

D.A.

*Yana Milev, ed.*

**D.A.**

A Transdisciplinary Handbook of  
Design Anthropology

Impressum

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For my beloved father, the physician  
and anthropologist Gancho Milev.



Legal Representation of Yana Milev: Dr. iur. Martin Heller, Heller Consulting, Berlin

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

Yana Milev, <i>Design Anthropology: Outline of an Expanded Concept of Design in the Field of the (Empirical) Cultural Sciences</i> .....	18
--	----

### Book 1

#### CLUSTER I : DESIGN CULTURE

Introduction .....	40
--------------------	----

#### A

##### Agent (Network) Culture as Design Culture

1. Tom Holert, <i>Distributed Agency, Design's Potentiality</i> .....	42
---	----

#### C

##### Counter Culture as Design Culture

2. Ulf Wuggenig, <i>The Return of the Plague of Ornaments</i> .....	56
---	----

#### D

##### Disaster Culture as Design Culture

3. Jean Baudrillard, <i>The Power of the Global: Requiem for the Twin Towers</i> . . .	68
--	----

#### G

##### Global Culture as Design Culture

4. Evert Ypma, <i>Design as Global Lingo</i> .....	74
--	----

#### U

##### Urban Culture as Design Culture

5. Elisabeth Blum, <i>Dialectics without Reconciliation. How Urbanism lags behind Urban Reality</i> .....	90
VE/1 Elisabeth Blum, <i>The Ethnographer's Glance</i> .....	98

#### V

##### Visual Culture as Design Culture

6. Birgit Richard, <i>The World Trade Center (WTC) Image Complex: On the Culture of the Shifting Image</i> .....	106
--	-----

### Book 2

#### CLUSTER II : SEGNO

Introduction .....	114
--------------------	-----

#### A

##### Semiotic Conceptions

7. Aleida Assmann, <i>Problems in the Explication of Occidental Sign Conceptions</i> .....	118
8. Elize Bisanz, <i>The Triadic Mind: Peirce's Semeiotic Concept of Designing the World through Signs</i> .....	126
VE/2 Yana Milev & R+, <i>Rammstein_Semiology</i> .....	134
C: Commentary by Yana Milev: <i>Rammstein_Semiology</i> .....	146

#### B

##### Semiocracy (Simulacrum, Hyperreality)

9. Daniel Hermsdorf, <i>The 1,000 Lies of Cinema: On Baudrillard's Term 'Simulation' and its Relevance for Film Theory</i> .....	154
10. Saroj Giri, <i>Sights and Sounds at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2011</i> .....	166
VE/3 Marc Bijl, <i>Burning Signs</i> .....	180

#### C

##### Semioclash (Semiotic Deconstruction, Critical Semiotics)

11. Mark Dery, <i>Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of the Signs</i> .....	188
VE/4 Princess Hijab, <i>Hijabism = Hijabizing Advertisements</i> .....	216
C: Commentary by Angelique Chrisafis: <i>Burka &amp; Gabanna: The Adbusting of Princess Hijab</i> .....	226



### CLUSTER III: MYTHUS

Introduction .....	230
--------------------	-----

#### A

##### Designing the Myth of the Other

12. Henk Oosterling, <i>The Myth of Modernity Interrogated: Oedipus and the Dogon</i> .....	234
13. James Clifford, <i>Taking Identity Politics Seriously: "The Contradictory, Stony Ground..."</i> .....	250
VE/5 Roger Ballen, <i>Boarding House</i> .....	268
C: Commentary by Yana Milev: <i>I FINK U FREEKY: On Roger Ballen's Search for Traces</i> .....	276

#### B

##### Designing Myths of Everyday Life

14. Molly Nesbit, <i>Ready-Made Originals: The Duchamp Model</i> .....	280
15. Christof Zotter and Janina Karolewski, <i>Ritual Design: A Popular Term and its Scientific Applications</i> .....	290
VE/6 Elisabeth von Samsonow, <i>Ariadne—a Ritual of Everyman's Life</i> .....	298
C: Commentary by Elisabeth von Samsonow: <i>Ariadne, the Sacred Patron of Ritual Design</i> .....	306

#### C

##### Designing Myths in Exhibiting and Media Practices

16. Fareed Armaly, 'New Muse': <i>Museum Exhibition Design as Hubris</i> .....	308
17. Alexander Kluge, <i>Contemporary Ballads: The Narrative Power of the Catastrophe as seen through its Images</i> .....	324
VE/7 Bill Viola, <i>The Greeting</i> .....	328
C: A Commentary by Bill Viola: <i>The Greeting</i> .....	336

### CLUSTER IV: TECHNE

Introduction .....	338
--------------------	-----

#### A

##### Knowledge

18. Michael Tomasello, <i>Gestural Conventions</i> .....	342
19. Thomas Metscher, <i>The Logos as Designing Power of Cultures</i> .....	354
VE/8 AOBME, <i>Ambulance of the In/Human</i> .....	374

#### B

##### Immersion/Virtus

20. Rudolf Maresch, <i>Virtus: The Medium of Immersion</i> .....	384
--	-----

#### C

##### Cognition/Cyber

21. Tim Lenoir, <i>Contemplating Singularity</i> .....	390
--	-----

#### D

##### Surveillance

VE/9 Bureau d'Etudes, <i>Mapping the In/Human</i> .....	408
22. Brian Holmes, <i>Future Map</i> .....	416
23. Friedrich von Borries, <i>Climate Capsules or: The Dymaxion of the 21st Century</i> .....	438
VE/10 Mikael Mikael, <i>Show You Are Not Afraid</i> .....	444

## Book 3

### CLUSTER V: DESIGN POLITICS

Introduction .....	452
--------------------	-----

#### A

##### Design Politics

24. Boris Groys, <i>Politics of Self-Design</i> .....	456
25. Boyan Manchev, <i>Performative Design of Life: Perverse Capitalism vs. 'Aesthetic' Materialism</i> .....	468
VE/11 Kai Löffelbein, <i>Kids of Sodom: The Dark Side of IT Design Industries</i> .....	476

#### B

##### Political Design

26. Branka Ćurčić, <i>Ideology of Design: From a Socialist Perspective on Design to it's Neo-Liberal-Transformation in Ex-Yugoslavia.</i> .....	484
27. Hal Foster, <i>Design and Crime: A Sketch for a Political Economy of Design.</i> ..	492
VE/12 Jürgen Mayer H., <i>HIDE-OUT: Camouflages in Architecture and Public Spaces</i> .....	500

#### C

##### Designing the Political

28. Chantal Mouffe, <i>Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices</i> .....	508
29. Oliver Marchart, <i>Staging the Political: (Counter-)Publics and the Theatricality of Acting.</i> .....	516
VE/13 Yana Milev, <i>*M *A *D *V *E *R *T *I *S *E*. The Album.</i> .....	532
C: Commentary by Yana Milev: <i>Madvertise Yourself! The Madness of Self-Design via Mobile (App) Advertising and Social Media</i> .....	542

### CLUSTER VI : DESIGN GOVERNANCE

Introduction .....	550
--------------------	-----

#### A

##### Semiocapitalism

30. Franco Berardi Bifo, <i>Aesthetic Sensibility and the Genealogy of Economic Reason: From Protestant Indust-Reality to Baroque Semiocapital</i> .....	554
31. Saroj Giri, <i>WikiLeaks: the Radical Gesture and its Emptiness</i> .....	568
32. Georg Franck, <i>Mental Capitalism</i> .....	580
VE/14 Alexander Becherer, <i>Paratropolis.</i> .....	598

#### B

##### Media Politics, Disaster Industries and the Zones beyond the Line

33. Joachim Kreysler, <i>Relational Design between Disaster Capitalism, Public Health Diseases, Security Industries and Media Politics</i> .....	606
VE/15 Mikael Mikael, <i>White Out</i> .....	630
34. Kenichi Mishima, <i>The Disempowered Public</i> .....	640
35. Krystian Woznicki in collaboration with Christiane Schulzki-Haddouti, Magdalena Taube, Andi Weiland, <i>CPJ: Project on the Media and Public Sphere in Times of Disaster Industries.</i> .....	648
VE/16 Miki Mistrati, <i>The Dark Side of Chocolate</i> .....	658
C: Commentary by Yana Milev: <i>The Chocolate Industry's Camouflage Politics</i> .....	666

#### C

##### Counter ID Agencies

VE/17 UBERMORGEN.COM, <i>Scheinbar unscheinbar: It's different, because it's completely different!</i> .....	668
C: Alain Bieber interviews UBERMORGEN.COM: <i>WOPPOW: Somali Pirate Fashion.</i> .....	676
VE/18 REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT, <i>Venceremos!</i> .....	684
C: Commentary by REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT: <i>Creating Social Practice</i> .....	692

## CLUSTER VII : DESIGN SOCIOLOGY

Introduction ..... 698

### A

#### Society

36. Gabriel Tarde, *Mimikry: Social Resemblances and Imitation Perspectives for a Design Sociology I* ..... 702
37. Martina Löw, *The Emergence of Space through the Interplay of Action and Structures Perspectives for a Design Sociology II* ..... 714
38. Stephan Moebius and Sophia Prinz, *Society's Design/Designing Society Perspectives for a Design Sociology III* ..... 728
- VE/19 Yana Milev, *Destination Eternal Beauty/Beautiful Eternity. Designing a Societal Obsession* ..... 742

### B

#### Mobility

39. Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis, *The State of Mobility and its Territorial Effect* ..... 750
40. Philip Ursprung, *Precarious Bodies: Containerization and Design* ..... 760
- VE/20 Olivier Coulange, *The Cell Phone's Point of View* ..... 768
- C: Commentary by Yana Milev: *The Revolution Will Not be Authorized* .... 776

### C

#### Survival (Emergency Design)

41. Mark Kammerbauer, *Socio-spatial Phenomena of Urban Disaster: Schismourbanism as 'Design'* ..... 780
42. Gabriele Hadl, *"This is a human emergency" – Ecology and Media after Fukushima* ..... 792
- VE/21 Marjetica Potrč, *The Urgent House* ..... 806
- C: Commentary by Yana Milev: *Hybrid Dwellings in the Zones of Anomy* .. 814

## CLUSTER VIII: DESIGN ETHNOLOGY

Introduction ..... 820

### A

#### Habitus and Habitat

- VE/22 Pierre Bourdieu, *Report of Precarity* ..... 824
- C: Commentary by Franz Schultheis: *Pierre Bourdieu and Algeria: An Elective Affinity* ..... 832

### B

#### Relation and Cooperation

43. Henk Oosterling, *Dasein as Design: Every Thing is Made of Some Thing* . . 836
44. Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman or: The Relational Design Between Hand, Head and Social Cooperation* ..... 854
- VE/23 Yana Milev, *Kyudō: The Way of the Bow* ..... 872

### C

#### Scapes and Islands

45. David d'Heilly, *Global Islands: Learning from the Galapagos Megalopolis* . . 880
46. Manuel Arias-Maldonado, *Wikipedia: The Collective Design of a Digital Planet* ..... 892
- VE/24 Remy Markowitsch, *On Travel: «Tristes Tropiques»* ..... 902

### D

#### Migration and Demarcation

47. Nils Zurawski, *Divided by Design: On Cognitive Maps and Material Culture in the Northern Ireland Conflict* ..... 910
48. Christian Ritter, *Migration Design: Research on Aesthetic and Social Practices in the Context of Transcultural Identity Formation* ..... 918
- VE/25 Michael Blum, *Exodus 2048* ..... 928
- C: Miri Stern interviewed by Lotte Müller in *Voice of the Buurt*, Rotterdam, 20 March 2068 ..... 936

## Book 4

### CLUSTER IX: DESIGNING TECHNOLOGIES

Introduction .....	946
--------------------	-----

#### A

##### Programming Intelligence: Technikphilosophie

49. Peter Weibel, <i>The World as a Rewriting Program: On the Progress of Culture through Transcription</i> .....	950
50. Paul Virilio, <i>Cinema Isn't I See, It's I Fly</i> .....	956

#### B

##### Artificial Intelligence: Embodiment and Interaction

51. Roger Frantz, <i>Herbert A. Simon and The (Design) Sciences of the Artificial</i> ..	978
52. Joachim Halse, <i>Between Design and Anthropology: Improvising Embodied Interaction</i> .....	994
53. Sophie Houdart, <i>Welcome to the "Small People-Texture Industry"!</i> <i>Human Figures in Architectural Perspective Drawings</i> .....	1006
VE/26 Peter Welz, <i>Airdrawings</i> .....	1014
C: Commentary by Yana Milev: <i>Kinaesthetic Embodiment in William Forsythe's Airdrawings: A Project by Peter Welz</i> .....	1022

#### C

##### Deconstructing Intelligence: De-Design (War)Technologies

54. Bruce D. Larkin, <i>Denuclearization Design: Political De-Design After Fukushima</i> .....	1026
55. Wolfgang Fach, <i>Worlds After</i> .....	1036
VE/27 Knowbotic Research, <i>be prepared! tiger stealth!</i> .....	1046
C: Commentary by Matthew Fuller: <i>The Cat Seemed to Think There was Enough of it Now in Sight</i> .....	1054

### CLUSTER X: DESIGNING THE IN/VISIBLE

Introduction .....	1060
--------------------	------

#### A

##### Designing Sur/Faces

56. Jacques Rancière, <i>The Surface of Design</i> .....	1064
57. Graham Ward, <i>Postsecularity? The New Public Faces of Religions</i> .....	1076
VE/28 Gregor Schneider, <i>Cube</i> .....	1088
C: Commentary by Yana Milev: <i>The (Non)Face of the (Un)Seen: A Suprematist Antithesis</i> .....	1096

#### B

##### Designing Visual Representations

58. Irit Rogoff, <i>We—Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations</i> .....	1102
VE/29 Gundula Schulze Elodowy, <i>The Ungraspable Face</i> .....	1110
C: Commentary by Gundula Schulze-Elodowy: <i>The Gaze is Answered by the Gazed-Upon</i> .....	1118

#### C

##### Designing the In/Visible

59. Peter Berz, <i>Biological Aesthetics: (A)Symmetry and (In)Visibility in the Appearance of a Blueprint</i> .....	1124
VE/30 Philipp Beckert, <i>Trace and Testimony</i> .....	1134
60. Giorgio Agamben, <i>The Kingdom and the Glory</i> .....	1142
VE/31 Armin Linke, <i>Designing Invisible Emanations of Sovereignty</i> .....	1166

## **Book 5**

### **CLUSTER XI: CRITICAL DESIGN IN(TER)VENTION/ DESIGN CRITIQUE**

Introduction .....	1174
--------------------	------

#### **A**

##### **Participatory Design/Socially Responsible Design**

61. Cynthia E. Smith, <i>World Design to End Poverty</i> .....	1178
62. Marjetica Potrč, <i>Participatory Design</i> .....	1188
VE/32 United_Bottle Group, <i>United_Bottle Participate!</i> .....	1200
C: Commentary by Dirk Hebel and Jörg Stollman:	
<i>See Garbage, Think Resource!</i> .....	1208

#### **B**

##### **Design In(ter)vention**

VE/33 Lisa Kirk, <i>Revolution Fragrance</i> .....	1212
C: Commentaries by	
Lia Gangitano: <i>Lisa Kirk: Revolution Fragrance</i> .....	1220
Thorsten Schmitz: <i>A New Fragrance. The Stink of Revolution</i> .....	1222
VE/34 Christina Hemauer and Roman Keller, <i>A Road not Taken</i> .....	1226

#### **C**

##### **Crossbench Design**

63.	Markus Miessen, <i>Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality</i> . . . . .	1236
64.	Brian Holmes, <i>Swar/m/achine</i> . . . . .	1252
VE/35	MINDPIRATES, <i>dropping knowledge</i> . . . . .	1264
	C: Commentary by Mindpirates: <i>We Ask Ourselves</i> . . . . .	1272

### **APPENDIX**

Editor and Team .....	1274
Contributors .....	1276
Acknowledgements .....	1296



Advertising Public  
Space

Yana Milev

## Design Anthropology: Outline of an Expanded Concept of Design in the Field of the (Empirical) Cultural Sciences

### 1. THE PROJECT

#### 1.1. Design Cultures—An Altered Concept of Culture

Individual and collective access to visual technologies from the military, news media and scientific research, means that the image of the world is in a process of permanent fragmentation, interest-oriented sampling, accelerating half-life and (non-)validity in information contexts. This shift in the perception of images has radically changed the role of design, while at the same time there is an increase in individual access opportunity to digital image production and thus in social practices. Design is no longer confined to images (for purposes of marketing, journalism and image data banks); it has now also become a design of searches, knowledge and behaviour. We have, as digital and physical actors in fields of information, expanded our own range of activity and thus shaping options in the context of creating positions, viewpoints and opinions. Communication technology has made possible the individual and collective intrusion into streams of data of so-called public networks/spaces, but also into hidden, clandestine networks/spaces. Unauthorized practices of intervention can deflate agreed-upon regulations, such as image and behaviour regulations. This suspension of hierarchies of authority is, in a political sense, new. Thus the sovereign is not the only one with the power of decision, nor is his adversary, the partisan. Instead, there is also the manager, the hacker, the terrorist, the activist and others. There is a new complexity of protagonists' networks and designing powers that can be explained through the image and news fakes, the camouflaging of interests and the invisibility of their protagonists. These dynamics in social fields—quickly outlined here—presuppose new measures of enlightenment and imply a revision of discursive concepts. Among other concepts, that of design has been caught up in this field of revision and is now understood as a concept of processes and the creation of social practice and surroundings. The degree to which unauthorized protagonists intervene in urban cultural settings has increased disproportionately and has multiplied the degree to which individual protagonists shape social and political practice. This fact speaks for a design revolution that implies an altered concept of culture: *cultures of design*.

Pierre Bourdieu must be credited as the first to combine sociological objects and research practices with semiological ones in his book *On the Sociology of Symbolic Forms*,<sup>1</sup> making reference to Ernst Cassirer's "Philosophy of Symbolic Forms".<sup>2</sup> Since the negative horizon of 1945 and ever since Frankfurt School critical thought became prevalent, philosophy has been practised as social philosophy, while cultural philosophy—unthinkable without an analysis of social behaviour—has been practised as cultural sociology. While cultural sociology poses the question of the introduction of social patterns of behaviour into culture, *Design Anthropology* goes beyond social research into the meaning of communication in the context of the shaping of text, symbol, sign and message, as well as the meaning of sign determination (De-Sign) in objects, goods and images, the meaning of *De-Signs* as a moment of demarcation in social spatial construction and social behaviour. The inventor of the Frutiger typeface, Adrian Frutiger, writes: "The copy (*Abbild*) becomes a symbol (*Sinnbild*). The holy signs of meaning (*Sinnzeichen*) follow a sober formula. Heraldic figures and signatures turn into logos and brands."<sup>3</sup> Signs in public spaces, as the result of evictions and negotiations, demonstrate visual orders in social, economic and political formations. Designs are thus rhetorical demarcations of spaces or—as representatives of social affiliations or exclusions (as in the case of brands)—they demonstrate economic stagings as conditions of power and war.

The popularity of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's global bestsellers *Empire*<sup>4</sup> and *Multitude*<sup>5</sup> is an example of how great readers' desire is to be informed in an increasingly complex world of postmodern politics, *globalization*. At the same time, both books point out the limits of an analysis of postmodern politics based on the cultural sciences (Deleuze) and thus on the limits of their suggested solutions of exodus and desertion. *Exodus* leads to and seduces one to participate in design ideologies, as well as to support the mechanisms of production and reproduction of a Global Design Governance. Here again globalization means nothing more than the artificial victory march of the *design of spheres* motivated by convenience at the cost of the world's resources of human beings and basic commodities. "It is thus no coincidence when the globalization debate is almost exclusively held as a monologue among the affluent zones; the majority of the other regions in the world hardly know the word and certainly not the issue, except for its negative side effects."<sup>6</sup> The concept of affluence remains incomplete without a sociology of design for the aesthetics and consumption of goods and without a design-specific diagnosis of the "unlimited openness for everything that can be had for money".<sup>7</sup>



O<sub>2</sub>-Revolution Egypt/  
O<sub>2</sub>-World Berlin



Coastal Pollution /  
Media Pollution

Given the background of a massive media presence for social realities, communicated via screens, terminals and surfaces, the spheres of 'lived experience' become blurred with the 'media placebo experience'. In epidemic proportions, signs, symbols, emblems, images and narratives become hybrid and meld with infrastructures, public spaces and bodies. The perception of the surroundings of individuals and groups inexorably liquefies public space into a single *Design Overkill*, in which borders and differences between illusions and facts are suspended. This phenomenon of design strategies' indifference in public spaces leads—above all for migrants globally—to the mistaken idea that consumption and the carrying of the decisive brand anticipate the arrival of a desired reality. Here we can speak of an altered concept of culture, of design cultures. Design cultures are, among other things, cultures of migration, protest, daily life, cafés, shopping, leisure, the internet, religion, election campaigns, prisons, etc. The list could be extended indefinitely. The point is to suggest that each form of social communication that creates affiliation or exclusion involves cultural productions that become significant in their specific design dynamics in urban and networked spaces.

### 1.2. A Project in the Field of the (Empirical) Cultural Sciences

In the volume at hand, the attempt is made to outline a new field of research within the framework of the empirical cultural sciences, specifically that of cultural and social anthropology. The concept of Design Anthropology is made up of two disciplines—design research and anthropology—that have already been connected in many ways. From this new connection between these complex areas of knowledge and practice, we expect a new orientation towards the question of the role of design in twenty-first century societies. To answer this question, the concept of design enters prominently, as do its usual meanings and applications. Clarifying these—also in contrast to an understanding of design that is relevant to this project—is this venture's operational approach. In this work, we hope to open up new perspectives for the understanding of and possibilities in the cultural sciences. In this respect, it seems advisable to expand the academic concept of cultural sciences in the direction of empirical cultural sciences and cultural studies, with a focus on a *culture of everyday habits*. Against this backdrop, design is understood as an element of everyday practice and as a sociological phenomenon of cultural practices, as well as—and above all—an agent of a cultural and anthropological turn.

While cultural studies expands its interpretative approach turn by turn, today we stand at the threshold of an 'anthropotechnical' turn—perhaps due in part to Peter Sloterdijk's latest introduction to anthropotechnics. The human question—and cultural studies can

help find an answer here, making unconventional connections between comparative research practices—becomes essential, also in discourse, in the face of a diagnosis of our catastrophic times. An anthropological turning point in combination with a new definition of the concept of design is on this project's agenda.

After the twentieth century's *linguistic turn*, introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein and Ferdinand de Saussure's studies, there followed a *semiotic turn*, then a *medial turn* followed by an *iconic turn*, then a *spatial turn*, followed by a *performative turn*, then a *sensual turn*, etc. After the spatial discourse, visual discourse followed; after the media discourse, the discourse of scenarios and narratives followed, and then the discourse of gestures and signs. The concept of design is now conquering the discursive platform of change, since the concept itself is already within a social and discursive change in perception and reception. *Design has rid itself of boundaries as a concept and a thing, and has become relevant in the understanding of cultural technique and anthropotechnics*. The concern of this book and its authors is to expand the concept of design in its rhetorical, political, sociological, aesthetic and anthropological semantics and shape it as a contemporary theory of culture.

In times of *Total Design* (Mateo Kries) and the lack of difference between strategies and politics of design, clear boundaries between the various origins of thinking about design must be drawn on the one hand, while, on the other hand, the concept of design must be newly understood in its most original sense of script, trace, text, gesture and sign, as well as in its semiotic position as a text of signs, images and media and as a basis for action, behaviour, communication and the production of space. This is the reason why this project's objective is to create the outline of Design Anthropology as a field of research and a new concept of design as an object of research in the context of societal and social practice.

Such a concept of design could be located in the interdisciplinary overlap of the semiotic and symbolic strategies, image and media strategies, behaviour and communications strategies, performative and political strategies as well as spatial strategies that will be investigated, and be oriented towards a new understanding of the concept of 'design strategies'. When all strategies listed above can also be understood as partial strategies of design strategies, then an expanded concept of design will gain a new cultural sociological and cultural anthropological dimension. A first thesis of *Design Anthropology* could thus be deduced: a *synchronization* of design strategies with behavioural strategies extrapolates the process of design as a process of social production

emergency camp, Gaza/  
trekking camp, Everest



of culture. The concept *cultural production* can be asserted as the umbrella term for spatial production, image production, aesthetic production and the production of social and communication fields. However, it remains incomplete without the synthesis of an expanded concept of design, with a *Gestaltgenese* (origin of *Gestalt* or of shaping) in the context of social behaviour, cultural exchange and political fields. Given the background of this thesis, this project develops a multilayered and differentiated formulation and definition of design strategies in the interdisciplinary framework of the cultural sciences. The objective of the *Design Anthropology* project is to open up cultural theory and cultural anthropology for an expanded concept of design, i.e. for this *synthesis of cultural production and Gestaltgenese*.

#### Summary:

For the discourse of cultural science and its immanent *cultural turns*, the pre-text to the concept and meaning of design described above comprises a new imperative. Individual terms that had previously been prominent in the discourse—such as image, media, space, symbol, performative and gesture—are newly interwoven in the discourse of a *design as a modus of creation for social processes and anti-processes*. Consequently, one can speak of design as a self-referential process of the creation of the public and the anti-public, as a self-referential process of the creation of hegemony and heteronomy or as a self-referential process of the creation of aggregations and dissipations. These processes of creation make reference to all social and political micro- and macro-dynamics. Given this background, we would like to ask if we can speak of a *design turn* in discursive and observational contexts.

## 2. AN EXPANDED CONCEPT OF DESIGN

### 2.1 An Approach

Human beings are semiotic creatures, design creatures. From a social-anthropological perspective, their survival is bound to behaviour that leaves behind signs and makes communication possible. Social systems are semiotic systems that survive as a result of their recognizability and the recognizability of their codified ideologies and interests. This preservation of the system takes place via semiotic identifications and image identifications that generate exchange in language, i.e. symbolic exchange. Deviations in system codifications necessarily lead to the loss of the system ID and thus to expulsion from the system. However, at the same time each system expulsion opens up the opportunity to gain access to another system of language or semiotics. For individual

Migrants / Tourists



entities, as well as for social systems, semiotic codification means *survival*. Theories and provisions of integration attain an incomprehensible meaning in the economization of all areas of life, since system integrations create markets and thus employment. The idea of a semiotic theory of survival is validated anthropologically and breaks with a Darwinist theory of survival. In other words, the theoretical approach sketched out here prefers *semiogenesis* as opposed to favouring fitness and stress theories. But it is precisely with the economization of *social semiotics* that neo-Darwinist fitness and stress theories experience a renaissance. Since symbolic capital and linguistic exchange have become corruptible, affiliations are bought, camouflaged, monitored, betrayed and destroyed.

The necessity of research into cultural techniques of the semiotic and symbolic—and the performative and staged in the context of social behaviour—is more essential than ever at times of radical change in social and individual identifications; it subjects an expanded concept of design to negotiation. However, an expanded concept of design that can be considered beyond pragmatic and consumer functionality will be of great interest, as established since the 1950s in Europe in the context of the car industry, the Bauhaus, consumer goods at times of economic miracles and the concept of design created at the Ulm School of Design (*Hochschule für Gestaltung Ulm*). In this volume we are researching an expanded concept of design that defines the 'user', his habits and his status without recourse to issues of uniqueness, the serial or industrially created forms. This context must be left behind to motivate a thinking about design in terms of the social, political, ethnographic, ecological, economic, urban, spatial, aesthetic, mediated, cultural, narrative and above all the performative and scenographic. Today, design primarily means communication, since one's environment for living is developed or destroyed via strategies of design.

The anthology thus assembles different positions on an expanded concept of design that can be associated with different origins, sources and expertise: for example, critiques of the psychological and sociological consequences of the corporate capitalization of urban spaces through 'brands and branding', the criticism of an increasing loss of orientation in constantly changing zones of stealth marketing and *corporate design*—inspired by Pierre Bourdieu, Chantal Mouffe or Wolfgang Fritz Haug—next to positions that ground social behaviour in its semiological and behavioural-anthropological dimension, such as those formulated by Ferdinand de Saussure or Claude Lévi-Strauss. Positions that discuss symbolic and archetypal representations as a carrier and stabilizer for psychological identification as investigated in the framework of analytic psychology





Consumer Streams/  
Refugee Streams

stand next to positions that project social processes in their aesthetic and sculptural dimension, as Joseph Beuys has researched in an exemplary and enduring way. Positions in performative theory and media theory, as well as projects in demographic research, migration and urban research, equally discuss *cultural productions as design processes*. The references to an expanded concept of design correspond to concepts of political philosophy and theory, political sociology, political ethnography and anthropology, but also to concepts of sciences of the image, semiology, linguistics and artistic, scenographic and aesthetic research. Under the auspices of an expanded concept of design, the role of the agent and dynamic objects that contribute to the production or destruction of space continues to be monitored. Here Martina Löw's position in spatial sociology and spacing, the processes of negotiation between people and goods, are up for discussion, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's actors' theory of distinction gain that takes place on the symbolic level, and Bruno Latour's actor-network theory. In addition, the relationality, self-referential nature and singularity between actors and networks are examined under the auspices of an expanded concept of design, as proposed by Niklas Luhmann or Dirk Baecker in relation to societies, organizations and systems.

At a fundamental level, the cause for dealing with an expanded concept of design and a new partial discipline of cultural anthropology—[political] Design Anthropology—is argued as follows: first, the problems of social and societal *anomie* that Emile Durkheim makes reference to are rooted in a so-called Global Design Governance. Second, the problem of a permanent urban *state of emergency* in which public spaces increasingly find themselves as a result of globalization and migration—referenced by Giorgio Agamben—is rooted in a non-difference of *design policies*. Third, the necessity of a new type of analysis for public spaces that acknowledges the questions of visual sciences, iconic criticism, mediology, artistic research, semiotics and semiology, space and spacing, communications guerilla and anti-design, is rooted in an expanded *thinking about design*. Fourth, in future, the focus will be on micro-designs and micro-habitats, local ways of dealing with one's environment for living, which necessarily assume a revised and *critical concept of design*. New curatorial concepts of critical design, as presented by Emily Pilloton (*Design Revolution*), Cynthia Smith (*Design for the other 90%*), Chantal Prod'Hom (*Destroy Design*) or Friedrich von Borries (*Climate Design*) support this.

In conclusion, one can determine that the process of design is a process immanent in societal dynamics that can neither be ignored nor separated and observed individually. The aim of a fusion among social-political subjects with an emphasis on the question



Schengen Area/pan-European  
Day of Action 2005

of diagnostics and shaping processes in social fields can no longer be avoided, since, as described above, cultural techniques, self-techniques, governmental techniques, etc. will be understood in the sense of anthropotechnics and, additionally, will be put on one level with techniques of design.

## 2.2. The Concept of Creation of Social and Cultural Practice

Synchronizing the concept of design with the concept of the creation of social and cultural practice connects social behaviour with the semiological: *urban social fabrics* are urban design fabrics and lead to a new redistribution of cultural capital in public spaces. Thus the expanded concept of design in the context of social and cultural practice is always simultaneously political and shaping.

Given this *definition* as a background, an expansion of the concept of design from the object to the process and the thing to the condition takes place. An expanded understanding of a concept and practice of design conforms to Beuys' definition of the *social sculpture* that revolutionized the concept of art due to its synchronization with social processes.

As a result of the total economization of the concept and practice of art, as well as the establishment of the art market as a competitive market beside those for resources, real estate, finance and weapons, a concept of art connected to an idea of social and political free space—as Beuys once proposed—has become obsolete. The logic of transforming the market on the basis of their critique is analyzed excellently in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* by Ève Chiapello and Luc Boltanski.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, there is a tradition to critiquing the ideological usurpation of creative self-referential models of organization. *Dada*, *Arte Povera*, *Stuckism*, *Fluxus* and *Activism* are anti-art forms within the field of art. Their central objective—fighting against economic and institutional colonization—has failed in the face of historic facts. However, in this anti-art movement, Beuys' concepts of the *social sculpture* and an expanded concept of art take on a new historic role. Beuys succeeded, for the first time, in taking a fundamental step outside the framework of art and in expanding art's field of action into political practice and everyday life, with the result that art suspends itself in the moment when "everyone is an artist". It is this project's objective to build on Joseph Beuys' historic contribution and the semantic, political and aesthetic expansion of basic anthropological concepts (perception, work, discourse practice and social shaping) that played a central role in Beuys' project.



São Paulo, Brasília/  
Paris Banlieue, Europe



Palestine 2009/  
Istanbul 2009

Beyond the concept of art, in this *Design Anthropology* project we will discuss an expanded concept of design that is understood as a concept of *anthropotechnics*, as a concept of creation of cultural practice. Such a concept of design is one that necessarily shapes. This does not just imply the aesthetic shape, but above all the sculptural shape, process shape and performative shape of social behaviour. In the sense of social sculpture, the *genesis of shaping* cultural practice finds itself in a mode of transitive creation.

In his important “Work of Art” essay, Walter Benjamin examined the situation of mass entertainment and mass reproduction of cult and works of art. In his study—grounded in the sociology of art—he complained of the uncritical, value-free and disconnected relationship of consumers to their objects of consumption. Though at one point objects of contemplation, these objects deteriorate in duplicate and replicated form into mass ornaments that serve hegemonic policies. Benjamin wrote this in 1936. What does a continued Benjaminian discourse look like today? The *discontent* in the arts has returned to the agenda in current debates led by Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière and Oliver Marchart. In *The Public in Question: The Politics of Artistic Practices*, Chantal Mouffe writes:

“A question, perhaps the most central—repeatedly posed in seminars—is the following: how can artistic practice still play a critical role in societies in which any critical position is incorporated and neutralized by the powers that be? [...] Blurring the border between art and advertising goes so far that the idea of critical public spaces have lost their meaning. In the end, we live in societies in which even the public sphere has been privatized. In respect to the politics of artistic practice the questions must be posed, if and to what extent cultural and artistic practice assists in reproducing existing hegemonies or if and to what extent they assist in the anti-hegemonic fight against neoliberal hegemony.”<sup>9</sup>

Research in the arts suggests a critical investigation of *aesthetic regimes*, for example the art market system or the aestheticizing of the political/anti-political or public spaces. Mouffe’s question makes reference to the question of the aesthetic in the political aspect of cultural practices, as Antonio Gramsci did. In general, this question leads to raising the subject of *cultural creation*, as Gramsci calls it. This concept of *cultural creation* is identical to Joseph Beuys’ expanded concept of art and an expanded concept of design as a concept of creation of cultural practice.

### 2.3. The Genesis of the Shaping of Cultural Fabrics

Centrally, it can be determined that the *transmission dynamics* in cultural fields are the ones that make a standalone media or visual anthropology appear incomplete. *Transmission*, *transversality* and *agency* are three operative aspects of an expanded concept of design in the field of cultural and social anthropology that place the phenomenon of the image and the phenomenon of the medium or the phenomena of body and space in a transmissive, plastic and fluctuating—a *generative-condition*. The concept of the condition—analogue to the physical model—makes reference to a situated excerpt of complex shaping procedures. In contrast to physics, in this volume sociomorphic, semiomorphic, iconomorphic and anthropomorphic cultural phenomena will be investigated from the perspective of an expanded concept of design. The phenomenological change of the concept of culture—which will be better understood through an expanded concept of design—refers to the phenomenon of the permanent crisis of the image, medium and body. Clifford Geertz, similarly against the backdrop of *permanent* crises of cultures and their concepts, characterizes the concept of culture as a self-woven fabric of meaning in *Thick Description*.<sup>10</sup> To argue from this point of view demands a new theoretical attitude towards the interminable, imperfect and circulating in all phenomena, stages and aggregates in culture, perception and identification. In addition, this point of view demands a new perspective on the processes of creation for the cultural and social that recognizes a *networked* as well as a *cultural-sculptural* shaping procedure in gestures, representations or stagings. As a result, the future of the image, as Jacques Rancière asserts in *The Future of the Image*,<sup>11</sup> is obsolete if ‘the image’ is not seen in a complex, space-producing connection to performative gestures and behaviour. Even here, the understanding of the image must be expanded and tied to a superior understanding of design in which ‘the image’, ‘the body’ or ‘the medium’ are simply amalgams and elements of a complex shape of anthropomorphic design. Peter Sloterdijk’s attempt at speaking of systems and zones of training (*Übung*)—instead of investing in ideological architectures of images, spaces, bodies and religions—is invaluable for a development of theory in Design Anthropology as carried out in the project presented here.

#### Summary:

Clifford Geertz’s concept of culture is a primary orientation for the formulation of a Design Anthropology. Geertz has been using a ‘semiotic’ concept of culture—i.e. one based on the meanings of signs—and promotes an open, flexible concept of culture; he makes direct reference to Max Weber and uses his image of a self-woven fabric of meaning<sup>12</sup> in which man is caught. Culture is thus the fabric that is in constant creation and change,



Wild Refugee Camp, Calais  
2009

and can constantly be reinterpreted. Thus *culture* is constantly subject to new interpretations and meanings, is never objective and shows itself in man's daily life. Culture is thus everywhere, though the culture of interpretation is inalienable to the existence of the definition of *culture*. Geertz also speaks of a code whose symbolic content has to be deciphered. We want to take Geertz's undertaking into account and extend it with an expanded concept of design in the context of the processes of creation in cultural fabrics.

### 3. SCIENTIFIC CONTEXT

#### 3.1. A Field of Research in Cultural and Social Anthropology

In an expanded concept of design, Design Anthropology defines a field of investigation of self-creating cultural fabric. Thus this concept of design differentiates itself clearly from existing concepts of design in the research fields of Design Thinking (David Kelley, Terry Winograd, Larry Leifer), designing (Claudia Mareis, Gesche Joost), Cognitive Design (Peter Friedrich Stephan) or design sciences (Herbert A. Simon, Holger van der Boom). Although the named design developments are not ignored within anthropological design research, the focus is placed on cultural processes of creation, i.e. 'designs from below'.

In order to verify and detail Design Anthropology as a research discipline of (political) cultural anthropology and sociological anthropology, in this volume we therefore pose the question from different points of view within the empirical cultural sciences, specifically cultural philosophy (Peter Sloterdijk), cultural anthropology (Aleida Assmann), the semiotics of images (Elize Bisanz), sociology and economic anthropology (Frank Schultheis), art history (Eugen Blume), cultural sociology (Ulf Wuggennig), the sociology of disasters (Elke M. Geenen), media theory (Boris Groys), macro-sociology (Heinz Bude), historical anthropology (Michael Tomasello), political theory (Chantal Mouffe), linguistics (Roland Posner), image sciences (Lydia Haustein), image semiotics (Elize Bisanz), ethnology (Judith Schlehe), as well as positions in the fields of design research, design thinking and design science. The objective is to create a complex idea of an expanded concept of design, which, communicated through transdisciplinary implications, becomes visible in cultural science and especially cultural anthropology, and which allows it to be termed a subject of cultural anthropology in order to assist in formulating its sub-discipline, Design Anthropology.



Trekking:  
Pakistan 2009 /  
Sudan 2009

While two new sub-disciplines have been established in cultural anthropology, namely *media anthropology*<sup>13</sup> and *visual anthropology*<sup>14</sup>, *Design Anthropology* founds a further sub-discipline of cultural anthropology; this follows from the research context in *anthropological design research*. Thus three objectives become evident that formulate the research project's aims in *Design Anthropology*, are specified for the first time in this publication and are an objective of the anthology itself.

1. *Outline of an expanded concept of design (including all differentiations)*
2. *Definition of an expanded concept of design in the field of the (empirical) cultural sciences*
3. *Derivation of a critical and practice-oriented cultural theory of design anthropology*

In its cultural anthropological approach, *Design Anthropology* makes a central reference to James Clifford and Clifford Geertz's positions, to Ernst Cassirer and Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory of symbols, to Bronislaw Malinowsky and Marcel Mauss' theories of economic anthropology, to Michael Tomasello and Aleida Assmann's theories of cultural memory, to Ferdinand de Saussure, Yuri Mikhailovich Lotman and Umberto Eco's semiological theories, to Roland Posner and Klaus Robering's semiological encyclopedia, as well as to Robert Buckminster Fuller and Villem Flusser's nomadic design theories.

The concept of empirical cultural sciences is necessarily created from the confrontation between a cultural anthropological concept of culture and the spectrum of qualitative research methods. I would also like to make reference to the study programme for 'Empirical Cultural Sciences' (EKW) at the Ludwig Uhland Institute of the Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen. In Tübingen, sociology stands at the centre of the institute's understanding of the empirical cultural sciences.

In this context, the choice of the term 'Design Anthropology' implies design sociology. In *Design Anthropology*, sociological concepts such as behaviour (*Handlung*), communication, daily habits, organization, systems, solidarity, distinction, the subaltern, etc., join together with the ethnographic-anthropological methods of field research, participatory observation and 'living archaeology'. According to Clifford Geertz's semiological concept of culture, a Design Anthropology connects equally well to the concept of semiotics.

Train-Shuttle,  
India/  
Walk-Shuttle,  
China, 2008



#### 4. PROJECT ARCHITECTURE

In this *Design Anthropology* project, the concept of design is brought back to the most original and elementary understanding of the *disegno*; in other words, to the understanding of the signature, the trace and the script that are left by social and existential processes. Such a concept of design is connected to the protagonists of semiotic and ethnographic cultural (technological) research, such as Jacques Derrida, Ferdinand de Saussure, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Umberto Eco, Marcel Mauss and Michel de Certeau. The present project investigates the character of the creation of narratives and orders, of situations and daily life, of symbols and histories—the semiotics and semantics of (self-)description and (foreign) interpretation of cultural systems.

In his essay “Die Sichtbarkeit sozialer Systeme: Zur Visualität von Selbst- und Fremdbeschreibungen”,<sup>15</sup> the Swiss sociologist Urs Stäheli makes reference to the leading role of visual semantics in the self-description and description by others of functional systems, on the one hand, and determines, on the other hand, that this role is disregarded in research. The goal of the present project is to grasp this missing link and to replace it with the prospect of a Design Anthropology. Cultures that move and orient themselves in a medium of language and linguistic operations—and whose central means for ordering and connecting (origins and associations) are signatures, scripts, traces, symbols and images—are design cultures. In accordance with Joseph Beuys’ expanded concept of art, an expanded concept of design will here be developed and tested for its connectivity to the various fields of empirical cultural research (cultural anthropology).

The volume is made up of five books and 11 clusters. Each book has three clusters with the exceptions of Book 1 (one cluster), Book 2 (four clusters) and Book 5 (one cluster). Each cluster is divided into a block structure.

**Book 1** represents one cluster exclusively, Cluster I, which is named

##### • Design Culture

In a reference to an infinite list, Cluster I demonstrates which forms of culture belong to a temporary design culture. The character of a list is emphasized by this cluster’s lack of an A-B-C block structure; instead, this has been abandoned for an alphabetical series. Thus it is suggested that the listing of cultural forms as design cultures can have a lexical character.



Refugee Camps  
Iraq / Kosovo

Cluster I enters at the beginning of a concept of ‘Design Anthropology’ like an overture. The representation of design culture’s multiple facets already anticipates the direction of research at the beginning of the project.

It should be mentioned here that the *Design Kulturen* project will appear as an encyclopedia with the Fink Verlag, edited by the HFG Research Institute, in 2013.

**Book 2** proposes an expanded concept of design whose foundations are set on the three cornerstones ‘Segno’, ‘Mythus’ and ‘Techne’. Thus the three subsequent clusters II-IV present the constitution of an expanded concept of design in:

- **Segno:** the root of semiology, concepts of signs and images, semiosis, symbols, iconography, archetypes
- **Mythus:** the root of mythology as a secondary semiotic system, symbols and semantics (carriers of meaning)
- **Techne:** the root of anthropotechnology, cultivating, cultural technologies, *conditio in/humana*, coding, surviving, shaping, meaning, craftsmanship, production, self-description, etc.

These three cornerstones emphasize the genesis of so-called strong cultural metaphors and their dispersion as collective narratives and cultural memory. This results in a design research based on the archaeology of knowledge, anthropotechnologies of survival and on the principles of *oikonomia* and cooperation.

The expanded concept of design developed here later fuses fields in the empirical cultural sciences (cultural anthropology)—as introduced in Book 3—with Design Anthropology, its branches and grounds for argumentation.

In order to proceed by way of a clear differentiation from the design sciences—the declared objective of this volume—we will repeatedly make reference to the basic arguments for a Design Anthropology in the way these are set out in the three clusters of Book 2. To establish our difference from the design sciences, we do not speak explicitly of the shape, technology, interaction between humans and machine/object or of marketing and brand politics, technological innovation, trends and the generation of user streams, of industrial concepts such as design thinking, sustainable design, green design, etc. Instead, we speak of sign conceptions, image conceptions, cultural weaves, dense descriptions (Clifford Geertz), *writing cultures* (James Clifford), narratives (myths) and practices of everyday life, as well as the phenomenological character of



Haiti, 2010

cultural technologies such as mimesis, mimicry, reproduction, replication or exchange and negotiation, simulation and surveillance and their shaped dimensions.

**Book 3** investigates an expanded concept of design that is constructed in Book 2 in the four branches (politics, governance, bodies, spaces) of the empirical cultural sciences (cultural anthropology). Clusters IV–VIII that follow deal with the project of conveying and representing the design-anthropological cornerstones (*segno*, *mythus*, *techne*) onto the discourses of politics, governance, bodies and spaces. In Clusters IV–VIII, the result is theory, argumentation and definitions for the four sub-fields or branches of a Design Anthropology:

- **Design Politics**
- **Design Governance**
- **Design Sociology**
- **Design Ethnology**

The field of the *political* is examined twice: once as the continuation of war by other means, and then as war theatre or parliamentary theatre; in other words, in its character as a production or propaganda. In this context and through the lens of an expanded concept of design, the concepts of democracy and dictatorship enter in a multitude of ways, even in their deceptive roles. This is what the concept of 'Design Politics' stands for.

The field of *governance* is viewed on the basis of Michel Foucault's theory; he established in *Biopolitics I+II* that the centre of governance is ruled by market principles. Foucault calls this type of governance "governmentality". This type defines three decisive turns in the economy: 1) industry's rise (lobbyism) to become the fifth power of the state; 2) lobbyism's politics of camouflage in the economy and in politics; 3) the power of the imperiums of media images and news that euphemize the corporations' politics of camouflage. In sum, this stands for the concept of *Design Governance* in the focus of an expanded concept of design.

The field of (social) *bodies* primarily deals with the sociological concepts of behaviour, communication and exchange, but also mobility and survival in the focus of an expanded concept of design. Crowds and masses, bodies and containers appear as networks, swarms and multitudes that negotiate revolutions, migrations and disasters. Gilles Deleuze summarizes his essay "Postscript on the Societies of Control" with the statement that "The operation of markets is now the instrument of social control". Here the euphemistic instrumentalization of crowds through markets and marketing becomes a

Congo, 2008 /

Dakar, 2009



strategy of biopolitical submission, crowd affiliation and conformity. The global expansion of the marketing zone has attained a radical influence on the creation of identities, identifications and emotions. This is what the *Design Sociology* concept stands for.

The field of (ethnic) spaces is centrally focused on concepts of ethnology and anthropology such as habitus, relations, scapes, islands, migrations and demarcations. Here, the dynamic shape of emergent social orders is considered as introduced by Arjun Appadurai's concept of *ethnoscapes*. In some cases, the ethnic groups involved in emergent processes can radically shift normative and traditional social spaces and orders. Thus design ethnology examines practices from daily life in areas of crisis, war and violence that lead to migrations, precarious situations, superfluity, exclusion, deportation, displacement or annihilation—or that also lead to forced mobility and flexibility in living and work situations. Although one can observe disturbances in cultural fabrics within emergent social orders, communities—especially in the diaspora—still make their cultural affiliation and origins significant. In the face of these processes, it is equally important to establish to what extent questions of cultural representation and identity politics are tied to spatial presence and shaping. The problem of social visibility as well as the current issue of integration appear to be closely tied to processes of the politics of space. This is what *Design Ethnology* stands for in the focus of an expanded concept of design.

In all four clusters of Book 3 it repeatedly becomes evident how strong the reference is to the argumentative foundations constructed in Book 2 of *segno*, *mythus* and *techne* as manifest roots of self- or autopoietical cultural production. Above all the analysis of, for example, media images of enemies and news (Designing Politics), the causes for swarm behaviour in dealing with social media, the internet, apps and mobile devices (Design Governance), or within a certain sociology of disasters in which everything is intertwined: the production of images, dramatization and narration as well as the creation of markets that seduce one to participate; here an expanded concept of design is tied to *Design Anthropology*.

Of course, this enumeration merely indicates some of the contexts in which the concept of design as developed here plays a role. It would be equally feasible to examine other fields and to evaluate their relevance as areas of a Design Anthropology:

- *Design Ethology*
- *Design Psychology*
- *Design Philosophy*
- *Design Archaeology*



Emily Pilloton  
DesignRevolution  
Road Show 2010/  
Cynthia Smith,  
Design for the  
other 90%, 2010



Friedrich von Borries,  
Klimakapseln, 2010/  
Evelyne Jouanno, Emergency  
Biennale, © 2005

**Book 4** is devoted to the various production programmes that, from a Design Anthropology perspective, can be understood as *complex anthropotechnical design programmes* of 'designing'. The titles of Clusters IX and X, in contrast to the previous cluster titles, point to design as a process form. As in Book 1, reference is made to an infinite list. In "Designing Technologies" and "Designing the In/Visible", examples are introduced that belong to the (auto)poietic processes of 'designing', such as 'programming', 'recognizing', 'deconstructing', 'masking', 'communicating', 'spacing', etc. in spaces, spheres and zones. The examples of 'designing' can be continued ad infinitum; the list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Analogous to the category created by Martina Löw in her volume *Raumsoziologie* in 2001, 'spacing' and 'spacing processes', 'designing' and 'designing processes' are understood to be negotiations between objects and protagonists that lead to syntheses. Thus the concept of designing completes the concept of spacing because spatial syntheses are generally also design syntheses.

In the symposium "Making, Crafting, Designing" organized in February 2011 by Philip Ursprung (also an author in this volume), the thesis was postulated that human activities can be verified as design activities. This was formulated as follows:

*As a result, the notion of what constitutes design is narrowed to concern only 'designed objects', while the overall view, which concerns the process of making, is extended to include intended and unintended artifacts. This will raise important questions for the role of design in human life. Design has been described as "the conscious and intuitive effort to impose meaningful order" (Victor Papanek). In this sense, most human activities can be viewed as design activities. Yet there are various ways in which human production has been described, and thus we would like to ask how design differs from making, crafting, or planning. Is design a special form of activity that requires distinct cognitive and/or cultural prerequisites? Or may all types of human making and doing be described as design? Furthermore, we might ask about the role these activities play in defining who we are: do we make ourselves by making things? And what happens when we start making ourselves?<sup>16</sup>*

This symposium also established guidelines for 'designing processes' as we convey them here and as we place them in the context of the empirical cultural sciences.

In "Designing Technologies", engineering and IT-specific fields of knowledge are less at issue; instead, the focus is set on complex design and self-design programs that are

concretely termed 'Programming Intelligence', 'Artificial Intelligence' and 'Deconstructing Intelligence'. In this case, wars, machine controlling and technological accidents are the precursors to film, robotics and computer games. In the meantime, science has been interested in the complex shaping of artificial worlds as they are created with the help of motion capture and performance capture in 3D animations. Films such as *Avatar* are just as relevant as animations of life on Mars in the future. Information, data and programs create intelligent representations that serve humans either as an interface, plug-in or hybrid and thus have a strong relationship with semioses, mythologies and the production of meaning, i.e., with an expanded concept of design.

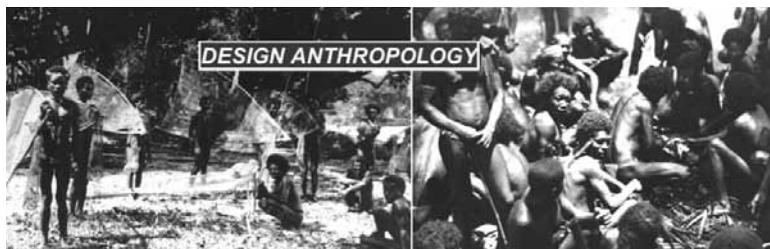
Visual representations and surfaces simultaneously assume the absence of an author and the invisibility and concealment of construction plans. Cluster X discusses aisthesis, the perception of an *Imago Dei* and the emanation of what cannot be represented, for which representations of simulacra and symbols stand. The strong mystical character of invisibility and absence, and the conveyance of invisibility and absence as negative representations onto political, social and economic systems are examined under the title *Designing the In/Visible*. The contributors to this chapter give an impressive demonstration of how the power of the imaginary is staged as the power of numinosity and can be deployed as violence in political contexts. The unseen, invisible and appearance (delusion) are all media of transmission for the blueprints of an invisible spirit: it is called *sovereignty* in politics and God in the mystic realm.

The fields of effect of complex anthropotechnical designing processes result from both Clusters IX and X of Book 4:

- **Designing Technologies**
- **Designing the In/Visible**

Once again, this enumeration is of course not exhaustive. Other fields may be relevant to a Design Anthropology programme on the basis of the concept of design developed here:

- *Designing Resonances and Atmospheres*
- *Designing Spaces and Dwellings*
- *Designing Languages and Narratives*



Bronislaw  
Malinowski:  
Anthropological  
Fieldwork

In **Book 5** and Cluster XI within it, critical design practices and design interventions by leading designers are presented. Design disciplines that are the focus of the design sciences—namely industrial design, urban design, IT design, application design or emotional design—are part of a lifestyle and marketing world that cannot be sustained without advertising design, media design, trend design and ergonomic design. If practising designers, i.e. experts in these fields, wish to take up a critical view of the one-dimensionality of design science and the ideologization of the concept of design in industry and IT, they must switch sides and thus switch perspective on their own ‘making, crafting and designing’. The designers (and their projects) presented in this cluster have understood this and practically convey design criticism via critical design in(ter)ventions. This cluster is named

#### • Critical Design In(ter)vention/Design Critique

The discursive provenance of critical design is diverse and spans cultures and generations, with origins in post-war Germany and post-war America. The critical observers of the façade of an economic miracle—the result of economic shock doctrine in post-war Germany—were on the side of the revolts and revolutions of the generation of 1968.

In “anti-design”, Estonian activist and producer Kalle Lasn, founder of the Adbusters movement in the USA, wrote an enduring anti-consumerist manifesto that went global. In the 1970s, the German philosopher Wolfgang Fritz Haug wrote a paper against the liberalized façade of post-war Germany’s economic miracle that was critical of consumption; it remains a groundbreaking work for critical designers and design critics.

Practical examples of participatory design in the Slovenian architect and artist Marjetica Potrč’s work, socially responsible design in the American designer and curator Cynthia E. Smith’s project, examples of ‘destroy design’, poverty design, but also cynical and critical statements in the American artist Lisa Kirk’s ‘design revolution’ project, as well as examples of participatory critique in the German architect and curator Markus Miessen’s contribution or in those by the American cultural critic, activist and blogger Brian Holmes...these all set limits to what Mateo Kries calls “total design”.

Solutions, models for the future and visions are being called for, but without a belief in progress and in the consciousness of the complex damage to the environment and social organs that accompany neoliberal design trends. The United\_Bottle Group shows an impressive and humorous recycling model that has become an example for others. In this volume, we have a total of 97 positions on *Design Anthropology* arranged in five

Cultural Knowledge/  
Knowledge of Cultures



books and 11 clusters. Of these positions, more than three dozen are visual essays and photo series that interrupt the visual discourse in the text and theory sections. The visual essays are in most cases double contributions with comments. The commentary is not meant to be an independent position, but rather an augmentation of the visual essays. This creates a rhythm between discourses of theory and images.

#### 5. PERSPECTIVE

“*Dasein is Design*”: Henk Oosterling, Dutch philosopher and design theoretician, proposes this as a thesis and thus raises the concept of design to an anthropological constant. Had Niklas Luhmann read Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt,<sup>17</sup> he would have certainly termed his social and societal systems design systems. Sociologists who work as entrepreneurs in business do this as a matter of course, referring to business performance and of corporate design, by which they mean—in the first instance and above all—sales and consumer strategies.

The performance of a business is determined by its sociological context of design, its system design, that is, the efficient regulation between media (propaganda), image and emotions (clients). The enormous success of profit-oriented systems’ global marketing is established precisely here: in the synchronization of *big* business with knowledge derived from behavioural biology and behavioural sociology, ethology or anthropology. The result of the conditioning of intercollective feelings and needs is established in the neurosemantic strategies of marketing design, atmosphere design, emotional design... in short, in intelligible *design rhetoric*.

Biological behavioural systems have always reacted towards images and signs, as well as having acted in signs and images. Mimicry is a creative sociological survival tactic, in the way that a green aphid amongst others of its kind will remain green if it wants to survive. Social systems function in a similar way in political contexts; they also declare their affiliations via colours or images.

Deception, fake signals, seduction, threats, distractions, etc. are unthinkable without designs, without the effective placement and order of signs, symbols, images, colours and gestures. Seen ethologically, semiotic orders and stagings embody design strategies for social and political survival. So when we speak of social behaviour, behavioural theory, mobility, migration and flexibility, of communication and exchange, then we are speaking about sociological subjects and, at the same time, about *design anthropological* subjects.

Social Sculpture /  
Crowds



Social Sculpture / Dérive  
All slides © Yana Milev

We have been living in a design society for quite a long time; this is one of the basic theses of Mateo Kries' book *Total Design*, which initiates a debate that is not just focused on design as a leading social ideology, but also on the question of how we all want to live in the future. He makes a plea for a radical new direction for the concept of design oriented towards the truly pressing questions of our time, for the creation of a real design policy and for more public discussion about design—and for the bravery to reject the coercion of form in daily life.

The reason that social theory today can hardly cope with *design overkill* using the conventional weapons of theory is related to the fact that *cognitive capitalism* has completely absorbed precisely the potential of singular communication, speech between people and masses, on a de-sign level, on the level of signs and symbols. The seductive power of a neoliberal hegemony in, for example, the staging power of ad designs and marketing can hardly be neutralized or surpassed on the creative level. Before academia can even get to work, *creative industries* are supposed to clear up the phenomena that transform potential enemies (critics) into potential clients. Here, the so-called design sciences can be seen to be complicit with liberalized universities (the Bologna Process) and industry-friendly think-tanks, instead of taking on the role of enlightening society on the level of culture, society and the humanities.

Conversely, the conventional methodological weapons of theory creation do not suffice from a cultural theoretical and sociological perspective when considering design issues in social and societal contexts. Other academic departments surrender without a fight and cede responsibility to the design sciences. The globalizing power of design hegemonies currently demands confrontation with a critical *design sociology*, Design Anthropology and *design philosophy*! The objective of this confrontation culminates in questions regarding a future community (Giorgio Agamben). Various tendencies run in the direction of this culmination, as seen in the cases of Peter Sloterdijk (*You Must Change Your Life*), Zygmunt Bauman (*Community*), Slavoj Žižek or Jean-Luc Nancy. This question can hardly be answered without an expanded concept of design and without a future-oriented Design Anthropology.

Our attention is directed towards giving prognoses, investigating, verifying and describing the new possibilities, spatial perceptions, atmospheric perceptions, orientations in social and political fields, identification and affiliations, etc., in the expanded context of D.A. (*Design Anthropology*).

The volume *D.A. – A transdisciplinary Handbook of Design Anthropology*, published in English by the international academic publishing house Peter Lang, simultaneously

formally initiates the research platform of the same name that Yana Milev founded in the course of her habilitation. This volume will form the basis for a curriculum on the subject in the structure given here (five books, 11 clusters, block structure per cluster); research emphases for conferences and applied projects will follow with the partners involved in this anthology.

I would like to express my thanks to all the authors from different disciplines and practices who have contributed to shaping and validating the multi-layered and networked image of an enlightened and contemporary Design Anthropology.

Yana Milev, February 2013

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*Yana Milev*

## Cluster I: Design Culture

In reference to an infinite list, Cluster I — titled Design Culture — demonstrates which forms of culture belong to a temporary design culture. The character of a list is emphasized by this cluster's lack of an A-B-C block structure; instead, this has been abandoned for an alphabetical series. Thus it is suggested that the listing of cultural forms as design cultures can have a lexical character.

A as in 'Agent-Network Culture as Design Culture' with an article by Tom Holert  
 B as in 'Branding Culture as Design Culture'  
 C as in 'Counter Culture as Design Culture' with an article by Ulf Wuggenig  
 D as in 'Disaster Culture as Design Culture' with an article by Jean Baudrillard  
 E as in 'Engine Culture as Design Culture'  
 F as in 'Financial Culture as Design Culture'  
 G as in 'Global Culture as Design Culture' with an article by Evert Ypma

The attempt at an alphabetical list then ends, with a few gaps, with U as in 'Urban Culture as Design Culture' with an article by Elisabeth Blum, and V as in 'Visual Culture as Design Culture' with an article by Birgit Richard.

At this point I would like to draw attention to the book that gave this cluster direction: *The Visual Culture Reader* by Nicholas Mirzoeff, published in 1998 by Routledge, London. It collects important positions on visual culture, from Irit Rogoff to Jean Baudrillard, Roland Barthes to Donna Haraway. I would also like to point to Irit Rogoff's publications, such as *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (2000), as well as a more recent essay by Guy Julier, "From Visual Culture to Design Culture", published by MIT Press in 2005.

Cluster I enters at the beginning of a concept of Design Anthropology like an overture. The representation of design culture's multiple facets already anticipates the direction of research at the beginning of the project.

It should be mentioned here that the *Design Kulturen* project will appear as an encyclopedia with the Fink Verlag, edited by the HfG Research Institute, in 2013.

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### A: Agent (Network) Culture as Design Culture

*Tom Holert*

### C: Counter Culture as Design Culture

*Ulf Wuggenig*

### D: Disaster Culture as Design Culture

*Jean Baudrillard*

### G: Global Culture as Design Culture

*Evert Ypma*

### U: Urban Culture as Design Culture

*Elisabeth Blum*

*Elisabeth Blum (VE)*

### V: Visual Culture as Design Culture

*Birgit Richard*

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Tom Holert

## Distributed Agency, Design's Potentiality

### RITUALISTIC NEGATIVITY AND THE MATERIALISM OF THE BANAL

What could it mean to reframe, or even imagine, cultural and aesthetic practices in decidedly post-capitalist terms—that is, as embedded in and engendered by processes of globally networked solidarity, diversity, cooperation, interdependence and so forth? I would like to begin by supplementing the notion of practice with the notion of design, which may provide the discussion with an initial spin. Of course, 'design' is a contested term, and its meaning and function can differ dramatically depending on ideological claims and institutional interests. The very notion of 'design', not to mention the ideologies and machinations implied in design-driven modes of problem-solving that operate as a potential disciplining force, are most questionable. Moreover, the logic of design is being mixed and modulated to transform society in previously unknown ways. According to social theorist Michael Hardt, 'design' has become a "general name" for post-Fordist types of creative production and productive creativity, which is to say that hardly anybody can claim to be outside of design anymore.

In this view, design, which has long been bemoaned by cultural critics as the utmost symptom of the postmodernist loss of substance to surface, does have its benefits. Its contemporary ubiquity, entailing an increasingly universal competence, is linked to a historical moment when, thanks to the universal abstract machine of information technology and, in particular, the personal computer, the divisions between producers and consumers, makers and users, of designed products and processes appear to be vanishing and being replaced by new, multitasking amateur professionals and professional amateurs, such as the 'prosumer', the 'citizen designer' or the DIY design expert.

As Hardt argues, this general presence of design marks a position of great potential for the immaterial labourer, and can also indicate "a certain kind of critique and struggle that can be waged from within".<sup>1</sup> Hence, the usual rebuttal of design (and of urban design in particular) to accusations of being either merely the department of cultural production, turning useful things into desired commodities, or a top-down, masterplanning imposition of value-making schemes (justified as this rebuttal may be occasionally), also tends to freeze the critique in predictable anticapitalist stances without seeking ways of negotiating differing, deviating visions of urban and cultural production that are pursued within the practice itself.

What could be a perspective that goes beyond well-rehearsed figures of critique, namely, those accusing design and its practitioners of being complicit with capitalist commoditization and, ultimately, exploitation? Is there a way to look at contemporary culture and the neoliberal city that veers away from the only stance that seems viable and acceptable from and for a position of the radical Left: as something to be relentlessly opposed, denounced and scandalized? While there are certainly countless reasons for criticism, rejection and disgust, one may also agree with Adrian Lahoud—an architect and critic from Sydney, who maintains the (quite fantastic and tellingly-titled) blog Post-Traumatic Urbanism—in his opinion that

*Lists and examples of urban injustices like uneven development, gentrification, and zero-tolerance policing make for an appropriate corrective to the historical account of capitalist development but fall short of any transformational consequence [...] By constraining political agency to action within the confines of a given political landscape, we exclude the contours and limits of this landscape as a site for political action. The system itself must be up for grabs.*<sup>2</sup>

The relationship between micropolitics and radical politics, between, on the one hand, a *longue durée* practice of small steps, or dispersed moments of counterhegemonic resistance amounting to change, and, on the other, the single decisive act—the 'event' so eloquently evoked by thinkers such as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek—seems key. What is to be done to unchain criticism from ritualistic negativity, from being simply the 'anti-' of capitalism or neoliberalism? The current dispensation connects thinking and doing to the idea of fighting rather than overcoming, of confronting the enemy directly rather than rendering it obsolete. Similar to Badiou, Žižek and the like, neoliberalism studies, a dominant trend in various leftist quarters of the social sciences of the past decade(s), tend to understand their critical research as imposed and ordained by the stark realities of capitalism, while concealing the performativity of their critique from itself. Modes of address that entail a sense of urgency and immediacy in the face of false alternatives, scandalous inequalities and post-political wastelands of debt and ecological catastrophe perform the crisis in their own way.

To enable oneself as a researcher to imagine other realities, to avoid deterministic theorizing and bring the difference and diversity of social and economic worlds and practices to light could become the first step towards actually changing the reality. The "system itself" must be up for grabs, indeed, but its suspension may not necessarily come through the means and strategies proposed so far. Designing in and for a non- or post-capitalist world may thus have to address the system itself, which necessarily includes the system of design, but it may not be the single, revolutionary event that

unhinges the established traditions and protocols, but an ongoing, if increasingly impatient, questioning of the roles and practices to which designers are assigned.

During the history of design, statements have been publicized, again and again, that called for the independence of the profession of design and the very practice of designing (not the same thing) from the constraints of commercial interests and speculation. The 'responsibility' of the designer is and has been invoked regularly, aiming at a critical ethics and etiquette of design. "There are pursuits more worthy of our problem-solving skills", claimed the famous *First Things First Manifesto 2000*, which was drafted by thirty-three (graphic) designers, following the original *First Things First Manifesto* initiated by British designer Ken Garland in 1964. The signatories, design practitioners involved in social marketing, anticorporate and culture-jamming activities during the heyday of the early antiglobalization movement and 'No Logo' activism, proposed "a reversal of priorities in favour of more useful, lasting and democratic forms of communication—a mindshift away from product marketing and toward the exploration and production of a new kind of meaning". Though the latter phrase, "production of a new kind of meaning", alienated some commentators and signatories, the basic call for a "reversal of priorities" in the name of responsibility met with wide approval.

In the aftermath of the *First Things First Manifesto 2000*, however, a type designer working under the alias Mr Keedy remarked that "designers can make their biggest social and political impact by not designing". Mr Keedy also contended that the debate about the designer's responsibility in society should avoid moralizing black-and-white distinctions between powerless complicity and social actualization. "If you are a corporate tool, at least be a good one", he advised his colleagues.

*Everyone knows the difference between engaging and deceptive messages. If you are doing work that you feel conflicted about, however, don't kid yourself that some pro bono work or anonymous culture jamming will even the score. It doesn't, and stop pretending you're an artist, because you're not.*<sup>3</sup>

The somewhat self-deprecating admonition to accept one's own status as a 'tool' and to forget about any aspiration to have one's work considered art may also bespeak design's shared or distributed agency. Always already applied, adding value, serving external needs and responding to socioeconomic demands, design is heteronomous to the core. Despite numerous attempts to wrest it from its basic heteronomy, for example by proposing the autonomy of the 'good form', the objects and subjects, the materials

and the performances of design have always been operating within larger economic, technological and cultural networks. Conceiving design in terms of such complex interdependencies, of intermateriality and intersubjectivity, of designer-client, user-object, human-machine interfaces etc., could lead to the recognition of design's distributed agency, as a trans-subjective, interdisciplinary and ultimately diverse endeavour. "Design", architectural theorists Brian Boigon and Sanford Kwinter contended already back in 1991, "must rediscover itself as a volatile microprocess, a politicized and totally incorporated *physical* reflex, like speaking".<sup>4</sup>

Design practitioners acting responsibly would thus become subjects of reflex and response to a relocated perception of their (disowned, miniaturized, demastered) practice, consequentially displaying a certain humility in regard to their role in society and culture. Moreover, the humble acknowledgement of being nothing more than a 'tool' in the corporate machinery may also carry the implication that design is basically happening in hybrid assemblages (or networks) of human and nonhuman, of institutional and individual actors, and not in the exclusive loneliness of an imaginary designer's studio.

In order to reconsider and rearticulate the question of design's ethics, its 'responsibility in society', it might therefore be appropriate to turn design's very lack of intention and expressivity, the absence of authorship in the traditional, subjectivist sense of the term, into an asset of a politics of designing that does not waste time by marketing its good intentions and critical stances. In the era of the "orgman", who "derives a pioneering sense of creation from matching a labor cost, a time zone, and a desire to generate distinct forms of urban space", as architectural theorist Keller Easterling puts it (in words that are deliberately devoid of any self-aggrandizing illusions that designers or architects may still entertain for themselves and an audience of believers), a materialism of the banal prevails, which expands and increases with every creative act performed by investors and developers.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, accepting that 'not-designing' could thus be the most valuable contribution to the common good, the question of course remains how to act in a world marked by the aforementioned, unprecedented ubiquity of design, especially if you are a person whose profession used to be exactly that: 'design'. For in the socio-technical-capitalist networks of the globalized present, the coalescence of human and nonhuman actors, of climate and financial markets, of workforce and border control etc., amounts to a redistribution of agency as well as of responsibility.

Paraphrasing a beautiful expression by science studies scholar Andrew Pickering, one may speak of the open-ended “dance of agency”<sup>6</sup> that is design practice. Occasionally this dance becomes locked into a relatively fixed cultural choreography, providing the kind of service that is expected of design. Avoiding choreography and becoming dance (again) may be just the appropriate project for designers in the aftermath of design. This is not said in order to denigrate the position of designers as potential world-makers. Instead, it is about pointing to the very world-making—that is, performative—effects of hybrid, heterogeneous, multiagent practices such as designing, as well as of more scholarly, though also networked, undertakings such as design theory or cultural studies.

### THINKING LIKE A CRAFTSMAN

Dedicated to the ideas of libertarian communism, libcom.org is a website that pursues the “political expression of the ever-present strands of co-operation and solidarity”. In March 2009, a contributor posting under the alias ‘Kambling’ ventures the interesting thought that “the artisan” may qualify as “a rather attractive concept for a post-capitalist subject—it certainly beats the bourgeois star artist or proletarianized designer as a way of organizing creative activity”. However, Kambling continues, the concept of the artisan is at the same time “doomed as an attempt to overcome capitalism, as it can be so easily drawn back into capitalist processes of accumulation and dispossession. This is precisely the problem with a lot of autonomist (and anarchist) strategies for resistance or ‘exodus’—including some forms of anarcho-syndicalism.”<sup>7</sup> This scepticism is only too familiar by now—any candidate put forward for the new revolutionary subject will be quickly rendered inappropriate, deficient, cooptable. The reasons for such preemptive scepticism, popular even among the most hard-line autonomists, anarchists or anarcho-syndicalists, are manifold. However, a central argument for this cooptation is linked to the awe-inspiring malleability and adaptability of capitalism as such, which, when accompanied by representative democracy, helps to reduce politics “to the negotiation of private interests”, as Slavoj Žižek puts it in his discussion of what he considers to be a symptomatic proximity between contemporary biopolitical capitalism and the productivity of the multitude of networked workers toiling in the factories of ‘knowledge’ and ‘affect’.<sup>8</sup>

The ‘artisan’ evoked by Kambling, though immediately disregarded as allegedly “doomed” to fail in the face of capitalism like so many others, may be an interesting figure to reconsider here—less out of interest in revolutionary politics than in envisioning

alternate ways of organizing ‘creative activity’ to replace and/or evade capitalist modes of production. Dislocated from the hegemonic framing of capitalism, imagined as a subject acting outside of those ontologies of relentless dominance and maintained by many critical theorists of neoliberal capitalism, the ‘artisan’ may become someone whose practice may differ and deviate, as it is apparently anachronistic, inefficient, without use to powers aligned with progress and profit.

Interestingly, Kambling distinguishes the “artisan” from the “bourgeois star artist” and the “proletarianized designer”.<sup>9</sup>

However, one may also imagine these distinct figures aligning—with each other and with others beyond themselves. These alignments or assemblages would depend on an ability and willingness to recognize and accept difference and diversity, not only in one’s own social surroundings, but also within oneself as a subject. To acknowledge the fact that one may simultaneously inhabit more than one identity leads almost inevitably to cooperation with others that would go beyond the model of the homogeneous community and enter the ontology of hybrid collectives.

But, in *Capital*, Karl Marx is highly sceptical of ‘cooperation’ as a way out of capitalism: “Cooperation ever constitutes the fundamental form of the capitalist mode of production”.<sup>10</sup> Its power is

*developed gratuitously whenever the workmen are placed under given conditions and it is capital that places them under such conditions. Because this power costs capital nothing, and because, on the other hand, the laborer himself does not develop it before his labor belongs to capital, it appears as a power with which capital is endowed by Nature—a productive power that is immanent in capital.*<sup>11</sup>

The very power of cooperation that Marx located at the centre of the capitalist project has become the keystone of theories of post-Fordism, which have observed that the value-increasing function of cooperation has become increasingly tangible in a system based on an essential superfluity of labour and the permanence of unemployment, a system that simultaneously captures and exploits the very ‘power’ of non-labour-based communality and communication. “Since social cooperation precedes and exceeds the work process, post-Fordist labor is always also, hidden labor”, as the philosopher Paolo Virno wrote in his 2004 book, *A Grammar of the Multitude*. Defining hidden labour as “non-remunerated life” in the very “production time” of post-Fordism that exceeds “labor

time",<sup>12</sup> Virno also provides an opportunity to discuss unaccounted, unpaid labour—exploitable and valorized by capital as it is—as a realm of potential freedom and disobedience. Indeed, the politics of cooperation and communication (which include affective labour) operate at the heart of the post-operaist project, and the mingled and sometimes dirty practices of such cooperation between different factions of contemporary labourers are illustrated by one of the many examples of the hidden labour of artisanry in sociologist Richard Sennett's book *The Craftsman* (2008). Reflecting on the debilitating split between head and hand that occurred when architects and designers began to use computer-aided design (CAD) programs, Sennett postulates the need "to think like craftsmen in making good use of technology" and to consider the "sharp social edge" of such thinking. Thinking like craftsmen could entail a certain kind of work that one executes after the designers have left the building. Particularly interested in the parking garages of Atlanta's Peachtree Center, Sennett noticed a specific, inconspicuous kind of post-factum cooperation between designers and artisans/craftsmen:

*A standardized bumper had been installed at the end of each car stall. It looked sleek, but the lower edge of each bumper was sharp metal, liable to scratch cars or calves. Some bumpers, though, had been turned back, on site, for safety. The irregularity of the turning showed that the job had been done manually, the steel smoothed and rounded wherever it might be unsafe to touch; the craftsman had thought for the architect.<sup>13</sup>*

The labour of modifying and repairing the work of others is certainly not groundbreaking in terms of anticapitalist struggle per se. However, the physical skills, the attitude of care and circumspection, the inscription of a hand that performs 'responsible' gestures and so forth, all engender a shared authorship—in this case a cooperation between the absent architect's and/or construction company's work and the subsequent, careful labour of detecting and correcting the building's design problems. This cooperation is neither contractually negotiated nor socially expected; instead, it results from a specific situation in which a problem called for a solution. It is inseparable from local conditions and constraints, and should not be taken as a general model for action. Yet, on the other hand, it is intriguing, as it displays relationalities within material-social practices that usually remain unnoticed, and whose resourcefulness is thus overlooked.

In some respects, Sennett's concept of 'thinking like craftsmen' resembles a definition of 'design' that science studies scholar and actor/network theorist Bruno Latour introduced the same year that *The Craftsman* was published. Speaking in 2008 at a conference held by the Design History Society in Cornwall, Latour differentiated 'design' from the concepts of building or constructing. The process of designing, according to Latour,

is marked by a certain semantic modesty—it is never foundational, always re-design, and hence "post-Promethean". Latour ventured that "the whole fabric of our earthly existence has to be redesigned in excruciating details" and, as a consequence of such urgency, "we are obviously entering into a completely new political territory".<sup>14</sup>

His talk seemed to respond to initiatives calling for 'ethical design', such as the Designers Accord, a "global coalition of designers, educators, and business leaders, working together to create positive environmental and social impact", founded in March 2008 ([www.designersaccord.org](http://www.designersaccord.org)). The concept of design put forward by Latour, however, aims at a kind of 'impact' that is almost intangible. For him, design is a post-eventual, post-emptive practice of remedy and restoration. He thus emphasizes the dimension of (manual, technical) abilities, of 'skills', which suggests a more cautious and precautionary (not directly tied to making and producing) engagement with problems on an increasingly larger scale (as with climate change). Then, too, design as a practice that engenders meaning and calls for interpretation tends to transform objects into things—irreducible to their status as facts or matter, being instead inhabited by causes, issues and, more generally, semiotic capacities. According to Latour, design is thus inconceivable without an ethical dimension, without the distinction between good design and bad design—which also always renders design negotiable and controvertible.<sup>15</sup>

## 'WEAK THEORY'

Such a notion of a politics and an ethics of design, informed by a specific, if slightly idiosyncratic idea of design as a modest and moderating practice that follows rather than leads, can now be linked to another project that envisions a "politics of (economic) possibility". In an elaborate argument that draws on a pioneering spirit of "disclosing new worlds" rather than flocking to the same subject position, Katharine Gibson and Julie Graham, two feminist economic geographers who, until Graham's recent death, have collaborated under the penname JK Gibson-Graham, take an approach that may initially appear overly optimistic in its belief that reality can actually be changed by thinking it up differently. This belief in the power of alternative ontologies, however, is well-founded in fieldwork and action research into diverse, noncapitalist economies of community realized in places such as the Pioneer Village in Massachusetts, the Asian Migrant Centre in Hong Kong, and the Latrobe Valley in Australia. They seem to know what they are talking about when they refer to the "cultivation of subjects" for "community enterprises and initiatives" of postcapitalist "new commons".<sup>16</sup> And as perplexing

as this conflation of the positions of the researcher and the cultivator of subjects (who are capable of affording an understanding and, even more, an enjoyment of difference, as well as “new ways of ‘being together’”) may be, it is exactly this understanding of research as socially performative and transformative that underlies their theoretical and critical project.

In many respects, JK Gibson-Graham's epistemological attitude resembles the self-perception of many designers, who consider their practice both to be driven by theories about culture, society and subjectivity and to entail direct, material, transformative effects on people's lives. However, JK Gibson-Graham's writings may be looked at particularly by those designers who are less interested in having their given self-image as socially responsible and transformative practitioners supported, than in pursuing an unsettling, disconcerting and disarticulating discourse on practices involving communities.

JK Gibson-Graham's books, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)* (1996) and *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006), are organized around what they call “techniques of ontological reframing (to produce the ground of possibility), rereading (to uncover or excavate the possible), and creativity (to generate actual possibilities where none formerly existed).”<sup>17</sup> JK Gibson-Graham base their ideas, which are informed by, among other schools of thought, feminist poststructuralism and queer theory, on strong notions of un-thinking (avoiding notions such as economic determinism), anti-essentialism (avoiding any understanding of causality), anti-universalism and anti-structure, all in order to conceptualize “contingent relationships” that replace “invariant logics”. By way of this substitution, “the economy loses its character as an asocial body in lawful motion and instead becomes a space of recognition and negotiation”.

JK Gibson-Graham use words that denote a deliberate weakness, pliability and openness, such as “underlaboring”, and they intensely advocate a tolerance of “not-knowing”. Contingency, difference and differentiation lie at the core of their thinking, as do the empiricism and materialism of actor-network theories and object-oriented ontologies that offer a means of describing and thinking through the unfolding logic within an object as a thing, but also as “a very concrete process of eventuation, pathdependent and nonlinear”, thereby deprivileging global systems under the auspices of emergence and becoming. As they put it, “With the aim of transforming ‘impossible into possible objects,’ reading for absences excavates what has been actively suppressed or excluded, calling into question the marginalization and ‘non-credibility’ of the nondominant.”

Underscoring the “always political process of creating the new”, JK Gibson-Graham consider politics to be “a process of transformation instituted by taking decisions on an ultimately undecidable terrain”—and their own thought process as “starting in the space of nonbeing that is the wellspring of becoming”; it is here that they discover the “space of politics” and its “shadowy denizens”—the “subject” and “place”. JK Gibson-Graham are not naive, however, when it comes to theorizing the dynamics of subjection, the question of “how to understand the subject as both powerfully constituted and constrained by dominant discourses, yet also available to other possibilities of becoming”. But they call for an acknowledgement of the necessity to withdraw from a “traditional [leftist] paranoid style of theorizing” that also brings about changes in the effects that give rise to social transformation and communal becoming, a “wonder as awareness of and delight of otherness” combined with a “growing recognition that the other is what makes self possible”.

This bewildering and enjoyable ‘recognition’ drives JK Gibson-Graham's research, and their pedagogical vision of a postcapitalist politics is inseparable from a belief in the possibility of “cultivating subjects”—citizens for a different, community-based, cooperative economy. And in contradistinction to theorists such as Žižek or Badiou, JK Gibson-Graham actually speak of individual agency, of specific persons whose subjectivities have registered the experiences of community economies and their particular potentiality, embracing the weakness and micrological scale of such fieldwork, also in terms of theory.

Writing in the vein of queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, JK Gibson-Graham suggest that:

*Weak theory can be strong politics—it opens up social options that would be inaccessible to a theorist intent on eliminating surprise (by exploring the unknown rather than extending and confirming the known). It widens the affective possibilities of politics (who knows what emotions will arise in an experimental, only partly mapped space?) and allows for the possibility of maximizing positive affect (something we all want to do, which means that participation in politics would not be limited to the stoical cadre of the already politicized).*

Although JK Gibson-Graham do not address the realm of culture and cultural production explicitly, their thinking remains relevant to the question of how design can be approached within the scope of a postcapitalist project. Even if aspects of their discourse appear familiar in the context of theories pertaining to art and to cultural production in general—and may therefore lack the scandalizing or provocative edge they



purportedly have in the disciplines of economics and geography—even savvy readers trained in narratives of ‘becoming’ should gain a sense of how politics can be framed differently with regard to predominant ‘progressive’ discourses of radical-democratic or neo-Maoist persuasion. Moreover, JK Gibson-Graham’s attention to contingency and agency, to singularity and a “place-based politics of subjectivation” can be enormously helpful in providing a framework for approaching cooperative cultural production in a different way—as a politics that boldly centres on the local and the particular without falling victim to a retrograde romanticism of the homogenous community or the ‘neighbourhood’.

As much as JK Gibson-Graham are critically aware of the governmentality of the cooperative found in the ‘third way’ politics of 1990s neoliberalism (with its rhetoric of ‘trust’, ‘mutual obligation’, ‘reciprocity’), so should one be aware of the misuses of terms such as ‘participation’ in urban government and design discourses. However, the capacity for JK Gibson-Graham’s path-dependent, de-disciplining and place-specific methodology to be extended towards cultural (discursive and material) practices of doing—such as design and craftsmanship (conceived roughly along the lines of Sennett or Latour)—make them vital for articulating a means of going beyond the failure of grand designs, demonstrated so drastically by the current crisis of large-scale state and economic institutions. Given that everyone is affected—if to different degrees (but much too often disastrously)—by the neoliberal abolition of everything, it appears that small-scale endeavours of solidarity, however networked, which work around the disciplining effects of capital (and of anticapitalist politics as well), developing humble ways of altering and improving inherited designs, are not the worst option available at the moment.

## PARTICIPATION?

What would be necessary to transform ‘design’ into a discipline of un-disciplinary moves and motions, into a practice of possibility and an articulation of becoming? At the occasion of *Design and Human Values*, the legendary 1957 Aspen Design Conference, the American designer Richard Latham interrogated the ideas that designers cater to and the kind of responsibility they take:

*As designers, we may properly assume responsibility for goodness and badness in the work we create; we are called upon, and entitled, to make value decisions. We are also entitled to a pioneering spirit and a desire to see things change for the better; we need not assume that what is is always inevitable or for the best. I believe that change, even*

*for its own sake, can be a good thing. But I contend that, before we dare assume this right to judge and shape other people’s values, we had better first examine our own values and our own motives for wanting to exercise this control over the lives of others [...] We designers [...] can begin to build a meaningful aesthetic culture if we are willing to prepare ourselves for a new learning experience, and we cannot learn unless we participate.*<sup>18</sup>

Unless one simply dismisses these lines as old-school navel-gazing or as the exhortative sophistry of someone who made a good living from the value systems of the design trade, the statement conveys a surprising desire to open the profession to the uncertainties and challenges of a becoming. Terms such as ‘change’ and ‘learning experience’ can be read as a purposeful destabilization of the social and aesthetic contracts of the design profession. Latham’s punch line, “we cannot learn unless we participate”, certainly suggested, in 1957, a paradigmatic reorientation of the role and position expected of the future designer. Interestingly, participation was not yet considered integral to a designer’s or planner’s role, being instead only a means of improving knowledge and experience: in order to learn, one has to take part. Yet the question remains: who is invited to participate and who is inviting them? The desire to participate must not necessarily meet with recognition by others. You may ask whether you are allowed, but the question can be refuted. An inherent right to participate cannot be taken for granted by the designer, much less the nonexpert citizen. Moreover, the question has to be asked: to what extent do ‘participation’ and the programmes and methodologies affiliated with this concept need to be revised and adapted, considering the ideas about distributed agency and diverse economies put forward in this essay? The communities addressed by designers should be conceived as assemblies where the most heterogeneous actors and constituencies gather, whose readiness and willingness to become subjects of interpellations to ‘participate’ may differ dramatically. Hence, design can only be understood as an activity situated in an arena where ‘participation’, if at all, is happening under the condition of competition and conflict. Instead of glossing over social, cultural and economic inequalities, design, in its microprocessual capacity to engage with the local and the particular, is bent to acknowledge difference—not as distinction, but as struggle. And one issue such struggle centres on would be the question of design’s ‘responsibility’ in the face of its own distributed agency.

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Ulf Wuggenig

## The Return of the Plague of Ornaments

### FROM GRAFFITI TO STREET ART

How would Adolf Loos have responded to phenomena like American graffiti, tattoos as fashion or the street art of our times? In his famous manifesto against the “ornament disease”, he writes with the voice of a prophet:

*We have outgrown ornament; we have fought our way through to freedom from ornament. See, the time is nigh, fulfillment awaits us. Soon the streets of the city will glisten like white walls. Like Zion, the holy city, the capital of heaven. Then fulfillment will be come. [...] The enormous damage and devastation caused in aesthetic development by the revival of ornament would be easily made light of, for no one, not even the power of the state, can halt mankind's evolution. It can only be delayed.<sup>1</sup>*

Loos' pamphlet was directed not least against the innovation of Art Nouveau. He did not hesitate to denounce the “barbarian taste” of these ‘outsiders’: “The modern man who tattoos himself is a criminal or degenerate”.<sup>2</sup> Loos projected this bad taste of ‘criminals’ onto hedonistic varieties of bourgeois art and avant-garde design. With such a polemic, he exemplifies the negatively determined dispositions of taste that have been brought into play from Nietzsche to Bourdieu, since “in matters of taste, more than anywhere else, all determination is negation; and tastes are perhaps first and foremost distastes”.<sup>3</sup>

The critics of mass culture and the culture industry, such as Clement Greenberg, Theodor Adorno and Dwight Macdonald, continued Loos' polemic.<sup>4</sup> They expanded it to decor, kitsch (including art-based kitsch for elites), design and, especially, middle-brow culture in general. Only under conditions of postmodernism, under the “logic of late capitalism” (Jameson), did the partial rehabilitation of aesthetic populism occur.<sup>5</sup>

Almost a century after the publication of “Ornament and Crime”, New York's Museum of Modern Art broached this issue in an encompassing manner. At this former stronghold of Modernism, leading art historians and critics delivered their opinions on the topic in a catalogue for the exhibition *High and Low*, discussing both Art Nouveau and phenomena of popular culture such as advertising, cartoons, comics and graffiti.<sup>6</sup>



Blu, Berlin Kreuzberg,  
Cuvrystrasse, May 2011,  
photo © Ulf Wuggenig

This had happened already, after a certain time lag, with the graffiti wave, which had spread around New York City in the 1970s. While Jean Baudrillard glorified it as a “revolt of signs”, Nathan Glazer saw it as nothing other than a symptom of the anomie of NYC.<sup>7</sup> The moral panic, which he and other moral entrepreneurs fuelled, paved the way for the ‘zero-tolerance policy’ against the subculture of writers.

In their discussions, the art historians of the MoMA established connections between graffiti and Art Nouveau at their much-preferred analytical level of the world of signs. In this way, Adam Gopnik was able to draw an immediate connection between Art Nouveau and ‘American graffiti’, without considering the different socio-cultural backgrounds of the producers and recipients. However, he did not have in mind the Vienna Secession, against which Loos fought, but the ‘Catalan Modernism’ of Antonio Gaudí.

In his discussion of graffiti, Gopnik was not referring to simple tags, but rather to the ‘pieces’ of New York ‘muralists’.<sup>8</sup> These graffiti were not simply stylized signatures that had been created with minimal effort, but elaborate, colourful ‘pieces’. Their design was not spontaneous, but had been prepared indoors. They culminated in the ‘wild style’, to which the authors of the MoMA attested a certain “calligraphic originality”.

Graffiti is nowadays considered one of the most remarkable cultural inventions of that period. Its musealization in exhibitions such as “Born in the Street” (2009) at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain in Paris or “Art in the Streets” (2011) at The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles testifies to this.<sup>9</sup>

Together with stencil graffiti, it is possible to see in graffiti writing one of the historical roots of the public art that is today called ‘street art’. In this context, Blek Le Rat, an architect and native of the Parisian bourgeoisie, has to be especially foregrounded as one of the pioneers of street art.

Graffiti, as a form of the production of visual signs, usually falls into the category of ‘uncommissioned art’ or ‘painting without permission’.<sup>10</sup> Insofar as it operates without request or authorization, it distinguishes itself both from ‘community art’ and from ‘corporate art’, which is produced at the behest of companies. Nevertheless, commissioned art with a graffiti or street art aesthetics is meanwhile no longer a rarity, with commissions granted by museums, municipalities and companies. Under conditions of cognitive capitalism,<sup>11</sup> a certain type of company has realized since the 1990s that graffiti are not at all “empty signifiers” that resist “every interpretation and every connotation”, as Baudrillard still believed in 1976.<sup>12</sup>



Blu, Prague, New Town (Nové Město), December 2008, photo Matej Bat'ha, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported

Rather, the use of graffiti and street art allows companies to create an image that is in tune with youth:

*What was once a rebellious expression of youth disaffection has, it seems, gone corporate. Major commercial players have taken various approaches, from high-visibility connections with the outlaw art [...] to more low-profile acts of 'guerrilla' marketing. Companies [...] have used a loose association with graffiti to inject a shot of transgressive cool into their products. [...] For companies and 'aspirational' consumers alike, graffiti signifies creativity and risk.<sup>13</sup>*

In this way, graffiti even became classified as one of the standard techniques of advanced marketing strategies, beside flyposting and wheatpasting.<sup>14</sup>

Graffiti's first steps in the commercial world had been taken earlier. In the early 1980s, illegal graffiti emigrated from the streets and subways into the galleries of the artistic field. For this reason, it became necessary to distinguish between 'graffiti' and 'graffiti art'.<sup>15</sup> Graffiti art encompasses, on the one hand, the work of genuine graffiti writers—who apply their signs on marketable canvas—and, on the other hand, also gallery artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring or Kenny Scharf. Some of these artists look back to their own past as writers, having partly worked with graffiti aesthetics themselves or exhibited in the same galleries as graffiti writers such as Lee Quinones, Dondi White, Futura 2000, A-one or Fab Five Freddy. Fashion Moda in the South Bronx and the Fun Gallery in the East Village were the most important of these sites.<sup>16</sup>

The attempt to integrate graffiti artists of the first type ended in an impasse. After the 1983 exhibition "Post Graffiti" at Sidney Janis (a leading New York gallery that was involved in the establishment of Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art), the writers found themselves largely excluded from the centre of the artistic field. A major reason was that streets and the public space generally provide a much more interesting context for graffiti aesthetics than the white cube of a gallery. All the connotations of freedom, risk and anarchy dissolve in the latter environment. If the appeal of this aesthetics is also based on its conditions of production—such as illegality, courage or enforced speed of production—then it is precisely this distinctive difference from conventional visual production that is lost. Another problem consisted in the habitual dispositions of the writers, which were incompatible with the art field.<sup>17</sup>

Insofar as writers were interested in producing graffiti art, rather than graffiti, they lacked the discursive framework that is necessary for the validation of aesthetic value. Graffiti did not emerge in an "atmosphere of theory",<sup>18</sup> which began increasingly to define the discourse of contemporary art from the 1960s onwards. There were no important critics who worked on the history and tradition of graffiti or its specific visual characteristics. This deficit reflected the weak cultural and social capital of the writer scene and the problem that it was not possible in this era, before the internet, to build a viable support structure beyond the gallery world.

Street art enjoyed much greater hype, and it was interpreted as the historical successor of graffiti without much ado. When compared to the variety of media in graffiti and graffiti art, this artistic movement appears as a primarily figurative visual culture in the tradition of pre-modernist forms of painting and drawing. More rapidly than in the case of graffiti, it underwent a differentiation between a commercially disinterested or even commercially aversive production of signs on the street and artistic works that were aimed at distribution in galleries and auction houses.

In this context, one should not forget to mention the integration since the late 1970s of the writer scene into Hip Hop culture, which was consequential for the diffusion of graffiti. In fact, the image thus became the fourth main element of this culture—alongside language, music and dance—as part of a synthesis of rap, DJ techniques, break dance and graffiti. Graffiti, in turn, owes its international diffusion to the globalization of this media-produced and -diffused youth culture,<sup>19</sup> through photo documentation, early video clips (e.g. "Rapture" by Blondie, 1981, or "Buffalo Gals" by Malcolm McLaren, 1982) and cult movies (e.g. *Wildstyle* by Charlie Ahearn, 1983, or *Beet Street* by Stan Lathan, 1984). Hip Hop subculture, which became integrated into graffiti aesthetics, stands out from other popular and youth cultures, not only because of its longevity, but also on account of the extensive activation that it requires by all parties involved. The new computer technology, which made image design and design in general more accessible, as well as the internet, which the writer scene had used since 1994, contributed significantly to expand the base of operations of graffiti and street art. A vast number of fora, websites and blogs emerged that were dedicated to the mediation of graffiti and street art. Similar to the numerous fanzines, magazines and catalogues in these scenes, they were characterized by a wealth of images and a poverty of text.

There are aesthetic correspondences between the world of signs of street art and the signs and 'characters' of comics and tattoos, which can hardly be overlooked. For this

reason, it is not too difficult to answer the question brought up at the beginning of this essay about how Adolf Loos would have reacted to this form of visual production. And it should be also relatively easy to find authors who draw on polemical exaggerations in symbolic classification struggles revolving around street art.

An obvious character in this regard is Jonathan Jones, a Turner Prize judge and *Guardian* art critic. From the pen of this priestly defender of art-art, one can read the following about graffiti, street art and Banksy (the “prankster” of the genre, who became a superstar on the internet and in the journalistic field, with quite remarkable auction successes, yet rather modest recognition in the art field):

*Banksy's single-note jokes and don't-frighten-the-horses subversiveness are easily graspable, offering a headline-friendly, visual equivalent of a one-liner.*<sup>20</sup>

*He is a background artist, as in background music: like all graffiti, he is essentially an accompaniment to other activities.*<sup>21</sup>

*Cy Twombly is the only graffiti artist I care about. Twombly is the thinking person's Banksy.*<sup>22</sup>

*Banksy is no longer hot. [...] You live by the media, you die by the media.*<sup>23</sup>

These and similar polemical points against popular or ‘social art’ were launched by Jones year after year.

At the time he was writing “Ornament and Crime”, a dandy like Loos, who was rich in cultural capital but poor in economic assets, belonged to the artistic bohème, located in the lower-left quadrant of the art field in Bourdieu's sense.<sup>24</sup> His cathartic thesis can easily be recognized as position-bound position taking. It appears characteristic for the type of upwardly-mobile, dominated agent in fields of cultural production. This type tends to attack the establishment and arrivistes in the field in the name of purity from corruption and degeneration, and to accuse rivals of orienting themselves by out-dated and backward-looking principles.

The ascetic Modernism that Loos represented and its later theoretical radicalization are already history. Regarding aesthetic ‘others’, Loos neither knew the powerful, visually dominated culture industry, nor could he have been familiar with the worlds of signs of



Paris, Boulevard Raspail, in front of Fondation Cartier at the time of the “Born in the Streets” exhibition, September 2009, photo © Elke Kroemer

youth cultures, which seek to distinguish themselves from each other and from mainstream culture through style.<sup>25</sup> From a prognostic point of view, Loos' prophecy was not self-fulfilling. He was simply wrong in his generalizing assumption that there is a cultural tendency towards purification and a quasi-natural move away from ornament and floral motifs. In fact, after a purist phase, characterized by the International Style in architecture and by abstraction in painting, there was a revival of the ornament under conditions of postmodernism in architecture, art and design. Regarding the more popular wings of the latter, graffiti and street art can undoubtedly be attributed to it.

## GRAFFITI AND STREET ART IN THE CULTURAL MATRIX

A cultural domain like science is, according to widespread belief, characterized by the fact that expert opinion (peer review) is of central importance for the evaluation of output. It can be distinguished from fields of cultural production, in which experts play an important role, but in which the general public can partially co-decide the acceptance of innovations, especially the material rewards for them. One of these fields is visual art. Because of the relative power of consumers (collectors and buyers), Diane Crane classifies it as a semi-independent reward system, in contrast to the independent reward system of, for example, basic science.<sup>26</sup>

For a sociological distinction between high and popular culture, the simple criterion of peer versus lay ratings is not sufficient. This can be illustrated by the example of graffiti writing:

*Despite all of its destructive tendencies, tagging is a highly aestheticised form of vandalism. [...] The problem for the external viewer is that aesthetic codes exist in such an internalized language that the main group of people who can fully appreciate it are other graffiti writers.*<sup>27</sup>

If one follows this description, graffiti writing appears as a (highly codified) production for producers. Unlike commercial popular culture, the ‘aesthetic value’ of tags is not determined by judgements of a wider audience. The relevant aesthetic evaluation is carried out by peers, rather than by representatives of the field of power or a more general audience.



Wall of tags, Barcelona,  
August 2004, photo Vincent  
Ramos, GNU Free Documenta-  
tion License



Pixação graffiti, São  
Paulo, Ipiranga, April 2008,  
photo Gabriel de Andrade  
Fernandes, Creative Commons  
Attribution-Share Alike 2.0  
Generic

A model of higher complexity, like that proposed by Bourdieu,<sup>28</sup> is necessary for an appropriate classification of graffiti and street art. It takes into account the disposable capital not only of producers, but also of consumers or recipients. Furthermore, it considers the authorities of legitimation and the mediation of rules, conventions and techniques. Avant-garde art production, for example, is based on high specific capital; while its production does not follow demand, it nevertheless envisages certain target groups. Its production is oriented towards fractions of the field of power, that is, mostly the dominated dominant. The model thereby assumes a homology between the field of aesthetic production and a field of reception. The genre of 'social art' in particular can appeal to these fractions as part of intellectual production, based on the homology between the dominated dominant and those actually dominated and negatively privileged in social space.

'Bourgeois art' also addresses an audience in the field of power, namely the fractions of the centre and the upper-right region of social space, whose demand for escapism and the negation of the social it usually satisfies. Heteronomous 'industrial' art, in turn, speaks primarily to the cultures of taste of the middle and popular classes. It includes the semi-legitimate and illegitimate arts, the spheres of popular and mass culture or the culture industry, which primarily aims at quick effects and effortless consumption.

The origin of the graffiti writers in the social periphery has often been described,<sup>29</sup> with an added recruitment of writers from the middle classes in recent times. Academies and universities are not the proper instances of consecration and mediation for this production. Non-naive consumers can be found among the writers' peers, but also among the youth and adolescents of the lower and middle classes, in particular. It is thus not rare that they are involved in Hip Hop culture themselves.

One of the main social differences between graffiti and street art refers to institutionalized cultural capital. Cedar Lewisohn, curator of Tate Modern's "Street Art" group exhibition in 2008, highlights that graffiti writers rarely attended schools of art or design, whereas street art producers were often trained at these types of school.<sup>30</sup> Women disrupt the masculinity rituals of the graffiti subculture, which is dominated by machismo.<sup>31</sup> Hence it is not surprising that the number of female graffiti writers is low. Only very few of them have high visibility, such as, for example, Lady Pink. On the other hand, the overall proportion of female street artists is around 20 to 30 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Regarding the recipients of street art, it can be stated that they extend far into the middle classes.

Street art represents a less unified field than graffiti. The main internal oppositions structuring this field are legality vs. illegality, political activism vs. political indifference and self-referentiality vs. wider accessibility. In fact, illegally placed signs in public space stand in opposition to the legalized graphics, prints and objects that are offered for sale through websites and galleries, eBay and, sometimes, through auction houses that are active in the business of art and antiques.

In comparison to graffiti writing, street art uses a variety of artistic materials, media and strategies, especially in those works that are produced for galleries and auction houses. Yet references to the history of art also play a certain role. Apart from a dominant ornamental and decorative stream that seeks to embellish urban space with partly cute, partly cartoon-like images that tell fantasy stories, street art also includes a wing that is critical of consumption and capitalism. Its producers work with strategies of ironic alienation, over-stickering, repainting, imitation, forgery and the visual kidnapping of corporate or commercial codes. In this regard, one can recognize smooth transitions to culture jamming, adusting and subvertizing.<sup>33</sup> The more artistically-inclined wing of street art, anchored in the subculture of skateboarders in the US, should also be emphasized.<sup>34</sup> It is supported by Jeffrey Deitch, the former gallerist and present director of MOCA Los Angeles. Deitch Projects, one of the leading galleries in New York until its closure in 2010—on account of Deitch's new museum position, which was regarded as being incompatible with a commercial institution carrying his name—represented some artists who work outdoors as writers, yet produce conventional gallery work as well. These producers secured visibility and recognition in the hegemonic art field through this hybrid strategy of production and through the promotion by Deitch's established art gallery, manifested in 2000, for example, in the participation at the 49th Venice Biennale of Barry McGee (aka Twist), Todd James (aka REAS) and Stephen Powers (aka ESPO). Swoon—the female street artist with the highest visibility and who mainly works outdoors—was also represented by this gallery.

Furthermore, the anchoring of street art in applied or commercial fields of visual culture, such as design, fashion or advertising, cannot be overlooked.<sup>35</sup> While such crossover secures street art media presence and economic support, it also keeps it at a distance from the hegemonic field of art, where its acceptance is quite low. Given the still-reigning anti-economism in cultural fields, however, this commercial wing also regularly evokes accusations of selling out in the field of street art itself.



Given its internal heterogeneity, it seems appropriate to consider street art as a field of cultural production *sui generis*, similar to popular music, instead of subordinating it to the artistic field in the narrow sense. Such a view has also been suggested by some of its protagonists. In line with the popular impetus of street art, Steve Lazarides—one of the leading street art gallerists, who has been successful in London with web-based business models<sup>36</sup> offering street art at low prices—likes to invoke the formula of “art from people for people”. In his view, street art is produced in an art world of its own kind, in a parallel universe: “All my artists are outsiders. You have two artworlds, which function side by side, our artworld and their artworld.”<sup>37</sup>

“The popular arts are”, as the sociologist Herbert Gans observes, “on the whole user-oriented and exist to satisfy audience values and wishes”.<sup>38</sup> With this criterion in mind, it seems fitting to classify the parallel world of street art as a “popular culture field”. The main protagonists of street art like to see the accessibility of artistic production for everyday experience—which had been despised and stigmatized as kitsch by Clement Greenberg and Dwight Macdonald—as one of the distinctive features of their genre. For Blek Le Rat it represents the ‘Other’ of conceptual art. His remarks reveal the inclusive self-understanding of street art, its populist impulse: “Conceptual art is designed for those who understand philosophy and the history of art, so it will always be exclusive. What we are doing is breaking down the walls.”<sup>39</sup>

In a similar way, Shepard Fairey aka Obey states, “What I always found important in my art is that it is accessible and populist”.<sup>40</sup> Through street art, the idea of an ‘opening of art to the masses’ has enjoyed a revival again. Bourdieu identified the populism of professional cultural producers as a strategy of those who, as new entrants, occupy a dominated position within a specialized field.<sup>41</sup> This underprivileged situation is undoubtedly characteristic of street art, if one situates it along a hierarchy of legitimacy in the arts. However, its populist orientation can also be interpreted as the occupation of an open niche. In this light, it appears as one of the responses to the increasing complexity of the discursively oriented contemporary visual arts, a field in which status-oriented traditions of closure still survive.

In this sense, one might also explain the success of street art by the fact that it accounts for the visual needs of wider society, which tends not to be satisfied by the rather highly-coded hegemonic art.



Banksy, rat mural, New York City, Howard Street, Soho, October 2008, photo Stan Wiechers, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic

Street art is an aesthetically, intellectually and financially accessible art. Leading artists in this field do not necessarily stand out through record sales in the art market. Perhaps the most specific trait of this kind of art is the extraordinary media coverage of its protagonists. As far as their media visibility is concerned, leading street artists such as Banksy, Os Gêmeos or Shepard Fairey must not shy away from a comparison with artists of the hegemonic art field. Only the most famous historical artists of the twentieth century, such as Warhol or Picasso, are more present on the internet than Banksy. Indeed, with around 2.3 or 3 million ‘hits’ in Google, even the most controversial contemporary artist-artists, who aim for media effects and scandal, like Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst, are now (July 2011) far behind this symbolic figure of street art in the ‘attention economy’. Unlike his colleagues, Banksy returns no fewer than 14.8 million hits in Google, even though he still only occupies rank 7,874 in one of the main ranking lists of the artistic field (artfacts.net<sup>42</sup>), while Koons and Hirst belong to the top 100 (Koons at 50, Hirst at 64). Thus, street art can be associated not only with a ‘tattooing of cities’, but can also be considered a new pop cultural (media) art. Structurally, it is mainly supported by the internet and a mass audience—factors over which the more intellectual and bourgeois-oriented artistic field neither disposes, nor seeks to dispose.

*Translated from the German by Larissa Buchholz*

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Jean Baudrillard

## The Power of the Global: Requiem for the Twin Towers

The September 11 attacks also concern architecture, since what was destroyed was one of the most prestigious of buildings, together with a whole (Western) value-system and a world order.<sup>1</sup>

It may, then, be useful to begin with a historical and architectural analysis of the Twin Towers, in order to grasp the symbolic significance of their destruction.

First of all, why the *Twin* Towers? Why *two* towers at the World Trade Center?

All Manhattan's tall buildings had been content to confront each other in a competitive verticality, and the product of this was an architectural panorama reflecting the capitalist system itself—a pyramidal jungle, whose famous image stretched out before you as you arrived from the sea. That image changed after 1973, with the building of the World Trade Center. The effigy of the system was no longer the obelisk and the pyramid, but the punch card and the statistical graph. This architectural graphism is the embodiment of a system that is no longer competitive, but digital and countable, and from which competition has disappeared in favour of networks and monopoly.

Perfect parallelepipeds, standing over 1,300 feet tall, on a square base. Perfectly balanced, blind communicating vessels (they say terrorism is 'blind', but the towers were blind too—monoliths no longer opening on to the outside world, but subject to artificial conditioning<sup>2</sup>). The fact that there were two of them signifies the end of any original reference. If there had been only one, monopoly would not have been perfectly embodied. Only the doubling of the sign truly puts an end to what it designates.

There is a particular fascination in this reduplication. However tall they may have been, the two towers signified, nonetheless, a halt to verticality. They were not of the same breed as the other buildings. They culminated in the exact reflection of each other. The glass and steel façades of the Rockefeller Center buildings still mirrored each other in an endless specularly. But the Twin Towers no longer had any façades, any faces. With the rhetoric of verticality disappears also the rhetoric of the mirror. There remains only a kind of black box, a series closed on the figure two, as though architecture, like the system, was now merely a product of cloning, and of a changeless genetic code.

New York is the only city in the world that has, throughout its history, tracked the present form of the system and all its many developments with such prodigious fidelity. We must, then, assume that the collapse of the towers—itsself a unique event in the history of modern cities—prefigures a kind of dramatic ending and, all in all, disappearance both of this form of architecture and of the world system it embodies. Shaped in the pure computer image of banking and finance, (ac)countable and digital, they were in a sense its brain, and in striking there the terrorists have struck at the brain, at the nerve-centre of the system.

The violence of globalization also involves architecture, and hence the violent protest against it also involves the destruction of that architecture. In terms of collective drama, we can say that the horror for the 4,000 victims of dying in those towers was inseparable from the horror of living in them—the horror of living and working in sarcophagi of concrete and steel.

These architectural monsters, like the Beaubourg Centre, have always exerted an ambiguous fascination, as have the extreme forms of modern technology in general—a contradictory feeling of attraction and repulsion, and hence, somewhere, a secret desire to see them disappear. In the case of the Twin Towers, something particular is added: precisely their symmetry and their twin-ness. There is, admittedly, in this cloning and perfect symmetry an aesthetic quality, a kind of perfect crime against form, a tautology of form which can give rise, in a violent reaction, to the temptation to break that symmetry, to restore an asymmetry, and hence a singularity.

Their destruction itself respected the symmetry of the towers: a double attack, separated by a few minutes' interval, with a sense of suspense between the two impacts. After the first, one could still believe it was an accident. Only the second impact confirmed the terrorist attack. And in the Queens air crash a month later, the TV stations waited, staying with the story (in France) for four hours, waiting to broadcast a possible second crash 'live'. Since that did not occur, we shall never know now whether it was an accident or a terrorist act.

The collapse of the towers is the major symbolic event. Imagine they had not collapsed, or only one had collapsed: the effect would not have been the same at all. The fragility of global power would not have been so strikingly proven. The towers, which were the emblem of that power, still embody it in their dramatic end, which resembles a suicide. Seeing them collapse themselves, as if by implosion, one had the impression that they were committing suicide in response to the suicide of the suicide planes.

Were the Twin Towers destroyed, or did they collapse? Let us be clear about this: the two towers are both a physical, architectural object and a symbolic object<sup>3</sup> (symbolic of financial power and global economic liberalism). The architectural object was destroyed, but it was the symbolic object which was targeted and which it was intended to demolish. One might think the physical destruction brought about the symbolic collapse.

But in fact no one, not even the terrorists, had reckoned on the total destruction of the towers. It was, in fact, their symbolic collapse that brought about their physical collapse, not the other way around.

As if the power bearing these towers suddenly lost all energy, all resilience; as though that arrogant power suddenly gave way under the pressure of too intense an effort: the effort always to be the unique world model.

So the towers, tired of being a symbol which was too heavy a burden to bear, collapsed, this time physically, in their totality. Their nerves of steel cracked. They collapsed vertically, drained of their strength, with the whole world looking on in astonishment.

The symbolic collapse came about, then, by a kind of unpredictable complicity—as though the entire system, by its internal fragility, joined in the game of its own liquidation, and hence joined in the game of terrorism. Very logically, and inexorably, the increase in the power of power heightens the will to destroy it. But there is more: somewhere, it was party to its own destruction. The countless disaster movies bear witness to this fantasy, which they attempt to exorcize with images and special effects. But the fascination they exert is a sign that acting-out is never very far away—the rejection of any system, including internal rejection, growing all the stronger as it approaches perfection or omnipotence. It has been said that ‘Even God cannot declare war on Himself’. Well, He can. The West, in the position of God (divine omnipotence and absolute moral legitimacy), has become suicidal and declared war on itself.

Even in their failure, the terrorists succeeded beyond their wildest hopes: in bungling their attack on the White House (while succeeding far beyond their objectives on the towers), they demonstrated unintentionally that that was not the essential target, that political power no longer means much, and real power lies elsewhere. As for what

should be built in place of the towers, the problem is insoluble. Quite simply because one can imagine nothing equivalent that would be worth destroying—that would be worthy of being destroyed. The Twin Towers were worth destroying. One cannot say the same of many architectural works. Most things are not even worth destroying or sacrificing. Only works of prestige deserve that fate, for it is an honour. This proposition is not as paradoxical as it sounds, and it raises a basic issue for architecture: one should build only those things which, by their excellence, are worthy of being destroyed. Take a look around with this radical proposition in mind, and you will see what a pass we have come to. Not much would withstand this extreme hypothesis.

This brings us back to what should be the basic question for architecture, which architects never formulate: is it normal to build and construct? In fact it is not, and we should preserve the absolutely problematic character of the undertaking. Undoubtedly, the task of architecture—of good architecture—is to efface itself, to disappear as such. The towers, for their part, have disappeared. But they have left us the symbol of their disappearance, their disappearance as symbol. They, which were the symbol of omnipotence, have become, by their absence, the symbol of the possible disappearance of that omnipotence—which is perhaps an even more potent symbol. Whatever becomes of that global omnipotence, it will have been destroyed here for a moment.

Moreover, although the two towers have disappeared, they have not been annihilated. Even in their pulverized state, they have left behind an intense awareness of their presence. No one who knew them can cease imagining them and the imprint they made on the skyline from all points of the city. Their end in material space has borne them off into a definitive imaginary space. By the grace of terrorism, the World Trade Center has become the world's most beautiful building—the eighth wonder of the world!<sup>4</sup>

*A version of this paper was Baudrillard's contribution to a debate on the events of 11 September 2001, the 'Rencontres philosophiques outre-Atlantique', organized jointly by New York University and France Culture in Washington Square, Manhattan. The formal contributions were broadcast on France Culture on the afternoon of 23 February 2002.*



*The debate, which was largely conducted in French, was chaired by Tom Bishop; other participants were Jacques Rancière, Charles Larmore and Mark Lilla. The footnotes, which refer to slight variations between the written text and the version delivered in New York, are my own [Trans.].*

*Reprinted from: Jean Baudrillard, The Spirit of Terrorism, Chris Turner trans., London and New York: Verso, 2003, pp. 35-48, reprinted by kind permission.*

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1. In the New York debate, Baudrillard prefaced his talk with the following comments: "There is an absolute difficulty in speaking of an absolute event. That is to say, in providing an analysis of it that is not an explanation—as I don't think there is any possible explanation of this event, either by intellectuals or by others—but its analogon, so to speak; an analysis which might possibly be as unacceptable as the event, but strikes the... let us say, symbolic imagination in more or less the same way."
  2. In New York, Baudrillard here glossed: "Air conditioning, but mental conditioning too".
  3. In New York, Baudrillard added, "symbolic in the weak sense, but symbolic, for all that".
  4. After delivering a slightly modified version of this last paragraph in New York, Baudrillard closed with the comment: "So I set out to produce a Requiem, but it was also, in a way, a Te Deum".

Evert Ypma

## Design as Global Lingo

### DESIGN IS A WESTERN PRODUCT

Design is everywhere, increasingly everything and involving everyone. The idea of design as a global cultural phenomenon has often been discussed under the perspective of widespread production, distribution and use of similar design artefacts<sup>1</sup> in different geographies and cultures. In popular design discourse it is common that international design products harvest a credibility bonus. Design that is bound to a specific place, institution or person may yield credibility under the premise of uniqueness and exclusivity. But credibility works both ways. If something becomes mainstream and distributed everywhere it can also lose credibility easily.

This essay discusses a conceptualization of design that comprises the notions of 'everything' and 'relating to everyone'. It concentrates on the expanded concept of design and embraces the full complexities of design production, use and after-use, as a generative, shaping force. This presumes that design is a profound sociocultural phenomenon, and "that the state of the world and the state of design need to be connected", according to Tony Fry.<sup>2</sup> Design as global lingo<sup>3</sup> can be interpreted in multiple ways.

For centuries, European and North American economic, political and cultural dominance in the world gave rise to the development of a global design culture as it is today. In the course of recent design history, Western industrial inventions, perspectives and values have been exported via trade and cultural exchange with oriental cultures. In particular, political power dynamics between dominating and dominated (colonized) societies advanced or hindered the flow of information, people and goods, often by enforcement. Even today, the prevailing conceptualization of design around the world is still centred on its occidental roots. Similar to most discourses on globalization, 'global design' is a Western-centred, power-gaining, wealth-dependent and commodity-driven concept.<sup>4</sup> Especially in the framework of the creative economy, social progress is expressed through design cultural icons. Also, discourses about non-Western design can barely escape Western vocabularies and interpretative models and methods. The artefacts, languages and mechanisms of design have become a global operative standard of being and sense-making.

Modernism and economy-driven marketing ideologies strongly contributed to the present-day nature and orientation of design as a global culture. After the Second World War, modernist ideas about organizational standardization and economic efficiency led to proficient and fast industrial production methods. These were needed to rebuild Europe and to restore the ruined global economy. The application of marketing techniques became the nucleus to stir up the economic equilibrium of supply and demand. Furthermore, it became key to the construction of individual and collective identification with social progress and prosperity through economic growth. Modernism and marketing both share the concepts of efficiency and reproduction.

Culture is not stable, neither is the culture of design. The manifold repercussions of globalization dramatically change social conditions, consequently changing design production, distribution, reception and use. The significance of these changes lies in their parallel occurrence and the increasingly unforeseeable character of the influential contexts of design. Design professionals face different demands and are challenged to answer to the altering needs of society, such as integrative, inclusive design, environmental sustainability and social accountability. Designers are more than ever forced to negotiate firmly about terms, protocols and formal outcomes with the various stakeholders of the design process—often ending up in compromised design solutions. The traditional disposition between Western and non-Western design cultures is also shifting, since emerging economies started to formulate new foundations for design, which are also based on local non-Western knowledge, traditions and values.

Due to the abundance of designed and mediated scenographies, the distance between designed hyperreality and reality has collapsed.<sup>5</sup> Designed environments mould a user-friendly, encapsulating sphere around human beings. People have accepted hyperreality as their natural home base, from which they make up their social and material worlds. Increasingly artificial realities define the horizon of people's aspiration. Children who have grown up entirely with information technologies integrate the unfolding realms and possibilities seamlessly into the processes of identity formation, choice making and action.<sup>6</sup> Presentation and especially representation as design is widely perceived as a condition for social existence and recognition.<sup>7</sup> In media-centred societies, the presupposition, *no design, no presence*, often needs to be taken literally.



## BRAND CULTURE AS GLOBAL LINGO

The ultimate illustration, and one of the most reproductive design models in the context of globalization, commerce and information technology, is the cult of brands. This concept originated from the nineteenth-century North American tradition of marking live-stock to identify the owner. Throughout history, rulers have practised symbolic customs to represent their identity and power and to demarcate properties. A nonlinear line of development can be drawn from the medieval coat of arms used in feudal societies to the present-day global cult of brands. Brand culture is present in every social sphere, has been adopted by almost any culture and has been integrated by most design disciplines.

During the 1930s Great Depression of the US economy, Edward Bernays—a nephew of Sigmund Freud—introduced the application of Freud's methods of psychoanalysis to business and politics to boost the economy and build political support.<sup>8</sup> Following this idea, consumption was not based on practical needs, but driven by unconscious desires and social-emotional motives. Fordist mass production and the connection with mass consumption became a design, and Bernays became the architect of public relations and marketing ideologies. Marketing categorizes people as potential consumers according to social stratifications based on market research, to be approached, accordingly, with persuasive communication strategies (rhetoric). Instead of responding to people's needs, designing for consumer demands became the default orientation of mainstream design culture.

For thirty years, marketing methods have been elementary in business school curricula. From the mid-1990s, design schools have also embraced marketing in their discourses under the label of *design management*. This was in response to the increasing complexity of (digitalized) design processes and the separation of labour. Marketing found its way into *corporate design*<sup>9</sup> practices, which, from the 1990s, shifted to the management concept of *corporate identity*. This refers to the 'all-encompassing' design of organizational culture and the mental orientation of an entity.<sup>10</sup> This and the concept of *brand identity* have been picked up by all design disciplines. The core idea and qualities of an entity or product are conceived as a 'brand personality', which is attributed with simulated human qualities. Since corporations are legal constructs instead of natural persons, notions of corporate identity and brand identity as designable character are therefore ambiguous.

In saturated markets with commodities combining similar qualities, design and brand strategies have become the key differentiator for positioning products in the market. Nowadays, branding is an extremely versatile and omnipotent practice, based on the idea of appropriation through aesthetic politics and soft power strategies.<sup>11</sup> As the lingo of the global marketplace for attention, it links institutional interests<sup>12</sup> with the perceptive identifications and behaviours of individuals, which become operational through lifestyle, mentality and superimposed identity formats. The legitimization of brand strategies often directly derives from (potential) market success, which makes it a reactionary practice that is based on short lifecycles.

Images create perceptions and perceptions create images. A significant facet of the design of brand constructs is the iconographic dimension, which relates to popular symbolic ecologies and connotations. Additional semantic fields are introduced to generate new layers of meaning to the actual product, service or entity. Narratives and representation strategies convey the qualities of the represented in such a way that people can relate to it on an imaginary level. Frequently, these added semantics are disconnected from the represented original. Increasingly, products and entities don't have the 'real original' anymore, because they are empty props themselves. In that case, branding and representation are simulacra used to cover the void of the general product or entity,<sup>13</sup> which has neither specific content nor distinct qualities. These image politics can be observed in most representation strategies of generic products, multinationals or supranational bodies, such as the EU. Due to its complexity and focus on consensus, most of those communication efforts remain indistinct and un-outspoken, while leaving users, consumers and citizens alone in their disorientation.

Whereas some brands try to link up with the 'true' intrinsic qualities of the represented original, other brands acquire value according to 'sign value'. Here, symbolic representation itself is the object of desire, and consumption doesn't go beyond the identification and appropriation of the visual representation. Something that can be observed with the luxury brand Louis Vuitton, which gains popularity due to its characteristic visual patterns. The majority of buyers don't buy Louis Vuitton products because of the high product quality in the first place, but because of its sign value. That these symbols once derived from French late Gothic church architecture remains unknown to most consumers. This questions what a sign of quality is in a context of signs without qualities?



In a symbolic economy, superimposed identity representations function as performative interfaces that structure the relationships and interactions between people and systems, configuring socio-spatial situations. By doing so, virtual value is created in the form of recognition, appreciation and trust. For most people, branding is—consciously and unconsciously—a tool for social and material orientation in the complexity of daily reality. The premise of branding is individual happiness and self-realization through brand loyalty and social recognition by peers from the same *brand tribe*. It answers to the human desire for social belonging, although this is often based on simulation and psychological coercion. The process of labelling and the consumption of (brand) labels is a matter of definition power: does Nike own its brand or do consumers take ownership of the Nike brand?

Identity construction and brand production have a dialectic nature. They are based on the verbal and visual play of opposition and demarcation, which sorts the effect of social polarization of 'belonging' and 'not belonging'. Strong identity-thinking fosters the idea of 'exclusiveness' and the idea of 'us' versus 'them'.<sup>14</sup>

Western Enlightenment as prevailing life design (*Lebensentwurf*) has proliferated across the planet through colonization in the eighteenth century, industrialization in the nineteenth, Modernism in the twentieth, and around the turn of the millennium through the hegemony of brand culture. Although branding works on an operational level with emotion-oriented strategies, Enlightenment rationality interlaminated the technocratic calculative and tactical nature of brand practices. These have proven to be very foreseeable, effective means to push and pull people's consumption patterns or to create political loyalty.

The demand of the global economy creates a communication culture with many floating semantic fields, which, as such, do not refer to any particular objects or sociocultural, political and ecological implications. Short media cycles make information, communication and symbolism become outdated quickly and this fosters a perpetual demand for new design production. Brand culture denies almost any disposition about values, such as origin, sociocultural and political position, production processes or realistic statements. Brands connect to the generics of the non-product, non-place, non-character, non-story, non-communication, and about a non-relation, etc. The virtue of brand construction is therefore not the ability to shape and represent identity and character, but the non-relational nature of the denial of commitment until the moment of financial transaction or social subscription, which is its key feature. The omnipotent qualities and

capacity to adapt to any cultural contexts make this form of design capable of *branding* everything and everywhere. It is no coincidence that the cultures of global capitalism operate under the same conditions: anonymity and the denial of commitment. In liberal culture, capital, human and natural resources are labelled and re-labelled and redistributed whenever needed, in the global search for cheap labour and profitable markets. In this context brand value links to monetary value through market sales and growth potentials. The power of these capital-oriented identity constructs becomes apparent in the valuation of corporations when it comes to mergers and acquisitions.

Brand culture is rarely reflected as a global design in itself, but it can be understood as the protocols of communication in a multicultural world.<sup>15</sup> It is discussed, rather, from the perspective in which design strategies are instrumental to the cult of brands. Brand thinking never doubts, and is always confident about its own assumptions, claims and purposes, which is one of its weakest aspects. The unsustainable human mindset and lifestyle, the dot-com bubble at the end of the 1990s and the global financial crisis could emerge easily in a culture in which simulation and 'as-if values' are commonly accepted. The manifold crisis therefore also questions our identity production and representation cultures.

## ACKNOWLEDGING THE COMPLEXITY OF DESIGN

The underlying complexity of design production and use has been denied for a long time. This is inherited from the premise of modernist organizational and aesthetic reduction, as well as from the yearning for simplicity,<sup>16</sup> which has been victoriously embraced by commercial design practices. Designers start to see that the object-centred approach to design only allows for a micro-perspective that concentrates on the direct relations between design artefact and its context. The 1980s debate on recycling is a good example of how the impact radius of production methods and consumption patterns was set too small. It was treated as a material issue, instead of a sociocultural-material issue.

In the culture of design production, use and after-use, the relationships with the meta-systems have been out of scope for long, which leads to present-day systems of design mistakenly oriented around the idea of isolation and disconnection (nonrelational), the myth of plenty, infinite resources and possibilities without ethical boundaries. In a design culture like this, it is not surprising that we are reluctant to let our children play with toys that emit toxic chemicals, such as lead, cadmium, arsenic or bromine.





Triggered by the global environmental debate and a growing focus on social liability during the past decades—for example, auditing, corporate social responsibility, sustainability—the complexity of design can no longer be denied. The multifarious repercussions of material and immaterial design production within social and ecological contexts unambiguously overhauled simplistic perspectives on creation and aesthetics. Design disciplines are forced to shift their focus from the world of design towards the design of the world.<sup>17</sup> So far, the reality check to the relevance of design has been a material and, especially, a tough political and social struggle.

Almost everywhere, humans have made themselves completely dependent on conceived strategies. Although designers have the capability to produce almost seamless perfection and hermetic encapsulations, design retains a wicked nature.<sup>18</sup> Not only when it comes to managing ‘wicked problems’ in the act of designing, but the wicked nature of design also comes to the foreground during use and, especially, after use. Outcomes and the act of creation are both transformative actions, turning one situation into another. Any design as action immediately causes a large range of new relations with other (earlier) interventions, and starts to interfere on different scales, dimensions and in unexpected directions.

What is gained if a problem is sustainably solved in one context, but simultaneously creates a new problem elsewhere or later? Designing (in) society is like dealing with a many-headed Lernaean hydra. The cultures and systems of design are intertwined with other generative systems that are at work as world-shaping forces, such as economic systems, technology, politics, science, religion, ecology, or systems related to food, leisure or national and cultural identification. Design cannot be viewed from one particular disciplinary angle or from one singular cultural perspective. The act of designing needs to be approached with a multi-perspective and understood as a contextual intervention in which all actors—creators, objects, systems and users—go on designing themselves.

## DESIGN CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

We live in a designed society—materially, culturally and psychologically. Beyond comprehending the ubiquity of design in terms of physical or spatial quantity, ‘design intensity’<sup>19</sup> refers to the boundless incorporation of design as part of human existence, as well as a substantial component of human self-consciousness.<sup>20</sup> Although intensity

and typologies of design vary under the influence of geographical, political, economic and cultural parameters, the impact of design reaches as far as manmade artefacts and actions can go. Numerous agents, such as individuals, objects, cities and situations, processes and agreements, are manifestations that actively make up the culture of reality creation. Mostly unconscious, as Tony Fry describes: “Essentially, we see and make a world through the prism of our culture, but mostly it exists as an unconsidered condition of normality”.<sup>21</sup>

To perceive acts of design as cultural processes suggests an understanding of design cultures as shared systems of beliefs, values, rituals, protocols, languages, constructions of meaning, material artefacts and, foremost, as an evolving occurrence. The methods, protocols and meaning of design production are permanently altered by the dynamics of ongoing social change due to micro and macro globalization dynamics. For instance, the global economic recession has caused an implosion of the real estate market, which in turn has cut architecture businesses in the US and Europe. Due to the growing interconnectedness of social and information systems, it is likely that, in the near future, (hidden) global issues and their concrete implications will increasingly determine the role of design and the modes of operation within social processes.

Information technologies and standardization through norms foster the synchronization of production and consumption processes. This gives way to de-contextualized, anonymous design production, which becomes apparent in earlier addressed brand design, in corporate processes, products or, for instance, in airport design.<sup>22</sup> Unnamed design facilitates and maintains the free flow of information, capital, goods and people in perpetual cycle. It relates to a society in which economic and social capital are fluid means that can be relabelled and redistributed to increase profits whenever needed. The creation and application of artificial strategies has become a global idiom in itself. It operates as a world-shaping language that structures the mindsets and relations of people.

Globalization is a designed process, which, on the one hand, is the outcome of a historical development of former and contemporary world (shaping) forces, including mighty nation states and power blocs—such as NATO, IMF, WTO, G20 or EU—that have shaped the conditions of people’s lives over time,<sup>23</sup> but also media giants—such as CNN, Al Jazeera, Google or Facebook—that have dramatically reconfigured everyday experiences regarding relationships, communication, labour and the behaviour of individuals.<sup>24</sup>



On the other hand, globalization is a process that is out of human control and that undercuts the steadiness of present-day existence. Interconnectedness and disembedding of information, people and cultural values, as well as the acceleration of social processes through information technologies, are the result of developments on global scale. Within many societies, we can also notice—as a counterforce to social ruptures—processes of re-embedding that are often driven by a sense of nostalgia and that seek for new social equilibriums.<sup>25</sup>

### ALTERING PROTOCOLS AND MEANING OF DESIGN DUE TO SOCIAL CHANGE

The globalized world has to be understood as the new point of departure for redirecting the processes of artificial world-making, as Tony Fry addresses in his book *Design as Politics*. The creative capacity should not be underestimated, but for doomsayers this doesn't offer a bright outlook. However, for optimists it raises the bar, and it clearly carves out new challenges for societies to develop a truly integrated design intelligence. The recent economic crisis represents a cultural crisis as well. Fundamental assumptions about economic models and corporate trust have been discredited or are in need of revision. Social sensibility for 'change' has increased, due to pressing global issues<sup>26</sup> such as climate change, food production, dependency on fossil fuels and the risks of nuclear technology. Topics such as migration and (inter)national security also contribute to the public's perception of a world as a place of turmoil and instability. Acute and long-term social problems suffer from not being articulated in differentiated ways. Since news coverage is a commodity, too, every (visual) detail, from armed conflicts to rescue operations and catastrophes, becomes emphasized and brought into the personal sphere through media (visualizations). In this manner, every single local event becomes a 'world event', and thus part of people's everyday experiential reality.<sup>27</sup> In addition, shifting geopolitical power equations, from West to East, cause various economic fluctuations, which resonate directly or indirectly in the systems of design.

The greater part of design production focuses on the output and usage of short-term commodities, while externalizing social and environmental consequences. The diminution of design to the level of appearance and style, in order to create virtual value through strategies of social exclusiveness, artificial obsolescence and utilitarianism, have produced a design system in crisis—a designed crisis. However, designers are now beginning to acknowledge that no value is created if we put smart technologies into

stupid products,<sup>28</sup> or if commodities are produced under ecologically and socially irresponsible conditions.

The crisis of contemporary design culture is its depoliticized orientation. In the wake of Tony Blair's Third Way and the new public management models of the 1990s, design customs, procedures and communication principles from the private sector were widely adopted in the public sector. The withdrawal of government from the public domain made space for free market initiatives, which have led to the present-day tendency in which spatial, cultural and political design assignments have become private affairs.<sup>29</sup> This gave rise to phenomena such as real-estate-driven turbo-urbanism,<sup>30</sup> place branding strategies and public diplomacy, such as city, region and nation branding. The depoliticized nature of design contributes to the growing suspension of the boundaries between the private and the public sphere. Despite the collective consequences of design production, its use by people and after-use, there is almost no public debate about how processes, concepts and people's environments could be designed more appropriately.

Within design practice, the political dimension of design often has an affirmative character, in the form of ethical design manifestos<sup>31</sup> that mainly serve as operative, woolly calls for designing in a better way, while leaving out any form of checks and balances. Others develop critical imperatives reflecting upon the functional and cultural role of design through imaginary and disruptive counter-proposals.<sup>32</sup>

The politics of design is predominantly steered by policymakers, business leaders and shareholders, who mainly decide on the basis of economic arguments related to shareholder value, and the sensitivity for public opinion, and maintaining their own positions within the hierarchy. Social organization is a manmade, designed system built on a multiplicity of subsystems, which amalgamate as a tight network of interests and interdependencies.<sup>33</sup> In global network society, the design of products, of corporate strategies, and the design of relations through representation and communication, are part of the network protocol, the earlier addressed concept of norms and standards. Strategies that function as the bridging lingo for managing identities, perceptions and interest. Design strategies are increasingly important to gain and maintain network power,<sup>34</sup> and network-making power that is built upon *switchers*,<sup>35</sup> actors who can influence the shaping dynamics within particular social contexts. The web has proven to be a world-improving tool, but, on the other hand, we can see that the information and social media networks also have negative consequences for users. Good and bad regimes make extensive use of the internet to spy on



their citizens, and personal information may last forever in the digital memory of the web. Design as global lingo can be discussed on an operational, systemic, ideological and political level. Acknowledging the complexities of artificial world-making, an expanded concept of design needs to be adopted. During 100 years of recent design history, the practical focus and meaning has shifted from the design of technologies to the fulfilment of consumer demand, to design for social and ecological wellbeing.

The design strategies of early Modernism concentrated on the amalgamation of material formality and functionality. During post-war Modernism, design remained technology-driven by the economic efficiency structures of the first multinational corporations. It started to leave the technosphere under the influence of seductive advertising and marketing strategies. Brand culture instrumentalized design strategies to create virtual value through consumable identity formats, which create mental bonds between people, products and organizations. Internet and social media tools facilitate individual experiences as part of networked collective identification. Nonetheless, "[...] these protocols are not based on the sharing of culture, but on the culture of sharing", according to Richard Sennet.<sup>36</sup>

The various crises<sup>37</sup> have served as a wake-up call, forcing design disciplines to reassess their arguments and social relevance. Changing protocols and rituals create new rhetorical and operative spaces for design, as Klaus Krippendorf investigates in his discourse on the *Semantic Turn*<sup>38</sup> in design production. New practices and vocabularies need to be explored, designed and assessed. The efforts to manoeuvre within and out of the strict regimes of current design practice and the cultural systems that shaped them still have to take a bumpy and stony road.

It is not seldom that new social claims are made for existing practices. Design has become a mainstream concept, and we can see how practices from creative industries—which were hit by recession—are now searching for new social legitimization. The popular label 'design thinking'<sup>39</sup> aims to enter management echelons under the promise of creativity as an all-compelling solution for public and business problems. Added to philanthropic ideas of 'doing good', arguments are borrowed from peripheral design practices and converted into speech and models compatible with management. The often-heard affirmation, 'design for society', therefore needs to be approached with care. Design has always been related to society—the change of social-economic and ecologic constraints places the act of designing into another perspective. Currently, design is a reactionary practice; it should play at its anticipatory part more strongly.

Design cultures as arrangements of rituals and protocols make up the complexities of design as the point of departure for artificial world-making. Design disciplines actively search for possibilities to intervene in existing systems, in order to reprogramme the design cultural mindset and to redirect design production. This refers to design production and patterns that include the integration of contextual aspects—culture, language, geographical qualities—but also principles—such as social inclusion—and open-ended design that can be adapted, transformed and reused. Design needs to be based more on democratic deliberation. This attitude to design actively takes ownership of problems beyond the level of individual satisfaction and fosters the human capability of cooperation as an engine for grassroots innovation and social transformation.

Creative production is in need of a more critical reflection on existing assumptions, as well as the reassessment of criteria for the valorization and legitimization of design. To approach and examine design from cultural and anthropological aspects may be helpful. To find out how design culture, as a combined knowledge-experience culture, can be steered into relevant fields of investigation, design practices need to build solid bodies of knowledge and vigorous reflection. Opening and cultivating new territories of design practice, such as social design, and the 'scientification' of design,<sup>40</sup> aim to explore the deeper complexities, significances and potentials to intervene in world complexities.

Current accreditation models for design production are framed in technological innovation, economic figures and mass media representation scores. Objective criteria and tools for the quality assessment of design are lacking, and the ethical debate about design cannot rely on the fast loops of design cultures. Pragmatism, ethics, accountability and trust have already become more important in the processes of designing. Design issues are increasingly determined as social-political questions. This also implies greater awareness of the political mechanisms of design.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Understanding the act of designing and the use of design as a generative, socio-cultural activity, causing a myriad of consequences, calls for the reformulation of 'global design' as design of 'everywhere', design of 'everything' and 'everyone'—as anticipatory design, which stimulates discourses and cultures. Design is about mastering the complexities of transformation and about moderating the transformation of complexities. This requires a relational approach.



## Cluster I: Design Culture

## 6. Global Culture as Design Culture

From left to right:	2008	-IKEA, Beijing, 2009	-Digital life, Amsterdam 2008
-Taxi driver, Pokhara, Nepal, 2000	-Meeting room, The Hague, 2008	-UEFA 08 mascotte, Zurich, 2008	-Toy, Lugano, 2008
-Public lounge, London, 2009	-Employee, Lahore, 2008	-Lahore, 2007	-Shop, Cluj-Napoca, Rumania, 2002
-Farm, Western Auckland, New Zealand, 2011	-Shopwindow, Belgrade, 2007	-'New nature', Rotterdam, 2005	-May 1st riots, Zurich, 2004
-Art Gallery Auckland, 2011	-Pudong, Shanghai, 2009	-Set for supermarket	-Google Streetview, Zurich, 2009
-Festival Tilburg, Netherlands, 2009	-Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, 2009	commercial, Zurich, 2008	-Billboard, Lichtenstein, 2010

The current, dialectical nature of marketing-driven design production fosters oppositional relationships and inequality. This is due to its orientation towards exclusivity and its definition power in the framework of fiction-as-reality. As we know from brand culture, virtual value creation counts as communication protocol in hybrid society with many semantic voids. But with the focus on the verbal play of opposites and obsession with identity demarcation, people's capability for mutual dialogue and cooperation declines. Whereas dialectical strategies focus on the power of the argument and the rationality of agreement, a mutual dialogue centres on engagement, active listening skills and a conversation based on empathy.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the need for the human capability to cooperate with peers, the philosopher Henk Oosterling reminds us that design needs to be reconnected to the concept of *in-ter-est*—'being in between' things, earthly dynamics and individual people.<sup>42</sup>

Design should not be an object-oriented and economic practice only, but also needs to become the act of cultural politicizing<sup>43</sup> within the process of artificial world-making. Even when the erection of a building is privately initiated, its design and use should be understood as a public practice linked to the common good.

In this perspective, the designer, who was initially a material engineer, then was transformed into an organizer who was structuring information and relations, subsequently into a commercial marketer, is now converted into a public cultural mediator focussing on curating and reframing realities by design.

The borders between people's fantasy and reality can be explored in richer ways, so that design production converges less with tactics at an operational level, where people are seduced by design props. But design that opens the mechanisms of production can show users how their own perceptions of their lives are created.

Designers, as public cultural mediators, no longer interpret design authorship in the same terms as the genius, or star designer, did, but take public ownership over social problems and proactively reformulate them into responsible design briefs. By changing the reactionary attitude of waiting for assignments to initiating projects, designers can be encouraged to create their own agendas with a focus on actualities and the needs of people, and relate these to anticipatory, later moments and consequences. With integrated agendas, designers are taking social responsibility as proactive agents in the process of world-making.

-CCTV, Beijing, 2011	-Fashion store, Belgrade, 2007	-Scenography, Zurich station, 2008
-Fence to prevent tourists entering private zone, Begijnhof Amsterdam, 2010	-Market, Melbourne, 2011	-Toy, Nijmegen 2009
-Waste, Zurich, 2009	-Bank employee, Cluj-Napoca, Rumania, 2002	-Construction site, Seoul, 2011
-Shopping mall, Zurich, 2009	-Design school, Chongqing, China, 2012	
-Advertisement, Sydney, 2011	-Construction site, London, 2009	All images © Evert Ypma
-Flea market, Zurich, 2005		

1. Artefacts are material objects and situations, as well as immaterial concepts, processes or narratives.
2. Fry, Tony, *Design as Politics*, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2011, p. 4.
3. Lingo, "the specialized vocabulary of a particular field or discipline", according to thefreedictionary.com.
4. McGettrick, Brendan, *design.is.Design.is.not.design*, Gwangju: Gwangju Design Biennale, 2011.
5. Rancière, Jacques, *The Future of the Image*, 2007, available online at <http://www.page291.com/blog/archives/73>, accessed 29 August 2011.
6. European Commission, "Digital Agenda: children using social networks at a younger age; many unaware of basic privacy risks, says survey", 18 April 2011, available online at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/11/479>, accessed 29 August 2011.
7. Oosterling, Henk, *Dasein as Design*, Premisela Lecture 2009, available at [http://www.premisela.org/en/premisela\\_1/projects-and-publications/downloads\\_1/](http://www.premisela.org/en/premisela_1/projects-and-publications/downloads_1/), accessed 29 August 2011.
8. Ewen, Stuart, *PR!: A Social History of Spin*, New York: Basic Books, 1996, pp. 159-173.
9. This is understood as the display of visible aspects of a company, organization or institution.
10. This can be every organized entity, large or small, in the private, public or tertiary sector.
11. Influencing people so that they adapt to ideas or initiate behaviour on the basis of soft skills, without obvious physical enforcement, as described by Joseph S Nye Jr, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs, 2004, pp. 5-17.
12. For example, corporations, governments or groups, products, situations, spaces or concepts (ideas).
13. This can concern any artefact or organizational entity.
14. Populist political agendas of many European countries are centred on migration issues and identity-thinking.
15. Castells, Manuel, *Communication Power*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 125-126.
16. The credo "less is more" did not do justice to the real complexities of design.
17. Mau, Bruce and the Institute without Boundaries, *Massive Change*, London: Phaidon Press, 2004.
18. Horst Rittel and Melvin M Webber's concept of 'wicked problems', formally outlined in 1973. For more information, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked\\_problem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wicked_problem), accessed 29 August 2011.
19. Lash, Scott and Arjen Mulder, "Intensity Generators", *Content*, Rem Koolhaas ed., Cologne: Taschen, 2004, p. 300.
20. This refers to Foucault's analysis of the biopolitical nature of power: "Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it." Cited in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2000, pp. 23-24.
21. Fry, *Design as Politics*, "Preface", p. ix.
22. Widely celebrated by lifestyle magazine *Wallpaper* and discussed in the publication accompanying the Museum of Design Zurich's 2010 exhibition, *Global Design*; see Angeli Sachs ed., *Global Design: International Perspectives and Individual Concepts*, Baden: Lars Müller Publishers, 2010.



23. Sassen, Saskia, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006, pp. 36 and 200.
24. Apple has changed the entire music industry by introducing iTunes and the iPod in 2001.
25. Eriksen, Hylland, *Globalization: The Key Concepts*, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007, pp. 8-9.
26. For more information, see <http://www.globalissues.org/>, accessed 29 August 2011.
27. Slavoj Žižek in a video interview, *Living in the End Times According to Slavoj Žižek*, made by director Marije Meerman and interviewer Chris Kijne, Backlight VPRO television, Hilversum, 2010: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gw8LPn4irao>, accessed 12 September 2011.
28. Thakara, John, *In the Bubble: Designing in a Complex World*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006, and Thakara's interview about the book, available online at: <http://www.thackara.com/inthebubble/faq.html>, accessed 29 August 2011.
29. See, for instance, the RIBA 2011 study on the future of architecture, available at <http://www.building-futures.org.uk>, accessed 29 August 2011.
30. A term used by Kai Vöckler to mark the power vacuum in public planning affairs in post-war reconstruction contexts. See Kai Vöckler, *Prishtina is Everywhere. Turbo Urbanism: the Aftermath of a Crisis*, Amsterdam: Archis, 2008.
31. See, for instance, the *First Things First Manifesto* of 1964 and of 2000, *Living Principles* and *Kyoto Design Declaration*. More information available online, respectively, at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Things\\_First\\_1964\\_manifesto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Things_First_1964_manifesto), [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Things\\_First\\_2000\\_manifesto](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Things_First_2000_manifesto), <http://www.livingprinciples.org> and <http://www.cumulusassociation.org/cumulus/initiatives-a-partners/kyoto-design-declaration>, all accessed 29 August 2011.
32. For instance, critical design, cultural hacking, design activism and social design.
33. System theories by Niklas Luhmann and Talcott Parsons; Actor-Network Theory by Bruno Latour.
34. A vision discussed by David Grewel in his book *Network Power: The Social Dynamics of Globalization*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2008.
35. Castells, *Communication Power*, pp. 42-47.
36. Castells, *Communication Power*, p. 126.
37. For example, fossil fuel dependency, the unsustainability of present consumption cultures, drought and clean water, the economic crisis, lack of intercultural trust, decline of the capability for cooperation, etc.
38. Krippendorff, Klaus, *The Semantic Turn: A New Foundation for Design*, London & New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006.
39. Brown, Tim, *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation*, New York: Harper Business, 2009, p. 160.
40. Design research as a developing sub-discipline of design.
41. Based on notes from a lecture by Richard Sennett at the Making, Crafting, Design symposium at Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany, February 2011.
42. Oosterling, *Dasein as Design*.
43. Fry, Tony, "Preface", *Design Futuring: Sustainability, Ethics and New Practice*, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2009.

Elisabeth Blum

## Dialectics without Reconciliation. How Urbanism lags behind Urban Reality

Can you really leave the millions of 'have-nots' in the slum belts surrounding today's megalopolises to their own resources? Sure, you can. And what you will get is the result of what the Brazilian jurist and planner Edésio Fernandes calls "virtual planning".

### VIRTUAL PLANNING 1/THE INFORMAL CITY

The migration of thousands of people into cities—and their vital interest to stay, to work and to settle there—is bound to the fact that cities are unprepared for this dramatic situation, in Brazil as elsewhere. For decades, the possibilities of taking this development into account have been ignored by city councils and planning administrations, who have completely overlooked the real interests and prospects of these people. The only option left to migrants has been to take matters into their own hands. As an aside, according to Saskia Sassen, "today's vast numbers of shanty dwellers" can be regarded as "the largest group of builders in the world".<sup>1</sup>

According to UN-HABITAT data, rapidly increasing informal settlements already shape a great part of the world's urbanized areas. About 24 per cent of the world's urban population live in informal settlements. Available statistics indicate that in Brazil around 25-40 per cent of urban families live in favelas, irregular settlements on occupied private or public territories. Edésio Fernandes, a former consultant to the Lula administration, considers favelas not only the culmination of all the inequalities and contradictions that mark the structure of Brazilian society, but also a clear demonstration of the failure of the country's public housing policy.

Why does Fernandes call 40 years of Brazilian planning politics "virtual"? Why does he accuse it of being a politics of ignorance? He does so because this politics was based simply on middle and upper income groups and did not provide lower income groups with any chance for legal intervention. As a result, this sort of planning disempowered itself and helped to produce what are called informal settlements. There are different names for this form of ignorance: "bad legislation" or "the greatest hostility toward



Rio de Janeiro: informal and formal city in tight neighbourhood © Elisabeth Blum

migrants". These are the terms in which the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto describes those legal conditions that severely hamper the initiative of millions of people daily and push them into illegality. De Soto writes: "Once governments understand that the poor have already taken control of vast quantities of real estate and productive economic units, it will become clear that many of the problems they confront are the result of the written law not being in harmony with the way their country actually works. It stands to reason that if the written law is in conflict with the laws citizens live by, discontent, corruption, poverty, and violence are sure to follow."<sup>2</sup>

Rem Koolhaas comments on situations like these in his unmistakably sarcastic manner: "Housing is not a problem. It has either been completely solved or totally left to chance; in the first case it is legal, in the second 'illegal'; in the first case, towers or, usually, slabs [...], in the second (in perfect complementarity) a crust of improvised hovels."<sup>3</sup>

In a city's formal areas, informal quarters and their inhabitants cause noticeable symptoms of fear, articulated spatially through gates and barriers between private and public domains; they signal, respectively, the self-inclusion of the wealthy and the exclusion of the poor. Other than walls, fences demonstrate the self-restricted forms of life that introduce into urban space what Hannah Arendt called attributes of totalitarian terror: a constraint of the freedom of movement.<sup>4</sup> The barred houses of Ipanema—once a famous borough of Rio de Janeiro—show the extent to which the self-included are ready to abandon dialogue with urban space.

With its Favela-Bairro and Morar Carioca programmes, Rio de Janeiro's urban planning policy tries to frame intelligent and sustainable answers to the urgent social problems of millions of poor people with regard to their living conditions. The favela upgrading programme carried out in Rio de Janeiro from 1994 onwards brought to an end the violent eviction of thousands of favela inhabitants and the demolition of their houses experienced during Brazil's military dictatorship. As these settlements usually occupy vacant sites unsuitable for development, they are characterized by inappropriate self-built houses, a lack of urban infrastructure and services, deforestation of environmental protection areas and soil and water pollution. Accordingly, the favela upgrading programme's four steps were (1) sanitation infrastructure, (2) spatial reorganization, (3) social services and (4) land tenure legalization.<sup>5</sup> Edésio Fernandes called the favela regulation experiences "essentially political", inasmuch as they immediately "refer to the configuration of urban property".<sup>6</sup> Recognizing favela inhabitants as legal persons, he says, helps to establish the basis of a new, socially oriented culture of urban planning.



Ipanema (Rio de Janeiro):  
self-inclusion of the wealthy  
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## VIRTUAL PLANNING 2/A GLOBAL PHENOMENON

Using the terminology of the German sociologist Georg Simmel (1858–1918), we can describe the conflict between “vital processes” (today’s migrating people), on the one hand, and “frozen” forms (planning politics and practice), on the other, as “dialectics without reconciliation”.<sup>7</sup> The big expansions of today’s megalopolises are products of those vital processes; they have broken up the sclerotic forms of the former cities, along with the attitudes and practices of the planners and politicians in charge. What you see when you look at the gigantic areas of so-called informal areas is just one, albeit extreme, visualization of Simmel’s thesis, the core of which contends that in the conflict between frozen forms and vital processes—by necessity periodically aggravating—the latter always break up sclerotic forms.

Writing from a position in the West, we are of course neither in Rio de Janeiro nor in any other southern megalopolis with its wide slum belts. But maybe we are well on our way to emulating them. To understand the full potential for our own everyday life and the physical and social changes it may undergo, as well as to gain new insights, we should pay closer attention to Georg Simmel’s words: “The vital processes of life are creating a world of forms, in which they accommodate themselves. Like a tailor-made dress these forms not only stand for the time-specific representations of life, but are at the same time facilitating, encouraging and comprising them.”<sup>8</sup>

However, social processes and physical forms, being mutually conditional, only hold true for a specific timespan. Frozen forms (due to beliefs, practices, etc.) are usually preserved beyond their time to the extent that they begin to conflict with changing representations of life. Step by step this incompatibility between vital processes and frozen forms is growing more acute. As a result, changes are constrained and life is violated. In the end, one cannot ignore the fact that Simmel’s “dialectics without reconciliation” is at work again in today’s cities.

The real needs of thousands of people and the official urban reality that could also—at least partly—be called fictitious are again drifting apart. Today’s cities are equipped in such a way that they obstruct vital processes anew. Again, the structures for thinking, planning and acting have become too narrow. Regrettably, neither politicians, architects nor planners are willing to admit this.

Some facts speak about the “vital processes” of our times: the French sociologist Loïc Wacquant, a Bourdieu scholar teaching at the University of California in Berkeley and doing research at the Centre de Sociologie Européenne in Paris, mentions over 50 million poor people in the European Union;<sup>9</sup> millions belong to the so-called ‘uncoupled precariat’; psychological hardship among workers is increasing because of considerable pressures to achieve and the fear of losing jobs. Jeremy Rifkin, founder of the Foundation on Economic Trends, prophesied that 75 per cent of all jobs will be replaced by technology in the coming decades and that full-time employment will become a thing of the past.

Hitherto unmentioned are the hundreds of thousands of migrants or refugees, termed illegal by those who command and live in ‘formal’ cities. These people go to work or to school, but mostly live without official documents, medical treatment, occupational health and safety and so on. Lacking any rights, they are fighting for the simple right to live. Day after day thousands of refugees from Tunisia, Libya and other African countries count on a number of human rights embodied in most European constitutions—and day after day these refugees are rejected already by the continent’s border officials and politically abandoned by numerous state or government representatives. Without the help of sympathizers, the willingness of doctors to provide (free) treatment if necessary and the moral courage to transgress the borders of legality, such underground existences are unthinkable. Hannah Arendt characterizes this kind of existence as located in a grey zone, which is defined by the fact that human rights end at the barrier of civil rights. The continuing production of people without rights is guaranteed as long as the enforcement of human rights is bound to the civil rights of any state.<sup>10</sup>

How do modern societies react to all these “vital processes”? It is still not as bad as the methods used to deal with those deemed superfluous in Jean-Luc Godard’s film *Alphaville* (1965). Preferred locations in the plot are a swimming pool used as execution theatre and a cinema converted into an institution for mass extermination, where the audience is shovelled from their movable seats into waste dumps. In her book *L’horreur économique* (1997) Viviane Forrester<sup>11</sup> maps out a sombre perspective: one gets rid of the superfluous, one disposes of them instead of having to maintain them any further. In fact, current western societies battle two kinds of enemies: inner and outer strangers. The inner enemies are the ones who are on their way to the bottom—without work, shelter, money or access—released into a hopeless dead end. Cities have begun to arm themselves not against an external threat but against present poverty.

What are architects and urban planners doing about this situation? The answer is nothing or almost nothing. Contrary to Brazil, however, planning policies or programmes for the new precariat—that is, for the growing number of those left behind, who live under increasingly precarious conditions and the growing number of migrants and refugees—do not exist in our countries. Urban planning authorities do not arrange public competitions to find architects, planners and answers for this special issue. Consequently, there is practically no public discourse on the subject. Most architects don't pay any attention to the issue. Urbanism lags behind reality. Cities are virtually unchanged: still the same public infrastructure and housing opportunities as if society had not altered. Cities are still equipped as if the patriarchal family could still guarantee a life-long income and the exchange of work and salary could still be the predominant form for making a living. This adherence to an out-dated societal standard leads to the exclusion of those who do not fit this standard. You may remember that Edésio Fernandes has called Brazilian planning practice “virtual”; similar facts can be found in our countries too. As planning here is more or less tailored to the needs of the middle and upper classes and ignores those on lower incomes, we can say that our planning politics is on the way to virtuality too. Rem Koolhaas suggests finding “methods to impact the inescapable”, to develop different ideas of cities and to take risks.<sup>12</sup> We do not know what the strategies Koolhaas describes would look like in reality because the respective practical experience is lacking. In any case, you won't have to start from zero.

In a competition held in 1994 that was unfortunately ignored publicly, the French philosopher and urbanist Paul Virilio and the architect Chilpéric de Boiscuillé predicted that the number of poor familiar to us now are “only the beginning of a wave [...], such as we have never seen before [and] which will be able to destabilize any political power”. In their view, cities need to be newly equipped and civic facilities revolutionized in order only to anchor even minimally the new “city nomads”. As a member of the High Committee for the Accommodation of the Underprivileged that was formed by François Mitterand at the time, Virilio cooperated with de Boiscuillé in setting up an international competition entitled *bâlisés urbaines*. Five hundred and seven projects were submitted and the 11 winners were presented at the exhibition “La Ville” at the Centre Pompidou. Based on Le Corbusier's metaphor of the city as a huge ship, Virilio asked, “Where are today's metropolises' life islands?” In the unfilled gaps of the constructed city, the *bâlisés urbaines* are to be the place where the “new nomads” have access to whatever they need for daily life. Virilio had in mind telecommunication technologies and other forms of access that enable people “to continue to participate in the social game”.<sup>13</sup>

What lesson does Virilio and de Boiscuillé's project teach us? Instead of just reflecting given norms of urban life—as architects often do—and thus helping to maintain a normative life in a normative city, Virilio demands a new representative “infrastructural figure” for cities, providing an additional structure of facilities that helps to ensure the societal survival of the growing urban class of the poor. This politically explosive demand causes a lot of unease because it no longer pretends that everything will just work out automatically and because it counters predominant forms of urban investment—ones that rely on very brutal and extensive forms of exclusion—with an alternative model of investment.

But how could such modest reforms, selective interventions and strategic reorientations be possible in today's cities? If there is to be a new urbanism, Rem Koolhaas said, first things have to be stirred up. According to him, it is not about the planning of lasting objects, but about the supply of options for vital processes to unfold. It should not be about the definitions of limits, but about the extension of visions, about the conscious handling of infrastructure.

## MENTAL IMAGES

When we think of cities, a sequence of structural figures comes to mind—be it the ancient, medieval or baroque Rome with its figures of churches, palaces, market places and other public places and institutions—a sequence of overlapping figures that constitute but also change the character of a city and determine the structure and the quality of its public life and private lifestyles. These figures are like mirrors of historical ideas about how the city was to be, as well as of what and whom the city had to represent as a cultural creation; networks of ideas about what the core structure of a city can be, showing images that characterize a particular city.

If we want to understand the *power-dispositifs* ruling our societies and their representations in city maps, we have to focus on the role that these figures of public places and institutions play in a city's everyday life. Focusing like this is highly interesting because the history of cities clearly shows that these structural figures—often based on visions and images—determined, abetted or hindered the quality and nature of their everyday lives. If we want to understand to whom the city belongs, we have to ask which figures do in fact exist and which forms of living they represent, favour, suppress or ignore. Questions such as these mirror the social-political dimension of these urbanistic figures.

In other words: Who has the right of being represented in the city and who does not? How are the existing figures to compete in order to enable any repressed group to be represented in the structural figures of urban facilities and living forms? Being aware of these facts and ideas, we set in motion the meaning of what city life is or could be. We question the concept of who has the right of being represented in the city's infrastructures.

We have to be clear about the fact that planning authorities, as we know them today, can no longer be the only addressees of the following questions: Who will have the (creative) authority regarding permanently renegotiating planning competence in the future city? Who is going to be concerned that urban planning has to become less virtual, more realistic; that cities are in need of new public facilities and infrastructures that prevent the exclusion of any individual in favour of another? That urbanism can contribute to the provision of access to important contemporary forms of physical and media infrastructure for everyone, be it citizens, migrants or refugees, irrespective of their social condition? That architecture and urban planning work for the current city, not for the official one? That we have to scan urban areas for current "vital processes" and to assess, in the style of a *bricoleur*, the potential for appropriate usage of different city fragments?

To quote Rem Koolhaas again, it is "about the manipulation of infrastructure for endless intensifications and diversifications, shortcuts and redistributions—the reinvention of psychological space. [...] it's not about the 'new', only about the 'more' and the 'modified'."<sup>14</sup> For the 'living city' we need the ability to detect, expose and investigate constantly shifting chances and potentials for practical interventions. We need a city with changing areas to be defined and displayed according to particular demands and opportunities at places suitable for what we would call an 'urban test-practice'.

It's also about changing cultural images. "Images are traps", says the German philosopher Wolfgang Iser. In his opinion, our most basic cultural images that determine our concept of reality are "painfully relevant", as they are inscrutable, have us dancing to their tune all our life, and are nearly inescapable, submitting as we do to their influence. Our current perceptions of living have become images of disturbance. Not only do they threaten our physical and psychic wellbeing, they also prevent other opportunities of living together. So any literal reconstruction of the city, of its public space, of its infrastructure and living possibilities must be predicated upon a restructuring of our mental images.<sup>15</sup>

*This essay is a revised and shortened version of the author's earlier "Detect & Paste City", Camp for Oppositional Architecture: Theorizing Architectural Resistance, An Architektur: Produktion und Gebrauch gebauter Umwelt, no. 18, 2007.*

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## Cluster I: Design Culture

## M. Metropolitan (Urban) Culture as Design Culture

All Images © Elisabeth Blum

fig. 1

Between Jaipur and Pushkar, 2011

fig. 2

Between Haridwar and Delhi, 2011

fig. 3

Street vendor in Delhi, 2011

fig. 4

Jaipur, 2011

fig. 5

Subterranean lightshow in the Jai Guru Dev Hindu Temple,  
Mathura, 2011

fig. 6 – fig. 9

Zaha Hadid, MAXXI: Museum of XXI Century Arts, Rome, 2011

fig. 10

Favela Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, 2001

fig. 11

Favela Morro dos Macacos, Rio de Janeiro, 2001

fig. 12 – fig. 13

Favela Rio das Pedras, Rio de Janeiro, 2003

fig. 1





fig. 2



fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5



fig. 6



fig. 8



fig. 7



fig. 9







fig. 10



fig. 12



fig. 11

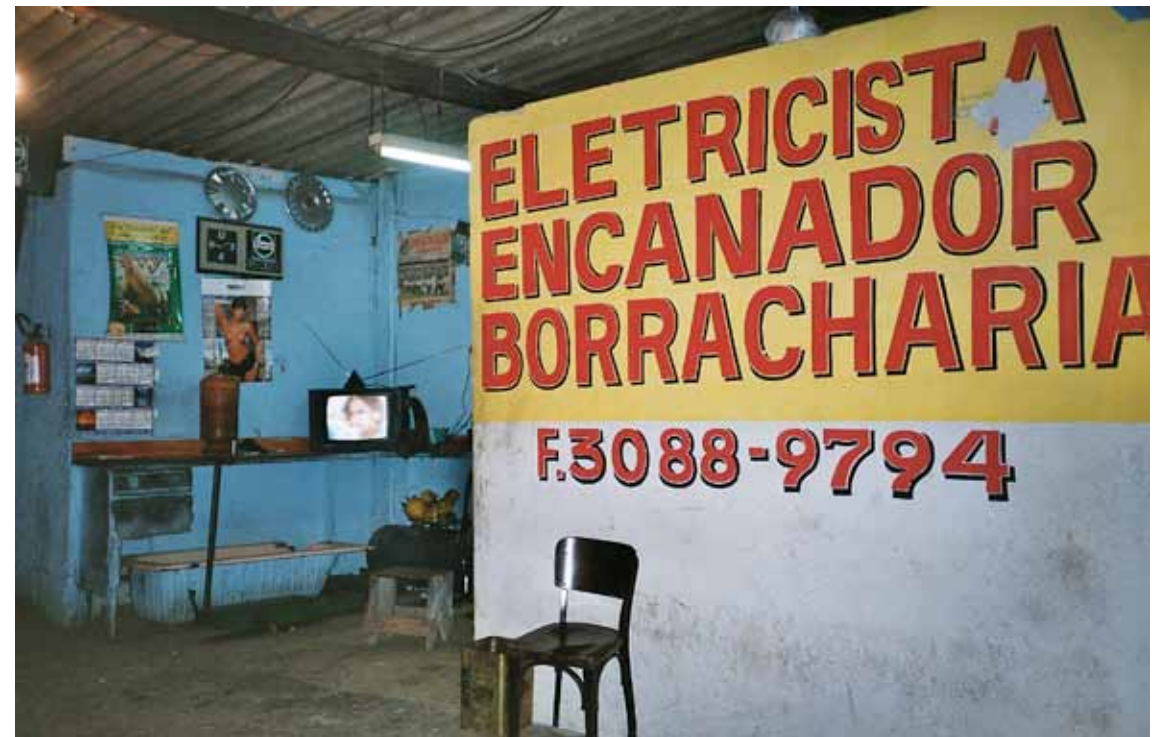


fig. 13



Birgit Richard

## The World Trade Center (WTC) Image Complex: On the Culture of the Shifting Image

*"[...] images are expected to represent directly an outer reality [...]. But it is a wrong conclusion to believe that images illustrate reality directly. [...] Images never illustrate, not even photographs, but they present, what they present, in their own way."*<sup>1</sup>

An image is no longer worth a thousand words. Our vision is getting worse, despite images that seem to offer many views from different angles. Technically perfect high-resolution images become enigmatic entities that are impossible to decipher. Although images show clear details, they leave spectators speechless as the images of fighting the Taliban. The camera seems to be involved directly. The image-producing apparatus has become an active part of the battlefield and the megazoom images are so close to the viewer.

On the other hand, there is nothing to see, as with the images of the first bombings of Kabul.

In the war against Afghanistan, the United States again created non-images. The first bombing of Kabul made TV viewers—especially in Europe—very angry with CNN for transmitting the same infrared night images already known from the Gulf War. The images of bombs over Baghdad were culturally implanted in the social memory. Ten years later the same green sparkles reappeared. War and image technologies came to a standstill with these propaganda images. Through repetition they turned into pure nothingness and emptiness, green-coloured noise. The seeing bombs provided redundant images. It could be Baghdad again or Kabul—impossible to judge from the images alone. Again, they do not provide information that can be transformed into some kind of knowledge about what's happening on the ground.

What are we to do with all these images? The images of the attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) were also very clear, but the problem in reception here was the pre-formation of memory through filmic imagination. That made it very difficult to cope with or to understand the meaning of the seen. It is important to keep Slavoj Žižek's characterization of images in mind: they are partly situated in the subconscious in an area between

the symbolic and the imaginary. It is always difficult to get certain images out of your sensory system, even when you know about their possibly manipulative character.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of this destructive terrorist attack was to create a symbolic image that will remain in the subconscious of the West for a long time. The new dimension of terror is not, as is often maintained, its global nature—terror has always been global—but the design of such a horrible aesthetic image behind which the killing of thousands of people is hidden. It is not about killing and destroying but about creating a monumental image of the destruction of a symbol that will never leave the collective memory. This material iconoclasm leads to the unbelievable disappearance of the Twin Towers and of thousands of human beings. It is a paradox that an iconoclastic fundamentalism created one of the strongest images that the global power now has to deal and compete with. Until now, the US has found no images to set against these images of destruction and collapse to eradicate that horrible event. The war against terror did not create any strong images—America's new war and the American flag were insufficient to deal with the symbolic attack. Photographers and cameramen fulfilled the mission of the terrorists because they reproduced the images of terror in real time. They transformed the terror into an aesthetic image.

All these images perform the politics of visibility without telling which images are covered through others. Death and the corpses are hidden categories; the architectonic destruction may be shown. The aesthetic remains of the WTC do not show any traces of the thousands of dead bodies vaporized or still there in the form of body parts. There is no language or symbolic image for the thousands of dead bodies. The firemen are left alone with their horrible work that includes gazing upon and handling body parts. On the other hand, the ruins of the WTC—the open wound in Manhattan—have to be plastered all over with images. This is the point that overemphasizes the basic paradigm of 'Visual Culture': visibility does not equal transparency.<sup>3</sup> The unconscious, metastatic production of images lacks an imagery that may be used for fuelling a critical approach to the behaviour of the US and its European allies at war. It is no longer the postmodern problem of the manipulated digital image but a matter of the politics of visibility. The images shown are not complex or multi-layered; they are pure surfaces<sup>4</sup> with no hidden truth behind them, only images that push aside other images.

## SHIFTING IMAGES AND IMAGE NEIGHBOURHOODS

A shifting image moves around in the image universe and is connected to other images that build up clusters around certain topics. Since the loop of destruction went around the world, the universe of images had to be remodelled. Now, every image—visible or invisible—has to find its new place in the structure. Sets of images that were accepted for decades—like the symbolically strong film images of terrorist acts or the architectonic destruction of Manhattan—become invisible for the moment.

Shifting images do not stay in one place. Every time a new strong image appears it brings some movement into images that are culturally fixed only momentarily.

An image is not a firm entity. Images as representations include the attitudes of spectators, as there is no objective image to be viewed unsituated. There is not only a single picture, but all the rituals and habits composed around its reception and production.

A critical analysis of the shifting image does not focus on the extraordinary image by an artist. There is no singular image, as art history would like us to believe. There are only image clusters and neighbourhoods. The shifting image designs new meanings with every movement; there is no standstill in the universe of images. Images are characterized through their connectivity, they build knots in a rhizomatic structure. It is important to watch the movement of images from one system to another and how they change their meaning by shifting, for example, from the art system to politics. Within the emerging networks images cross over between social systems; with the internet even doing so from one culture to another. Therefore, images are not to be bound to one analysing discipline. Traditionally, the different fields and systems of knowledge try to keep one image outside or inside their system, for example with the distinction between art and everyday culture. That means that for an art historian it would be blasphemous and unbelievable to let an image from the English painter William Turner (eighteenth century) out of their system to build up a neighbourhood with some of the photographs that have been made from the shell of the shattered World Trade Center. The image clusters of Ground Zero—especially the more artistic approaches of photographers such as those from Magnum—are interesting to look at. Their photos of the smoking remains enter into a special correspondence with the images of high art. Aside from a close analysis of the formal qualities of the images it is important to show relations between images. It is not to construct analogies: a picture of the ruins of the WTC is not thought equal to an image painted by William Turner.

This would be one of the new connective knots in the image universe that creates a new cluster that has to be interpreted as a sign of how a society tries to cope with that terrible attack. Treating the image of horror in an artistic way aims at making it more symbolic in reception, transforming it into a socially meaningful image.

The whole WTC image complex is so awful and strange that it gives rise to a lot of questions. Why are images of postal workers with masks framed with the anthrax virus? Why did people in Manhattan wear masks even if they were far from the smouldering, smelly air of Ground Zero and why did they immediately make a stylish accessory out of them? Why does Bert from *Sesame Street* turn up alongside Bin Laden?

## HOW DO BERT FROM SESAME STREET AND BIN LADEN RELATE?

The shifting image is characterized by its global availability via the internet. The net is the place where a global image culture has concentrated its public archives. Although the destruction loop of the Twin Towers originated on TV, these images were digitized and immediately put on the net. Users could choose between countless perspectives from professional and amateur videos and photos or screenshots from the different news channels showing the attack on the WTC live. The Internet established itself as a premium public storage space for moving and still images that may be used by anybody.

The shifting image is cross-cultural and intersects cultures in its digitized form over the net.

A US website uses the word jihad for expressing hate against the Microsoft character Barney. The site was consequently mistaken for an Islamist terrorist site, although it is the hate page of an American citizen. The face of Bin Laden was also immediately integrated into Western commodities cycles, transforming him into a Halloween mask.

A shifting image moves between cultures, creating some kind of Islamist pop culture that uses images of Western cultures by deframing them and adding them onto their cultural representations. The Islamist pop culture uses images for protest. To see portraits of the idolized Bin Laden in a culture that is normally considered by the West a completely imageless culture seems strange. Posters that show Bin Laden as an Islamist hero are evidence of a popular culture that is not very differentiated yet but starts to work according to Western patterns of merchandising.<sup>5</sup> Different images of Bin Laden

exist on posters, banners and also on T-shirts throughout many countries of the Muslim world. The fan products include highly symbolic images, such as the terrorist on a white horse. He also appears surrounded by a mixture of military aeroplanes and the commercial planes that the terrorists flew into the World Trade Center. There are also posters with the burning Twin Towers in the background. On these image he looks like an Islamist action hero, comparable to images of the actor Bruce Willis in front of collapsing buildings in *Die Hard*.

From the cultural viewpoint of the West, these posters are paradoxical because they are made for an iconoclastic society—see, for example, the Islamic hadith, “Angels do not enter a room in which there are figures, images or dogs”. In the long term the availability of images on the net may influence the way Muslim societies deal with images in general (as with cinemas reopening in Kabul). The question becomes, who is allowed to deal with images and is allowed to look at them. The example of cinemas in Kabul shows that women were excluded from the cinematic experience.

Through the internet, images are able to cross cultures. The fundamentalists immediately had access to images of the burning Twin Towers to use for propaganda purposes. It is therefore quite clear that digital ‘infowar’ is also fought with images.<sup>6</sup> Images do not have to be made by one culture itself—they are there for use. After they have been picked from the net they may be materialized in printed form, reproduced for others and sold.

The availability of global images for every culture means that there is a constant production of new meanings when images shift cross-culturally. The best example of this new culture of shifting images is the one that appeared first on the mailing list for net culture and politics, [www.nettime.org](http://www.nettime.org). It showed pro-Bin Laden protesters in Bangladesh and Pakistan carrying posters of Bin Laden. The poster was a combination of images downloaded from the net. One of the images on the poster showed Bin Laden alongside the character Bert from *Sesame Street*. The image originated from a hate page called “Evil Bert”, where Dino Ignacio, a Filipino based in San Francisco, put images of Bert next to dictators and terrorists—enemies of Western civilization. The people who printed the poster got their image from Ignacio’s website. It was initially discussed on the mailing list as an act of manipulation of the Western media. A posting from Diana Ozon argued that it had not been manipulated.<sup>7</sup> Standing against an act of digital manipulation were the different photos from different agencies and from different locations in Bangladesh and Pakistan that all showed the same poster. One attempt to understand the process

that led to Jim Henson’s puppet appearing on the Islamist poster included some cultural prejudices about more highly developed Western media competence: the people who made the poster were too stupid to remove Bert from the picture or they did not notice the presence of the evil Western character. But what if Bert is also known as a children’s character in Muslim cultures? On nettime Hari Kunzru noted the adoption of Bert into Muslim culture in London, where there are images of Bert with a prayer cap.<sup>8</sup>

On American anti-Bin Laden pages there are other variations of the poster, showing Bert to the right and Microsoft’s Barney to the left of Bin Laden.

So the Bert and Bin Laden connection bounced back and forth between the cultures.

This case shows the necessity of developing a bundle of questions examining the field of vision critically. The culture of the shifting image is based on uncertainties about the meaning of the singular image. One has to take a close look at image neighbourhoods and clusters to unveil the different cultural discourses that run and transport these images. Researchers have to ask questions from different cultural perspectives. The important thing is that a critical spectatorship should take a ‘curious’ look from the angle of the foreign culture to understand the momentary status of the nomadic image.

## YOU AIN’T SEEN NOTHING YET, BUT MAYBE LATER: A CRITICAL FOCUS ON SHIFTING IMAGES

The example of Bert and Bin Laden shows that it is impossible to keep an image in one culture. Once you publicize it and put it on the net, it moves around uncontrollably.

A critical culture of shifting images may ask after ways of transforming these images that say nothing into information. An education towards image competence avoids colonizing other image cultures. An image has to be recognized and reconquered as a form of cultural knowledge and as a means of participation. Viewers need the ability to contextualize an image as active spectators. Cultural competence would also be expressed through a fine tuning of the examining look. The aim is not to find out what the truth is behind an image, but to ask which images are made invisible by others.

The image clusters described have to be reframed and put into a critical discourse about how images are used to produce political and cultural meaning. This is to enable a critical

and non-hegemonic look at the whole political and social complex that infiltrates the field of vision. The intention behind the image galleries of the WTC attack on the web is not to provoke a critical or curious gaze. The whole complex of images related to the attack does not say anything by itself. So it has to be filled with proposals for symbolic meaning to allow people to work with the images. As active spectators, we must come to the point of an autonomous 'imagineering' against economic and political interests. It is amazing that in the case of the WTC attack, people have already found a way to deal with the event through their own image productions on the net. They are already encouraged to publicize unknown and unusual transformations of images by collecting and rearranging them.

The recipients of the images have to be trained as coproducers of cultural meaning. As situated viewers they have to repopulate space through recognizing its constitutive racial and sexual obstacles.<sup>9</sup> Rogoff describes space as constituted out of circulating capital and that the obstacles never allow us to see what is actually out there. But it is impossible to see what is behind an image. That is the wrong question. The precise question is: what are the other images behind the one that is visible?

One scientific approach would be to watch and encode the politics of visibility that deny the transparency of events because they are embedded in discourses of power. Images cover other images. Censorship is no longer the basic strategy to deny visibility to specific images. Instead, now an overvisibility of a controlled imagery causes an information overload that chokes questions for the other possible images. The critique of the current image culture has to refer to this kind of shifting image. The constant process of moving the boundaries of visibility should be followed to transform these enigmatic images into cultural knowledge that may question the politics of visibility.

Medial shifts and inter-medial changes show that a medial image as 'shifting image' permanently changes its meaning not only because it is set in relation or neighbourhood to other images, but also because, as a numeric picture, it does not remain in one form—that is, still/moving or material/immaterial. Any image is a composite image. This is evident in the virtual comparison of formal similarities between images. Images are immaterial palimpsests, which have no depth, but instead a medial, plane extension. These surfaces expand through the relations between images. As they have no depth, a truth can never be extracted from them. Even the consideration of the image producer's intention will not lead to a solution, but only to further images. Rather, the obvious interrelations between the images of violence, art and film show the pre-shaping of the view and make evident that a direct presentation of reality is impossible.

As images can only be viewed in relation to other images and are thus always images derived from images, they move within the entire variety of materially fixed images through to realizations of collective imaginations and phantasms, as social interim and pre-images between diverse social systems of reference.

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Yana Milev

## Cluster II: Segno

In Book 2, Clusters II to IV set the foundation for an expanded concept of design; this is important in constituting Design Anthropology and its branches. As it is presented here, Cluster II conveys the first cornerstone of an expanded concept of design with *Segno* as a root of semiotics.

This discourse on conceptions of signs and images as well as the theory of the simulacrum and critical semiotics is based on questions of the semiosis' character in shape, perception and action—in other words, in the processes involving signs and their complexity as representamen, representation and representative. Or, as Charles William Morris formulated it, in the interaction between the interpretamen (*signifié*), interpretant and interpreter, as well as in questions relating to the options of shaping and cooperation within semioses that are relevant to the explanatory model of semiotics, the semiotic triangle (symbol, thought, referent). Questions of visibility (Barthes) or the ability to deconstruct symbols and simulacra along with their dissolution (Derrida) are also the focal centre. This debate surrounding the foundation of an expanded concept of design within the first cornerstone is located in semiotics/semiology, philosophy, visual and image anthropology and cultural anthropology, as well as in the fields of media theory, literature and linguistics. This is what the *Segno* stands for.

The references made in Cluster II's composition include positions by Walter Benjamin (Work-of-Art Essay), Ferdinand de Saussure (Course in General Linguistics), Roland Barthes (Elements of Semiology), Jean Baudrillard (Cool Killer) and Jacques Derrida (Grammatology), among others. In addition to Ferdinand de Saussure, Charles Sanders Peirce is one of the founders of semiotics. Semiosis, a concept introduced by Peirce, is deemed the actual object of semiotics, the taking-notice-of by a third party, something communicative. The US semiotician Charles W. Morris takes up Peirce's theory of semiosis, as does the Italian semiotician and linguist Umberto Eco. Excellent researchers in the German-language realm have also influenced to this cluster with their semiotic theories: the German linguist and communications scientist Roland Posner ("Gestures and Rituals" and "Semiotic Pollution") and the German philosopher and semiotician Dieter Mersch (*Grammatik der Kultur: Ernst Cassirers Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*).

The articles in Block A are gathered under the heading 'Sign Conception'. I am especially grateful to be able to integrate numerous leading statements from eminent positions in the arena of cultural anthropology and semiology that spark the debate in design semiotics. Two remarkable positions on the subject are found in Block A. The German cultural anthropologist, English specialist and Egyptologist Aleida Assmann has written an article on "Problems in the Explication of Western Sign Conceptions". We were given permission to publish her essay (in its English version) from the volume *Semiotik*, edited by Roland Posner, Klaus Robering and Thomas A. Sebeok. In 2008, the image anthropologist and semiologist Elize Bisanz contributed "The Logic of Interdisciplinarity Semiotics as the Science of Mind and Body" to an issue of *Semiotics*. She wrote a spectacular article about Claudius Galen's symptomatology. For this volume, Bisanz drafted an essay on Charles Sanders Peirce's semeiotic concept. Block A closes with a visual essay and a text by Yana Milev, both of which are concerned with the iconography of the German band Rammstein.

Block B's contributions are collected under the thematic title of the 'Simulacrum'. The concept of the simulacrum is also ambivalent in that it first meant an image or reproduction, but also a fictional, vague or diffuse image. In Baudrillard's cultural and media semiotics, he deals with a concentration of this meaning: the dissolution of the difference between the original and a copy, model and portrayal, reality and imagination; the increasing loss of reference in signs and images; the empty signs that determine current society as free-floating signifiers. Baudrillard uses the term simulation to describe the dominant simulacrum of an ideology of media and consumption.

Today, simulacrum theory is inseparably connected to the concepts of hyper-reality and the rule of semiotics, the fake and camouflage and (de)sign surfaces that serve ideologies and have been liberalized and are now compared to 'ornaments as crime'—rightfully so. Given this perspective, texts by Adolf Loos, Mateo Kries (Total Design), Hal Foster (Design&Crime) and Boris Groys (Unter Verdacht) serve to underpin Block B. The German media critic Daniel Hermsdorf investigates Baudrillard's concept of simulation and its relevance for a contemporary critical film theory. The Indian political scientist Saroj Giri examines a contemporary society that is determined by mass media; he describes the "Sights and Sounds at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2011" in an ethnographic report. The works by the Dutch media artist Marc Bijl have had a strong relationship to icons and contemporary signs from the beginning. Bijl explores the semiotic violence of marketing strategies and the emotional effect of politics in public spaces. His projects include creating, faking, disfiguring and destroying free-floating signifiers such as

Bluetooth, Mercedes, Nike and other symbols from the worlds of business, pop and religion. In “Sade. Fourier. Loyola”, Roland Barthes formulated the question that worked like a fuse in a social movement critical of consumption at the end of the 1960s and 1970s: “Isn’t it more subversive to disfigure signs rather than destroy them?”

Not only is the production and the exchange of linguistic signs a central subject of semi-otics, their destruction is as well; Baudrillard (Cool Killer), Derrida (*Différance*) or Kalle Lasn, the founder of the adbusters movement, confirm this. The roles of semiotic and communications guerrillas become politically relevant. Concepts such as anti-design (Kalle Lasn) and ‘destroy design’ are radicalized slogans and measures in an *Empire of (hollow) Signs*.

The contributions in Block C are assembled under the title ‘Semio-*clash*’ and ‘Critical Semiotics’. It is a special honour to be publishing the classic representative of semio-*clashes*, Mark Dery, with his essay “Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of the Signs”. For this anthology, Mark Dery added an eight-page preface to his famous 1993 essay. Princess Hijab’s visual essay then follows, with comments by Guardian journalist Angelique Chrisafis; Princess Hijab is already a simulacrum, an agent whose identity remains hidden—much the way Banksy’s was in his early years.

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#### **A: Semiotic Conceptions**

*Aleida Assmann*

*Elize Bisanz*

*Yana Milev & R+ (VE)*

*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

#### **B: Semiocracy (Simulacrum, Hyperreality)**

*Daniel Hermsdorf*

*Saroj Giri*

*Marc Bijl (VE)*

#### **C: Semio-*clash* (Semiotic Deconstruction, Critical Semiotics)**

*Mark Dery*

*Princess Hijab (VE)*

*(commentary: Angelique Chrisafis)*

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Alaida Assmann

## Problems in the Explication of Occidental Sign Conceptions

### 1. SEMIOTICS AS A PART OF ANTHROPOLOGY

From an anthropological perspective, 'man' as a species obtains its specific characteristics in a process of differentiation from animals. As is generally known, the use of signs is unsuitable as a relevant differentiating criterion. However, this is not the case for the embodiments of their usage, the most distinctive of which are the individual natural languages. Animal sign language transmits information through the sensuous representation of that which is absent. However, *Homo significans* is set apart from animals by virtue of the 'excarntation' of signs. 'Incarnated signs' are those that are physically generated and, as a general rule, are only present for as long the sign-giver enacts them; in contrast, 'excarnted signs' are detached from the body, adhering to an information-carrier that can be detached from the sign-giver. This technical extension opened up new dimensions of sign usage beyond pure interaction. As a result, signs can, above all, be reused—and that independently of the sign-giver. The American cultural anthropologist Kenneth Burke illustrated this using a specific example. A blackbird that has discovered a trick, either through chance or painstaking effort, which enables her to eject her reticent chick from the nest, is not in a position to make use of this knowledge at a later point in time, let alone pass it on to other potential beneficiaries.<sup>1</sup> The mnemonic function of "pictures and signs which preserve the actions beyond the moment"<sup>2</sup> therefore appears to be a characteristic of man.

With the fixing of knowledge through signs, the sphere of communication is drastically expanded in space and time.<sup>3</sup> Cultures are based on such signs as organize information for re-use. This organization has both a synchronic dimension—the formation of society in space, the integration of numerous individuals into a community—as well as a diachronic dimension—the continuation of society with the aid of the creation of tradition—through the development of a trans-individual memory in which the individual can participate over time.

Anthropologically, man is to be conceived of as both *Homo significans*, sign-giving, as well as *Homo interpres*, a symbol-receiving being that experiences the world as a message, latent with meaning and in need of deciphering. It is a basic axiom of semiotics that

this 'signedness' is not derived from specific features of an object, but first emerges from the relationship between an interpreting observer and an object. Observer-related definitions of the sign have been around since Aristotle and the scholasticism that drew on his work: "A sign is that which the faculty of a cognitive subject uses to represent something". The interpreting subject lives in an environment that he experiences as addressed to himself and therefore in need of interpretation. Thus the sign world extends far beyond the socially constructed spaces of interaction; environmental signals must be continually read in order to ensure survival. However, the signals from gods, spirits and forefathers, who encode their messages in signs, must also be heeded.

### 2. SEMIOTICS AND CULTURAL SCIENCE

As man in the abstract does not exist in this form anywhere on the planet, this anthropological description must immediately be viewed from a cultural perspective. Both sign-giving competence and attentiveness directed towards meaning first receive their specific character through the relevant cultural frame. It is for this reason that an anthropological perspective must be situated in a cultural context. Individual cultures prescribe the grammars of sign practice; they define the limits within which specific semiotic systems develop and others do not. Just as a sign outside its system is devoid of meaning, so human sign practice does not exist outside its cultural foundation. That means that culture is to be viewed as the positing framework of individual sign systems and that, conversely, individual sign systems can be viewed as an index of cultural options. Cultures make prior decisions as to how environmental information is to be processed; cultural identity is measured according to the manner in which signs are used. Cultures, as the context of sign systems, condition awareness dispositions, patterns of perception and relevance horizons, which always precede the orientation of the individual.

While such prior decisions are usually described as 'cultural constraints', in what follows we prefer the term 'cultural options'. In order to illustrate this in more detail, it is useful to draw on Lévi-Strauss's distinction between 'cold' and 'hot' cultures, a distinction that replaces the untenable classification of cultures according to those 'capable of history' and those 'without history'.<sup>4</sup> The two types of culture develop fundamentally different sign practices. Cold cultures are adaptive cultures; they presuppose the sentient quality of the cosmos and are directed towards accommodation and embeddedness in the environment. To this end, the environment is transformed into a speaking subject, with whom a continuous dialogue is maintained.



In contrast, hot cultures are expansive cultures that are characterized by a drive to universalize their sign practice. Hot cultures are indifferent to their environment and environmentally abstract; they do not engage with existing environments, instead developing the intermediate world of technology as their own specific environment. The sentient cosmos is replaced by the disenchanted world, which presents itself as an object of world assimilation. The goal of expansive cultures is the domination of nature, not adjustment to it. The category of meaning is thus restricted to that made by man.

Admittedly, one cannot stop at the simple topology of cold (or adaptive) and hot (or expansive) cultures. Such a topology has the heuristic function of accentuating antithetical directions, but is hardly suitable for describing more complex problems. However, 'occidental sign conceptions' are such a highly complex phenomenon. What is at issue here is far from being a uniform cultural type with a uniform sign practice. Quite the opposite: the cultural history of old and new Europe is best described as the arena of partially overlapping sign conceptions that are engaged in mutual struggle and violent suppression. From this perspective, the cultural development of this realm reveals itself as a process of conflict between antithetical sign conceptions and practices. This will be made clear below by way of several constellations.

### 3. CULTURAL SEMIOTIC PRACTICE: SEMIOTICS OF THE TEXT, OF THE WORLD AND OF BEHAVIOUR

The question as to a survey of sign conceptions, suggested in the title of this article, requires certain limits to be imposed on the use of the term 'sign'. In a broader sense, all forms of communication and cultural practice are based on signs; this term, with its unspecific inclusivity, has been employed above, and in its general scope forms the subject of the meta-discipline of semiotics. In a narrower sense, semiotics is implied when specific phenomena within a specific culture are qualified as signs and require the development of an art of interpretation. In such cases we will speak of 'cultural semiotic practice'. In an even more restrictive sense, we define the word 'semiotics' as the theoretical reflection on signs in general. In those cases we will speak of 'semiotic discourses'.

Semiotic discourses precede cultural semiotic practice. The rationalized discourses of the sign have partially systematized cultural semiotic practice. However, they have also, to an extent, ignored or even suppressed it. Consequently, magic as a central area of

cultural semiotic practice is generally overlooked—with a few exceptions—within historical semiotic discourses that pride themselves on what they see as their scientific character. Semiotic practice emerged within the history of culture at those points where signs exist that are simultaneously experienced as meaningful and illegible. Semiotic practice begins with the experience of the illegibility of meaningful signs. When the meaning of signs cannot be spontaneously deciphered, then the culture must develop corresponding interpretative tools. These interpretation instructions are not the result of theoretical speculation; instead, they are guided by a vital pragmatic interest. This art of sign interpretation is concerned with facilitating important decision making, receiving signals related to healing and meaning, as well as orientating oneself in an insecure world.

We intend to unfurl the development of semiotic practice in the history of culture from its end, and to begin with an example. A tenured literary scholar reads the description of an abandoned garden that the narrator, a schoolboy, gives in James Joyce's short story, "Araby": "The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes, under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump". As an interpretation specialist the literary scholar now has to rack his brains as to whether the pump represents the serpent in paradise or whether it is in fact a phallic symbol. Which interpretation is found or preferred is immaterial; the only thing of importance is that, within the institution of literature, texts are considered to be pan-semiotic carriers of meaning. This pan-semiotic attentiveness ends at the limits of the text. On seeing a rusty bicycle pump in his garden, no literary scholar—no matter how sensitive—is going to ask whether it has to do more with the serpent in paradise or a disguised phallic symbol. This disposition to interpret has withdrawn from the empirical, everyday world, and is concentrated on specific texts that have been produced for interpretation.

The exegetical addiction has a long tradition. It was not developed on literary texts, but on texts that established the normative and formative basis of a society's life, on holy texts and legal texts. The art of commentary developed in close conjunction with both types of text. Its social mission was to counteract the increasing alienation of the frozen letters and to return transparency and luminosity to the signs of the text, which had grown dark. The exegetical tradition is a creation of written culture; the double-tracked parallel motion of main text and subtext is inconceivable in an orally constituted society.

By concentrating on texts as meaningful sign carriers in need of construal, the energy of interpretation withdrew from areas that had previously claimed semiotic relevance. The

interpretation of signs first emerged within cultural history not as textual semiotics, but in the form of a semiotics of the world. However, this definitely did not consist of a diffuse sense of being addressed by meaning, as in the case of the existential philosophers of our century, but of concrete messages that needed to be deciphered. The oldest cultural semiotic practice is divination. This refers to a cultural institution directed at receiving meaningful signs from another world and developing techniques for their interpretation. These messages are reflected in the world of experience: as 'sign and miracle' in natural phenomena or as inspiration received from voices. The most important precondition for divination is that communication with nonempirical beings such as gods, demons, ancestral spirits and the dead is possible. However, as their language is not immediately accessible, a special technique for the translation of such signs into comprehensible meaning is required. Priests and shamans offered their services and, as we know not least from the story of Joseph, there were experts in the interpretation of dreams. So-called 'dream books' were very popular in ancient Greece,<sup>5</sup> providing instructions on inducing and deciphering meaningful dreams. The same applies to the art of the oracle. These various forms of soothsaying constitute the oldest semiotic practices in the history of culture, whose folkloric fascination still resonates to this day.

In addition to textual semiotics and a semiotics of the world, there is a third area in which something approaching semiotic practice developed: the semiotics of interpersonal behaviour. In these cases, the problem of interpretation penetrates the realm of human interaction. Interpretation also becomes necessary here, as soon as opacity and foreignness are experienced. The primary problem is that of foreign languages, which require an interpreter. Dealings with foreigners became a semiotic practice along cultural borders and at intercultural nodal points where we have to conceive of the existence of systems of cultural bilingualism and multilingualism, as in Hellenic Alexandria or in the Bukovina of the Austrian Empire. The problem of foreign behaviour and foreign customs as semiotic cultural practices existed long before ethnology appeared, which specialized in foreign thinking. Significantly, Clifford Geertz described his ethno-semiotics using a philological metaphor. By doing so, he simultaneously made it clear that textual exegesis in Western culture has become the paradigm of all sign interpretation:

*Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a meaning of') a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour.*<sup>6</sup>

However, interpersonal foreignness is not restricted to the carrier of a foreign culture and language. Above all, the problem becomes one of semiotic relevance when one has to deal with conversational partners who are dissimulating as opposed to disclosing themselves, who are skilled in concealing their intentions for strategic reasons. While Hugh of Saint Victor developed an ethics of gesture at the start of the twelfth century, which rested on an analogy between the expression of the body and the soul, the problem took on an entirely different character in the Renaissance. Within the horizon of the exigencies of courtly life, a semiotic practice of dissimulation emerged, together with the corresponding art of behavioural interpretation. Baltasar Gracián summarized its principles as follows: "Practical knowledge consists in the art of dissimulation. Whoever plays with an open hand runs the risk of losing. The reticence of the cautious does battle with the attentiveness of the enquiring."<sup>7</sup> Handbooks supported this practice of interaction, which degenerated into a complex semiotic exercise in which physiognomy formed an integral part.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. SEMIOTIC DISCOURSES IN THE OCCIDENT

Canonical texts, the signals of otherworldly messages in this world, and the lack of clarity in human behaviour can be identified as three heterogeneous sources of semiotic practice in Occidental culture. Alongside this practice, and to some extent developing independently, semiotic discourses emerged that took the sign itself—its occurrence, status and the variety of signs—as the subject of reflection. In the history of the Occident, these semiotic discourses originated in Greek and Roman antiquity, where the sign as a medium of the cultural generation of meaning first became the focus of interest. However, these histories of discourse do not combine to form a continuous history of a discipline, where the term 'discipline' presupposes continuity in terms of subject and problem area, conceptual instruments and institutional authorization. Up until the dawn of modernity, the histories of semiotic discourses are subordinate to a variety of thematic frameworks and interests.

In Greek and Roman antiquity semiotics was an area that did not claim an interest in its own right, but provided assistance to other fundamental reflections: linguistics, epistemology, the theory of perception and ontology. Signs as subordinate media of speaking, thinking and perceiving did not have an autonomous status yet. The Stoics were interested in the sign, especially within the framework of their theory of the origin of language. They attributed a point of emergence to each word, contained within itself

as its irreducible origin, and to which the etymological procedure could carefully work its way back. There is no strict boundary in this conception between language and the world of things; linguistic signs are impregnated with the things they represent, even if this relationship does not always remain transparent due to the corruptions of temporal change.

In addition to the semiotic discourses of the philosophers, there are those of the theologians. Their origin extends beyond the development of a Judaic or Christian hermeneutics. An early example is provided by the discussion on the status of the names of the gods, which was initiated in the controversy between Origen and Celsus. According to the theory initially proposed by Origen—and later adopted by Iamblichus—the names of the gods were, on principle, untranslatable. As a consequence, they were accorded a special status beyond that of the linguistic sign. This special status rested on their extraordinary power, which excluded the replacement of the signifier as a matter of principle.<sup>9</sup>

The subordination of sign theory to overriding philosophical problems such as language, truth and knowledge ended with Augustine, who is generally regarded as the founder of semiotics. The novel aspect of the discourse he founded is the integration of the theories of language and of the sign. Augustine is the first to interpret language as a structure of signs. It means that words are no longer conceived of as (secondary) images or manifestations of things, as in the case of Plato, but as elements of an independent system. In addition, he also developed his own theory of understanding (hermeneutics) for the written signs of the biblical text.

Scholasticism continued the theory of signs as a subdiscipline of grammar and logic. The study of signs served the purpose of instruction in correct and truthful speaking (grammar) and thinking (logic); in the Protestant tradition, the semiotic discourse was subordinated to theological metaphysics. With the beginnings of a modern epistemology in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the interest in signs was placed at the service of epistemology. The Christian tradition of textual hermeneutics was revived in modern hermeneutics, whereby the allegorical procedure for the generation of meaning was increasingly replaced by textual interpretation. The most important change in the history of the semiotic discourses is that from an auxiliary science—whose services were employed here and there—to a generalized theory forming the foundation of other disciplines, a status it is considered to have reached with Peirce.

*Translated from the German by Colin Shepherd. German original first published as Alaida Assmann, "Problems in the explication of western sign concepts", Semiotik/ Semiotics: Ein Handbuch zu den zeichentheoretischen Grundlagen von Natur und Kultur, vol. 1, Roland Posner, Klaus Robering and Thomas A Sebeok eds, Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1997, pp. 710-715. Reprinted by kind permission.*

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Elize Bisanz

## The Triadic Mind: Peirce's Semeiotic Concept of Designing the World through Signs

*"The working body is not understandable without knowledge of its structure"*  
 Claudius Galen

### A SCIENCE OF MIND AND BODY

The crisis that science and philosophy were involved in during the past two hundred years stands out clearest in no other feature than in the relation between the natural sciences and humanities. In both fields of study, progress in research was tantamount to being single, continuous and triumphant. The epoch was unique, not only in content but also in terms of methodology, not only concerning the continuous expansion of subject matter but also regarding its intellectual development and penetration.

The natural sciences not only progressively widened their sphere, they also created entirely new instruments of knowledge. Biology advanced beyond the mere description and classification of natural forms and became a genuine theory of organic forms. As for the sciences of culture,<sup>1</sup> they stood before an even greater task. For there, it was first of all a question of finding that genuinely scientific attitude that even Kant and Hegel believed to be reserved solely for mathematics and the mathematical science of nature.

Instead of removing the gulf between nature and culture, academic philosophy in the nineteenth century served only to widen it further. For philosophy itself increasingly broke up into the two hostile camps of naturalism and historicism. This was less the result of a differing critique of knowledge and methodology, than an opposition between *Weltanschauungen* that was scarcely accessible to purely scientific arguments. Subsequently, the choice between naturalism and historicism seemed left to the feelings and subjective taste of the individual scientist, and polemics increasingly outweighed objective argumentation.

The entrenched positions of these scientific conflicts have naturally left very vivid traces, which are still present in the 'mentefacts' of contemporary cultural science. Never-



Charles S. Peirce

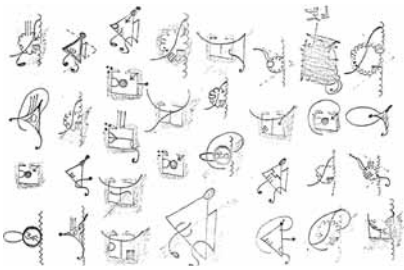
theless, recent neuroscientific brain research has led to interesting results in the search for the material sign vehicle of human thought; there is a growing research consciousness that complex information-processing mechanisms are deeply embedded in cultural environments and determined by sign processes. Within these discussions, psychological concepts of thought and sensation are getting broader access into the research field of the neuronal basis of consciousness. In a certain way, the analysis of the different stages of the process of understanding binds neuroscientific research to theoretical concepts from the field of the humanities.

An important role in this interdisciplinary approach is played by the theories of William James<sup>2</sup> (1842-1910), a professor of psychology and philosophy, whose work on pragmatism contributed strongly to the development of psychology.<sup>3</sup> A main category among the issues discussed is presented by the notion of *cooperation*. Researchers explain its function as the most effective way to transmit information or signals to the brain. Further highly culturally-adapted categories such as *experience*, *expectations* or even individual *intentions*—traditionally issues of concern in the humanities—are playing a fundamental role in the neural exploration of the brain.

This scientific awareness opens new horizons towards solving complex inquiries into the dependencies between mind and body, a point of intersection that was also one of the central issues for the psychological and philosophical concerns of the nineteenth century. From this point of view, the emerging popularity of psychological approaches in various neuroscientific research projects can be considered the natural way of joining the interdisciplinary efforts.

What are the issues at stake and how can we expand the circle of this interdisciplinarity? A common denominator between the contemporary scientific discourse and that of the second half of the nineteenth century is the category of *synchronization*. Neuroscience explains neuronal synchronization as a functionality that decisively influences which incoming signals can be further processed in the brain and thus which signals become relevant to perception. Similar explanations were discussed by William James, who himself was deeply influenced by the founder of pragmatism, Charles S. Peirce,<sup>4</sup> a logician and scientist trained in physics and chemistry, who had practice in using various precision instruments.

Peirce's interest in human nature was wide and he contributed notably to the study of various psychological problems; in particular, to the problems relating to sensation, ma-



Peirce's manuscripts are full of graphical illustrations; he considered diagrammatical expression as a genuine manifestation of human thinking, which he often compared with a reasoning machine. The illustrations appear on blank pages in a notebook included in MS 725, begun 1867

teriality and the psychology of perception. Peirce's thoughts and speculation in scientific matters greatly interested William James and had a deep impact on his philosophy of change.<sup>5</sup>

Peirce was deeply interested in the history of thought and of various natural sciences. But the evolution of matters of logic fascinated him most. One of the central issues in Peirce's pragmatism—a position that Peirce developed as a revised form of pragmatism—was again the category of synchronization, understood as synchronization on many levels of mind activities. The most important and general of them he considered the synchronization of *mind* and *body* or the biological and the non-biological individual faculties of the process of understanding.

Peirce was profoundly acquainted with the development of psychology and criticized its existing divisions of introspective, experimental and *physiological* psychology. Instead, he proposed a physiological psychology that should work commodiously with a diagrammatic figure for the exploration of the brain and its connections. He considered the psychological theories derived from the study of the anatomy of the brain of great value, as long as it was the conscious mind that was to be studied. Nevertheless, he stressed, that this could not be considered a method of investigation, but only an instrument in forming those hypotheses that investigation had to take as its starting point towards explaining the structure of the *semiosis*.

Peirce's scientific aim was pure observation in every discipline. Accordingly—and contrary to introspection, which was a direct observation of the operations of the mind as mental operations—a true psychological experiment had to be the careful observation and definition of the features of human action. Feelings, on the other hand, could only be scientifically observed through the objects of their reference, which meant that there could be an observation of feelings primarily through the *characters* of objects.

This “nomological psychognosy”, as Peirce called it, organized the different divisions of a scientific psychology according to the following categories, within which the categories discussed in contemporary neuroscience, such as *volition* and *attention*, were considered subcategories.<sup>6</sup>

Peirce determined the different elements of the nomological psychognosy as follows:

- a. *General Psychonomy*, which studies the laws of final *causation*; and
- b. *Special Psychonomy*, which studies the subordinate laws of mind beginning with *association*.

Many of the central categories of contemporary brain research, such as emotion, attention, volition etc., are absorbed in a complex chain of brain functions and mind activities, forming subcategories of what Peirce called *special psychonomy*. They are essential elements of brain processing, a phenomenon that occurs at the intersection point of all the categories, also understood as *the intersection area of body and mind activities*. Accordingly, the listed categories were not designed in a separation of the two areas, but as a whole system of a *science of mind and body*.

For Peirce, analyzing the functional levels and categories was only one aspect of a scientific mission that could only be completed by discovering and explaining the relational levels of the elements or categories. He explained logic as the scientific observation of the universe of mind and as the science of general properties of signs, of their relations or relatives. Within this, Peirce included an entire epistemology and methodology that had the goal of analyzing reasoning on the basis of anatomical properties. Criticizing research in formal logic that dealt primarily with dyadic relations, he designed a new concept for thinking reasoning, namely the *triadic relational analysis*. For him, the best way to express thought relations and thought development in logic was the graphical approach of diagrammatic techniques, which included both the role of observation and experimentation in logic, as well as the material properties of their manifestation.

## THE TRIADIC EVENT OF CULTURAL MODELLING

A central question that emerged in this context at the beginning of the twentieth century—especially in the circles of Ernst Cassirer's cultural sciences—was to bind both scientific traditions through a common denominator in their scientific essence, logic or form—such as the question about the ‘essence’ of language or of any objects of culture—as a strategy to overcome the gaps in purely historical, psychological or metaphysical definitions.

The question concerning the essence of language, understood in its wide definition as a mode of expression, promised a new approach of unifying the diverse scientific methods. Up until those discussions, the way of differentiating the fields was, for example, through distinguishing the three spheres of spirit: subjective, objective and absolute spirit. Psychology studied the phenomena of subjective spirit; objective spirit was the scientific object of history; and metaphysics dealt with the nature of absolute spirit. This triad would thus appear to encompass the entire totality of culture with all its individual forms and objects.



Like Peirce, Ernst Cassirer pointed out that the analysis of the conceptual form as such could not completely elucidate the specific difference that exists between the science of nature and the science of culture; hence, analytical inquiry had to advance to a deeper level, towards a phenomenology of perception. Cassirer explained perception as a simple phenomenal state that contains two elements that are intimately fused in it, without being reduced to one or the other. They remain distinct from each other in their signification, even though it is not possible in actual fact to separate them. Accordingly, perception could not occur without a determined 'object'. But this necessary objective reference presents itself to us in a twofold direction, which we can briefly and schematically characterize as a direction toward the 'it' and a direction toward the 'you'. Perception is always determined by an I-pole which defines the object-pole. But the world that the I encounters is in the one case a world of things and in the other a world of persons. In the one case we look at it as the whole of spatial objects and as the totality of temporal changes that realize it in these objects, whereas in the other case we perceive it as something "like ourselves".<sup>7</sup>

Supposing it is unmistakable and uncontested that a human being *experiences* reality in this double manner, why then has theory repeatedly made the attempt not only to abstract from this fact, but also flatly to deny and refuse it?

Cassirer explains this anomaly by recalling the tendency that all theorizing derives from its origin, which increases in strength as theory advances. This tendency consists not in completely supporting but in limiting one of these factors of perception. Furthermore, all theoretical explanation of the world finds itself from the beginning faced with another spiritual force: the force of *myth*.

In order to hold their ground against this force, philosophy and science must not only replace the particular mythical explanations with others, but also contest and reject the mythical conception of being and events as a whole. They must not only attack the formations and figures of myth, but must attack its root. This root, explains Cassirer, is none other than the perception of things that characterizes the mythical worldview. For it, there is no rigorously fixed and separate 'world of things'. Myth knows nothing of properties and qualities of similarity and uniformity, as detected by empirical observation. For myth, the world can assume any form at any moment, depending on emotional states such as love and hate, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, in which the features of reality transform them constantly. Each of these excitations can give rise to a new mythical *gestalt*.



An excerpt of the written part with the title "Natural Classifications" in MS 725.

For philosophy and science to achieve pure scientific observation, Cassirer stressed the importance of developing an independent way of looking at things, of focussing analytical work on the perception of expression. Instead, science in general and strict physicalism construct a world in which expressive qualities are initially replaced by or reduced to the pure sense qualities of colours, tones, etc. Even these, argued Cassirer, are secondary properties that are based on the primary, purely quantitative determinations.

Furthermore, as philosophy is more than a critique of knowledge it must go beyond the analysis of intersubjective languages to universal meaning language spaces. A science of a specific language is more than its physical determinations; it is also an expression, that the 'physical' reveals itself in. The same would hold for the science of art, science of religion and other sciences of culture, insofar as they seek to be something other than the representation of physical things and the changes that take place in them. The history of religion would concern itself with those behaviour patterns that we call rite and cult, prayer and sacrifice. It could describe the manner and course of these behaviour patterns with exactness, but it would have to abstain from all judgement as to their 'meaning', for it would possess no criterion by which it could distinguish these supposedly unique actions from other actions that fall within the sphere of the common. In order to grasp the essence of meaning production between mind and body, science has to abstain carefully from all judgements over what representations, thoughts or feelings find their expression in it.

On the other hand, however, Cassirer pointed out that in this sphere the physical itself is seen in a new *function*. Not only does the physical 'exist' and 'become', but in this being and becoming something else appears. This appearance is the *meaning*, which is not detached from the physical but is *embodied* by it and in it; it is the factor common to all those contents that we denote by the term *culture*. It is essential to consider this factor to have an access to its 'symbolic value'. This double function of everything symbolic, the function of splitting and reunification, emerges still more clearly and convincingly in art, in the poetic power of the *sapientia humana*.

Human beings acquire culture through a triadic event. What Peirce called the triadic event always involves *meaning* of a special sort. Words are nothing less than the tiny triadic lever that moves the entire world into the reach of our peculiar species. This capacity is unique to humans, as they are not only able to understand and 'utter' 'words', but also to organize them in structural entities with *rules, grammar and linguistic structure*.

Like Peirce, Cassirer criticized scientific research that focussed only on information about the human as organism, its needs and drives, its behaviour and physiology. On one side are the dyadic sciences, from atomic physics to academic psychology, with its behaviourism and the various refinements and elaborations thereof; and on the other side are the 'mental' psychologists, with entities such as consciousness, the unconscious, dreams, egos, ideas, archetypes and so on. An appropriate role for science and philosophy would instead be to explain the transformation of the responding organism into the languaged/symbolic human. This would be an important step—to go from a dyadic science such as biology to a triadic science that also includes the grammar of sign systems. Whereas the psychologist or neurologist explains the mind as a property of brain circuitry, Peirce proclaims a different sort of reality, which lies at the heart of all uniquely human activity—speaking, listening, understanding, thinking—namely, *triadicity*.

Once one concedes the reality of the triadic event, one is brought face to face with the nature of its elements. The concept that binds the elements to an entity that Peirce gave various names: interpretant, interpreter, judge and also "mind" and even "soul".

This binding concept has an individual materiality with the ability to assert; whereas no material structure of neurons—however complex and however intimately it may be related to the triadic event—can itself assert anything. Peirce insisted both on the reality and on the non-materiality of this binding element, a position that is of critical importance to all sciences because its claim to reality is grounded not on this or that theology or metaphysics but on empirical observation and the necessities of scientific logic.

Peirce designed his pragmatism as the science of the semeiotic, which covered both the perspective of natural sciences and humanities. He understood the semeiotic as a combination of *semiology* and *semiography*: semiography as graph, a mark, a trace and semiology as the logical theory of signs, of the conditions of their fulfilling their functions, of their chief kinds, etc. Hence the analysis of semiosis must include both:

- a. a semiological analysis of sign expression forms, of their fulfilling their functions, of their chief kinds, etc., which focuses on the materiality of signs;
- b. a semiographical analysis of signs as symptoms of the conditions of culture, as meaning analysis.

These diverse scientific strategies in the history of modern semiotics show the complex structure of the sign materiality in semiosis. Cognitive science—as well as neuroscience—is heading towards a genuinely interdisciplinary approach to showing the structures and the logic of interaction between the triadic—therefore cultural—mind and its material, the neurological location that was defined as the "gamma band"; this region that binds the diverse individual characteristics can be considered the neural basis of *semiosis*, the focal point of sign-operations. The Peircean *semeiotic* as the science of semiosis shows the essential role of semiotic investigations to understanding human understanding and its forms.<sup>8</sup> Cognitive science is already having very productive experiences in this direction. As for neurobiology, the initial step has already been taken in the encounter with the psychology of William James, whose intellectual heritage is deeply ingrained in the Peircean era of pure scientific observation beyond disciplinary egocentrism.

1. The term "cultural science" is used in Cassirer's description as a science of forms of cultural expression such as languages, art, myths, etc.
2. See Andreas K Engel, Stefan Debener and Cornelia Kranczioch, "Coming to Attention", *Scientific American MIND*, August 2006.
3. In various research fields and topics, such as cognition, emotion, consciousness, memory, attention.
4. KL Ketner, *His Glassy Essence: Autobiography of Charles S. Peirce*, Nashville TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1998.
5. William James dedicated his book (*The Will to Believe*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1896) to Peirce, with the following words: "To my old friend, Charles Sanders Peirce, to whose philosophic comradeship in old times and to whose writings in more recent years I owe more incitement and help than I can express or repay."
6. Peirce, CS, *The Essential Peirce, Selected Philosophical Writings, Volume 1 (1867–1893)*, Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel eds, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1992.
7. Cassirer, Ernst, *Zur Logik der Kulturwissenschaften: fünf Studien*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994.
8. A very good example of the topicality of Peirce's thought is shown by the recent publication, GR Beil and KL Ketner, *A Triadic Theory of Elementary Particle Interactions and Quantum Computation*, Lubbock: Institute for Studies in Pragmatism, 2006. The monograph summarizes an attempt to demonstrate that there are direct applications of Peirce's Logic of Relations—in particular, the Sign Relations—to the theory of elementary particles and their interactions. The authors have also registered a patent for a new computer logic switch.

## RAMMSTEIN\_SEMIOLOGY

fig. 1

North America Tour 2012

Photo © Rammstein GbR

courtesy of Rammstein GbR

fig. 2

Badge for Officers of the Land Forces of the National People's  
Army Panzer I

fig. 3

Rammstein Logo

designed by Dirk Rudolph

courtesy of Rammstein GbR

fig. 4

GDR Document Folder

fig. 5

Rammstein Single Collection, Cover, 1998

(contains the singles: 01. Du riechst so gut / 02. Seemann /  
03. Engel / 04. Engel Fan Edition/ 05. Du hast/ 06. Das Modell)

designed by Dirk Rudolph

courtesy of Rammstein GbR

fig. 6

Emblem of the GDR Pioneer Organisation "Ernst Thälmann"

fig. 7

LIFAD-Logo

Liebe ist für alle da

designed by Bastian Sobotzick

courtesy of Rammstein GbR

fig. 10

Red Star, Kremlin, Moscow

fig. 11

Rammstein Made in Germany Tour 2012 Moscow, poster

Source unknown

fig. 12

Kazimir Malevich, Black Cross, 1928

Suprematist Icon

Oil on Canvas, 106 x 106 cm

St Petersburg, State Russian Museum

fig. 13

Rammstein Brand

designed by Dirk Rudolph

courtesy of Rammstein GbR

fig. 14

Iron Works, Eisenhüttenstadt

Bundesarchiv, Picture 183-26067-0008

Photo © Horst Sturm, 1954

fig. 15

Rammstage

Photo © Sandie Besso, Paris 2012

Sandie Besso Photography

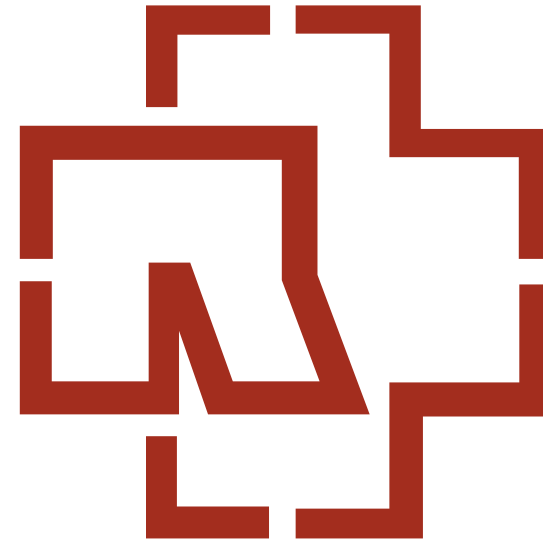
fig. 16

Rammstage

From the Album: The Different View / stage details

Photo © Faren Matern, 2012

## RAMMSTEIN\_SEMIOLOGY (1-7)




HEIMAT  
SENTIO  
RELIGO  
HELIOS  
IRON  
FETISCH  
LEIB





 figure 1



figure 2 / 3 

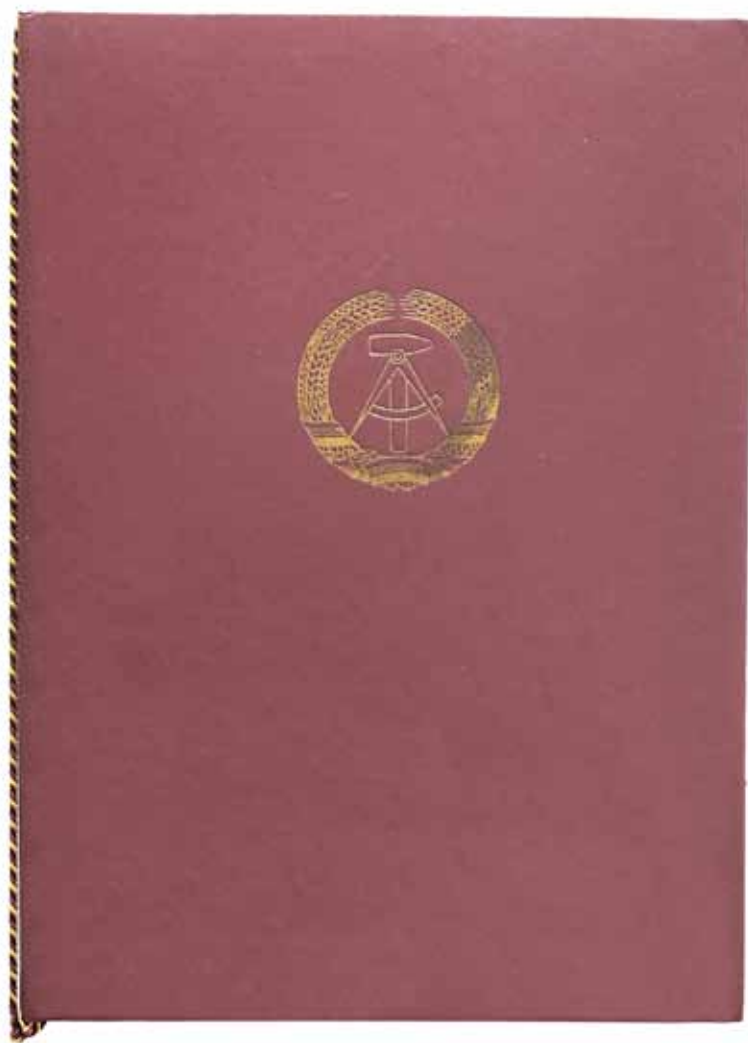


 figure 4

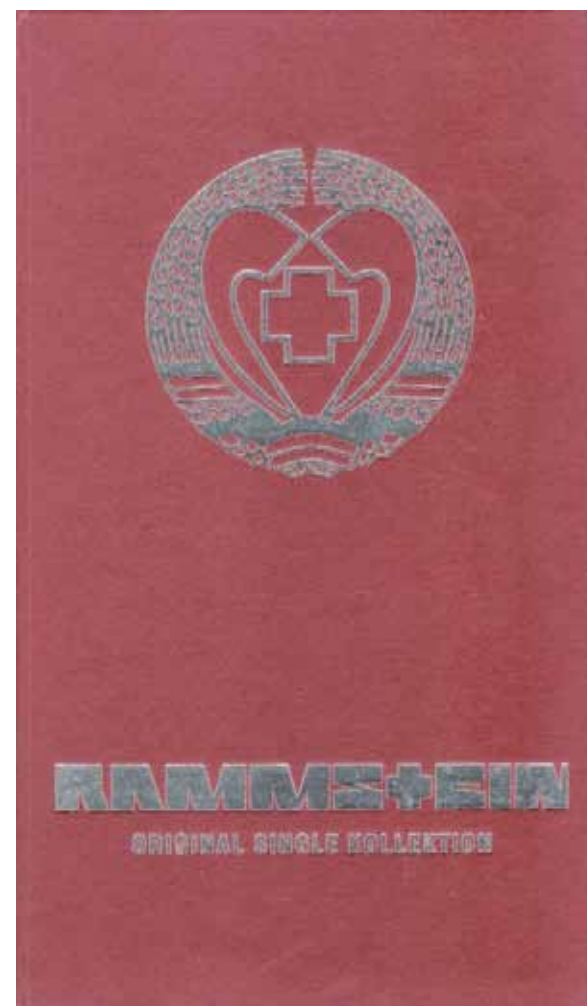



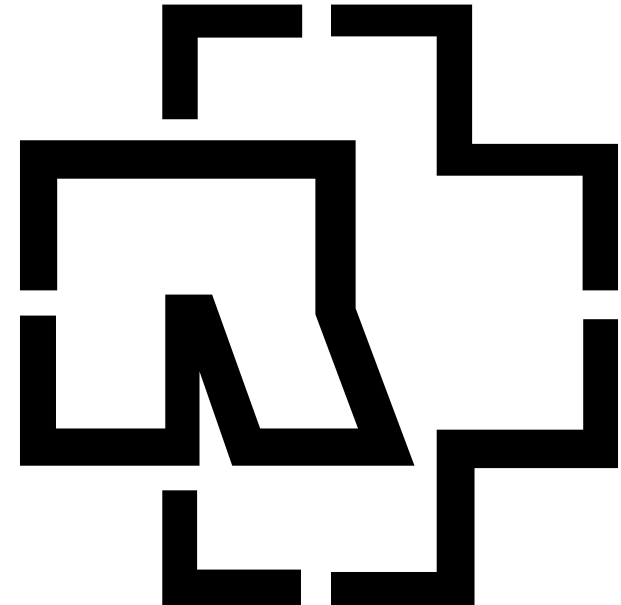
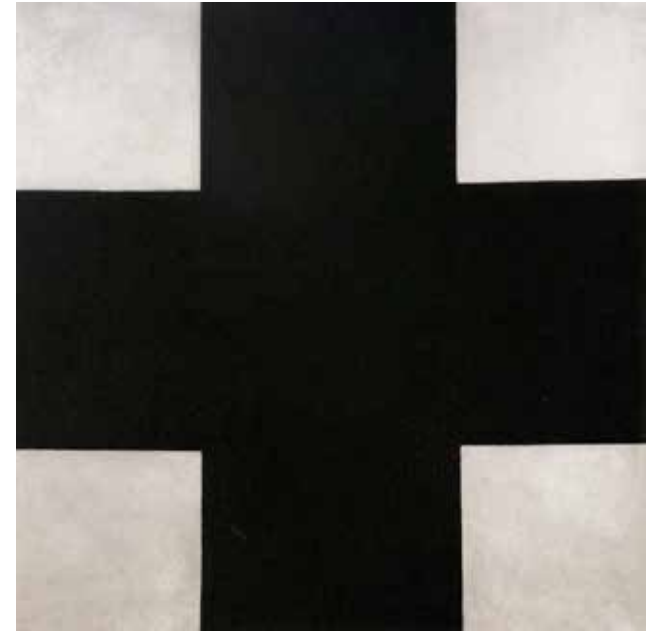
figure 5 



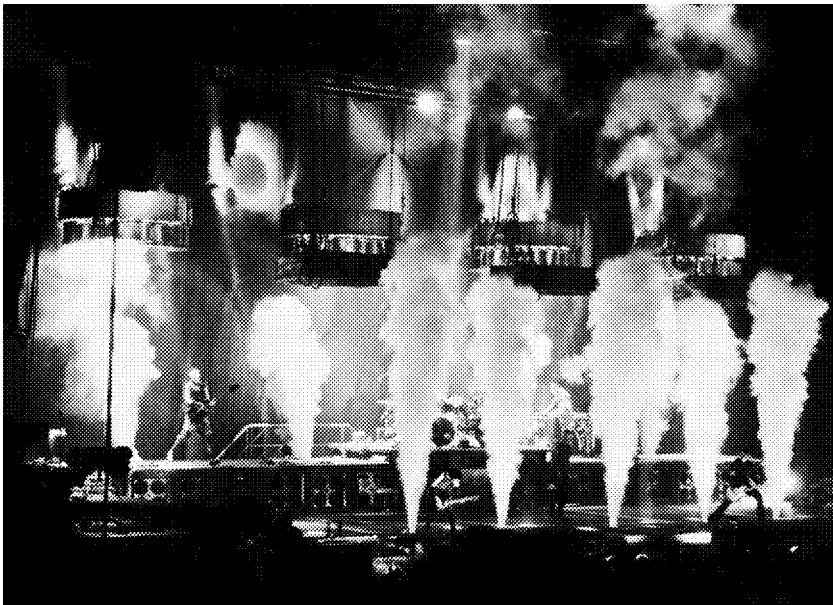
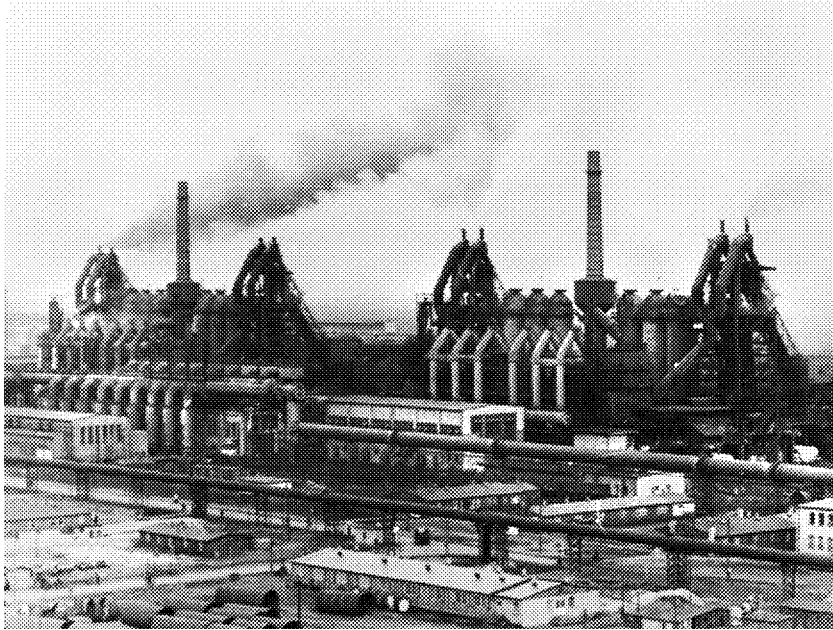
 figure 6




figure 7 







 figure 14 / 15



**GOTT WEISS ICH WILL KEIN ENGEL SEIN.**

figure 16 

Yana Milev

## Rammstein\_Semiology

### : INTRO

Who could have succeeded in propagating a mythology over the last two decades that has spread raucously through sold-out arenas and onto one of the largest touring stages worldwide—other than the German band Rammstein (stylized as R+)?

After R+ had to deal with media accusations of glorifying national socialist cults and symbols in the past—and after the band's immediate reaction with their position "Links"<sup>1</sup>—one can be happy that the Nazi accusations didn't do them any long-term reputational damage. One just ponders, however, what minds under what conditions put their journalistic creativity into high gear in order to conceive of such a thing. Since R+ is an association of brothers from East Germany, it seems apparent that the criticizing brothers from the West are simply overwhelmed by this provocative band's iconological and poetic dimension. The journalistic misinterpretation of R+ can thus only be a postcolonial form of iconoclasm. The newspapers' cultural pages have apparently not managed to move beyond the question of whether R+ is left or right, concluding stereotypically that the band is a kind of Laibach adaption of Feeling B offshoots. It is my objective—in my reaction to the media disorientation that is also applied to characterizing the group's members and to judging their sound—to develop R+ semiotics in this essay.

Semiology means the theory of signs. According to Roland Barthes, semiology is the science of all sign systems, including a repertoire of gestures, symbols, metaphors, figures, myths and icons. Given this background, it is my intention to decipher the multi-level symbols, emblems, archetypes and narratives that characterize R+'s work. This is no simple task; we are not just dealing with a canon of visual symbolism, but also with a semiological "flagship" that appears on all levels of perception. In addition to the visual level, there is also an acoustic and musical level, an olfactory level (gasoline, burned flesh, "Du riechst so gut"), the architectural level (bridge), the mythological level and the level of personal typology. All of these levels, which carry a heavy semiological load, finally lead to the R+ *Gesamtkunstwerk* and the founding myth of a legend.

The simple fact that the band members repeatedly survived and pulled themselves up by the bootstraps in a German Democratic Republic (GDR) that was then denigrated

by *Spiegel* journalism in the 1990s and during the era of the real incorporation by the West—and who, in the meantime, have risen like the Phoenix from the ashes to fill all of Germany with sound—is sufficient cause to make you wonder. The cultural pages' hysteria could be deemed a logical reaction that devalues what is unheard of—and probably because, from now on, an uncomfortable wind is blowing from the East for all Toten Hosen, Ärzte and Böhse Onkelz. The extent of the R+ criticism even led to Ursula von Leyen announcing that "Rammstein does not deliver texts with a high quality"<sup>2</sup> and thus deserved being placed on the index set by Germany's Federal Department for Media Harmful to Young Persons. Public media subtly rule over the atmosphere of public consumption. In this climate, R+ is not the Phoenix, but rather the archaeopteryx, a kind of dragon, rising from the ashes—in fact, "rising from the ruins"<sup>3</sup> and loaded with all kinds of mythological facets of a country that has been erased from cultural memory.

The band's visual character is clearly defined by GDR and Eastern Bloc emblems. The redesign of numerous East German emblems creates the R+ logo, covers and coat of arms. An example is the emblem of the GDR's 'Young Pioneers' organization, which serves as a pattern for the R+ emblem LIFAD;<sup>4</sup> the National People's Army insignia for officers of the 'Landstreitkräfte Panzer I' is the model for an R+ logo in the form of a military insignia with its wings; the red GDR certificate folder is the model for the first R+ single collection; the 1980 emblem for the XXII Summer Olympiad in Moscow is the model for the design of *Völkerball*<sup>5</sup> (2006); the R+ star metaphor that was used on the Moscow poster (2012 tour); and the central R+ logo makes reference to Kazimir Malevich's suprematist cross, which can also be seen in Laibach's "Der Staat"<sup>6</sup> music video. Numerous visual symbols are presented here with attributions that cannot be misconstrued; they will be investigated in the "Zone" segment of the seven-part treatise of R+ semiotics.

Other image icons are the 1950s steel factories from Eisenhüttenstadt, previously Stalinstadt, which reoccur in the metallic and steaming R+ stages that spew smoke and fire; the miner Adolf Hennecke, who mines for gold to offer up to Snow White in the "Sonne" (2001) music video; the post-revolutionary East German who, in panama hat and hotpants, is obsessed with travelling in order to find a beach paradise in "Mein Land" (2011). This last song also references the unbelievable "—schland oh -schland" hysteria initiated by the group Uwu Lena (the remake of a voiceless something and no-name-girl, who won Eurovision for Germany in Oslo in 2010: Lena Meyer-Landrut). "Schland O Schland" became epidemically popular during the 2010 World Cup among the reunified 'Ballermann community',<sup>7</sup> the members of which only feel fully dressed when their cars sport *autobikinis* in the colours of the national flag.<sup>8</sup> *Wendeossi* and *Wendewessi*<sup>9</sup> are happy; finally, they are allowed to sing about their own nation—not



as a “Deutschland über alles”,<sup>10</sup> but rather in a linguistically amputated form: “Schland”. This inconceivability is dealt with by Rammstein in “Mein Land”.<sup>11</sup> In the chronology of song titles, East German steelworks have become neo-German *Ballermanns*. And thus the subject of the ‘peaceful revolution’ has been checked off the list.

Of course, the subject of “Mein Land” is open to interpretation. In the music video of the same name, you can’t miss the fact that Till Lindemann chants his command, “Wohin gehst Du, wohin?” (*Where are you going, where?*), into a megaphone decorated with the Swiss national emblem. It is widely known that Switzerland’s asylum and migration policies are questionable at best. In the little country, the Swiss *Volkspartei* decorates its billboards and ads with unprecedented xenophobic slogans; their goal is an initiative to regulate the percentage of foreigners in Switzerland. You can easily see Switzerland as a playground for “Mein Land”, even though Switzerland only has mountains and, in this case, no beaches lined with palm trees.

In addition to the visual symbols and narratives that characterize the R+ mythos, the acoustic and musical references definitely come to the fore in R+’s constructed sound profile. Comparing them to Laibach is an obvious step, especially in terms of the iconography. But Laibach, in comparison to R+, are far more an amalgam of industrial (post-industrial) and pop music, and are musically not very close to R+’s sound. The description of R+’s music ranges from a standard determination of them as a metal band that is difficult to categorize—due to their eccentric mix of melody, lyrics and theatricality—ending up as ‘dance metal’. According to North Rhine-Westphalia’s Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Rammstein is deemed an important representative of the *Neue Deutsche Härte* (New German Hardness). But even here the categories are insufficient, which has not damaged R+ in any way. R+’s worldwide success in the last two decades has raised an array of questions. Indicators of this success are, in addition to the strong image scenarios, the broken-up soundscape, the dramaturgic character of the stage shows and the music videos’ suggestiveness. Broken-up soundscape. R+’s so-called hard music is made up of typical metal “Enter Sandman” guitar riffs, penetrated by Till Lindemann’s stanza-based vocals that lead to hymnic refrains. The role of choruses in R+’s songs is so massive that it is absolutely no problem for Spanish, Italian, Polish, French and Russian fans to sing along. German is, after all, supposed to be a difficult language, and it is only a rumour that it has established itself in international communication. This may change if R+ causes a breakthrough that the Goethe Institutes in 92 countries over the last 60 years (since 1952) have not come close to reaching. But even here there have been pioneers: Blixa Bargeld supplied attention-grabbing German lyrics

that even managed to reach Japan. So, the reason why an audience that is linguistically far removed from the German language sings along is no less a result of the refrains’ poignant anthemic and song character. Even German fans are extremely well served when Till Lindemann sings his rough songs, given that the finest poetry gushes from his mouth—you have to strain your ears if you want to understand the words. (When has anyone ever wanted to understand the words when they throw themselves into the ocean of techno, metal or rock?) The texts have a linguistic quality and power that does the German classics proud (and, yes, Goethe did come from Weimar). So much so, that one has to seriously wonder what Frau von der Leyen understands to be a higher education. This is the level at which German talk shows and the magnates of media and politics decide that R+ disseminates taboo texts. Period.

Broken-up soundscapes—in keyboard and piano solos by Christian ‘Flake’ Lorenz. Recently, a journalist said that the rockers’ sonic “roast” is garnished by Flake Lorenz’s odd notes. Unfortunately, once again one has to make reference to the tabloids’ helplessness. It is only the combination of Till Lindemann’s voice and Paul Landers’ and Richard Kruspe’s power chords’ groove, tectonically penetrated by Christoph ‘Doom’ Schneider’s drumbeat and interrupted by Flake’s organ acrobatics, that is in fact musically unique. Sometimes the entire sound landscape crashes in the direction of pop, as in the chorus of “Ich tu dir weh” (2010), sometimes in the direction of techno, as in “Du hast” (1997). On the other hand, the organ and piano parts—as in “Hilf mir” (2005)—are reminiscent of classical or ‘serious’ music. Recently, Lindemann’s lyrics were set to music as the “Mein Herz Brennt” song cycle by Torsten Rasch, performed by the Dresden Symphony in 2004. The vocal and speaking roles taken by the baritone bass René Pape and by Katharina Thalbach transport Lindemann’s texts into the category of the classical song. The timeless urgency of Lindemann’s lyrics are described by the author of the concert programme as follows: “When apocalypse becomes one with genesis is when my heart begins to burn. The sound fades away, the words go silent, but what is heard and suffered through lies like a film on his creations in its emphatic beauty.”<sup>12</sup> In R+’s sound profile, hymnic elements follow symphonic elements, song-like structures follow metal, martial moments follow the master’s voice in its best stage German, recognizable as a mix of male Marlene Dietrich, Marilyn Manson’s personal Jesus, death metal frontman Chuck Schuldiner and the Russian baritone bass and Wagner interpreter Yevgeny Nikitin. By the way, Nikitin, the ex-metal rocker, is now also walking into the German media libel trap, as he has tattoos that are “either symbols of National Socialism or symbols that demonstrate a close proximity to NS ideology, i.e. runes and such”.<sup>13</sup> A response from Bayreuth followed promptly, preventing the maverick Wagner interpreter

from taking on his stage role. Tattoos play the same role as German pronunciation does for the stage. If you roll your Rs, it is immediately Teutonic satire with a reference to Adolf & Co. However, the rolled R dominated stage German into the 1960s and into Bert Brecht's songs. One of the greatest post-war actors, the prominent director of the Berlin Ernst Busch acting school, Wolfgang Heinz, rolled his Rs playing Lessing's Nathan at the GDR's Deutsches Theater like no other. The German theatre is unthinkable without the rolled R, but still Lindemann's stage language causes as much furore as a neo-Nazi demonstration. "Schland O Schland" is just that demented.

R+ is a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The steel factory stage, an optical-atmospheric mix of Berghain, Tacheles and Tatlin's Tower, celebrates Marinetti's Futurism, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* and Russian rocket science in one spectacle. It is great opera with big choirs, hymns and odes that tell of life's powers and abysses and leave nothing out. Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, with the four operas *Rheingold*, *Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, may be a good reference. The tabloids should be warned not to speak of Nazism, since Richard Wagner is, after all, a boy from Leipzig—just like Till Lindemann. With the fine difference that Lindemann, the greatest pyromaniac of all time, offers us spectacular fire and light technology with Gert Hof<sup>14</sup> in order to highlight the abysses (as one ought to do in Bayreuth and singe the entire hill in the process). This happens while Flake, the man at the keys, turns odd arabesques with his perfect dancer body; he reminds one of Iggy Pop, Woody Allen and the Japanese Butoh artist Kazuo Ohno. Flake's art is *Butoh Punk*, a hybrid of comedy, fragility and lightness that weaves through the martial fabric with its musicality—and thus breaks it up.

In addition to local history, the quest for the holy grail and storms of steel, the subject of the Romantic age dominates the scene. Much of what the tabloids reject as R+ taboos, as they don't meet the tastes of a consumer audience, but rather an expensive therapy session, are Romantic subjects. Duels, suicide, self-harm and obsessions are discussed as pathologies from clinical perspectives, such as borderline and narcissistic disturbances. Similarly, the rush to the summit in "Ohne dich" (2004) and the sea voyage in "Seemann" (1995) are *Lebensraum* discovered during the Romantic period. As Rüdiger Safranski demonstrates in his book on Romanticism, the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder went to sea in 1769 to seek adventure and stimulate his pathos. Without Romanticism, no Kleist, no Novalis, no Grimm brothers and their fairy tales presenting us with the timeless subjects of incest, child murder, sexual abuse, sadism and fear in a wonderful way (as they appear in "Mutter", "Mein Teil", "Ich tu dir weh" or "Bestrafe mich")—and no collections of folk songs. "Sah ein Knab ein Röslein steh'n", a text by Goethe from 1771 that can't be more Romantic, is reinvented in "Rosenrot" (2005) as an

abysmal love story—and in the way that those who yearn and are jealous become serial killers. Catharsis is at the root of Greek tragedies: the poetics of spiritual cleansing. One can assume that the band members, on the one hand, and the audience, on the other, invoke a kind of transformation (of themselves) on the evenings of their furious concerts. At least Till Lindemann can then be seen as an angel, or perhaps more of an angelic dragon with a fire-spitting cape of feathers. Fire as an archaic element of destruction and cleansing runs through all the shows and creates a supernatural atmosphere. As is stated in the lyrics to "Asche zu Asche" (1995), "the fire purifies the soul"—the R+ arena obviously turns into a location of taboo-free subjects and collective arousal.

In his article for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* magazine,<sup>15</sup> Alexander Gorkow writes about R+: "Darkness is one thing, light the other. Volume is one thing, whispers the other. Sadness is one thing, humour the other. You will not understand Rammstein if you are not willing to accept contradictions."<sup>16</sup> Those who grew up in the GDR know that you didn't speak directly. Life was a *Glass Bead Game* (Hesse), meandering between propaganda surfaces and subversive, fragmented metaphors, a life forged ahead in absurd emblems and an extreme willingness to take risks. Shaping its *Lebensräume* meant, above all, surviving—Emergency Design. Though surviving should certainly be understood to be ambiguous: as an exaggerated, exalted and excessive life, fragile and fleeting, in multiple impenetrable facets and as a game of just barely having escaped once again.

R+ is and remains enigmatic and exciting. Brilliant management stands behind their image between disappearing and reappearing in new costumes and contexts, their abstinence from journalistic expression, immediately sold-out concerts that are announced spontaneously, behind their image between *Ossibrüder* and conquerors from Hollywood, the *Musik-Malocher* (music workers) and simple family fathers, among other things. This management knows how to build myths. Everyone gets what they want when they open their hearts to the boatmen. And R+ get awards—more than is possible in a lifetime.

Rammstein consists of:  
Paul Landers  
Christian Flake Lorenz  
Till Lindemann  
Oliver Riedel  
Christoph Schneider  
Richard Kruspe

- 
1. "Links 2-3-4", a track on the third R+ studio album, *Mutter*, 2001.
  2. <http://www.jurablogs.com/de/rammstein-jugendschutz>
  3. A part of the GDR national anthem.
  4. LIFAD, *Liebe ist für alle da*, sixth R+ studio album, 2009.
  5. *Völkerball*, DVD, Universal Music, 2006.
  6. Available online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJ4A2MfINL8>.
  7. The *Ballermann* community is a German community in Mallorca, named after the Ballermann beach bar at Playa de Palma, which characterized a typical German habit abroad: to booze, to bawl and to fuck.
  8. *Autobikinis* are textiles and pennants in black/red/yellow, with which cars are decorated (on mirrors, small flags from the windows). They are a sign of German national confidence and are mostly displayed during soccer games at the European or World Championship level.
  9. *Wendeossi* and *Wendewessi* are colloquial terms for post-reunification East and West German citizens.
  10. Part of the "Deutschlandlied", resp. the German national anthem.
  11. "Mein Land" is the song title on the R+ retrospective album, *Made in Germany 1995-2011*.
  12. Programme text, CD, *Mein Herz Brennt*, Torsten Rasch, Universal, 2003.
  13. Available online at <http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/kulturheute/1818337/>.
  14. Gert Hof, German lighting artist and director with international success. He staged the pyrotechnology and lighting for numerous R+ concerts. Died in 2012.
  15. *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin*, no. 27, 6 July 2012.
  16. Available online at <http://sz-magazin.sueddeutsche.de/texte/anzeigen/37769/1/1>.

Daniel Hermsdorf

## The 1,000 Lies of Cinema: On Baudrillard's Term 'Simulation' and its Relevance for Film Theory

### IT'S THE ECONOMY, EGGHEAD!

Cinema: that's 100 years of practice and nearly as many of theory. Success is measured in economic terms—demand stimulates supply, at least in the case of an expensive art form like cinema. If theory is critical, its opportunity for success in relation to practice may only come in the long run. If theory is affirmative, it aligns itself with the public relations of ideological and commercial production. Such theory *can also* be critical, when it imitates faults of practice (perceived as such) pointedly but in positive terms—"subversive affirmation".<sup>1</sup>

What was established as mass culture in the course of history is a strange mixture of optimized communication, tolerance and liberty and cynicism, malice and deception of an audience that has limited (blocked or costly) access to film archives and that is treated like the *mule* with a carrot dangling in front of it. What is puzzling in this context are the different idioms of discourses, disciplines and social groups. One person's deepest desire is a joke to someone else. What causes disgust from a theoretical or humane point of view operates better than anything else in terms of marketing techniques. What obviously fails in some domains and 'market segments' is the basis and purpose of media: communication.

### FIRST TOPIC: APPEARANCE

Over the course of centuries, the fine arts have developed numerous motifs to address their own virtuality. This includes iconographies of the mirror, the curtain, the image within the image, as well as narrative legends thematizing artificial illusion (e.g. the competition between Zeuxis and Parrhasius in Ancient Greece). The integration of self-reflection, of self-criticism and of moralistic warnings about the power of images did not damage their triumphal march through Western cultures. Automated pictorial production means of the nineteenth century emerged from theories that were the basis for the realistic construction of space, the linear perspective of the Renaissance. Over the last two decades, their potentialities have been expanded by digital techniques.



Figure in a mirror with clock  
*La Sirène du Mississippi*  
(*Mississippi Mermaid*)  
France/Italy 1969  
D: François Truffaut

This topic is a fundamental one, if statistics on time spent on television consumption and the use of computers for entertainment purposes are reliable. A major part of people's lives in industrialized societies is invested in watching and listening to audiovisual representations. The freedom to choose (maturity or 'media competence') stands in opposition to some cinematic motifs, which, following the artistic *memento mori*, remind the viewer of transience and the vanity of all human endeavour. Viewers should carefully observe when clocks operate as straightforward symbols of time in the history of film. Endlessly redundant, chains of motifs can be reconstructed since the early days of cinema that connect the human figure with clocks or with the figure's mirror-image and other self-referential metaphors, for instance symbols of death, such as skulls, or lampshades, which can be understood as metaphors for reflecting screens and luminous displays. The anthropomorphic design of scenography and composition metaphorize the relation between physicality and imagery.<sup>2</sup> Additional motifs in this vein are technological apparatuses: from everyday objects like telephones to the fantastical projects of virtual realities. They thematize media apparatuses, while being transmitted by media apparatuses such as the cinema and television. The tendency unfolding around these motifs is disproportionate to the euphoria of other media since the 1990s, expecting new forms of experience of 'virtual reality'.

In a large number of scenes, the history of film demonstrates that humans 'speak on the phone to lampshades', that human bodies are treated indiscriminately like inanimate objects and are constantly connoted and interchanged with them in visual logics. Fireplaces open up like threatening chasms; humans are decorated like flower arrangements and are staged as their equivalent. What can be judged an absurd apex of such iconographies is, for example, the lampshade in Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Ordet* (*The Word*, Denmark, 1955), which is positioned in front of a portrait on a table between talking humans. As implied by the *mise en scène*, they are not communicating with each other, but with the lampshade. In Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'Avventura* (*The Adventure*, Italy, 1960), a potted plant is positioned in a fireplace, where it is misplaced—in the same way that a human does not belong to an arsenal of non-living objects.

Aside from these single images examining virtuality and reification, several feature films explore fantastic scenarios of simulated worlds. In doing so, they foster a culturally pessimistic worldview. Some examples may speak for themselves: *Welt am Draht* (*World on a Wire*, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Germany, 1973); *Brainstorm* (Douglas Trumbull, USA, 1983); *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, USA, 1995); *The Matrix* (Larry and Andy



Phoning the lampshade?  
*The Big Clock*  
 USA 1948  
 D: John Farrow



Talking to the lampshade?  
*Ordet (The Word)*  
 Denmark 1955  
 D: Carl Theodor Dreyer

Wachowski, USA, 1999). Analogous narrative constructions, read self-referentially and affecting the ontological status of images, can be found in plots about ghosts, puppets, artificial humans and extraterrestrials.

## SECOND TOPIC: DEATH

In *Ordet* we also witness the resurrection of a dead person. This turn, which can also be understood as bitter satire, refers to an iconography of death in the history of film that is far more dominant than it is in the history of art in general. The parallel of the *memento mori* has already been mentioned. Zombies have been established as a variant of the horror genre. Referring to the repressed knowledge that film pictures are inanimate, the idea of lifelessness returns on screen.

The passage leads from *White Zombie* (Victor Halperin, USA, 1932), *The Walking Dead* (Michael Curtiz, USA, 1936) and *I Walked with a Zombie* (Jacques Tourneur, USA, 1943) to hordes of ghosts and living corpses in hysterical horror movies like *Night of the Living Dead* (George A. Romero, USA, 1968) or *Army of Darkness* (Sam Raimi, USA, 1994). From this point of view, the history of film appears as the “greatest graveyard in the world” on which the stately mansion of Hjalmar Poelzig (Boris Karloff) is erected in Edgar G. Ulmer’s *The Black Cat* (USA, 1934). To his prisoners he announces the truth about his world: “Even the phone is dead!”

## THIRD TOPIC: MADNESS

As is already known, rhetorics of madness play an important role in modern culture. Originating with Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic pathologies, a discourse on mental disease and madness has been popularized, comprising private conversations, cultural products and institutional rules. In the history of film, two important iconographies of madness can be found: the insane criminal and the mad scientist (a third is the realistic story of psychopathologies and psychiatry, which is nowadays mostly found in arthouse films like *Sweetie* [Jane Campion, Australia, 1989] or *I’m a Cyborg, But That’s OK* [Chan-wook Park Republic of Korea, 2006]). Here there is an affinity to the genre of comedy, in which certain patterns of behaviour and thinking are satirized. A number of different cinematic works deal with the mad scientist, such as *Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Stanley Kubrick, USA, 1961), *The Nutty Professor* (Jerry Lewis, USA, 1963) and *Altered States* (Ken Russell, USA, 1980).

Megalomania is attributed to characters such as the arch-criminal. In addition to these villains—typical of James Bond films—cinema is fascinated by the sexual pervert. Sex and serial killing—as in *Peeping Tom* (Michael Powell, UK, 1960), *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, USA, 1960) or *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, USA, 1991)—constitute an outlet for the urge-driven mind and deviant Other of bourgeois society, escaping moral constraints in controlled fantasies of fictional worlds for an agreed (but expanding) period of time that could possibly be described in terms of catharsis and compensation.

Technical media themselves are haunted by psychopathological criteria. The recording of images and sound is hallucinatory.<sup>3</sup> Tending towards the totalization of simulated sensory experiences, media psychology associates them with regression and sensory delusion.<sup>4</sup> Cinematic form establishes special differences from visual reality, thus influencing the spatial and historical consciousness of man. The constants of form and size are partially suspended through the perspective and movement of the camera, as well as through montage.

These formal properties are connected to some of the iconographies of virtuality and simulation. When, in Tim Burton’s *Beetlejuice* (USA, 1988), human ghosts carry their eyes on their tongues in wide-open mouths, stumbling through a desert that cannot be placed in time or space and that is filled with bizarre shapes, we can read it as a metaphorical narrative of the fragmentation and disintegration of the human figure and its environment through cinematic representation. In John Carpenter’s *Memoirs of an Invisible Man* (USA, 1992), a detonation devastates the building in which a lecture on magnetism is being given, and Nick Halloway (Chevy Chase) gives voice to just such an impression: “It was in a nightmare. Nothing around me was right. I could see pieces of the office, jagged edges of the building. Was I hallucinating? Because all laws of physics seemed to have been suspended.”

## FOURTH TOPIC: SEX

Like no other form of art, photography and cinematography owe their impact to erotic aspects of the human body. A lot could be said about the psychological and sociological implications of the infiltration of public life by intimate pictures (especially of the female body). The cinematic exploitation of female eroticism is perhaps expressed sufficiently by photographer Dick Avery (Fred Astaire) in *Funny Face* (Stanley Donen, USA, 1957), as he directs Jo Stockton (Audrey Hepburn) in a fashion shoot: “Heartbroken, suffering. You’re Anna Karenina.”





Misplacement—plant in a  
fireplace  
*L'avventura (The Adventure)*  
Italy/France 1960  
D: Michelangelo Antonioni

From the female idols of early cinema to the simultaneously ironic and abusive cynicism of Paul Verhoeven's *Showgirls* (USA, 1995), a constellation of power is repeated in which a male image-maker finds female 'models' and feeds them into advertising and/or masturbatory chains of exploitation. Harun Farocki has documented the industrial production of erotic sensation in *Ein Bild (An Image)*, Germany, 1983). The meticulous, overactive and soulless realism of pictures showing the naked, seducing body becomes obvious.

In addition to the evolution of eroticism in cinematic images, from covered limbs through the taboo-breaking 'sexual liberation' of the 1960s, to the ubiquitous availability of internet pornography, another story can be told. It deals with Freud's sexual symbol, based on the analogy between objects and parts of the human body. In the history of art, this symbolism can be followed back to Dutch still lifes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In cinema and television it appears frequently, as firearms, champagne bottles or as rhombuses, openings, seams.

In Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (USA, 1943), a bedpost protrudes like an erect penis from the lap of a lying woman. In numerous Hitchcock compositions sexual symbols are pictured as carved wood, a carrot or the finger of a glove, without ever showing a naked body. Films like Hitchcock's elucidate the American prudery of age restriction—associated with an odd tolerance for media violence—as a historical curiosity. Symbolic penises and vaginas loom and pose everywhere in the scenography of film, flickering on millions of private screens in living rooms, while depicted bodies are subjected to a fearful control of lust.

On the other hand, the market for pornographic 'basic services' is liberalized digitally and made easily accessible. "Late-bourgeois pornography serves in capitalist society as an initiation into the not-now structure of schizoid life, swindled out of its own time."<sup>5</sup>

## FIFTH TOPIC: MEDIA THEORY

French poststructuralism is only one among several peculiarities within the history of philosophy, but it has a great influence on current media theory and therefore serves as the point of departure for the final part of my argument. In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*,<sup>6</sup> Jean Baudrillard puts forward for discussion the notion of 'simulation', developing

it further in several other texts. As with the terms of Gilles Deleuze, those of Baudrillard have a Freudian-Marxist and Lacanian basis. In reading their texts (in Deleuze's case, his books on cinema<sup>7</sup>), we become aware of contradictions and incoherencies.

We can argue that these texts deal with argumentative logics that cannot be reformulated consistently in other terms. The question of 'ideology' remains untouched by fashionable discourses. Baudrillard calls it the first "simulacrum", "a corruption of reality through signs".<sup>8</sup> Ideology stands in contrast to material reality, as the product does to its reality of production in Karl Marx's concept of the "fetishism of the commodity". "It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things."<sup>9</sup>

Ideology and the commodity are "fantastic forms". Baudrillard's categories can be applied to film: in the "industrial era" it is "production",<sup>10</sup> which—in contrast to the first simulacrum—becomes a factor that constitutes reality. The third simulacrum is what he calls the present time:

*The end of the spectacle brings with it the collapse of reality into hyperrealism, the meticulous reduplication of the real, preferably through another reproductive medium such as advertising or photography. Through reproduction from one medium into another the real becomes volatile, it becomes the allegory of death, but it also draws strength from its own destruction, becoming the real for its own sake, a fetishism of the lost object which is no longer the object of representation, but the ecstasy of denegation and its own ritual extermination: the hyperreal.*<sup>11</sup>

With "hyperreality" or "simulation",<sup>12</sup> a circular definition is given from which we cannot dissociate ourselves on an epistemological level: if the "reduplication of the real" becomes "the real for its own sake", the basic ontological difference does not apply. A psychic situation like this would be deplorable, with the power of judgement and sense of reality extinguished. The definition of the third simulacrum performs nothing other than that with which the first simulacrum reproaches ideology: to embezzle "reality" with "signs". Whoever does not read Baudrillard's third simulacrum as a logical fake, has not understood the first. Whenever Baudrillard's 'simulation' is debated without indicating this circumstance, the term 'ideology' remains obscure.



Revived by electricity  
*The Walking Dead*  
 USA 1936  
 D: Michael Curtiz

Contributions to this logical and strategic project can also be observed in authors such as Deleuze or, recently, Slavoj Žižek. In his second book on cinema, *The Time-Image*, Deleuze writes of Alain Resnais' *Providence* (France, 1977) that it belongs to the "cerebral cinema": "if the cinema of bodies referred in particular to one aspect of the direct time-image—series of time according to the before and the after—the cinema of the brain develops the other aspect—the order of time according to the coexistence of its own relations".<sup>13</sup>

According to Deleuze, this is concretized by Resnais as a puzzling structure of time:

*In Providence, the bombshell is in the state of body of the old, alcoholic novelist, who rattles in every direction, but also in the state of the cosmos in thunder and lightning, and in the social state in machine-gun and rifle bursts. This membrane which makes the outside and the inside present to each other is called memory.*<sup>14</sup>

On the level of content, Deleuze describes the confused state of mind of the main character, which is also manifested in narrative form and montage. In psychoanalysis, the distinction between interior and exterior is connected to the infantile narcissistic phase of personal development.<sup>15</sup> Deleuze now claims that this undifferentiated constellation of interior and exterior, which reigns in the primary identification of the infant, is the nature of "memory" and becomes cinematic form. Two categorial impossibilities are linked to this: a metaphorical transposition of primary identification from a psychic process of infantile experience to processes in the brain of adults; and a transposition—dubious in itself—of this definition of psychic processes to an aesthetic form.

Correspondingly, in reference to this chapter of *The Time-Image*, Stojan Pelko formulates, albeit cautiously, "That is why we dare to say that, in contrast to the traditional distinction between primary and secondary identification, Deleuze is interested precisely in the *identity of the two identifications*".<sup>16</sup> On a terminological level, that would mean giving up ontological and psychological differences of appearance and reality, sense of reality and hallucination. Pelko's essay "*Punctum Caecum*, or, Of Insight and Blindness"

was published in the anthology *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*, which was edited by Žižek.

In Žižek's article, "The Individual: Hitchcock's Universe", a twist in the argument connects a nonsensical logic à la Deleuze with Marx's theorem of the exchange of goods. Žižek draws a parallel between Hitchcock storylines in which characters are subject to a *Dieu obscur*, their fate determined by cruel chance, and Marx's "'fate' of the commodity, its exchange-circuit, experienced as radically external to its positive, inherent properties (its 'use value')".<sup>17</sup>

The fantastic form of the commodity equals the Kafkaesque destiny of the cinematic character. In both cases, an invisible programme ensures what happens to the visible (commodity/character). In this context, Žižek makes a comment that undermines the whole logical operation as reported so far: "Yet the use of such abstract homologies is not to be overestimated—ultimately, they function as an excuse for postponing the elaboration of the concrete mechanisms of mediation".<sup>18</sup> This signals that the argument itself has the form of a commodity: the "abstract homology" commodity/character is called upon as "excuse" for the fact of "postponing the elaboration of the concrete mechanisms of mediation".

In Deleuze's and Žižek's texts, dysfunctional "abstract homologies" are at work. Their functionality is based on an inaccurate structure, which has its only justification as a literary and artistic metaphor: as a playful-associative connection of usually distinct domains of appearance, signification and meaning, partially accepting of inaccuracy. Such an illogical homology has also been observed in Baudrillard's terminology: demonstrating an ideological error in compliance with the first simulacrum, the definition of the third simulacrum postulates its own deficiency as unquestionable. Every time the term 'simulation' is used uncritically, the commodity form of the argument or statement is revealed.

The semiotics and film theories of Baudrillard, Deleuze and Žižek produce fallacies with psychoanalytical terms that turn logical structures into commodity form, until a logical state is reached, which, in the case of commodities, Marx calls an "absurd form".<sup>19</sup>

## LOGICAL FAILURE

The Greek word *homologia* means 'consistency'. In the first place, cinematic representations are iconic: they are based on the similarity of the signifier and its real referent. Žižek's "postponing the elaboration of the concrete mechanisms of mediation" can be



Woman with phallus  
*Shadow of a Doubt*  
 USA 1943  
 D: Alfred Hitchcock

applied to the topics mentioned above. The critique of appearance always aims at the iconic function of signs and the ontological difference between reality and semiotic representation. In this regard, the ambiguity of images is the interference of living forms and their lifeless representations. Among other things, the absurdity of cinematic form lies in these first two topics and their specific deformations of visual reality. The eroticism of images is again based on the iconic function of signs, which presupposes an illusionistic confusion of images and reality—Sloterdijk's "not-now structure".

"[T]he elaboration of the concrete mechanisms of mediation" would, for example, include an insistent investment in the reflexive post-processing of cinematic products. At the present time, this is a naive utopia. The economic powers-that-be deplore the educational deficits of coming generations, while equipping them with technological apparatuses designed for the extended consumption of signs and the costly upgrading of hardware. Academic arts disciplines devoted to the study of contemporary media are constrained to justify their existence, for they have no immediate economic impact in the way that the sciences or engineering may. In case of doubt, the *tube* as technical device and buyable object seems more interesting to cultural policy than what is shown and inscribed on the minds of consumers. There is freedom of choice for citizens as consumers, but also an economic logic that requires rapid feedback, which cannot in fact be expected in this case. Damage is recognized when it is done. And then it is too late.

Deleuze does not transpose the lack of authenticity in cinematic form into abstract terms, but into an isolated characterization of Resnais's conception: "sometimes we only produce an incoherent dust made out of juxtaposed borrowings; sometimes we only form generalities which retain mere resemblances".<sup>20</sup> The fragmentation of the visual world in the cinematic frame and in the syntagmatic montage often tends to be "incoherent dust". Iconic signs are condemned to register "mere resemblances". This evaluation results from a "taxonomy" that Deleuze's books on cinema only claim to be.<sup>21</sup> In its ideas, this theory is merely a terminological tomfoolery, which, in full knowledge of the taxonomical basic structure—the ontological and semiotic problems of film—, performs a mimesis of cinema in its absurd form.

### THE CRISIS OF DERIVATIVES

What to do with the paradoxical rhetorics of representation in the wake of Baudrillard? What to do with the heritage of film history, which dissolves in endless loops of motifs, narratives and logics? What might follow is a new pathos of human presence against

the oblivion of being, contained in the spatially and temporally shifted rendering of recordings. What might follow is a new—or an older, but forgotten—standard of semantic integrity.

For the time being, the viral principle of Baudrillard's rhetorics has succeeded—evidently because it was constructed along the lines of a derivative culture that has successively detached linguistic and monetary signs from their *denotatum*. Sometimes, what follows is an adjustment of value.

1. Concerning this strategy, see Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse, "Subversive Affirmation: On Mimesis as Strategy of Resistance", *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, IRWIN ed., London: Afterall, 2006, pp. 444-455, available online at [www.projects.v2.nl/~arns/Texts/Media/Arns-Sasse-EAM-final.pdf](http://www.projects.v2.nl/~arns/Texts/Media/Arns-Sasse-EAM-final.pdf), accessed 22 May 2011.
2. See Daniel Hermsdorf, *Filmbild und Körperwelt: Anthropomorphismus in Naturphilosophie, Ästhetik und Medientheorie der Moderne*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011.
3. See the chapter "*Laterna Magica* and the Age of the World Picture" in Friedrich Kittler, *Optical Media* [1999], Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010, pp. 70-117.
4. See Michael Balint, *Thrills and Regressions*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1959; Hartmut Heuermann, *Medienkultur und Mythen: Regressive Tendenzen im Fortschritt der Moderne*, Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1994; and Gaylyn Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
5. Sloterdijk, Peter, *Critique of Cynical Reason* [1983], 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, p. 266.
6. Baudrillard, Jean, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* [1976], London: SAGE, 2002.
7. Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* [1983], Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986 and *Cinema 2: The Time Image* [1985], Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
8. See Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" [1978], *Simulacra and Simulation*, 16th edition, Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007, pp. 1-42.
9. Marx, Karl, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* [1867], vol. 1, London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1982, p. 165.
10. See Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p. 50.
11. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, pp. 71f.
12. Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, p. 50.
13. See Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, pp. 204 and 207.
14. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, pp. 204 and 207.
15. "The interaction between narcissistic libido and object libido corresponds thus to the interaction between the relation to introjected and external objects. If the ego and the internalized objects are felt by

the infant to be in bits, an internal catastrophe is experienced which both extends to the external world and is projected on to it." Klein, Melanie, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms", *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, no. 27, 1946, pp. 99-110, p. 108.

16. Pelko, Stojan, "Punctum Caecum, or, Of Insight and Blindness", *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*, Slavoj Žižek ed., London and New York: Verso, 1992, pp. 106-121, p. 116.
17. See Slavoj Žižek, "The Individual: Hitchcock's Universe", *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)*, London and New York: Verso, pp. 211-272, p. 216.
18. Žižek, "The Individual", p. 265.
19. I have shown that this is already a consequence in 'classical' Hollywood cinema. In Billy Wilder's films—as an example among others—complex semio-economic relations of interchangeable elements on all levels lead to logical and signifying blind spots. See Daniel Hermsdorf, *Billy Wilder: Filme – Motive – Kontroverses*, Bochum: Paragon, 2006.
20. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 123.
21. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, without page reference ("Preface to the French edition").

Saroj Giri

## Sights and Sounds at the Jaipur Literature Festival 2011

*The 'rise of the urban upper middle class' in 'global factories' such as China and India has been much commented upon. In India, however, the 'harsh reality' of the rest of the country and the almost ungovernable pressures of the burgeoning poor tend to inhibit this class in leading the high life and impairs its otherwise seamless, frictionless movement. A simulacrum, a world of free-floating signifiers—supposedly free from regimentation by any given 'reality', an 'equal and open' space—is easily close to the dreams of this class, inspired no doubt by the 'free spaces' facilitated by gated communities and private security cordons that occupy large parts of any Indian city. The irony is that even a well-meaning Literature Festival cannot escape the aporias of creating a supposedly 'equal and open' space amidst a sea of inequalities.*

Perhaps it is first the use of beautiful and colourful festoons and streamers that makes one feel nice and warm as soon as one steps into the venue of the Jaipur Literature Festival, held in 2011 from 21 to 25 January. Some claim it is the biggest 'lit fest' in the world, with the presence of Nobel laureates and Booker Prize winners and scores of other fine writers and artists. Rajasthan, where Jaipur is located, is the desert state of India known for its fast and bright colours, as one will see from any tourism brochure. If you come to the Jaipur Literature Festival, however, you are 'confronted' with fine shades and blends of colours, not the basic, bright colours—these colours and the fabric easily remind one of the very organic FabIndia garment and furnishings stores in up-market Delhi. While the organizers of the fest seem eager in every way to bring in the local flavour, one wonders why such bright colours were not the favoured colours used for the fest. This is of course not a 'local fest' but a 'global' one, with the presence of big star writers as much as of swish and swanky socialite notables, with funding from the biggest financial companies; Nobel laureates Orhan Pamuk and JM Coetzee, along with scores of other writers who read and discussed their work. So let us briefly hear Jean Baudrillard on colour.

Baudrillard points out that the traditional bourgeois "negates colour as such, rejects it as a complete value. Indeed the bourgeois interior reduces it for the most part to discreet 'tints' and 'shades'".<sup>1</sup> Spectacular, bright colour, perceived as over-aggressive, "was excluded from model forms, whether in clothing or in furnishing, in favour of a

somewhat relieved return to discreet tones".<sup>2</sup> What does it involve, though, what is being avoided, shoved away in not favouring the bright colours? The point is, Baudrillard argues, "labour should not be discernible anywhere—neither should instinct be allowed to show its face".<sup>3</sup>

"Without labour, without instinct"—was that how the fest was, was that how a participant directly experienced it? The official booklet for the fest announces, "We are a lot of fun, we are a proper festival: the buildings are festooned with *toranas* and bunnings, there are always thousands of enthusiasts milling around, we let off fireworks at night and after 6.30 pm, the writers have to shut up and give the stage over to music and dance". Chiki Sarkar of Random House India refers to the spirit of bonhomie and the "Jaipur effect": "With writers, critics and journalists milling together, a whisper can quickly become buzz. I am hoping that Shehan (author of *Chinaman*) too will benefit from the Jaipur effect."<sup>4</sup> Another report points to the seamless world, where all divides and sharp edges are suspended ('equal and open') so all can participate, the old and the new India: "Perhaps, the JLF is symbolic of the new-new India in a Raghu Rai-like photograph that compulsively blends contrasting, even opposing, elements in a pastiche of sensuous images, dark and bright at once". The report is titled "A Cocktail of Classless Elegance".<sup>5</sup>

What we have, then, is a world of blends and pastiche, a seamless space where everyone is milling around and a whisper can so easily become a buzz—isn't getting "labour and instinct" out of the way the most effective means to a such a space?

### EQUAL AND OPEN

British writer William Dalrymple, one of the key organizers and brains of the fest, writes:

*One of the things people like best about Jaipur is that we are completely egalitarian. There are no reserved spaces for grandees, no roped enclosure for our authors; they mingle with the crowds and eat with them on a first-come, first-served basis. In as hierarchical a country as India, this is rather radical.*<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, it has been said that at the fest you may find yourself casually standing next to a great writer, a Nobel laureate. There is a story from last year's fest of a young Australian volunteer who asked two young and beautiful women to step aside as they were



blocking the exit. The two turned out to be Julia Roberts and Nandita Das. There are no restrictions on entry—you can just walk into the venue and attend any of the sessions, sit anywhere you want. You can also keep drifting in the crowd the whole day, just sit by and read a book, chat with others and so on.

Related to the 'equal and open' character, there is a kind of serial anonymity at the venue. Abha Dawesar, New York-based writer of Indian origin, emphasizes this anonymity: "what is of interest to me is that the chance of a fortuitous encounter exponentially increases during a festival". As reports announce, you could be standing right next to Martin Amis or rubbing shoulders with a Nobel laureate like Coetzee. The frictionless, seamless world also means that literature and celebrity worship fuse: one newspaper reporting on the fest found it important to dispel the suggestion that the writer Junot Diaz is related in any way to Cameron Diaz!

## SEAMLESS

Coming back to the venue... The venue is called Diggy Palace, a 'heritage property', sprawling with gardens, ponds, antiques, artefacts, stables and, of course, heritage buildings. Heritage here fuses with big names from the corporate world as the halls and tents for the talks and readings are Merrill Lynch Mughal Tent, Vodafone Front Lawns, Kingfisher Airlines Baithak, *The Economist* Durbar Hall and so on. And further on, the sponsors: Rio Tinto, Shell, JCB, Goldman Sachs, Oliver Wyman etc. The corporate emblems held on to a retro 'premodern' or 'native', 'authentic' name—'Mughal', 'Durbar', 'Baithak' and so on; 'Lawns' and 'Tent' lend a relaxed, aristocratic, unhurried ambience to the 'equal and open' space. This pastiche and fusion does not bring out or accentuate the historical specificity or the concrete qualities of things—it instead stands for its loss. This is what allows the emergence of the spectacle and the simulacrum as a free, fluid, all-inclusive, hybrid space. Hybridity and heterogeneity here exist harmoniously under the stamp of finance capital.

The fusion of the two registers of the high modern, backed by speculative capitalism, and the premodern—a fusion or rather 'everything into everything' once bereft of labour and instinct—is endorsed by the postcolonial stance. This stance, as in the discussions by Pamuk and Diaz, is however presented as radical and destabilising by raising questions such as: is the non-Western voice today the truly global voice? Is it not time to displace the West as the stage of the global? Orhan Pamuk was seriously asking why

the non-Western voice is not regarded as the global voice. The desired seamlessness, now between the non-Western and the global, was unmistakable, as one talked about the inter-relationship and indeed the interconnectedness of the West and the non-West. The general mood was that the divides have been bridged, as we can all now engage in the celebration of the East, of the postcolonial and the subaltern as the new voice. It was perhaps only Chimamanda Adichie, the Nigerian writer, who detached himself from the dominant celebration of the global, of the non-Western voice as the global voice today.

This assumed seamlessness of the global, albeit with disjunctions and skewedness here and there, was what got inscribed in the other discussions about migration and transnationalism. It was all about migration, people moving across the globe—all understood as a problem of one culture and the other—all about cultural specificities and/or hybridities, multiculturalism and related tensions. As one report put it:

*Both 'Imaginary Homelands' with Ian Jack, Junot Diaz, Kamila Shamsie, Manushree Thapa and Marina Lewycka and 'Out of West' with Orhan Pamuk, Leila Abdouella, Nam Le and Chimamanda Adichie mulled over double identities, triple identities, identitylessness, hereness, thereness, being home, being away, Bad Western Attitudes and the 'non-west'.<sup>7</sup>*

Considering that most Indian writing in English is again mostly diasporic, there was such an emphasis on the mobility of people that someone was heard quipping whether we could also talk of the 'sedentary' people!

Other sessions included 'The New Non-Fiction' with Ahdaf Soueif, Basharat Peer, David Finkel, Martin Amis and Waheed Mirza—Merrill Lynch Tent. Jon Lee Anderson points out his special access to the unpublished diaries of Che Guevara, access granted to him by Che's wife—Vodafone Front Lawns. There were sessions on the caste problem in India, the problem in North Eastern India, sessions on Socrates, on 'Sex and the City' and the Taliban, as well as about 'Brand India', not to mention one session called the 'China Dialogues', readings by Swedish writer Henning Mankell, and Irvine Welsh reading from *Trainspotting*.

The multitude of ideas and the diverse topics somehow never collided nor did they become 'too diverse', for they were freely floating signifiers that had surrendered their sovereign energies and forces that formed the fest, the simulacrum. With such seam-

lessness, weightlessness and lightness—in a word, disembodiedness—words and ideas, hereness and thereeness or being home and being away, carried no charge of their own, but only acted as inputs into reproducing the spectacle that was the fest; everything a flow, all smooth, no sharp edges, like the smooth shades of colours. Anything could be mixed up smoothly and with anything: “The *bajre-ki-roti*, dipped in sauvignon blanc rather than *lassoon ki chutney*, is spelling a new kind of momentum. Puritans may step aside. This is Jaipur 2.0.”<sup>8</sup>

### NON-CONFLICTUAL ‘REALITY’

It would be interesting here to touch upon the uncomfortable questions raised about corporate funding. Now, it seems all too easy to accuse the organizers over corporate funding; but how does one come to terms with the fact that the space created there, the fest—what in Hindi is called a *mela*—is the most equal and open place you can imagine! Questions were thrown from among the audience about the litfest funders like Shell’s collusion in the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa as well as about DSC Ltd and the scams relating to the Commonwealth Games 2010 in Delhi.

But the question I would like to raise is: Do we accede to the litfest being otherwise ‘really’ equal and open, so that problems we have are only limited to funding from corrupt and unethical businesses? Thus the protestations seem to suggest that it is all fine if the companies have not engaged in these known crimes and corruption. Marx’s understanding of capital as dripping with blood and sweat seems confined in these protestors’ minds only to corrupt capital and they seem to be vouching for some ‘good’ capital. And, well, the organizers are ready to plug that hole and move on. Sanjoy Roy, one of the chief organizers thus is readily willing to address these ‘concerns’. He stated that, “we haven’t looked at the colour of money so far and I think that we do need to be somewhat sensitive to the kind of sponsorships we raise”.<sup>9</sup> So very well, maybe from next year only ‘ethical businesses’ will be funding the ‘equal and open space’. Problem solved? Can we now enjoy the equal and open space without any feeling of guilt?

We must therefore take up the most basic claim about the fest being a great space of equality and open discussion and exchange, the spirit of *bonhomie* and so on. Consider this report:

*The buxom girl with grey eyes that I last saw at a luxury goods conference in New Delhi was there, winding her way down to Diggi Palace in a multi-coloured harem pant that would not go well with the agonizing dark-blue tales of human rights violations being discussed in ritual sessions on AfPak or Kashmir in the lawns and the tents. However, there they were, providing visual relief.*<sup>10</sup>

What we have here is what Baudrillard calls a disembodied individual: this ‘participant’ ends up in the fest as she drifts seamlessly within the simulacrum, from posh New Delhi to Diggy Palace: “if the simulacrum is so well designed that it becomes an effective organizer of reality, then surely it is man, not the simulacrum, who is turned into an abstraction”.<sup>11</sup>

The point is that the fest comes across and is experienced as an equal and open space, only because we all participate in it as disembodied individuals—without labour, without instinct, ‘living beings’ milling around to make the simulacrum, the spectacle happen. Inside the simulacrum, in the spectacle, we are of course all equal and open, for ‘reality’ is now no longer conflictual—it is only once reality is rendered an abstraction that things are equal and open.

So where is the alienation? As Baudrillard says, “we are no longer alienated within a conflictual reality; we are expelled by a definitive, non-contradictory reality”.<sup>12</sup> This non-contradictory reality is the fest. The fest is an abstraction from ‘conflictual reality’: hence conflictual reality here can coexist alongside this non-conflictual, non-contradictory reality of the fest. So society has all kinds of divides and conflicts but somehow the fest can carve out a harmonious space, equal and open—Dalrymple’s completely egalitarian space where there are no divides hence allowing for free debate and discussion, without hierarchies. Isn’t this an attempt to render conflictual reality non-conflictual? Elsewhere I have written about this attempt in India under globalization to create this kind of a space, apparently one of open and equal access, even as deep and increasing inequalities persist. The billionaire minister Nandan Nilekani, an admirer of Thomas Friedman, also refers to globalization providing the conditions for Indians to an open and equal access to markets and resources in order to escape poverty and low standards of living. Deeper inequalities and the logic of capital can continue and yet market capitalism, ‘free and fair competition’ and ‘open and equal access to all’ will deliver progressive results—this is the neoliberal utopia so dominant in India today.

The fest and its self-images therefore manifest several layers, several displacements and ideological moves. This means that the fest is so beautiful and so tremendously oppressive in such a way that the beauty can be experienced directly, but the oppressiveness can only be sensed abstractly. It is therefore only as a disembodied being that you enjoy the spectacle, the simulacrum. As an embodied individual you are out of it—the real individual is therefore abstract.

Having ejected man thus as an abstraction, you have a non-contradictory reality—you have the man in and of the fest—these humans are all 'equal' to each other, they are 'open', too, since they have nothing to open up really, like the girl above—of course, let us not forget that choosing a girl and not a man for this example has its own problems. What is happening is the creation of an illusory wholeness, overcoming the divides—you might be jostling against a Nobel laureate as you stand in a queue for the loo.

The point, then, is that the more you lose sense of yourself and become just a fest-goer, a participant in the illusory seamless world, the more equal it gets or, rather, feels! As a disembodied self one floats around, milling around the venue hearing all kinds of things, ideas, readings and discussions. The more one hears the discussions, where everyone seems to agree with everyone, the more one tends to feel the disembodiedness. This unbearable lightness, of not striking too discordant a note, the deep homogeneity intertwined with outward heterogeneity of ideas and things, the disembodied participants, all fit what Baudrillard calls, "the orbiting refuse".<sup>13</sup> It would be interesting to ask, paraphrasing Baudrillard, about the fest and the energy the people/fest exude: where do we get our energy from—that energy mobilized by the fest—if not from the demobilization of our bodies?

What we have, then, is not equality per se, but a suspension of inequality—it is not that we act as though we are all equal. Rather, the place, the way the fest is done, makes us act as though we are all equal, achieved at the cost of de-substantiating the individuals present. However, *the real divides* are soon to catch up, as there are now already reports that, from next year, entry will be restricted and perhaps some order enforced. In any case, then, the spaces of free discussion and of complete egalitarianism are 'threatened' by outside forces. Bad news?

## PAMUK, GLOBAL, NON-WESTERN

There is a Pamuk discussion about Western and non-Western literature in a session entitled 'Out of the West'—Vodafone Front Lawns. The basic problem posed is one of ending the dominance of the West and establishing the non-Western voice as the global voice. This sounds like what we in India call replacing the white sahib with the brown sahib, but nevertheless. It was interesting that the major difference that emerged among the writers was that between the Nigerian writer Adichie and the British-Indian writer Rana Dasgupta. Adichie could not agree with Dasgupta's formulation that the global is the seamless world. "You can change capitals does not mean that you are already global", she pointed out. It did not at all feel out of place that someone with Indian roots felt more at home with the global than an African writer—this says a lot about how the divides are not simply Western and non-Western, but must be reset along other axes, most importantly within the non-West. Contradictory as it may sound, but the West/non-West divide might today very well be operating by rendering the divides within the non-West invisible.

Then there was AC Grayling talking about philosophy's relevance even for ordinary persons in everyday living and how it can be a guide to leading the good and meaningful life. He declared that confusion is the beginning of all philosophy. He insisted that philosophy should not be seen as irrelevant to everyday life. If we get confused trying to think philosophically we must not get disheartened, since confusion is the beginning of wisdom.

In many senses, Martin Amis really stood out as still not really giving in to the spectacle and simulacrum that the fest was. His concerns did not come from the universe of diaspora and migration and the issues of moving from one culture to another, multiculturalism and so on. Instead, he spoke in full consciousness of the 'older' ideological divides of, for example, liberalism and Marxism, democracy and communism. In that sense, he seemed not to give in to the seamless world of the global and the postcolonial, which everything in the fest seemed to exude. His references to classical European writers—Shakespeare and others—could easily have been accused of being not politically correct and, indeed, Eurocentric. But despite this, despite his 'congenital anti-communism', Amis spoke with tremendous weight and insight and seemed unwittingly arrayed against the postmodern/postcolonial lightness.

I heard Amis in this interesting panel on 'The New Non-Fiction' at the Merrill Lynch Mughal Tent. Here, all the other speakers were reporting from—and in some cases also belonged to—societies that were caught in a 'conflict situation': Kashmir, Palestine, Afghanistan and so on. So each of the writers was reporting on how they feel about the conflict and what it takes to report truthfully about situations of frequently cruel violence, when people have internalized the logic of violence and sometimes become immune to it. One could already see that Amis was not one of those writers reporting from the field. The moderator insisted, however, that each of the speakers tell a story they had encountered from an actual situation of violence. While others narrated their stories 'from the field', Amis, not to give up, invoked the accounts he had read about violence in the Stalinist Gulag. Again, it was interesting here for him to come up with what looks like a Cold War era story, instead of talking about a 'conflict situation' today in what looks like a post-Cold War, post-ideological age, a conflict that would fit into the 'clash of civilizations' framework. Instead of the 'clash of civilizations' narrative, Amis seemed to foreground the older 'capitalism versus socialism' narrative—I personally enjoyed this better, notwithstanding my full awareness about which side he stands on.

Another interesting session was 'Many Ramayanas', once again at the Merrill Lynch Mughal Tent. Professor Sheldon Pollock, eminent scholar of Sanskrit, got a question from the audience asking if we need to look to Lord Ram and his teachings in order to solve the political conflicts and violence in the world today. Pollock said that this issue is a hot potato and had better not be taken up. He instead recounted another instance where he was asked if he personally agreed with the treatment meted out to Sita by Rama—which was also a 'hot potato', he said, and ended it there.

Booker Prize winner James Kelman, speaking at the Kingfisher Airlines Baithak, stood out in a way, as he said he placed himself among the marginalized writers. He said that writing in the language of the working class was nothing constructed or contrived for him, as it was part of his life. He pointed out how he tried to do away with the mediation between the writer and the protagonist. Similarly, to a question from the audience, he pointed out that for him writing was not a specialized activity separate from the rest of his life—by this he did not mean, which so many writers would have done, that writing is his life. Rather, writing is one among so many other things he does in his life—so a call from his daughter that her son needs to be dropped off at school might take precedence over writing, for instance.

Another session was American writer Junot Diaz in conversation with Miss India turned investment banker cum novelist, Ira Trivedi—Vodafone Front Lawns. Her novel's plot is similar to a lot of popular Indian writing in English. Hers is the story of Riya Jain from Nagpur, who pursues her dream of being an investment banker. This girl from a small Indian town pursues her dreams all the way to Wall Street, where she finds freedom from the clutches of Indian society. But love is not so easy to find on Wall Street! Several writers have commented on what an embarrassment Ira Trivedi is, considering that what she writes can at best be called popular literature and not literature as such. But the fact that she was given so much importance—the Front Lawns and conversation with Junot Diaz—tells us something about the priorities of the organizers. Diaz, in a difficult situation, evaded saying anything specific about the novel and just pointed out that popular literature has its own importance and should not be ignored.

### 'BEING HUMAN'

As one walked around the venue, at some point one would hear very different words and sounds coming from one particular, unnamed tent. Here one could hear someone speaking about 'food rationing', the public distribution system, water problems, corruption by local contractors, minimum wages, lack of basic amenities and so on. Was the simulacrum cracking?

Upon inspection it turned out to be Tehelka Foundation's 'Being Human Workshop'—very symptomatic, very ironic, to say the least. This was supposed to be the "festival engaging with the youth of the host city". "Apart from writing they will be exposed to different forms of creative expression such as meditation, theatre, music, drawing and painting..." From the discussions, however, it did not seem to be imparting such literary and artistic skills. The discussion was about desperate livelihood issues, about corruption in the public distribution system in India, the shady role of local politicians and contractors and how to organize and resist them. Very few of the lit fest type, however, even seemed to notice the workshop. One wonders why the organizers thought it important to have this 'Being Human Workshop'. While the intention of some 'activists' or those in Tehelka might have been sincere, in effect it became nothing less than mere tokenism. One could see clearly that most of the 'youth' here were people from lower income backgrounds who were 'brought' there. The other youth of Jaipur, from well-off backgrounds, who came out of their own volition were freely exploring the different talks and lectures, buying books, etc.—and not really interested in 'being human'.

The song, music and dance sessions in the evenings were funded by Coca-Cola and the *Times of India*. Sufi music and *quawwals* were a great hit here. A new Delhi-based band, Fire Exit, a London-based band, Transglobal Underground, Susheela Raman, Madan Gopal Singh and radical Dalit singer Bant Singh were some of the key highlights. Between bands, the audience was subjected to full-blown commercials by Coke and other companies on a huge screen, repeated as often as the time allowed.

That the fest stood out as a simulacrum need not come as a surprise, if we simply check the profiles of the companies that did the logistics and conceptualization. Teamwork Productions, which put up and managed the event, announces itself as “a highly versatile entertainment company, with roots in the performing arts, social action and the corporate world”. The social action part is the most symptomatic—thus the fest had NGOs working for social empowerment and big corporates woven in a seamless world fully supporting what DSC, the infrastructure company that has put in a lot of money, called ‘social infrawealth’, in other words, literature. The same official booklet says that DSC “has identified the promotion of literature as a key initiative as it believes that promoting literature helps build the character of society, just as its infrastructure projects help create the infrawealth of the nation”.

In being counted as ‘social infrawealth’, literature loses its uniqueness, its essential disruptive content, and thereby comes into circulation in the simulacrum. Just as Teamwork seamlessly moves between the arts and the corporate world, literature seamlessly takes us to the corporate world—literature disembodied from itself now participates fully and mingles with investment banking or with infrastructure development. ‘Being Human’ bridges any remaining gaps in the simulacrum. Interestingly, even the great Sufi renditions seem to reinforce this ‘be human’ thinking. We are called upon to forget all divides and to appeal to all to rise above them, rather than accept their ‘reality’ in the first instance and place ourselves, in a ‘sectarian’ manner, on this or that side. The simulacrum creates the illusory idea of wholeness rendering invisible the divides that fundamentally structure society, ideas and consciousness. We can only note here how close we are to Guy Debord’s notion of the spectacle.

## FESTIVAL AND FORUM

I was reminded of the World Social Forum a couple of years ago in Mumbai, which was also a big gathering like this, almost a festival. The WSF was not primarily based

on the ‘Being Human’ approach, but more openly placed itself squarely on one side of the divide, taking a partisan position: against neoliberal globalization. More than the WSF, it was of course the parallel Mumbai Resistance, also in Mumbai, that was strongly partisan, opposing even the WSF for being compromised and succumbing to the ‘Being Human’ approach, to imperialism! The idea was not to bridge the deep divides and structural inequalities of global capitalism by ‘being human’ and so on, but to foreground them actively as the very basis of the gathering and the struggle. No seamless space was created there, and the ‘equal and open’ character did not derive from milling around or standing in the same queue or not having special VIP areas—rather, it came from a shared horizon of the possible against the given actuality, against the given necessity of things, of the present order, a horizon that ‘another world is possible’, of a postcapitalist world, of, in some cases, socialism.

The simulacrum of ‘Being Human’ fundamentally presupposes inequalities—their reality is not challenged, only the effects are to be ameliorated. Following the political philosopher John Rawls, the concern is with rearranging inequalities in such a way that they favour the least advantaged! This is where we can locate Teamwork Productions’ ‘social action’ and Tehelka’s ‘Being Human’. Another key player in organizing the fest is Jaipur Virasat Foundation—the JVF ad in the fest booklet says that the fest was “started and incubated by JVF”. It’s the ‘Being Human’ approach again: “JVF has pioneered a holistic, culture-based approach to development, and has linked livelihood generation and poverty alleviation with the best practices in the creative and cultural sector.”<sup>14</sup> Here is an example of what Slavoj Žižek calls philanthropic capitalism, a smart and selfreflexive capitalism which tends to perpetuate itself by supposedly critiquing itself.

## THINGS UNRAVEL

As the fest progressed, however, things started to unravel, the simulacrum proved not too well-knit and, as it were, started revealing its plot. Suddenly the organizers, who until then had prided themselves on the fest being ‘open to all’ and ‘equal’, were heard saying that maybe from next year there would have to be restricted entry. What had happened? William Dalrymple pointed out that “a decidedly non-literary crowd comes in for the music and raids the booze. In one small instance, some people were attacked. We’re going to have to rethink the free evening music or ticket the weekends.”<sup>15</sup> Well, charging a fee or restricting entry would seriously challenge the ‘equal and open’ claim, dilute it. But then, you see, it is like reality catching up, it is the simulacrum of the fest



cracking—so that now the divides that were rendered invisible show up and the benign approach of ‘we are all human’, ‘we do not believe in hierarchies’, seems to be challenged by the opening up of new divides (the ‘non-literary’ vs. the literary crowd).

Apart from this problem created by the ‘non-literary crowd’, I am otherwise amazed by how well the simulacrum works. Take the discussion in the Vodafone Front Lawns on the thorny Kashmir issue, sponsored by Goldman Sachs. This was an impressive discussion representing perhaps the entire spectrum of views and positions on Kashmir. Yet it is troubling to think that outside this fest, outside the simulacrum blessed by big capital and other centres of power, such a discussion is simply impossible in the country. The recent seminar on Kashmir in Delhi, which invited sedition charges against Arundhati Roy and other speakers, was disrupted by right-wing elements; passions ran high, so much so that the speakers had to be protected from possible attacks. Irreconcilable positions come to the fore and divides from within the audience as well as Hindu right-wing activists created a situation of hooting, yelling, fisticuffs, disrupting the entire event. Outside the fest, a Kashmir discussion would have brought all the real divides violently into the open, but within it the simulacrum somehow renders those divides invisible and they do not surface. Amazing!

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13. Baudrillard, *System of Objects*, p. 32.
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15. Dalrymple, William, “We May Have to Ticket the Weekends”, *Tehelka*, 5 February 2011.

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fig. 1

'Suicide Machine', 2004; Courtesy Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

fig. 2

"Symbolic IV (Burning Bluetooth)", 2006; Courtesy Bugada & Cargnel, Paris and APT London

fig. 3

"Burning Peace", 2004; Courtesy Upstream Gallery Amsterdam

fig. 4

"Burning Peace", 2004; Courtesy Upstream Gallery Amsterdam

fig. 5

"Freedom", 2003; Courtesy Bugada & Cargnel, Paris and APT London (in the background: "Burning Bluetooth")



fig. 1



fig. 4



fig. 2

fig. 3







fig. 5



Mark Dery

## Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs<sup>1</sup>

### A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE REPRINT

The term ‘cultural jamming’ and the concept behind it first appeared on *JamCon '84*, a 1984 cassette-only release by the audio-collage band Negativland.

The group, whose socio-political satire and media criticism often have a sharp, Situationist edge, applied the idea of ‘jamming’ to billboard banditry (jamming was the jokey, trollish practice, then prevalent in the CB radio community, of disrupting other users’ conversations with obscene or nonsensical interjections; billboard banditry is the neo-Situationist practice of illegally altering billboards to perversely funny, usually political effect in order to critique consumerism, capitalism, representations of race and gender in advertising, or American foreign policy).

Inspired by Negativland’s work in general, and *JamCon '84* in specific, I used my readings in postmodern theory, Baudrillard, McLuhan, and Stuart Ewen’s politicized histories of consumer culture to historicize and theorize Negativland’s notion of ‘cultural jamming’, which my Inner Grammarian insisted on retooling as *culture jamming*.

In my December 1990 *New York Times* article on the subject, I used Negativland, the media hoaxer Joey Skaggs, the graffiti artist Robbie Conal, the parody billboard painter Jerry Johnson and Reverend Ivan Stang of the tongue-in-cheek Church of the Subgenius cult as poster children for culture jamming—media age provocateurs who expose “the ways in which corporate and political interests use the media as a tool of behavior modification”. It was the first appearance of the phrase and the concept in the mainstream media.

In my 1993 Open Magazine pamphlet, *Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of the Signs*, a revised version of which appears below, I theorized the concept in greater depth, teasing out its historical precedents and excavating its philosophical foundations, among them Bakhtin’s reading of medieval carnival as symbolic subversion; the Situationist theory of the Spectacle and concomitant practice of

détournement; and the Baudrillardian theory of postmodern society as a hyperreality.

The conceptual thread running through the secret history and philosophical operating code of culture jamming was the idea of *guerrilla semiotics*, a term I coined—with a debt to Umberto Eco’s concept of “semiological guerrilla warfare” duly noted—and that I unpack at length in my essay, below.

After I published my *New York Times* article, I wrote a series of articles for the Canadian anti-consumerism magazine *Adbusters*, beginning with “Subvertising: The Billboard Bandit as Cultural Jammer” (*Adbusters*, vol. 2, no. 1, Fall/Winter 1991), in which I introduced editor/publisher Kalle Lasn to the term ‘culture jamming’ and to the theories it embodied.

Lasn took the concept and ran with it, branding his magazine as the house organ of the Culture Jamming Movement®, peddling anti-consumerist swag through the magazine’s website and publishing a jammer’s manifesto of sorts, *Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America*, a strategy that has earned him the ire of jammers like Carrie McLaren. In her essay “CULTURE JAMMING™ brought to you by *Adbusters*” McLaren charges Lasn with reducing the phenomenon to

*a few pointless vagaries (“challenge your economics professors to justify their scientific credentials in class”) and things to buy—air-time on local TV to air Adbusters’ anti-commercials, Buy Nothing Day promo goods (irony, anyone?), and the Culture Jammer’s toolbox, where, for \$35, you get a poster, stickers, The Culture Jammer’s Video, a Buy Nothing Day t-shirt and extra copies of Adbusters. Then inside the back page, in case you missed those two pages, there’s a full page of Culture Jamming materials. A set of six posters and postcards (\$15), the Culture Jammer’s Calendar (\$13), The Culture Jammer’s Video and Back Issues. Order before September 15 and get a second calendar free!... Beat ‘em at their own game, I guess is the thinking. But what comes out is no real alternative to our culture of consumption. Just a different brand.*

What she said. I share McClaren’s pique at *Adbusters’* complicity in the commodification of anti-consumerism (not to mention Lasn’s benign neglect, in too many interviews, of the role my work played in bringing the concept to his attention).

To be sure, *Adbusters’* exhortations to critical thinking and media literacy are crucial, especially when they fall on teenage ears. My ambivalence about the magazine springs

from its shrink-wrapping of anti-consumerism: culture jamming calendars replete with subscription cards and merchandise order forms, and so forth. Also, my nose wrinkles at the Dworkinesque censoriousness that wafts from the magazine's neo-puritan insinuation that alcohol *use* leads inevitably to alcohol *abuse*, that coffee consumption is a profound social evil. In such moments, it exudes the deep-rooted distrust of the masses' ability to police their own desires that makes strange bedfellows of moral crusaders on the left and the right.

Eighteen years after my manifesto hit indie bookstores, the look and feel of culture jamming, at least, have been appropriated by the mainstream, tirelessly promoted by *Ad-busters* (oh, the irony!) and hijacked by guerrilla advertisers to ambush unsuspecting consumers. Perhaps it's high time we asked whether culture jamming, like the medieval Feast of Fools to which it is distantly related, was always just a species of repressive desublimation (does anyone quote Marcuse anymore?); a socially sanctioned release valve for class resentment and pent-up fury at social injustices and economic inequities that might have found more profound political expression if they hadn't been harmlessly exorcized via carnival rituals or, in culture jamming's case, acts of *symbolic* resistance such as billboard banditry and media hoaxes.

(The same thing happened with the American version of Christmas, a thinly disguised Saturnalia, in which besotted working-class roughnecks invaded the homes of the wealthy, demanding drink and a handout. In the nineteenth century, Washington Irving, Clement Moore and other members of New York's anxious elite manufactured the 'traditional' American Christmas, re-imagining the holiday of booze-sodden misrule as a genteel observance of domestic harmony and a frenzy of conspicuous consumption.)

The cultural theorist Brian Holmes has questioned the utility of "semiotic activism", under which heading he files culture jamming. Appropriating the signs and symbols of dominant culture is "promising", he grants,

*but it only matters when it happens within the much larger framework of social movements, with experiential, organizational, political and legal dimensions. Pure semiotic activism is not particularly irritating for capitalism... But it does have meaning and importance to the extent [that] it participates in larger movements.*

To be sure, culture jamming and other forms of semiotic guerrilla warfare aren't going to bring capitalism to its quaking knees. If you *really* want to Strike at the Heart

of the State, slip a dinner jacket over your explosive vest, infiltrate the next Bohemian Grove retreat, then hit the detonator and turn America's ruling class into bloody chum. (Not that I'm *advising* such extreme—and extremely futile—measures. As Eco argues in "Striking at the Heart of the State", postmodern power is decentralized and phantasmic—"headless and heartless", everywhere and nowhere, globalized and stateless, able to route around the legal and political restrictions of nation states with fiendish ease. "The [multinational] system displays an incredible capacity for healing and stabilizing", writes Eco. "Wherever it is struck, that place will always be peripheral."<sup>2</sup>)

Let's face it: culture jamming is armchair activism for Derrideans—a grad student's Intifada. They don't call it *symbolic* resistance for nothing. It's not going to lower the cost of prescription drugs, reduce the level of chlorofluorocarbons in the upper atmosphere or give Poppy Bush a myocardial infarction. It's a *compliment* to, not a *substitute* for, the inglorious grunt work of real political change—community organizing, grassroots activism, lobbying politicians, drafting legislation, throwing your body upon the gears of power.

But in a Society of the Spectacle, where power is exercised increasingly through pre-spun media narratives and staged events—think of Bush's infamous "Mission Accomplished" photo op, in *Top Gun* drag—fighting symbolism with counter-symbolism is an essential part of any activist strategy. If a tree falls in the forest of signs and a network news camera isn't there to record it or a blogger isn't there to blog it or a bystander isn't there to capture it with her cameraphone, does it still make a sound? You don't have to be Baudrillard to know that the answer, in our hopelessly mediated moment, is a resounding "No". In 1943, Winston Churchill told the scions of America's ruling class in a Harvard lecture that "the empires of the future are the empires of the mind". Now, the parallel world of news narratives, advertising symbolism, Hollywood fables and videogame imagery is a theatre of war where the contest of narratives—the struggle for control of the meaning of things and thus for control of the public mind—is being fought.

Obviously, this doesn't mean that reality is roadkill. Media reform activists such as Robert McChesney, who founded the organization Free Press to lobby for radical changes in FCC regulations and telecommunications policy, are vitally important. But so, too, are billboard bandits who hijack the public address system of advertising, deconstructing its visual rhetoric to expose the grasping materialism, Stone Age sexism, class anxiety, body loathing, bogus hipness and faux rebellion that grease the gears of most ad campaigns. Media hoaxers like the Yes Men and Joey Skaggs expose the corporate

news media's unquestioning credulity in the face of government spin and corporate PR, its lapdog eagerness to serve its political and business masters. Every time jammers like the Billboard Liberation Front or Ron English strip bare the hidden agendas and manipulative machinery behind Karl Rove's public relations strategies, corporate America's ad campaigns or Roger Ailes's Faux News, they jar us out of our consumerist stupor with a sharp reminder that we're being prodded and persuaded to Obey the Giant (to borrow the graffiti artist Shepherd Fairey's ironic admonition to bow down to elite agendas).

Additionally, culture jamming offers desperately needed lessons in media literacy, suggesting ways in which we can read the visual narratives that advertisers, marketers, branders, PR experts and other members of the persuasion industries use to make up our minds for us.

Moreover, random acts of resistance are inspiring; they remind a cynical, dispirited TV Nation that heaving a flaming brick at the culture industry or at corrupt institutions, via socio-political pranks, can be empowering for both jammer and unsuspecting bystander, not to mention savage good fun. Consider phone prankster Ian Murphy's exposure of Scott Walker, the Republican governor of Wisconsin, as an overeager tool of the Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy. Posing as one of the vastly wealthy Koch brothers, right-wing plutocrats known for bankrolling the conservative pushback against healthcare reform, environmental legislation and trade unions, Murphy advises Walker to smear his state's pro-union protestors by planting hired troublemakers among their ranks: "I'll tell you what, Scott: once you crush these bastards, I'll fly you out to Cali and really show you a good time." To which Walker eagerly replies, "Alright, that would be outstanding. Thanks for all the support and helping us move the cause forward."<sup>3</sup>

It's important to remember that culture jamming springs as much from the medieval carnival tradition—definitively theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World*—as it does from the political theatre of '60s activists like Abbie Hoffman or the media provocations of the Situationists. Like the medieval rabble, who, during carnival, paraded pigs in bishops' mitres and otherwise mocked their lords and masters, jammers offer a vision of what Bakhtin called the World Turned Upside Down. Their pranks give us a much-needed reality check, reminding us that the power relations that structure our society are man-made, not god-given. The status quo, culture jammers argue, is purely provisional. They gesture toward a better world, where citizens are more than mere consumers—a wallet with a mouth, to use the wonderful advertising catchphrase—and

where society is about more than the cash nexus and a rigged choice between the lesser of political evils.

That said, in these desperate times we need adversarial, doggedly investigative journalists—an endangered species in the corporate news media—such as Walter Pincus, Lowell Bergman, Seymour Hersh and Robert Fisk *more* than we need jammers. Here, I agree with Holmes: in the Age of Wikileaks, a fearless exposé on the front page of a national newspaper, a prime-time news programme or a megahit website is worth a dozen détourned billboards when it comes to deep and lasting political impact (as opposed to Temporary Autonomous Zones, Islands in the Net and all the other pirate utopias romanticized by the insurgent imagination).

Consider Yomango (Spanish slang for "I steal"), a guerrilla movement that originated in Barcelona in 2002. According to *Wired* magazine, Yomango "calls on anti-consumerism activists to 'liberate' goods from stores in an effort to spread the ideals of brand-free living".<sup>4</sup> A cryo-frozen revival of the steal-this-book-and-Screw-the-Man logic of the early Abbie Hoffman, the group's manifesto, "10 Style Tips for a More Yomango Life"<sup>5</sup> is a brutally clueless mash-up of '60s-vintage countercultural strategies "promoting... shoplifting as a form of disobedience and direct action against multinational corporations"; a pseudo-Marxian anti-consumerism that replaces the cash nexus with a "politics of happiness, of putting the body first" (whatever that means); a pseudo-Situationist vision of the mall transformed into a space for subversive play (à la Situationist architect Constant Nieuwenhuys's New Babylon); and some pseudo-Bataille hand-waving about shoplifting as postmodern potlatch—half-baked ideas that are way past their sell-by date, and dangerously so. "'Stealing' is understood to be a crime, but YOMANGO does not acknowledge legalities or illegalities", says the manifesto. "More so, it speaks of a kind of legitimacy which comes from below, the legitimacy of daily life, of wanting to live freely, creatively." What kind of legitimacy? You know, man, like, *some kind*. It's a vague, ectoplasmic kind of thing—that ineffable authenticity that springs from The People, dude. Don't kill my buzz by asking for specifics! When The Man charges me with shoplifting, I'll just tell him I do not acknowledge legalities or illegalities. *That* will really levitate his Pentagon! And as for the hapless retailer whose wares I'm ripping off, burnt offerings on the altar of my middle-class rebellion, well, harsh realm, dude!

But seriously, can Yomango's anti-consumerist shoplifters bring power to its knees? Let me answer that question with a question: does it matter? When—and that's a *huge* when—such micropolitical gestures catch the wandering eye of the attention-deficit-

disordered mainstream media, and if—and that's a *huge* if—the media get the jammers' joke (meaning, if they report the story accurately, rather than with the usual smirky middlebrow condescension toward all things outside the mainstream), then maybe, just maybe, the act of culture jamming in question *might* punch through the media clutter that clogs the global mind.

And there's a lot of clutter out there. The half-life of any media event or pop-culture virus is about 15 seconds these days. And that includes *big* events. For a long time, the unending nightmare in Afghanistan disappeared from the media radar screen, crowded out of the public mind by the daily body count in Baghdad, the Israeli-Hezbollah war in Lebanon and the unrelenting, ball-peen-hammer hype for Hollywood's latest golden turkey. If a geopolitical bombshell like Afghanistan can get elbowed out of the mass mind by the celebrity peccadillo du jour, how can the Yes Men's latest media hoax get the world's attention?

Of course, the devil's advocate might reasonably ask, why are we holding it to that standard? If a refaced billboard or hacked advertisement only arrests the attention of one out of every hundred passers-by, planting the seed of critical consciousness, isn't that enough? Sure, lasting changes in public policy, the law of the land and the national consciousness are the ultimate goals of the progressive impulses expressed in McChesney's media reform organization or Naomi Klein's No Logo movement or the anti-consumerist eco-politics of *Adbusters* magazine. But that doesn't mean we should dismiss out of hand the micropolitical activism that snaps one happy shopper out of her consumerist trance or inspires one drive-time commuter to question the media's willingness to serve as Karl Rove's personal bullhorn. If all jamming does is liberate one mind at a time by sowing the seeds of a Marcusian alienation from the Spectacle or exposing the persuasion industries' manipulation of the "pictures in our heads" (Walter Lippman) to manufacture our consent for elite agendas, then it has more than earned its pay. As Umberto Eco wrote, in his essay "Toward a Semiological Guerrilla Warfare" (1967),

*What must be occupied, in every part of the world, is the first chair in front of every TV set (and naturally, the chair of the group leader in front of every movie screen, every transistor, every page of newspaper). If you want a less paradoxical formulation, I will put it like this: The battle for the survival of man as a responsible being in the Communications Era is not to be won where the communication originates, but where it arrives.*

This is straight-up reader response theory, of course, a slippery slope that leads some cultural-studies jocks to spot subcultural subversion in episodes of *Battlestar Galactica* and Lady Gaga lyrics. But it's a galvanizing call to arms nonetheless. For that reason, I'm still a true—if somewhat equivocal—believer in jamming's ludic politics and in its revolutionary dream of a media-literate public—a public that swallows the red pill and sees our Matrix world for what it is.

*Mark Dery, New York City, 2012*

## Culture Jamming: Hacking, Slashing, and Sniping in the Empire of Signs

### I. THE EMPIRE OF SIGNS

"My fellow Americans", exhorted John F. Kennedy, "haven't you ever wanted to put your foot through your television screen?"

Of course, it wasn't actually Kennedy, but an actor in "Media Burn", a spectacle staged in 1975 by the performance art collective Ant Farm. Speaking from a dais, 'Kennedy' held forth on America's addiction to the plug-in drug, declaring, "Mass media monopolies control people by their control of information". On cue, an assistant doused a wall of TV sets with kerosene and flicked a match at the nearest console. An appreciative roar went up from the crowd as the televisions exploded into snapping flames and roiling smoke.

Minutes later, a customized 1959 Cadillac hurtled through the fiery wall with a shuddering crunch and ground to a halt, surrounded by the smashed, blackened carcasses of televisions. Here and there, some sets still burned; one by one, their picture tubes imploded, to the onlookers' delight. A postcard reproduction of the event's pyrotechnic climax, printed on the occasion of its tenth anniversary, bears a droll poem:

*Modern alert  
plague is here  
burn your TV  
exterminate fear  
Image breakers  
smashing TV  
American heroes  
burn to be free*

In "Media Burn", Ant Farm indulged publicly in the guilty pleasure of kicking a hole in the cathode-ray tube. Now, almost two decades later, TV's cyclopean eye peers into every corner of the cultural arena, and the desire to blind it is as strong as ever. "Media Burn" materializes the wish-fulfilment dream of a consumer democracy that yearns, in its hollow heart and empty head, for a belief system loftier than the "family values"

promised by a Volvo ad campaign, discourse more elevated than that offered by the shark tank feeding-frenzy of *The McLaughlin Hour*.

It is a postmodern commonplace that our lives are intimately and inextricably bound up in the TV experience. Ninety-eight per cent of all American households—more than have indoor plumbing—have at least one television, which is on seven hours a day, on the average. Dwindling funds for public schools and libraries, counterpointed by the skyrocketing sales of VCRs and electronic games, have given rise to a culture of "aliteracy", defined by Roger Cohen as "the rejection of books by children and young adults who know how to read but choose not to".<sup>6</sup> The drear truth that two thirds of Americans get "most of their information" from television is hardly a revelation.<sup>7</sup> Media prospector Bill McKibben wonders about the exchange value of such information:

*We believe we live in the 'age of information,' that there has been an information 'explosion,' an information 'revolution.' While in a certain narrow sense this is the case, in many important ways just the opposite is true. We also live at a moment of deep ignorance, when vital knowledge that humans have always possessed about who we are and where we live seems beyond our reach. An Unenlightenment. An age of missing information.*<sup>8</sup>

The effects of television are most deleterious in the realms of journalism and politics; in both spheres, TV has reduced discourse to photo ops and sound bites, asserting the hegemony of image over language, emotion over intellect. These developments are bodied forth in Ronald Reagan, a TV conjuration who, for eight years, held the news media, and thus the American public, spellbound. As Mark Hertsgaard points out, the President's media-savvy handlers were able to reduce the fourth estate, which likes to think of itself as an unblinking watchdog, to a fawning lapdog: Deaver, Gergen and their colleagues effectively rewrote the rules of presidential image-making. On the basis of a sophisticated analysis of the American news media—how it worked, which buttons to push when, what techniques had and had not worked for previous administrations—they introduced a new model for packaging the nation's top politician and using the press to sell him to the American public. Their objective was not simply to tame the press but to transform it into an unwitting mouthpiece of the government.

During the Reagan years, America was transformed into a TV democracy, whose prime directive is social control through the fabrication and manipulation of images. "We [the Reagan campaign staff] tried to create the most entertaining, visually attractive scene



to fill that box, so that the cameras from the networks would have to use it", explained former Reagan advisor Michael Deaver. "It would be so good that they'd say, 'Boy, this is going to make our show tonight.' [W]e became Hollywood producers."<sup>9</sup>

The conversion of American society into a virtual reality was lamentably evident in the Persian Gulf War, a made-for-TV miniseries with piggybacked merchandising (T-shirts, baseball caps, Saddam toilet paper, Original Desert Shield Condoms) and gushy, *Entertainment Tonight*-style hype from a cheerleading media. When filmmaker Jon Alpert, under contract to NBC, brought back stomach-churning footage of Iraq under US bombardment, the network—which is owned by one of the world's largest arms manufacturers, General Electric—fired Alpert and refused to air the film. Not that Alpert's film would have roused the body politic: throughout the war, the American people demanded the right not to know. A poll cited in *The New York Times* was particularly distressing: "Given a choice between increasing military control over information or leaving it to news organizations to make most decisions about reporting on the war, 57 per cent of those responding said they would favor greater military control."<sup>10</sup>

During the war's first weeks, as home front news organizations aided Pentagon spin control by maintaining a near-total blackout on coverage of protest marches, Deaver was giddy with enthusiasm. "If you were going to hire a public relations firm to do the media relations for an international event", he bubbled, "it couldn't be done any better than this is being done."<sup>11</sup> In fact, a PR firm, Hill & Knowlton, was hired; it orchestrated the congressional testimony of the distraught young Kuwaiti woman whose horror stories about babies ripped from incubators and left "on the cold floor to die" by Iraqi soldiers was highly effective in mobilizing public support for the war. Her testimony was never substantiated, and her identity—she was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US—was concealed; but why niggle over details? "Formulated like a World War II movie, the Gulf War even ended like a World War II movie", wrote Neal Gabler, "with the troops marching triumphantly down Broadway or Main Street, bathed in the gratitude of their fellow Americans while the final credits rolled."<sup>12</sup>

After the yellow ribbons were taken down, however, a creeping disaffection remained. A slowly-spreading rancor at the televisual *Weltanschauung*, it is with us still, exacerbated by the prattle of talk show hosts, anchorclones and the Teen Talk Barbie advertised on Saturday mornings, whose "four fun phrases" include "I love shopping" and "Meet me at the mall". Mark Crispin Miller neatly sums TV's place in our society:

*Everybody watches it, but no one really likes it. This is the open secret of TV today. Its only champions are its own executives, the advertisers who exploit it, and a compromised network of academic boosters. Otherwise, TV has no spontaneous defenders, because there is almost nothing in it to defend.*<sup>13</sup>

The rage and frustration of the disempowered viewer exorcised in "Media Burn" bubbles up, unexpectedly, in "57 Channels (And Nothin' On)", Bruce Springsteen's Scorsese-esque tale of a man unhinged by the welter of meaningless information that assails him from every channel. Springsteen sings: "So I bought a .44 magnum it was solid steel cast / And in the blessed name of Elvis well I just let it blast / 'Til my TV lay in pieces there at my feet / And they busted me for disturbin' the almighty peace."

Significantly, the video for "57 Channels" incorporates footage of a white Cadillac on a collision course with a wall of flaming TV sets, in obvious homage to "Media Burn". The ritual destruction of the TV set, endlessly iterated in American mass culture, can be seen as a retaliatory gesture by an audience that has begun to bridle, if only intuitively, at the suggestion that 'power' resides in the remote control unit, that 'freedom of choice' refers to the ever-greater options offered around the dial. This techno-voodoo rite constitutes the symbolic obliteration of a one-way information pipeline that only transmits, never receives. It is an act of sympathetic magic performed in the name of all who are obliged to peer at the world through peepholes owned by multinational conglomerates for whom the profit margin is the bottom line. "To the eye of the consumer", notes Ben Bagdikian,

*the global media oligopoly is not visible... Newsstands still display rows of newspapers and magazines, in a dazzling array of colors and subjects... Throughout the world, broadcast and cable channels continue to multiply, as do video cassettes and music recordings. But... if this bright kaleidoscope suddenly disappeared and was replaced by the corporate colophons of those who own this output, the collage would go gray with the names of the few multinationals that now command the field.*<sup>14</sup>

In his watershed work, *The Media Monopoly*, Bagdikian reports that the number of transnational media giants has dropped to 23 and is rapidly shrinking. Following another vector, Herbert Schiller considers the interlocked issues of privatized information and limited access:

*The commercialization of information, its private acquisition and sale, has become a major industry. While more material than ever before, in formats created for special use, is available at a price, free public information supported by general taxation is attacked by the private sector as an unacceptable form of subsidy... An individual's ability to know the actual circumstances of national and international existence has progressively diminished.*<sup>15</sup>

Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon level another, equally disturbing charge:

*In an era of network news cutbacks and staff layoffs, many reporters are reluctant to pursue stories they know will upset management. "People are more careful now," remarked a former NBC news producer, "because this whole notion of freedom of the press becomes a contradiction when the people who own the media are the same people who need to be reported on."*<sup>16</sup>

Corporate ownership of the news media, the subsumption of an ever-larger number of publishing companies and television networks into an ever-smaller number of multinationals, and the increased privatization of truth by an information-rich, technocratic elite are not newly-risen issues. More recent is the notion that the public mind is being colonized by corporate phantasms—wraithlike images of power and desire that haunt our dreams. Consider the observations of Neal Gabler:

*Everywhere the fabricated, the inauthentic and the theatrical have gradually driven out the natural, the genuine and the spontaneous until there is no distinction between real life and stagecraft. In fact, one could argue that the theatricalization of American life is the major cultural transformation of this century.*<sup>17</sup>

And Marshall Blonsky:

*We can no longer do anything without wanting to see it immediately on video... There is never any longer an event or a person who acts for himself, in himself. The direction of events and of people is to be reproduced into image, to be doubled in the image of television. [T]oday the referent disappears. In circulation are images. Only images.*<sup>18</sup>

The territory demarcated by Gabler and Blonsky, lush with fictions yet strangely barren, has been mapped in detail by the philosopher Jean Baudrillard. In his landmark 1975 essay, "The Precession of Simulacra", Baudrillard put forth the notion that we inhabit

a "hyperreality", a hall of media mirrors in which reality has been lost in an infinity of reflections. We "experience" events, first and foremost, as electronic reproductions of rumoured phenomena many times removed, he maintains; originals, invariably compared to their digitally-enhanced representations, inevitably fall short. In the "desert of the real", asserts Baudrillard, mirages outnumber oases and are more alluring to the thirsty eye. Moreover, he argues, signs that once pointed toward distant realities now refer only to themselves. Disneyland's Main Street, USA, which depicts the sort of idyllic, turn-of-the-century burg that exists only in Norman Rockwell paintings and MGM backlots, is a textbook example of self-referential simulation, a painstaking replica of something that never was. "These would be the successive phases of the image", writes Baudrillard, betraying an almost necrophilic relish as he contemplates the decomposition of culturally-defined reality. "[The image] is the reflection of a basic reality; it masks and perverts a basic reality; it masks the absence of a basic reality; it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum."<sup>19</sup>

Reality isn't what it used to be. In America, factory capitalism has been superseded by an information economy characterized by the reduction of labour to the manipulation, on computers, of symbols that stand in for the manufacturing process. The engines of industrial production have slowed, yielding to a phantasmagoric capitalism that produces intangible commodities—Hollywood blockbusters, television sit-coms, catchphrases, jingles, buzzwords, images, one-minute megatrends, financial transactions flickering through fibre-optic bundles. Our wars are Nintendo wars, fought with camera-equipped smart bombs that marry cinema and weaponry in a television that kills. Futurologists predict that the flagship technology of the coming century will be 'virtual reality', a computer-based system that immerses users wearing headgear wired for sight and sound in computer-animated worlds. In virtual reality, the television swallows the viewer, headfirst.

## II. CULTURE JAMMING

Meanwhile, the question remains, how to box with shadows? In other words, what shape does an engaged politics assume in an empire of signs?

The answer lies, perhaps, in the "semiological guerrilla warfare" imagined by Umberto Eco. "[T]he receiver of the message seems to have a residual freedom: the freedom to read it in a different way... I am proposing an action to urge the audience to control the

message and its multiple possibilities of interpretation", he writes. "[O]ne medium can be employed to communicate a series of opinions on another medium... The universe of Technological Communication would then be patrolled by groups of communications guerrillas, who would restore a critical dimension to passive reception."<sup>20</sup>

Eco assumes, a priori, the radical politics of visual literacy, an idea eloquently argued by Stuart Ewen, a critic of consumer culture. "We live at a time when the image has become the predominant mode of public address, eclipsing all other forms in the structuring of meaning", asserts Ewen. "Yet little in our education prepares us to make sense of the rhetoric, historical development or social implications of the images within our lives."<sup>21</sup> In a society of heat, light and electronic poltergeists—an eerie otherworld of "il-limitable vastness, brilliant light, and the gloss and smoothness of material things"—the desperate project of reconstructing meaning, or at least reclaiming that notion from marketing departments and PR firms, requires visually-literate ghostbusters.<sup>22</sup>

Culture jammers answer to that name. 'Jamming' is CB slang for the illegal practice of interrupting radio broadcasts or conversations between fellow hams with lip farts, obscenities and other equally jejune hijinx. Culture jamming, by contrast, is directed against an ever more intrusive, instrumental technoculture whose operant mode is the manufacture of consent through the manipulation of symbols.

The term 'cultural jamming' was first used by the collage band Negativland to describe billboard alteration and other forms of media sabotage. On *Jamcon '84*, a mock-serious band member observes, "As awareness of how the media environment we occupy affects and directs our inner life grows, some resist... The skilfully reworked billboard... directs the public viewer to a consideration of the original corporate strategy. The studio for the cultural jammer is the world at large."

Part artistic terrorists, part vernacular critics, culture jammers, like Eco's "communications guerrillas", introduce noise into the signal as it passes from transmitter to receiver, encouraging idiosyncratic, unintended interpretations. Intruding on the intruders, they invest ads, newscasts and other media artefacts with subversive meanings; simultaneously, they decrypt them, rendering their seductions impotent. Jammers offer irrefutable evidence that the Right has no copyright on war waged with incantations and simulations. And, like Ewen's cultural cryptographers, they refuse the role of passive shoppers, renewing the notion of a public discourse.

Finally, and just as importantly, culture jammers are Groucho Marxists, ever mindful of the fun to be had in the joyful demolition of oppressive ideologies. As the inveterate prankster and former Dead Kennedy singer Jello Biafra once observed, "There's a big difference between 'simple crime' like holding up a 7-11, and 'creative crime' as a form of expression... Creative crime is... uplifting to the soul... What better way to survive our anthill society than by abusing the very mass media that sedates the public?... A prank a day keeps the dog leash away!"<sup>23</sup>

Jamming is part of a historical continuum that includes Russian *samizdat* (underground publishing in defiance of official censorship); the anti-fascist photomontages of John Heartfield; Situationist détournement (defined by Greil Marcus, in *Lipstick Traces*, as "the theft of aesthetic artefacts from their contexts and their diversion into contexts of one's own device"); the underground journalism of '60s radicals such as Paul Krassner, Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman; Yippie street theatre, such as the celebrated attempt to levitate the Pentagon; parody religions such as the Dallas-based Church of the Subgenius; workplace sabotage of the sort documented by *Processed World*, a magazine for disaffected data entry drones; the ecopolitical monkeywrenching of Earth First!; the random acts of Artaudian cruelty that radical theorist Hakim Bey calls "poetic terrorism" ("weird dancing in all-night computer banking lobbies... bizarre alien artefacts strewn in State Parks"); the insurgent use of the 'cut-up' collage technique proposed by William Burroughs in "Electronic Revolution" ("The control of the mass media depends on laying down lines of association... Cut/up techniques could swamp the mass media with total illusion"); and subcultural bricolage (the refunctioning, by societal 'outsiders', of symbols associated with the dominant culture, as in the appropriation of corporate attire and *Vogue* model poses by poor, gay and largely nonwhite drag queens).

An elastic category, culture jamming accommodates a multitude of subcultural practices. Outlaw computer hacking with the intent of exposing institutional or corporate wrongdoing is one example; 'slashing', or textual poaching, is another<sup>24</sup>; transmission jamming; pirate TV and radio broadcasting; and camcorder countersurveillance (in which low-cost consumer technologies are used by DIY muckrakers to document police brutality or governmental corruption) are potential *modus operandi* for the culture jammer. So, too, is media activism such as the cheery immolation of a mound of television sets in front of CBS's Manhattan offices—part of a protest against media bias staged by FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting) during the Gulf War—and 'media-wrenching' such as ACT UP's disruption of *The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour* in protest of infrequent AIDS coverage. A somewhat more conventional strain of culture jamming

are mediawatch projects such as Paper Tiger Television, an independent production collective that produces segments critiquing the information industry; Deep Dish TV, a grassroots satellite network that distributes free-thinking programming to public access cable channels nationwide; and Not Channel Zero, a collective of young African-American 'camcorder activists' whose motto is "The Revolution, Televised". And then there is academy hacking—cultural studies, conducted outside university walls, by insurgent intellectuals.

Thus, culture jamming assumes many guises; let us consider, in greater detail, some of its more typical manifestations.

#### SNIPING AND SUBVERTISING

'Subvertising', the production and dissemination of anti-ads that deflect Madison Avenue's attempts to turn the consumer's attention in a given direction, is a ubiquitous form of jamming. Often, it takes the form of 'sniping'—illegal, late-night sneak attacks on public space by operatives armed with posters, brushes, and buckets of wheatpaste.

*Adbusters*, a Vancouver BC-based quarterly that critiques consumer culture, enlivens its pages with acid satires. "Absolut Nonsense", a cunningly-executed spoof featuring a suspiciously familiar-looking bottle, proclaimed: "Any suggestion that our advertising campaign has contributed to alcoholism, drunk driving or wife and child beating is absolute nonsense. No one pays any attention to advertising." Ewen, himself a covert jammer, excoriates conspicuous consumption in his "Billboards of the Future"—anonymously-mailed Xerox broadsides like his ad for "Chutzpah: cologne for women & men, one splash and you'll be demanding the equal distribution of wealth". Guerrilla Girls, a cabal of feminist artists that bills itself as "the conscience of the art world", is known for savagely funny, on-target posters, one of which depicted a nude odalisque in a gorilla mask, asking, "Do women have to get naked to get into the Met. Museum?" Los Angeles's Robbie Conal covers urban walls with the information age equivalent of Dorian Gray's portrait: grotesque renderings of Oliver North, Ed Meese and other scandal-ridden politicians. "I'm interested in counter-advertising", he says, "using the streamlined sign language of advertising in a kind of reverse penetration." For gay activists, subvertising and sniping have proven formidable weapons. A March 1991 *Village Voice* report from the frontlines of the 'outing' wars made mention of "Absolutely Queer" posters, credited to a phantom organization called OUTPOST, appearing on Manhattan build-

ings. One, sparked by the controversy over the perceived homophobia in *Silence of the Lambs*, featured a photo of Jodie Foster, with the caption: "Oscar Winner. Yale Graduate. Ex-Disney Moppet. Dyke." Queer Nation launched a "Truth in Advertising" poster-ing campaign that sent up New York Lotto ads calculated to part the poor and their money; in them, the official tagline, "All You Need is a Dollar and a Dream", became "All You Need is a Three-Dollar Bill and a Dream". The graphics collective Gran Fury, formerly part of ACT UP, has taken its sharp-tongued message even further: a super-slick Benetton parody ran on buses in San Francisco and New York in 1989. Its headline blared "Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do" over a row of kissing couples, all of them racially-mixed and two of them gay. "We are trying to fight for attention as hard as Coca-Cola fights for attention", says group member Loring Mcalpin. "[I]f anyone is angry enough and has a Xerox machine and has five or six friends who feel the same way, you'd be surprised how far you can go."

#### MEDIA HOAXING

Media hoaxing, the fine art of hoodwinking journalists into covering exhaustively researched, elaborately staged deceptions, is culture jamming in its purest form. Conceptual con artists like Joey Skaggs dramatize the dangers inherent in a press that seems to have forgotten the difference between the public good and the bottom line, between the responsibility to enlighten and the desire to entertain.

Skaggs has been flimflamming journalists since 1966, pointing up the self-replicating, almost viral nature of news stories in a wired world. The trick, he confides,

*is to get someone from an out-of-state newspaper to run a story on something sight unseen, and then you Xerox that story and include it in a second mailing. Journalists see that it has appeared in print and think, therefore, that there's no need to do any further research. That's how a snowflake becomes a snowball and finally an avalanche, which is the scary part. There's a point at which it becomes very difficult to believe anything the media tells you.*

In 1976, Skaggs created the Cathouse For Dogs, a canine bordello that offered a "savory selection" of doggie Delilahs, ranging from pedigree (Fifi, the French poodle) to mutt (Lady the Tramp). The ASPCA was outraged, the *Soho News* was incensed and ABC devoted a segment to it that later received an Emmy nomination for best news broadcast

of the year. In time, Skaggs reappeared as the leader of Walk Right!, a combat-booted Guardian Angels-meet-Emily Post outfit determined to improve sidewalk etiquette, and later as Joe Bones, head of a Fat Squad whose tough guy enforcers promised, for a fee, to prevent overweight clients from cheating on diets. As Dr Joseph Gregor, Skaggs convinced UPI and New York's WNBC-TV that hormones extracted from mutant cockroaches could cure arthritis, acne and nuclear radiation sickness.

After reeling in the media outlets who have taken his bait, Skaggs holds a conference at which he reveals his deception. "The hoax", he insists,

*is just the hook. The second phase, in which I reveal the hoax, is the important part. As Joey Skaggs, I can't call a press conference to talk about how the media has been turned into a government propaganda machine, manipulating us into believing we've got to go to war in the Middle East. But as a jammer, I can go into these issues in the process of revealing a hoax.*

#### AUDIO AGITPROP

Audio agitprop, much of which utilizes digital samplers to deconstruct media culture and challenge copyright law, is a somewhat more innocuous manifestation. Likely suspects include Sucking Chest Wound, whose *God Family Country* ponders mobthink and media bias; The Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy, who take aim in "Television, the Drug of the Nation" at "happy talk" newscasts that embrace the values of MTV and *Entertainment Tonight*; Producers For Bob, whose pert, chattering dance tracks provide an unlikely backdrop for monologues about "media ecology", a McLuhan-inspired strategy for survival in a toxic media environment; and Chris Burke, whose Oil War, with its cut-up press conferences, presidential speeches and nightly newsbites, is pirate C-Span for Noam Chomsky readers. Sucking Chest Wound's Wayne Morris speaks for all when he says, "I get really angry with the biased coverage that's passed off as objective journalism. By taking scraps of the news and blatantly manipulating them, we're having our revenge on manipulative media."

#### BILLBOARD BANDITRY

Lastly, there is billboard banditry, the phenomenon that inspired Negativland's coinage. Australia's BUGA UP stages hit-and-run 'demotions', or anti-promotions, scrawling graffiti on cigarette or liquor ads. The group's name is at once an acronym for "Billboard-Utilizing Graffitiists Against Unhealthy Promotions" and a pun on 'bugger up', Aussie slang for 'screw up'.

In like fashion, African-American activists have decided to resist cigarette and liquor ads targeting communities of colour by any means necessary. Describing Reverend Calvin Butts and fellow Harlem residents attacking a Hennessy billboard with paint and rollers, *Z Magazine's* Michael Kamber reports, "In less than a minute there's only a large white blotch where moments before the woman had smiled coyly down at the street". Chicago's Reverend Michael Pfleger is a comrade-in-arms; he and his Operation Clean defaced—some prefer the term 'refaced'—approximately 1,000 cigarette and alcohol billboards in 1990 alone. "It started with the illegal drug problem", says Pfleger. "But you soon realize that the number-one killer isn't crack or heroin, but tobacco. And we realized that to stop tobacco and alcohol we [had] to go after the advertising problem."<sup>25</sup>

San Francisco's Billboard Liberation Front, together with Truth in Advertising, a band of "midnight billboard editors" based in Santa Cruz, snap motorists out of their rush hour trances with deconstructed, reconstructed billboards. In the wake of the Valdez disaster, the BLF reinvented a radio promo—"Hits Happen. New X-100"—as "Shit Happens. New Exxon"; TIA turned "Tropical Blend. The Savage Tan" into "Typical Blend. Sex in Ads." Inspired by a newsflash that plans were underway to begin producing neutron bombs, a Seattle-based trio known as SSS reworked a Kent billboard proclaiming "Hollywood Bowled Over By Kent III Taste!" to read "Hollywood Bowled Over By Neutron Bomb!", replacing the cigarette pack with a portrait of then-President Ronald Reagan.

Artfux and the breakaway group Cicada Corps of Artists are New Jersey-based agit-prop collectives who snipe and stage neo-Situationist happenings. On one occasion, Artfux members joined painter Ron English for a tutorial of sorts, in which English instructed the group in the fine art of billboard banditry. Painting and mounting posters conceptualized by English, Artfux accompanied the New York artist on a one-day, all-out attack on Manhattan. One undercover operation used math symbols to spell out the corporate equation for animal murder and ecological disaster: a hapless-looking



cow plus a death's-head equalled a McDonald's polystyrene clamshell. "Food, foam and Fun!", the tagline taunted. In a similar vein, the group mocked "Smooth Joe", the Camel cigarettes camel, turning his phallic nose into a flaccid penis and his sagging lips into bobbing testicles. One altered billboard adjured, "Drink Coca-Cola—It Makes You Fart", while another showed a seamed, careworn Uncle Sam opposite the legend, "Censorship is good because — — — -!"

"Corporations and the government have the money and the means to sell anything they want, good or bad", noted Artflux member Orlando Cuevas in a *Jersey Journal* feature on the group. "We...[are] ringing the alarm for everyone else."

### III. GUERRILLA SEMIOTICS

Culture jammers often make use of what might be called 'guerrilla' semiotics—analytical techniques not unlike those employed by scholars to decipher the signs and symbols that constitute a culture's secret language, what literary theorist Roland Barthes called "systems of signification". These systems, notes Barthes in the introduction to *Elements of Semiology*, comprise nonverbal as well as verbal modes of communication, encompassing "images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these".

It is no small irony—or tragedy—that semiotics, which seeks to make explicit the implicit meanings in the sign language of society, has become pop culture shorthand for an academic parlour trick useful in divining the hidden significance in *Casablanca*, Disneyland or our never-ending obsession with Marilyn Monroe. In paranoid pop psych such as Wilson Bryan Key's *Subliminal Seduction*, semiotics offers titillating decryptions of naughty advertising. "This preoccupation with subliminal advertising", writes Ewen, "is part of the legendary life of post-World War II American capitalism: the word 'SEX' written on the surface of Ritz crackers, copulating bodies or death images concealed in ice cubes, and so forth".<sup>26</sup> Increasingly, advertising assumes this popular mythology: a recent print ad depicted a cocktail glass filled with icecubes, the words "Absolut vodka" faintly discernible on their craggy, shadowed surfaces. The tagline: "Absolut Subliminal".

All of which makes semiotics seem trivial, effete, although it is an inherently political project; Barthes "set out... to examine the normally hidden set of rules, codes and

conventions through which meanings particular to specific social groups (i.e. those in power) are rendered universal and 'given' for the whole of society". Marshall Blonsky has called semiotics "a defense against information sickness, the 'too-muchness' of the world", fulfilling Marshall McLuhan's prophecy that "just as we now try to control atom-bomb fallout, so we will one day try to control media fallout".<sup>27</sup> As used by culture jammers, it is an essential tool in the all-important undertaking of making sense of the world, its networks of power, the encoded messages that flicker ceaselessly along its communication channels.

This is not to say that all of the jammers mentioned in this essay knowingly derive their ideas from semiotics or are even familiar with it, only that their ad hoc approach to cultural analysis has much in common with the semiotician's attempt to 'read between the lines' of culture considered as a text. Most jammers have little interest in the deliria that result from long immersion in the academic vacuum, breathing pure theory. They intuitively refuse the rejection of engaged politics typical of postmodernists like Baudrillard, a disempowering stance that too often results in an overeagerness for ringside seats at the *Götterdämmerung*. The *LA Weekly*'s disquieting observation that Baudrillard "loves to observe the liquidation of culture, to experience the delivery from depth" calls to mind Walter Benjamin's pronouncement that mankind's "self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order".<sup>28</sup> Jammers, in contrast, are attempting to reclaim the public space ceded to the chimeras of Hollywood and Madison Avenue, to restore a sense of equilibrium to a society sickened by the vertiginous whirl of TV culture.

### IV. POSTSCRIPT FROM THE EDGE

The territory mapped by this essay ends at the edge of the electronic frontier, the "world space of multinational capital" (Fredric Jameson) where vast sums are blipped from one computer to another through phone lines twined around the globe. Many of us already spend our workdays in an incunabular form of cyberpunk writer William Gibson's "cyberspace", defined in his novel *Neuromancer* as "a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system."<sup>29</sup> The experience of computer scientist W. Daniel Hillis, once novel, is becoming increasingly familiar:

*When I first met my wife, she was immersed in trading options. Her office was in the top of a skyscraper in Boston, and yet, in a very real sense, when she was at work she was in a world that could not be identified with any single physical location. Sitting at a computer screen, she lived in a world that consisted of offers and trades, a world in which she knew friends and enemies, safe and stormy weather. For a large portion of each day, that world was more real to her than her physical surroundings.*<sup>30</sup>

In the next century, growing numbers of Americans will work and play in artificial environments that only exist, in the truest sense, as bytes stored in computer memory. The explosion of computer-based interactive media seems destined to sweep away—at least in its familiar form—the decidedly non-interactive medium that has dominated the latter half of this century: television. Much of this media may one day be connected to a high-capacity, high-speed fibre optic network of ‘information superhighways’ linking as many homes as are currently serviced by the telephone network. This network, predicts computer journalist John Markoff, “could do for the flow of information—words, music, movies, medical images, manufacturing blueprints and much more—what the transcontinental railroad did for the flow of goods a century ago and the interstate highway system did in this century”.<sup>31</sup>

The culture jammer’s question, as always, is: who will have access to this cornucopia of information, and on what terms? Will fibre-optic superhighways make stored knowledge universally available, in the tradition of the public library, or will they merely facilitate psychological carpet-bombing designed to soften up consumer defences? And what of the network news? Will it be superseded by local broadcasts, with their heartwarming (always ‘heartwarming’) tales of rescued puppies and shocking (always ‘shocking’) stories of senseless mayhem, mortared together with airhead banter? Or will the Big Three give way to innumerable news channels, each a conduit for information about global, national and local events germane to a specific demographic? Will cyberpunk telejournalists equipped with Hi-8 video cameras, digital scanners, and PC-based editing facilities hack their way into legitimate broadcasts? Or will they, in a medium of almost infinite bandwidth and channels beyond count, simply be given their own airtime? In short, will the electronic frontier be wormholed with “temporary autonomous zones”—Hakim Bey’s term for pirate utopias, centrifuges in which social gravity is artificially suspended—or will it be subdivided and overdeveloped by what cultural critic Andrew Ross calls “the military-industrial-media complex?” Gibson, who believes that we are “moving toward a world where all of the consumers under a certain age will... identify more... with the products they consume than... with any sort of antiquated notion of

nationality”, is not sanguine. In the video documentary *Cyberpunk*, he conjures a minatory vision of what will happen when virtual reality is married to a device that stimulates the brain directly. “It’s going to be very commercial”, he says. “We could wind up with something that felt like having a very, very expensive American television commercial injected directly into your cortex.”<sup>32</sup>

“For Sale” signs already litter the unreal estate of cyberspace. A *New York Times* article titled “A Rush to Stake Claims on the Multimedia Frontier” prophesies “software and hardware that will connect consumers seamlessly to services... [allowing them] to shop from home”, while a *Newsweek* cover story on interactive media promises “new technology that will change the way you shop, play and learn” (the order, here, speaks volumes about American priorities). Video retailers are betting that the intersection of interactive media and home shopping will result in zillions of dollars’ worth of impulse buys: zirconium rings, nonstick frying pans, costumed dolls, spray-on toupees. What a *New York Times* author cutely calls Communicopia (“the convergence of virtually all communications technologies”) may end up looking like the Home Shopping Network on steroids.

But hope springs eternal, even in cyberspace. Jammers are heartened by the electronic frontier’s promise of a new media paradigm—interactive rather than passive, nomadic and atomized rather than resident and centralized, egalitarian rather than elitist. To date, this paradigm has assumed two forms: the virtual community and the desktop-published or online zine (‘zine’, the preferred term among underground publishers, has subtly political connotations: grassroots organization, a shoestring budget, an anti-aesthetic of exuberant sloppiness, a lively give-and-take between transmitters and receivers and, more often than not, a mocking, oppositional stance vis-à-vis mainstream media). Virtual communities are comprised of computer users connected by modem to the bulletin board systems (BBS’s) springing up all over the Internet, the worldwide meta-network that connects international computer networks. Funded not by advertisers but by paid subscribers, the BBS is a first, faltering step toward the jammer’s dream of a truly democratic mass medium. Although virtual communities fall short of utopia—women and people of colour are grossly underrepresented, and those who cannot afford the price of admission or who are alienated from technology because of their cultural status are denied access—they nonetheless represent a profound improvement on the homogenous, hegemonic medium of television.

On a BBS, any subscriber may initiate a discussion topic, no matter how arcane, in which other subscribers may participate. If the bulletin board in question is plugged into the Internet, their comments will be read and responded to by computer users scattered across the Internet. Online forums retire, at long last, the Sunday morning punditocracy, the expert elite, the celebrity anchorclones of network news, even the electronic town hall, with its carefully-screened audience and over-rehearsed politicians. As one resident of a San Francisco-based bulletin board called the WELL noted,

*This medium gives us the possibility (illusory as it may be) that we can build a world unmediated by authorities and experts. The roles of reader, writer, and critic are so quickly interchangeable that they become increasingly irrelevant in a community of co-creation.*<sup>33</sup>

In like fashion, ever-cheaper, increasingly sophisticated desktop publishing packages (such as the software and hardware used to produce this pamphlet) ensure that, in a society where freedom of the press—as A.J. Liebling so presciently noted—is guaranteed only to those who own one, multinational monoliths are not the only publishers. As Gareth Branwyn, a one-time zine publisher and long-time resident of virtual communities, points out,

*The current saturation of relatively inexpensive multimedia communication tools holds tremendous potential for destroying the monopoly of ideas we have lived with for so long... A personal computer can be configured to act as a publishing house, a broadcast-quality TV studio, a professional recording studio, or the node in an international computer bulletin board system.*<sup>34</sup>

Increasingly, zines are being published online, to be bounced around the world via the Internet. “I can see a future in which any person can have a node on the net”, says Mitch Kapor, president of the Electronic Frontier Foundation, a group concerned with free speech, privacy and other constitutional issues in cyberspace. “Any person can be a publisher. It’s better than the media we now have.”<sup>35</sup>

Devil’s advocates might well argue that Festering Brain Sore, a fanzine for mass murderer aficionados, or the WELL topic devoted to “armpit sex” are hardly going to crash the corporate media system. Hakim Bey writes, “The story of computer networks, BBS’s and various other experiments in electro-democracy has so far been one of hobbyism for the most part. Many anarchists and libertarians have deep faith in the PC as a weapon of liberation and self-liberation—but no real gains to show, no palpable liberty.”<sup>36</sup>

Then again, involvement in virtual communities and the zine scene is rapidly expanding beyond mere hobbyism: as this is written, approximately ten million people frequent BBS’s and an estimated 10,000 zines are being published (70 alone are given over to Left politics of a more or less radical nature). These burgeoning subcultures are driven not by the desire for commodities but by the dream of community—precisely the sort of community now sought in the nationally-shared experience of watching game shows, sitcoms, sportscasts, talk shows and, less and less, the evening news. It is this yearning for meaning and cohesion that lies at the heart of the jammer’s attempts to reassemble the fragments of our world into something more profound than the luxury cars, sexy technology and overdesigned bodies that flit across our screens. Hackers who expose governmental wrongdoing, textual slashers, wheatpaste snipers, billboard bandits, media hoaxers, subvertisers and unannounced political protestors who disrupt live newscasts remind us that numberless stories go untold in the daily papers and the evening news, that what is not reported speaks louder than what is. The jammer insists on choice: not the dizzying proliferation of consumer options, in which a polyphony of brand names conceals the essential monophony of the advertiser’s song, but a true plurality, in which the univocal world view promulgated by corporate media yields to a multivocal, polyvalent one.

The electronic frontier is an ever-expanding corner of Eco’s “universe of Technological Communication... patrolled by groups of communications guerrillas” bent on restoring “a critical dimension to passive reception”. These guerrilla semioticians are in pursuit of new myths stitched together from the fabric of their own lives, a patchwork of experiences and aspirations that has little to do with the depressive stories of an apolitical intelligentsia or the repressive fictions of corporate media’s Magic Kingdom. “The images that bombard and oppose us must be reorganized”, insist Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen. “If our critique of commodity culture points to better alternatives, let us explore—in our own billboards of the future—what they might be.”<sup>37</sup> Even now, hackers, slashers, and snipers—culture jammers all—are rising to that challenge.

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© Princess Hijab



fig. 1





fig. 2



fig. 3



fig. 4

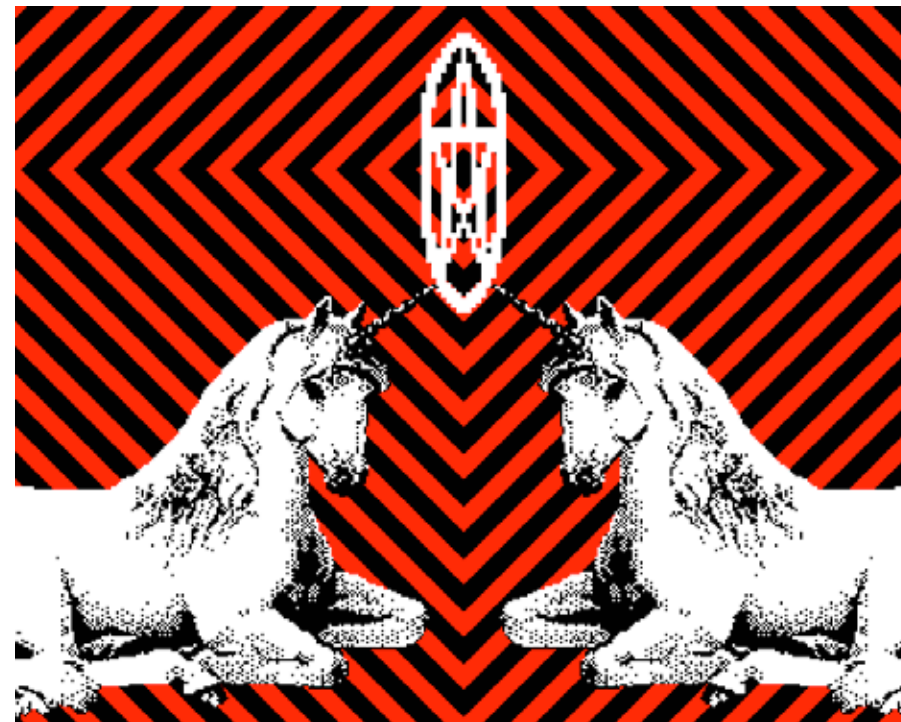


fig. 5



fig. 6



fig. 7



fig. 8



fig. 9

Angelique Chrisafis

## Burka & Gabanna: The Adbusting of Princess Hijab

Princess Hijab daubs Muslim veils on half-naked fashion ads on the metro. Why does she do it? Is she a religious fundamentalist? And is she really a woman?

Just after dawn at Havre-Caumartin metro station, Paris's first commuters are stepping on and off half-empty trains. Then, at the end of the platform, a figure in black appears, head bowed and feet tapping with nerves.

Princess Hijab is Paris's most elusive street artist. Striking at night with dripping black paint she slaps black Muslim veils on the half-naked airbrushed women—and men—of the metro's fashion adverts. She calls it "hijabization". Her guerrilla niqab art has been exhibited from New York to Vienna, sparking debates about feminism and fundamentalism—yet her identity remains a mystery.

In secular republican France, there can hardly be a more potent visual gag than scrawling graffitied veils on fashion ads. Six years after a law banned headscarves and all conspicuous religious symbols from state schools, Nicolas Sarkozy's government has banned the niqab from public spaces amid a fierce row over women's rights, Islamophobia and civil liberties. The 'burqa ban', approved last month, means that from next year it will be illegal for a woman to wear full-face Muslim veils in public, not just in government offices or on public transport, but in the streets, supermarkets and private businesses. The government says it is a way of protecting women's rights and stopping them being forced by men to cover their faces.

Already this has prompted extreme reactions. One female teacher in favour of the ban was last week given a month's suspended jail sentence for trying to rip a veil from the face of a 26-year-old Emirati tourist in a shop, then slapping, scratching and biting her. On the other side of the argument, two French women calling themselves "niqabitch" reproduced the classic visual mixed metaphor of walking around central Paris in niqabs, black hotpants, bare legs and high heels, posting a film of it online in order to highlight the "absurdity" of the ban.

But Princess Hijab got there first, and her simple, almost childlike acts of sabotage with

a black marker pen still manage to be the most unsettling, with the widest audience abroad. Yet who is she? A French Muslim woman in hijab raging at the system? That would be a rare thing on Paris's male-dominated graffiti scene. Is she a religious fundamentalist making a point about female flesh? But she likes to leave a witty smattering of buttock cheeks and midriff on display. If she's a left-wing feminist making a point about the exploitation of women, it's odd that she always flees the scene of her crimes. Is she even Muslim? Her fans like to imagine a young rebel outsider from Paris's suburban ghettos travelling to the capital to make her mark. But like Paris's greatest street artist, Blek le Rat—who inspired Britain's Banksy—she could turn out to be a fiftysomething white man who voted for Sarkozy.

The Princess winds through the corridors of Havre-Caumartin, sizing up the advertising posters lining the walls. She has agreed to meet as she scours stations for targets for her next "niqab intervention". In spandex tights, shorts and a hoodie, with a long black wig totally obscuring her face, one thing is clear: the twentysomething doesn't wear the niqab that has become her own signature. She won't say if she's a Muslim. In fact, it's more than likely that Princess Hijab isn't even a woman. There's a low note in her laughter, a slight broadness to her shoulders. But the androgynous figure in black won't confirm a gender. "The real identity behind Princess Hijab is of no importance", says the husky voice behind the wig. "The imagined self has taken the foreground, and anyway it's an artistic choice."

"I started doing this when I was 17", she says (I'll stick to 'she' as the character is female, even if the person behind it is perhaps not).

"I'd been working on veils, making spandex outfits that enveloped bodies, more classic art than fashion. And I'd been drawing veiled women on skateboards and other graphic pieces, when I felt I wanted to confront the outside world. I'd read Naomi Klein's *No Logo* and it inspired me to risk intervening in public places, targeting advertising."

The Princess's first graffiti veil was in 2006, the 'niqabization' of the album poster of France's most famous female rapper, Diam's, who by strange coincidence has now converted to Islam herself. "It's intriguing because she's now wearing the veil", the Princess muses. Initially she graffitied men, women and children and then would stand around to gauge the public's response; now she does hit-and-runs. "I don't care about people's reactions. I can see this makes people feel awkward and ill at ease, I can understand that, you're on your way home after a tough day and suddenly you're confronted with this."



With the Paris metro protective of its advertising spaces, her work now usually stays up for only 45 minutes to an hour before being ripped down by officials. She has become highly selective, doing only four or five graffiti 'interventions' in Paris a year. But each is carefully photographed and has its own afterlife circulating online. Those 'niqabized' range from Dolce & Gabbana men's underwear to risqué adverts for Virgin bookshops.

Why does she do it? "I use veiled women as a challenge", she says, quick to add that she believes no one way of dressing is either good or bad. She's not defending the rights of any group and no one needs her as a spokesperson. "That's paternalistic. If veiled women want to make a point, they'd do it themselves. If feminists want to do something they're capable of doing it on their own." She later explains by email: "The veil has many hidden meanings, it can be as profane as it is sacred, consumerist and sanctimonious. From Arabic Gothicism to the condition of man. The interpretations are numerous and of course it carries great symbolism on race, sexuality and real and imagined geography."

Princess Hijab is deliberately cool and detached, but the one issue that really shakes her—and perhaps reveals a little of her true identity—is the place of minorities in France. Beyond the arguments about whether Muslim women should cover their heads, Sarkozy's new ministry of immigration and national identity and his national debate on what it means to be French has stigmatized the already discriminated and ghettoized young people of third- and fourth-generation immigrant descent. France has the largest Muslim population in Europe, but the prevailing anti-immigrant discourse—and what many view as a pointless burqa ban—has increased the feelings of marginalization felt by young Muslims and minorities.

Princess Hijab sees herself as part of a new "graffiti of minorities" reclaiming the streets. "If it was only about the burqa ban, my work wouldn't have a resonance for very long. But I think the burqa ban has given a global visibility to the issue of integration in France", she says. "We definitely can't keep closing off and putting groups in boxes, always reducing them to the same old questions about religion or urban violence. Education levels are better and we can't have the old Manichean discourse any more."

She adds: "Liberty, equality, fraternity, that's a republican principle, but in reality the issue of minorities in French society hasn't really evolved in half a century. The outsiders in France are still the poor, the Arabs, black and, of course, the Roma."

The Princess won't say what her own roots are. She simply says she sees her work as a kind of "cartography of crime", a mapping out of the underbelly of the city where "I bring inside everything that's been excreted out".

And yet her graffiti is particularly French in its anti-consumerism and ad-busting stance. For her, painting a veil on adverts works visually because the two are "dogmas that can be questioned". She feels young women wearing the hijab who were once stigmatized by French institutions are now being targeted for their purchasing power, the "perfect customers" in France's increasingly consumerist society.

Her next spree will focus on her favourite target brand, H&M. After all, its ad campaigns are plastered all over the Paris metro. She argues that the brand "democratized" fashion at low prices, women in hijab often shop there, and inking out H&M models is the perfect act of confrontation: "It's visually very striking because [the brand's] images are ideologically very present in the urban landscape."

So these blacked-out niqabs seem to represent everything but religion. "Am I religious?" she asks, hesitating. "The spiritual interests me, but that's personal, I don't think it bears on my work. Religion interests me, Muslims interest me and the impact they can have, artistically, aesthetically, in the codes that are all around us, particularly in fashion", she muses.

And with that, the graffiti performance artist scuttles off, kit-bag over her shoulder, to change out of her bizarre disguise and into her own everyday fashion and wander off above ground into the daylight.

*First published in The Guardian, Thursday 11 November 2010; reprinted by kind permission.*

Yana Milev

## Cluster III: Mythus

In Book 2, Clusters II to IV set the foundation for an expanded concept of design; this is important in constituting Design Anthropology and its branches. As it is presented here, Cluster III conveys the second cornerstone of an expanded concept of design in the idea of myth as a secondary semiotic system. Here, the discourse about systems of communication and conceptions of narratives, as well as about the theory of the 'other', the foreign and everyday life, is based on questions regarding the *Gestalt* character of mythogeneses (i.e., of processes in which signs and symbols communicate through events or ritual), on questions of design options within mythologies and (founding) events, as well as on questions regarding how myths are passed down, are subject to ideology, are manipulated or even extinguished. The debate on the founding of an expanded concept of design on the basis of this second cornerstone is located in cultural anthropology and ethnography, in the fields of media theory and curating, as well as in the production of art and culture. This is what *Mythus* stands for.

Cluster III proposes a discourse on myths and the mythical as a secondary semiotic system, starting with Roland Barthes' approach in *Mythologies*.

In accordance with the etymology of the word, Barthes establishes that myths are a system of communication that includes messages—and they cannot be an object, a term or an idea. A myth is a way of creating meaning, a form with a process and a shape. According to Barthes, the previous meanings of the word 'myth' are irrelevant. Here the idea of a design concept is founded on the concept of creation and of shaping the mythical, as well as on mythogenesis as a power to shape societies. Edward Said's concept of orientalism stands for an ideological and pathological myth of the 'other' and the foreign. However, since the 1990s, the terminology used in art history and cultural science of the Marco Polo syndrome—a mythical narrative within colonialism—has also been dominant. Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*, Edward Said's *Orientalism*—a strong reference for Catherine David when she curated the "documenta X" in 1997, at which she initiated the debate on the Marco Polo syndrome—the myth of the 'other' in works by Emmanuel Levinas, as well as the myth of the foreign in works by Clifford Geertz, are fundamental in constituting this chapter, "Design Mythology". Thus the process of creating and shaping myths is decisively determined by the proposition of truth and

interpretation, reduction and invention. The interface between ethnology, anthropology and design is generated here in the sense of creation and construction of narration, drama and emotion.

I am especially thankful for James Clifford's contribution; he is one of the pioneers of American cultural anthropology and ethnology as well as founder of the 'writing culture'<sup>1</sup> concept, which was an important influence on the new epistemological orientation in ethnology at the end of the last century.

The volume also profits from Dutch cultural philosopher and designer Henk Oosterling's position; he embodies the interface between ethnography, ecology and design in his scientific/empirical profile. In his article for this volume, Oosterling questions the myth of modernity with reference to the Dogon myth as it is discussed by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in "Body without Organs" and *A Thousand Plateaus*. In his *Shadow Chamber* and *Boarding House* series, the Australian photographer Roger Ballen captured psycho-ethnographies of the 'other' and the foreign in a poignant way. All three contributions are located in Block A of this chapter.

In Block B, positions regarding the construction of myths in daily life are discussed. Here I would like to thank the Californian art historian Molly Nesbit and the Austrian art anthropologist Elisabeth von Samsonow. Molly Nesbit focuses on the design process of Duchamp's readymades and uses this as a step towards the construction of myths in daily life. This is also the subject of Elisabeth von Samsonow's investigation, the difference being that her project focuses on the subjective search for traces of the protagonists of classical drama in daily life and she thereby gives her own narrative power free reign. In her visual essay, Ariadne's thread symbolizes this (free) reign. The German Indologist and ethnologist Christof Zotter and the German Islamic scholar and political scientist Janina Karolewski offer a recent position on the construction of myths in daily life in "Ritual Design".

Block C focuses on the construction of myths in media, museum and art spaces. Here one can also quickly find references to 'writing culture'—the invention or construction of narratives and history—and to the theory of the simulacrum. The American curator and artist Fareed Armaly outlines the discourse of 'lament' that has been established as exhibition design in museum settings since 9/11. The filmmaker and author Alexander Kluge reflects on the narrative spirit of media images—in this case from the Fukushima catastrophe in 2011, which feeds collective knowledge in an inflationary way as a media

interpretation of the 'other' and the foreign. In an imaginative transfer effect, images of the tremors cause tremors in the interpreter. *The Greeting* by the American video and installation artist Bill Viola also connects to the semiotic triangle's prerequisites. Viola expresses this in his own words: "the image on the computer monitor is only the top level of an extended network of connections and hidden symbolic forms that represent the actual reality of what we see in front of us. Both worlds, the interior world of the computer and the interior world in which we live, are not visible." In *The Greeting*, a work from 1995, Viola shows us a conversation's gestural and mimicked sensations that only become visible in the individual images of the process. A sequence of a conversation or chain of events hardly achieves such attention to detail. Normally, differentiated messages are buried under a surface of redundancy.

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1. Clifford, James and George Marcus eds, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1986.

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#### **A: Designing the Myth of the Other**

*Henk Oosterling*

*James Clifford*

*Roger Ballen (VE)*

*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

#### **B: Designing Myths of Everyday Life**

*Molly Nesbit*

*Christoph Zotter, Janina Karolewski*

*Elisabeth von Samsonow (VE)*

*(commentary: Elisabeth von Samsonow)*

#### **C: Designing Myths in Exhibiting and Media Practices**

*Fareed Armaly*

*Alexander Kluge*

*Bill Viola (VE)*

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Henk Oosterling

## The Myth of Modernity Interrogated:<sup>1</sup> Oedipus and the Dogon

In 1980 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari published *A Thousand Plateaus* as the second part of a book entitled *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the first part of which was published in 1972 with the title *Anti-Oedipus*.<sup>2</sup> In Part Two, an intriguing image opens the article “November 28, 1947: How do you make yourself a Body without Organs?” A title mysterious enough in itself, but the image that should throw some light on it is even more enigmatic. The caption reads: “The Dogon Egg and the Distribution of Intensities”.

How is this mythological egg related to the weird concept of a Body without Organs (BwO)? What is a BwO, that quasi-concept that raised much debate after its introduction in Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* (1969) and its implementation in *Anti-Oedipus*?

*At any rate, you have one (or several). It's not so much that it preexists or comes ready-made, although in certain respects it is preexistent. At any rate, you make one, you can't desire without making one. And it awaits you; it is an inevitable exercise or experimentation, already accomplished the moment you undertake it, unaccomplished as long as you don't. This is not reassuring because you can't botch it. Or it can be terrifying, and lead you to your death. It is nondesire as well as desire. It is not at all a notion or a concept, but a practice, a set of practices. You never reach the Body without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit. People ask, So what is this BwO?—But you're already on it, scurrying like a vermin, groping like a blind person, or running like a lunatic: desert traveler and nomad of the steppes.*<sup>3</sup>

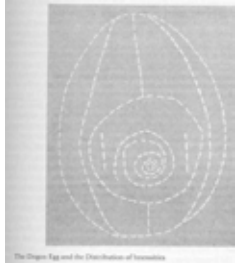
The BwO is a substrate of affects. These strive to connect to everything at hand, crossing borders that are holding individual desire culturally and historically within the frames of a given society. It subverts this as a functional organism. The title is adopted from a radio experiment performed by the French actor, artist and writer Antonin Artaud (1896-1948), who was diagnosed more or less insane and finally ended up in an asylum. Artaud declares war on the organs. In philosophical terms: he radically criticizes the way Western individuals objectify and experience their bodies, with their desires as functional organisms locked in upon themselves.

The coherence of this functional body is subverted by ‘pathological’ body experiences and desires: hypochondriacs, schizophrenics, paranoiacs, addicts, masochists. The authors do not marginalize these pathologies, but solely focus on the intensity of these bodily experiences that strive to become consistent on a certain level or plane, on a plane of consistency. They are not interested in the moral opinions of others, even less in the scientific judgments of their colleagues that are, after all, regulated by the ruling discourse. They rather affirm, in a Nietzschean way, the body as a field of forces, connected to everything that is in contact, surpassing the opposition between private and public. The dynamic ‘logic’ of these forces can only be apprehended from within, as a field of immanence, without references to pathology or other scientific concepts.

In *Anti-Oedipus*, bodies were presented as ‘desiring machines’. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, the multi-layered connection of affects to everything that can be desired—between will and world—is called *agencement*. This is too strictly translated as ‘assemblage’, because this word neglects the fact that there is always an ‘agent’. This, however, is not the ‘I’ as an autonomous subject, but a non-subjective ‘will’. Deleuze & Guattari's frame of reference is not Kant, but Nietzsche. The coherence of the personal identity as a subject is only one of the mega reductions within modernity of these assemblages. Agency defined as ‘the will to....’ must be situated on a sub-individual or supra-individual level, i.e. on different plateaus. Referring to Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) plateau is circumscribed as “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation towards a culmination point or external end”.<sup>4</sup> It is within this perspective that they present their idea of a rhizome.

Will is triggered by affects, which off and on strengthen and on and off annihilate each other. So the centre of agency need not be a rational and intentional subject. A smell or sound reminds the body of an intense experience. It can be a smile, a gesture. Assemblages are made continuously. Deleuze & Guattari short circuit the relationship between body and mind, deconstructing the modern subject-object opposition. This nonconventional approach breaks with traditional metaphysics, the Cartesian dualism of body and mind and the Kantian subject. Within these philosophical perspectives the body is presented as the Other.

In retrospect, the exclusion of this Other, be it the nature within man (passion) or outside Western civilization (the wild and primitive), has constituted modern man's identity. Chastity and self disciplining are micropolitical counter-strategies to restrict the body, colonialism and imperialism geopolitical articulations of a civilizing quest on the



The Dogon Egg and the  
Distribution of Intensities

wild and primitive. Deleuze & Guattari politicize scientism with its universalist pretensions that sustain political ambitions to control society and the capitalist urge to colonize in order to maximize profits. In the final instance, their philosophical adversary par excellence is Hegel, that is, his dialectical reduction of reality to an ever-increasing process of identification, in which all differences in the final instance are reduced to series of identities. As in the works of Derrida, Lyotard, Irigaray and Foucault, Deleuze & Guattari's philosophical approach can therefore be qualified as a 'thinking of differences'.<sup>5</sup> Differences, minor and major, have always been suppressed in Western culture. Belonging to a group is defined literally by exclusiveness. This reductive urge of identity and the theological emphasis on the One instead of the Many has, over the ages, marginalized all that differed.

## 1. HEGEL'S MODERN DEVALUATION OF AFRICA

How can Western philosophy get a grip on non-Western forms of thought without assimilating these into its own conceptual framework? How can occidental man think differences without reducing these to the very identity that enables him to even 'see' the Other, be it as a negation. One of the most explicit articulations of that impossibility is the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. As a matter of fact, in *Reason in History* he concluded that in the area south of the Sahara, "no history can take place [...] There is no goal, no state, where one can strive for, no subjectivity, only subjects that disorganize themselves".<sup>6</sup> Hegel, in line with the Enlightenment's presupposition that things can change for the better, agrees with Kant that subjects as autonomous, self-conscious beings incorporate universal Reason and as such are the source of knowledge.

But, for him, thinking does not end at the Kantian antinomies of Reason. History incorporates a higher foundation than the subject that is torn apart between phenomena and noumena. World Spirit supersedes the subject-object opposition, dialectically realizing truth. Every opposition turns out to be a contradiction, due to the very dialectic dynamics that rule both history and men's minds. And every contradiction is from within sublated to a higher order position. Spirit realizes itself in an ever-increasing, positive process of identification, politically culminating in the modern state, with its institutions and laws, in which every citizen participates. From this political philosophical point of view Hegel passes his final judgment on Africa, whose "condition is not able to develop or form itself. In fact it has no history. Africa is a non-historical continent."<sup>7</sup>

No history, no politico-juridical infrastructure, and therefore no subjectivity. Just myths, superstition and violence.

However, the very course of modern history has falsified Hegel's insights. The so-called civilizing activities of colonialism and imperialism have proven Hegel's all too absolute Spirit to be wrong. Even worse, as a result of their civilizing activities, Westerners gradually came to the conclusion that their ideas about civilization and development were not only destructive for other cultures, but became a threat to their own civilization as well. The exploitative universality was not only caused by a different, apparently harmless conception of time and space—linear, progressive, cumulative, hierarchical—but also by a repressive attitude towards an outer and inner world, towards nature outside and inside man.

## 2. FRENCH ANTHROPOLOGY: CRITIQUE OF MODERN SOCIETY

The reference in *A Thousand Plateaus* to the anthropologist Bateson is exemplary. Deleuze & Guattari cross-refer on historical and cultural planes to deconstruct modern universalism. According to them the Dogon image bears witness to another way of describing the creation and production of world; forces and intensities, instead of identities and intentions. It lacks nothing, and all intensities distribute themselves constantly, in spite of necessary articulations.

*The BwO is the egg [...] you always carry it with you as your own milieu of experimentation, your associated milieu [...] There is a fundamental convergence between science and myth, embryology and mythology, the biological egg and the psychic or cosmic egg [...] The egg always points to an intensive reality, not undifferentiated, but where the organs uniquely differentiate themselves through grades, migrations and zones of proximity [...]*<sup>8</sup>

According to the Dogon, Amma—God—created the world in the form of an egg, filled with signs. The egg contains a series of 266 points. All points will develop into specific forms. From the four elements—air, water, earth and fire—the so-called collarbones of Amma emanate, via the dynamic principle of spiral vibration, the second egg, the *yala*. This is the egg that illustrates the article in *A Thousand Plateaus*. The signs form a fourfold series: abstract signs, tokens or images, figures and, eventually, designs or factual things that express themselves socially in a range of articulations: from building



patterns of houses to initiation rites. Epistemology and ontology are two aspects of the same process, as in the case of Hegel's formal ontology: understanding is being. But Hegel is not a myth, at least not in the nineteenth century.

The myth of the origin of the Dogon is recorded by the French ethnologist Marcel Griaule (1898-1956). He distilled the myth from stories of one of the important tribe members, the blind *hogon* Ogotemmêli.<sup>9</sup> Griaule's presence in the area between Mali—colonized by France in 1893—and Burkina Faso, former Upper Volta, and his research on Dogon culture were embedded within the repressive policies of French colonialism. By studying the customs and habits of the natives to gain a better understanding of collective behaviour, France, like every self-respecting colonial power, tried to gain control over her colonies more effectively.

Deleuze & Guattari's book is written against the horizon of French cultural anthropology or ethnology with its strong philosophical perspective, criticizing modernity. This discipline was institutionalized in the 1930s. Griaule was a student of Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), one of the founders of the Institute for Ethnology in 1925. Mauss was a nephew of Émile Durkheim (1858-1917). Griaule led an expedition from Dakar to Djibouti and became acquainted with the Dogon. This tribal community within different groups that are culturally and religiously linked comprises approximately 300,000 people. As a result of extensive research, their lifestyle, rites and myths became general knowledge, available to many French intellectuals.

But Griaule was also one of the editors of a critical magazine in the 1930s, called *Documents*. As such, he was indirectly influenced by his fellow editors Michel Leiris (1901-1990) and Georges Bataille (1897-1962), who wrote articles on avant-garde art, non-Western cultures and political phenomena like fascism and communism.<sup>10</sup> Both were critical of the dominating capitalist ideology with its geopolitical ambitions. In their view, Western society had reached an economic, cultural and political deadlock that resulted in totalitarianism. Bataille's ideas had a great impact on thinkers of differences. Mostly on Foucault and Derrida, less affirmatively on Lyotard and Deleuze. But in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* we find references to Bataille.

Of course, critique of modernity is not exclusively illustrated by this reference to the Dogon egg as the womb of the world. Other pre-modern and non-Western conceptualizations of the ontological foundation of reality are summoned: Spinoza's *Ethics*, with its theory of affects, Castaneda's *Lessons of Don Juan*, and the Chinese *Tao Teh Ching*,

with its Yin-Yang energetics, among others. Once we realize that the main philosophical targets in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* are Marx and Freud—or, methodologically, dialectics and psychoanalysis—the picture becomes clearer. The Dogon twins, the Nommo—a half-man, half-snakelike, bisexual being that emanates from the egg—is related to the structure of modern man's desire as the Freudian Unconscious, locked upon itself via the Oedipus myth. *Anti-Oedipus* questions the constitutive role of the myth of Oedipus in psychoanalysis and, by implication, the epistemological role of metaphor and myth in scientific explanations of individual desires is under discussion.

### 3. OEDIPUS: MYTHICAL ORGANIZER OF DESIRE

*Anti-Oedipus* criticizes the mythological origin of Freudian theory, which structures and signifies 'unconscious' drives and their bodily effects in terms of the Oedipus complex. Freud imagines man's inner life as an ancient theatre. Our desires were caught up within a tragedy: the myth of Oedipus, the tragic hero, who, in spite of his own good intentions, was trapped in the web of fate as a challenged patricide and incestuous son. To Freud, both collective behaviour and the institutional infrastructure of society are functions of this libidinal dynamics. But for Deleuze & Guattari individual desires are first of all group phenomena that are constituted and organized by phantasmata: the 'I' is first a 'We', the individual is first a 'dividual'. However, they do not agree with Marx, who, despite his 'sociological' approach, aims at reconstituting a new subject, repositioning non-alienated desire.

This shift was already acknowledged by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who redefined Freud's theories from a structuralist point of view. He stated that the Unconscious is structured like a language as a system of signs, each of which consists of a signifier—acoustic or visual, the spoken or written word—and a signified, i.e. a concept. For Lacan, the Unconscious is not an ontological category, but an epistemological construct that is articulated within the triangle of three domains: the symbolic (S), real (R) and imaginary order (I). The phantasma, Lacan claims, fulfils the role of a signifier in (I), sublimating drives as transgressive desires, referring to 'some thing' that ultimately escapes final determination. In the final instance the Unconscious literally explicates itself within series of signifiers that suggest an ontological foundation. But in the final instance the 'real thing' cannot be captured.<sup>11</sup>

Deleuze & Guattari criticize Lacan for his rigid conceptualism and still pseudo-universalist pretensions. But they agree that, whatever the signifier is, its nature is always arbitrary. They radicalize Lacan's insights.<sup>12</sup> There is no universal, trans-historical truth in it. Freud's analysis of desires is only one way to conceptualize the world of desires. It is part of Western discourse, i.e., of the way modern culture gives meaning, reproducing these meanings in scientific and sociocultural practices. Language and social rules—Lacanian symbolic order—are inscribed on individual bodies, as tattoos and scars once signified membership of a tribal community. But bodies always resist this literal inscription or *écriture*, due to the unpredictable connectivity of desire—the BwO—because it can assemble everything in traversing different plateaus. This 'rhizomatic' connectivity is beyond good and evil, as Nietzsche already described in his genealogy.

So, according to Deleuze & Guattari the Unconscious is not an antique theatre. It is a *factory*. The very idea that this is a new metaphor is rejected, because a metaphor—a is as b—as an image implies image still refers to a 'real' world. Because they reject the metaphysical possibility of such a real world in a Nietzschean way, Deleuze & Guattari no longer accept the metaphorical quality of desire. The transcendence of desire is turned outside in. The focus is on the affirmative and productive quality of desire as assemblage of affects as forces that connect, divide and produce new forces that are integratead into a new coherent process on a plane that is still open to all sides. The 'I' as agency is only a result of an immense reduction. This machinic dynamics cannot be explained from outside, under the flag of a transcendent signifier, i.e. Oedipus. It must be understood from within: from the immanent functioning on a 'substrate' that organizes needs and desires by immediately linking these to what is at hand.

This is all motorized by difference. A force is, by definition, difference. As tension it expresses itself as pull, push, pressure and power. A force is per definition already two, so two forces that clash are at least four. The dynamics of forces do not go by the book, in this case Freud's fairy tale book of psychoanalysis. The ever growing number of psychopathological categories—the sadist, pervert, neurotic, psychotic, masochist, schizophrenic and paranoiac—at least proves its inadequacy to explain life. In the final instance the autonomous subject as a fictional entity that rules its inner and outer world, turns out to be subjected to a more 'autonomous' instance: intensive forces that roam the empty desert of bodies trying to strengthen themselves.

#### 4. CRITICISM OF MARX'S SEPARATION OF INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL DESIRE

The meaning of desire is articulated in its connectivity. Individual and social desires cannot be separated. It is precisely this separation that Deleuze & Guattari criticize as a modern presupposition that is reproduced over and again in the nuclear family. This mediates all social and historical forces, educating offspring to become autonomous, but well disciplined subjects of the state. According to psychoanalysis, the father incarnates the Law, blocking certain forms of behaviour via sanctions and stimulating others, working as a role model, connecting all desires to the family triangle. Through these signifying interventions history and society are inscribed on the child's body. However, in affirming its life forces, the child's body transgresses and decodes these limitations incessantly. This abundance is systematically restricted in educational practices that Michel Foucault rephrased as disciplinary practices, focusing on the mother-child axes, unmasking the Freudian paradigm as a disciplinary tactic par excellence.<sup>13</sup>

This critique is also suggested in the subtitle to Deleuze & Guattari's books: capitalism and schizophrenia. According to them, capitalism functions thanks to its schizophrenia: it has an immanent axiomatic that constantly decodes and recodes. The capitalist system forces new markets to open up in order to decode the economic diversity of tribal communities and to recode these in terms of the economy of the occupier. As soon as the authentic codes of these territories are overcoded, capitalism refrains from this ideological freedom by protecting new market. Decoding and recoding, deterritorialization and reterritorialization—there is no dialectical sublation.

Marx did not take into account this schizophrenic trait within capitalism that explains its enduring success. How to break the spell of capitalism? To Deleuze & Guattari the most radical gesture consists in affirming this schizophrenia, instead of fighting its transgressive and prodigal intensities. But Marx is also criticized for his modern presupposition of the separation of the private and the public order. Contrary to Freud, Marx reduced individual desires to collective, politico-economic forces. Notwithstanding his critique of Hegel's idealist approach, in Marx's dialectical materialist analysis—and for certain in the Soviet variation of Diamat—identity is the final term. In short, Freudian and Marxist analyses, each in their own way, reduce one field of desire to the other and take no notice of the connectivity of intensities that cuts through individual and social bodies. Critical modernists like Marx and Freud tried, by presupposing and reproducing this division, to converge desire ultimately into a coherent structure: a historical subject—the Proletariat—or a middle class Ego.

The exclusive division of individual and social desires—private from public—does not yet exist in tribal communities like the Dogon. *Anti-Oedipus* shows that modern desire cannot be derived solely from individual needs, nor from a collective quest for happiness for all. The interests of the proletariat as a historical subject and its enlightened will to the realization of collective freedom even merge with the masses' fascination during the 1930s for fascism. Ideology critique for countering alienation is not sufficient a theoretical tool to explain this paradox: devotion versus autonomy. Collective desire apparently acts out of other interests as well, if we still can call them 'interests' in a strict sense. Within the Freudian context, Deleuze & Guattari refer to Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) as one of the first who tried to explain the fascination for fascism by appealing to the inner dynamics of unconscious drives. To Reich, fascism is, although perverted, still an expression of the will of the masses. As one can imagine, this explanation did not really win approval among modernist thinkers.

In this way, both the Freudian Ego and the Marxist Proletariat become expressions of forces that transverse individual and social bodies. This world of affects, this affectivity, is productive in creating ever-new agencies, although these 'agencies' do not confirm the subject's will. *Agencement* or assemblage is beyond the autonomy of the subject. Deleuze & Guattari's references to other cultures and discourses suggest that an ecstatic experience of this affectivity, in which the subjectivity disappears instantaneously, is possible: "Tao, a field of immanence, in which desire lacks nothing and therefore cannot be linked to any external or transcendent criterion".<sup>14</sup> The 'I' then coincides with total awareness of linked bodies as an unmediated corporality.

The tribal communities of the Dogon—like all tribal and even medieval and pre-modern communities—organized transgressions by means of rituals. These extremely formalized, collective practices do not allow the division of individual and social desires. Individual bodies connect directly to the social body, historical events empower actual forces. In Western society these rituals, like Carnival, have been capitalized, becoming part of an economics of the spectacle. For Deleuze & Guattari, psychoanalysis is such modern ritual. Myth is applied to reproduce citizenship. They propose a new kind of self-reflective ritual as therapeutic practice: 'schizoanalysis'. Within this perspective, the 'pathological' descriptions of the BwO do not become prescriptions. On the contrary, they solely indicate specific contextual organizations of the Other.

## 5. DOGON MYTH: THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL BODY

In Freudianism, Oedipus functions as a myth. The utopian aspect of Marxism still has a mythological quality. Both 'isms' have installed practices, in which affective connections are regulated and strategically focused on the restoration of a lost Ego or the inauguration of a new Community. In Dogon tribes, myth connects these functions on the substrate of a cosmic egg. According to the wise Dogon elder who was interviewed by Griaule, the Dogon egg also explains Dogon society as life that develops through different phases. Collective behaviour is specified, classified and evaluated in mythological and cosmological categories. Time and space are organized around mythological and cosmological events. The construction of houses and villages is inspired by postures of mythological persons.

The emanation of the signs tells the story of the creation of the universe. Amma creates the sun and the moon in the form of pots. Hunks of clay thrown about form the stars, in which Sirius plays a central role: its 60-year orbit determines the categories of time and the main funeral rites. Amma makes the earth of clay and saliva. When he wants to unite himself with the feminine earth, he cannot penetrate her because his way is blocked by a termite hill. After the removal of the hill, the union can take place. This act of violation forms the first rupture with universal order. It is socially reproduced in female circumcision. 'Historical' facts are cruelly inscribed in the individual body.

Because of the act of violation, the earth does not give birth to the expected twins, the Nommo. It gives birth to a fox, which from then on is the symbol of all evil. Amma's second attempt results in the birth of the twins. The upper part of this being is human, the lower part has the shape of a snake. The twins are green and slippery as water. They have sinus-like limbs and a double sexuality. Once back in heaven, re-joined with their father, they look down on their naked mother. To protect her, they cover her with a dress woven of threads. It colours red from the blood. With this dress they give earth the first word: the language of the spirits. Technique and language are two sides of the same coin in Dogon myth. With every new form of language, a new technique is given.

One day the fox steals the dress and obtains power over the earth via language. He rapes his mother. The second rupture of universal order. Amma withdraws from the earth and creates the eight ancestors out of himself. The Nommo, the twins, form the ancestors as bisexual beings and they are taken up into heaven. One pair returns to earth to give her the second language, that of the ancestors, and the technique of weav-

ing. The third language—that of the present-day Dogon—is given together with the technique of forging. One story recalls the origin of this gift as follows: one of the ancestors steals fire and slides down to earth on the rainbow, chased by the Nommo. They cannot catch him, but because of his enormous speed he crashes on earth and breaks his limbs. Since then the limbs have adopted a human shape.

The offspring of the ancestors are not yet mortal. One day an old woman finds the red dress of the fox and puts it on. She gains enormous power over the rest of the human beings. But tribesmen become jealous and kill her. They put on the dress, but forget to tell the eldest man about this event. When he dies, i.e. transforms into a spirit and takes on the earthly shape of a snake, he discovers this crime when he meets the dressed man. Because of his rage he forgets that he must speak the first language, that of the spirits. He addresses the tribesmen in the third language, that of human beings. This breach with universal order brings about mortality. The man cannot return to heaven, but neither can he regain the state of a human being. So he just dies.

In *Le renard pâle* (The Pale Fox) (1965),<sup>15</sup> the emanation of the signs is described through these stories. Griaule and Dieterlen, the co-author of the book that was published after Griaule's death, emphasize the value of signs in Dogon culture. The signs give life. Of course, for the Dogon these are by no means arbitrary additions to life. The power of the word is an expression of the power of the sign. It determines the world even before it factually exists. Therefore the Dogon egg is, properly speaking, creation in a nutshell. The creation emanates from the intensities that form the amorphous 'structure' of the egg, consisting of "grades, migrations, zones of proximity".

In *Anti-Oedipus*, an extensive commentary on the Dogon myth as "a splendid theory of signs"<sup>16</sup> deals with the role of the Oedipus complex, the crucial role of the mother, the filiation of the twins and the question whether we are dealing with incest or not. The myth functions as a signifier for flows of desire within the collective body: the story of the insemination of the earth by Amma removing the termite hill regulates the circumcision of boys and girls, which refers to the separation of the female and the male part, united at first in the Nommo, but separated once the ancestors became mortal human beings. "Griaule's article is without doubt the text most profoundly inspired by psychoanalysis in the whole of anthropology. Yet it leads to conclusions that cause the whole of Oedipus to shatter..."<sup>17</sup> The Dogon myth obtains an epistemological value comparable to the Oedipus myth, but it connects and conjugates the individual and the social body in a different way to guarantee continuity of the community.

## 6. SCIENCE AND MYTH

In *Anti-Oedipus* the issue is the Oedipal incest. In *A Thousand Plateaus* the egg is presented as a BwO, a limit concept that motorizes both mind and body. Yet the critical impact of Deleuze & Guattari's quest has to be situated on another level: the relation between science and myth in the ruling discourse that disciplines bodies. *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* does not formulate an answer to specific Western problems. At most, it contains suggestions for another 'topology' or 'dynamics' of desire that make us more tolerant towards the Other and to difference. The least we can say is that Deleuze & Guattari offer a politico-aesthetic proposal for a coherent body-experience that explains how actual and historical forces colonize individual bodies beyond morals, as a result of which 'pathologies' are inescapable. They also show the important role of differences and differing as constituents for 'becoming'.

But, analyzing Dogon culture, we also become aware of implicit mythology that regulates our own culture. This mytho-poetic aspect is invisible to the eye that analyzes the Other from within a discourse that pretends to be beyond myth—and for that matter beyond religion. By opening our eyes to this productive mythology, Deleuze & Guattari reveal the violence and the cruelty with which desire is inscribed in bodies. And, last but not least, with regard to modernity two other notions of time are proposed. The Dogon tribe is focused on an ever-actual past, with a time cycle oriented to the star Sirius, which orbits every 60 years, inaugurating revitalization. Hegel's philosophy of history induces a linear idea of development and the collective project of self-realization aimed at a near future. In the present we are always in the future. The notion of time that Deleuze & Guattari propose is neither past nor future: it focuses affirmatively on an immanent process of becoming: a now/here that Western philosophy cannot but think as a no/where.<sup>18</sup> The myth of development is criticized from two directions and by implication Hegel's devaluation of Africa is rejected.

This touches upon recent academic debates in Africa about the status of philosophy.<sup>19</sup> The oral traditions and the local systems of thought claim to be the original form of African philosophy as, respectively, 'sage philosophy' and 'ethnophilosophy', both different from more academic approaches in a Western manner. This discussion touches on the matter at hand because the relation between myth and science is the main target here too. Critics of ethnophilosophy aim their arrows at the irrational elements in local systems of thought. The modernist tendency in African thinking would rather strip itself of these irrational elements. In an article entitled "Mythe et philosophie: Réponse à Elungu,

Towa et autres", Irung Tshitambal'a Mulang criticizes the radical division between these two points of view:

*The radical dichotomy between the rational and the mythopoeic is misleading, since philosophical thought, from presocratic to present times, is informed in no small measure by mythical elements. Not only have thinkers like Plato and Marx used forms of expression that properly belong to myth but, too, philosophers and philosophy as such can't proceed without in some measure having recourse to these forms of expression.<sup>20</sup>*

In spite of the fact that we have tried to banish myth in Western thought radically from our conception of world and history, it was involuntarily reintroduced in different ways in order to satisfy the need to totalize becoming. Although modern philosophy flatters itself with the thought that it has completely freed itself from the shackles of mythology and externally imposed authority—in the form of religion—many twentieth-century philosophers have recognized the fact that, as in myth, Enlightenment became trapped in mythology with each step it took to increase the distance between itself and mythology. After the project of the *Encyclopedia* had objectified religious and mythical phenomena and transformed them into positive forms of knowledge, Kant had grounded the production of knowledge in the transparency of the autonomous, self reflexive subject, and Hegel had provided the timeframe to imagine cumulative development upon the opposition between the enlightened and the primitive, Adorno and Horkheimer showed during World War II that the rational discourse of Enlightenment had produced its own myth: the autonomous subject gone wild. Freeing ourselves from Nature, Technology has become our faith and fate. The subject's urge to control by means of objectification has unleashed counterforces that can no longer be controlled.<sup>21</sup> Adorno and Horkheimer came to the same conclusion as Mulang: myth and Enlightenment are interrelated.

## 7. REVALUATION OF AFRICAN THOUGHT AND PRACTICES

On a superficial level, *Capitalism & Schizophrenia* shows that the self criticism that Western society has developed can reach out for counter-positions that can be found in non-Western societies, such as the Dogon. Some use it to compensate for the exhaustion of the utopian potential that got entangled in its own micropolitical paradoxes. The socialist model, which functioned for a long time as a last refuge, no longer offered realistic alternatives. The (neo)liberal solution became more and more suspect, too, because of its explicit totalizing tendencies, which created paradoxes on a geopolitical

level.

By studying African societies—their proverbs, their myths, their notions of time and space—we gain insight into invisible and suppressed aspects of modern culture due to the reductive urge to annihilate the Other. History has taught us to accept the violence that was once externalized to the Other, be it African tribes or the transgressive violence of our desire. Philosophers of differences have come to realize that an insight into the mythologization of Western identity means a discourse change. In fact, digitalization and globalization have transformed the globe into a BwO that can only adequately be conceptualized in terms of networks and flows. Multiculturalism is no option, as long as it only multiplies identities. In a globalized world, the issue is far more complex. The issue is: what happens in between cultures, i.e. interculturality. Interculturality begins and ends with an insight into the productivity of differences. Producing interculturality begins and ends with the refusal to give in to reductive, hierarchical practices based on an outdated idea of civilization.



1. This article was published in 1990 under the same title in *I, We and Body*, Heinz Kimmerle ed., Amsterdam: BR Grüner. Apart from minor corrections it has not been updated. In footnotes, however, I have inserted references to more recent literature and have sketched the direction in which research on interculturality has been directed in the two decades after publication.
2. Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 1*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983; *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia 2*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.
3. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, pp. 150-151.
4. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 22.
5. Kimmerle, Heinz, *Philosophien der Differenz: Eine Einführung*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000.
6. Hegel, GWF, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, J Hoffmeister ed., Hamburg: Meiner, 1965, pp. 216-217.
7. Hegel, *Vernunft*, p. 234.
8. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 164.
9. The method Griaule used for his research, the fact that he did not speak the Dogon dialects and the willingness of the tribesmen to inform him because it raised their status—all these issues have been critically debated over the years. See, DA Lettens, *Mystagogie et mystification: Evaluation de l'oeuvre de Marcel Griaule*, Bujumbura, Burundi: Presses Lavigerie, 1971.
10. Bataille, Georges, "La structure psychologique du fascisme", *La Critique Sociale*, nos 10-11, 1933/1934.
11. Lacan, Jacques, *Écrits I*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966, pp. 251-289.
12. Slavoj Žižek fiercely counters this critique in his *Organs without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*, New York & London: Routledge, 2004.
13. Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge. Volume 1*, London: Random House, 1978.
14. Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p. 157.
15. Griaule, Marcel and Germaine Dieterlen, *Le renard pâle. Tome 1: Le mythe cosmogonique*, Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1965, p. 96.
16. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 157-163.

17. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 160.
18. Following Samuel Butler, Deleuze & Guattari show, by means of what seems to be just a pun, how attention can be drawn to a hidden aspect in our nihilism from no-where to now-here. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, London & New York: Verso, 1994, p. 100.
19. The book in which this article was published in 1990 inaugurated a line of research at the Erasmus University on interculturality, led by Heinz Kimmerle. See the series *Studies in Intercultural Philosophy* published by Rodopi and, recently, Reza Yousefi, Hermann-Josef Scheidgen and Henk Oosterling, *Von der Hermeneutik zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, Nordhausen: Traugott Bautz Verlag, 2010.
20. Irung, Tshitambal'a Mulang, "Mythe et philosophie: Réponse à Elungu, Towa et autres", *Quest*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1987, p. 12.
21. Horkheimer, Marx and Theodor W Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Amsterdam: Querido, 1947, p. 22.

James Clifford

## Taking Identity Politics Seriously: “The Contradictory, Stony Ground...”

*Gramsci said: “Turn your face violently towards things as they exist now.” Not as you’d like them to be, not as you think they were ten years ago, not as they’re written about in the sacred texts, but as they really are: the contradictory, stony ground of the present conjuncture.*

Stuart Hall<sup>1</sup>

*Pour moi, ce qui est authentique, c’est ce qui donne de la saveur à ce que chacun vit. Ce que mon père, mon grand-père, mon arrière-grand-père ont vécu, toutes leurs expériences des rites, de la tradition, de l’environnement sont différentes. Ils en ont été imprégnés sociologiquement et psychologiquement. Mais pas moi, qui ait ma propre expérience du monde. Je serai peut-être un jour authentique dans un musée de l’an 2000 ou de l’an 3000. En attendant, c’est moi qui invente.*

Jean-Marie Tjibaou<sup>2</sup>

*We can build upon the contributions of cultural studies to dispose of the idea that identity is an absolute and to find the courage necessary to argue that identity formation—even body-coded ethnic and gender identity—is a chaotic process that can have no end. In this way, we may be able to make cultural identity a premise of political action rather than a substitute for it.*

Paul Gilroy<sup>3</sup>

‘Identity politics’ is under attack from all sides these days. The political Right sees only a divisive assault on civilizational (read national) traditions, while a chorus on the Left laments the twilight of common dreams, the fragmentation of any cumulative politics of resistance. Meanwhile intellectuals of a poststructuralist bent, when confronted with movements based on tribal, ethnic, gender, racial or sexual attachments, are quick on the anti-essentialism trigger. Now there is no doubt that group identity narrowly defined and aggressively sustained can be a serious obstacle to wider, more inclusive solidarities; and the ideological work of clearly defining a sense of community or peoplehood often violently erases historical experiences of entanglement, border crossing and coexistence. The tragedy in the former Yugoslavia stands as a brutal, inescapable warning.

But, however justified our revulsion in particular instances of exclusivism or separatism, if the criticism hardens into a general position against identity politics as such, or leads to arguments for getting ‘beyond’ such claims, the effect may be disabling. We risk being left with a narrowly foreshortened view of contemporary social movements around culture and identity, missing their complex volatility, ambivalent potential and historical necessity.

In a recent collection, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, Craig Calhoun<sup>4</sup> challenges a widespread perception that the identity-based politics of racial/ethnic groups, the women’s movement, the gay movement and other self-assertions by excluded peoples represent something quite new. Social theory, he argues, has tended to repress the centrality of such mobilizations in heterogeneous, more-or-less democratic, public spheres. Identity has been seen as preceding political participation, rather than as made and unmade, connected and disconnected, in the interactive arenas of democratic, national and transnational social life.

*Identity formation on most models—including for example Habermas’s famous theory of the public sphere—prepares one for entrance into the public arena. It gives one individual strength and individual opinions. Conversely, the public sphere calls on one to put to the side the differences of class, ethnicity and gender in order to speak as equals. And it thereby makes it all but impossible to thematize those very differences as the objects of politics instead of as obstacles to be overcome before rational political formation of the collective will.*<sup>5</sup>

Since the project of identity, whether individual or collective, is rooted in desires and aspirations that cannot be fulfilled, identity movements are open-ended, productive and fraught with ambivalence. Calhoun argues that this generative “tension” is “the source of identity politics that aim not simply at the legitimation of falsely essential categorical identities but at living up to deeper social and moral values”.<sup>6</sup> Collective self-assertions may thus be traced simultaneously to the manipulations of leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic and to noble community aspirations and self-sacrificing moralities. Indeed, modern national projects—identity politics writ large—have always articulated noble goals of freedom, equality and solidarity with chauvinistic projects of exclusion and sometimes genocide. Such inclusive ‘communities’ can never be finished or whole: to differing degrees they are unstable, complicated and undermined by other identifications. It follows that national and transnational orders are not a domain of teleological progress, but of continual struggle and negotiation, formation and breakup.

One suspects that 'identity politics' needs to be contained, even scapegoated at times, because it is a figure for chaotic cultural and political articulations that exceed systemic, progressive determination. Collective agency, for better and worse, has long been exercised at discrepant scales: particular colonial and neo-colonial contact zones; regional, religious, ethnic mobilizations and resistances, specific transnational and diasporic circuits. It is on this uneven terrain, grasped with ethnographic complexity, that we can begin to track less heroic, more contradictory and multivalent processes of historical transformation. Without guarantees...

Stuart Hall has worked to keep this more complex field of identifications in view. From his crucial linkage of Gramscian politics with racial and ethnic formations,<sup>7</sup> to his recent attempts to reclaim 'ethnicity' from exclusivist nationalisms,<sup>8</sup> Hall recognizes the constitutive role of cultural, ethnic and racial identifications in contemporary politics. Human beings become agents, capable of effective action, only when they are actively sustained 'in place' through social and historical connections and disconnections. For Hall, this relational positioning is the work of culture, ensuring that "as subjects [social actors] function by taking up the discourses of the present and the past".

*It is that taking up of positions that I call 'identities'. You see the consequence of turning the paradigm around that way, the political question (for there is always a political question, at any rate, in the way I pose the issue) is not "How do we effectively mobilize those identities which are already formed?" so that we could put them on the train and get them onto the stage at the right moment, in the right spot—an act the left has historically been trying to do for about four hundred years—but something really quite different and much deeper.<sup>9</sup>*

Throughout the world, people are caught up in, and excluded by, the powerful currents of capitalist markets, religious movements and national projects. Embracing and resisting these forces they struggle to position themselves, to establish home bases, sites of collective support and action. Communities need to make "room" for themselves<sup>10</sup> in a crowded world. If in the late twentieth century they do this through cultural processes of ethnic, regional, tribal, class, racial, gender and sexual identification (in tactical combination), this is not something we have the luxury, or the privilege, to lament. As George Lipsitz<sup>11</sup> trenchantly argues, opposition to the special claims of racial or ethnic minorities often masks another, unmarked, 'identity politics', an actively sustained historical positioning and possessive investment in Whiteness. This defensive response, most aggressively mobilized by the Right, in fact spans the political spectrum. It thus

behooves those of us on the Left to be especially wary of any absolute, self-righteous opposition to identity claims. The lesson Gramsci learned from the devastating victory of national over class identifications in 1914 remains inescapable. Cultural politics is not secondary to more 'material' political/economic agencies. Effective democratic mobilizations begin where people are (not where they 'should be'): they work through the cultural discourses that situate groups, that provide them with roots (always spliced), with narrative connections between past and present (traditions), with distinctive social habits and bodies.

This hooking-up and unhooking, remembering and forgetting, gathering and excluding of cultural elements—processes crucial to the maintenance of an identity—must be seen as both materially constrained and inventive. Of course it is difficult, analytically and politically, to sustain this double vision, just as it is hard to work with the ambivalence inherent in processes of identification: the practical inseparability of empowerment and chauvinism, of community and exclusion, of performance and commodification, of positioning and governmentality. And yet it is precisely in this uncomfortable site of cultural process and politics that we begin, and begin again. Moreover, it is here that we can cultivate a kind of historical 'negative capability', aware of our own partial access to other historical experiences, tracking interference patterns and sites of emergence, piecing together more-than-local patterns, big-enough stories of the 'global', of intersecting 'historical' trajectories.

In what follows I begin thinking in this comparative, historicizing spirit about contemporary claims for 'tradition', claims that are central to the deeper and more differentiated politics of identifications that Stuart Hall helps us keep in view. For if, as he reminds us, a discursive linking of pasts and futures is integral to the positioning of collective actors, then some gathering up and performance of 'traditions' must inform all political subjecthood. To imagine a coherent future, people selectively mobilize past resources. Articulations of tradition, never simply backward-looking, are thus generative components of peoplehood, ways of belonging to some discrete social time and place in an interconnected world.

To take these complex, historically specific processes seriously we need to keep in view a quite uneven, broadly distributed, always unfinished range of phenomena. The task requires representational tact, a patient, self-reflexive 'listening' across cultures and histories. Toward the end of my remarks I will urge the importance of a reconstituted cultural anthropology for this project. The anthropology I have in mind is no longer part

of a unified 'science of man', a science that sorted out the world's cultures, synchronically and diachronically, from a privileged standpoint at the end or cutting-edge of history. Rather I want to affirm another strand of anthropology, which points toward more tentative, dialogical, but still realist, ethnographic histories: a work of translation that focuses not so much on cultures as on conjunctures, on complex mediations of old and new, of local and global.

More explicitly than the term 'culture', the word 'tradition' (along with its many near-equivalences: *costumbre*, *coutume*, *kastom*, etc.) highlights a historical break, a re-linking of past and future in a collective dynamism. Tradition becomes problematic, and thus politicized, in situations of rapid 'modernization'. Three canonical cultural-studies works, grappling with changes in post-war Britain, may be said to have introduced a contemporary, critical approach to the topic: Richard Hoggart's<sup>12</sup> (1957) evocation of a threatened working-class way of life, Raymond Williams<sup>13</sup> (1958) critique of elitist appeals to 'cultural' value and continuity, and EP Thompson's (1963) history of artisanal traditions and the rights of 'freeborn Englishmen' in the popular politics of early industrialism.<sup>14</sup> These seminal works responded to a society struggling with industrial and imperial decline, with the emergence of mass politics and consumerism and with a new international order increasingly dominated by American economic, military and cultural power. Hoggart, Williams and Thompson, in their different ways, were concerned to salvage and revitalize British, indeed rather narrowly English, currents of democratic community and contestation in a rapidly changing global context not yet fully visible when they wrote in the late 1950s.<sup>15</sup> All three saw democratic politics as crucially a clash and negotiation of 'traditions'.

Twenty years later, two influential works would cast this critical approach to tradition in a wider frame: Hobsbawm and Ranger's *The Invention of Tradition*<sup>16</sup> and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*.<sup>17</sup> Together they epitomized a paradigm in which the authenticity claimed for any tradition, culture or identity would be interpreted as a historical and political process involving the selective and creative manipulation of symbols, stories, spaces and times. While the two books focused on national projects, their general approach extended to a wider, more disorderly range of creations. Since the early 1980s, countless works have been written on the 'invention' of almost everything, from the Gaucho and George Washington, to Appalachia and the Shtetl. The 'invention paradigm' spilled out of the constraints Hobsbawm and Ranger placed on it. Their distinction between 'custom', which was (authentically) lived, and 'tradition', which, under modernizing pressures, was (inauthentically) invented, quickly came under pressure.

Indeed, Roy Wagner, in *The Invention of Culture*,<sup>18</sup> had already shown in a Melanesian context that cultural process is always invention, all the way down. He argued that the notion of 'culture' was a relatively new way of objectifying collective meanings—emerging from the distinct but connected modern projects of natives and anthropologists. But the basic symbolic production at work, the marking off of value and the social processing of novelty, was not qualitatively new in Melanesian inventions of tradition—cargo cults or a range of 'kastom' movements.

In the 1980s the 'invention paradigm' often fused with poststructuralist theories, underwriting a deeply sceptical stance toward all identity claims, and often a prescriptive anti-essentialism. In its more pragmatic forms, this disposition opened important new ways of imagining political agencies and alliances: the coming together of complex, multiply identified subjects in particular conjunctures around specific struggles.<sup>19</sup> But given the well-established propensity of people to locate themselves in more enduring (if dynamic) traditions, this paradoxical "politics of singularity"<sup>20</sup> retains a theoretical, utopian cast. Moreover, when poststructuralist critiques of identity have hardened into theoretical dogma, they may dismiss historically adaptive forms of cultural *integrity* in the same breath as essentialist assumptions of *authenticity*. It is not surprising, then, that the invention paradigm itself quickly became a violently contested set of propositions wherever identity-based social movements need to make cultural claims against hegemonic systems. Seen from the standpoint of resistance movements, critiques of authenticity articulated from a dominant position appeared as disempowering, and sometimes, when matters ended up in court, as actively hostile.<sup>21</sup> The resulting battles over cultural authority and colonial legacies, intellectual and material turf, have helped to focus attention on newly intractable, comparative questions.

How, in practice, is the gathering, locating, narrating power that the term 'tradition' implies mobilized and challenged? How do a range of peoples (nations, ethnicities, tribes and other mobilized communities) distinguish relatively invariant, 'past'-oriented dimensions of their collective life from changing, creative ('future'-oriented) dimensions? And to what extent are the very temporal markers 'past' and 'future' skewed by a particular history of modernization? The culture wars of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe opposed ancients and moderns, religious orthodoxy and scientific enlightenment. This Western historical transition may be sedimented in the term 'tradition' whenever it is defined in implicit or explicit opposition to 'modernity'. But much is obscured by this prefiguration when we consider Melanesian invocations of 'kastom', local, regional and national claims integral to the process of patching together new nation states. Is 'tradition'

an adequate translation for Pan-Mayan *costumbre*, articulated in current struggles for a multi-ethnic Guatemalan polity? Indigenous traditionalisms, Marshall Sahlins<sup>22</sup> has proposed, might better be compared with a different European transition, one which returned to a classical past to innovate a dynamic future: 'the Renaissance'.

Tradition, in this view, is less about preservation than about transformative practice and the selective symbolization of continuity. But how much interaction and hybridity—mix and match—can a given set of conventions and filiations accommodate without losing the ability to assert the integrity of a discrete tradition? Apparently quite a lot. For the practical limits on 'invention' are primarily political (What does it take to *convince* ourselves and others?) rather than empirical (How *much*, exactly, is new?) or moral (Is this the *real* tradition?). Articulations of tradition can take many forms in a range of historical conjunctures, from early contact histories in the Pacific, analyzed by authors such as Greg Dening<sup>23</sup> and Sahlins<sup>24</sup>, where more or less intact local cultures can still process novelty on indigenous terms, to the Caribbean of scholars such as Sidney Mintz,<sup>25</sup> Richard Price<sup>26</sup> and Daniel Miller,<sup>27</sup> where cultural roots have long been radically cut and remixed. Differently hybrid versions of continuity and peoplehood need to be distinguished across a spectrum of post- and neo-colonial histories, a range of indigenous, local, national and diasporic cultural projects.

At century's end, we confront a spectacular (I use the word advisedly) proliferation of claims to culture and identity. Can these be accounted for in a systematic way? An influential and important argument proposes that the prolific invention and reinvention of identities is integral to a late capitalist, or 'postmodern', world system of cultures. In this view, globalization, at a cultural level at least, permits and even encourages ethnic, racial, gender and sexual differences—as long as they do not fundamentally threaten the dominant political-economic order. Traditions are thus constantly salvaged, created and marketed in a productive game of identities. In the work of Fredric Jameson<sup>28</sup> and especially David Harvey,<sup>29</sup> the commodification of identities and traditions is linked to a historical moment, a global change that brings with it newly flexible and decisive restructurings of local worlds. While accounts vary as to where, when and how unevenly the change occurs—the global economic crisis of the 1970s is often seen as a turning point—the outcome is a significantly new form of cultural production: postmodernity.

In the globalizing condition of postmodernity, local communities are reconstituted within a superficial shopping mall of identities. Where 'culture' and 'place' are reasserted politically in the new system, they do so increasingly in nostalgic, commodified forms.

Thus the before/after structure of authentic custom/invented tradition assumed by Hobsbawm and Ranger is given a postmodern reworking. Traditional heritage persists as simulacrum, folklore as fakelore. We increasingly confront what Dean MacCannell calls "reconstructed ethnicity... new and more highly deterministic ethnic forms... ethnicity-for-tourism in which exotic cultures figure as key attractions".<sup>30</sup> I wish to argue, however, that this growing tendency to objectify, commodify and perform identities is only part, albeit a crucial part, of the story.

In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Harvey significantly identifies a crucial "paradox".<sup>31</sup> Homogenization breeds difference. As geographic barriers and distances are erased by mobile commodity, labour and capital flows, as a global postmodern 'space' is created, simultaneously an increasingly explicit, performative differentiation of 'places' becomes apparent. What accounts for the contradiction? Harvey writes that,

*If capitalists become increasingly sensitive to the spatially differentiated qualities of which the world's geography is composed, then it is possible for the peoples and powers that command those spaces to alter them in such a way as to be more rather than less attractive to highly mobile capital.*

Local elites "package" their place so as to attract investment; and in a competitive environment, this leads to "the active production of places with special qualities". Cities, for example, need "to forge a distinctive image and to create an atmosphere of place and tradition that will act as a lure to both capital and people 'of the right sort'". "Heightened inter-place competition should lead to the production of more variegated spaces *within* (my emphasis) the increasing homogeneity of international exchange."<sup>32</sup>

The paradox is thus functionally explained. Within the expanding 'space' of capital, 'places' exist as consumable commodities. Cultural differences produced by the post-modernist marketing of local aura and distinction tend, Harvey argues, toward the replication of nearly identical patterns from city to city. To clinch his argument, he cites New York's South Street Seaport, Boston's Quincey Market, Baltimore's Harbor Place.<sup>33</sup> This is, however, a very specific list of sites—all certifiably 'postmodern'. When we expand the range of performative sites for culture, locale and tradition, the 'systematic' determination of heritage and identity is crosscut by other contributions. Indeed, an *unresolved* paradox is presented by the florescence of claims to difference (by people of both the right and the wrong sort) in contexts of political-economic globalization—a paradox Harvey clearly names but perhaps explains away too quickly. Ethnographic realism requires that we inhabit the paradox, if I may put it thus, more actively and attentively.<sup>34</sup>



Different versions of a global-systemic approach—for example the work of Jonathan Friedman,<sup>35</sup> of Aiwah Ong and Donald Nonini,<sup>36</sup> or of Alan Pred and Michael Watts<sup>37</sup>—leave more room for the transformative continuity of older elements in new situations, a politics of articulation rather than of functionalist containment. In these ethnographically-based analyses, the old/new cultural claims and emergent identities cannot be ultimately determined by an expansive capitalism. Global-systemic forces do play a profound structuring role, but they do so in relation to local agency and prior traditions—structures negotiated in specific contact-histories, which retain their own transformative momentum. A growing number of historically-minded anthropologists have clearly shown the dynamism and transformative capacity of indigenous social structures and cosmologies. Overall, this work tends to shift the emphasis from inventions of tradition to traditions of invention. But both processes are at work in most contemporary conjunctures, and it is often hard to say definitively which plays the dominant role. The distinction between a transformed older structure and novel hybrid forms will necessarily be debatable.<sup>38</sup>

Ethnographic/historical research makes clear, in any case, that the relative dynamism and power of interacting local and global forces, and the ultimate question of determination—who consumes whom in a spectrum of culture-contact situations—cannot be read off in advance. While we can, and must, track the constitutive force of a world-system of cultures and identities, this cannot be the only, or the final, moment in our analysis. All global-systemic approaches run the risk of reductionism, where difference becomes merely derivative of, or contained by, structural power. But when a systemic approach is kept in serious tension with historical-ethnographic specificity, it can yield textured, realistic (which is not to say objective or uncontested) understandings of contemporary cultural processes. The challenge is to recognize overlapping but discrepant histories that struggle for position, for room to manoeuvre, in a paradoxically systematic and chaotic modernity.

I have suggested that the perspective of a historically informed ethnography is indispensable to a comparative understanding of the politics of identities. In conclusion, I would like to urge the point more strongly, particularly since cultural/historical anthropology does not appear to be required reading for a broad range of cultural studies scholars. Anthropology is too often stereotyped and misunderstood—seen as confined to ‘pre-modern’ societies, irreparably tainted by colonialism or fatally hemmed in by its own forms of textual and institutional authority. The discipline has, of course, been going through an epistemological and political crisis and it has been significantly transformed

by the intense questioning.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, one wonders how many academic fields could survive this kind of very public scrutiny, both of its methods and global positioning. The result in many departments today is a series of intense debates and turf battles—as a dis-articulated anthropology debates its central heritage and essential methods. In this context (and as someone whose work is sometimes cited as having contributed to anthropology’s disarray) I hasten to affirm some traditions worth reinventing.<sup>40</sup>

Cultural anthropology has characteristically made two irritating but crucial interventions, calling everyone up short: “What else is there?” and “Not so fast!” The discipline pays serious attention to people at the margins—relatively powerless, non- or differently-literate communities whose particular stories are left out of national or global histories. Of course, this professional brief for diversity carries evident risks: nostalgia (the belief that distinctive traditions are vanishing or must always be defended) and wishful thinking (an uncritical tendency to celebrate difference as ‘resistance’, either in traditional survivals or in a new world of hybrid forms). But a disposition to perceive and value difference can also be understood, not as a reification of otherness, but as an awareness of excess, of the unwoven and the discrepant in every dominant system, the ‘constitutive outside’ of even the most hegemonic social or ideological formations. In times of presumed globalization, “brushing history against the grain”, as Walter Benjamin<sup>41</sup> put it, is more critical than ever. It’s in the emergent sites, the things that don’t quite fit, the remembered or revived alternatives, that we look for utopian, transformative visions and practices.

“What else is there?” Perhaps this question is all that can be reclaimed from anthropology’s exoticist heritage, a systematic interest in what doesn’t match familiar patterns. Ethnographic exoticism no longer presumes cultural isolates. It tracks, instead, “out of the way places” intimately engaged with national and transnational powers<sup>42</sup> or populations that occupy, in Kathleen Stewart’s resonant title, “A Space on the Side of the Road”.<sup>43</sup> Nor is this a matter of ‘speaking for’ the others—primitives or subalterns. What’s at issue is more like listening than speaking. “What else is there?” persistently reminds us not to skip over the marginal, the ‘small’ sites, when thinking historically at global, national or regional scales. In California, for example, one hears a great deal about the ‘Asia-Pacific Region’ or ‘The Pacific Rim’—discussions in which the Island Pacific, Oceania, regularly drops from view. Yet places like Vanuatu or Papua New Guinea are extraordinary laboratories for ‘postmodern’ nation-making, and the latter is home to one seventh of the world’s languages. Melanesia is anything but small in that register! Such places seem, always, to be left behind, playing historical catch-up.

What changes of perspective, asks the Tongan anthropologist and novelist Epeli Hau'ofa<sup>44</sup> would be needed to recast isolated dots scattered in a distant sea (as viewed from Europe) into a historically interconnected, culturally dynamic 'sea of islands'?

Or consider contemporary Mayans. I am often struck by the surprise many people evince when told there are living Mayan languages—not 'native dialects' (conversation reverts quickly to the ancient ruins). Surviving Mayan societies are relatively small, to be sure; but their old/new traditions loom large in post-1992 re-imaginings of the history of the Americas. One of several major pre-Columbian 'civilizations', Mayans are an ancient past-becoming-future—active in a culturally complex present. Seen in global perspective, they shrink in importance; but within Guatemala, Mayans form a majority of the population. As they mobilize politically and culturally in the current conjuncture, they become a force to be reckoned with.<sup>45</sup> There are, of course, differences between the various local and pan-Mayan articulations of *costumbre*, tensions present, to varying degrees, in all contemporary indigenous movements: regional, linguistic and class factions; urban and rural, traditionalist and modernizing agendas. The movement standardizes languages and customs, producing a newly objectified culture and folklore. But its roots in local places and politics remain strong. Clearly the work of linguistic and cultural advocacy pursued by Mayan intellectuals and activists is a far cry from the state-sponsored nostalgia decried by first-world critics of the 'heritage industry'. Nor is it very much like MacCannell's "reconstructed ethnicity", a production for the White-dominated culture market—though tourism, these days, will always be somewhere in the picture.

Comparative ethnography—sensitive to historical patterns of dominance, accommodation and resistance, to gendered and regional formations—helps us appreciate the uneven landscape, Hall's "contradictory, stony ground" of contemporary identity claims. Are we concerned with Colonial Williamsburg,<sup>46</sup> with English country houses,<sup>47</sup> with newly 'traditional' Japanese sites of mourning<sup>48</sup> or with Pan-Indian movements in North America—their powwows, art markets and long histories of cultural performance across generations, for other Indians and for tourists? Is our focus the mobilization by Melanesians of 'kastom' in response to Christian missions, labour recruitment and Western political institutions, a mobilization with different stakes for men and women?<sup>49</sup> Are we considering the cultural politics of Hawaiian sovereignty, including the quite recent and booming Hula Competitions;<sup>50</sup> or the extraordinary, transnational 'revival' of klezmer, described by its historian, Mark Slobin, as "a reasonably rootless but deeply rooted music that has no geographic center, no living community it's attached to by continuous

practice, a capricious and shifting audience, and no fixed body of music that defines its contours?"<sup>51</sup> Are we talking about Kayapo Indians from the Amazon, regaled in feather crowns and body paint to demonstrate in Brazilia or at the World Bank against land encroachments, while recording these demonstrations on video for internal and external use?<sup>52</sup> What is the ambivalent mix of local empowerment, self-stereotyping, alliance and chauvinism in such mobilizations of 'authentic' tradition?<sup>53</sup> How do differently positioned audiences (insiders, outsiders, border crossers) consume cultural performances for tourists—for example, mobilizations by the 'primitive' Ainu in Japan<sup>54</sup> or by the 'savage' Small Nambas of Malekula, Vanuatu?<sup>55</sup> What is the "second life of heritage"<sup>56</sup> in these experiences: the intricate mix of backward- and forward-looking agendas enacted in the myriad museums, villages, monuments and landscapes where 'tradition' is currently preserved and displayed?

"Not so fast." The survival (and renaissance) of 'doomed' tribal peoples or the variety of African Christianities and Islams make it clear that 'Westernization' has not been a linear process. The local outcomes of 'acculturation' or religious 'conversion' can be surprising. It thus behooves us to hesitate when assessing the effects of cultural contact, staying alert for unexpected consequences and mixtures. Most histories of global development have had few second thoughts about people on the margins: 'pre-modern' societies are destined either to assimilate or to vanish in a relentless homogenizing process. As we have seen, visions of globalization tend to smooth over the constant (re)articulation of cultural identities and differences—in nationalist visions, large- and small-scale,<sup>57</sup> supporting and subverting established states<sup>58</sup>; in proliferating ethnic claims, creative and virulent;<sup>59</sup> in diverging local practices of consumption,<sup>60</sup> in the politics of neo-tribal and 'Fourth World' movements.<sup>61</sup>

It is all too obvious when identity turns ugly, when self-assertion requires scapegoating, when people kill and expel their neighbours.<sup>62</sup> Rwanda, Sarajevo (now Kosovo), Belfast, Cyprus, Indonesia—the list is depressingly long. Given the constitutive tension of positive and negative impulses in claims to peoplehood, all assertive identity movements, including those that empower the dispossessed, can seem to be symptoms of a general disease. But only when looked at abstractly. A more conjunctural understanding will grapple with a shifting mix of political relations (hostility, tolerance, indifference, alliance) and with the specific historical conditions of social crisis and material insecurity that are conducive to chauvinism. The range and outcome of identity politics can never be guaranteed. In relatively secure times, movements of self-assertion by the less powerful will include a combination of tactics, affirmations and negotiations around separation

and interaction. Effective group action in complex civil societies means recognizing that there are times for gathering in and times for reaching out, times for the “barred room” and for “coalition politics”.<sup>63</sup> Identity can be a basis for connection as well as disconnection. Let me end with two brief evocations, offered in the spirit of ethnographic attention and historical open-endedness I have been urging.

New Caledonia, a ‘small’ Oceanic place, has undergone a particularly disruptive, at times deadly, colonization over the past century and a half. Important white settler and diasporic Pacific populations are well-established there. The Kanak independence movement, which emerged in the 1960s, has championed an island-wide politics of Melanesian identity, organizing important heritage festivals and cultural centres with the aim of re-positioning dispersed ‘tribal’ groups as ‘Kanak’ (the new name is a critical appropriation of the generic French colonial label, *Canaque*). This articulation (in Stuart Hall’s terms, a political cobbling together) of a new ethnicity, has been crucial for a movement working, simultaneously, on cultural, economic and political, fronts. And here, unlike the more diasporic experiences central to much postcolonial and cultural studies work, a traditional attachment to land, to particular sites and valleys, is a structuring element of the old/new mix.

The Kanak movement’s goal of rooted independence does not presuppose, however, an absolute separation from France, with its ongoing cultural and economic contributions, or from the world system of markets, media and cultures. Rather, the movement works to achieve a real measure of political autonomy and control over the processes of import and export that inescapably connect places in the world. Thus the struggle for sovereignty is not to opt out, but to find new—engaged and embattled—ways to be Kanak in a cosmopolitan Pacific of the twenty-first century. The tactical politics of delinking and re-linking are inseparable. I derive this pragmatic vision from the writings of the movement’s late leader, Jean-Marie Tjibaou.<sup>64</sup> The vision is not uncontested. Tjibaou was seen by some as too accommodationist and he was assassinated by a member of his movement’s radical fringe. His views have, however, generally prevailed. Given the picture of local/global entanglement I have been sketching, Tjibaou’s understanding of independence as an interactive autonomy—and of *la coutume* as a way of reaching back in order to be differently modern—appears as something like realism.

What else is there? Not so fast! At the conclusion of a recently published book, I quoted the long historical vision of Barbara Shangin, an Alutiq (Koniag) elder from Alaska. I still can’t quite assimilate her statement. I don’t think we should assimilate it too easily.

Speaking of a long stretch of time, she says, “Our people have made it through lots of storms and disasters for thousands of years. All the troubles since the Russians [arrived] are like one long stretch of bad weather. Like everything else, this storm will pass over some day.”<sup>65</sup> What will it take for this invocation of tradition—a temporality cast in the cyclical rhythms of weather—to be widely accepted as realizable history, a differently modern past-becoming-future?

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14. In Thompson’s *Making of the English Working Class*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1963, the centrality of ‘cultural’ politics to ‘class’ politics is inescapable. There is nothing universal about the emerging

- consciousness Thompson traces: it is a historically contingent articulation of local traditions. Indeed, his most engaged critics have shown the 'making' he traces to be strongly determined by populist movements of local self-defence (see Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982) and by a gendered artisanal subjectivity (see Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1995)—the very limitations often laid at the door of 'identity politics' by advocates of wider class mobilizations. Class that is 'for itself', that mobilizes self-consciousness and agency, is always an articulated cultural formation. For a recent example, see Sherry Ortner's ethnographic account of the fusion of class with race and ethnicity in American social practices, "Identities: The Hidden Life of Class", *Journal of Anthropological Research*, vol. 54, no. 1, 1998, pp. 1-17.
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  20. Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies", pp. 102-105.
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  32. Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 295.
  33. Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 295.
  34. See *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local*, Daniel Miller ed., London: Routledge, 1995, for a sampling of ethnographic work in a less determinist vein. The editor, Daniel Miller, argues for a bifocal historical attention to both 'apriori' and 'aposteriori' differences. The former are transformed or syncretic versions of pre-modern cultures. The latter, "rarely acknowledged or theorized", reflect the "quite unprecedented diversity created by the differential consumption of what had once been thought to be global and homogenizing institutions" (Miller, Daniel, "Introduction: Anthropology, Modernity and Consumption", *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local*, Daniel Miller ed., London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 1-23 pp. 2-3). His distinction, though no doubt heuristic, helps us keep a very wide range of local/global articulations in view. Another exemplary recent collection is Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson eds, *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1997.
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  38. One might note, for example, the difference of emphasis underlying the disagreement between Nicholas Thomas ("Substantivization and Anthropological Discourse: The Transformation of Practices and Institutions in Neotraditional Pacific Societies", *History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology*, James Carrier ed., Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1992, pp. 64-85) and Marshall Sahlins ("Cery cery fuckabede", *American Ethnologist*, vol. 20, no. 4, 1993, pp. 848-67) over the Fijian custom of kerekere—dynamic local tradition and/or colonial invention. A sampling of recent work in historical ethnography/ethnographic history might include, along with the well-known scholarship of Sahlins, Thomas and Greg Denning: John and Jean Comaroff (*Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Boulder CO: Westview, 1992), James Carrier ed. (*History and Tradition in Melanesian Anthropology*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1992), Paul Sullivan (*Unfinished Conversations: Mayas and Foreigners Between Two Wars*, New York: Knopf, 1989) and Carolyn Hamilton (*Terrific Majesty: The Powers of Shaka Zulu and the Limits of Historical Invention*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), among many others.

- Sahlins ("Goodbye to Tristes Tropes") provides a brilliantly argued manifesto for the general approach, diminished, however, by slapdash polemics and an unmotivated, almost Hegelian vision of an emerging "world culture of cultures".
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  40. They are not, of course, the only ones. See also chapter three of my *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. While I cite, for the most part, works by academic scholars based in the United States, Australia and Europe, it is important to recognize that professional anthropology today includes Western, non-Western and in-between perspectives. Moreover, academic anthropology is not the only place one can go for a textured sense of local/global histories. As ongoing debates around the 'invention' of tradition show, no professional, or geopolitical standpoint enjoys a monopoly of authority, either scientific or indigenous. Indeed, many Western-based scholars now present their accounts in dialogue and tension with indigenous authorities. The work of Kay Warren, cited in footnote 45 below, is exemplary.
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## Cluster III: Mythus

## A. Designing the Myth of the Other

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fig. 1

Ambivalence, 2003

fig. 2

Chuckles, 2007

fig. 3

Configuration, 2003

fig. 4

Interwined, 2007

fig. 5

Juxtaposed, 2004

fig. 6

Overview, 2006

fig. 7

Predators, 2007

fig. 8

Prowling, 2001

fig. 9

Scrawls, 2004

fig. 10

Sliced, 2007

fig. 11

Washing line, 2005

fig. 12

Wild child, 2003

From the series *Shadow Chamber*

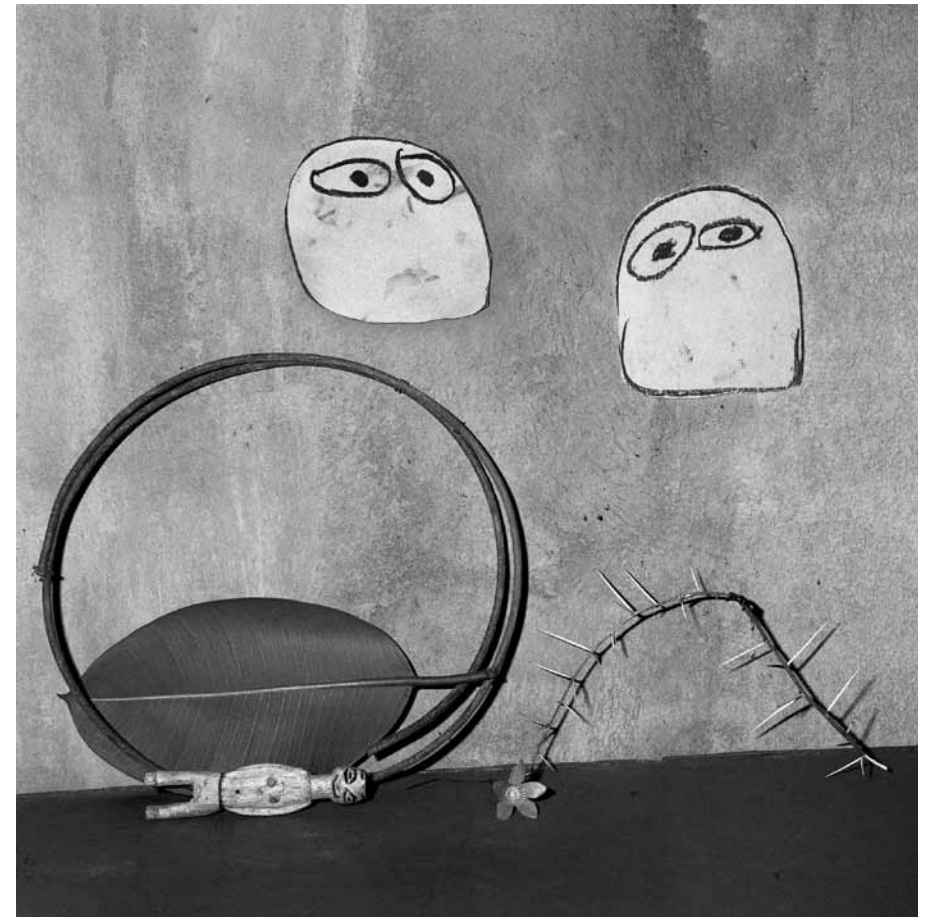


fig. 1

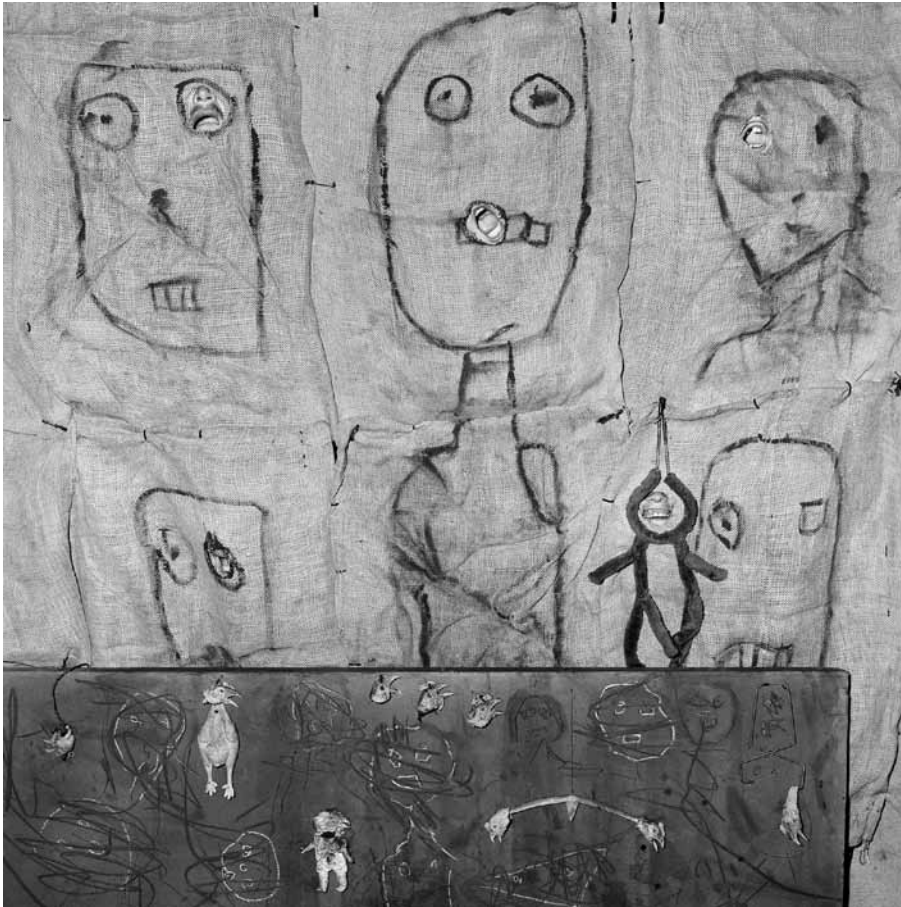


fig. 2



fig. 3

fig. 4





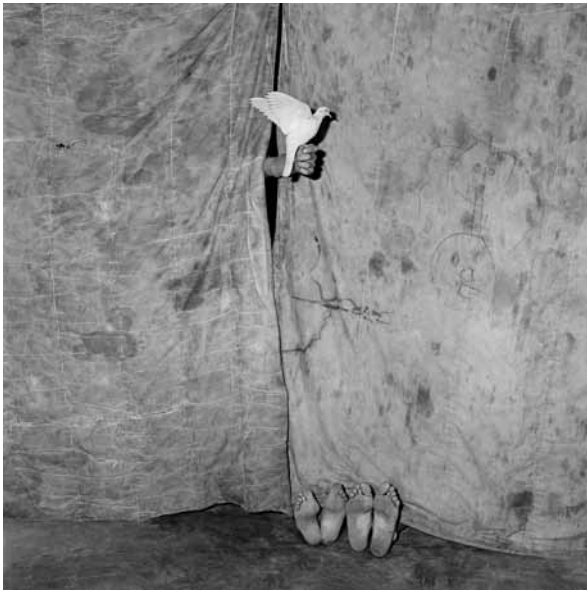


fig. 5



fig. 6

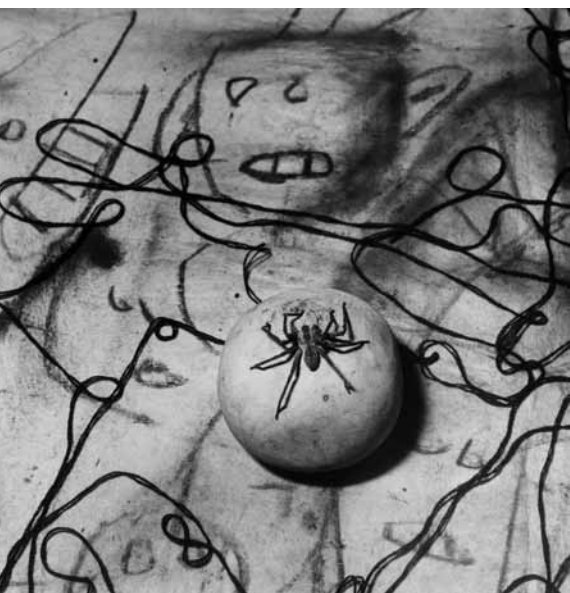


fig. 7



fig. 8



fig. 9

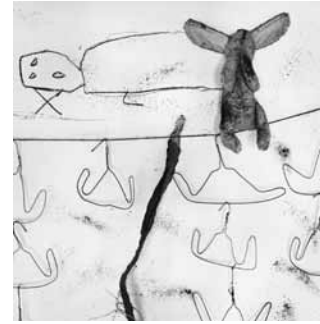


fig. 11



fig. 10

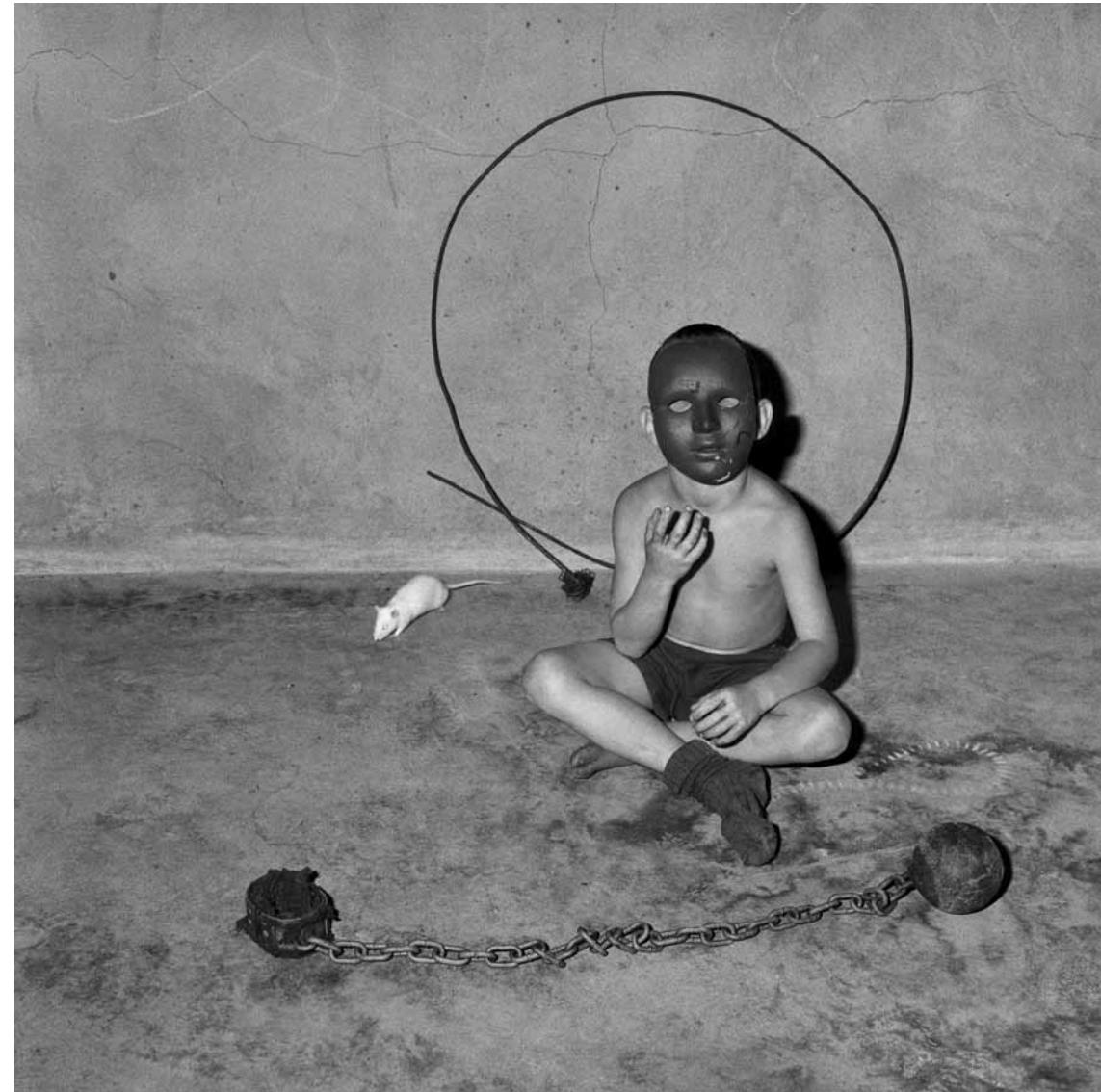


fig. 12

Yana Milev

## I FINK U FREEKY: On Roger Ballen's Search for Traces

In the last ten years, hardly any photographer has disturbed the art scene more than Roger Ballen.

Numerous components are joined in his pictures that require an observer to be attentive to the utmost, while the act of viewing them simultaneously leads one onto a slippery slope toward an emotional confrontation. Ballen is an ethnographer. He calls his photography the attempt at finding himself, at literally taking "psychological and existential journeys". The journey is the central method of ethnography and is tied to photography, journals and interviews. In addition, Ballen belongs to the few famous photographers worldwide who still produce images on the basis of black and white analogue photography. The *journey*, the *trace* and the *other*—these three components sound so harmless that on second thought it is frightening to enter into an analysis of this harmlessness. The apparent banality of journeys, the other and its traces associate the horrors of scenarios from depth psychology.

Ballen has been taking photographs since he has been a child and is a practicing geologist. An American, he has been living and working in South Africa since the 1970s. In 1974 he ended up there at barely 24 for professional reasons. In the 1980s, Ballen began documenting the poor Whites in the countryside shortly before the end of apartheid.

When you see Roger Ballen's face, it is incomprehensible that precisely this man—who seems so harmless at first glance—has been going on a trip, on a journey to his self and in search of those living on the margin for the last 40 years. In search of Bluebeard's eighth room, Ballen himself embodies a drama in concentrated form. As an ethnographic Orpheus, Ballen is mostly interested in the underworld, the world at great depth, the inaccessible, hidden and shielded spaces. Just like Orpheus, the hero climbs down into the depths of the unseen and hidden, and thus simultaneously into the world of his own soul. Orpheus' charm and singing were the key even to opening the gates of Hades. So much for mythology. Roger Ballen went to the poor white areas of Johannesburg, into a white hell. What were generally known as lower class to the modern world were only understood to be relevant for the black and non-white population. Worldwide. A white ghetto in the middle of Africa? An inside-out of racist psychogeography? A *vice versa* in the defining lines of winners and losers? The geologist feels like this is his calling: it



still exists, the *terra incognita*, the unseen, uncharted land, the land of white poverty on the edge of the black continent.

His destinations are forbidden locations. Just like Orpheus, Ballen also rejects convention. Death should not be taken lightly, and Hades devours everyone. The apartheid regime did not like Ballen's documentations of poor, precarious whites. However, nothing could stop him from continuing his search for places such as the *Shadow Chamber*, *Boarding House* and *Asylum*. All of these are places in which people who are damaged in a multitude of ways sought refuge: the *other* of existence, territory of outcasts and forgotten lives.

As stated above, the journey is the central method of ethnography and is tied to photography, journals and interviews. His photography unifies both; journals and interviews meld into one image. While Ballen was closing in on the underworlds and forbidden zones, he met their residents. The unspeakable habitats were home to inhabitants who were never spoken of, and who opened themselves up like journals to the geologist, ethnographer and psychologist Roger Ballen and his camera, his view and his gentle resolve. They all opened up to him, all the inhabitants from the fringes and cast-off areas of society. What is more, Ballen sees playmates in them. Teammates, performers, showmen of their own situations, exaggerated, distorted, lovingly mended and sewn together—with a powerful symbolism that can hardly be more touching.

Graffiti that reminds you of children's doodles, scratched images in caves or the fragile stick figures by the 'Sprayer of Zurich', Harald Naegeli, demarcate a semiotic system of coordinates throughout the Freaky Family's scenes. The selection and associations of symbols, masks and gestures have an irresistible psychological character of meaning. They exaggerate the roles of people who are in fact playing themselves—in their vulnerability, stigmatization, maltreatment and isolation, in their insanity and hopefulness!

Similar to the way the German psychiatrist and art historian Hans Prinzhorn was committed to the unbelievable images and *Lebenswelt* of the 'insane', Roger Ballen is also committed to his subjects in his own way. With passion, respect and fascination—as one of them.

Hans Prinzhorn died in 1933 and his life's work was branded *entartete Kunst* by the Nazis, gathering dust in some attic; it was another 30 years before the great Swiss curator and exhibition director Harald Szeemann brought the Prinzhorn collection to light. The exhibition "Bildneri der Geisteskranken" became the moment of renewal for art





All Photos:  
Die Antwoord,  
Roger Ballen © 2012  
Courtesy of Roger Ballen

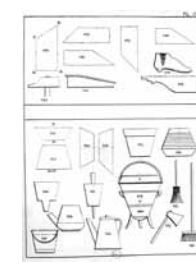
brut, namely its extension to the so-called 'art of the insane'. Szeemann campaigned for the position that the mental production sites for the borderline do not lie outside society, but rather within it. He thus brought movement into international discourse about high art and 'the art of the insane'. It is not surprising that the apartheid regime didn't like Ballen's photography, since it clearly shows what hardly any other photographer succeeded in doing with this level of commitment.

Recently, Ballen created a spectacular synthesis with the South African techno band Die Antwoord; he intertwines the entire boarding house and white trash scenario into shrill, psycho-semiotic techno punk in the video "I FINK U FREEKY". Roger Ballen says that the video was shot in only five days, but it had been developed conceptually for years. Ballen has probably found the best possible allies in Die Antwoord. The video embodies an explosion of white rebellion and the shrill upcoming of a "national embarrassment"—what Die Antwoord is seen to be in Johannesburg. "I FINK YOU FREEKY AND I LIKE U A LOT" is post-apartheid art brut and a total declaration of love to a new, hybrid South Africa.





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Molly Nesbit

## Ready-Made Originals: The Duchamp Model

*It seems incredible that it is in the name of free instruction that they come along today to forbid us to see masterpieces; and what do they give us instead? Cubes, cones, hexagons, tetrahedras, polyhedras, the group of them looking like a cemetery. They made the great draughtsman [Ingres] say, "My poor children, they have placed you before your tombstones and then forced you to copy them!"*

Balze<sup>1</sup>

The modern model of repetition was established well outside the avant-garde. It is usually called mass production and recognised in the commodity, that dull fetish, the brand-name good, the ideal of middle-men. Though we tend to consider this kind of repetition unbearably crude, it has nonetheless become the unwritten point of reference for all other definitions of the copy, not to say the original. As a point of reference it is hardly abstract: mass production is a daily real; more than a flood of exchange values, it is powerful, essential, basic. We cannot take it lightly.

There is, it must be admitted, a play of variation within this brute repetition: the industrial model is neither monolithic, nor all that crude. There are, for example, the historical shifts in what is understood by the word commodity. There are, for another example, the deviations and interferences made by politicians and industrialists to favour the development of certain sectors over others. The mass-produced repetition is not, bang-bang, mechanical: it contains longings for individual greatness, dreams of national prosperity and fears of loss. These variations make for a model of repetition that is neither very simple nor easy to use. Possibly for these reasons as well as for the others just mentioned, it is rarely proposed as a model for culture to follow.

At one stage in the history of industry, it displayed a culture for itself, rather than, as came to be the case, using another kind of culture to represent its interests. This happened in the nineteenth century when mass production, often with the help of the state, organized trade fairs, culminating in the World's Fairs. The Fairs drew attention to themselves like magnets; they easily rivalled traditional forms of culture and in many ways brought on their competition's demise. They exhibited models of modern, national cultures; they claimed to exhibit the future, natural evolution of man. They proposed a grand new culture of the patent that quite overshadowed the culture of the copyright.

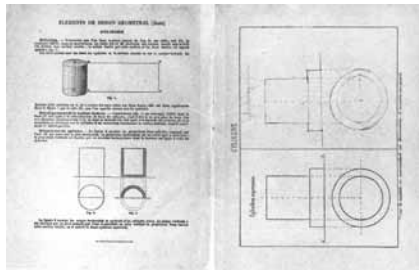
This display of futures and goods provoked much debate over the way to industrial supremacy. The debate in nineteenth-century France led, somewhat surprisingly, to a call for drawing. According to Fernand Buisson, then-director of primary school education, the call came from diverse sectors, from workers and management, special commissions and chambers of commerce, and it saw drawing as the salvation of French industry; he saw it as social capital.<sup>2</sup> A better instruction in drawing was theorized; with the Ferry reforms in public school education in the early 1880s, it became law, integrated into a program of basic, compulsory civic knowledge.

The cycles of this curriculum led to another order of repetition, one designed to justify the nation and its industrial mode of production. This made for a closed system, a wheel in a wheel, where a social and political order was justified and justifying, as Gramsci observed about the contemporary Italian reforms. One was taught to regard this schooled knowledge as absolutely objective, when in fact nature was being mastered according to a particular scheme of social order that was facilitating a particular idea of work.<sup>3</sup> Work, said Gramsci, was the latent principle in the Italian primary school. It was embedded, in a slightly different form, in the French school too. Drawing was taught as one such given, full of the latent idea of work; at the same time, it was taught as a piece of the *hexagone*, a common sense and a tool by which one ordered visual experience.<sup>4</sup> It was taught through drills, like writing, and taken as a language, to be read, as it were, and spoken. In this secondary, drawn, silent, massive, classroom repetition, we can begin to fathom the deeper machinations of the original, industrially produced model with which we began.

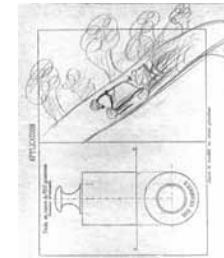
The drawing instruction was designed by Eugène Guillaume, who was fond of explaining his method as the instrument for the establishment of drawing as a regular language; he was not, however, promoting the teaching of art. As he put it:

*Drawing expresses artists' most sublime conceptions; it is the point of departure and the last word of the masterpieces of painters, sculptors and architects; and at the same time it is a means of communication and a practical instrument for the use of the worker-artist and the artisan. If it has its poetic language, it has in some way as well its business one. But all this is but one and the same language, which rests on principles and formal rules, these having a grammatical character.*<sup>5</sup>

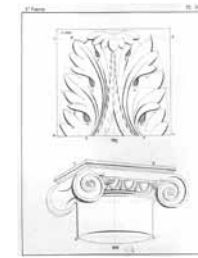
These rules were grounded in and expressed by geometry. The geometric language base installed by the Ferry reforms and taught by the Guillaume method could be built upon later for different professional purposes, like art or industrial design, but that was



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not the educators' first concern. They wanted to guarantee an elementary—which is to say, as yet unprofessional—but still workaday visual language for daily use; they hoped that the entire population would be able to read geometrical and mechanical drawing, a skill they deemed necessary for modern life. The language base they set up was primary, aesthetically neutral, and cut to fit a particular idea of the visual.

The program as it was instituted in 1883 remained in effect, with minor adjustments, for the next 26 years. It began by teaching the student the straight and the curved line, explaining that the entire world of appearances was built upon combinations of these two elements: they were the first letters of the alphabet. The relations between the lines were studied too: the rapports, one manual said, were the syllables of drawing.<sup>6</sup> Tableaux illustrated and summarized the progression of the program, how the broken line was extended into cornices and T-squares, how the combination into trapezoids led to the formation of watering cans and shoes. The student went on to master the figures of plane geometry, and then to those of solids. Simple drawing after decorative ornament was tried, but there was no drawing after nature in the raw. The geometry moved in its own sphere, according to its own elemental logic. The figures of plane and solid geometry led to instruction in perspective, and then to the introduction of projection drawing, on which mechanical drawing was based.

This was achieved by laborious copying in notebooks: by the repetition of the cylinder, the cone and the sphere, in their pure form and in their other guises. One can see the child labouring in the notebooks that survive, here Henri Jeannotte doing the lesson on the cylinder, the cone and the sphere, in plan and elevation; at times there was resistance, for Jeannotte at the point of the 500 gram weight.<sup>7</sup> But mainly, the surviving notebooks show conformity, not to mention an extraordinary skill with the very straight line.

The program continued. It took the student through the architectural orders, did the vases and balusters, and ended with the human head. The visual set of the program was colourless, technical and relentlessly geometrical. In the secondary schools, the lessons were extended: the drawing became ever more technical and exacting; there were copies after the antique and calculations of cast shadows. Once the student had passed puberty, the human body could be drawn, but never from life. These, in short, were the limits to this visual common sense.

The projections and perspectives were critical. The child was learning that there were two kinds of representation: drawing that imitated the appearance of things to the

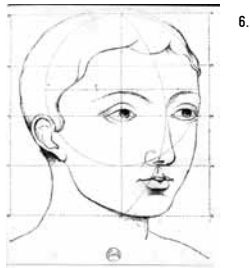
naked eye and drawing that revealed the truth of things behind the surfaces of appearance; that is to say, there was perspective drawing and mechanical drawing. Each kept a relation to the object, one could have a coffee grinder both ways, but truth, significantly, was not optical. It was, rather, non-retinal, and clearly identified with the *croquis coté*, the blueprint for production, the working drawing for the commodity. In practice, the language base was hardly neutral; it cheerfully ratified the means and ends of industrial production; insofar as it was a language for everyday use, it was a language of work, a language of industry.

At the heart of the program sat the object of everyday life, or better, objects, which were named and prescribed in the certification for drawing teachers and repeated, without actually being specified individually, in the manuals used in the schools.<sup>8</sup> They were household objects and tools usually: tables, pails, flowerpots, frying pans, rakes, trestles, umbrellas. By and large, this elementary education was successful: the coffee grinder's appearance and being were registered by children and graded by teachers. The full implications of the normative lesson on the commodity and its required, geometrical form were probably not grasped by the nine- to twelve-year-olds who received it; they were simply assumed; they came with literacy. And with literacy came another order of repetition, the kind of repetition that is called use.

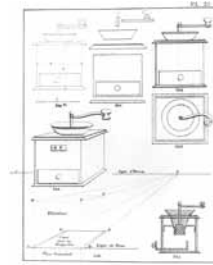
This language in use does not take its textbook form, of course. It is best considered speech and sometimes it just popped out. As Marcel Duchamp told Pierre Cabanne:

*My brother had a kitchen in his little house in Puteaux, and he had the idea of decorating it with pictures by his buddies. He asked Gleizes, Metzinger, La Fresnaye, and, I think, Léger, to do some little paintings of the same size, like a sort of frieze. He asked me too, and I did a coffee grinder which I made to explode; the coffee is tumbling down beside it; the gear wheels are above, and the knob is seen simultaneously at several points in its circuit, with an arrow to indicate movement. Without knowing it, I had opened a window onto something else. The arrow was an innovation that pleased me a lot—the diagrammatic aspect was interesting [...] It was a sort of loophole [...] there I began to think I could avoid all contact with traditional pictorial painting...*<sup>9</sup>

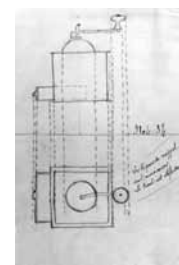
In fact, Duchamp had switched into the neutral, utilitarian mode of representation that he had learned along with everybody else, though it would seem not to have been a conscious decision. The coffee grinder is painted in cross-section and from above, maintaining the points of view of the mechanical drawing. It is a variation that ends up as



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a repetition; it moves through the loophole to the coffee grinder; a slip of the tongue produced one of the most common textbook objects of everyday life. As Duchamp abandoned easel painting, he lapsed into the language of industry, slipped back onto a readymade base, one with a technical, non-art edge, pretensions to language, a non-retinal dimension, projections and cast shadows. The notes for the *Large Glass* and the assortment of objects that accompanied its making are concerned with defining and exploring all of these things further. Duchamp by no means reproduced his elementary education; rather, he used it against the interrogation by the shop window and its contents, commodities.

Duchamp wrote a note to himself in 1913:

*When one is interrogated by shopwindows, one is also pronouncing one's own sentence. In fact, the choice is a round trip. From the demands of the shopwindows, from the inevitable response to the shopwindows, comes the end of choice. No obstinacy, out of absurdity, hiding the coitus through the glass with one or more objects from this shopwindow. The sentence consists in cutting through the glass and in regretting it once possession is gained. Q. E. D.*<sup>10</sup>

Consumption is pre-determined; consumption is regrettable, since one cannot avoid becoming possessed by these objects; consumption can be demonstrated using geometry (Q. E. D.). Whatever his reservations about consumption, Duchamp did submit to the interrogation and he answered back. But he tried in his answer to break away from the mandatory round trip, to remain self-possessed in front of the windowpane. He took to symbolic violence rather than vandalism; in 1915 he bought a snow shovel and named it *In Advance of the Broken Arm*. It was a logical move, a self-defence, and a reply in the appropriate native tongue.

The readymades and the assisted readymades sometimes duplicate the object lessons of the Guillaume method and sometimes extrapolate from them; at the very least, Duchamp always chose objects that come from the same generic family studied in the object lesson. They seem to have been plucked from a distant mechanical drawing in the mind, though they carry the textbook example to an adult conclusion: they *produce* the object from the drawing. In this reproduction came a literal possession of the object and its language. In the readymades, Duchamp seized control of the dialogue dictated by the shop window: the model is taken out of circulation, often given an absurd title, hung in limbo and effectively silenced. This shovel will never be used, bent, rusted or

fall obsolete. And yet, Duchamp was not behaving as badly as little Henri. The language of industry was not dismissed out of hand, but, rather, assumed and then subjected, sentenced to an ambiguous zone of Duchamp's own choosing. Duchamp was careful, however, to point out that originally it was never a question of condemning the readymades to art.

The readymade, then, was a response to a condition of everyday life. It was articulated through the visual set of the Guillaume method; it demonstrated Duchamp's literacy in the visual language of the quotidian. As a response, it fits perfectly into Voloshinov's description of everyday discourse, where the banal comment gains its meaning from a range of unspoken social conditions, a horizon that grounds the empty phrase.<sup>11</sup> Voloshinov's example takes two men. One says "Voilà"; the other says nothing. By itself, the *voilà* is empty. But if one knows that it is May and that the two men, presumably Russian, are standing by a window watching the snow fall before their very eyes and feeling a certain gloom, the *voilà* speaks worlds. The shovel is a *voilà*, a perfectly ordinary response in 1915 to a hardware store on Broadway, a purchase. It is an empty, banal thing that requires a native speaker to get the unsaid, the snowfall, in it. The shovel is legible but closed: it is not a *voilà* to be countered with another like phrase, say, a depressed "Mais oui". The shovel leads nowhere in the terms of everyday discourse, except to a monologue by Duchamp.

Duchamp's unpoetic monologue on everyday visual experience was strung out over the series of readymades, a succession of *voilàs*. In themselves, they say nothing much; their interest lies in Duchamp's use of the language. For Duchamp is attempting to master not only the commodity, but also its means of communication, its language. If mastered, he would have the symbolic means of industry under his personal control.

In 1920 Duchamp pretended to have done just that in the *Fresh Widow*, another object-type of the instruction, this one part of the required curriculum in Duchamp's *lycée*<sup>12</sup>. Here we know that there is this very working drawing lodged somewhere in his memory, a drawing that reappeared 20 years later with a few details missing: the French has gone fresh; the window is a widow; the panes are made of leather; and it has been translated into English. The drawing was given to an American carpenter to get this small-scale model in blue. So the drawing is repeated and manufactured like a model for a patent office. It makes a joke at the expense of the French war widow. But Duchamp has inserted a bona fide word this time around, which takes the visual language into another order of discourse: the *Fresh Widow* is declared copyrighted by Duchamp's



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alias, Rose Sélavy. The claim to copyright brings the interrogation by the shop window to a different halt: Duchamp has claimed copyright in a window that is not only plagiarized, but by definition not eligible for copyright. The window is an industrial good in the eyes of the law; if suitably innovative it might be patented but never given the *droit d'auteur*, not even in America. The copyright was a bluff. But with it, Duchamp subjected the culture of the patent in no uncertain terms: by means of that one word, he pulled the culture of the patent over into the culture of copyright, the traditional culture, the culture of artists.

The idea that he could seize control of the visual means of industrial culture was, of course, misguided, pure fantasy on Duchamp's part. Nobody except industry gets control over its symbolic means, let alone its models of repetition, not even artists. By 1925, Duchamp seems to have realized that his monologue was powerless against the commodity. He fell silent for a while. And then, in the 1930s, he began to work on the *Green Box* and the *Valise*, reproducing his old notes and his old work as documents for the history of art, boxed as a miniature museum without walls. This time around he was just plain repeating himself, doing the kind of artist's monologue we have come to expect, behaving now not as an ordinary citizen but as an old master. Outside, unperturbed, the industrial model of repetition rolled along under its own steam and the snow fell quite unnoticed.

*The original title of this essay was "The Copy", published as "Ready-made Originals: the Duchamp Model" alongside the other papers from the symposium organized by Rosalind Krauss, Repetition as Originality: a Challenge to Art History?, in October, vol. 37, summer 1986, pp. 53-64. Translated as: "Les originaux des readymades: le modèle Duchamp", Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne, no. 33, autumn 1990, pp. 55-65. The argument begun here evolved into my book, Their Common Sense, London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000.*

1. Balze, "Considérations sur l'enseignement de dessin" (1877), as quoted by L. Cernesson, *Conférence sur l'enseignement du dessin: 31 août 1878*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1879, p. 15.
2. Buisson, Ferdinand, "Discours prononcé à l'occasion de la distribution des prix aux élèves de l'Association Polytechnique le 24 juin 1883, au Cirque d'Hiver", *Conférences et causeries pédagogiques: Mémoires et documents scolaires publiés par le musée pédagogique, fasc. 59*, Paris: Delagrave, 1888, pp. 57ff. See also, in its first and subsequent editions, Fernand Buisson ed., *Dictionnaire de pédagogie*, 4 volumes, Paris: Hachette, 1882ff., for its historical justification and summaries of the curriculum by the principals involved in the reforms.

3. Gramsci, Antonio "In Search of the Educational Principle", *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith eds and trans., London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971, pp. 33ff.
4. The *hexagone* is a trope for the French nation, whose borders form a rough hexagon.
5. Guillaume, Eugène, "Dessin", *Dictionnaire de pédagogie*, part 1, vol. 1, Paris: Hachette, 1887, p. 688. See also, Christiane Mauve, "L'art à l'école?", *Esthétiques du peuple*, Jacques Rancière ed., Paris: St. Denis, 1985, pp. 131-144.
6. Pillet, Jules, *Bibliothèque pédagogique: Le dessin dans l'enseignement primaire. Conférence faite le 6 avril 1882 dans la séance d'ouverture de la session normale pour la préparation des candidats au certificat d'aptitude à l'enseignement du dessin*, Paris: Delagrave, 1883, p. 19. The official program is usually given at the head of any manual for use by drawing teachers. For an official appreciation of its success, as well as a breakdown of the program according to grade, see Paul Colin, *Exposition Universelle Internationale de 1889 à Paris: Rapports du Jury International publiés sous la direction de M. Alfred Picard. Classe 5bis. Enseignement des arts du dessin. Rapport de M. Paul Colin, artiste peintre, inspecteur principale de l'enseignement du dessin*, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1890.
7. The *cahier* is the collection of the National Museum of Education in Rouen, which has a small but telling group from the period 1880-1940. What is especially telling is the persistence of the *méthode Guillaume*, even after the modifications to the program in 1909, when some drawing after nature was essayed and colour was allowed.
8. For typical examples, see L. Malaval, *Le Vrai dessin: Cours pratique de perspective à vue. A l'usage de toute personne qui veut apprendre à dessiner d'après nature avec ou sans maître*, Paris: Nouvelle Librairie classique, 1888 and the various manuals for teachers and students by V. Darchez. It should be noted that the certification exam for the teaching of drawing instituted in 1887 specified a set of objects to be learned and that the objects for aspirants differed from those for aspirantes.
9. Duchamp, Marcel, *Dialogues with Pierre Cabanne*, Ron Padgett trans., New York: Viking, 1971, pp. 31 and 37 respectively. The language is used in many corners of French culture. Its presence can be detected, for instance, in the fact that the generation of Frenchmen who grew up in the 1880s and 1890s came to recognise merit in geometric abstract art. It probably allowed the work on the fourth dimension, dependent upon an understanding of projection, to be of sufficient popular interest to become a fad. It affected the way in which advertisers developed a mass media image for the commodity. And it provided a base after World War I for French Modernism, Dada, Purism and Surrealism, as these sought to make sense of the culture of consumption, to use those commodities that were competing with art. Its assumptions reappear in Ozenfant's theory, Léger's *Ballet mécanique* and the *objet trouvé*, as well as the readymade.
10. Duchamp, Marcel, *Ecrits: Duchamp du signe*, Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Petersen eds, Paris: Flammarion, 1975, pp. 105-106.



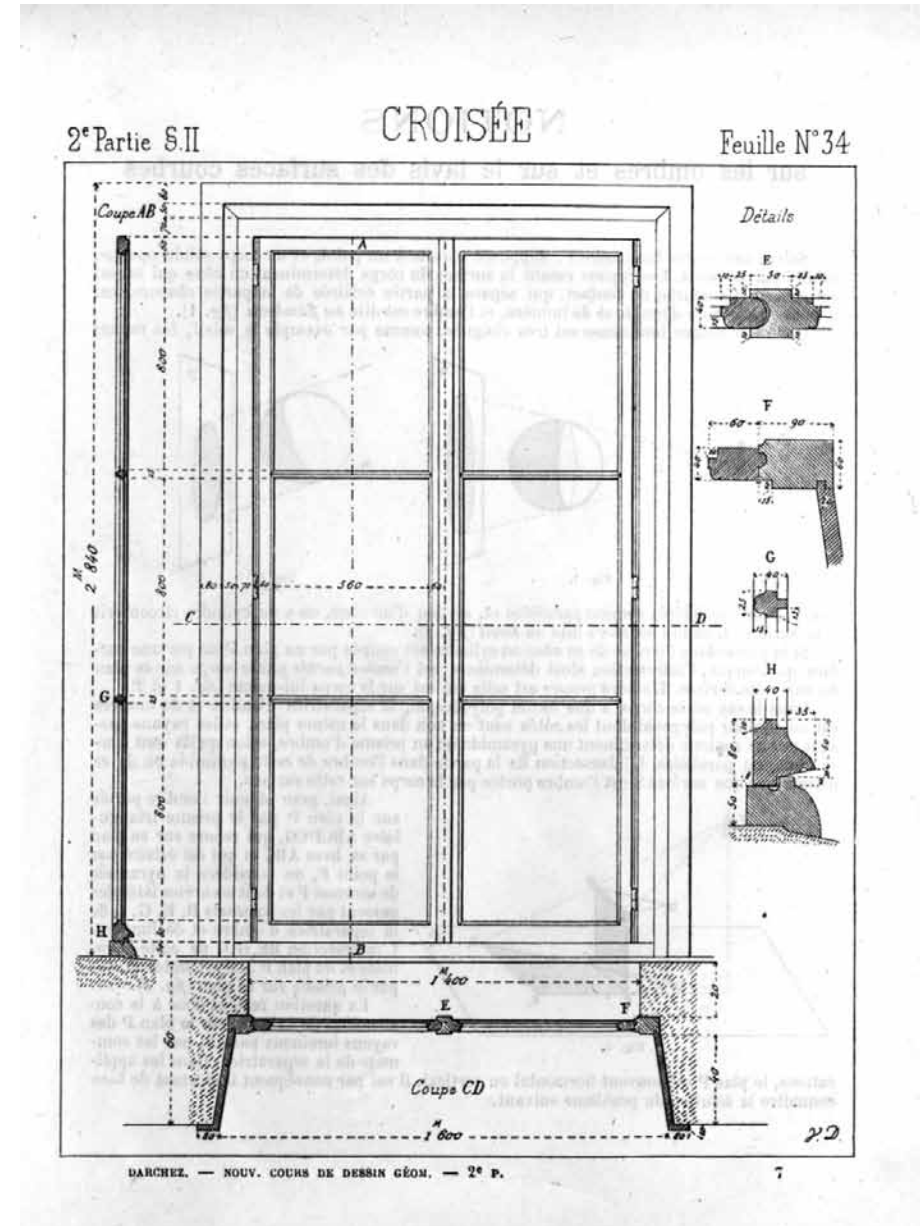


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11. VN Voloshinov, "Le discours dans la vie et le discours dans la poésie", *Mikhail Bakhtine le principe dialogique suivi de Ecrits du Cercle de Bakhtine*, Tzvetan Todorov ed., Paris: Seuil, 1981. This particular essay was first published by Voloshinov, a member of the Bakhtin circle, in 1926.
12. See Darchez, *Nouveau cours de dessin géométrique à l'usage des élèves de l'enseignement primaire supérieur, des écoles normales et de l'enseignement secondaire. Rédigé conformément des derniers programmes officiels*, Paris: Belin, 1896-1898. It should be said that others besides Duchamp felt it important to master the *méthode Guillaume*, notably feminists. See Renée Pingrenon, *De l'utilité du dessin dans l'existence de la Femme*, Paris: Librairie du "Moniteur du Dessin", 1904 and Lydie Martial, *Cours préparatoire à l'enseignement du dessin*, Paris: l'Ecole française de la pensée, 1917.

## Picture credits:

1. pl. 2, Etude de lignes (suite), Ris-Paquot, *Enseignement primaire. Dessin d'imitation. Cours préparatoire aux examens pour les brevets de capacité de l'enseignement primaire* (Paris: Laurens, 1887). Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France
2. pl. 13, Etude de trapèzes, Ris-Paquot, *Enseignement primaire* (1887). Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France
3. Eléments de Dessin Géométral, CYLINDRE, from the *Cahier de dessins*, V. Darchez, *Nouveaux exercices de dessin à main levée d'après les derniers programmes officiels* (Paris: Belin, s.d. [after 1889]) belonging to Henri Jeannotte. Collection of the Musée national de l'éducation, Mont Saint Aignan.
4. APPLICATION POIDS DE 500GR., from the same cahier belonging to Henri Jeannotte. Collection of the Musée national de l'éducation, Mont Saint Aignan.
5. pl. 30, Feuille d'acanthé et chapiteau d'ordre ionique, Ris-paquot, *Enseignement primaire* (1887). Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France
6. Tête, from V. Darchez, *Nouveaux exercices de dessin à main levée d'après les derniers programmes officiels. Cours supérieur et cours complémentaire suivi d'un complément spécialement destiné aux aspirants et aux aspirantes au brevet de capacité* (Paris: Belin, 1888), p. 83. Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France
7. pl. 21 Utilisation du cube, Ris-paquot, *Enseignement primaire* (1887). Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France
8. *Cahier de dessin* belonging to Roger Chardonnet, Coffee grinder with the drawing teacher's grade, ca. 1920. Collection of the Musée national de l'éducation, Mont Saint Aignan.
9. Marcel Duchamp, *Coffee Mill*, 1911. Oil and pencil on board. The Tate Gallery, London. © Succession Marcel Duchamp / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2012 and DACS, London 2002.
10. Marcel Duchamp, *In Advance of the Broken Arm*, 1915. As illustrated in the *Boîte-en-Valise*. © Succession Marcel Duchamp / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2012
11. pl. XLVIII Outils, from V. Darchez, *Nouveaux exercices de dessin à main levée d'après les derniers programmes officiels. Cours supérieur et cours complémentaire suivi d'un complément spécialement destiné aux aspirants et aux aspirantes au brevet de capacité* (Paris: Belin, 1888). Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France
12. Duchamp, Marcel (1887-1968): *Fresh Widow*, 1920. New York, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Miniature French window, painted wood frame, and eight panes of glass covered with black leather, 30 1/2 x 17 5/8" (77.5 x 44.8 cm), on wood sill 3/4 x 21 x 4" (1.9 x 53.4 x 10.2 cm). Katherine S. Dreier Bequest. 151.1953 © 2012. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence and Succession Marcel Duchamp / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2012
13. feuille 34 - Croisée, from Darchez, *Nouveau cours de dessin géométrique à l'usage des élèves de l'enseignement primaire supérieur des écoles normales primaires et de l'enseignement secondaire. Rédigé conformément aux derniers programmes officiels*, t. 2 (Paris: Belin, 1896-98). Courtesy Bibliothèque nationale de France



13.

Christof Zotter and Janina Karolewski

## Ritual Design: A Popular Term and its Scientific Applications

Since Émile Durkheim and other pioneers of the modern social sciences emphasized the crucial role rituals play in maintaining social coherence, this idea has undergone manifold transformations. It has been rethought and reformulated in many different ways: anthropologists explained ritual as a culturally constructed system of symbolic communication (Stanley Tambiah), as a model of and for cultural worlds (Clifford Geertz), as an arena for the negotiation and affirmation of identity (Felicia Hughes-Freeland and Mary M Crain), as the basic social act (Roy A Rappaport), as an 'archetypal' action clearly distinguished from everyday action by not expressing the actor's intention (Caroline Humphrey and James Laidlaw), and so on. Furthermore, not only anthropologists and scholars of religion, but also psychologists, ethologists, educationalists and scholars from other disciplines have examined peculiarities of ritual behaviour. Consequently, Bruce Kapferer states, "ritual is one of the most used, perhaps overused, sociological categories and one of the most resistant to adequate definition".<sup>1</sup> However, apart from lacking an adequate definition, there is also no generally accepted theory of ritual. One reason for this is that such a wide range of quite divergent actions and forms of behaviour are grouped under the label 'ritual' that they can hardly be explained sufficiently by using one (often reductive) model, which, furthermore, often generalizes findings won from one specific type of ritual to all kinds of ritual.<sup>2</sup>

Design, the second term of special interest here, creates comparable problems for its scientific usage. The word has accumulated different meanings throughout the centuries. At the beginning of the nineteenth century 'design' came to denote a discrete profession in the increasingly complex industrial production process. The current, internationally used term 'design' can "refer to a process (the act or practice of designing); or to the result of that process (a design, sketch, plan or model); or to the products manufactured with the aid of a design (designed goods); or to the look or overall pattern of a product ('I like the design of that dress')".<sup>3</sup> For 'Design History/Studies' as an academic discipline, it is therefore no easy task to specify the object of its study. Furthermore, the differentiation from other disciplines is problematic. Design originates in complex (economic, technical, sociological, psychological, morphological and aesthetic) contexts, which have to be taken into account by its analysts.<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding these difficulties, both terms—ritual as well as design—enjoy an ever-growing popularity in contemporary discourses, both academic and popular. On the one hand, the modern attitude of questioning established rituals persists in postmodern society. On the other hand, not least through the popularization of the academic discourse on ritual, contemporary Western society opens up to new forms of rituals that are characterized by individuality, creativity and institutional independence.<sup>5</sup> Over the last two decades, as a countermovement to the 'ritual vacuum' caused by rapid secularization, professionals who offer rituals tailored to the individual needs and interests of their customers have arisen.<sup>6</sup> It is in this context that the neologism 'ritual design' occurred and soon gained popularity.<sup>7</sup> This new term recently entered the field of ritual studies, where it provoked debate. Should scholars on ritual follow the *Zeitgeist* and pick up the term for analytical purposes? What might the advantages be? What about the limitations? Should 'ritual design' be restricted to the contemporary phenomenon of new individual forms of rituals? Or could the term be fruitfully employed in analyzing certain forms of ritual transformation in other times and places, too?

Despite the reputation of ritual for being rigid and unchanging, recent research has stressed the fact that dynamic changes of ritual complexes are the norm rather than the exception.<sup>8</sup> A comprehensive repertoire of approaches and concepts has been developed to theorize ritual and its dynamics.<sup>9</sup> So, what new insight can be gained if rituals or certain forms of rituals are considered 'designed'? How is 'ritual design' related to other analytical concepts? We do not present final answers to these questions here, but rather review an ongoing search for proper applications of this new term. As mentioned above, the ambiguities of the single words combined in the term 'ritual design' pose problems of definition.<sup>10</sup> But the multiplicity of meanings associated with the two words may also be seen as potentially allowing for different conceptualizations of this compound term. Indeed, the debate over design as a useful theoretical tool is quite controversial, oscillating between closed and open conceptions of 'ritual design'.

One of the first scholars to introduce the concept of 'design' to the field of ritual studies was Don Handelman.<sup>11</sup> Criticising the dominant notion in anthropology that all rituals are first and foremost representations, functions or models of and for social and cultural orders, Handelman proposes in a first analytical step to separate ritual from its socio-cultural context and to look into its inner organization "in its own right".<sup>12</sup> Handelman argues that neither analogies, nor symbols or functions, but the 'designs of ritual' and its 'logics' are the "principled ways in which certain social phenomena are intentionally ordered and disordered as practice (and practiced as ordering and disordering)".<sup>13</sup>

Rituals (or—in his preferred term—‘public events’) “can do what they do because they are formed as they are”.<sup>14</sup> Having distinguished and characterized different types of ‘meta-designs’,<sup>15</sup> Handelman demonstrates how in complex, modularly constructed rituals different logics of design are interwoven to form a dense web of causality.<sup>16</sup> For Handelman, ‘design of ritual’ is not restricted to a recent development or to a certain type of ritual. Every ritual is based on ‘designs’, but their ‘logics’ and their braiding can be radically different.

In contrast to Handelman’s more general approach, Kerstin Radde-Antweiler takes a particular religious tradition—namely the Wicca movement—and its magical rituals as her starting point.<sup>17</sup> She draws her material from personal homepages relating to the cluster ‘Hexe’ (‘witch’), proceeding on the assumption “that the phenomenon of religion was not declining in the Western world, but changing into a more individualized form”,<sup>18</sup> and that the medium of the internet represents a new and incomparable source for tracing variations in the religious self-understanding of individuals.<sup>19</sup> In her analysis she observes not only the apparent options for different combinations of religious traditions, but also that the ‘patchwork’ character of the individual beliefs expressed in the sources corresponds to the formal characteristics of the rituals promoted on the homepages: “Separate elements of rituals are removed from their original context and in a new process—which I define as ‘Ritual Design’—combined in different variations and moved into a *new* context” (emphasis added).<sup>20</sup> For Radde-Antweiler, ‘ritual design’ is therefore linked to processes of ‘ritual transfer’, which can be detected at different levels.<sup>21</sup>

She has identified an additional form of ‘ritual design’ on homepages that instruct believers how to develop their own individual ritual or even refrain from giving rules and regulations, on the assumption that every individual can and has to create his/her own ritual. Here, the elements of novelty and invention do not appear as simple parts of the construction of a ritual, but as integral to its legitimization and authorization. ‘Ritual design’ is therefore not consistent with most of the older theories of ritual, which presuppose a collective activity characterized by repetition and so forth.<sup>22</sup> As Radde-Antweiler hopes, a new perspective, one that considers seriously the active and passive roles of the individuals involved, “may generate new concepts or theories”.<sup>23</sup>

That ‘ritual design’ needs a designer—a feature presupposed by Handelman and Radde-Antweiler—figures prominently in one section of the conference proceedings edited by Gregor Ahn under the title “Ritual Design”.<sup>24</sup> In his introduction, Ahn welcomes ‘ritual

design’ as a promising addition to other new theoretical concepts and, moreover, calls for a clear differentiation from related topoi, such as ‘ritual transfer’ or ‘ritual invention’.<sup>25</sup> In order to give ‘ritual design’ a heuristic value, he suggests defining it as “an intentionally conducted act of constructing new forms of well-established rituals by using more or less common ritualistic components which might also stem from different traditions”.<sup>26</sup> Deliberately differentiating the theoretical use of the term from common parlance, Ahn accepts that the creation of completely new rituals, such as recently arisen ceremonies concerning retirement or some of the rituals studied by Radde-Antweiler, are excluded by this definition. In a revised version of his working hypothesis, he further sharpens the criterion of intentionality, suggesting that ‘ritual design’ should be best understood as an intentional modification of ritual that is decidedly articulated as such by the ritual agents. ‘Ritual design’ then appears as a certain mode of ritual modification, cutting across different subcategories of ‘ritual transformation’ (such as ‘ritual innovation’ or ‘ritual invention’), but still remaining a concept close enough for heuristic purposes.<sup>27</sup>

Ahn’s view has not gone unchallenged. Other contributors to the abovementioned proceedings section have focused on other criteria or reopened the concept of ‘ritual design’. Two examples follow. Taking structure and meaning as the two basic characteristics of ritual, Thomas Quartier, in his study on new forms of non-ecclesiastic funerals in the Netherlands, analyses how professional ritual guides, in cooperation with the bereaved, manage to create a ritual that, on the one hand, is individually designed for the deceased and his family, but that, on the other hand, is recognizable as a funeral even by outsiders.<sup>28</sup> He concludes, “rituals are, at one and the same time, traditional and innovative, individual and collective. Individually designed funerals do not have one given structure and meaning, but they do have structures and meanings.”<sup>29</sup> In the terminology borrowed from Ron Grimes,<sup>30</sup> the ritual guide, or ‘ritual designer’, acts in the role of the ‘diviner’, creatively inventing fresh impulses, as well as in the role of the ‘plumber’, taking care of the practical circumstances and the common framework.<sup>31</sup>

The common framework, making an event recognizable as ritual, is of special interest to Matthias Frenz.<sup>32</sup> Based on his observations on the ritual activities at Velankanni, a Marian Shrine in southern India, Frenz has pointed out devotees’ different strategies of gaining access to the ‘ritual space’ and the redistributive system centred on the Virgin Mary.<sup>33</sup> He understands the ritual modifications and inventions that thereby occur as part of a “process of ritual design”.<sup>34</sup> However, while Radde-Antweiler and others emphasize individual agency and innovation, Frenz focuses on the constraining factors of the design process.<sup>35</sup> Making use of Foucault’s discourse theory and of a concept com-

mon in literary theory<sup>36</sup> concerned with intertextuality, he distinguishes three dimensions of this process. First, comparable to Foucault's historical *a priori*, existing rituals and ideas provide the prefigurative dimension of ritual formation, opening up and limiting a space for real, valid and functioning innovations. The configuration, the second dimension, is characterized as a framing process that establishes relations between (ritual) acts and their context, which, third, is in need of refiguration.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, for Frenz, 'ritual design' "is not a singular event, but an ongoing process. Ritual formations are constantly re(con)figured."<sup>38</sup> He therefore speaks of the "common practice" of 'ritual design'.<sup>39</sup>

Other contributors, who deal with the reinvention of 'All Souls' Day' by Dutch artists,<sup>40</sup> the commodification of a new spirituality in secularized Swedish society,<sup>41</sup> and the impact of ethnographic research on the ritual traditions of different Masonic orders,<sup>42</sup> have approached 'ritual design' in their own ways.<sup>43</sup> However, as Ahn stresses, these contributions are "more than just a sequence of more or less accidental case studies. [...] different viewpoints cast a light on the authors' search for an appropriate way of theorising and conceptualising the divergent processes of designing rituals."<sup>44</sup>

The most recent examination of 'ritual design' is a volume resulting from a series of presentations and discussions at the 'Ritual Dynamics' Collaborative Research Centre at Heidelberg University.<sup>45</sup> This forthcoming publication aims to provide a broader basis for possible conceptions of 'ritual design'. It contributes to the debate on the 'closedness' or the 'openness' of the term 'ritual design', for example by re-examining the controversial criterion of intentionality, and includes both historical and 'non-European', in addition to recent and 'Western', case studies. Moreover, the contributors highlight other aspects related to design that have hitherto been neglected or unnoticed in the analysis of ritual transformations, such as customer orientation, aesthetic demands, economic preconditions and—leaving to one side the question of human agency—the influence of patterns or buildings on ritual. Furthermore, attention is paid to the interaction of these aspects, which is characteristic of 'design'.

Both the application of strictly-defined concepts and the analysis of as-yet-unstudied factors in their interplay open up new perspectives on the multifaceted phenomena of ritual transformations. Although the problems related to the terms 'ritual', 'design'—and hence also to 'ritual design'—are far from finally resolved, theoretical work on them deepens our understanding of the complex processes of ritual dynamics and promises further academic re(con)figurations of 'ritual design'.

*This paper is partly based on the introduction to the volume Ritualdesign written by the editors Janina Karolewski, Nadja Miczek and Christof Zotter (Ritualdesign: Zur kultur- und ritualwissenschaftlichen Analyse 'neuer' Rituale, Janina Karolewski, Nadja Miczek et al. eds, Bielefeld: transcript, forthcoming).*

1. Kapferer, Bruce, "Ritual Dynamics and Virtual Practice: Beyond Representation and Meaning", *Social Analysis*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2004, pp. 35-54 p. 35.
2. Cf. Handelman, Don, "Conceptual Alternatives to 'Ritual'", *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, Jens Kreinath, Jan Snoek et al. eds, Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp. 37-49.
3. Walker, John A, *Design History and the History of Design*, London: Pluto Press, 1989, p. 23.
4. Cf. Walker, *Design History*, pp. 22-37 and passim.
5. Cf. Lüddeckens, Dorothea, "Neue Rituale in allen Lebenslagen: Beobachtungen zur Popularisierung des Ritualdiskurses", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2004, pp. 37-53; and Stausberg, Michael, "Reflexive Ritualisationen", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2004, pp. 54-61. For the impact of the work of ritual theorists such as Arnold Van Gennep or Mircea Eliade on newly-constructed forms of initiation rituals, see Ronald L Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone: Re-Inventing Rites of Passage*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2000, p. 105.
6. Quartier, Thomas, "Funeral Design in the Netherlands: Structures and Meanings of Non-Ecclesiastic Funerals", *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual*, vol. 4, *Reflexivity, Media, and Visuality*, Axel Michaels et al. eds, section 4, *Ritual Design*, Gregor Ahn ed., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011, pp. 635-650 p. 636.
7. Cf. Ahn, Gregor, "Ritualdesign: Ein neuer Topos der Ritualtheorie?", *Ritualdesign*, Karolewski, Miczek et al. eds, forthcoming.
8. Cf. Michaels, Axel, "Zur Dynamik von Ritualkomplexen", *Forum Ritualdynamik*, vol. 3, 2003.
9. Cf. Kreinath, Jens, Jan Snoek et al. eds, *Theorizing Rituals: Issues, Topics, Approaches, Concepts*, Leiden: Brill, 2006.
10. Also see Michael Houseman, "Trying to Make a Difference with 'Ritual Design'", *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual*, vol. 4, *Reflexivity, Media, and Visuality*, Axel Michaels et al. eds, section 4, *Ritual Design*, Gregor Ahn ed., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011, pp. 699-706.
11. Cf. Handelman, Don, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 7 and passim.
12. Cf. Handelman, Don, "Introduction: Why Ritual on its Own Right? How So?", *Social Analysis*, vol. 48, no. 2, 2004, pp. 1-32 pp. 3f; and Handelman, Don, "Designs of Ritual: The City Dionysia of Fifth-Century Athens", *Celebrations: Selected Papers and Discussions from the Tenth Anniversary Symposium of the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 12-16 May 1999*, Michael Wedde ed., Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 2004, pp. 207-235 p. 208.
13. Handelman, "Designs of Ritual", p. 207.
14. Handelman, "Conceptual Alternatives", p. 49.

15. Handelman is mainly concerned with rituals that model the lived-in world and those that present it ("Designs of Ritual", pp. 208-210; and "Conceptual Alternatives", pp. 45-47). For Bruce Kapferer's concept of 'ritual virtuality' (see Kapferer, Bruce, *The Feast of the Sorcerer: Practices of Consciousness and Power*, Chicago IL: Chicago University Press, 1997, pp. 176-181; and "Ritual Dynamics", pp. 46ff.) as 'meta-design', see Handelman, "Conceptual Alternatives", pp. 47f.
16. Handelman, "Designs of Ritual", pp. 211-213 and passim.
17. Radde-Antweiler, Kerstin, "Rituals Online: Transferring and Designing Rituals", *Online—Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2006, pp. 54-72.
18. Radde-Antweiler, "Rituals Online", p. 56.
19. Radde-Antweiler, "Rituals Online", pp. 56f.
20. Radde-Antweiler, "Rituals Online", p. 66.
21. Radde-Antweiler, "Rituals Online", pp. 57-59 and passim. For the concept of 'transfer of ritual' as a form of 'ritual dynamics', see also Robert Langer, Dorothea Lüddeckens et al., "Transfer of Ritual", *Journal of Ritual Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2006, pp. 1-10.
22. Radde-Antweiler, "Rituals Online", pp. 67f.
23. Radde-Antweiler, "Rituals Online", p. 68.
24. Michaels, Axel et al. eds, *Ritual Dynamics and the Science of Ritual*, vol. 4, *Reflexivity, Media, and Visuality*, section 4, *Ritual Design*, Gregor Ahn ed., Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011, pp. 599-706.
25. Ahn, Gregor, "Ritual Design—an Introduction", *Ritual Dynamics*, pp. 601-605.
26. Ahn, "Ritual Design", p. 604. For an application of this working hypothesis see Gregor Ahn, "The Re-Embodiment of Mr. Spock and the Re-Incarnation of Voldemort: Two Examples of Ritual Design in Contemporary Fiction", *Ritual Dynamics*, pp. 607-616.
27. Ahn, "Ritualdesign".
28. Quartier, "Funeral Design".
29. Quartier, "Funeral Design", p. 648.
30. Cf. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone*, pp. 12f.
31. Quartier, "Funeral Design", p. 647.
32. Frenz, Matthias, "The Common Practice of Ritual Design in Southern India: Observations at the Marian Sanctuary of Velankanni", *Ritual Dynamics*, pp. 651-669.
33. Frenz, "The Common Practice", pp. 654-658.
34. Frenz, "The Common Practice", p. 654.
35. Cf. Klassen, Pamela E, "Ritual, Tradition, and the Force of Design", *Ritualdesign*, Karolewski, Miczek et al. eds, forthcoming.
36. Cf. Frenz, "The Common Practice", pp. 658-660.
37. 37/ Frenz, "The Common Practice", pp. 664-668.
38. Frenz, "The Common Practice", p. 668.
39. Frenz, "The Common Practice", p. 664.
40. De Maaker, Eric, Eric Venbrux et al., "Reinventing 'All Souls' Day': Spirituality, Contemporary Art, and the Remembrance of the Dead", *Ritual Dynamics*, pp. 617-634.
41. Hornborg, Anne-Christine, "Designing Rites to Re-Enchant Secularised Society: Cases from Contemporary Sweden", *Ritual Dynamics*, pp. 671-691.
42. Snoek, Jan AM, "Researcher and Researched Rituals", *Ritual Dynamics*, pp. 693-697.
43. For the difficulties around characterizing 'ritual design', see also Houseman, "Trying to Make a Difference".
44. Ahn, "Ritual Design", p. 604.
45. Karolewski, Miczek et al. eds, *Ritualdesign*.



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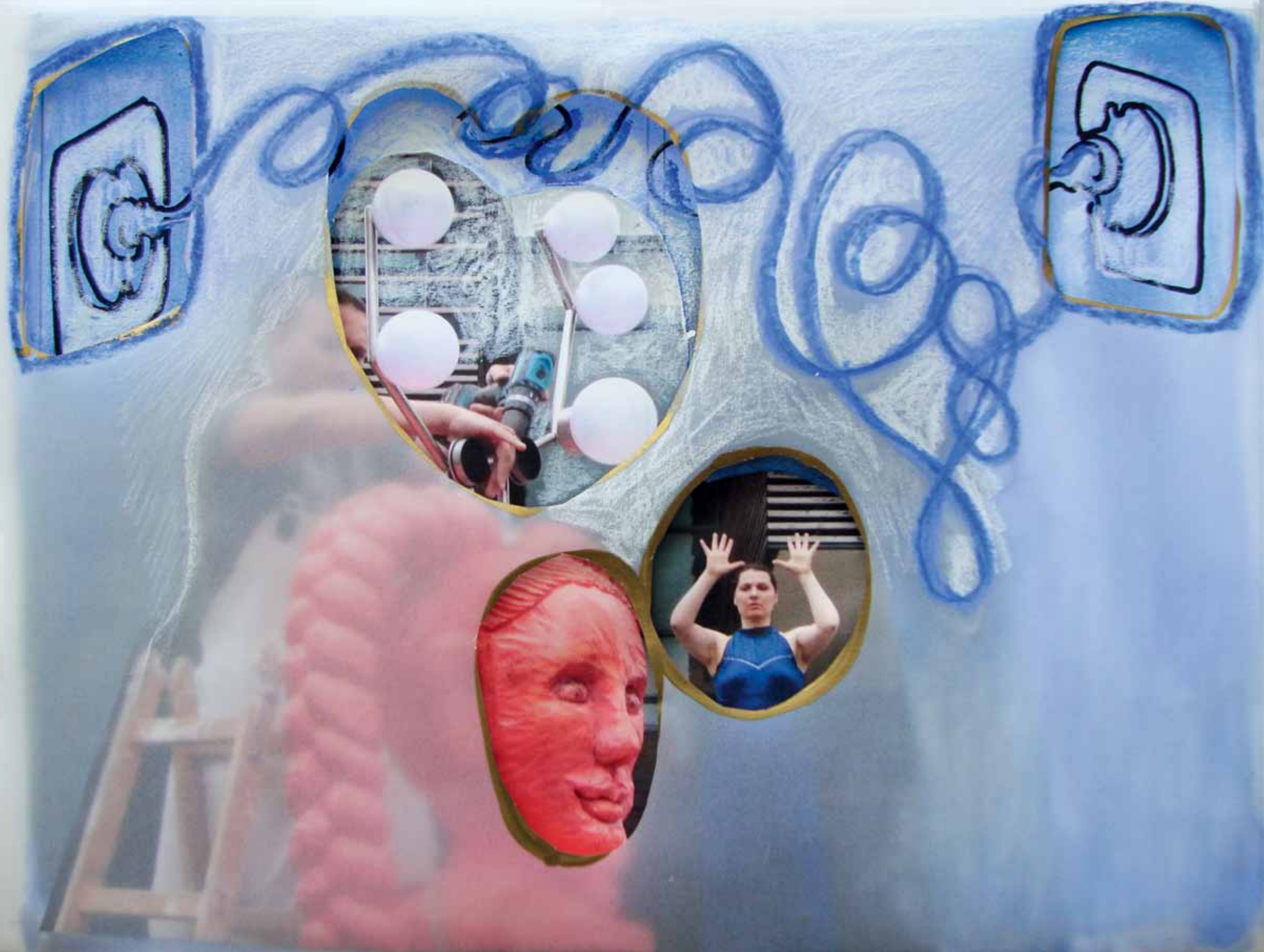












Elisabeth von Samsonow

## Ariadne, the Sacred Patron of Ritual Design

Ariadne possesses the 'thread', she is the mistress of the labyrinth, sister of the Minotaur. Her story is as much that of a remembering as of a misunderstanding or a series of forgettings. It is for this reason that Ariadne remains one of the most important figures in mythology, conjured up, for example, in the dark scenes of Nietzsche's *Dithyrambs of Dionysus* or in Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss' opera *Ariadne on Naxos*. In my research Ariadne occupies a position from which it is possible to set about reclaiming a 'different history'. She is synonymous with the promise of such a 'different history'. In her hands, the thread—as a technology of remembering and of memory—triggers abandonment, panic, exile, denial. Through the thread and its guarantee, it is possible to re-establish a connection, which, under the sign of the incest taboo, was a justification for a collective alienation from nature, from life. In this respect, Ariadne stands precisely for a 'different history' of our collective ancestry, namely for the infinite coherence of all bodies that have been *produced by women*. Like Electra, her accomplice, known for her hysterical reaction to the misappropriation of this insight by the Greeks, she stands on the side of *this production*, the production of *human beings*, which is not to be confused with the production of goods by human beings. With her ability to remember origin and source of production, Ariadne overcomes the inverted world that places a higher value on the production of goods than on the production of human beings and that—in a greater act of inversion (perversion)—allows human beings to be determined by the goods they produce. In Ariadne, the congruence of world and woman is established as a collaborative relationship, which a ban on incest cannot affect. The technical constituent of Ariadne's thread is always just this moment of the relations of production. Her thread points to the obtuseness of production under conditions in which the human realm in an eccentric world is constituted as separate and segregated. The woman-world cooperative, as illustrated by Ariadne's thread, means that the cooperation must be conceived *ontologically*, namely by embracing the systemic conditions of production; let us say: nature, earth, cosmos.

Summer 2011 I was commissioned by the Lower Austrian state government's Department of Cultural Funding for Art in Public Spaces (Dr. Katharina Blaas) to build a large sculpture of Ariadne for the so-called Dionysus Way in Mistelbach on the Zaya in Lower Austria. This sculpture presents Ariadne as a 'thread girl', whose body is itself a huge

reel from which the Dionysus Way unwinds as a red thread. On her head she carries her crown, a reproduction of the *Corona Borealis*, a constellation in the northern sky. The constellation was created as Dionysus cast Ariadne's wedding diadem—made by Hephaestus, the blacksmith of the gods—up into the sky in order to immortalize his godly bride. The constellation of the Mistelbach Ariadne, composed of seven stars, lights up the diadem at night using photoelectric cells whose largest and brightest star, *Alpha Coronae Borealis*, is called the *Gemma* of the heavenly jewel. The accumulation of cosmic radiation by Ariadne's crown of photoelectric cells, which is reemitted at night in the form of the glistening constellation of her diadem, is symbolic of a new age that will succeed that of fossil fuel energy generation.

For the opening of the Dionysus Way and its unveiling, the sculpture was animated in accordance with the texts of the Egyptian opening of the mouth ritual; that is, washed, censed, adorned, sung to, fed, soaked and anointed like a large doll—assisted by Karin Ferrari, Daniela Hölzl and Gotthart Fellerer. The photos forming the visual essay document the preparations and the ritual itself. The wonderful overtone vocalist Natascha Nikeprelevic sung in a night-blue evening dress made from sheep's wool dyed and spun by Maria Schiefer; Hephaestus the blacksmith was played by Sascha Lindl.





"King Tut" Death mask,  
Cover of exhibition catalog,  
"Treasures of Tutankhamun"  
1972

The Tutankhamun tomb relics offered the perfect material culture for this new development. At the time of the "King Tut" exhibition, little had been concretely established as to the identity of this boy ruler:

*"We know nothing about him," said Hoving. "There's not a line of hieroglyphs found in the tomb. No histories. No nothing. Zero. But who cares? This stuff is gorgeous. Unparalleled. When you look at it, you're moved to another realm [...] It was like people could almost reach out and shake the hand of a bygone civilization."*<sup>2</sup>

In "King Tut", the exhibition's path appeared determined to focus only on the space connecting display and objects. Whatever the ways in which each museum had traditionally routed through the domain of history, it was detoured by the exhibition's emotional appeal towards a sublime aesthetic—"moved to another realm". Museum artefacts were no longer cased and illuminated to assist classification or empirical study, but for atmosphere, suggesting clues to the central open riddle related to identity and death. Fittingly, the 'death mask'—a large, intact, solid gold object and most direct signifier for the absent king—was selected to stare back from the street in the ubiquitous imagery of the media campaign blitz. Dramatization would extend into the exhibition and provide sense to the conflation of archaeological science, consumer commercial display and theatrical exhibition design. Objects were now part of a scenography, which, at strategic points, implied a re-enactment, to *feel as if* witness to the archaeologist's discovery of the entrance to the liminal space between life and afterlife.

The British Museum "staged the show on the museum's first floor so that viewers actually feel they are descending into the Theban tomb itself, light receding, room by room, as they move deeper and deeper into the exhibit".<sup>3</sup> And the later Washington National Gallery installation "recreated the initial discovery of the dark tomb entrance and storage areas by presenting the objects in approximately the same order in which they were found. Photomurals of 1922 excavation scenes and contemporary newspaper accounts evoked the excitement of the discovery."<sup>4</sup>

Through the 1970s the "King Tut" tour made it clear that an enormous untapped audience existed. In the USA, this coincided with different currents in social history influencing new museum perspectives, which raised issues of audience, format and, ultimately, the development of a new field and its role: exhibition designer.

Fareed Armaly

## 'New Muse': Museum Exhibition Design as Hubris

*"We were getting away from the giant cabinet-of-curiosities approach to the idea of a good yarn, using literary and theatrical constructs [...] We began thinking of an exhibition as a three-act play, or a five-chapter book. We started thinking in theatrical terms, like where does the love song belong?"*<sup>1</sup>

### MOVED TO ANOTHER REALM

In the early 1970s the exhibition "King Tut—Treasures of Tutankhamun" began a tour that went on to achieve an unprecedented level of popular success. It opened in 1976 in Washington DC, with the subsequent US tour attracting nearly eight million visitors who waited in entrance lines for up to seven hours. Given its degree of success, it is interesting to note that this "King Tut" exhibition was not the first to present relics from the 1922 discovery of the Tutankhamun tomb. There had been several exhibitions, including one in 1961 at the Smithsonian, also in Washington DC. Yet, in that same city and a mere 15 years later, 55 artefacts from the same excavation would comprise the record-breaking version and, by doing so, confirm the 'blockbuster' strategy.

The touring blockbuster exhibition allowed a traditional museum to change tack temporarily and consciously to target the so-called 'general public'. Among the evident differences, the expected scholarly enquiry accompanied by publication of supporting texts was substituted by the more dramatic production of death and legends, with a publication placing more emphasis on pictures. Museums could fight inherent claims of elitism with this essentially soft, general focus on treasures and priceless objects, by having it be understood as a *populist* gesture. By all appearances this meant "King Tut" was constituted over time in advertising campaigns, media coverage, television/pop culture, in a varied range of discourses and souvenirs, and then in time its exhibition would arrive at the museum. Within the field of museology, "King Tut" offered a new narrative scenography for the display of relics that also stood for a seam connecting different categories of cultural and historical artefacts from media and museum. One side effect of this was that light was thrown on design and art, and what had traditionally been a background job—not even a fully operating field—supporting the curator's work: exhibition design.



"The Queen Attending the Treasures of Tutankhamun Exhibition in March 1972", British Museum, London. Photo by Keystone-France/Gamma-Keystone via Getty Images

### SETTING THEM UP TO RECEIVE CERTAIN EXPERIENCES

*History and science museums [...] have come around to the view that their artifacts should be used to tell a compelling story and impart a memorable emotional experience rather than simply to be spread out in glass cases. In museum-speak, the didactic has given way to the interpretive. But many newer museums are not based on collections at all. Instead, they dramatize a historical event or trend, like the Japanese migration to California, or trace the development and influence of an idea, like freedom of the press [...] These new-wave institutions are also known as single-subject museums.<sup>5</sup>*

These new museums, which began to emerge rapidly, were aware of the implications of the recent blockbuster exhibitions, but also noted the gaps left in the 'populist' construction. It was already clear in the 1970s that museums had to rethink in light of demands from two directions: conforming to new national standards for the teaching of history, social studies and science, and harnessing the new dynamic of culture in shopping centres and cinemas.<sup>6</sup> This becomes particularly relevant in terms of engaging with themes of history and culture, at a time when the focus would broaden to include aspects of the social and more intangible qualities (such as information or experiences) implied by the single-subject museum's direction.

During these museums' initial planning phases, exhibition designers began to occupy a more central position and, arguably, to assume a significant co-authorial role around the content and philosophy of the core permanent exhibits. They performed multifaceted research, for example into audience behaviour, aesthetics, narrative, trends or architectural strategy, in order to arrive at the concept. Over time, this development appears to be more akin to throwing out the exhibition and keeping the dramaturgy; that is, more suggestive of a scripted interface of episodes or what seminal museum designer Ralph Appelbaum<sup>7</sup> calls "interior interpretive architecture [...] that extends the story. It's the act of controlling a few hours of someone's time and setting them up to receive certain experiences."<sup>8</sup>

The new influence of exhibition design agencies (most notably Ralph Appelbaum Associates—RAA—which defined and continues to dominate the American design field for museums of history and culture) was reflected in the larger percentage of the building budget devoted to their role. Their philosophy would become influential in the perspectives of the new museums of science or of history and culture. RAA shapes a museum through storylines, but also through the agency's notion of 'socialization'. The implica-

tion is seemingly a more egalitarian conception of museum space, connected to information, education and entertainment via 'user-friendly' interfaces. The museum's curatorial input, meanwhile, becomes absorbed as co-author within the new intertextual popular star—the exhibition designer's emotive, scripted interface, which creates as it directs the socialization between the museum's voice and 'you'.

*"Curators are not trained to tell the story to the public. We empower curators. We empower architects. Our job is to find a museum's voice, then to search for relevance, to make a museum competitive for people's discretionary time and income."<sup>9</sup>*

### BETWEEN TRANSCENDENT AND TRANSFORMED

The hallmark example of the prime RAA aesthetic is considered the agency's award-winning permanent exhibits design for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which opened in Washington DC in 1993. Much has been written about the museum itself, partly due to the RAA exhibition, the aesthetic of which was noted as the inversion of priceless treasures on display.

*It was a turning point in the field of museology, not least because it focused attention on the power invested in ordinary objects [...] [A] mound of old shoes belonging to anonymous victims, to cite one haunting display at the museum; it evokes the sorrows of the Holocaust in a way that a history book never could.<sup>10</sup>*

The exhibition design, considered in terms of historiography, seems halfway between the demands of a memorial and a museum. It illuminates the state of artefacts unable to be converted to relics, as they remain evidence demanded for a staging to witness the presence of an absented ("haunting") body, returning to "evoke sorrow" through the designer's script. Contained within this gesture, however, there is also something at odds with this authorless evocation in that "way a history book never could". As a memorial and museum to a defining moment of modern history and humanity, it is also *the* site for recalling just *why* there were intense philosophical arguments around the core issue of representation, of methodology in a dialogue of ethics and aesthetics, history and memory, and certainly in relation to spectacle. The museum also stands for a transitional moment that confirmed the *Gesamtkunstwerk* exhibition designer, who produces content and ultimately voice (much to the chagrin of the founding director, who "would slam his fist down and say that design was not going to lead the museum"<sup>11</sup>).

RAA judges success by the size of the public drawn in by one of the iterations of what the company calls the “experience economy”, a competitive field where the “people who win create the most powerful memories”. Appelbaum hopes they leave transformed, although “transcendent would be better, but transformed would be enough”.<sup>12</sup>

The point between transcendent and transformed offers a place that should recall its roots in a 1970s context, an era that—in light of the preceding decade—was glibly termed the ‘me decade’, broadly characterized by atomized individualism that focussed on the ‘recovery’ of the self. This figure serves as a point of address, reflected within both the new exhibition design philosophy and, by extension, the related planning of new, single-theme American museums of history and culture.

The blockbuster exhibition was developed for the traditional museum framework, representing one extreme on a scale. The subject of legends implies an actual historical figure (whether King Tut or, more recently, Picasso) and a storyline scaled to embody timeless qualities. The exhibition subsumed the historian’s framework within consumerist ecstasy and also generated a new kind of twentieth-century legend: the touring exhibition itself. Exhibition design is introduced in the service of dramatization, staging relics as enchanted commodities. If any new social space is accounted for, it is outside the museum, in the form of a public as its own event, a public that acquiesces to waiting for hours in lines that wrap around street blocks.

The new exhibition philosophy represented by RAA began more abstractly, a system rethink of the new museum experience from the perspective of the permanent exhibitions being designed within. The firm develops storylines, but also focuses on shaping the public behaviour within as ‘socialization’. Both contribute to the central experience, from which, in turn, different segment concepts are rendered. The new system embodies an encompassing dramaturgy—a scripted space—a compositional form that becomes the attraction. The earlier ‘cabinet’ is absorbed within, the ‘curiosity’ contained by conduct. A familiar, vernacular language is developed to accommodate flexibly the demands of different frames of recognition, from shopping centre and cinema to TV and education. Overall, for the public, a symbiotic relation is suggested between a museum visit and an emotional journey and creating the most powerful memories.

An important distinction arises with the blockbuster connected to legends, which retains an index to history, while the RAA museum exhibition is harder to pin down at first. Despite the egalitarian cultural movement that the designer’s narrative proposes,

the focus is on the atomized individual, and emotional journeys are set in ideal terms, a self set towards ‘transcendence’. A significant question, therefore, is what role does being outside immanent meaning ultimately play in an institution indexed to history and culture?

From appearances, it would seem that the museum exhibition designer and their scripted spaces have expanded to meet all needs, until commanding essentially the role of cultural impresario. While all the muses may be invoked for this new museum, there is no artist, only artistry.

One aspect of this—which can be seen in the RAA designs for the Holocaust Memorial Museum—is that, in the course of the exhibition design, there is a sense of uncanny resemblance to certain modes of modern and contemporary artistic practice. Except that now these approaches are presented seamlessly within, as if to stage merely an amenable fragment of them. Consider it a gesture in contrast to Brecht’s demand that “the artist has to adopt a definitive attitude, he cannot let [the gesture] just speak only for itself, simply expressing it as the fact dictates”.<sup>13</sup>

## EXPRESSING NEWS AND INFORMATION

Museum exhibition design philosophy, deriving this form of address to the individual and self from a 1970s ethos, is further layered upon by the subsequent decade’s information-era zeitgeist. Certain implications should be drawn, in terms of which it is worth noting several significant changes underway during that same period, which relate the expression of information and facts to the new role of design in the news media as popular voice.

*USA TODAY* was launched in 1982 with the intention of creating a national newspaper by constructing a ‘populist’ voice to compete against the actual, existing local or metropolitan versions. The newspaper introduced the concept of visually striking ‘info-design’ to grab audience attention, using an abundance of colours, statistics, weather maps and infographics (long satirized for being uninformative) and, ultimately, synthesizing news down to small, easy-to-read pieces. Today, it is one of the largest circulation newspapers in the US.



1991 CNN GulfWar Title

"Our red, gold and black logo was none too subtle, it expresses aggression, war and danger" explains CNN's Vice President of Graphics Ann Williams. "It could also be said to have a period feel of war." From TVARK, "CNN War in the Gulf "; [http://www2.tv-ark.orguk/news/gulf\\_war.html](http://www2.tv-ark.orguk/news/gulf_war.html)



These results did not go unnoticed in the early days of CNN, the national 24-hour cable TV news network. It began with constantly updating news, embedded within an attractive, dynamic, visually immersive environment, with abundant graphics, colourful statistical charts and maps. In this context, the design environment, with its consistent, recognizable identity, added a new factor for expressing 'editorial' sentiments to its general viewing public. The most striking, early paradigmatic example occurred when, for the first time, the first minutes of a war could be viewed on television (CNN's broadcasting of the initial bombing of Baghdad). At the start of the 1991 Gulf War, CNN designers substituted TV's nomenclature of generic information subtitles with the dramatics of full-colour, full-screen, graphic title cards. They introduced a Gulf War 'opening title'—the typeface of which emphasized an emotional character—scaled to occupy the full screen in a style and colour palette altogether reminiscent of Hollywood.<sup>14</sup> The news, by way of its designed environment, now subtly represented war as similar to a produced, episodic fiction, in which CNN journalists were the main actors. Regardless of the viewing audience's awareness of this, its expectations are shaped through familiarity and sentiment, and opening titles imply a third-act ending, complete with matching 'War Over' title card, which was already waiting for use.<sup>15</sup>

While this info-design immersion developed gradually, at the same time the role of the reporter-journalist within that environment was being challenged by the newsreader. In order to make a distinction, 'subjectivity' was found to be an asset and was heightened, most notably through empathy: the interviewer's "how does that make you feel?" becoming a commonplace. A question, like a gesture, that demands a response that is already factored in and constructed.

#### "HOW DOES THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?"

The Newseum first opened in the Washington DC area in 1994, then relaunched in 2008 so as to be in close proximity to the National Mall's prestigious 'museum row'. In both cases, RAA developed the permanent exhibits. The project was created and funded by The Freedom Forum, whose declared interest lies in educating the public about the need for freedom of the press by utilizing history and context. Created in 1991, The Freedom Forum began under the direction of Al Neuharth, former publisher of *USA TODAY*.

In marked contrast to the national canon represented by the neighbouring Washington DC museums, the name 'Newseum' openly displays its contemporary corporate/non-profit merger mindset. 'News' and 'Museum' repackaged as a new entity, in the same way that a 'brand' raises expectations of a different (and new) experience.

It is important to consider the Newseum's situation with regard to this inherent claim for a new kind of museum and thus for a new kind of experience. The building's interior plan stresses a preoccupation with staging the movement of visitors between sections and floors. A vista window, a few floors tall, frames the whole situation, visually connecting the walkways with the pavements and avenue outside. People move along pathways in the open and arrive at the exhibition sections of interiors with displays, which offer a contrasting sense of *mise en abyme*. The most performative, interactive segments are the replica studio sets emulating the TV reporter's setup, where a visitor can attempt to read a teleprompt in front of a selection of different backgrounds, and pay to receive it as a digital souvenir. Placed quietly away on an upper floor is an actual broadcasting studio, where some actual TV news discussion programmes are produced, as well a range of interviews related to news and topical themes. In the latter, museum visitors may become the studio audience. While there are very different categories of museum experience, from calmer informational, archival displays to edutainment and sensurround '4D' cinema, all vie for attention aspiring to TV levels of comprehension, summed up by the idea of going through the motions of learning. Amidst all the variety, perhaps the most questionable is the emphasis on displaying a form of 'relics'. These can be markers from a journalist's past or present experience, the tokens from a TV-journalist's career, or be validated as evidence of dramatic events in the field. The range includes the door that burglars taped open at the Watergate Hotel; *Time* magazine's armoured truck from the Balkans, replete with bullet holes; the laptop used by Daniel Pearl, the murdered *Wall Street Journal* reporter; the vest Bob Woodruff wore when wounded by a roadside bomb in Iraq; and temporary exhibitions whose large displays have included collected evidence, such as the complete Unabomber's cabin.

The Newseum experience, with its focus on the history and context of the news, seems to derive less of an organizational focus from that earlier use of dramaturgical unity—neither three acts nor five chapters—and thus the question arises, what if anything does the exhibition design centre on now in this new experience?



Rendering of Newseum urn.  
copyright Fareed Armaly.  
Model: N.Hess



Rendering of Newseum Tissue  
Box. copyright Fareed Armaly.  
Model: N.Hess

### THE NEWSEUM 9/11 GALLERY SPONSORED BY COMCAST

*This gallery "explores the horrendous events of Sept. 11, 2001, and the extraordinary challenges that faced the journalists trying to report". It includes "a tribute to photo-journalist William Biggart—a journalist who died covering the attacks—and some of the final photographs he took. Also featured are front pages from around the globe about the attacks and first-person accounts from reporters and photographers who covered the story."*<sup>16</sup>

The Newseum's 9/11 Gallery is set in a visual balance with the adjacent mangled antenna tower, a large relic from New York's doomed World Trade Center. From ground level, the gallery offers a room with two small entranceways, rectangular dark areas set in a monolithic outer wall that extends upwards to a scale viewable from points throughout the museum. The resulting vast white expanse is covered by many precisely gridded-out rows of framed newspaper front pages from around the world, all shocked reactions to the events of 11 September 2001. The overall visual effect appears less like an exhibition installation and is more suggestive of a blank area with armour constructed out of traumatic heraldry.

In front of the ground floor gallery entrance, at a distance away from and running along the width of the room, is a wall high enough to lean on and from which to contemplate the newspaper row. On top of either side of this wall's entrance openings are two unassuming objects. They are cube-like, with only the vertical edges drawn subtly inwards at the middle to produce a mild arc conveying movement from base to top. Edges and corners, though precise, have no sharpness. A few minimal, finger-line details, repeated horizontally on all four sides, visually solicit touching. This is further enhanced by the pewter-like surface, which also provides a sense of everyday utility to the classic aesthetic. These objects do not seem designed in the sense conveyed by the museum displays overall. They do not completely fit with the relics or historical artefacts on display, nor with the souvenirs or tokens associated with figures or events, nor do they feel mass-manufactured or display an idiosyncratic artisan heritage. Although the objects appear specific to some task, the shape seems derived from a certain set of thresholds, to occupy a liminal state of familiarity that hails 'you'.

In many ways, these are *the* objects to grasp on all levels within the Newseum.

At first, standing at a distance across the floor from the 9/11 Gallery display area, I hardly noticed them, even less imagined what they were. As I walked towards the gallery, their sculptural aesthetic amidst the surrounding visual array started to catch my attention. Although drawing closer still, I had difficulty distinguishing the objects, as their metal surface, which had a kind of dull, projective quality within the overall lighting, refused to relinquish a more visually precise set of characteristics. Approaching nearer the gallery entrance area, the objects' box-like shape—by way of design as well as proportion—recalled square funeral urns. Assuming they were not such, that sensibility informed me nevertheless, so that I also briefly considered whether emerging out of the top of the boxes was supposed to be an eloquent, ephemeral citation of a memorial flame. Finally, I arrived close in front of the entrance to the 9/11 Gallery, which, just through its symmetry and volume, suggests a tomb-like tower for a room to view the reporters' footage. Turning my full attention to these objects I was surprised to discover that they are specially designed metal Kleenex tissue dispensers.

### 'TRAGEDY BOXES'

To place this in some context, here in the nation's capital, renowned for its monuments and memorials to wars, national leaders, historic figures and events, there is no such nearby tissue dispenser. Granted, the examples cited aren't galleries, and fall closer within the category of art than design, conceived as collective symbols for society that bridge past and future. But then, even among the exhibitions within other Washington DC museums, such as the Smithsonian, the National Gallery of Art, Museum of American History, Museum of the American Indian, etc., there is no policy of an institutional tissue dispenser.

An apt formulation for this: when the Newseum is divided through the set of these other museums, this is the remainder. The hard, indissoluble kernel in the new News+Museum experience is a discreetly placed, well-designed tissue dispenser.

One conclusion that could be drawn is that, inevitably, the demands of the design's aim for an emotional journey are insatiable, requiring a deeper artistic palette than the gestures that dramatization takes from drama. Thus the shift occurs towards tragedy, a form whose expressions can lay claim to grander themes of historical continuity, culture and identity, and where suffering contains a specific trajectory, that of catharsis. The designer's script would continue within the realm of poets, dramatists and composers,





Newseum Tissue Box in front  
of 9-11 Gallery. copyright:  
Fareed Armary

without a demand as to whose voice it is. In terms of the exhibition design, it makes sense, therefore, that the tissue dispenser offers a signal for catharsis—the museum's portable 'tragedy box'. But what kind of crying is proposed here?

Considering tragedy, neither of two poles of dramatic theory—the Brechtian and the Aristotelian—would have anything to do with simply eliciting crying. More to the point, the act of crying offers a multivalent sign, and as such it leads to an impasse in any sense. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle does not trust crying, as it is easily misused. There is, of course, 'catharsis' in the Aristotelian model, which can be defined as the purging of the emotions of pity and fear that occurs when we watch a tragedy. But in his terms, 'catharsis' is "in the strict sense to be understood as the positive social function of tragedy, more likely a definition of the function of tragedy and not of its emotional effects on the audience".<sup>17</sup>

The philosophy of catharsis plays an important role in the initial work of Sigmund Freud, which was influenced by Joseph Breuer and his related research. In this method, patients undergo hypnosis while the analyst looks for fragments of stories leading to the moment of an incident related to sexual tension. In theory, upon revelation of this moment, the act of crying offered a catharsis that would enable a permanent release. Freud would finally reject this search as too directed. His own research would later arrive at studying the unconscious or subconscious mind by analyzing dreams and leading his patients through conversations of which neither the patient nor the analyst knew where these were heading.

This philosophy of catharsis/crying did continue along other routes through World War II, arriving to intrigue American researchers who developed certain aspects of it. It corresponded to the interest in studying behaviour from many different, if often interrelated, fields of enquiry—whether by market researchers or psychologists, for example—connected to the figure of Wilhelm Reich. By 1970, the ultimate catharsis is introduced by Arthur Janov's landmark publication on primal therapy, *Primal Scream*, which makes it clear that everyday crying is not enough.

*"Screaming and crying are civilized out of us," Sidney Rose, a primal therapist and psychiatrist writes. We are forced to cut off our emotional reactions by parents and caretakers, and primal therapy allows the patient to "finish off old scripts to attain closure... to feel the emotions that were denied consciousness at the time [...] come to terms with his deepest emotions, those that he has struggled over an entire lifetime not to feel."*<sup>18</sup>

Of interest here is that the issue was not 'crying', but an understanding of the underlying scripts and the way in which they develop the outcomes, so as to avoid fulfilling the imposed script, the 'gest' that you perform without further consideration of how the context introduces and shapes that gest.

For Brecht, the social aspect of the gesture was manifested by the 'gest' within; a gest is, "at once gesture and gist, attitude and point [...] That a gesture is perceived by the subject as 'genuine' does not make it any less of a social and psychological abstraction, any less of a construction."<sup>19</sup>

Brecht leaves significant emotions unresolved, intending to force social action upon the audience. In contrast to the common understanding of catharsis, he states:

*"The rejection of empathy is not a result of a rejection of the emotions, nor does it lead to such. The crude aesthetic thesis that emotions can only be stimulated by means of empathy is wrong."*<sup>20</sup>

## NEWSEUM—NEW MUSE

If the Newseum is intended as an anomaly to the series 'museum', it also reveals what lies within that series. Consider 'museum' rooted in its origins as a temple to the Muses—in Greek mythology the patron divinities of the arts, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. The corresponding logic symbolizes human knowledge and culture in a space set aside for study and the arts, but as a temple it comes to imply establishing a division between sacred and profane. Centuries later, from the Enlightenment model onwards after the French Revolution, new political dimensions are layered onto the museum's previously implied meanings, dimensions of space, power and knowledge, which are also transmitted at the level of conduct, as implied scripts at work. In the setting of Washington DC, a new nation's capital, the space of which today is ordered by a variety of hardly co-existing alignments of statuary and symbols that mix pagan, Christian, non-Christian, classical mythic and secular symbols, the museums and libraries are established along the perspectives of Franklin and Jefferson, as important, purer affirmations of an Enlightenment model. I note all this just to lead to the fact that the institution of the museum—with the transmission of its knowledge, arts and culture in society—is bound to the civic space through modes of implied conduct expressed in a larger sense of an operating script. The shift I consider affecting



Newseum Tissue Box in front  
of 9-11 Gallery. copyright:  
Fareed Armalý

museums of history and culture after the 1970s is important in the sense of a change in policy, from the concern over things in a collection to the address of a new audience. It begins with the 'farming out' of this new set of demands to the newly devised field of exhibition designer, a new organizational perspective that introduces changes. In the prime examples, the design firm's additional focus occupies a role not unlike that of analyst to the museum directors and curators, but as one leading only along certain paths of discovery and thus outcomes. The implications are that the uncontrollable 'curiosity' that was once bound up with the museum is now banished, replaced by lessons experienced in familiar popular forms—three acts, etc. But curiosity takes with it a transgressive character, the unpredictability of discovery that is also required for learning. Artistry, as the interpretation of the designer, the virtuosic composition, embodies the 'voice' of the museum curator, yet is free of the institution. The museum history correspondence to its origins in a space of classical myths, which negotiates the scripting of sacred from profane through centuries and eras, is collapsed into one: the inward address to the ideal of an individual as transcendent subject. This reaches a point of dissonance, internal feedback at the point that News joins with Museum.

Thus it seems that from my initial path—to develop a set of reflections on the sense conveyed by the scripted space of exhibition design—I have inevitably ended up at the Newseum, stuck contemplating the dull metal surface of a well-designed Kleenex tissue dispenser, reflecting on the act of crying.

On the one hand, my arrival at this point offers some commentary regarding those memories that are so desired by the 'experience economy'. Additionally, I cannot help but note the remains of paths once outlined in 'three-act plays' that now resemble the enforced gestures of corporate decorum here.

On the other hand, while considering the results of this type of museum design philosophy at work, even the pleasure embodied in the most aesthetic, stunning or simply intelligent variations of its most self-contained examples, I won't be rewarded for believing myself simply to be 'outside' this design philosophy's ideology, as if to observe emotional pulls as scripted constructions only.

Since I have ended up circling around one of the smallest objects in the museum, whose placement associates it with a process of thresholds, of identification, of catharsis and tragedy, now, in some ways, desire has to allow in unpredictable routes with the offer of discovery. My attraction to the tissue dispenser is located somewhere within its

design, a liminal, borderline minimal state in the outline of a gesture that refuses any final direction. It draws on a kind of ambivalence that I feel within this experience-museum, and I take that as the offer for interruption to the act in which the tissue dispenser also serves as a cathartic prop. A temporary opening is formed, in other words, there at the tissue dispenser and here in my text, as the offer to return to my entrance point into the Newseum and to follow the same pathway, only differently. This time, I set a prohibition not to look towards the dispenser, while following my curiosity in negotiating the limbo between the aims of the designer's transcendence or transformation.

*'Newseum' openly displays its contemporary corporate/non-profit merger mindset. 'News' and 'Museum' repackaged as a new entity, in the same way that a 'brand' raises expectations of a different (and new) experience.* Through this act of compression, a unified set of institutional guidelines, languages, bylaws, perspectives and thematic approaches is formed, but also, inevitably, certain kinds of remainders too. Taken together, they structure, in the cohesive 'voice' of the new experience, the new institutional 'museum' space. This includes registering as forms of dissonance within the scripted interfaces of exhibition design. At these moments, the Newseum can be said to allow a glimpse of other agencies, where the notion of a museum comes to an end and something else begins to develop within it. It suggests a form within, a scripting method, secreted and structuring, that can be revealed through recoding the name itself: the merged 'Newseum' is an anagram of 'New Muse'.

From its appearance alone, the Newseum suggests the contemporary news media is the 'new muse' of society, correspondingly providing a museum-temple in their honour. Unsurprisingly, what occurs is something else: hubris. And taking its modern cues, it travels back up through the exhibition design, the supporting agency that aspired not only to be animate but to be the voice, to be constructed through the scripted narrative. Perhaps this is the actual 'voice': museum hubris. This, in turn, may in a perverse way be what the public pays to see today: a space for the dramaturgy of 'socialization', of conduct as well as of being conducted, that can only be introduced in the absented frameworks both of history and of the contemporary, current events as our lived history.

Yet, concurrently, if not paradoxically, what also emerges from precisely this hubristic combination is a 'New Muse'. It is constituted here from the space of remainders and gaps in the Newseum, as a dissonance that registers through the exhibition design's institutional 'voice'.

*Just as with the case of the failure of a definitive ideological expression in architecture, [these] ideological interpellations—within or without architecture—never provide, and never can provide, a definitive identity for a subject. They will always fail, precisely because what this hailing addresses, above all else, is the ambivalence, the ambiguity, the doubt, the excess, the trauma, the radical uncertainty of identification, but this failure, far from inhibiting the process of ideological identification, merely triggers further attempts, both by the subject and by the architecture, to fill the gap caused by this failure.<sup>21</sup>*

Between the museum, exhibition design philosophy and 'us' moving within, is the allowance to recuperate a space of knowledge that is shaped by the dissonance and markers in-between the categories of 'News' and 'Museum'. Moving within the Newseum's controlled maelstrom of scripted agencies, artefacts, info-educational events and experiences, the imperative is to look awry, to claim 'I' for a speculative, search-pattern set without institutional course correction. As the term 'muse' suggests, this should retain a sense of where knowledge and the arts meet—artistic practice—as redress to the applied 'overwhelmingness' of the design practice, particularly that which imagines social relations are assisted by the institutionalization of pathways. The Newseum emphasizes a dynamic of transition in trying to claim 'news' and 'museum' at the point they meet—in designed, immersive environments that speak in sentiments and conducts. The proposed 'New Muse' to be produced within is speculative, concerned with unfinishedness and process, paths as discovery that suggest knowledge, arts and institution, only different. Within the museum, it is a scripting of space understood as requiring no one 'who knows' to direct our paths, neither to a normative knowledge base, of history, nor leading to 'cure' or catharsis, neither subject transcendence nor transformation. Rather, it suggests relinking banished curiosity to the role of design, as the offer for new formulations of spatial narratives. These are set in terms of the institutional voice, where design and museum are a constant engagement in a process, an 'authoring', that keeps developing paths of analysis, through the equivalent of conversations, where neither the public as subjects nor the curators themselves know where they are leading.

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14. "[...] 24 hour global news capabilities put CNN in a strong position to cover the war and with CNN's graphics department geared for constantly breaking news, they were able to handle the demands of the war. Around the clock, they produced around 7,000 separate graphics [...] The CNN war logo used 3D type over a ground plan representing the theatre of war. 'Our red, gold and black logo was none too subtle, it expresses aggression, war and danger', explains CNN's Vice President of Graphics Ann Williams. It could also be said to have a period feel of war." Walker, Hayden, "CNN War in the Gulf", *TV ARK* website, available at [http://www2.tv-ark.org.uk/news/gulf\\_war.html](http://www2.tv-ark.org.uk/news/gulf_war.html), accessed 31 January 2012.
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Alexander Kluge

## Contemporary Ballads: The Narrative Power of the Catastrophe as seen through its Images

*Christine Eichel: Every day we are confronted with apocalyptic images—images, which never seem to change. Does each event of this kind have its own iconography?*

Alexander Kluge: I would draw a link to the reactor meltdown at Chernobyl and to 9/11. In New York it was the image of the woman covered in grime who glanced into the camera as she rushed past. To me, this was closeness. It is not the abundance of images, but the individual detail that is important.

*Which actual images do you have in mind?*

When discussing this with other people, it is those snapshots that remain etched in the memory: for example, the ship that was swept under a bridge and crushed by the tsunami; or the small, young boy standing as stoically as a Samurai warrior whilst his radiation levels were being monitored by a Geiger counter.

*These are highly distressing images. Why do they still exercise such a fascination over us and compel us to watch them so intensively?*

These images set in train a narrative process lying deep within us. They touch upon a primordial knowledge, which is then evoked by what we see. And we tell each other about this subsequently. The greater the disaster, the more intensively it is discussed: in the supermarket, in the taxi, at work, everybody is talking about it. This process corresponds in literary terms to a form of the ballad. Take, for example, Fontane's ballad "The Tragedy of Afghanistan", inspired by the military debacle suffered by the British in Kabul, or his ballad "John Maynard", which tells of a burning steamship on Lake Erie. This is the response of the poet to the public's interest in stories. The ballad contains the archetypal characters, particularly that of the hero. As such, the great iconographies of the disaster and the manner in which we discuss them are, at the same time, the ballads of our time.

*Can one describe this as a coping strategy?*

A story arouses feelings of empathy and compassion. This is an anthropological legacy that we carry within us. Man does not want disaster, he wants to survive. In evolutionary terms, we are an ancient creature, bearing within us a history stretching back across five million years. We have survived many catastrophes and have experience in finding solace. Our cells are smarter than our intellect. Unconsciously, we seek a balance. Or, to paraphrase Goethe, Man is not just *Homo sapiens*, he is *Homo compensator*, an expert in achieving equilibrium. For we strive for this equilibrium, this harmony.

*Does that mean we still look for the good even amidst the carnage?*

Yes, and we do that because we have stored within us tales of disasters such as the burning of Troy. These only appear to be myths, for they form the bedrock of our experiences. We tell each other of events using such metaphors. We see the boat battered by the flood wave listing heavily to the side, as people cling on to the keel. It is the image of the *Titanic*—only much more concrete and closer. This image is re-activated within us and generates both fear and the impulse to try to rescue. Particularly when we see the brave young lad trying to hide his fear, this stimulates in us the desire to restore equilibrium.

*Do we then interpret some images as symbols of hope?*

This takes place intuitively. We are so surprised and overwhelmed by the images that our intellect can no longer interpret them. The intensity and range of our emotions preclude that, and consequently new interpretations emerge. An example of this is the boat stranded on the roof of a house—the archetypal Noah's Ark, which came to rest on Mount Ararat.

*Does this also apply to you personally?*

I seek solace instinctively. This comes from my mother's side. Once, after a terrible night of bombing, she said next morning, "How comforting that the sun rises again". Something always remains that cannot be destroyed.

*At the same time, we are astonished at the stoicism with which the Japanese are confronting the disaster. In Europe one can imagine that a similar event would have triggered mass panic...*

I regard that as a fallacy. As a child I witnessed the bombing of Halberstadt. Of course, we were afraid, but the adults still behaved calmly. And we children adopted the same attitude. In the face of such disasters, people develop a remarkable composure. I can still remember how, after the bombing, I took my sister's hand and, without any feeling of panic, started walking through the burning city in the direction of the public baths, because the water in the pool would form a barrier from the flames.

*So the differences in mentality are not so vast?*

This attitude is embedded in all societies with a feudal tradition. Master and servant strike a deal: loyalty for loyalty. That is why the hero of the Japanese Samurai fables finds his counterpart in the figure of the Frenchman Roland or in the German hero Wieland, the blacksmith. These mythical heroes embody virtues such as courage, mutual support, reliability and a certain stubbornness. This stoical calmness is a consequence of deeply-rooted structures of solidarity, in which no one tries to gain an advantage at the expense of others, but acts with composure and consideration. The current disasters tie into these historic traditions.

*How is the media changing at present?*

I've noticed that the tabloid press has become more serious. Now is not the time to run stories on some A- or B-list celebrities. The focus is set more strongly on telling stories—particularly in the tabloids.

*Could one describe that as cathartic?*

In extreme cases, yes. Disasters purge the brain. It seems as if Nature wants to teach us something.

*Does our relationship to Nature change in view of its destructive power?*

This could be observed during the epic natural disaster of the eighteenth century, the Lisbon Earthquake. At the time Voltaire wrote, "We must declare war on Nature". This Enlightenment figure held that neither God nor Nature were entitled to instigate such a massacre. According to Voltaire, they represent, as it were, a violation of the constitution and our human rights. Today we must once again ask ourselves how we will deal with Nature in future. Most certainly not by trying to dominate it. We must develop humility before the elemental forces of Nature.

*What are the political consequences of this?*

There are two types of disaster: those that leave us helpless and demoralized, and those from which we can learn. Over the centuries, for example, the Dutch have had bitter experience of the power of water. They have developed technologies for dam building and are able to protect themselves permanently—a self-confident relationship with the elements. However, when a population can, for example, no longer safely control its nuclear energy, then the disaster is waiting to happen. And when that population's efforts no longer suffice we must retreat.

*Do you have a symbolic image for that in mind?*

It is the picture of the 50 technicians and engineers who were withdrawn from the reactor in Fukushima due to the extremely high radiation levels (50 workers have since returned to the site). Then something remarkable happened: they bowed towards the cameras. It was a farewell. This was the moment in which an entire scientific discipline declared itself bankrupt.

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*Translated from the German by John Rayner.*



## Cluster III: Mythus

## C. Designing Myths in Exhibiting and Media Practices

All images © Bill Viola

Bill Viola

*The Greeting*, 1995

Video/Sound Installation

video projection on large

vertical screen mounted

on wall in darkened space;

amplified stereo sound.

Production Photo: Kira Perov













Bill Viola

## The Greeting

Inspired by Pontormo's Mannerist painting *The Visitation* (1528–1529), *The Greeting* is a video image sequence projected onto a screen mounted to the wall of a dark room. Two women are seen engaged in conversation. Industrial buildings are visible behind them, aligned in a strange perspective within a barren urban background. As the two women are talking, they are interrupted by a third woman who enters and approaches them. As they prepare to greet her, it becomes apparent that one of the women knows her quite well, the other less so or perhaps not at all. A slight wind comes up and the light subtly shifts as the new woman arrives to greet the one she knows, ignoring the other. As the two embrace, she leans and whispers something to her friend, further isolating the other woman. With an underlying awkwardness, introductions are then made and pleasantries exchanged between the three.

Presented as a single take from a fixed camera position and projected in a vertical aspect ratio more common to painting, the actions of the figures are seen in extreme slow motion. An original event of forty-five seconds now unfolds as an elaborate choreography over the course of ten minutes. Subtle aspects of the scene become apparent. The unconscious body language and nuances of fleeting glances and gestures become heightened and remain suspended in the viewer's conscious awareness. Minor shifts in light and wind conditions become central events. At times the background becomes foreground, and other figures are seen in the darker spaces behind the central figures, engaged in unknown activities. The geometry of the walls and buildings appears to violate the laws of optical perspective, and this, together with ambiguities in lighting, lends a subjective character to the overall scene. In the end, none of the figures' actions or intentions are explained or become apparent. The precise meaning of the event remains in circulation as an ambiguous, speculative gesture.



Yana Milev

## Cluster IV: Techne

In Book 2, Clusters II to IV set the foundation for an expanded concept of design; this is important with constituting Design Anthropology and its branches. As it is presented here, Cluster IV conveys the third cornerstone of an expanded concept of design in the idea of *Techne* as the root of an *In/Human Culture*.

Here, the discourse on cultural techniques and cultural achievements, as well as on theories of knowledge, crafts, the artificial and distinctions, is based on questions regarding the *Gestalt* character of the creation processes of culture and machines; in the broadest sense, these are bound to the pair of concepts termed human/inhuman. Since culture is not static, but rather can be equated *per se* with genealogical and systemic processes, cultural acts are self-creating acts that result from processes—autopoieses and cyberpoieses. We are therefore investigating the *Gestalt* character of autopoietic systems and cultural zones in a human and inhuman extension, of people, groups, spaces, languages, machines, cyborgs—of anthropotechnics. This debate on the founding of an expanded concept of design on the basis of the third cornerstone is located in the fields of anthropology and in the cognitive sciences and neurosciences in the broadest sense, as well as in the fields of historiography, the theory of science, philosophy and aesthetics. This is what *Techne* stands for.

Jean-François Lyotard coined the term 'inhuman' at the beginning of the 1990s, setting in motion the transition to postmodern knowledge by declaring the blind spot of the inhuman to be a permanent aspect of the human condition. The inhuman does not have to be adapted; it is inherent to man. Lyotard thus dropped a bomb in the cognitive, media and cyber sciences. For an understanding of cultural techniques in the sense of the *conditio in/humana*, the structure of this chapter is oriented towards the following: Bruno Latour and Madeleine Akrich's arguments; Jean-François Lyotard's concept of the inhuman; Peter Sloterdijk's concept of anthropotechnics and the inhuman in the human park, answering Heidegger's 1946 letter on humanism; Heidegger in his 1956 lecture at the TU Darmstadt, in which he suggests that we reconsider the essential anthropotechnics of constructing, living and thinking in the post war era; and Michel Foucault's so-called techniques of the self and biopolitics, which are researched and expressed in his eminent *Gesamtwerk*.

The contributors to this cluster offer their input from the cognitive sciences and neurosciences and communicate the aspect of immersion in—or embodiment of—virtual surroundings in the mirror of cultural techniques. Input also comes from biological and cybernetic anthropology, as well as from ontology and the media sciences. In this fourth cluster, the phenomenological character of cultural techniques such as mimesis, mimicry, reproduction, replication or simulation and surveillance are sketched out as forms of knowledge that assist in the constitution of social fields, identifications and societies. In an anthropological sense, cultural techniques assume the existence of sociological instruments such as cooperation, collaboration and complicity, communication and negotiations. The expanded concept of design that is placed in this context connects to the arguments made in Clusters II and III of semiotic and mythic instruments that make the recognition of and access to social and societal behaviour in media and cyber machines possible. The interface and the plug-in become interesting for lifeworlds in virtual and cyber spheres. Given this discussion, the question of post-humanism or postmodernism in the context of an expanded concept of design will be posed anew.

I am especially grateful to the American anthropologist and behavioural researcher Michael Tomasello for his contribution. In his article on gestural conventions, Tomasello delivers an elementary building block for the processes of creating culture from the perspective of biological anthropology. We see the semiotic and semantic ensemble inscribed in gestural conventions that, temporarily or also genealogically, lead to knowledge and identifications. The contribution by Thomas Metscher is also of incalculable value for this volume. With his theory on the logos as the designing power of cultures, Metscher provides a quintessential formulation for the constitution of 'Design Anthropology'. Processes for creating culture are processes of production and—because they are aesthetic in their shaping power, as well as symbolic and signifying—are also design processes. Metscher investigates this act of synthesis from an ontological perspective. With the two theories—Tomasello's and Metscher's—a differentiated access to design knowledge becomes possible that relativizes the almost ideological status for design knowledge of innovation, progress and markets established in the design sciences.

With its focus on technological worlds of immersion, the contribution in Block B by the American bio- and nanotechnologist Timothy Lenoir, professor for new technologies at Duke University in North Carolina, emphasizes the aspect of cyber design and develops thoughts on singularity along positions represented by Andy Clark (*Natural-Born Cyborgs*), Terrence Deacon (*The Symbolic Species*), Donna Haraway ("Significant Otherness") and Friedrich Kittler (*Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*). A kind of futurology

is developed with the concepts of singularity and artificial intelligence in cybernetics and technology; it proposes the perspective of man as machine. This research perspective is presented here as being as inhuman as is conceivable. Rudolf Maresch presents the *virtus* as the transformed power of masculinity that produces virtuality as a medium of immersion. In addition to artificial intelligence, cyberspace has been established as the lifeworld of the conceivably inhuman.

The discourse on surveillance in Block C represents, above all, a thematically exhausted direction of cultural techniques in contemporary societies.

We still find the most convincing fundamental arguments from Michel Foucault and his 1970s works on biopolitics. In conjunction with Lenoir's contribution on the sensualization of technology or, *vice versa*, the technology of the *sensus*, today's excesses of psycho-technological and psycho-political control and self control can hardly be anticipated.

The contributions by Brian Holmes and Friedrich von Borries communicate the bizarre character of dystopian designs and cultural techniques. The visual essay by Mikael Mikael introduces the psycho-political component of *angst* that stands as a product at the end of a long chain of cultural techniques and lays siege to daily life (in the media).

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#### **A: Knowledge**

*Michael Tomasello*

*Thomas Metscher*

*AOBBME (VE)*

#### **B: Immersion/Virtus**

*Rudolf Maresch*

#### **C: Cognition/Cyber**

*Tim Lenoir*

#### **D: Surveillance**

*Bureau d'Etudes (VE)*

*Brian Holmes*

*Friedrich von Borries*

*Mikael Mikael (VE)*

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Michael Tomasello

## Gestural Conventions

Most of what makes human communication so powerful is the psychological infrastructure that is present already in species-unique forms of gesturing such as pointing and pantomiming. Language is built upon, and relies totally upon, this infrastructure. Without this infrastructure, communicative conventions, like *gavagai*, are only sounds, signifying nothing.

Whereas pointing and pantomiming may be considered 'natural' communication because they direct attention and imagination in ways that all humans can understand among one another, even with no previous contact, 'conventional' communication uses arbitrary signs, and these require shared social learning experiences among all the members of the group (who all know, in principle, that they share these learning experiences). And this highlights a key theoretical point. Communicative conventions are defined by two separable characteristics.<sup>1</sup> First and most critically, we all do something in the same way because that is the way everyone is doing it (and we all know this together): it is shared. Second, we could have done it differently if we had wanted to: it is, at least to some degree, arbitrary. But arbitrariness is a relative notion and could indeed be seen on a continuum. Are certain obscene gestures 'arbitrary', or are they iconic representations of real actions? Many such gestures were at one time iconic, becoming more arbitrary over historical time—but they were conventional, in the sense of shared, throughout. In any case, our proposal here will be that first came shared conventions and then there was a kind of 'drift to the arbitrary' over historical time. In this view, the most arbitrary forms of conventional communication—that is, linguistic communication in the vocal modality—could never have evolved *de novo*, but had to have evolved from, or by overlapping with, more naturally meaningful gestural conventions.

### THE DRIFT TO THE ARBITRARY

Our model at this point, before the advent of communicative conventions, might be something like a modern-day, 12- to 14-month-old prelinguistic human infant: communicating regularly by pointing and occasionally using iconic gestures when pointing is not feasible. Perhaps combinations of these were at some point possible as well, such as pantomiming an antelope while pointing to the out-of-sight location where it is presumably grazing.

For the evolution of language, iconic gestures are especially important, as they involve symbolic representation, typically of displaced referents. Elsewhere we have provided evidence that in children's development linguistic symbols supplant not pointing, but iconic gestures. Nevertheless, iconic gestures, like pointing, have communicative limitations as well, especially as compared with language. If I pantomime for you the act of digging to suggest to you, a novice, what you should now do (assuming you understand it as a communicative act), comprehension relies to some degree on your familiarity with digging in general and your assessment of what is needed now in the current situation. If I could simply tell you what to do with a conventional language, it might still depend on your past experience and your current assessment of the current situation to some degree, but much less so. But, of course, communicative conventions rely on a previous common history of social learning, so it is also fair to point out that when we do not share that social learning history—as, for example, when two people who speak different languages attempt to communicate—iconic gestures actually are superior to conventional communicative devices, which are useless in this situation.

In any case, human groups at some point went beyond iconic gestures that needed to be invented anew on every occasion and moved to communicative conventions. Conventions are ways of doing things that are somewhat arbitrary—there are other ways they could be done—but it is to everyone's advantage if everyone does it in the same way, and so everyone just does what everyone else is doing because that is what everyone is doing.<sup>2</sup> This arbitrariness means that one cannot invent conventions on one's own. One can invent communicatively effective iconic gestures, but arbitrary communicative conventions require that they be 'shared', so that everyone can rely on everyone else in the group knowing how the convention is used communicatively—which is obviously, again, at least a partial product of recursive mindreading. We have argued elsewhere that the form of social learning required here is not just imitation, but role reversal imitation, in which each initiate to the convention understands that she can use the convention toward others as they have used it toward her and vice versa—so that both producer and comprehender roles are implicitly present in both production and comprehension.<sup>3</sup>

But we are still left with the problem of how conventions get started in the first place. Invoking a process of explicit agreement—as in various kinds of social contract theories—is not really a viable option, as agreement presupposes an already existing means of communication, more powerful than the one to be invented, in which to formulate the agreement. But among organisms who already possess the cooperative communicative infrastructure we have laid out here, and who are also capable of collaboration

and role reversal imitation, conventions can arise ‘naturally’ as a result of a combination of shared and unshared experiences. Here is the kind of scenario that must have occurred at the dawn of arbitrary communicative conventions. First came some kind of cooperative iconic gesture. For example, perhaps a female of the genus *Homo* wishes to go digging for tubers. To get others to come with her, she pantomimes digging for them in exaggerated fashion in the direction in which tubers are normally found. The cavemates understand this gesture naturally; that is, they understand that this digging gesture is intended to depict a real instrumental action of digging. It is possible that some of them might then learn this gesture from her, by role reversal imitation, thus creating a shared communicative device that is conventional in the sense of being shared, and at least partially arbitrary in the sense that other gestures for this same function could certainly have been used.

But now let us assume the following extension of the scenario. Some individuals not familiar with digging, perhaps children, observe this ‘Let’s go digging’ gesture, and for them the connection between the ritualized digging gesture and the act of digging for tubers is opaque (though they do see that it is intended to be communicative); they think it is just intended to initiate leaving generally. They might then imitatively learn the gesture to initiate leaving (for something other than digging) on some future occasion—so that the original iconic grounding of the gesture is now completely erased. (This is not unlike the way that some motivated linguistic forms, such as metaphors, become opaque [‘dead metaphors’] across historical time as new learners are not exposed to the original motivation.) One can possibly imagine in addition some kind of general insight at some later point that most of the communicative signs we use have only arbitrary connections to their intended referents and social intentions, and so, *voilà*, we can, if we want, make up new arbitrary ones as needed.

Another important outcome of this process is a kind of standardization of signs. That is, when iconic gestures are motivated, ‘the same’ action or event is typically depicted in different ways depending on context; for example, opening a door is pantomimed in one way, whereas opening a jar is pantomimed in another. This is typical of individually created home signs, for example.<sup>4</sup> However, as the iconicity becomes opaque for new learners, the possibility arises for a stylized depiction of opening that is highly abstract and resembles no particular kinds of opening with particular objects. This is typical of many signs in conventionalized sign languages, and of course opens the way for the totally arbitrary and abstract signs characteristic of the vocal modality.

The first uses of communicative conventions were presumably as holophrases. This term has been used to mean different things,<sup>5</sup> but here we simply mean a one-unit communicative act. But actually, from the communicative point of view, even in this simplest of cases, there is more than this going on. First of all, as should be clear from our previous arguments, the meaning conveyed by a one-unit utterance may be as complex as you wish—depending on the joint attentional context within which it is used. A single unit in the communicative signal says nothing about the complexity of what is communicated, as what is communicated depends not only on what is in the communicative signal explicitly, but also on what is in the common ground implicitly. The second important consideration is that holophrases actually have two components. The communicative act always comprises both an attention-directing, referential aspect and a potential expression of motive. And so, if I want you to give me some water, I might say “Water”, with a demanding intonation, whereas if we are walking down the sidewalk and I want to warn you of a puddle, I might say “Water!” with a surprised and warning tone of voice and/or facial expression. The holophrase, just like the pointing gesture, thus always has these two components—reflecting reference and motive—even if in some contexts the motive is assumed and so not expressed with any distinctive tone of voice or facial expression. The fact that, from a functional point of view, even holophrases are inherently composite might be seen as a kind of initial wedge into grammar.

The move to communicative conventions is thus, paradoxically, a natural one. No one intends, certainly not initially, to invent any conventions. Communicative conventions happen naturally as organisms who are capable of role reversal imitation and who already know how to communicate in fairly sophisticated ways—cooperatively, with gestures—imitatively learn one another’s iconic gestures. Then individuals who are not privy to the iconic relation observe the communicative efficacy of the gesture and use it on that basis only, without any iconic motivation—at which point it has become, for these new users, arbitrary. This is what has been called a “process of the third kind”, a sociological result of human intentional actions, but not something that any one person actually intended.<sup>6</sup>

## THE SWITCH TO THE VOCAL MODALITY

We have so far remained fairly neutral about whether the earliest communicative conventions—after nonconventional pointing and pantomiming—were in the gestural or the vocal modality. But, actually, the first communicative conventions absolutely could

not have arisen in the vocal modality, at least not given the starting point of nonhuman primate vocalizations. There are two essential points.

First, nonhuman primate vocalizations are tethered quite tightly to emotions and so are not produced intentionally. Like almost all animal communication, they are essentially 'coded' communication, in the sense that individuals are born producing species-specific vocalizations and reacting to them in species-typical ways. Mother Nature has left almost no room for intentionality, cooperation or inferences, beyond recipients associatively learning what often happens in conjunction with a vocalization (e.g., leopards tend to appear with certain bird alarm calls). And so for vocalizations to participate in intentional and ultimately cooperative communication, vocalizing individuals would first need to gain intentional control over them.

Human beings did, of course, at some point gain control over their vocalizations. But this brings us to the second problem. Vocalizations are not as good a medium for referential communication as are action-based gestures. Thus, in terms of attention directing, it does not come naturally to any primates, including humans, to direct the attention of others by vocalizing to external targets. Indeed, what primates do naturally upon hearing someone vocalize is locate the vocalizer himself and identify his emotional state, and perhaps in some circumstances look around to locate the cause of his emotional state. What comes naturally to some primates, namely humans, is to direct others' attention visually in space through some form of action, such as looking or pointing, based ultimately on the tendency of all primates to follow the gaze direction of others. In terms of directing imagination to absent referents, nonconventionalized vocalizations are again extremely limited. We might mimic some environmental sounds associated with important referents and so indicate them indirectly (e.g., the sound of a leopard—or a sound mimicking my normal emotional reaction to leopards), but again this would seem much less natural and productive than action-based pantomiming in the visual channel.

An interesting exercise might be to imagine two groups of young children who have never before communicated with anyone. Each is isolated on its own desert island, *Lord of the Flies*-style. One group of children has their mouths bound with duct tape and the other has their hands tied behind their backs. (Apologies to all Human Subjects committees everywhere—I promise that the children are otherwise very well taken care of and that their parents have given informed consent before their bondage.) What kinds of communication might arise in each of these two groups? Well, we actually

know quite a bit about what might happen in the case of the children unable to use their mouths, because deaf children born to parents who do not know any sign language actually develop with their parents and siblings quite sophisticated systems of action-based gestures that use pointing and pantomiming, so-called home sign.<sup>7</sup> And if such children come together later, they develop even more sophisticated, conventionalized gestural sign systems with grammatical properties (as in Nicaraguan Sign Language). In the case of the children unable to use their hands, we do not know what would happen, of course. But it is difficult to imagine them inventing vocalizations on their own to refer the attention or the imagination of others to the world in meaningful ways—beyond perhaps a few vocalizations tied to emotional situations and/or a few instances of vocal mimicry. This is because humans have no natural tendencies in the vocal modality—analogue to following gaze directionally in space or interpreting actions as intentional in the gestural/visual modality—to serve as natural starting points. And so the issue of conventionalizing already meaningful communicative acts never arises. Incidentally, my own guess is that the children with their hands tied would probably end up trying to direct attention with their eyes and/or heads and to pantomime with their bodies.

The point of this fanciful, if perhaps a bit grotesque, exercise is simply to underscore that, given the nature of the vocal medium, and especially its functions in the lives of primates in general, it is very difficult to even imagine the evolution of meaningful, human-like, cooperative communication—much less communicative conventions—exclusively in the vocal modality. But it is not difficult at all to imagine this happening in the action domain. Indeed, we do not need to imagine it because, as noted, it sometimes does happen with deaf children born in special circumstances (there are also a number of well-documented cases of adult humans in special circumstances, such as noisy factories or for communication among different linguistic communities in such activities as trade, inventing gesture sign systems).<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the fundamental reason underlying this difference is that, for primates in general and human beings in particular, we automatically follow gaze direction and we automatically see behavioural actions as intentional and inherently meaningful, including when they are directed to us. If the essence of human communication is its intentionality, then human action is the ultimate source of its meaning. It is not that this could not conceivably happen in the vocal modality in some other organisms; it is just that, given how vocalizations work in primates—especially their close tie to emotions and their tendency to draw attention to themselves, their source, not to external referents—it is almost inconceivable.



And so, to get to human cooperative communication, in all its cooperative peculiarities, we must start with an action-based infrastructure. This must be based ultimately on the human propensity for gaze following, for pointing directionally to induce gaze following, and for interpreting the actions of others in intentional terms (and also on collaborative actions as the main source of the cooperative infrastructure). So the question naturally arises: why did humans end up switching to the vocal modality? When humans today communicate, they most often use both language and gesture, but language does most of the referential work (perhaps in combination with pointing) and gestures supplement this with imagistic signs conveying information not easily codified in language.<sup>9</sup>

However, there is no doubt that vocal language is predominant and even has a grammatical dimension (and sometimes a written version), which naturally occurring gestures do not. How did the vocal modality assume such pre eminence?

In the history of thought on this question, there has been no shortage of hypotheses, as all of the classic gesture origins theorists have had something to say on the matter. One could thus posit, for example, the superiority of the vocal modality because: it enables communication at a longer distance; it enables communication in dense forests; it frees the hands so that one may be communicating and manually manipulating things simultaneously; it frees the eyes to be scanning for predators and other important information while communication is taking place aurally; and on and on. Any or all of these may have played a role. What we would simply like to contribute as an additional possibility here is that communication in the vocal modality is more public than communication in the gestural modality. In discussing primate communication elsewhere, we noted that primate vocalizations are broadcast indiscriminately, so that everyone nearby hears them, and that gestures are directed to individuals. Having gone through a period of using gestures to direct communicative acts to individuals, the switch to the vocal modality might have meant that communicative acts are still directed at individuals—and indeed the communicative intention may be seen as a metasignal for communicating that this is ‘for you’—but at the same time the vocal medium enables anyone nearby to eavesdrop, as it were (this being preventable only by special acts such as whispering). This means that vocal acts are by default public and so are relevant for reputation-making and the like.

Finally, our proposal for how the transition came about more specifically is that in the beginning the earliest vocal conventions were emotional accompaniments, or perhaps added sound effects, to some already meaningful action-based gestures—or at least some already meaningful collaborative actions. There was thus at least some redun-

dancy, at least from the point of view of the recipient, in what the communicator was attempting to communicate with the gestures and the vocalizations. As humans gained more voluntary control over their vocalizations, they could have also used some vocal icons (e.g., making the sounds of a leopard), though like visual icons those could only have arisen after the emergence of the Gricean communicative intention. But at some point, in some situations, the vocalization came to be functional on its own—perhaps under pressure to communicate at longer distances or for the communication to be in the public space, and so forth.

As one example, an especially interesting class of words universal in all languages, is that of so-called demonstratives, which are often accompanied even today by pointing. In English, these are words such as *this* and *that* or *here* and *there*. The special nature of these words may be seen (as Wittgenstein first noted in *Philosophical Investigations*, 1953) by thinking about how children might learn them. For words such as nouns and verbs we may, given the appropriate joint attentional frame, point to something and name it for a child and she will learn the name. But how might we use pointing to teach children the words *this* and *that* and *here* and *there*? The answer is we cannot really. How does one point at *that* or *there*? The problem is that if we point to something in an attempt to teach these special words, the pointing is both part of the ostensive act intended to teach (to direct attention to the appropriate referent) as well as the meaning itself—a peculiar situation that, miraculously, does not seem to confuse children at all. They must in some way understand the redundancy involved. In any case, demonstratives are clearly special because they are present in all known languages; they almost always embody a spatial component of distance from the speaker (as in *this* versus *that*); they are very often accompanied by pointing gestures; and they in all cases seem to be primitive, as they do not derive from other types of words.<sup>10</sup> And so demonstratives may be the most basic communicative acts in the vocal modality—they are often used quite early in development by infants—quite plausibly because of their redundancy with the pointing gesture.<sup>11</sup>

Iconic gestures, of course, contain more referential specificity in the communicative act itself than do pointing gestures. Thus, without context, pointing to an animal running past could be intended to refer to almost anything, whereas pantomiming running or pantomiming a rabbit—while still fundamentally indeterminate without common ground—narrows things down quite a bit. I can only point and intend to indicate a rabbit that is not currently perceptible in very special circumstances, but I can pantomime an absent rabbit with the same intention quite easily. Iconic gestures are typically used for two basic functions: (i) to indicate an action and (ii) to indicate an object associated

with the enacted action (or, less often, the object depicted in a static display). We may then posit that the elements of language that correspond to iconic gestures are the referentially contentful words such as verbs (prototypically for actions) and nouns (prototypically for objects). On almost everyone's account, verbs and nouns are the most fundamental types of content words in a language, as they are the only two classes that are plausibly universal, and most of the other types of words in a particular language can be shown to be historically derived from nouns and verbs (or else demonstratives).<sup>12</sup> The proposal would thus be that initially humans used some vocalizations, while pantomiming actions or objects in a naturally meaningful way. These became conventional as others learned the vocalizations socially, conventionally, making the pantomime unnecessary—with vocalizations having some of the advantages listed above, such as freeing the hands, long-distance communication, making things public, and so forth.

In terms of our quasi-evolutionary story, then, we may go all the way back to ape attention-getter and intention-movement gestures, then move through the human use of pointing and pantomiming as natural communicative acts (based on new skills and motivations of shared intentionality), and end in human communicative conventions for directing attention (demonstratives) and inducing the recipient to imagine intended referents (content words such as nouns and verbs and their derivatives).

ape attention-getters > human cooperative pointing > demonstratives and deictics in language  
ape intention-movements > human iconic gestures > content words (nouns, verbs) in language

These two lines of correspondence simply reflect that in action-based gestures there are really only two things that humans can do to refer others' attention to things, at least naturally: we can direct their visual attention in space (as in the top row) or we can do something to evoke absent objects and events in the imagination (as in the bottom row). Human linguistic conventions simply provide us with special ways of doing these things based less on current common ground and more on a shared history of social learning. We have not focused at all here on asking when particular things happened during human evolution; we have chosen, rather, to focus simply on the ordering of events. But one additional fact about human vocal-auditory competence is especially noteworthy. Recent genetic research has established that one of the key genes responsible for articulate human speech (the FOXP2 gene) came to fixation in the human population no more than 150,000 years ago with modern humans.<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to imagine any function other than articulate speech, as used in modern languages, for the incredibly fine-grained motor control that this gene seems to enable. And so this very recent

date of 150,000 years (right before modern humans started spreading out all over the globe) might be taken as indicating a point in human evolution where good articulators—who presumably facilitate the use of a vocal language—were at a competitive advantage. We are not concerned here about a specific timeline for all of this, and so for now the important point is simply that these genetic data provide additional evidence that humans began using the vocal modality as their major modality of communication only very late in the process.

## SUMMARY

The argument is simply that one cannot jump straight to conventional communication. When we visit a foreign country with a very different language, we can get lots of things done by the 'natural' communicative acts of pointing and pantomiming, especially in collaborative activities such as transporting something together or in institutionalized activities occurring in shops or railway stations, where common ground is solid. But we do almost nothing communicative in the vocal medium, other than express a few emotional reactions to things, and we basically never invent new vocal communicative conventions. We could theoretically invent new and arbitrary communicative conventions with our foreign friends even in the vocal modality, but only if there was a transition period in which these arbitrary devices were used redundantly with other communicative devices that were more naturally meaningful. Or perhaps, if there was a significant amount of time involved, arbitrary communicative conventions could arise among foreigners implicitly across a transmission chain in which the originators used naturally meaningful gestures and later learners reproduced that use without understanding its natural common ground. These are really the only two possibilities for the origin of communicative conventions, and they both involve an intermediate step of natural communication.

Our overall account, then, is an evolutionary sequence in which we go from (1) collaborative activities, to (2) 'natural' action-based cooperative communication (first within collaborative activities and then outside them), and then to (3) conventional communication—with perhaps some parallel developments in the latter two, as natural forms of communication began being conventionalized (and so became partially arbitrary) and also supplied a grounding for totally arbitrary vocal conventions.

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Thomas Metscher

## The Logos as Designing Power of Cultures

*Basic thesis:* human consciousness, understood in the sense of Marxist materialism, is part of the historical ensemble of social relations. Its genesis lies in the concrete (object-related) activity of human beings arising from the constraints of reproduction. It is materially present as language and has existence in practical life in everyday consciousness. It is a constitutive part of human labour. It exists in the form of a world-disclosing elementary logos, which is the condition of human reproduction as well as of cultural world-formation, as cognition, knowledge and understanding, in the basic forms of symbolic and conceptual thought, the historical types of rationality, the objective forms of religion, myth, art, science and philosophy. As social relation and institutional reality it has the character of ideology. It is a basic power of cultural production—*power of cultural design*—and thus builder of the human world. It is a self-reflexive agent: in contrast to animals, the human being is conscious of her/his consciousness. As ‘unity of dialectical reason’ (the synthesis of differences) it constitutes the concrete universal of the human species.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. WORLD-DESIGN AND SELF-DESIGN: THE CULTURAL PROCESS

The basic category of the cultural is human self-production, understood as an empirical fact: that humans, through their own activity and by means of materially objectifying this activity, develop genetically inborn potentials—latent capabilities<sup>2</sup>—that find expression and further development in a world of objects produced by human labour (that of ‘objective culture’). ‘Self-production’ is a complex fact (a *Sachverhalt* in Wittgenstein’s sense)<sup>3</sup> both philo- and ontogenetically: in relation to the history of the species as well as to that of individuals. The concept of ‘cultural design’ achieves a special meaning in this connection. The objective cultural world is a ‘design’ arising from the productive object-related activity of humans; a ‘design’ in a historically specific mode of cultural conditions finding expression in a special form and figure (shape) of a culture—Shakespeare’s ‘form and pressure of the times’, the *inner form* and *outer appearance* of an age (*Hamlet*, III.2). This form and figure of a time results from a constellation of determining factors in the centre of which stands the teleological activity of humans; teleological activity in the sense of conscious purposeful doing. In the core of this process, human self-formation takes place—the subject inwardly and outwardly finding form and figure—

on account of which cultural *world-design* is at the same time *self-design*: the ‘marking out’, or cultural sketching, of a figurative formation on a social-individual level in the concrete activity of human beings themselves. In this sense, world-design and self-design are part of the anthropological content of the cultural process.<sup>4</sup>

The real foundation of this process is social labour. Labour is the first motor of cultural formation with regard to its objective and subjective side. Its second motor is mimesis.<sup>5</sup> Labour and mimesis are forms of conscious life activity in which preconscious impulses are present (above all in mimesis). “Free conscious activity” or “conscious life activity”<sup>6</sup> as the fundamental generic characteristic of the human is the medium of synthesis of all formative factors that participate in the process of cultural self-production.<sup>7</sup> In this connection the logos—human consciousness—plays a key role in the process of cultural formation. It is a constitutive factor of material reproduction, of mimesis and work, a formative part in the ensemble of social relations. The ‘logos’ is therefore dealt with in more detail in what follows.

Culture as self-production is a process in time. It is *chronotopos*—a space-time relation (in the sense of a necessary organic relationship)—and as such a historical category. Culture, indeed, forms the substance of the historical process, if understood as a process of the “self-genesis of the human through human activity”.<sup>8</sup> The core category of the historical-cultural process, understood thus, is individuality, in a way that calls for saying: *individuality*—the individual as social being—is the product of culture; and in relation to the design-concept: *individuality is to be understood as the ultimate design of the cultural process*.

Furthermore, the process of such a formation is, as I have said, of an object-related nature. It runs via the vehicle of a dialectics of subject and object: the objectivization of human activity and the re-subjectivization of an objective culture. *The formation of the subject corresponds to the construction of a human world—self-design corresponds to world-design*. Individuality is a part of the historical ensemble of social relations. Thus an object-side of cultural formation corresponds to a subject-side, an objective to a subjective culture: a concrete world in which the essential human powers (the ‘energetic potential of humans’) manifest, articulate and develop themselves. Labour/industry, religion, science and art are the main social realms and institutionalized spheres in which the cultural formation of humans takes place. A further aspect is that of the *constitution of meaning*, ‘meaning’ being a core category of the cultural. Thus the constitution of meaning is a basic dimension of cultural formation. ‘Meaning’ therefore stands at the centre of the cultural-anthropological design-concept.

Ideological relations play a determining role in the formation of culture. In all known history, cultural relations are connected to ideological relations—culture never being independent of ideology.<sup>9</sup> Thus the design-concept has an ideological dimension—as a materialist-dialectical concept it should explicitly be understood in an ideological-critical sense. Ideological relations are determined by the structure of domination, property and power. They have a supportive (fostering, stimulating) or restrictive (suppressive) effect on the processes of cultural formation. In class societies, as a rule, they have a restrictive, subjugating function, for the majority of humans at least. Under such conditions, self-production is forced to articulate itself in forms of subjugation; indeed, for the majority of humans it is often only possible in acts of resistance. ‘Resistance’, therefore, is a key category in any developed Marxist cultural theory.<sup>10</sup> The concepts of *first* and *second culture* have their place in this context.

If the cultural process is to be understood as the history of a gradual progressive formation, it is not in the sense of a linear one, let alone in that of a teleologically determined progress. ‘Progress’ is understood rather in the sense of a spiral in which the previous is present in what follows. The cultural process is subject to a dialectics in which that which has been culturally achieved is never free from the possibility of destruction. It is exposed to the continuous possibility of a relapse to barbarity.

## 2. LOGOS: HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS. PREFATORY REMARKS

‘Logos’, as understood in this paper, is the core category of human social consciousness; ‘social’, because human consciousness never exists in a merely individual form but is always related to others—potentially to all humans—individuality having existence solely as a mode of sociability. This consciousness has, in a fundamental structural sense, a *self-reflexive character*, self-reflexiveness being the generic feature of humankind. In all its stages the logos is a self-reflexive agent. The human, as opposed to every animal, is principally aware of her/his consciousness. Human beings think with their “inner eye”, knowing that they are thinking about themselves.<sup>11</sup> One could also speak of an ‘inbuilt mirror’ in front of which processes of consciousness run their course, in as far as they completely belong to humans—of the self-reflection or internal self-reference of human consciousness, self-reflection, in this sense, being its basic structure.<sup>12</sup> *In the process of thinking I reflect myself in an inbuilt looking-glass. I know that I think while I think and I know that I think.*

‘Logos’ is chosen here as a basic concept of human social consciousness, as this word in its historically evolved meaning is more comprehensive and at the same time more exact than any terminological equivalent in German or English. Language, speech, the ability to speak, the power to think, thought, reason, counsel, conversation, calculation, collecting, organization, proportion—all are assembled in this one word, ‘logos’. The term developed as a philosophical concept out of everyday speech, and in so doing took on the specific meaning of rational (conceptual) thinking and speaking. As such, logos appears as the explicit opponent to myth, opinion (*doxa*) and perception (*aesthesis*). Indeed, with Heraclitus it takes on the character of a basic metaphysical-cosmological concept, giving expression to a logocentric view of the universe. From here, the path to the logos-concept of the *New Testament*—as “the word of god”—has been clearly mapped out.<sup>13</sup>

The word’s semantic field thus stretches from the language of praxis to various levels of theoretical language. We must in fact distinguish between three basic levels of meaning of the logos concept. The first and oldest level is centred in acts of lingual-mental understanding, of the cognitive discovery and mapping-out of the world and of communicative interchange through language. ‘Logos’ here means, in the widest sense, the ability to think, to speak, to open up the world through thought and language. Speech, discussion and conversation are part of this process. On a second level, logos refers to strictly conceptual thinking. Logos here has the meaning of ‘theoretical concept’, of scientific-philosophical rationality and (in this sense) reason. A third level is centred in the metaphysical-theological idea of logos as a cosmological principle, as world-reason or God. Here the concept of logos is the medium of metaphysical world-interpretation. In relation to these three levels I speak of a *primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary* logos concept. What these levels have in common lies in the semantic field of thought/ability to think (power of thinking), language (word, speech, statement, report), reason, lawfulness and proportion, to which the logos concept directly or indirectly refers on all three levels. Attached terms here are consciousness, recognition, knowledge (*episteme*). The term ‘*epistemic logos*’ is introduced in relation to this field of meaning.

The *primary* concept of logos stands at the centre of this study’s consideration, and with it the world-disclosing function of consciousness and language—language as the sensual existence of consciousness and the medium of understanding, communication, as reservoir of knowledge and living memory of human experience. Attached to this field of meaning is the concept of ‘elementary logos’. In this context, the *secondary* concept of logos is understood as a mode of the primary logos concept. Its meaning and le-



gitimacy in the precise, though narrow, sense of scientific—i.e. conceptual-theoretical—rationality (conceptual logos) nevertheless remains undisputed. It must be restricted, however, with regard to the concept of elementary logos. Alongside the conceptual logos, the symbolic logos must be placed, in the sense of a dialectical difference, as an epistemic figure of equal importance. The symbolic logos articulates itself in religion, myth and art. The *tertiary* meaning of logos—the logos as medium of world-interpretation and articulation of meaning with reference to the totality of human experience in the world—remains valid in the restricted form of materialistic worldviews, though outside the traditional grounds of metaphysical-theological assumptions. In its ‘secularized’ form it is the medium of the formation of worldview and ideology.

### 3. THE ELEMENTARY LOGOS

In the view put forward here, ‘logos’ in the basic sense is meant to be a logical substratum (or ‘foundation’) that backs up all historically given forms of rationality and knowledge. It constitutes the synthetic structure of human consciousness: the ‘unity of dialectical reason’—unity of dialectical reason because it deals with the synthesis of differences. Thus the basic patterns of dialectical thinking can be discovered on the ‘lowest’ level of this logos—in the material activity of human beings (the labour process).<sup>14</sup> As this logos, in the exact sense of the term, constitutes the logical substratum of all real and possible forms of human consciousness, I speak of the ‘elementary logos’ as this substratum. It is the *first universal* (concrete universal) of the human species in an anthropological-generic sense. This elementary logos is no abstract form that dwells in the heads of humans beyond real human living relations. It has its place in the centre of the *ensemble of social relations*,<sup>15</sup> and ‘ensemble of social relations’ means the coherent whole of human living activities, their concrete shape and social form in a comprehensive historical sense. The logos is a constitutive part of this ensemble, which, without it, would not be what it is. It emerges and develops, as a result of evolutionary processes, in the constraints of human reproduction. It manifests itself in human life activity. In labour and mimesis it emerges as elementary force of cultural formation—‘*power of cultural design*’.

The elementary logos is the cell of a plurality of forms of rationality and knowledge—the logical universe of historical reason. Conceptual thinking has its place here as much as symbolic thinking, knowledge as much as understanding and interpretation. ‘Cell’

means that the elementary logos is, to a great extent, capable of formation and development. As a productive force—power of cultural design—it is part of the ensemble of human productive forces, an acting ability that has its place in the concrete praxis of humans. It is accessible solely to genetic reconstruction, i.e., to reconstruction that goes back behind given forms of historical reason and inquires about that which lies at their basis.

The elementary logos is ‘recognizing’, world-discovering consciousness producing knowledge via cognition, cognition as world-discovery. It is the basis of the historic forms of rationality and of the universe of knowledge. In this capacity it is, more closely defined, *epistemic logos*.

### 4. THE EPISTEMIC LOGOS

Basic forms of the epistemic logos are *symbol* and *concept*—symbolic and conceptual thought. Myth, art and—in a specific sense—religion belong to symbolic thought, while science and philosophy belong to conceptual thought. Rationality appears in a variety of forms (types of rationality) that are determined historically and culturally and have to be described as differentials in this determination. Analogously, knowledge develops into a universe of forms to which belong everyday knowledge, mythical, religious, aesthetic and conceptual knowledge and, occupying a privileged position, language.<sup>16</sup> I use the term ‘episteme’ for the concept of knowledge employed here.<sup>17</sup> The types of rationality are historically determined forms of the organization of knowledge. Further categories belonging to the epistemic logos that are of fundamental importance are *understanding* and *interpretation* (world-interpretation): the basic categories of hermeneutics. *Cognition*, *knowledge* and *understanding* form the epistemic core complex. All these categories go back to the elementary logos. Understanding and interpretation/world-interpretation form levels of an increasingly organic and systematic character. World-interpretations crystallize in everyday world pictures (mythical, religious, aesthetic and theoretical), worldviews and ideologies. If understanding is an anthropological universal—i.e., a category to be ascribed to all levels of cultural formation, even the most primitive (most archaic)—then interpretations/world-interpretations presuppose developed forms of culture; indeed, they form the prerequisites for their gradual development. Myth, religion, art and science/philosophy are institutions or social systems in which acts of world-interpretation take place; in the developed stages of religion, art and theory they do so in the form of coherent worldviews. At the same time,

they constitute forms of ideology in the sense of socially determined consciousness. In this sense they always act as ideological forces in the context of rule (domination) and emancipation, subjugation and resistance. Understanding and interpretation stand in a necessary specific relationship to knowledge. They are dependent in their respective forms on the given historical level of knowledge. Not only are they based, together with knowledge, on the elementary logos, they cooperate with knowledge in the epistemic discovery: *the 'opening up' of the world for us*. Language obtains a privileged position in this connection. It forms the monadic core zone of the logical universe of which I speak: the zone in which the various aspects of the logos are crystallized. At the same time, it contains the entelechial potential of its practically unlimited development.

Epistemic discovery: the opening up of the world—disclosure of something 'closed' or 'hidden'—is the primary function of the epistemic logos. It is part of the cultural process, part of the formation of the human world. The epistemic opening up of the world has a key function here. The reality of nature becomes the world in which we live only when known, understood and interpreted: *the human world as reality for us*. The concept of epistemic discovery (opening up of the world) thus also belongs to the core of the cultural-theoretical design concept.

If we look at the history of human culture from its earliest forms, the epistemic opening up of the world uses a variety of instruments. One such instrument, the first to be named, is language (everyday language). The other two that are of anthropologically essential significance are symbol (symbolic thinking) and concept (conceptual thinking). The difference between both is centrally important to the considerations formulated here. Symbol and concept are two essential and fundamentally different forms of the logos that have coexisted from the earliest stages of civilization to the present. They fulfil distinct, irreplaceable functions. They are essential forms of human consciousness, standing in an opposition to each other that is charged with tension, still complementing one another.

One must thus distinguish between the symbolic and the conceptual (theoretical) logos as basic forms of the epistemic logos, the aesthetic logos being assigned to the symbolic. The symbolic logos is articulated in sensuous material, the conceptual in the form of categorical abstraction, ideally in schematic forms. The symbolic logos has the character of sensuous perception: the sensual manner of viewing things. It is in this sense aesthetic, image-forming, imaginative and frequently ambiguous. The conceptual logos aims at the clarity of cognition, the unambiguity of abstract-conceptual terms (Descartes' ideal of the "clear and distinct" recognition of things) and in this sense of

*theory*. Metaphor as the sensuous form of the concept forms a middle way between both. On the side of the symbolic logos stand myth, religion and art, on the side of the conceptual logos the sciences and philosophy—any form of theoretical thought. In the praxis of mental activity both forms of logos converge. In their characteristic shapings, however, they are clearly divided; indeed, they may articulate themselves as hostile opposites.

The decisive point of the conception developed here is the understanding that both—symbol and concept—are forms or 'figures' of the logos and thus compatible. It is only against the background of this principle of a common ground that the alterity and difference of the symbolic and conceptual logos, the historical variety and divergence in their appearances, functions and meanings, the plurality of their forms and figures, can be grasped and worked out in detail. From the basis of their common ground the venerable problem of the relationship of myth and logos, poetry and philosophy, which has plagued European thought since its pre-Socratic beginnings, may be solved. Myth and poetry too are forms of the logos in the sense of a world-discovering explanatory discourse, even though myth and concept have fallen apart in the course of historical development, even though the history of knowledge in European culture is to a large extent characterized by the predominance of the conceptual logos in conjunction with a devaluation of the symbolic-aesthetic logos. One can draw a line from Solon's phrase that "poets lie" to Hegel's epistemological devaluation of the arts in the system of the Absolute Spirit. But in this history, on the other hand, the opposite view exists—and has since Aristotle's *Poetics*—which regards the symbolic logos, in the field of art, as being principally truthful and on an equal footing with the conceptual logos.

## 5. THE CONCEPTUAL LOGOS

The *conceptual logos* aims at clear and distinct recognition, at knowledge that has been gained methodically and developed argumentatively and is thus capable of being critically questioned and scrutinized for systematicity and cohesion. Already in Ancient Greek usage the conceptual logos is distinguished by the "characteristic of verifiability".<sup>18</sup> Its aim of cognition is the recognition of the general/the universal, of rules and laws. Its form of cognition is categorical, abstract, schematic. It is the form of the *categorical or theoretical concept*. What is meant is the pure 'unsensuous' concept working with abstract terms, in contrast to the 'sensuous' concept embodied in symbolic/metaphorical language. Its ideal mode/form of cognition is science, and within it the natural sciences with their strictly empirical and/or mathematically oriented

methods. Ideally speaking, there is no room for the 'subjective' in science, unless this is the object of scientific research itself. Science is "de-anthropomorphizing"<sup>19</sup> in a constitutive sense. Its objects are to be grasped free of any possible subjective tinge. Only thus can rules and laws, can—ideally—*reality-in-itself* be grasped.

Science, in the most general definition, is "the social-politically institutionalized attempt, realized only collectively, to investigate what is the case in the world and why it is the case".<sup>20</sup> Its idea can be characterized by five regulative ideals: the ideal of truth, the ideal of explanation and understanding, the ideal of epistemic justification, the ideal of inter-subjectivity, and the ideal of the union of theory and praxis. According to the *ideal of truth*, scientifically articulated statements on facts in the world must correspond to these. The *ideal of explanation and understanding* means that science not only wants to state what is the case in the world but also wishes to explain and understand why this is so. To this belong questions as to the causes of single facts and questions as to the patterns, rules and laws according to which the objects and occurrences in the world are connected with each other. The *ideal of epistemic justification* demands that a scientific opinion be well-founded and thus stand the test of critical scrutiny in order to be regarded as true. The *ideal of inter-subjectivity* means that science is principally addressed to everyone and must be capable of being taught and learnt gradually. Scientific knowledge must be communicated in inter-subjective discourse and remain open to scrutiny throughout, meaning that scientific assertions must be clearly and distinctly formulated.<sup>21</sup> The *ideal of the unity of theory and praxis* means that scientific knowledge, arising from human praxis, should relate back to human praxis in its results: science does not (at least, it does not only) carry its meaning in itself, but should be useful for human existence in a pragmatic sense—from technical use to social cooperative planning and formation; again, this touches on the concept of cultural design—in the best instance serving "to alleviate the troubles of human existence", as Bertolt Brecht put it in *Leben des Galilei*. The highest goal of science is to change the world in the sense of improving the conditions of human living.<sup>22</sup>

## 6. THE SYMBOLIC LOGOS

In the exact meaning of the word, a symbol is something 'that has been thrown together'. Originally it was a sign agreed upon for recognition, frequently arranged between two parties in the form of an object broken into two halves. In the most general sense, symbol is a sensuous sign standing for an idea (or, to be more careful, a complex of

meaning) without being identical with it. The symbol, according to Goethe, transforms "the phenomenon into an idea, the idea into an image, in such a way that the idea in the image remains infinitely effective and unreachable, and even if expressed in all languages would remain inexpressible" (conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann, 17 January 1827). True symbolism is to be found where "the particular represents the general" (Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*). Sensuous presence and concreteness are the conditions of the symbolic sign: the independence of a supportive figure existing in its own right outside its symbolic function (such as a rose). Symbols are not bound to a particular material medium, but are possible in every such medium. Every material medium, including stone, sounds, colours—not only language—can become a bearer of symbolic meaning. Thus there exists no preference for a special medium in the concept of symbol.

The symbolic sign points to a complex of meaning that the concept is unable to exhaust or to articulate or (as in the early stages of culture) where conceptual thought is not yet available. Not only are a sensuous object and an idea 'thrown together' in the symbol, but various meanings are contracted in the idea, stretching from the rational to the emotive, from the conscious to the unconscious. The traumatic, the surreal, the imaginative, the fantastic, fear, longing, hope and dream find articulation in the symbol. The meaning of the symbol, as Goethe realized, is thus conceptually inexplicable ("*unausschöpfbar*"), as opposed to that of allegory, which is conceptually fully explicable. For this reason, even in the age of science the concept has never been able completely to oust, never mind replace, the symbol. The arts form the terrain for its development in the modern era. At the same time they are the mental form in which symbol and concept come together.

Symbolic representation has the character of 'showing'. This 'showing' has a threefold structure in its logical construction: that of *sign*, *object* and *meaning*. Let us take the symbol of the rose as an example. The word 'rose' serves as a sign for something double: the sensuous object—the flower 'rose' that is evoked by the word 'rose'—and the complex of meaning (the 'idea') to which the word 'rose' points via the object 'rose'. In the case of the rose the complexity of meaning is highly heterogeneous: it stretches from the medieval 'rose of heaven' (Dante's 'white rose', in the image of which the heavenly throng of angels appears to which "Christ became engaged with his blood") via the rose as symbol of love and its sensuous experience (Burns' "My love's like a red, red rose/That's newly sprung in June" or Goethe's "Heidenröslein") to the enigma of human existence (Rilke's "Rose, oh reiner Widerspruch, Lust,/Niemandes Schlaf zu sein

unter soviel/Lidern")<sup>23</sup> and through to the ironic withdrawal of the symbolic meaning of the rose with Gertrude Stein ("A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose"). If Goethe calls the symbolic idea "unreachable" and "inexpressible", he must have meant that this idea can be 'shown' through the symbolic sign—the 'image'—but cannot be dissolved in conceptual statement. If we accept this view we should consider if Wittgenstein's concept of 'showing' in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is appropriate for what the symbol achieves. 'Showing', with Wittgenstein, is the opposite of 'speaking'. "There is", he writes, "something that is unspeakable"—i.e., something that cannot be expressed in language, that cannot be conceptually formulated. This 'unspeakable', however, "shows itself". Wittgenstein calls it "the mystical".<sup>24</sup> We do not need to take on the connotations of the irrational here. We wish to place Wittgenstein on his feet and say: *the symbol shows what cannot be said*, that which cannot be directly stated in ordinary or conceptual language. The uniqueness and irreplaceability of symbolic articulation would thus be vindicated.

The symbol is the *logos that shows*. In this special property it is a form of thinking: a manner in which the logos reveals something, makes something known, connected with the concept in the form of contradiction. Only the unity of both constitutes—as a unity of opposites—the whole of human thought. In the 'showing' of the symbolic logos, representation and interpretation, cognition and knowledge converge. The symbol discloses: it opens up and interprets world relations.

Symbolic thought is the oldest form of human thinking. Only in a later phase of civilization, with the rise of science, does the concept appear at the side of the symbol (in the medium of language alone, we can assume, there are rich traces of conceptual thought reaching back to the early days of human civilization). Traces of symbolic thinking can be found in the earliest human cultures, such as Neolithic places of worship.<sup>25</sup> From archaeological evidence it seems reasonable to assume such places have had a symbolic significance. The theoretical investigations of Klaus Holzkamp are of crucial importance in this regard. He distinguishes between two elementary forms of symbol, the iconic and the lingual-discursive—image and language—both of which arise from human labour and have been integral parts in the process of reproduction of the human species from the earliest phase of its history.<sup>26</sup> Following Georg Knepler, an acoustic-musical symbol must be added as a third form.<sup>27</sup> The function these symbolic forms fulfil in connection with human reproduction and cultural constitution is not limited to secondary qualities of a merely imitative, passively reflecting activity. Rather, they accomplish the

achievement of basic world orientation. They organize psychic and social processes, place emotionality and cognition in a relationship, and act as media of the constitution of human world- and self-consciousness. Indeed, they are motors in the process of human self-production, of self- and world-design: of the cultural formation process of the species as a process of human self-genesis. In their totality (together with other factors such as gestural-mimetic acts, rites and ritual dances) they form the basis of the world of the arts: the art of language (poetry), the visual arts, music, dance, the theatre.<sup>28</sup>

The concept of symbolic thought suggested here must clearly be dissociated from the 'universalistic' concept of symbol proposed by Ernst Cassirer, which is founded on the view that the human, in an anthropological sense, lives "in a symbolic universe" and thus must be defined as an "animal symbolicum".<sup>29</sup> According to Cassirer, thought can only articulate itself in symbolic systems.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, symbolic activity is the prerequisite for the constitution of the human world, 'reality' being an internal function of the different symbolic systems. The distance to Cassirer has its ground not only in view of his latent Kantianism, which conceives reality merely as a construct of mental—that is, symbolic—activity. It is directed against a concept of the symbol that subjects the totality of mental manifestation to the symbolic and that is thus incapable of grasping internal differentiations of the human mind. Cassirer's symbol is like night, when all cats are grey. In contrast, the concept of symbol is used here in a limited and differentiated manner. Following Cassirer, myth, art and religion are understood as symbolic forms, but this by no means applies to all forms of culture. The concept is the dialectical opponent of the symbol and, together with the world of science assigned to it, forms an independent cultural universe beside and in connection with the universe of the symbol, to which myth, religion and art belong. Language, which Cassirer assigns to the symbolic forms, has a part in concept as well as in symbol. Language, indeed, could be defined as the intersection of the symbolic and the conceptual. And no matter how much social, political and ideological institutions make use of symbols, they can scarcely be allocated to the symbolic universe. They are the very real apparatus of power. The symbolic, as I understand it, is part of the cultural; it is one of its components, together with and different from the other components. It is a basic form of the epistemic logos, as is the concept, and as such it is a necessary part of human world construction (of 'world-design'). Only the interaction of differing forms, and within that interaction human reproduction as the basis of those forms, constitutes the historical totality of the human world—what Marx terms the "ensemble of social relations".

## 7. THE METAPHOR AS SYNTHESIS AND THE AESTHETIC LOGOS

In the analysis of the epistemic logos, and especially in the differentiation of its two basic forms, symbol and concept, it is necessary to make further distinctions. Language is the primary medium of articulation of the logos in human history. For the symbolic logos it is certainly characteristic that it articulates itself not only in language, but in a principally unlimited number of material media. The symbolic logos stretches from archaic stone settings to the metaphor as the midpoint between symbol and concept. On account of the variety of media for its articulation, the symbolic logos can be characterized as *aesthetic-sensual*, *image-forming* and *imaginative*: 'aesthetic-sensual' refers to its articulation in and outside the arts, 'image-forming' relates to the ability of visual-iconographic articulation in the widest sense, 'imaginative' to the dimension of fantasy and invention ('imagination').

Metaphor takes on a special meaning in this connection. It is the privileged place where the symbolic logos meets the conceptual logos. Symbol and concept come together here. Thus it marks the transition of the symbolic to the conceptual, just as art completes it as a system in its most developed forms.

According to Hans Heinz Holz, the metaphor is a "sign through which logos reveals itself".<sup>31</sup> Its special characteristic lies in its relationship to the concept. As far as its form is concerned it is a "sensuous form of the concept".<sup>32</sup> Metaphors are "not images of reality but intellectual perceptions pointing to reality".<sup>33</sup> They are "original images of human self-recognition" and thus "inalienable media for the exploration of the historicity of human existence" as well as "media of philosophical reflection".<sup>34</sup> Metaphor is "necessary" in this function, as without it "what is meant would not appear at all".<sup>35</sup> It is a necessary mode of a concept in the way that "a concept has its source in the mode of the image".<sup>36</sup> "Without metaphors we would have no vocabulary for the non-sensuous, thanks to metaphors we have concepts of it."<sup>37</sup> If we follow these deliberations, then metaphor is both: mode of the symbol and mode of the concept. The uniqueness and irreplaceability of its function exist exactly in this relation.

In its logical genesis, therefore, the metaphor has its roots both in concept and in symbol—it is the synthesis of both. It is, one can say, the *symbolic form of a concept* that cannot or cannot yet be articulated. In contrast to forms of the symbol that are primarily related to the sub- or preconscious, the conceptual is the first point of reference in metaphorical articulations. Metaphorical thought has the character of *showing*, as does all

symbolic thought.<sup>38</sup> The metaphor points to a world concept in the sense of a sensuous imagining of what is being pointed to in the metaphorical sign itself. Thus the metaphor evokes what is shown in the act of showing itself—in the 'sign that shows'. The moment of a sensuous evocation, the structural independence of the sensuous sign is essential to it. This means that the visual concreteness of the metaphorical bearer must be provided at least in an associative sense.

In this sense, metaphor is the representation of the world in the medium of a sensuous (mostly visual) sign. At the same time it interprets what it represents in the sensuous sign. It thus embodies the *synthesis of representation and interpretation*. This has its cause not in the what of the shown but in the how—in the act of showing itself. When Shakespeare's players show the 'form and pressure of the time'—its inner form and outward appearance—they do so in no other way than that of acting ('playing'), which is their mode of showing. For art in general this means: an interpretation of the world (of a world segment) is executed *in the medium of the aesthetic form*, and this interpretation is at the same time a mode of world cognition.

Not only do representation and interpretation meet in the semantic mode of the metaphorical, world-interpretation comes into contact with cognition and knowledge of the world. World-interpretation shows itself as a mode of world cognition, understanding in unity with knowledge. As such synthesis, metaphor is a prototypical form of the epistemic logos. It has, in an outstanding sense, a world-disclosing, exploratory function, one that makes world relations recognizable. It is a semantic concentrate—an "objective correlative" (to use T.S. Eliot's intriguing phrase)—which joins together complex factual relations in a complex (frequently many-levelled) sign. Thus, as a complex metaphor, it can never theoretically be fully explained, an inexplicable surplus of meaning necessarily being attached to it. As the synthesis of symbol and concept, metaphor, in form and function, cannot be substituted either by any other symbolic form or by a categorical (theoretical) concept. In this sense, the metaphor is autonomous.

This structural autonomy of the metaphor is the condition for the special mode of epistemic world-disclosure that metaphorical thought achieves. By virtue of its form—and this connects it to art—it possesses possibilities of associative world cognition, of representation, interpretation and assignment of meaning that remain closed to the concept as a non-sensuous, categorical/theoretical and therefore abstract mode of world cognition. Herein lies the specific difference between the two. At the same time, however, metaphor remains allied with the categorical concept in a semantic field of reference, in



a way that qualifies it as 'sensuous concept'. The difference between metaphor and art is one of mode. The compositional independence that the aesthetic form possesses in the arts is lacking in metaphor. But metaphor is used by the arts as part of the aesthetic work form, just as it is used by theoretical thought if the borders of the categorical concept are to be overstepped within the framework of a reflection encompassing image and concept.

As power of synthesis, the metaphor stands in analogy to the arts. In several respects the aesthetic logos is of a synthetic nature.<sup>39</sup> In its most complex forms it is capable of incorporating other figures of the symbolic logos (mythical and religious forms). Indeed, it is capable of integrating modes of the conceptual logos, certainly in the lingual arts. Art thus marks an intersection between symbol and concept. Its epistemic range stretches from theoretical reason and scientific knowledge to the prelogical sphere of the sub- and pre conscious, which it evokes through language, image and sound.

The work of art possesses an epistemic form. In it, knowledge is organized as world-discovery. Such knowledge is communicated through this organization. It is lifted into the consciousness of a recipient and individually comprehended. The discovery or 'opening up' of the world through art refers to the 'infinite' variety of human historical experience.

The articulation and organization of aesthetic episteme takes place in the mode of a formal composition: as 'artistic figure', 'formal figuration', 'compositional form'; that is, in the material medium of a particular art form. In the aesthetic episteme, cognition, emotion and sensuality form a peculiar union differing according to chosen form, genre and individual work. No matter how much concepts may have a share in the constitution of aesthetic cognition, art can in no sense be reduced to conceptual knowledge.

The aesthetic episteme is a synthesis also in the sense that cognition, knowledge and interpretation of the world come together in it. It is *experiential knowledge*: it refers not to mere facts or 'the world as such', but to human experience in it, its perennial theme

being *human praxis* in a sensuous world—the discovery and "seeing through" (José Saramago) of human world relations.

Art as epistemic form is in an excellent way the storehouse of the cultural experience of humans. As synthesis of the forms of knowledge, it is the highest form of experiential

knowledge. It is "the memory of mankind" (György Lukács), the "living record of [...] memory" according to Shakespeare's fifty-fifth sonnet.

## 8. CONCLUSION

The common ground of all forms of logos lies, first of all, in the fact that they develop from an identical elementary logos. What they have in common, furthermore, is what I analyzed as the *achievement of epistemic logos*: the epistemic disclosure or 'opening up' of the world—epistemic world-discovery—as part of the constitution, through human activity, of a material human world; what in this context we might term *world-design*. It is a prerequisite and constituent part of the process of civilization. Symbol and concept cooperate in this function; while both differ in their achievements on the common ground of their cooperation, likewise the range of their achievements diverge. As record of experience and regarded historically, the aesthetic logos has the widest range of epistemic world-discovery. Moreover, as I indicated, it is in a certain sense of a synthetic nature.

The epistemic logos thus embraces the theoretical-general and the sensuous-particular: the conscious and the unconscious, reason and feeling, concept and emotion (affect). The epistemic logos is the medium—the human power—in which both sides enter into the status of *reflexivity*: they relate to each other, they are no dead opposites. The logos, we recall, is a self-reflexive agent; it is such as force of production and power of design. It comprises a living, active unity of differences inside a complex self-reflective structure. As 'human capability' it is a force of production rooted in the psyche.<sup>40</sup>

*In summa*: the unity of human consciousness—its character as a *concrete universal*—is founded on the *constitutive unity, the identity and universality of the elementary logos*. This applies as an identical factor to all human cultures and, in a genetic sense, to all historical stages of human development. This identity and universality, however, arises from no other moment than the material identity of human individuals, their physical-psychic and cognitive constitution as such. Such an identity is the sole assumption that is made here. To put it simply and poignantly: humans must eat to survive, they are forced to produce their means of reproduction, and in doing so the logos plays a part—inevitably and equally for all. This, and nothing else, is the sole starting point for the ideas put down in this paper.

But, as we have also seen, unity of consciousness implies *unity in difference*. The elementary logos is the cell of a plurality of forms of rationality and knowledge—of an *epistemic universe*. Conceptual thought has its ground in it, as much as symbolic thought and its components do, knowledge as much as understanding and interpretation. ‘Cell’, furthermore, means that the elementary logos is to a high degree capable of formation, development and transformation. It is to be thought of as force of production, as a constitutive part of the ensemble of the human forces of production. It is active human ability that has a place in the objective praxis of humans. Thus it is the basis of all human culture. In this sense, logos is understood here as “*designing power of cultures*” (Yana Milev).

#### Translated from the German by Priscilla Metscher

1. What is summarized here in shortened form are theses set out in detailed argument in my book *Logos und Wirklichkeit: Ein Beitrag zu einer Theorie des gesellschaftlichen Bewußtseins* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), as well as in a number of my previous texts, such as: “Literature and Art as Ideological Form”, *New Literary History*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1979, pp. 21-39; “Episteme: Wissen als anthropologisches Datum. Grundsätze einer elementaren Epistemologie”, *Wirklichkeit und Wissen: Realismus, Antirealismus und Wirklichkeitskonzeptionen in Philosophie und Wissenschaften*, HJ Sandkühler ed., Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1992, pp. 219-228; “Modell und Deutung von Welt: Für eine Mimesistheorie der Künste”, *Repräsentation und Modell: Formen der Welterkenntnis*, HJ Sandkühler ed., Bremen: Zentrum Philosophische Grundlagen der Wissenschaften, 1993; “Ästhetik und Mimesis”, *Mimesis und Ausdruck*, T Metscher et al. eds, Cologne: Dinter, 1999, pp. 9-109; “Leibniz’ Stadt: Perspektivik und Objektivität des Denkens”, *Herausforderung Pluralismus*, M Plümacher et al. eds, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000, pp. 195-205; “Welt im Spiegel”, *Welten in Zeichen—Sprache, Perspektivität, Interpretation*, HJ Sandkühler ed., Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002, pp. 77-118; Metscher, Thomas and Hans Heinz Holz, “Widerspiegelung/Spiegel/Abbild”, *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe*, Barck et al. eds, vol. 6, 1998, pp. 617-669. These publications do not yet contain references to the anthropological ‘design’ concept developed by Yana Milev. At the time of writing them I was not yet aware of it. Some of their leading ideas, however, would certainly suggest such references—a line of thought I try to take up in this paper. The translations from German in the texts quoted are my own.
2. In *Logos und Wirklichkeit* (pp. 408f) I introduce, in an anthropological sense, the concept of an ‘energetic potential’.
3. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, *Philosophische Tagebücher 1914-1916*, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984, p. 2.
4. The closeness of the ‘design’ concept to the cultural-theoretical concept presented in *Logos und Wirklichkeit* is obvious if we consider the meaning of ‘design’ in English. The verb ‘to design’, from the Latin *designare*, ‘to mark out for a purpose’, ‘to plan’ (Smith, William, *Latin-English Dictionary*, London: Mur-

ray, 1959), has the basic meaning of ‘to conceive and plan out in the mind’. ‘Design’ as a noun refers to ‘a mental project or scheme in which means to an end are laid down’, also ‘plan’, ‘particular purpose’, ‘deliberate purposive planning’ (*Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language*, Springfield MA: Merriam, 1971): the moment of conscious life activity, of acting according to plan and purpose that dominates here, makes the design-concept especially suitable for my purposes.

5. See the chapter “Mimesis und Arbeit” in Metscher, *Logos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 409–419.
6. Marx, Karl, “Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844”, *Marx-Engels-Werke*, supplementary vol. 1, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1970, p. 516.
7. Stepping to the side of labour and mimesis as further formative cultural factors are those that belong—in parts at least—to the emotive (‘feeling’) and the ‘social subconscious’, not least *eros*, the ‘love complex’ (Metscher, *Logos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 401–403).
8. Pertinent here is what Marx works out as the positive achievement of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Mind* in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*: “The outstanding thing in Hegel’s *Phenomenology* and its final outcome [...] is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-genesis of man as a process, conceives objectivation as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of *labour* and comprehends objective man—true, because real man—as the outcome of man’s *own labour*. The *real*, active orientation of man to himself as a species being [...] (i.e. as a human being) is only possible by his really bringing out of himself all the *powers* that are his as the *species* man—something which in turn is only possible through the totality of man’s actions, as the result of history” (Marx, Karl, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1961, p. 151). This passage contains, in spite of its somewhat remote sounding Hegelian terminology, what can still serve as the kernel—the conceptual core pattern—of a present-day cultural anthropology.
9. See Metscher, *Logos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 321–388.
10. Weiss, Peter, *Ästhetik des Widerstands*, 3 vols, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976-1981 (English edition available as *Aesthetics of Resistance*, vol. 1, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
11. Braidt, Alexander, *Bewußtsein: Der Abgrund zwischen Mensch und Tier*, Bonn: Pahl-Rugenstein, 2010.
12. It can therefore serve as the anthropological base of a dialectical theory of reflection (see Hans Heinz Holz, *Weltentwurf und Reflexion*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 2005).
13. Ritter, Joachim et al. eds, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 5, Basel: Schwabe, pp. 491f, 499.
14. See Metscher, *Logos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 65–82, 122–171.
15. Marx, Karl, “Thesen über Feuerbach”, *Marx-Engels-Werke*, vol. 3, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1970, p. 6.
16. See Metscher, *Logos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 172–221.
17. The reasons for the use of ‘episteme’ are the same as for the use of ‘logos’. ‘Episteme’ has a wide, permeable meaning that cannot be rendered by one single word in German or English. Episteme means knowledge, cognition, insight, but also skill, ability, *knowing why* as well as *knowing how* (the ‘knowing how’ as knowledge laid down in practical skills). Episteme as scientific knowledge (which is the predominant meaning today) enters at a later historical stage and is thus a ‘derived sense’. The reduction

of the episteme concept to science, as is generally the case in the disciplinary meaning of epistemology, is therefore a reduction of the original meaning of the word.

18. Ziegler, Konrat et al. eds, *Der Kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike*, vol. 3, Munich: dtv, 1979, pp. 710ff.
19. Lukács, György, *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen*, Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1963.
20. Tetens, Holm, "Wissenschaft", *Enzyklopädie Philosophie*, Hans Jörg Sandkühler ed., Hamburg: Meiner, 1999, p. 1763.
21. Tetens, "Wissenschaft", pp. 1763–1765.
22. See Metscher, *Logos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 288–290.
23. "Rose, o pure contradiction, desire/To be nobody's sleep under so many/Eyelids."
24. *Tractatus*, 6. 522
25. The sun hole in the graves at Newgrange, Ireland, together with the stone carvings interpreted as 'sun-dials' point to a cyclical understanding of the world with the opposites sun/night/sun, life/death/life, summer/winter/summer, in the sense of concepts of 'dying and becoming' of an archaic dialectics(cf. O'Kelly, MJ, Early Ireland, Cambridge: CUP, 1989; Ina Mahlstedt, Die religiöse Welt der Jungsteinzeit, Stuttgart: Theiss, 2004.
26. Holzkamp, Klaus, "Kunst und Arbeit", *Gesellschaftlichkeit des Individuums*, Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1978.
27. Knepler, Georg, *Geschichte als Weg zum Musikverständnis*, Leipzig: Reclam, 1982.
28. Cf. Metscher, Thomas, *Herausforderung dieser Zeit: Zu Philosophie und Literatur der Gegenwart*, Düsseldorf: Edition Marxistische Blätter, 1989, pp. 170-185.
29. Cassirer, Ernst, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, ninth edition, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994, pp. 50f.
30. With Cassirer, 'symbolic form' is the concept that stands for the basic figures of culture-shaping symbolic systems. He names six such forms: myth, religion, language, art, science, technology.
31. Holz, *Weltentwurf und Reflexion*, pp. 285f; Holz, Hans Heinz, "Widerspiegelung; Ästhetik; Metapher", *Europäische Enzyklopädie zu Philosophie und Wissenschaft*, 4 vols, HJ Sandkühler ed., Hamburg: Meiner, 1990, p. 381.
32. Holz, *Weltentwurf und Reflexion*, p. 268.
33. Zimmer, Jörg, *Metapher*, Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 1999, p. 13.
34. Zimmer, *Metapher*, pp. 20f.
35. Holz, *Weltentwurf und Reflexion*, pp. 285f; Holz, "Widerspiegelung; Ästhetik; Metapher", p. 381.

36. Zimmer, *Metapher*, p. 25.
37. Holz, "Widerspiegelung; Ästhetik; Metapher", p. 381.
38. When Shakespeare names 'showing' as the specific achievement of theatrical playing, this not only qualifies theatrical playing as "symbolic action" (Kenneth Burke)—'showing' in itself has *strictu sensu* a metaphorical meaning. The conceptual reference point of this metaphor is the 'mimesis' concept of Aristotle's *Poetics*. The "purpose of playing" is "to show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" (*Hamlet*, III.2): it is 'mimetic action'. Showing makes visible what is not immediately recognisable, what does not lie in the street empirically: not the particular but the general in the particular, not what has happened but what might happen, not the factual but the possible in the factual, the possible therefore as a mode of the real.
39. For more on this point, see the chapter "Ästhetischer Logos" in Metscher, *Logos und Wirklichkeit*, pp. 438–477 and p. 287 in the same book.
40. A theoretical explanation of the highest order can be found in the *Psychology* of Aristotle, according to which the logos (reason/thinking/the mind) is an ability of the psyche: "the original *entelecheia* of a natural organic body", i.e., the principle of abilities that constitutes this body (Aristotle, *Hauptwerke*, Horst W Nestle ed., Stuttgart: Metzler, 1953, p. 172). Thinking as part of these abilities aims at cognition/knowledge. It makes use of perception and imagination. The mind is "the strength of the soul that thinks and forms images" (p. 175). Aristotle's argument is still valid today, as it suggests a complex concept of the psychic root of cognitive abilities (human consciousness) that undercuts any form of mentalist dualism, which at present is again on an upward trend. From such a starting point a theory of the logos as psychic ability and productive force could be developed further and integrated in a dialectical anthropology.

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fig. 1-3

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KULTURELLE  
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VORTRAG  
HOME PAGE  
PUBLIKATIONEN  
SHOW

Prätext  
Präposition

I.

TEXT-KONTEXT

GRANDFÜRSTENTUM  
KONTINUITÄT  
EXISTENZ  
IN FORTUNEN

LEIB  
ALS  
SYSTEM  
STADT

Text

Superposition  
Identität

II.

DEFORMATION

DISKONTINUITÄT  
KONTINUITÄT  
KONTINUITÄT

DEFORMATION → DEFECT

KRISE

A.O.B.B.M.E.

PASSION

HOBIES  
KULTUR  
BILDUNG  
PROTEKT

Kontext

Position

Entität

POLITIK

III.

RESEARCH - URBAN - INTERVENTION

MANIFEST

INTEGRITÄT

GENETIK

MATRIX

EXISTENZ

INITIATION

IDENTITÄT

VISION

IMAGINATION

MIGRATION

DIASPORA

INTEGRITÄT



Physiologie  
PHYSISCHER LEIB



Ontologie  
METAPHYSISCHER LEIB



Ethnologie  
MEDIALER LEIB



Mystik  
ABSTRAKTER LEIB



Morphologie  
KONKRETER LEIB



Morphologie  
KONKRETER LEIB



Sozialer Leib  
POLITISCHER LEIB



Teilnahme  
Topos  
Gelbst



ÖKOLOGISCHER LEIB

BLACK BOX

ARCHETYP

LEBENDIGE ARCHÄOLOGIE

Städte (als  
abstrakte/  
konkrete  
Raum)

PARADOXE SYMMETRIE

SKULPTUR DES ÜBERGANGS

Biologie

Label

DIASPORA

LOGO

METAPH

MIKROTOPOS

UTOPIE

ZEN

PSYCHOANALYSE

ERKENNTNISSE  
SELBSTWISSEN  
KUNST  
DIALOGIE  
WIRTSCHAFTSLEBEN  
KONSTRUKTION  
PERSÖNLICHKEIT

PHILOSOPHIE  
THEORIE

ANATOMIE  
DES  
BLACK BOX

Film  
Schrift/Text

Morphologie  
Kontext  
Sinn

Mobilität

INSTITUT FÜR  
ANGEWANDTE  
EXISTENZLEBEN

INSTITUT FÜR  
PRAKTISCHE  
EXISTENZLEBEN

Management

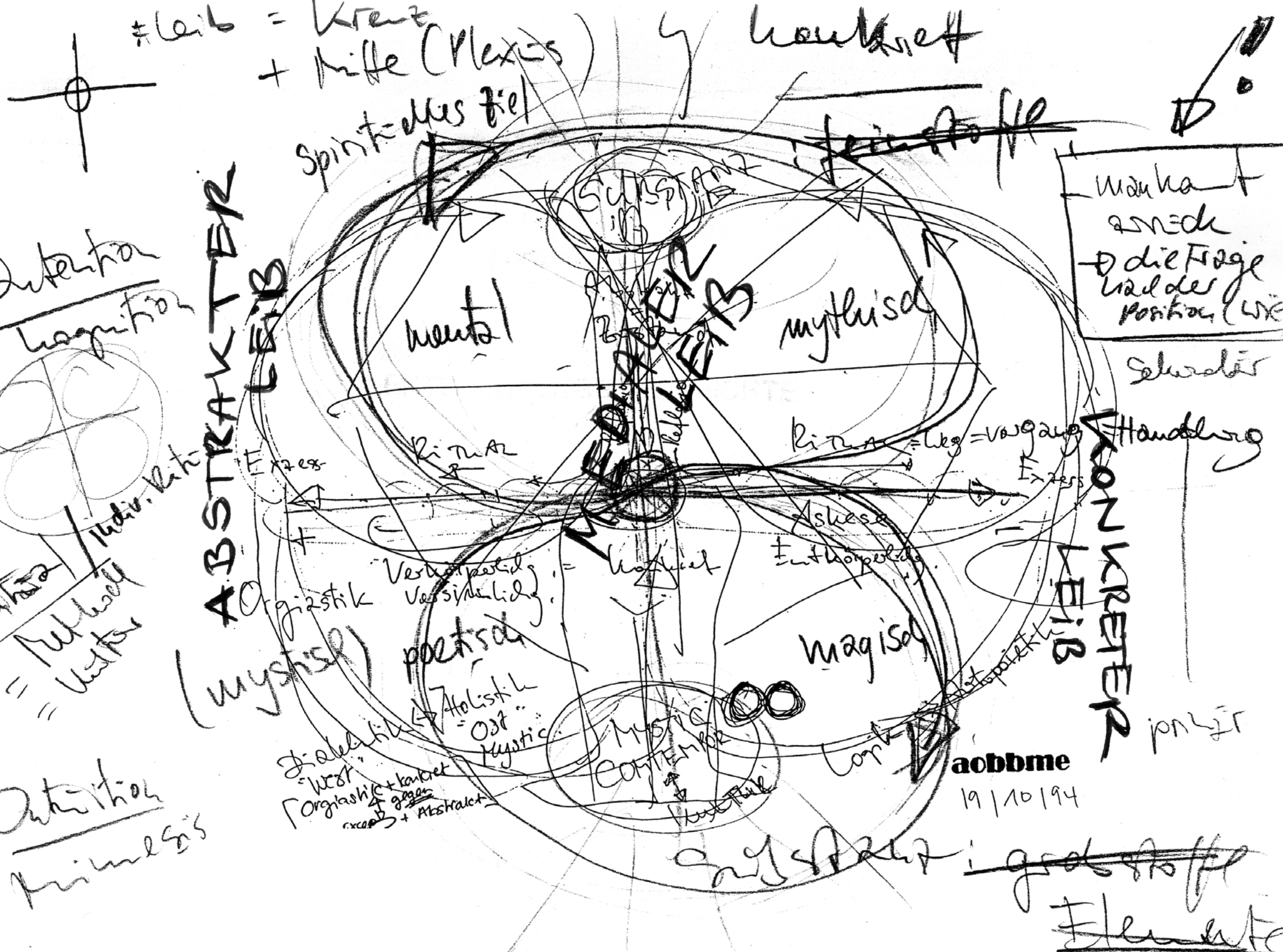
Marketing

Logistik



A.O.B.B.M.E. IST EINE UTOPIE - EIN FORTLAUFENDER NICHTLOKALISIERBARER KOMPLEXER DEFECT IM GETRIEBE DER URBANISIERUNGSMASCHINE. 09-1997





#Leib = Krenz  
+ Mitte (Nexus)

konkret

spirituelles Ziel

feinstoffl

Man hat auch die Frage nach der Position (wie)

Schwerer

Handlung

ABSTRAKTER LEIB

LEIB

KONKRETER LEIB

Intention  
Kognition

Indiv. Knt.  
Kulturbild  
Kultur

Intention  
Primales

(mystisch)

Organistik  
Verkörperlich.  
Versinnlich.

poetisch

Holistik  
= Ost  
Mystik

Gegensatz  
West  
Organisch + konkret  
gegen  
Abstrakt

Substanz

mythisch

Ritual = Leg = Vorgang  
Exzess

Ashese  
Entkörperlich.

magisch

Mystik  
Contemplation  
Herkunft

aobbme  
19/10/94

grobstoff

Elemente

Die Idee des Körpers wird als Topos des Ontogenese-Weis dargestellt.

Fragment  
(PRIVAT-) Mythologie

Traktat

Begegnung

Metaphysikalisch

Die Verhältnisse der Quarks, lasse sie im Ontogen darstellen!

Murray Gell-Mann  
Physiker, Amerikaner  
"Das Quark + der Lepton"

Epologie = Isomorphisch-Geometrisch  
Phänomenologie  
Hypothese

Esoterisch

Metaphysikalisch  
kosmologisch

Isolierte +  
Leide von Lekt

verf. Wissen

Mythogramme © 1987, Dresden

© 1992

bis 1992  
Spiral

Volks-  
Ordnung

System-  
Theorie

Mythologie

Ultraschallologie  
als Phänomenologie,  
Anthropologie

+ 20bbme © 1994, Berlin



PUBLIC BORDER

PUBLIC BORDER

PRIVATE BORDER

PUBLIC BORDER

Rudolf Maresch

## Virtus: The Medium of Immersion

Along with the terms self-organization, contingency, emergence, complexity, fractal and rhizome, 'virtuality' is one of those fashionable 1990s concepts that has experienced inflationary use (its etymological roots are in Latin *virtus*—virtue, excellence/aptitude—and medieval Latin *virtualis*, meaning 'present due to talent, capability or possibility' and often tied to concepts of 'appearance', 'fiction' and 'the not really real').

Since the historic collision of semiconductor technology and Boolean algebra during and after the Second World War, the conversion from analogue to digital information processing and the rapid rise of computers as the leading medium of the global knowledge and information society, virtuality is now only associated with the model worlds it generates, namely so-called 'virtual reality' (VR). Since then, the concept of the virtual has had a technological foundation. This, however, has changed little of the term's vagueness, ambiguity and diffuse use. In the meantime, there is hardly a thing or appearance in our daily lives that is not stamped with the epithet 'virtual': cities and cafés, money and businesses, bodies and gender as well as communities and shop windows, wars and moderators, addresses and marketplaces.

It is also debatable what ontological status one should grant the 'virtual'. While philosophical 'realists' often see virtuality in opposition to reality—as a kind of additional, parallel or second world created somewhere beyond known daily life thanks to sophisticated computer software—'constructivists' grasp it as a part of reality. In the latter case, the virtual does not stand outside the material world, but is rather one version among many possible realities.

One can observe how, during the 1990s, the 'constructivist paradigm' became dominant in science, culture and art. This was perhaps not necessarily the case in the experimental natural sciences, where the accordance between thinking and being, thing and concept remains the decisive criterion for truth. But it certainly is true for the humanities and cultural sciences, which have denied the existence of an actual, sign-independent reality since the 'linguistic turn', the shift to models, structures and systems based on codes or observers. The problem of how one can differentiate between these different

levels of reality is generally solved by placing reality in the custody of a human observer (consciousness). The observer or, more precisely, the observer's brain makes the final decision about what is to be deemed real or fictive.

Aristotle is generally seen as the progenitor of this de-ontologization and increasing relativity of perception and knowledge. As is well-known, he already understood reality not to be static, but to be variable and dynamic. According to Aristotle, the real is never complete. It includes a multitude of potentialities that do not necessarily have to be actualized. Many people, for example, have talents. Whether these talents are later realized remains highly uncertain and is dependent on factors such as chance, self-discipline, ambition, luck, perseverance, social contacts, sponsors, etc. Virtual existences are thus always latent existences that do not manifest themselves or have not yet manifested themselves—but that include the potential for realization or effect.

Just about two and a half thousand years later, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze refined this position. For him, the virtual remains oriented towards the actual, but it should not be confused with the possible. While the possible must first be realized and thus can only deliver a retrospectively created image of reality, the virtual is actualized in that it constantly changes, differentiates itself and thus creates itself anew. According to Deleuze, the virtual already has a "complete objective reality" in itself. This "reality of the virtual" is what he calls structure. It is pure plurality and is made up of elements and conditions that are singular and relate to one another in a differentiated and heterogeneous way. In this structure, which is always present but generally does not show itself to the observer, the virtual is "completely determined".

When Deleuze formulated these thoughts on the eve of May 1968, automatic signal processing was in its infancy. PCs, network technology and the possibility of 'cloning' letters, images and sounds at the press of a button were generally unknown. Thus the philosopher couldn't imagine how much the "reality of the virtual" would play a part in the editing, transmitting and archiving of data and would expand and redefine both access to and the mode of social communication. However, even then he had the suspicion that any release from or dissolution of local elements, powers and milieus (de-territorialization) would cause a new process of integration (re-territorialization). What media technologies decode on the one hand is turned into an axiom on the other. Uprooting, non-conformity and decoupling thus turn into social connection, homogenization and global integration.

Thus, *en passant*, Deleuze also broke with philosophical tradition, which had ascribed a neutral and passive function to media. According to Aristotle, a medium must be “transparent” in order to function well; this means it must be “permeable”. The less it appears and ‘co-writes’ the message, the more useful, reliable and effective it is. In systemic constructivism, the medium still leaves no traceable effects. In this theory design the medium only serves as a ‘repertoire of possibilities’ from which the much more rigid forms can easily draw. However, since Ludwig Boltzmann and Claude E. Shannon’s studies on physical and information theory at the latest we have known that pure channels do not exist. Technological media and their channels are fundamentally noisy, so that a message cannot arrive as—or will always arrive differently than—the sender intended, which is also why media don’t ‘suffer’ anything or stand along the sidelines ‘indifferently’. By changing their forms and distributing, editing and saving, recording and transmitting, media are constantly co-writing the input and output, the thoughts and the message.

The shaping of new universes and the journey into as yet unrealized realities—which philosophers such as Vilém Flusser hope to achieve through computers—are thus limited from the outset by technical considerations. What can be actualized depends to a high degree on the technical configuration (frequency, computing capacity, transmission speed...), overcoming the signal-to-noise ratio, as well as the architecture of programs and the construction and function of the hardware in use. “Only that which is switchable, is at all” is Friedrich Kittler’s description, the Berlin scholar of hardware, following Martin Heidegger.

In general, everything that a medium does remains hidden from the observer and user. As a rule, he sits in front of his screen, clicks on the many colourful images and windows on his desktop and communicates what the machine conjures up on his screen. However, if he wants to know what the machine is doing when it translates data, manipulates images and develops programs, then he must break through the communicative shell of the screen. He must open up the casing and must move from the level of appearances in texts, images and sounds to the codes of integrated circuits and the computers in which they are found. There, inside the digital machine, he will not only meet a hierarchical ‘multi-level architecture’ that is made up of integrated circuits (hardware), switching states (operating system) and complex programs (software), that denies normal users access to and control of system resources (protected mode). He will also discover all those technological dispositifs that currently characterize the deep structures of knowledge, information and communication, and that are forcing their ‘reality of laws’ onto human eyes, ears and souls.

To end the confusion, then, one should reserve the term ‘virtual’ for all those events that take place between the central processing unit (CPU) and the graphical user interface (desktop). Since Alan Turing’s spectacular construction of a discrete machine—and John von Neumann’s implementation of a logic of functions that results in specified outcomes—the Turing machine has stood as the model for a universal computing machine that disaggregates intelligence into elementary, doable arithmetic operations. The symbolic space that is created in such an interior is purely numerical. Here everything is strictly determined, computed in advance and calculated; no questions are asked, opinions exchanged, compromises made or debated, norms or values argumentatively justified and settled as a community; and here no disputes or compliments, seduction or bribery, negotiations or provisional arrangements are possible. The mass of possible interactions is completely defined by mathematically established rules. Thus its way of working and ‘being’ is radically different from the everyday lives familiar to us. In contrast to the analogue world, where observers continue to construct realities and engage in communication with addressees (people) in order to provoke more communication, the syntax of the machine is made up of addresses, data and *commands*. If-then statements, rewritten into chains of signs and burned into silicon, make the medium into an *imperium* (order). Communication—within the virtuality that is created by the universal medium—means nothing more than: reading, writing and *executing*.

As a rule, the ordinary user notices none of these events, especially now that graphical interfaces with multimedia functions (‘windows’) have replaced text-based programs (MS-DOS) and double-clicking has replaced typing commands. When the user opens a window, it may seem that the machine is creating an endless array of possibilities. This impression arises when one describes the syntax of commands and algorithms as a loose connection, and contingency (unpredictability) is held to be a sufficient description for these events. However, one overlooks the fact that the binary option of the (logical) machine has transferred the world of chance of signs into the realm of machine-based certainty. Contingent operations that are, as a rule, caused by an ‘agitated and flitting consciousness’ in daily life are taken over by the digital computer with decisiveness, as it calculates instead of selecting. Randomness, differentiability and the substitutability of signs, which Deleuze portends as the reality of the virtual, are anchored here. The virtual is not just real anymore. Due to components such as wires, transistors and magnetic disks, it has once again become highly material.



In cyberspace—the network of all available computers in a single global data space—this virtual world of addresses, programs and commands comes ‘alive’, turning into a gigantic machine for interaction and communication. The user is now no longer a passive receiver, instead becoming the author and transmitter of messages. He can, anonymously and while concealing gender and any deficiencies, give himself a self-made identity (avatar) created from digital set pieces and contact other unknown addresses within a community. He can also, while buying an old aeroplane at an online auction, download the complete works of Leonard Cohen from an illegal file-sharing site. And he can, without being physically present at the relevant locations and places, take part in live events (tele-presence) or actively influence events by vote, chain letter or sit-in (tele-coups). However, he should always be aware that he may meet unpleasant people, programs and characters, with viruses, bugs and memes that can crash his computer, steal his time or demand his attention. In addition, he must also know that each step or contact on the internet leaves traces that can be followed, retraced and evaluated by interested third parties. As much as the user may think he is travelling through the virtual data space autonomously, per click and touch, no user in front of the screen should abandon himself to the illusion. Computer technology is the waste and by-product of weapons research and arms races, emanating from the armed forces’ desire for the precise locating, steering and control of communication. At every moment spent ‘inside’ the internet, the user is part of a program, becoming a transmission belt for machine-based feedback loops. What at first glance seems increasing self-determination and autonomy, at closer range reveals itself to be a target, one that can be located, spied on, controlled, harassed and bombed like an enemy warplane.

Wireless transmission (mobile phone networks, mobile computing, touchscreens, intelligent clothing...), the networking of offices, houses and children’s rooms, and the expansion of the internet into an omnipresent data space (evernet) will strengthen the trend to direct contacts and will boost the development of the individual rerouting of messages. The user may be able to call up information from any place on earth, control his house’s heating or check the contents of his refrigerator, but, thanks to mobiles and other ‘smart engines’, the user also becomes a target, which, despite its mobility, can be located, watched, reached and tracked everywhere and at any time.

It is no wonder that this virtual space has given rise to the most remarkable and odd expectations and wishes. Some people dream of direct contact between humans and machines, of brainchips, neuronal implants or the feeding of individual brainwaves into the data net; others hope for the disappearance of individual intelligence in the endless

data flow of the matrix. Since data and addresses are permanently updated there—they can disappear or appear anew—it is often termed a ‘global brain’ that is like a ‘laboratory’ for new products and the equivalent of a ‘breathing sensorium’. Even if there are increasing overlaps between biology and technology (biological and gene technologies), and actors, moderators and museum visitors are learning to move around spaces generated in computers, such animation of the inorganic is wrong and distracts from the ‘actual’ events in the ‘invisible machine’.

Cyberspace certainly displays characteristics of an ‘autopoietic machine’. But it is not a ‘living organism’ in a biological sense. Counting, computing and calculating are not functions that sustain life or existence. This is why this non-Euclidean space—as opposed to the Moon or Mars in the future—remains inaccessible and uninhabitable for our known form of life, and why the humanization, vitalization and settlement of the virtual is limited by physical borders.

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Tim Lenoir

## Contemplating Singularity

The spectre of a postbiological and posthuman future has haunted cultural studies of technoscience and other disciplines for two decades. Concern—and in some quarters enthusiasm—that contemporary technoscience is on a path leading beyond simple human biological improvements and prosthetic enhancements to a complete human makeover has been sustained by the exponential growth in power and capability of computer technology since the early 1990s. The deeper fear is that somehow digital code and computer mediated communications are getting under our skin and that, in the process, we are being transformed.

But these are deflationary times, and some of the techno-optimism of the pundits of singularity—Ray Kurzweil, Hans Moravec and others—has been brought to bay by the efforts of a generation of neuroscientists and roboticists to understand and replicate human intelligence in humanoid robotic systems. Eminent scientists such as Christof Koch, Giulio Tononi, John Horgan, Rodney Brooks and others argue that, given the mapping more than two decades ago (in 1986) of the 6,000-odd chemical synapses and the complete wiring diagram of the earthworm, *C. elegans*, for which we still do not have a working model of its nervous system, mapping the human brain with its 100 billion-odd neurons and a couple hundred trillion synapses and simulating such a gigantic neural network model in the hope of seeing consciousness emerge will not happen in the foreseeable future. Moreover, despite significant recent advances in brain-machine interfaces and the development of neural prosthetics, even if it were possible to simulate the architecture of the human brain, neuroscientists are far from understanding the neural codes, the sets of rules or algorithms that transform neural spikes into perceptions, memories, meanings, sensations and intentions.<sup>1</sup> Even if we could replicate the machine, we couldn't program it.

Still, most researchers agree that there is no reason in principle why we will not eventually develop conscious machines that rival or surpass human intelligence. Rather than pursuing the goal of replicating human intelligence in a computer-based medium, researchers like Christof Koch and Giulio Tononi advocate starting with a suitably abstracted mammal-like architecture and evolving it into a conscious entity through the rapidly developing field of evolutionary robotics.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Rodney Brooks asserts,

"Although I firmly believe the brain is a machine, whether this machine is a computer is another question".<sup>3</sup> Brooks believes that standard economic and social forces will gradually shape the mildly intelligent systems we have today into more intelligent machines. The singularity will be a period, not an event:

*Eventually, we will create truly artificial intelligences, with cognition and consciousness recognizably similar to our own... At the same time, we humans will transform ourselves... We will incorporate a wide range of advanced sensory devices and prosthetics to enhance our bodies. As our machines become more like us, we will become more like them.*<sup>4</sup>

Brooks' admonition that we are machines on a continuous path of co-evolution with other machines prompts reflection on what we mean by 'posthuman'. If we are crossing into a new era of the posthuman, how have we got here? And how should we understand the process? What sorts of 'selves' are imagined by Brooks and others as emerging out of this postbiological 'human'?

Cultural theorists have addressed the topic of the posthuman singularity and how, if at all, humanity will cross that divide. Most scholars have focused on the rhetorical and discursive practices, the metaphors and narratives, the intermediation of scientific texts, science fiction, electronic texts, film and other elements of the discursive field that enable the posthuman imaginary. While recognizing that posthumans, cyborgs and other tropes are technological objects as well as discursive formations, the focus has been directed less toward analyzing the material systems and processes of the technologies and more toward the narratives and ideological discourses that empower them. We speak about machines and discourses 'co-constituting' one another, but in practice we tend to favour discursive formations as preceding and, to a certain extent, breathing life into our machines. The most far-reaching and sustained analysis of the problems has been offered by N. Katherine Hayles in her two recent books, *How We Became Posthuman* and *My Mother Was a Computer*. Hayles considers it possible that machines and humans may someday interpenetrate. But she rejects as highly problematic, and in any case not yet proven, that the universe is fundamentally digital, the notion that a Universal Computer generates reality, a claim that is important to the positions staked out by proponents of the posthuman singularity such as Morowitz, Kurzweil, Wolfram and Moravec. For the time being, Hayles argues, human consciousness and perception are essentially analogue. Indeed, she argues, currently even the world of digital computation is sandwiched between analogue inputs and outputs for human interpreters.<sup>5</sup>

How we become posthuman, Hayles argues, will be through interoperational feedback loops between our current mixed analogue-digital reality and widening areas of digital processing. Metaphors, narratives and other interpretive linguistic modes we use for human sense-making of the world around us do the work of conditioning us to behave as if we and the world were digital. Language and ideological productions thus serve as kinds of virus vectors preparing the ground for the gradual shift in ontology. In the case of Wolfram and others, Hayles argues, the appropriation of computation as a cultural metaphor assumed to be physically true constitutes a framework in which new problems are constructed and judgements made.

*On the global level, our narratives about virtual creatures can be considered devices that suture together the analog subjects we still are, as we move in the three-dimensional spaces in which our biological ancestors evolved, with the digital subjects we are becoming as we interact with virtual environments and digital technologies.*<sup>6</sup>

The narratives of the computational universe serve, then, as both means and metaphor. In our current analogue/digital situation, Hayles proposes an analytical strategy she calls intermediation to analyze the new processual human/machine texts of the post-human era. By “intermediation”, Hayles refers to a complex entanglement of bodies of texts and digital subjects as well as between different forms of media.<sup>7</sup> In the media-theoretic perspective Hayles adopts in *My Mother Was a Computer*—a perspective she refers to as Kittlerian—subjects are the effects of media.

Hayles’ theory of intermediation alerts us to the need to understand how the complex transactions between bodies and our inscription practices might take place, and how to understand the “entanglement” of media with the formation of human subjects that she describes. How can we think beyond the notion of virtual creatures as rhetorical devices and explore instead how the embodied human subject is being shaped by a techno-scientific world? Can we get at the embodied levels of the interactive feedback loops Hayles describes, so as to examine the metabolic pathways and emerging neural architectures through which these technologies are getting under our skin?

I propose circumventing the issue of an apocalyptic end of the human and our replacement by a new form of *Robo sapiens* by drawing upon the work of anthropologists, philosophers, language theorists and, more recently, cognitive scientists, shaping the results of their research into a new argument for the co-evolution of humans and technics—specifically, the technics of language and the material media of inscription practices. The general thrust of this line of thinking may best be captured in Andy Clark’s

phrase, “We have always been cyborgs”.<sup>8</sup> From the first ‘human singularity’ to our present incarnation, human being has been shaped through a complicated co-evolutionary entanglement with language, technics and communicational media. The materiality of media, rather than their content, is what matters. Communicational media are machines operating at the heart of subject formation. Like Deleuze and Guattari—and like Andy Clark—I would like to view consciousness and mind as an emergent phenomenon based in assemblages of machinic operations. I am tempted by a position sympathetic toward Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of the human body understood as an assemblage of mutating machines—a Body without Organs—rather than as a teleologically orchestrated organism with consciousness as the core of coherent subjectivity. Consistent with the flattening of differences between biological and inorganic machines central to contemporary nanotechnology and cognitive neuroscience, Deleuze and Guattari argued that, as bodies without organs, human assemblages are capable of absorbing a variety of entities, including other machines and organic matter. In this perspective, media machines are not just prosthetic extensions of the body, they are evolving assemblages capable of being absorbed into the body and reconfiguring the subject.

Materialist semiotics, in concert with recent work in cognitive neuroscience, studies in evolutionary ethology and a variety of recent developments in the computational sciences, may point the way.<sup>9</sup> The path I would like to pursue in addressing the questions of the subject, embodiment and agency was suggestively, if inadequately, marked out by Deleuze and Guattari in their emphasis on the human as machinic assemblage and in Guattari’s suggestive notion that techno-machines operate invisibly at the core of human subjectification—particularly what Guattari referred to as “a-signifying semiological dimensions (of subjectification) that trigger informational sign machines, and that function in parallel or independently of the fact that they produce and convey significations and denotations, and thus escape from strictly linguistic axiomatics”.<sup>10</sup> For media philosophers, the question is whether Deleuze and Guattari’s cryptic and sketchily developed theses about “a-signifying semiological dimensions” of subjectification can be put on a solid foundation of what might be called ‘corporeal axiomatics’ in contrast to Guattari’s reference to “linguistic axiomatics”.

I would like to argue that each media regime and each system of signification projects a specific configuration of the subject and a horizon of agency as a consequence of its normal operation. Every medium, whether it be speech, alphabetic writing or digital code, and each media ecology, such as the configuration of gramophone, film and typewriter discussed by Friedrich Kittler,<sup>11</sup> projects a virtual user specific to it. This projected virtual user is a ghost effect: an abstract agency distinct from any particular embodied user,

a variable capable of accommodating any particular user within the medium. Moreover, these semiotic systems evolve with the media machines that embed them. They are techno-cultural artefacts that co-evolve with their human host-parasites. Conceived in this fashion, language, media and possibly the new generations of intelligent machines we imagine just over the horizon might be considered companion species, dependent on but also powerfully shaping us through a co-evolutionary spiral. Indeed, offered as a replacement for what she now regards as her outdated earlier notion of the cyborg, Donna Haraway has recently advocated a similar line of inquiry in her "Companion Species Manifesto": "Earth's beings are prehensile, opportunistic, ready to yoke unlikely partners into something new, something symbiogenetic", Haraway writes. Co-constitutive companion species and co-evolution are the rule, not the exception.<sup>12</sup>

Is there any foundation for relating this approach to the biological evolution of human cognition to a theory of signification and the notion of media machines? Terrence Deacon, Merlin Donald and others have pursued this question deep into the structure of symbolic communication and its embodiment in the neural architecture of evolving human brains. Their work on the evolution of language is suggestive for considering the formative power of media technologies in shaping the human and some of the critical issues in current debates about posthumanity. For Deacon and for Donald, what truly distinguishes humans from other anthropoids is the ability to make symbolic reference. This is their version of the singularity—*Homo symbolicus*, the human singularity. Although language evolution in humans could not have happened without the tightly coupled evolution of physiological, anatomical and neurological structures supporting speech, the crucial driver of these processes, according to Deacon, was *outside* the brain; namely, human cultural evolution. The first step across the symbolic threshold was most likely taken by an australopithecine with roughly the cognitive capabilities of a modern chimpanzee. Symbolic communication did not spontaneously emerge as a result of the steady evolution in size and complexity of hominid brains. Rather, symbolic communication emerged as a solution to a cultural problem. To be sure, language could not have arisen without a primitive prerequisite level of organization and development of the neurological substrates that support it. But, in Deacon's view, those biological developments were more directly driven by the social and cultural pressures to regulate reproductive behaviour in order to take advantage of hunting-provisioning strategies available to early stone-tool-using hominids. Deacon argues that this required the establishment of alliances, promises and obligations linking reproductive pairs to social (kin) groups of which they were a part. Such relationships could not be handled by systems of animal calls, postures and display behaviours available to apes and other animals and

could only be regulated by symbolic means. A contract of this sort has no location in space, no physical form of any kind. It exists only as an idea shared among those committed to honouring and enforcing it. Without symbols, no matter how crude in their early incarnation, that referred publicly and unambiguously to certain abstract social relationships and their future extensions, including reciprocal obligations and prohibitions, hominids could not have taken advantage of the critical resources available to them as habitual hunters.<sup>13</sup> In short, symbolic culture was a response to a reproductive problem that only symbols could solve: the imperative of representing a social contract. What was at stake here was not the creation of social behaviour by the social contract, as described by Rousseau, but rather the translation of social behaviour into symbolic form.

Once the threshold had been crossed to symbolic communication, natural selection shifted in dramatic ways. Deacon bases his model on James Mark Baldwin's original proposals for treating behavioural adaptation and modification as a co-evolutionary force that can affect regular Darwinian selection.<sup>14</sup> Baldwinian evolution treats learning and behavioural flexibility as a force amplifying and biasing natural selection by enabling individuals to modify the context of natural selection that affects their future offspring. Deacon uses Baldwinian evolution in a provocative way to address the question of the co-evolution of language and the brain. Though not itself alive and capable of reproduction, language, Deacon argues, should be regarded as an independent life form that colonizes and parasitizes human brains, using them to reproduce.<sup>15</sup> Although this is at best an analogy—the parasitic model being too extreme—it is useful to note that while the information that constitutes a language is not an organized animate being, it is nonetheless capable of being an integrated adaptive entity evolving with respect to human hosts. This point becomes more salient when we think of language as carried by communication systems and examine the effects of media, including electronic media, more broadly.

For Deacon, the most important feature to recognize of the adaptation of language to its host is that languages are social and cultural entities that have evolved with respect to the forces of selection imposed by human users. Deacon argues that the greater computational demands of symbol-use launched selection pressure on increased prefrontalization, more efficient articulatory and auditory capacities, and a suite of ancillary capacities and predispositions that eased the new tools of communication and thought. Each assimilated change added to the selection pressures that led to the restructuring of hominid brains.

*More than any other group of species, hominids' behavioral adaptations have determined the course of their physical evolution, rather than vice versa. Stone and symbolic tools, which were initially acquired with the aid of flexible ape-learning abilities, ultimately turned the tables on their users and forced them to adapt to a new niche opened by these technologies. Rather than being just useful tricks, these behavioral prostheses for obtaining food and organizing social behaviors became indispensable elements in a new adaptive complex. The origin of 'humanness' can be defined as that point in our evolution where these tools became the principal source of selection on our bodies and brains. It is the diagnostic trait of Homo symbolicus.<sup>16</sup>*

In Deacon's theory, evolutionary selection on the prefrontal cortex was crucial in bringing about the construction of the distributed mnemonic architecture that supports learning and analysis of higher-order associative relationships constitutive of symbolic reference. The marked increase in brain size over apes and the beginnings of a stone tool record are the fossil remnant effects of the beginnings of symbol use. Stone tools and symbols were the architects of the *Australopithecus-Homo* transition and not its consequences.

Symbolic reference is not only the source of human singularity. It is also the source of subject formation in all its varied manifestations. Deacon bases his theory of reference on (what is arguably a modified version of) Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics. Peirce made the distinction between iconic, indexical and symbolic forms of reference; where icons are mediated by similarity between sign and object, indices are mediated by some physical or temporal connection between sign and object, while symbols are composed of relations between indices and are mediated by formal or conventional links, rather than by a more direct neurological connection between sign and object.

For Deacon, symbolic reference is virtual, unreal and carries with the ghostly. Symbolic reference rests on the powerful combinatorial, associative logics of forming relationships between signs, and its mnemonic supports need only be cashed in and reconstructed in terms of their lower-level indexical and iconic supports when needed. Symbolic reference is so powerful because it allows us to ignore most of the vast web of word-object, word-word and object-object indexical associations and to make rapid calculations using the mnemonic shortcut of symbol-symbol relationships instead. It is this virtual character of symbolic reference that is the source of its power and of its interest for our concerns with subject formation. The ignored indexical relationships are still the implicit grounding of word reference, but these interpretive steps can be put off until it can be determined exactly which are relevant and which are not. For Deacon, symbols

are neurological tokens. Like buoys indicating an otherwise invisible best course, they mark a specific associative path, by following which we reconstruct the implicit symbolic reference. The symbolic reference emerges from a pattern of virtual links between such tokens, which constitute a sort of parallel realm of associations to those that link these tokens to real sensorimotor experiences and possibilities. Thus it does not make sense to think of the symbols as located anywhere within the brain, because they are relationships between tokens, not the tokens themselves; and even though specific neural connections may underlie these relationships, the symbolic function is not even constituted by a specific association, but by the virtual set of associations that are partially sampled in any one instance. As Lao Tzu wrote, "Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub, but it is the hole in the center that provides its usefulness".<sup>17</sup> Widely distributed neural systems must contribute in a coordinated fashion to create and interpret symbolic relationships.<sup>18</sup>

It is this virtual aspect of symbolic reference that leads to some interesting possibilities and peculiarities of subject formation. Three points are especially relevant to our present discussion. The power of symbolic reference is due to its *virtual* character; it is *shared*; and it is largely *external* to the individual mind, being located in cultural systems and artefacts. Unlike the interpretation of icons and indices—a process uniquely personal and insular within each brain—symbolic representations are in part externally interpreted. They are shared. Symbolic reference is at once a function of the whole web of referential relationships and of the whole network of users extended in space and time. It is as though the symbolic power of words is only on loan to its users. If symbols ultimately derive their representational power not from the individual, but from a particular society at a particular time, then a person's symbolic experience of consciousness is to some extent society-dependent—it is borrowed. Its origin is not within the head.

*Consciousness of self in this way implicitly includes consciousness of other selves, and other consciousnesses can only be represented through the virtual reference created by symbols. The self that is the source of one's experience and intentionality, the self that is judged by itself as well as by others for its moral choices, the self that worries about its impending departure from the world, this self is a symbolic self. It is a final irony that it is the virtual not actual reference that symbols provide, which gives rise to this experience of self. This most undeniably real experience is a virtual reality.<sup>19</sup>*

Supported by the evidence of contemporary neuroscience on the plasticity of the neo-cortex and its capacity to adapt to intricate challenges of a changing cognitive environment, Deacon argues that, rather than being rigidly hardwired to structures inside the



brain, symbolic communication created a mode of extrabiological inheritance with a powerful and complex character and with an autonomous life of its own. The individual mind is a hybrid product, partly biological and partly ecological in origin, shaped by a distributed external network whose properties are constantly changing. The leap to the symbolizing mind did not depend on a built-in hardwired tendency to symbolize reality. The direction of flow was from culture to the individual mind, from *outside-to-inside*.<sup>20</sup> A number of theorists, including Andy Clark and Kate Hayles, have been interested in expanding this analysis to include media other than speech and writing, especially technologically mediated and computer-based forms of communication. It is to that argument I want to turn now.

In several books and pathbreaking articles, Andy Clark has developed a compelling thesis about what he calls “extended mind”, which provides the perfect bridge between Deacon’s work on the evolution of symbolic reference and our considerations of media in the posthuman singularity. Clark radicalizes much recent work in cognitive science that emphasizes the embodied character of cognition. While agreeing with these new-wave cognitive scientists that mind is not simply a device to manipulate symbols in terms of formal rules and that higher cognition is built on a substrate of embodied perceptuomotor capacities, Clark takes the position of embodied cognition in quite radical directions. While proponents of distributed cognition defend the embodied character of cognition and support the notion that cognition makes heavy use of external props in the world, for the most part, Clark argues, the world and even, to a certain extent, the human senses are treated as instruments of the brain. In this account all genuinely cognitive activity, however richly supported by external material and social supports and bodily input, goes on inside the brain and central nervous system. Clark radicalizes this idea in moving from embodiment to cognitive extension. In the extended model of cognition, thinking and cognition depend directly and noninstrumentally upon the ongoing work of the body and the extraorganismic environment. Clark writes that,

*According to EXTENDED, the actual local operations that realize certain forms of human cognizing include inextricable tangles of feedback, feed-forward, and feed-around loops: loops that promiscuously crisscross the boundaries of brain, body, and world. The local mechanisms of mind, if this is correct, are not all in the head. Cognition leaks out into body and the world.*<sup>21</sup>

In discussing the parity principle at the basis of their important paper on the extended mind, Clark and David Chalmers argue that when the human organism is linked with an external entity creating a two-way interaction, the coupled system consisting of components both external and internal to the brain should be seen as a cognitive

system in its own right. All the components, including the external components, play an active causal role and jointly govern behaviour, in the same way that cognition usually does. If by removing the external component the behavioural competence of the system drops, the external component should be viewed as much a causal factor in the cognitive process, whether or not it is wholly in the head.<sup>22</sup> In Clark and Chalmers’ vision of cognition, the boundary between external and internal perception and action disappears, so that iPhones, calculators, computational aids and less exotic cultural props such as the tray of letters in a game of Scrabble become components of the extended mind. In the years since 1998, when they first published their paper, Chalmers has become convinced that the extended mind is most likely even more widely extended than to the domain of beliefs and specifically cognitive processes. What about extended desires, extended reasoning, extended perception, imagination and emotions?

*I think there is no principled reason why the physical basis of consciousness could not be extended in a similar way. It is probably so extended in some possible worlds: one could imagine that some of the neuronal correlates of consciousness are replaced by a module on one’s belt, for example. There may even be worlds where what is perceived in the environment is itself a direct element of consciousness.*<sup>23</sup>

Brain-machine interfaces such as cochlear implants, artificial prosthetic hippocampus chips, retinal implants and DARPA’s ‘brain-in-the-loop’ imaging systems for its Cognitive Threat Awareness Program are all examples of where the extended mind might be heading.<sup>24</sup>

The extended mind thesis treats human cognition as distributed and multiply hybrid, involving a complex interplay between internal biological and external non-biological resources. On this model, then, thinking itself is deeply hybrid, involving internal biological resources as well as external agents/artefacts annexed and scaffolded as parts of cognitive processes. Included in these external elements are sociocultural artefacts, such as gestures, diagrams, external text, software applications and more. But chief among these resources is language itself, which Clark and Chalmers consider the ultimate artefact.<sup>25</sup> Language on this view is an external public code organized around arbitrary material symbols. Its primary role is to facilitate a coordinated coupling between the internal biological structures and processes of the brain and external non-biological resources. Language, according to the Clark-Chalmers extended mind model, is a crucial hybrid structure: it straddles the internal-external borderline, looking one moment like any other piece of the biological equipment and, at the next, like a particularly potent piece of external cognitive scaffolding.<sup>26</sup> In this view, language is not a mirror

of internal states, but rather a complementary external structure that carries the major burden of coordinating coupling between external cognitive artefacts and processes and the brain's internal representational regime. Drawing on a variety of recent studies in cognitive science, such as the work of Baraslou,<sup>27</sup> Elman,<sup>28</sup> Clowes<sup>29</sup> and others, Clark argues that the symbolic environment impacts thought by activating internal representational resources and by allowing the stable structures of public language, with its rich set of material symbols, to act as a fulcrum for attention, memory and control, and as an anchor in the fluid stream of active thought and conceptualization.

The extended mind treatment of language in terms of hybrid representational forms, coordination dynamics and complementarity between biological and artefactual contributions provides a supportive framework for Hayles' theory of intermediation described above, offering an account of how the transactions between bodies and our inscription practices might take place and how to understand the "entanglement" of media with the formation of human subjects that Hayles describes. The key point in Clark's model is that language is fundamentally an external resource, and even processes of internal thought, silent rehearsal and other forms of 'off-line' linguaform representation for problem-solving are internal recapitulations of the relevant external vehicles. Of course, there are internal representations in this model, but Clark-Chalmers part company with defenders of neural mentalese (Churchland) or a hardwired language of thought (Fodor). Stressing hybrid representational forms and coordination dynamics of a brain that is fundamentally a pattern-completing engine, the proposal is that external artefactual resources of the symbolic environment are co-opted without being replicated by special biological structures or translated into another internal code. Exposure to external material symbols and epistemic artefacts does not result in the installation of new internal representational forms in the brain or, as Dennett proposed, by installing a new virtual serial machine via "myriad microsettings in the plasticity of the brain".<sup>30</sup> Rather, words, sentences and other stable public symbolic forms are used without radically altering the brain's basic modes of representation and computation. External public symbol structures, in this view, complement the basic modes of operation and representation endemic to the biological brain. Clark notes that "The brain represents these structures, of course. But it does so in the same way it represents anything else. They do not reorganize neural routines in any way that is deeper or more profound than might occur, say, when we first learn to swim, or to play volleyball."<sup>31</sup>

What then about the posthuman? Are we transitioning to some new form of self adapted to our environment of ubiquitous computing technology, and, if so, how is this self assembled and transformed by the machinic processes of our technoscientific milieu? Since the rise of *Homo sapiens* between 200,000 to 100,000 years ago, there has been

little change in brain size or, as far as can be determined, in brain structure. A critical contributing factor to the rapid cultural evolution that took off with *sapiens* and has continued since at an ever-increasing pace is the development of supplements to individual internal biological memory in the form of visuographic systems and external memory media, especially written records and other forms of symbolic storage.<sup>32</sup> Rather than being limited by our neural architecture, these external material supports have only enhanced the symbolizing power of the mind. In a sense, the recent development of the internet and distributed forms of electronic communication only further accelerate a process that has defined and shaped human being since that first singularity. From the perspective of the work in evolutionary cognitive science we have discussed, any change in the way information gets processed and represented inevitably constitutes a change in the cognitive economy of the subject, a difference in psychic architecture and ultimately of consciousness itself. Teasing out the implications of this notion, Rotman argues that the medium of alphabetic writing introduced as silent, collateral machinic effects an entire apparatus that enabled practices, routines, patterns of movement and gestures, kinematic, dynamic and perceptual activities as part of the background conditions—in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the a-signifying dimensions of the medium lying beneath the medium's radar as part of its unconscious—giving rise to the lettered self: a privately enclosed, inward and interiorized mind, structured by the linear protocols and cognitive processing that reading and writing demand.

This mode of psychic organization is giving way to new forms as part of the massive shift in computational media taking place. Of particular importance to our present situation is the influx of parallel computation into what has been an almost exclusively serial computational regime. The parallel/serial duo is nothing new. In fact, as Rotman argues, the dynamic tension between parallel and serial modes of thinking and representation have characterized every media regime. Rotman examines the tandem opposition of serial and parallel forms across many types of activity: music (melody versus harmony), symbolic forms (text versus image), arithmetic (ordinal versus cardinal numbers), film editing (Eisenstein versus intercut montage), electrical circuits (serial versus parallel), and, especially, serial versus parallel modes of computing. The serial/parallel duo come together, and the two modes are always in a certain tension with one another. Seriality is exemplified in narratives, routines, algorithms, melodies, timelines; parallelism is exemplified in scenes, episodes, harmonies, contexts, atmospheres and images. Parallelism foregrounds presence, simultaneity, co-occurrence. Serialism foregrounds linear order and sequence and occurs in counting, listing, lining up and telling. Serialism privileges a certain mode of cognitive and psychic organization, according to Rotman: namely, the individual mind/brain in which thinking takes place inside the

closed, individual thinker. Everything outside the individual symbol-processing brain is assigned to context and plays no substantive role in the thinking process. This model of the mind and of thinking is being challenged and displaced by contemporary cognitive science research, which is demonstrating that what was previously marginalized as context is actually a crucial element in how we think. Not only is thinking always social, culturally situated and technologically mediated, but individual cognition requires symbiosis with cognitive collectivities and external memory systems in the first place. Parallel computing, Rotman writes, puts into flux the relations between internal self and external other,

*since it is a machinic implementation, not of individual linear thinking but of distributed bio-social phenomena, of collective thought processes and enunciations, that cannot be articulated solely on the level of an isolated, individual self. Its effects are to introduce into thought, into the self, into the 'I' that engages its various forms, parallelist behavior, knowledge, and agency that complicate and ultimately dissolve the idea of a monoidal self. (Rotman 2008 p. 99)*

Long characterized by linear processing of code, computing is undergoing a massive shift toward parallelism. In nearly every venue of computing—from high-end processing of massive data sets, such as the human genome, and large-scale imaging projects, such as GIS maps, to routine gaming machines such as the PlayStation 3—computing is being performed by multiple machines working simultaneously in parallel on different parts of the job to be computed or—as with video-editing workstations, game machines and even some new laptops—multiple processors in the same machine. In addition, the computational affordances of cell phones, pervasive technologies for multi-tasking such as instant messaging, manipulation of multiple avatars of the self in communally-inhabited virtual worlds such as *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*, and engagement with a variety of forms of distributed agency, blends of artificial and human agents in networked circuits—all these contribute, Rotman argues, to making the parallelist self radically different from the single, serial, alphabeticized psyche it is in the process of displacing. Both crucial to and symptomatic of this shift to parallelism is the centrality of visualization technology and the strategic influx of images into all forms of contemporary cognitive work. Everywhere, pragmatic images, graphs, charts, tables, figures, maps, simulations and other forms of visual artefact are permeating our reading and writing practices. These apparently innocuous information-bearing, instructional, explicatory

and otherwise instrumentally-oriented images are, from Rotman's perspective, a (welcome) dimension of parallelism, prompting him to cite artist Helen Chadwick's dream-like meditation, "What if dangerous fluids were to spill out, displacing logic, refuting a coherent narrative, into a landscape on the brink of I". Nothing better represents this "spillage of the Ego" as a prelude to the emergence of a para-self, Rotman urges, than the prevalence of the post-photographic digital image and, especially, the GIS map. The post-photographic image dissolves the classic viewer rooted in Renaissance perspectivalism, which privileged a self with a point of view outside the imaged object. An increasingly familiar example of what Rotman is describing occurs in our obsession with GIS maps, such as maps provided by Google Earth, with multiple (currently up to twelve) separate graphic layers overlaying different kinds of information, which can be dynamically viewed as a co-present assemblage of images and proactively navigated by the user. GIS maps of this sort enact the parallel seeing of images that previously had to be viewed side-by-side, serially; in the process, they reshape the fixity of the viewing subject and promote a dynamic viewing body that bypasses a perspectival mode of viewing. In terms of Rotman's thesis, this dissolution of seriality impinges directly on the subject and the construction of the self, a falling away from a one-dimensional, singular consciousness into parallel, distributed co-presence. Rotman summarizes this transition eloquently:

*Once, not so long ago, there was an absolute opposition of self and other: an 'I', identical to itself, wholly present as an autonomous, indivisible, interior psyche against an external, amorphous collectivity of third persons outside the skin. Now the I/me-unit is dissolving, the one who says or who writes 'I' is no longer a singular integrated whole, but multiple: a shifting plurality of distributed I-parts, I-roles, I-functions, and I-presences. Now the 'I' bleeds outward into the collective, and the collective introjects, insinuates and*

*internalizes itself within the me. What was privately interior and individual is invaded by the public, the historical, the social. (Rotman 2008 p. 100)*

As we spend more time in electronically mediated environments, engaging with massively parallel distributed computing processes that are merging ever-more seamlessly with the material processes and technological affordances of our everyday world, we are, in Rotman's terms, becoming—literally evolving as—distributed machinic multiples, para-selves beside our selves.

1. Berger, TW, A Ahuja, et al., "Restoring lost cognitive function", *Engineering in Medicine and Biology Magazine*, IEEE, vol. 24, no. 5, 2005, pp. 30-44. Berger, TW, DL Glanzman eds, *Toward Replacement Parts for the Brain: Implantable Biomimetic Electronics as Neural Prostheses*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2005. But here, too, researchers argue that we are far from cracking the neural code, and that it is very unlikely that the neural code will be anything as simple and as universal as the genetic code. Christof Koch notes that neural codes seem to vary in different species and even in different sensory modes within the same species. The code for hearing is not the same as that for smelling, for instance. Evidence from research on neural prostheses suggests that brains even devise entirely new codes in response to new experiences, inventing new codes as necessary.
2. Koch, C and G Tononi, "Can machines be conscious?", *Spectrum, IEEE*, vol. 45, no. 6, 2008, pp. 55-59.
3. Brooks, RA, "I, Rodney Brooks, Am a Robot", *Spectrum, IEEE*, vol. 45, no. 6, 2008, p. 69.
4. Brooks, "I, Rodney Brooks", p. 73.
5. See especially N Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp. 206-213.
6. Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer*, p. 204.
7. Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer*, p. 7.
8. Clark, Andy, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.
9. In many ways the argument grows out of an extended, appreciative but ultimately critical dialogue with Derrida's theses on writing and grammatology in the formation of the (Western) subject. While deconstructing notions of presence and logocentrism at the foundations of Western metaphysics, Derrida, like most other major Western philosophical thinkers, has still left us with a subject as disembodied, a floating signifier with no traction for agency.
10. Guattari, Felix, *Chaosmosis: An Ethicoaesthetic Paradigm*, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 4.
11. See Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks: 1800/1900*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1992, and Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1999.
12. Haraway, Donna, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Chicago IL: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003, p. 32. Also see Nigel Thrift, "Electric Animals: New Models of Everyday Life?", *Cultural Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2/3, 2004, pp. 461-482.
13. Deacon, Terrence, *The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain*, New York: Norton, 1997, p. 401.
14. Baldwin, James Mark, "Consciousness and Evolution", *Science*, vol. 2, 1895, pp. 219-223; Baldwin, *Development and Evolution*, New York: Macmillan, 1902. For a discussion of "Baldwinian evolution" in relation to Darwinism, see Robert Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

15. Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 436. We are not just a species that uses symbols. The symbolic universe has ensnared us in an inescapable web. Like a 'mind virus', the symbolic adaptation has infected us, and by virtue of the irresistible urge it has instilled in us to turn everything we encounter and everyone we meet into symbols, we have become the means by which it unceremoniously propagates itself throughout the world.
16. Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 345. Elsewhere (p. 322) Deacon summarizes his point eloquently as, "I do not suggest that a disembodied thought acted to change the physical structure of our brains, as might a god in a mythical story, but I do suggest that the first use of symbolic reference by some distant ancestors changed how natural selection processes have affected hominid brain evolution ever since. So in a very real sense I mean that the physical changes that make us human are the incarnations, so to speak, of the process of using words."
17. From the *Tao Te Ching*, quoted as an epigraph by Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 433.
18. The fact that symbolic representation can only emerge from the systematic interconnection of symbols in a holistic, all-or-none fashion (Deacon refers to it as the "threshold") has been flagged as a serious problem for Deacon's theory. See David Lumsden, "Crossing the symbolic threshold: a critical review of Terrence Deacon's *The Symbolic Species*", *Philosophical Psychology*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2002, pp. 155-171.
19. Deacon, *Symbolic Species*, p. 452.
20. This position was originally championed by Lev Vygotsky in his work on mimesis in children in 1934. It has recently been reinvigorated by the work of cognitive scientists such as Donald. See Lev Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, A Kozulin trans., Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1986.
21. Clark, Andy, *Supersizing the Mind: Embodiment, Action, and Cognitive Extension*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, p. xxviii.
22. Clark, Andy and David Chalmers, "The extended mind", *Analysis*, vol. 58, no. 1, 1998, pp. 8-9.
23. David Chalmers' foreword to Clark, *Supersizing the Mind*, p. xiv. For a more extended discussion of these points, see David Chalmers, "Perception and the Fall from Eden", *Perceptual Experience*, Tamar Szabò Gendler and John Hawthorn eds, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 49-125.
24. See Clark's own exploration of this theme: Andy Clark, "Re-Inventing Ourselves: The Plasticity of Embodiment, Sensing, and Mind", *Journal of Medicine & Philosophy* (Routledge), vol. 32, no. 3, 2007, pp. 263-282.
25. Clark, Andy, "Is language special? Some remarks on control, coding, and co-ordination", *Language Sciences*, vol. 26, no. 6, 2004, pp. 717-726.
26. Clark, Andy, "Material Symbols", *Philosophical Psychology*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2006, p. 293.
27. Barsalou, Lawrence W, "Perceptual symbol systems", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1999, pp. 577-660.
28. Elman, Jeffrey L, "An alternative view of the mental lexicon", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, vol. 8, no. 7, 2004, pp. 301-306.
29. Clowes, Robert, "Semiotic symbols and the missing theory of thinking", *Interaction Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1,

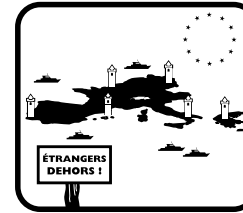
2007, pp. 105-124. Clowes, Robert, "A Self-Regulation Model of Inner Speech and its Role in the Organisation of Human Conscious Experience", *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, vol. 14, 2007, pp. 59-71.

30. Dennett, Daniel, *Consciousness Explained*, New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1991, pp. 218-219.
31. Clark, "Is language special?", p. 720. While Clark's account is of great appeal, it is difficult to understand how language moves beyond being an external tool to an "internal" self-regulatory device. In order to address this issue, Rob Clowes and his colleagues at the Center for Research in Cognitive Science (COGS) at the University of Sussex have constructed a series of experiments with robots that seek to explore how the process of internalization might get underway. See RW Clowes, C Herrera et al., "How Words become Cognitive", paper delivered at Symposium on Language and Robots, Aveiro, Portugal, 10-12 December 2007.
32. See especially Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1991, pp. 308-312.



## Schengen.com

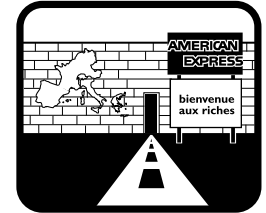
Il y a environ 170 millions de migrant-e-s dans le monde. L'Europe en accueille seulement un demi-million par an.



Les étranger-e-s admis-e-s sont les travailleurs hautement qualifiés qui peuvent espérer décrocher un permis de travail.



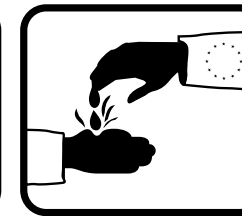
Les autres, les non-qualifié-e-s, trouvent généralement porte close. Pour eux, la seule solution est d'enfreindre la loi.



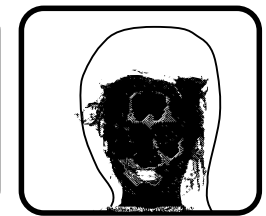
Les critères d'entrée dans l'espace Schengen étant très élevés, un marché de passage des frontières s'est développé.



2 005 décès d'immigrant(e)s sont survenus de 1993 à mai 2000 aux frontières de l'Europe (cf. United for Intercultural Action).



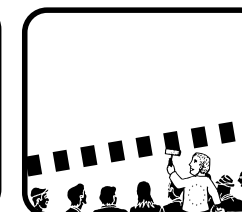
Les immigrant-e-s sans papiers et demandeurs d'asile qui ont survécus aux passages des frontières sont transformés en "parias" :



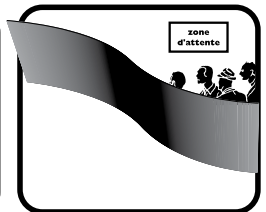
...exploitation patronale de ces "clandestins officiels" que sont les sans papiers non régularisés, voués au travail dissimulé...



... déni de droits civiques, économiques, médicaux et sociaux,...



Placement en "Zones d'Attente" et en "Centres de Rétention", sans papiers incarcérés comme des criminels



parce que nous ne voulons pas de tout cela, nous demandons et demanderons encore :



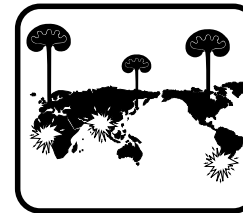
La Régularisation de tous les Sans-Papiers



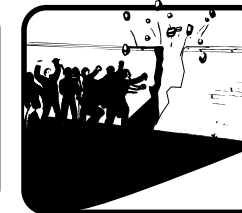
Le respect absolu du Droit d'Asile



Le refus des quotas et des politiques qui ont pour effet de vider les pays pauvres de leurs forces vives en drainant leurs compétences vers les pays riches



La fermeture des Centres de rétention et des zones d'attente



L'égalité des droits et la citoyenneté pour toutes et tous, notamment par le droit de vote.



# Chroniques de guerre

Relevé cartographique des firmes, instituts, associations, institutions, groupes confidentiels, lobbys, familles, ... liés directement ou indirectement à Lagardère.

Il existe plusieurs manifestations des médias en France, et l'attention portée ci-contre au groupe Lagardère ne doit pas dissimuler les quelques autres, français, famille Seydoux (Libération, UGC), Bernard Arnaud-Lyria, François Penault (Le Parisien, TF1), allemands ou anglo-saxons (RTL, Pearson, 2 leaders européens, News Corp., Disney...). Lagardère articule cependant à une puissance de propagande et de l'opinion des esprits, un réseau de firmes productrices d'armement ainsi que de multiples autres intérêts.

Le diagramme ci-dessous ne cherche pas à faire la part belle aux soi-disant "indépendants" qui, tel Le Monde, le Soleil ou Galleries pour ne citer qu'eux, qui ne s'en distinguent que par la taille. Les objectifs et la philosophie de ses sociétés de presse et d'édition ne sont pas les mêmes que ceux des groupes d'éditeurs ou de presse critique, alternatifs ou autonomes.

LA CARTOGRAPHIE, POUR QUOI FAIRE ?

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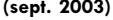
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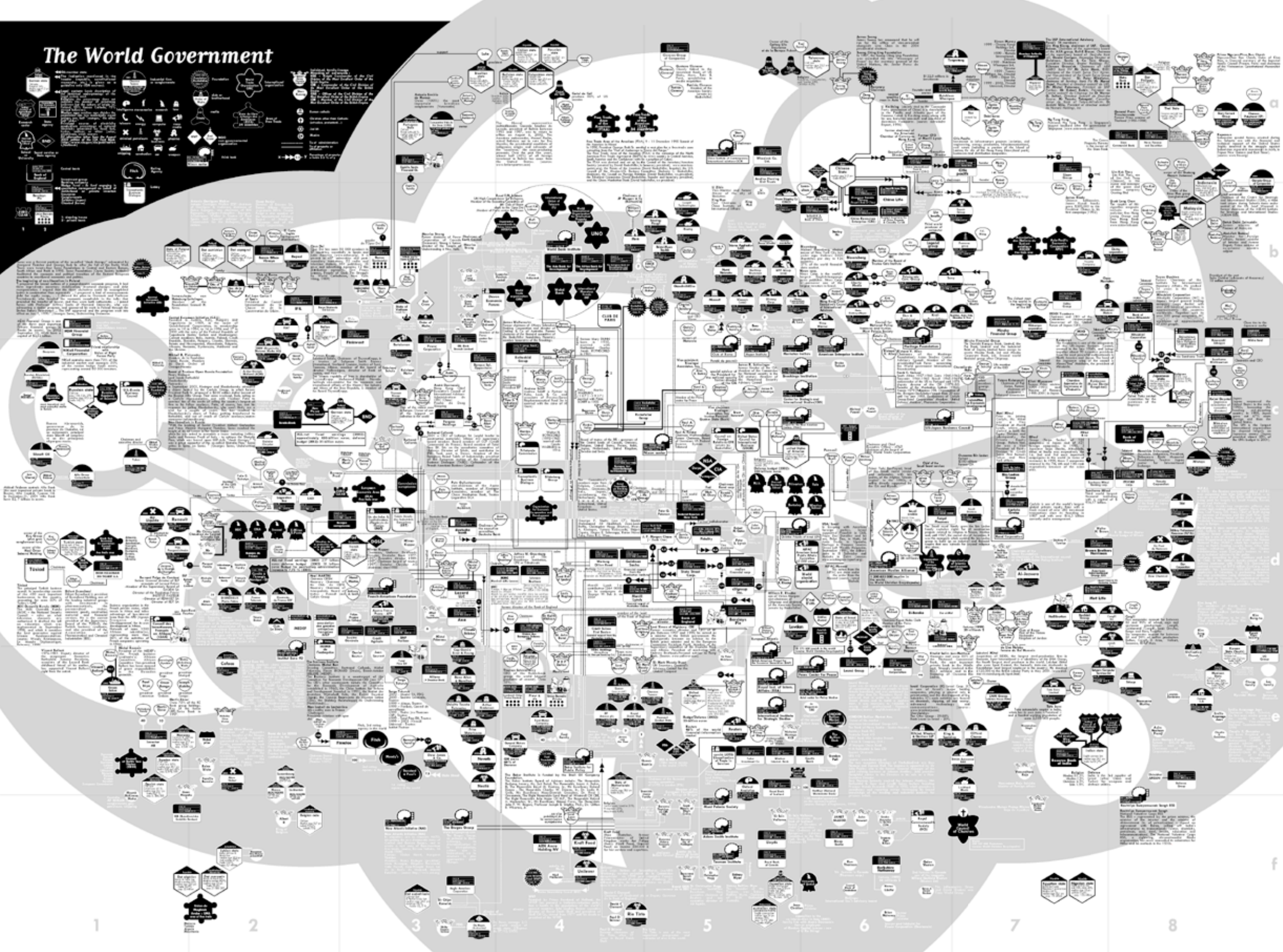


**(sept. 2003)**





# The World Government



Brian Holmes

## Future Map

*"We are living through a movement from an organic industrial society to a polymorphous information system – from all work to all play, a deadly game."*

Donna Haraway, *The Cyborg Manifesto*

In his final book, published in 1964 at the height of the industrial boom under the title of *God & Golem, Inc.*, the scientist Norbert Wiener asked a question: "Can God play a significant game with his own creature? Can any creator, even a limited one, play a significant game with his own creature?"<sup>1</sup> The example he used was trivial: a computer program for playing checkers, written by A.L. Samuel of the IBM corporation. As for the definition of "significant", it's not very clear: but Wiener does observe that just as in the contest between God and Lucifer, the programmer may well lose the game.

He had reason to be nervous. During the war he had worked on electronic targeting mechanisms and had come to conceive the feedback loop as a model for every kind of purpose, whether of animals or machines. In December 1944, acting jointly with his colleagues Howard Aiken and John von Neumann, he invited a select group of researchers to join a "Teleological Society" to study the intersections of neurology and engineering.<sup>2</sup> The name made use of a term that had previously been reserved for the final causes of speculative philosophers and theologians. Soon after its first meeting, the Teleological Society transformed into the famous Macy Conferences on "Circular Causal and Feedback Mechanisms in Biological and Social Systems"—a title summed up as "Cybernetics" after Wiener coined the word in 1947.

In the course of that year he publicly renounced any direct collaboration with the military brass and the giant corporations. He was repelled by his wartime experience and sought to exercise his mind against nature alone, a passive, transparent, Augustinian nature harbouring no hidden intentions, and not some Manichean universe full of opaque bluffs, evil designs and dissimulations. He did not want his new science to develop as a calculator's battle against an unseen, calculating enemy.<sup>3</sup> This antimilitarist stance placed him at odds with the fiercely anticommunist von Neumann, a mathematical genius and a central figure in the creation of the atom bomb. Von Neumann, who

attended Atomic Energy Commission meetings on a wheelchair, is thought to have been among the models for Stanley Kubrick's Dr Strangelove.<sup>4</sup> One of his theories, developed extensively by the mathematicians at the RAND Corporation, sought to identify the most rational strategies for any two-person game by relentlessly calculating all the possible moves of each player.

Wiener saw von Neumann's game theory as deterministic and scientifically outdated. He preferred the statistical analysis of stochastic processes and a policy of continuous error-correction, rather than any quest for absolute certainty. By the 1960s he was increasingly concerned that decision-making might be taken over by game-theoretical robots, capable of learning checkers and many other things—until one day, like the Golem, they would run amok and unleash some kind of Doomsday Machine. In the face of that final cause, every human game would become insignificant.

Today Dr Strangelove has receded into the never-never lands of science fiction and game theory no longer unnerves the general public. But for an understanding of the God and Golem equation in the post-industrial information age, one need only look more closely into the nature of Wiener's own research during World War II. Here, in effect, lay the origins of his revulsion. Beginning in 1940, he set to work on a closed-loop information system called an antiaircraft predictor. This was a three-part problem: use radar to record the zigzagging path of an airplane performing evasive manoeuvres; calculate the probabilities of its future course based on its past behaviour; and convey this information to a servomechanism that would correct the firing of the gun—an operation to be repeated in a continuous, circular fashion. Yet more was at stake than a sensor, a calculator and a servomotor, because the gun, like the enemy airplane, was also connected to a human being. This, for Wiener, was fundamental:

*It does not seem even remotely possible to eliminate the human element as far as it shows itself in enemy behaviour. Therefore, in order to obtain as complete a mathematical treatment as possible of the overall control problem, it is necessary to assimilate the different parts of the system to a single basis, either human or mechanical. Since our understanding of the mechanical aspects of gun pointing appeared to us far ahead of our psychological understanding, we chose to try and find a mechanical analogue of the gun pointer and the airplane pilot. In both cases, the operators seemed to regulate their conduct by observing the errors committed in a certain pattern of behaviour and by opposing these errors by actions deliberately tending to reduce them... We call this negative feedback.*<sup>5</sup>



The upshot of Wiener's prediction research was a double inscription of the "human element" into the system: on the one hand, as a servomechanism, pointing the gun or steering the plane, and on the other, as a source of information for the feedback loop. The historian of technology Peter Galison stresses the mechanical side of the equation: "The core lesson that Wiener drew from his anti-aircraft work was that the conceptualization of the pilot and gunner as servomechanisms within a single system was essential and irreducible."<sup>6</sup> Philip Mirowski, in his study of the cybernetic model in economics, lays the emphasis on the informational aspect of the paradigm: "The physical and the human both had to undergo ontological metamorphosis into 'messages with noise' in order to be combined into a new synthesis."<sup>7</sup> But Galison and Mirowski are speaking of the same thing: the infomechanical being that emerged from World War II.

Its double constitution could be felt in the uncanny identity of the strange new creatures that fired the guns and piloted the planes: both seemed to waver between machinelike, implacable humans and intelligent, humanlike machines. Where did this uncanniness come from? Galison's insight was to realize that the closed-loop information machine, in its circular, self-correcting unity, was ultimately defined by the opaque manoeuvres of the dodging pilot in the plane, whenever he was pursued by the aggressive eye of the gunner. In other words, cybernetics was a Manichean science, permeated by the violent interrogations of its subject and the dissimulating absence of its object. This founding relation makes up what Galison calls "the ontology of the enemy".

The systemic unity of man and machine, split at its heart by an ontology of the enemy, is what I will explore in this essay, in order to gain a new understanding of surveillance. But the concept of surveillance itself will have to be expanded far beyond its traditional range. Here is the thesis in a nutshell. The automated inspection of personal data can no longer be conceived as a purely negative function, an all-seeing eye, a hidden ear, a baleful presence behind the scenes. The myriad forms of contemporary electronic surveillance now constitute a proactive force, the irremediably multiple feedback loops of a cybernetic society, devoted to controlling the future. Conflict lodges within these cybernetic circles. They knit together the actors of transnational state capitalism, in all its cultural and commercial complexity; but their distant model is Wiener's anti-aircraft predictor, which programs the antagonistic eye into an obedient killing machine. Under the auspices of a lowly servomechanism coupled into an informational loop, we glimpse the earliest stirrings of the Golem that matters to us today, in the age of data mining and neuromarketing; and this Golem is ourselves, the cyborg populations of the computerized democracies.

Our movements, our speech, our emotions and even our dreams have become the informational message that is incessantly decoded, probed and reconfigured into statistical silhouettes, serving as targets for products, services, political slogans or interventions of the police. Each of us, paradoxically, is at once the promise and the threat of the future, which itself is our *Telos*, our God, our Creator. And so, under the incessant scrutiny of today's surveillance technologies, Wiener's philosophical question returns in an inverse form. Can a creature play a significant game with her creator? Can we play a significant game with the cybernetic society that has created us?

## CARDINAL POINTS

To set up the context of this question, I would like to introduce four characteristic technological systems, which together trace out the contours of our society. These systems are all of North American origin. They illustrate how the hegemonic power spends its immense defence budgets on 'dual-use' technologies—both civil and military—that continually intertwine with each other even as they reshape the emerging global order.<sup>8</sup> You might think of these four systems as cardinal points, or even mapping instruments: they exemplify the way that concentrated computing power charts out the present, in order to wipe clean the slates of the past and colonize the future.

*The Joint Helmet-Mounted Cueing System* is a semi-opaque visor set into a magnetic helmet that tracks where the pilot's head is pointing.<sup>9</sup> It functions as a display surface, replacing the traditional control panel and allowing the pilot to read aircraft performance, targeting information, weaponry status and threat predictions from the greenish letters of a computational scrim that remains constantly within his field of vision. At the same time, he is able to lock on a Sidewinder missile by just looking at its target. The helmets are made by Vision Systems International, a joint venture between Rockwell Collins and Elbit Systems of Israel. The fighter-plane cockpit places the human being at the junction between information-delivery systems and a whole battery of controls and launch mechanisms, to be operated in quasi-extraterrestrial environments. It is the ultimate man-machine interface, something like the cyborg's natural home.<sup>10</sup> It is here that new answers are constantly found to the question raised by military psychologist John Stroud at the Sixth Macy Conference in 1949, way back at the dawn of cybernetics: "So we have the human operator surrounded on both sides by very precisely known mechanisms and the question comes up, 'What kind of a machine have we placed in the middle?'"<sup>11</sup>

*InferX privacy preserving real-time analytics* is a data-mining tool based on previous research carried out by the parent company, Datamat, for the targeting of missile interceptors.<sup>12</sup> It works by inserting an “InferAgent” program into an entire range of computer systems—banks, airports, ticketing agencies, harbour authorities, etc.—then using encrypted transmissions to perform real-time pattern-recognition analysis on the data that circulates through those systems. The software is promoted by Michael Brown, the disgraced former head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): “What these algorithms do is they look at what’s the normal pattern for any given set of data points, and if those veer off by any fashion, then the protocol says you need to look at that.”<sup>13</sup> InferX is designed to hunt around the world for “unknown unknowns”: those things that “we don’t know we don’t know”, as Donald Rumsfeld puts it. Because the data is not physically warehoused, it escapes the restrictions placed by Congress on DARPA’s (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency’s) Total Information Awareness (TIA) program. Indeed, the company has actively marketed its system for the US military’s TANGRAM project, which effectively replaces TIA.<sup>14</sup> And InferX is a dual-use technology, including a marketing application:

*InferCluster uses the same distributed architecture as InferAgent to send agents over networks for the clustering of groups of objects with similar features from multiple data sources. InferCluster can be used to group customers with similar purchasing behaviour, or to even discover patterns of who is not buying and why.*

In that last phrase, one begins to sense the disquieting pervasiveness of what Peter Galison calls “the ontology of the enemy”.

*The Personix customer relationship management system*, developed by the Acxiom corporation, divides the entire US population into 70 demographic clusters, according to “age, estimated household income, presence and age range of children, marital status, home ownership status, estimated net worth and population density”.<sup>15</sup> The system is built on Acxiom’s InfoBase, which is the largest continuously updated consumer database in the United States, containing public tax and census information as well as innumerable bits of data culled from the records of corporate clients. The database covers some 110 million households—basically the entire marketing universe of the United States—and, unlike the geodemographic systems of rival companies such as Claritas, it provides direct mail, telephone and email access to *individual* households, not just zip code groups. It profiles the cultural background, lifestyle, hobbies and aspirations

of each cluster, and it also tracks them through life-stage changes, allowing for what Acxiom calls “preemptive marketing”, or the chance to begin pitching products and services to households shortly *before* they enter a new phase. The resources of companies like Acxiom are increasingly used by politicians. As Democratic campaigner Terry McAuliffe said:

*If I want to sit at my desk, pull up on the screen the state of Ohio, and say, ‘Who in Ohio says that education is going to be the number one issue they’re going to vote on,’ six seconds later, 1.2 million names will pop up. I then have the ability to hit buttons and do telemarketing to them immediately, or to send emails to them immediately, send direct mail to them immediately, or actually send someone to their door to talk to them.*<sup>16</sup>

The technology of the “panoptic sort”, studied in the early 1990s by Oscar Gandy,<sup>17</sup> has taken a quantum leap forward—and it will take another one very soon, when the lifestyle information offered by social networking sites like MySpace starts being exploited by the data miners.

*Orbit Traffic Management Technology*, sold by the ShopperTrak corporation,<sup>18</sup> is the last point on the quadrant. It consists of an unobtrusive ceiling-mounted video camera that compiles records of customer movement through the store and correlates them with both sales figures and labour force data. Up to 254 units can be networked to cover large areas and cameras can also be installed outside to compare how many people pass by and how many actually enter. The data is transmitted to ShopperTrak’s treatment centre, where it is processed and presented on a web platform for remote access by management. The point is to use the information as a guide for adjusting in-store traffic flow, product placement, signage and advertising. The effectiveness of the design changes can then be checked against the hard data of sales. The cash register results of individual stores can also be compared with macro trends at the regional and national levels, allowing for performance benchmarking. Even more crucially, real-time data on regional and national sales of a given product line can be used for hour-by-hour adjustments in the size of the retail labour force, by means of an application called ESP or “Easy Staffing Planner”. In this way, businesses are expected to move toward “customer experience management”, which consists of an ability to reconfigure both the built environment and the reception staff in real time, in order to capture the client’s desire more efficiently and convert it into sales. The ideal seems to be a situation where a single look leads inevitably to a purchase.

Each of these four technologies represents a major innovation in its class. But at the same time, they are only a tiny part of a vastly wider range of surveillance techniques, all integrated to larger control systems that increasingly rely on predictive algorithms. When surveillance develops to this degree you can say goodbye not only to privacy, but also to the entire public/private divide on which individual choice in a democracy was founded. Today, what Habermas called the “structural transformation of the public sphere” has crossed another threshold.<sup>19</sup> In the twentieth century, it was a matter of large-scale news and advertising companies distorting the public sphere in which ideas are exchanged. Now we are heading toward an entirely different kind of society, based not on informed debate and democratic decision, but on electronic identification, statistical prediction and environmental seduction. A society whose major professional preoccupation is preemptively shaping the consciousness of the consumer. In this kind of society, the ciphers of opportunity presented by marketing data are never very far from the targeting information thrown off by an evasive enemy.

The four examples I've presented take us from looks that kill, with the helmet-mounted cueing system, all the way to looks that consume, with customer experience management. In between, they show how data mining provides the power to identify probable criminals or terrorists, but also probable buyers of a product or voters for a candidate. This kind of ‘future mapping’ via the combination of data collection, predictive analysis and environmental simulation could be found in dozens of other realms, from traffic control to finance. In every case, the tracking and analysis of human beings helps to configure a man-machine interface. The classical example is the explicitly cyborg form of the pilot inside his moulded cockpit, which has led to extensive development of flight-simulation devices for both testing and training.<sup>20</sup> But the most extensive condition of interface arises from the relation between mobile consumers and what the architectural critic Sze Tsung Leong calls “control space”, i.e., urban design shaped by real-time information on the aggregate behaviour of individuals.<sup>21</sup> The word ‘control’ has a precise meaning here: it refers to the continuous adjustment of an apparatus—or in this case, an environment—according to feedback data on its human variables. The environment is overcoded with an optimizing algorithm, fed by data coming directly from you. This notion of continuous adjustments to an overcoded environment is key, if we want to understand the pervasiveness of surveillance in today's societies—a pervasiveness that goes well beyond military, police and secret service functions. To understand contemporary surveillance, however, requires abandoning two commonly held ideas: the literary image of Big Brother peering out from a screen and the more complex architectural image of the Panopticon.

What's interesting is that both these images correspond to comprehensive models of society and subjectivity. The world of Orwell's *1984* is not only defined by a camera hidden in a telescreen, manned by secret police watching out for crimethink. It's also a regime of absolute identification with the dark-haired, moustachioed image of Big Brother and of absolute rejection and hatred of the Jewish traitor Goldstein. *1984* depicts a totalitarian state, regulated by arbitrary trials, torture and spectacular executions and articulated by the language of Newspeak, which allows for no internal contradictions, indeed, no difference whatsoever in society or the inmost conscience of the individual. But in that respect it's an archaic image, one that corresponds very little to the world in which we live, even if there are thousands of NSA (National Security Agency) operatives devoting all their time to spying on specific persons and even if there are orange-suited prisoners held in the spectacular torture centres of Guantánamo.

Similarly, the Panopticon is not just a circular building with windowed cells and a central tower outfitted with venetian blinds, where a functionary can watch a prisoner's every move without himself being seen. It's also a world of proliferating files, dossiers and case histories, each administered by professionals who seek to reform and retrain the individual, to ingrain a discipline into his mind, emotions and reflexes, a discipline that will operate even without the all-seeing eye. Panoptic society is a bureaucracy that individualizes its subjects through the imposition of a regular and codified system of differences, creating functional categories of able-bodied men and women whose actions and gestures can be articulated into a productive whole, and whose truth can be distilled into the discourses of specialists. Despite their inexorably ramifying knowledge, these specialists always retain something of the warden, the doctor, the educator, shaping pliable personalities within the stable framework of all-encompassing institutions. But as we know, such clearly defined institutions with their carefully moulded subjects are increasingly hard to find in present-day society, even if we do not lack schoolmasters, sergeants and psychiatrists in the pay of the state.

It's obvious that both Big Brother and the Panopticon are dated, though they have not entirely disappeared. The question, then, is how do we characterize a surveillance regime that is neither totalitarian nor disciplinary, but depends primarily on the statistical treatment of aggregate data in order to shape environments in which populations of mobile individuals can be channelled and controlled? How, in other words, do we understand the political economy of surveillance in a cybernetic society?

## SECURITY DEVICES

It's astonishing to see how Foucault, in his 1978 lectures at the Collège de France, immediately begins to distance himself from the image of the Panopticon and the concept of a disciplinary society that he had advanced only two years before, in *Discipline and Punish*. The 1978 lectures are entitled *Security, Territory, Population*. They deal with what Foucault calls "security devices", or the regulatory mechanisms whereby the economic activity of a population is both optimized and protected against disruption.<sup>22</sup> The first example is a mid-eighteenth-century redevelopment plan for the city of Nantes, which involves cutting out new streets to serve four overlapping functions: the aeration of unhygienic neighbourhoods; the facilitation of trade inside the city; the direct connection of the streets to long-distance transportation networks; and the surveillance of traffic in an urban environment that is no longer walled or subject to curfew. The keyword here is *circulation*. Instead of developing closed, precisely defined spaces for exclusive uses, as in a disciplinary architecture, the plan creates an open series of multifunctional devices that can expand in various directions according to patterns of future growth that can only be foreseen as probabilities. Further examples include the treatment of the plague by an identification of its transmission vectors, or the mitigation of famine by economic adjustments that discourage the hoarding of grain. In each case, the nature of an existing phenomenon and its effects on a population are carefully analysed before any measures are taken. The aim of the liberal art of government is not to punish, transform or even save individuals, as in a disciplinary regime, but instead to arrive at the optimal distribution of certain phenomena in society, "to reduce the most unfavourable, deviant normalities in relation to the normal, general curve".

All of this is quite unlike a sovereign upholding an arbitrary and terrifying law—which was the role of the ancient kings or of Big Brother. But it is equally distinct from an administration imposing disciplinary routines on an individual—which is the effect of panoptic surveillance, whether in prison or on the factory floor. It is now a matter of political economists adjusting the parameters of an open environment so as to stimulate and channel the probable behaviours of a population and to manage the risks entailed by its free and natural mobility, or indeed, by the expression of its desire. The problem of governments under this liberal paradigm, Foucault explains, "is how they can say yes; it is how to say yes to this desire".

What's impressive here is the about-face in Foucault's theory of the panoptic order—a rethinking motivated by the rise of neoliberalism, amid the shift to a post-industrial

society. He goes so far as to say he was wrong when he claimed in his work on the prison that the disciplines were the coercive "dark side" of Enlightenment liberties, the fundamental mechanisms of power lying beneath the formal surface of liberal theory. Instead, he now maintains, "freedom is nothing else but the correlative of the deployment of apparatuses of security". The two, in other words, evolve as a function of each other. Developing that same idea a year later, he declares with a certain irony that the liberal art of government "consumes freedom"—"freedom of the market, freedom to buy and sell, the free exercise of property rights, freedom of discussion, possible freedom of expression"—and therefore, "it must produce it, it must organize it".<sup>23</sup> It must provide the institutional environment for the exercise of certain freedoms, including the conditions under which one person's freedom can be prevented from limiting another's, or indeed, from threatening the entire mechanism of economic exchanges. The liberal art of government, for Foucault, consists in intervening not on the players but on "the rules of the game".

From here it would have taken just one more step to foresee how the statistical interpretation of computerized surveillance data would open up entirely new possibilities for the governance of mobile populations circulating through the world space. In effect, the analysis of liberal economic regulation allows us to understand the tremendous incentives for the global deployment of feedback environments since the close of the Cold War. Cybernetics—whose etymology means both 'steersman' and 'governor'—has become the applied social science of control at a distance, the necessary correlate of American aspirations to global free trade and, indeed, to liberal empire. This relation between classical liberalism and technological control would have been faintly visible some three decades ago, for someone trying to look into the future.<sup>24</sup> But Foucault was not a social forecaster, as the sociologist Daniel Bell claimed to be. Instead, he worked as a genealogist, examining the successive historical strata that combine in the present. He conceived the security devices as an eighteenth-century addition to the disciplinary procedures of the sixteenth century, just as those procedures had been superimposed on the juridical forms of medieval sovereignty:

*There is not a series of successive elements, the appearance of the new causing the earlier ones to disappear. There is not the legal age, the disciplinary age, the security age... In reality you have a series of complex edifices... in which what above all changes is the dominant characteristic, or more exactly, the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security.*"<sup>25</sup>

It is the complexity of such an architecture that we must take into account if we want to develop an image of surveillance within the wider panorama of the corporate and military order. The difficulty, in a fully-fledged neoliberal society, is to see how a wide range of different actors continually attempt to manipulate the environments in which individuals freely take their decisions; and to see in turn how state power intervenes at the highest level, with attempts to readjust the concrete “security devices” of the corporations and the police, along with the broader and more abstract rules of economic governance. The difficulty, in short, is to create the image or the metaphor of a deeply Manichean society where, as Daniel Bell observed, “games between persons” have definitively replaced any kind of collective struggle against nature.<sup>26</sup> This society, which displaces so much of its conflict into the future, is nonetheless the present framework in which individuals, groups and populations all become cyborgs, that is, people bound inseparably to machines, struggling to make sense and to achieve purposes within mediated environments that are expressly designed to manipulate them. But this is also the framework that a neoconservative state power like that of the George W. Bush administration seeks to restructure, by reinforcing the earlier paradigms of military discipline and sovereign law. Very few people have sought to theorize this highly unstable condition of governance. But has anyone managed to crystallize it in an image? And has anyone managed to oppose it with what Foucault would have called “counter-behaviours”?

## PRECOC VISIONS

One of the most original images of data-gathering technologies is proposed by William Bogard, in his book *The Simulation of Surveillance*. Going beyond Big Brother and the Panopticon, he explores an imaginary future—or “social science fiction”—where surveillance outstrips itself to become simulation, a virtual reality in which crime is already vanquished and desire is already satisfied. Bogard is keenly aware of the historical role of cybernetics in preparing the ground for such a society, as he indicates by speaking of simulation as “hypersurveillance control”. But he works in a Baudrillardian vein, with an ecstatic fascination for the synthesized image. Simulation, he writes, “is nothing less than perfect surveillance, surveillance raised to the highest power, where nothing escapes the gaze. Everything already observed, absolute foreknowledge of events grounded in the possession of the codes which generate them.”<sup>27</sup> There is something very close here to a game-theoretic vision, in which all the moves are already known and all the strategies have already been played. Bogard probably felt vindicated by movies like *The Truman Show* or, even better, *The Matrix*, both of which came out after his

book. But what gets lost in the fascination of simulation is the fundamental paradox of control, its Manichean nature.

Another film offers a stranger and more searching image of surveillance, though without quite matching the science fiction story on which it was based. I’m thinking of Steven Spielberg’s *Minority Report*, which tells the tale of the experimental “Pre-Crime Department” of the Washington D.C. police in the year 2054. Spielberg is known for special effects, and some of them go straight to the point. The chase scene captures the ambiguity of contemporary identification and tracking technologies by imagining their logical development in the future. Billboard advertisements spring to life, activated by a retinal scan, to call out the name of the central character, John Anderton, as he strides anxiously through a corridor to the subway. In a bit of poetic justice, American Express, one of the pioneers of the “panoptic sort” studied by Oscar Gandy, gets the highest visibility in this thirty-second orgy of brand name seductions. Another quick scan at the subway turnstile epitomizes the convenience of biometric identification. And the matching cut to the police, tracking their prey through the transport system, recalls the price we pay for it. Later on, this imaginary vision comes extremely close to Foucault’s notion of enforced optimization, when the inventor of Pre-Crime, police commissioner Lamar Burgess, addresses a crowd of people celebrating the extension of the device to the entire country. He says to them: “Enjoy yourselves! That’s an order.” And everyone seems delighted to hear even the police commissioner saying yes, saying yes to their desire. Still the most powerful, most haunting image in the film is that of the precognitives themselves: strange, misshapen creatures, pumped full of drugs, bathing in some amniotic solution, with electrodes pressed to their heads to read off their visions of the future.

These three creatures are clearly cyborgs. Yet rather than being outfitted with powerful mechanical prosthetics and assisted with augmented cognitive faculties, as in fighter-plane cockpits or in movies like *The Terminator*, here they are merely monitored, probed to their innermost imaginings. It is the sensitivity of their emotional responses to the world that makes it possible for the police to predict the future. Philip K. Dick’s short story is worth quoting here:

*In the gloomy half-darkness the three idiots sat babbling. Every incoherent utterance, every random syllable, was analyzed, compared and reassembled in the form of visual symbols, transcribed on conventional punchcards, and ejected into various coded slots. All day long the idiots babbled, imprisoned in their special high-backed chairs, held in*



*one rigid position by metal bands, and bundles of wiring, clamps. Their physical needs were taken care of automatically. They had no spiritual needs. Vegetable-like, they muttered and dozed and existed. Their minds were dull, confused, lost in shadows. But not the shadows of today. The three gibbering, fumbling creatures, with their enlarged heads and wasted bodies, were contemplating the future.*

In the movie, Spielberg has the precogs generate mental images of the future, without any mediation of computer analysis. He makes them self-aware, conscious of their visions and even able to suggest a course of action, as when the precog Agatha tells Anderton that he can change the future. But in that way, Spielberg simplifies a metaphor that was much more brutal and precise in Dick's short story. There the precogs are pure sensibility, without reason or personal identity—something like the “reptilian brains” that contemporary marketers try to map out in their experimental subjects.<sup>28</sup> The precogs, in Dick's story, are uncanny, Golem-like creatures, wavering between men and machines. They stand in for the populations whose affects and mental activities are relentlessly probed and palpitated, so that their aggregate data image can be mirrored by seductive products and waking dreams.

Other elements from the narrative are also lost in the film. Spielberg and his scriptwriters make the Anderton character into the victim of a plot woven by his hierarchical superior, Lamar Burgess, in order to cover up the killing of Agatha's mother, who sought to take the precog back from the police. The result is a typical emotional drama, focused on the daughter's anguished visions of her mother's death and on Anderton's parallel memories of his own murdered son. By contrast, in Dick's vastly more paranoid imagination the plot against Anderton is a way for the Army to abolish Pre-Crime as an independent department and to wrest control of the future back from the civilian authorities. What's more, Dick gave a precious indication in the story, having Anderton explain that when he worked out the theory of Pre-Crime he refused the temptation to apply it to the stock market, where he could obviously have made fortunes. Had Spielberg been able to seize these two motifs—the relation to finance and the Army's hunger for power over the civilian state—then the film, which came out shortly after September 11, could have become the metaphor of an entire epoch.

Truth is stranger than fiction. The neocon takeover of the American state effectively transferred power to the President as Commander-in-Chief of the military and to the Pentagon under Donald Rumsfeld. The oil and arms industries that had taken a back seat to finance in the 1990s now returned to the forefront with a vengeance.<sup>29</sup>

A financially driven liberal regime regressed to its disciplinary reflexes under a resurgent sovereign gaze, as the “complex edifice” of power suddenly shifted on its bases. In a world where the speculative futures of the long stock market boom had collapsed, the fabricated need to invade Iraq became a new kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, a vastly more violent way to shape the future.

In 2002, shortly before the invasion of Iraq, DARPA launched what may have been its most twisted program ever: FutureMAP, or “Futures Markets Applied to Prediction”, developed as part of the Total Information Awareness program under the authority of a convicted criminal, the retired Admiral John Poindexter.<sup>30</sup> Here one can observe a precise and yet insane readjustment of what Foucault called “the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security”. Even as *Minority Report* was hitting the movie theatres, consultants for the United States Department of Defense were proposing a computerized “Policy Analysis Market” (PAM) that would mobilize the predictive capacities of investors by getting them to bet their money on civil, economic and military trends in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey. Finance, which for twenty years had been at the leading edge of cybernetic transformations, would now be repurposed for the needs of sovereign and disciplinary power. In this way, the distributed intelligence of the market would be harnessed and the price signals given off by these fictional ‘futures’ would indicate the likelihood of given trends or events.

At this point it's worth quoting from the mission statement of the Total Information Awareness program, because it exemplifies the military interpretation of the kinds of feedback loops that I have been discussing.

*The DARPA Information Awareness Office (IAO) will imagine, develop, apply, integrate, demonstrate and transition information technologies, components, and prototype closed-loop information systems that will counter asymmetric threats by achieving total information awareness useful for preemption, national security warning, and national security decision making.*<sup>31</sup>

The Policy Analysis Market would be a sensing device in such a self-regulating, closed-loop system—like a human thermostat connected to the inferno of American economic, diplomatic and military power. A mock-up of the trading interface, prepared by the Net Exchange company, shows Special Event Contracts concerning such eventualities as “Jordanian monarchy overthrown in 4th [quarter] 2004”, or “Arafat assassinated in

4th 2004"; while a Global Contracts section includes ranges of possible bets on "terror deaths" and "US military deaths". The trading function are overlaid on a map of the Middle East, like windows of geopolitical risk-opportunity. This interface, and the lure of profit it offered, would be the electrodes attached to the precognitive lobes of the investors. If they produced striking images, then preemptive policies would follow.

The PAM trading interface is literally a map of the future. It is also a perfect example of what Foucault calls a "security device", offering precise insight into the dynamics of surveillance under cybernetic capitalism. It is not a police program, but a market instituted in such a way as to precisely condition the free behaviour of its participants. It produces information while turning human actors into functional relays or, indeed, into servomechanisms; and it "consumes freedom" for a purpose. Like all security devices, it serves two functions. One is to optimize economic development: in this case, the development of financial speculation. But the other function is to produce information that will help to eliminate deviant behaviour of the kind that can't be brought into line with any 'normal' curve. This is the double teleology of closed-loop information systems in cybercapitalism. The map of the future is always a promised land to come. But there are always a few enemy targets on the way to get there. The question is, do you hold the gun? Do you watch as the others take aim? Or do you try to dodge the magic bullet?

## GOD MACHINES

The heraldic emblem of Total Information Awareness—a sky-blue sphere encompassing an earthly globe caught in the gaze of a radiant eye detached from the summit of a Masonic pyramid—is surely the purest expression of the exorbitant will to power unleashed on the twenty-first century. But all around the world, complex systems are striving to realize the goals of Wiener's original predictor, which itself had been a practical failure, destined for the closets of useless circuitry and the fevers of theoretical dreams. The sleep of reason under informatic surveillance gives rise to God machines. Yet every new claim to 'shock and awe' or 'full-spectrum dominance' is ill-conceived, illusory, useless.

The latest financial crisis, unfolding as I write in late 2007, is caused in part by the inability of banks to even know who will take the inevitable losses on subprime loans, since these have been bundled by computer into ultra-complex collateralized debt obligations (CDOs), themselves further collateralized into derivatives called "CDO-squared", whose monetary value has become almost impossible to assess.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile the 'surge' of

fresh (or, more often, returning) American troops in Iraq effectively defends the Stars and Stripes under the gaze of the media, but only on small parcels of territory and at limited hours of the day. Victory, too, has become hard to calculate. And as the humiliation of anticipated defeat pushes the dollar economy ever closer to its black hole of unpayable debt, one wonders which inventions of abstract mathematics will allow the insurance men to offer policies against collapse of the system. The hilarious scene in Kubrick's war room, with the wheelchair-genius calculating the underground survival of selected members of the human race and the five-star general screaming to the president about the dangers of a "mineshaft gap", suddenly does not look so far away from these horizons. Except, of course, for the subversive humour.<sup>33</sup>

Our society's obsession with controlling the future—and ensuring accumulation—has at least two consequences. The first is the organization of a consumer environment for the immediate satisfaction of anticipated desires, with the effect of eliminating desire as such. In its place comes an atmosphere of suspended disbelief where entire populations move zombie-like and intellectually silent beneath exaggerated images of their unconscious drives. The second consequence, which we have seen with such violence in recent years, is the simple removal of those who might conceivably trouble this tranquilized landscape with any kind of disturbing presence or speech. What remains in the field of public politics is dampened voice, dulled curiosity and insignificant critique, sinking to a nadir in the period of national consensus over American military intervention after September 11.

In the face of these trends, which have been gathering since at least the 1980s, large swathes of the world's population have reacted to the colonization of the future by seeking refuge in the distant past of revealed religion, giving rise to fundamentalisms, both Christian and Muslim, whose archaic vision of better days to come can only translate as a violent desire for apocalypse. Any number of national militaries, terrorist groups or guerrilla armies are willing to oblige, particularly in the historical lands of the Sacred Books, but also in places of deadly emptiness like Waco, Texas. The thing to realize is that the prophets of past and future go hand in hand. The computerized trader, the religious zealot, the military pilot and the suicidal terrorist are all protagonists in the "time wars" of the twenty-first century, whose coming Jeremy Rifkin predicted two decades ago, without being able to foresee the *dramatis personae*.<sup>34</sup> As Maurizio Lazzarato has written more recently: "The West is horrified by the new Islamic subjectivities. But it helped to create this monster, using its most peaceful and seductive techniques. We are not confronted with remnants of traditional societies in need of further modernization, but with veritable cyborgs that articulate the most ancient and most modern."<sup>35</sup>

In 1964, the year of *Dr Strangelove*, Norbert Wiener tried to conjure away the threat of deterministic game theory, which he saw as a sure-fire path to “push-button war”. He thought that by placing flawless reason on a single continuum with the imperfect human mind and the limited electronic computer—or, in other words, by understanding God and Golem to be “incorporated” within human experience—he could open up a more flexible ethical space, unbound to any ideology whether of religion or science. Yet today it is within this interface of God, man and machine that the Manichean games of corporate and military strategy are played, with few significant questions as to the rules, the stakes or the final causes. The cyborgs, like Kubrick’s strategic air commanders, have learned to stop worrying and love surveillance. But through the magic of computer media, their strange kind of love is now distributed much more widely through the population. The *telos* of humanity—its future map—once again looks like a bull’s eye of blind self-destruction.

## CONCLUSIONS

The question isn’t one of dodging the magic bullet or of constructing some fantasy space where you could survive unsurveilled. The question for artists, intellectuals and technologists is how to play a significant game, instead of reclining and declining in a gilded cage, as the PR and development wing for yet more corporate spin-offs of the mainline military devices. The question is how to engage in counter-behaviours, able to subvert the effects of cybernetic governance.

One thing we could do is to create more precise images and more evocative metaphors of the neoliberal art of government, in order to heighten awareness of the ways that intimate desire is predicted and manipulated. Such images and metaphors are desperately lacking, along with a Karl Marx of cybercapitalism. But another, more important thing we can do is to dig into the existential present and transform the everyday machines, by hacking them into unexpected shapes and configurations that can provide collaborative answers to the spaces of control. Critical communities of deviant subjectivity, forming at the site of the eviscerated private/public divide, are not subcultural frivolities but attempts to reinvent the very basis of the political. What’s at stake is the elaboration of different functional rules for our collective games, which in today’s society cannot be put into effect without the language of technology. Distributed infrastructure exists for such projects, in the form of open-source software. Laboratories for this kind of experimentation have been built *ad hoc*, by people such as Jaromil, Konrad Becker, Laurence

Rassel, Natalie Jeremijenko, Critical Art Ensemble, Hackitectura, the Institute for Applied Autonomy, Marko Peljhan and hundreds of others. But what we don’t have is any sustained institutional commitment, any governmental Golems who are willing to wake up from their waking dreams. And that makes it very difficult to bring together, over the medium and long term, the diverse range of people who are needed to help change the culture of the present.

Social interaction is always a game of control, as David Lyon’s work on surveillance shows.<sup>36</sup> But everything depends on who writes the rules and, even more, on how you play the game. To find a better way, or even to help raise the problem in its urgency and complexity, we would have to invent new kinds of cultural institutions able to take on more difficult and divisive issues—exactly the ones that the Manichean sciences of the postwar era succeeded in automating and hiding from view. Until artists, hackers and cultural critics are joined by scientists, sociologists, economists and philosophers with a purpose, there will be no deep and distributed critique of military neoliberalism, nor of the surveillance that articulates it. And in the absence of such an exorcism the ontology of the enemy will keep coming back to haunt us, like some undead ghost of the Cold War that never dissolved in the sun. This might even be the significance of the hilarious and supremely subversive ending that Kubrick gave to his film, when he has Vera Lynn’s optimistic, forties-era lyric come billowing up out of the mushroom clouds:

*We’ll meet again*

*Don’t know where, don’t know when*

*But I know we’ll meet again some sunny day...*

1. Wiener, Norbert, *God & Golem, Inc.: A Comment on Certain Points where Cybernetics Impinges on Religion*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1966, p. 17.
2. On the Teleological Society, and on Wiener generally, see Steve Heims, *John von Neumann and Norbert Wiener: From Mathematics to the Technologies of Life and Death*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1980, and Flo Conway and Jim Siegelman, *Dark Hero of the Information Age: In Search of Norbert Wiener, the Father of Cybernetics*, New York: Basic Books, 2005.
3. Cf. Norbert Wiener, *The Human Use of Human Beings*, New York: Da Capo, 1954, pp. 34-35: “The scientist is always working to discover the order and organization of the universe, and is thus playing a game against the arch enemy, disorganization. Is this devil Manichaeian or Augustinian? Is it a contrary force opposed to order or is it the very absence of order itself? [...] The Manichaeian devil is playing a game of poker against us and will readily resort to bluffing; which, as von Neumann explains in his *Theory of Games*, is intended not merely to enable us to win on a bluff, but also to prevent the other side from

- winning on the basis of a certainty that we will not bluff. Compared to this Manichaeian being of refined malice, the Augustinian devil is stupid. He plays a difficult game, but he may be defeated by our intelligence as thoroughly as by a sprinkle of holy water." Also see pp. 190-193 for explicit considerations on the Manichean nature of interstate politics, which Wiener considered "a bad atmosphere for science".
4. Cf. William Poundstone, *Prisoner's Dilemma: John von Neumann, Game Theory, and the Puzzle of the Bomb*, New York: Anchor Books, 1992, p. 190, n. 3. But there are other models for Dr Strangelove: Teller, von Braun, Kissinger and, above all, the game theorist Herbert Kahn, famous for "thinking the unthinkable".
  5. Wiener, Norbert, *I Am a Mathematician*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1956, pp. 251-252.
  6. Galison, Peter, "The Ontology of the Enemy: Norbert Wiener and the Cybernetic Vision", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 21, no. 1, Fall 1994, p. 238.
  7. Mirowski, Philip, *Machine Dreams: Economics Becomes a Cyborg Science*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 61.
  8. For an excellent discussion of dual-use technologies, see Jonathan D. Moreno, "DARPA on Your Mind", *Mind Wars: Brain Research and National Defense*, New York: Dana, 2006.
  9. See the product page available at <http://www.vsi-hmcs.com/index.php/jhmcs>, accessed 18 July 2011.
  10. For the origin of the word, see Manfred E Clynes and Nathan S Kline, "Cyborgs and Space", *Astronautics*, vol. 5, September 1960 (available at <http://web.mit.edu/digitalapollo/Documents/Chapter1/cyborgs.pdf>, accessed 18 July 2011).
  11. Stroud, John, "Psychological Moment in Perception", *Cybernetics: Circular Causal and Feedback Mechanisms in Biological and Social Systems, Transcriptions of the Sixth Conference*, Heinz von Foerster ed., New York: Josiah Macy Foundation, 1950, pp. 27-28.
  12. Corporate homepage available at <http://www.inferx.com>, accessed 18 July 2011.
  13. From a video interview with Brown on Dan Verton's Homeland Defense Week, available at <http://www.podtech.net/home/3766/former-fema-chief-michael-brown-on-data-mining>, accessed 18 July 2011.
  14. See the TANGRAM Proposer's Information Packet, available at <http://www.fbo.gov/spg/USAF/AFMC/AFRLRRS/Reference-Number-BAA-06-04-IFKA/SynopsisP.html>, accessed 18 July 2011 and the White Paper by Jesus Mena, "Modernizing the National Targeting System", available in the "Expert Insight" section of the InferX site. The firm Booz Allen Hamilton, which won the general contract for the TANGRAM project, is located in McLean, VA, alongside Datamat and InferX; it is not clear whether InferX has actually been hired for the project.
  15. Acxiom corporate homepage available at <http://www.acxiom.com>, accessed 18 July 2011.
  16. Terry McAuliffe, quoted in Douglas Rushkoff's PBS documentary, *The Persuaders*, 2004; transcript available at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/persuaders/etc/script.html>, accessed 18 July 2011.
  17. Gandy, Oscar H., *The Panoptic Sort: A Political Economy of Personal Information*, Boulder CO: Westview, 1993.
  18. ShopperTrak corporate homepage, available at <http://www.shoppertrak.com>, accessed 18 July 2011.
  19. Habermas, Jürgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Thomas Burger trans., Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991.
  20. For an insightful study of how the cockpit model has served for the retooling of public education in the US, see Douglas D Noble, "Cockpit Cognition: Education, the Military and Cognitive Engineering", *AI & Society*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1989. In conclusion Noble writes: "The means and ends of education are being reshaped within a massive military/industrial research and development enterprise, ongoing since World War II, to engineer appropriate human factors for high performance technological systems."
  21. Leong, Sze Tsung, "Uterior Spaces", *The Harvard Design School Guide to Shopping*, Chuihua Judy Chung et al. eds, Cologne: Taschen, 2001. Also see Stephen Graham, "Spaces of Surveillant-Simulation: New Technologies, Digital Representations, and Material Geographies", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1998. Graham writes: "Computerised simulation and modelling systems now allow the vast quantities of data captured by automated surveillance systems to be fed directly into dynamic facsimiles of the time-space 'reality' of geographic territories (neighbourhoods, cities, regions, nations etc), which can then, in turn, be fed in to support new types of social practices, organisational change, and urban and regional restructuring."
  22. The French phrase *dispositifs de sécurité* could equally well be translated as "safety devices" or even (catching the ambiguity that I will explore later on) as "safety-and-security devices". The published translation speaks of "security apparatuses". See the opening chapters of Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*, Graham Burchell trans., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. The following quotes are from pp. 62, 73 and 48.
  23. Foucault, Michel, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, Graham Burchell trans., Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 63; following quote on p. 260.
  24. The historian of technology Otto Mayr has documented the pervasiveness of simple feedback mechanisms (thermostats, governors) in liberal Britain during the eighteenth century, at a time when such devices remained rare among the authoritarian societies of the Continent. More importantly, he shows that these mechanical devices were commonly used as metaphors for such characteristic political economic notions as supply-and-demand, checks-and-balances and self-regulation. However, Foucault never cites Mayr's groundbreaking work of technical history, *The Origins of Feedback Control*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1970. Mayr's more explicit comparative study only came later: *Authority, Liberty and Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Europe*, Baltimore MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. Cf. Galison, "The Ontology of the Enemy," pp. 262-263.
  25. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, p. 8.
  26. Bell, Daniel, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, New York: Basic Books, 1999. Bell writes: "The 'design' of a post-industrial society is a 'game between persons' in which an 'intellectual technology,' based on information, arises alongside of machine technology" (p. 116).
  27. Bogard, William, *The Simulation of Surveillance: Hypercontrol in Telematic Societies*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 55.

28. See the interviews with Clotaire Rapaille in Rushkoff's documentary, *The Persuaders* (n. 16 above).
29. For an understanding of how this kind of economic shift occurs, see Shimshon Bichler and Jonathan Nitzan, "Dominant Capital and the New Wars", *Journal of World Systems Research*, vol. 10, no. 2, Spring 2004. Available at <http://bnarchives.yorku.ca>, accessed 18 July 2011.
30. The TIA program was shut down by the US Congress, in part because of the outcry over the PAM interface. However, all of the information concerning PAM has been archived by its proud inventor, Robin Hanson, available at <http://hanson.gmu.edu/policyanalysismarket.html>, accessed 18 July 2011.
31. From the reconstruction of the original TIA website, available at <http://infowar.net/tia/www.darpa.mil/iao>, accessed 18 July 2011.
32. The anthropologist and finance expert Paul Jorion, who detailed the mechanisms of the subprime crash over a year before it actually happened, quotes a remark from a specialized document released by the Union de Banques Suisses (UBS): "To analyse a simple CDO 'squared' constituted of 125 different securities [...] we would have to know the information pertaining to 9,375 securities." Available at <http://www.pauljorion.com/blog/?p=174>, accessed 18 July 2011.
33. Apparently there is a little humour left in Washington, to judge from what seems to be the work of a Beltway insider. In July 2007 a series of articles appeared by a certain "Herman Mindshaftgap" of "The Bland Corporation", casting doubt on some of the numbers and concepts used by the administration war machine. Cf. "Why In Truth There Is No Surge", *Counterpunch*, July 13 2007, available at <http://www.counterpunch.org/mindshaftgap07132007.html>, accessed 18 July 2011.
34. Rifkin, Jeremy, *Time Wars: The Primary Conflict in Human History*, New York: Holt, 1987.
35. Lazzarato, Maurizio, *Les révolutions du capitalisme*, Paris: Les empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2004, p. 101.
36. See, among others, David Lyon, *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001; David Lyon, *Surveillance Studies: An Overview*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.



Friedrich von Borries

## Climate Capsules, or: The Dymaxion of the 21st Century

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The world as gigantic capsule, as intelligently controlled unit—the geoengineer’s dream. The building as self-contained climate capsule, self-directing and autarkic. Zero waste, zero CO<sub>2</sub>, zero energy. The reality of advanced climate and energy technology—complemented, in the office sector, by a covered inner courtyard, a simulated open and green space.

Climatic differentiation. Demarcation of inside and outside. Social capsules, political capsules. Schengen Area, Frontex in the Mediterranean, intercepted refugee boats. The wall between the USA and Mexico. Spatio-political differentiation through the creation of boundaries between inside and out.

Who’s allowed in? Who isn’t?

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Imagine that the world’s cities did not exist under an open sky but were instead covered with gigantic domes. Imagine that these domes protected the cities from outside aggression, from vermin, bad air and pathogens, from disease and nuclear radiation. Maybe the cities are no longer fixed locations but mobile units that stop briefly at a given location, consume what they can use and return only when the local resources—water, earth, air—have recovered.

No, these visions are not new. They are well-known in science fiction novels and films. We also recognize them from architectural and design history as utopian concepts, future phantasms. Think *Manhattan Dome*, conceived in 1960 by Buckminster Fuller and Shoji Sadao. Think *Walking City*, conceived in 1964 by Ron Herron/Archigram.

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*Manhattan Dome.* Three kilometres in diameter, 1.6 in height—a bell jar over downtown Manhattan. The gigantic dome was intended to reach from the Hudson River to the East River, from 22nd Street to 62nd Street. In Fuller’s own words, “Its hull would consist of wire-reinforced, one-way mirrored shatterproof glass covered with an aluminium coating that would mitigate against the sun’s rays but still remain permeable to light. From outside, it would look like a giant shimmering mirror in the shape of a hemisphere. From inside, its structural elements would be as visible as the strutting of a winter garden. It would be like a translucent film on which the sky, clouds and stars would appear.”

There are concrete calculations behind the enormous proportions: according to Fuller’s numbers, the outer surface of the proposed dome would correspond to only 1/85th of the outer surfaces of the mid-Manhattan buildings it was meant to cover. Only 1/85th of the energy consumed by the individual buildings would thus be needed for heating in winter and cooling in summer; the dome’s construction costs would amortize within a few years.

At the time the dome was conceived, climate change was not yet a hot-button issue; air pollution and other environmental toxins were greater cause for concern. A better interior, completely isolated from the dangerous outside world seemed desirable. “Inside, one will have undisturbed contact with outside. The sun and moon will shine on the landscape; the sky will be completely visible. But the unpleasant effects of climate—heat, dust, vermin, glaring light, etc.—will be modulated by the shell, allowing a Garden of Eden to form within.” Fuller saw the colonization of the Arctic and Antarctic as an important potential application for the domed cities. He was convinced not only of their economic advantages but of the high quality of life they would offer inside.

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*Walking City*—another self-contained urban unit. Each of these capsules is intended to house 20,000 inhabitants. In form, the *Walking City* is like a cross between a spider and an insect. It consists of a thick oval body filled with apartments and shops. From this body project eight telescope-like legs with which the city can ‘walk’. Despite its ungainly appearance, the city is meant to be highly mobile, to move anywhere it is needed—or, as one might put it today, to leave all those places that its presence has polluted and destroyed.

The *Walking City* is a further development of the *Cities Moving* collage and is based on the idea that a city should be able to react flexibly to the needs of its residents. Multiple units with different functions (commercial district, offices, residential units, public buildings, hospitals, schools, etc.) can be connected to one another via retractable arms. Originally conceived as a hedonistic-utopian model, the *Walking City* presents several interesting possible applications from today's perspective. It could house migrant workers and transport them once resources have been used up at a particular location. It could be used as a refugee camp in a war situation. Or it could serve as a reception centre at the outskirts of a city after earthquakes, hurricanes or floods. Thrill-seekers could use it as a cruise ship through inhospitable regions like the atomic deserts or suburban slums of the future.

This analysis does not, at first glance, do justice to the *Walking City*. Nor is it meant to. It is a deliberate misinterpretation. So, too, is the subsequent interpretation of Fuller's Dymaxion. Why, otherwise, should a contemporary design theory grapple with an historical design practice? Productive misinterpretation gives rise to questions that force an examination of the historical and thereby expand the view of the present and open new intellectual perspectives.

At the time of their conception, both *Walking City* and *Manhattan Dome* were positive visions for the future. Today, they seem more like horror scenarios.

Buckminster Fuller (\* 1895 Milton/Massachusetts, † 1983 Los Angeles). Architect and engineer. World saviour and design prophet. Inventor of the geodesic dome and the Dymaxion principle, which includes a transport system, housing system and worldview.

The foundation of the Dymaxion projects is the house. Or the concept of the home. At the end of 1928, Fuller registers a patent for the *4-D House*, which he later develops into the first *Dymaxion House*. The *4-D House* is a tower structure consisting of stacked

hexagonal units. Thanks to a lightweight design, it can be transported by airship around the world. Three becomes four when Time is added to the spatial dimensions. Speed of assembly, but also as a projection into the future. Because Fuller's designs are always models for a better future, placeholders for a space of possibilities. Across the globe.

Fuller wants to market his idea. A product for the masses, industrially produced. But a product needs a brand name. Dymaxion is invented. Neologism. It is not Buckminster Fuller himself who coins the term, but an advertising expert who generates the brand name using some of Fuller's favourite words like 'dynamic' and 'maximize'. World salvation meets capitalist marketing.

Fuller further develops and refines his housing idea. Houses that are to span the world require partners that think in the same categories. World domination, world envelopment. Fuller cooperates with the military—first with the British during World War II, then with the Americans when the war is over. But only prototypes are ever developed.

He who thinks globally must give thought to transportation. Fuller designs a *4-D Transportation Unit* (from 1928), which then becomes the *Dymaxion Car* (until 1943). In this case, too, prototypes are built but do not go into production.

He who wants to cover the globe with his houses and cars must also design a world-view. Dymaxion world map. Dissolution of the sphere in favour of a polyhedron that can be unfolded without distortion.

Inversion of worldview. The *Dymaxion Car* is not driven via front-mounted axle but a single wheel suspended in the rear. The sphere is deconstructed into a triangle.

Holistic, closed systems of thought require holistic, closed constructions of space. Fuller develops geodesic domes—spherical spaces whose surfaces consist of triangles. Without any scale and beyond all measure.

Montreal, World's Fair, 1967. For the US contribution, Fuller builds a dome about 70 metres in diameter, known today as the *Biosphere*. 1972: plans for an additional dome, *Spaceship Earth*, at Disney World. 1982: opening.

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From today's perspective, Fuller can be seen as a forerunner of the geoengineer. Space-ship earth. Prophet of a worldview in which everything is technically possible. Prophet of capsules, self-contained worlds. Of geodesic domes, where everything inside is better than out.

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Today, a return to the Fullerish demand for full scale and the technical feasibility of the seemingly impossible.

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Geoengineering: deliberate changes to the climate system via direct, technical intervention in the atmosphere. To date, most geoengineering models are still in the conceptual stage. Structurally, one can distinguish between: (1) measures designed to sequester greenhouse gasses already emitted into the atmosphere like, for example, ocean fertilization to stimulate phytoplankton bloom, and (2) measures designed to reduce the amount of incoming sunlight. Several different approaches are currently under discussion. The Earth's orbit could be changed by a controlled comet impact; if the planet were 1,500 kilometres farther from the Sun, there'd be no global warming. Nobel Laureate Paul J. Crutzen proposes an alternative solution: the annual injection of several tons of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) into the stratosphere. The SO<sub>2</sub> would combine with oxygen, water and suspended particles to form small sulphuric acid droplets that would scatter incoming sunlight back into the stratosphere. This technology was suggested as early as 1974 by the Russian physicist and climate researcher Michail I. Budyko, and it was seen in action in 1991 during the eruption of Pinatubo. In the 1990s, Edward Teller, Roderick Hyde and Lowell Wood proposed the introduction of small metal particles into the stratosphere because they reflect even more sunlight than sulphuric acid particles. Astrophysicist Roger Angel, on the other hand, wants to position a sunshield at L1, the inner Lagrange point. Located several million kilometres from Earth, it is the point

at which the gravitational pull of the Earth and the Sun are equally strong. Angel's proposed sunshield would consist of billions of artificial refractors, discs about 60 centimetres in diameter. According to him, it would take circa 30 years to implement this sunshield (Angel 2006).

Proposals closer to home are also being discussed. Clouds could be manipulated so that their retro-reflectivity (albedo) rises, reducing the impact of sunlight on the Earth's surface. In this scenario, specially-designed ships would spray microscopic droplets of seawater into the air. The salt particles would reduce the droplet size in the existing clouds, and the clouds would become lighter and reflect more sunlight. This is known as the aerosol effect.

Geoengineering is highly controversial, partly because of its still indeterminate technical feasibility, partly because of its incalculable and uncontrollable consequences, but mostly because it may suggest that mitigation—that is, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions—can be eschewed.

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How, then, to change the world? Using a grand technical approach—like, for example, the great global climate capsule, the Earth as spaceship, its distance from the Sun somehow controllable, its internal climate somehow regulable? This global climate capsule, the worldwide interior, is the Dymaxion of the twenty-first century.

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World salvation models are self-contained and self-sustaining systems like Buckminster Fuller's geodesic domes. That makes them seductive but also dangerous.

We must find a different way to save the world, not an artificial Garden of Eden. Also not a spaceship.

And, unfortunately, we must do it without a user manual.

*Translated from the German by Jenna Krumminga*

# SHOW YOU ARE NOT AFRAID.

“Show you are not afraid” is a series of interventions through the medium of the poster, preserved by the artist Mikael Mikael in formally reduced photographs.

The posters – black lettering on a white background – quote the former Mayor of New York City Rudolph W. Giuliani calling upon the people the day after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 to hide their fear. “Show you’re not afraid. Go to restaurants. Go shopping!”

By omitting the call for consumer spending, Mikael Mikael cuts the quote to its performative core and asks what it is that one should not be afraid of, and how this was to be expressed.

Mikael Mikael placed these posters at scenes of political conflicts and social transformation; for instance, (but not only) at sites of terrorist attacks, or places where the causes and consequences of terrorist attacks and other violent clashes were clearly visible.

Please download the poster at [www.mikaelmikael.de/poster-campaign](http://www.mikaelmikael.de/poster-campaign) and send a photography of your intervention!





SHOW  
YOU  
ARE  
NOT  
AFRAID.

SHOW  
YOU  
ARE  
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AFRAID.







SHOW  
YOU  
ARE  
NOT  
AFRAID.

GE To

photo this page: Anat Cohen  
all other photos: Mikael Mikael

Yana Milev

## Cluster V: Design Politics

With *Design Politics*, Cluster IV defines the first branch of Design Anthropology. Various connections of post-political governance are discussed in Cluster V. Centrally important is the connection between ‘war’ and image production as manifested in the marketing power of image and design, as well as in the news industry. If we explore Foucault’s inquiry, namely the maintenance of order in the slaughter(house), then we must ask ourselves where that slaughter(house) is actually located today. Both the desire for expansion and allegiance belong to war. The new combatants are the carriers and users of brands and messages. The forced conformity of service providers and consumers only succeeds on the basis of strong cultural metaphors and collective archetypes that global governance marketing has co-opted. The field of political action is thus observed twice: once as the continuation of war by other means and once as a theatre of war or as parliamentary theatre—in its character as a staging. If politics is nothing more than the continuation of war by other means, as Foucault cites Clausewitz’s principle, then political or parliamentary theatre is nothing more than war theatre by other means. This is what the concept of *Design Politics* stands for.

“All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts”, Carl Schmitt states in his *Political Theology*.<sup>1</sup> I would just add: all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state, of political theology and political economy are strategic forms of camouflage, deception and glorification. ‘Design governance’ presents a paradigm that focuses on design strategies as governance technology; they operate with two aims: camouflage or the exterior ornament and the expansion of states of emergency in the interior. Both are presented here in this attempt at a doubly strategic design rhetoric. In this chapter, those theoreticians of political philosophy and sociology were invited who know that, for example, state activity—paired today with business activity, the fifth estate—follows a general plot: ‘camouflage’. In the language of political theory and political journalism, one cover is called ‘euphemism’; in the language of political philosophy, it’s ‘apologetics’; and in military language, it’s a ‘false flag operation’.

The contributions in Block A are assembled under the title “Politics of Self-Design”. I am happy to have received a contribution by the cultural and media theorist and curator Boris Groys. With his media ontology, presented in the text “Under Suspicion”, Groys delivers a fundamental take on double-strategy government technology in the context of design. In his contribution, Groys develops a concept of self-design that corresponds to Adolf Loos’ concept of ornaments. The masses as a political animal (a bio-political body) are a violent animal—and simultaneously one that provides a service. The bio-political allegiance of the masses that consume and provide services creates the ornament of self-design in the form of conformity effects. The concept of self-design has taken over the concept of self-exploitation. The Bulgarian philosopher and cultural critic Boyan Manchev once again examines the phenomenon of social service and conformity designs in the concepts of political narrativity and performativity. Manchev inquires about emotions and their representation in mass media, and about the performative power that binds them to an audience or causes them to appear in a target group.

In Block B, a discourse is opened with the Serbian producer, author and publisher Branka Ćurčić about post-communist design ideologies, using the example of ex-Yugoslavian regimes. Ćurčić asks what ideological function socialist design formations had and what the consequences of their neoliberal annexation are. In reference to Adolf Loos’ 1908 essay “Ornament and Crime”, the American art historian, publisher and art critic Hal Foster develops a political economy of design in his contribution “Design and Crime” that clearly distances itself from Loos’ prescriptions.

In his essay “Staging the Political”, the Austrian philosopher and sociologist Oliver Marchart describes space not only as the location of the political and of political staging, but also the reverse, as political staging in the creation process (design process) of spatialization. The political cannot be considered without a narration of spatialization. The political philosopher Chantal Mouffe’s proposal can be seen in direct correspondence to this theory; she goes on to speak of the spatialization of agonistic policies. Mouffe sees this type of spatialization in artistic/activist practices. In “Madvertise Yourself”, the German design anthropologist, cultural scientist and curator Yana Milev describes the daily insanity of bio-political forced conformity in self-advertising design with smartphones, gadgets and mobile devices. In her essay, she completes the transformation of the smartmob (Howard Rheingold) to the madmob.

1. Schmitt, Carl, *Political Theology*, George Schwab trans., Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

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**A: Design Politics**

*Boris Groys*  
*Boyan Manchev*  
*Kai Löffelbein (VE)*

**B: Political Design**

*Branka Ćurčić*  
*Hal Foster*  
*Jürgen Mayer H. (VE)*

**C: Designing the Political**

*Chantal Mouffe*  
*Oliver Marchart*  
*Yana Milev (VE)*  
*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

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Boris Groys

## Politics of Self-Design

Nowadays almost everybody seems to agree that the days are gone in which art—successfully or unsuccessfully—tried to establish its autonomy. At the same time, this diagnosis is accompanied by mixed feelings. One tends to celebrate the readiness of contemporary art to transcend the traditional borders of the art system when such a move is dictated by a will to change the dominating social and political conditions, to make the world a better place. Or, in other words, when the act of overcoming the borders of the art system is ethically motivated. However, one tends to deplore an undisputable fact that such an attempt to transcend the art system seems never to lead beyond the aesthetic sphere in general. Instead of changing the world, art only makes it look better. This causes a lot of frustration inside the art system—so that the dominant mood of the art scene seems almost permanently to shift back and forth between the hope of intervening in the world beyond art, and disappointment and even despair on account of the impossibility of achieving this goal.

This failure is often interpreted as proof of the incapacity of art to penetrate the political sphere *per se*. But I would rather argue that the politicization of art—if it is seriously intended and practised—mostly succeeds. Art *can* enter the political sphere and, indeed, art did enter it many times over during the twentieth century. The problem is not the incapacity of art to become truly political. The problem is that today's political sphere has already become aestheticized. When art becomes political it has to make the unpleasant discovery that politics has already become art, that politics has already situated itself in the aesthetic field. In our time, every politician, sport hero, terrorist or movie star generates a large number of images because their activities are automatically covered by the media. Previously, the division of labour between politics and art was quite clear. The politician practised politics and the artist represented this politics by narrating it or depicting it. But in our time the situation has changed drastically: the contemporary politician no longer needs an artist to win fame and to inscribe his actions into the universal memory. Every important political figure or event is immediately registered, represented, described, depicted, narrated and interpreted by the media. The machine that is media coverage does not need any individual artistic intervention, any individual artistic decision, to be put into motion. Indeed, the contemporary mass media have emerged as by far the largest and most powerful machine for producing images—vastly more extensive and effective than the contemporary art system. We are constantly fed

with images of war, terror and catastrophes of all kinds, at a level of image production and distribution with which the artist with his artisan skills cannot compete.

Now, artists who go beyond the art system begin to function in the same way as politicians, sport heroes, terrorists, movie stars and other minor or major celebrities. Namely, the artist also comes to be covered by the media. Or, in other words, the artist becomes the artwork. The transition from the art system to the political field is possible, but this transition operates primarily as a change in positioning of the artist vis-à-vis image production. The artist ceases to be an image producer and becomes an image instead. Friedrich Nietzsche already registered this transformation, famously saying that it is better to be an artwork than to be an artist.<sup>1</sup> But becoming an artwork provokes, of course, not only a pleasure, but also an anxiety of being subjected in a very radical way to the gaze of the other—to the gaze of the media functioning as a super-artist.

I would characterize this anxiety as an anxiety of self-design, because this anxiety forces the artist—as it does almost everybody who comes to be subjected to the media's coverage—to deal with the image of the self, to correct, to change, to adapt, to contradict it. One often hears, today, that the art of our time increasingly functions as design. That is, of course, true, if only to a certain extent. But the ultimate problem of design is not how I design the world outside myself, but how I design myself—or, rather, how I deal with a way in which the world designs me. And, today, it has become a general, all-pervasive problem, a problem with which everybody is confronted—not only politicians, movie stars and other celebrities. Today, everybody is subjected to an aesthetic evaluation and is required to take an aesthetic responsibility for his or her appearance in the world, for his or her self-design. In earlier days, self-design was a privilege and a burden of the chosen few. In our time, self-design has become the mass cultural practice par excellence. The virtual space of the internet is primarily an arena in which MyFace and MySpace are permanently designed and redesigned to be presented to YouTube—and vice versa. But in the real—or, let us say, analogue—world one is also expected to be responsible for the image that one presents to the gaze of others. One can say that self-design is a practice that unites the artist and their audience in the most radical way. For, while not everybody produces artworks, everybody is an artwork—and at the same time is supposed to be its author.

Now, every kind of design—including self-design—is mostly regarded not as a way of revealing things but of covering them. Aestheticization of politics is also interpreted as a way of substituting substance with style and real issues with superficial image-making. But the issues are changing all the time—and the image remains. One can easily become



a prisoner of one's image. And one's political convictions can easily be ridiculed as being only a part of one's self-design. Aestheticization is often identified with seduction and celebration. That is the meaning of the word aestheticization that Walter Benjamin obviously had in mind when he constructed the opposition between the politicization of aesthetics and the aestheticization of politics at the end of his famous essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction".<sup>2</sup>

But one can argue, on the contrary, that every act of aestheticization is always already a critique of the object of aestheticization—because it signals that this object needs a supplement to look better than it actually is. And such a supplement always functions as a *pharmakon*, in the sense in which Jacques Derrida has used this term.<sup>3</sup> Design makes a designed object look better—but at the same time it raises a suspicion that the object would look especially ugly and repellent if its designed surface were accidentally removed. Indeed, design, including self-design, is primarily a machine for the production of suspicion. The totally designed contemporary world is often described as a world of total seduction, from which unpleasant reality has disappeared. But the world of total design is, rather, a world of total suspicion—of latent danger lurking behind the designed surface. So the main goal of self-design is the neutralization of suspicion on the part of a possible spectator or the creation of a sincerity effect that provokes trust in the spectator's soul. The production of sincerity and trust is everybody's occupation in today's world. But at the same time it was and still is the main occupation of art throughout the whole history of modernity. The modern artist has always positioned him- or herself as the only honest person in a world of hypocrisy and corruption. Let us briefly investigate how the production of sincerity and trust has functioned in the period of modernity, as it will make it easier to characterize the way in which it functions today.

One can argue that the modern production of sincerity functioned as a reduction of design. The goal was to create a blank, void space in the middle of the designed world, to eliminate design, to practice zero-design. In this way the artistic avant-garde wanted to create design-free areas that would be perceived as areas of honesty, high morality, sincerity and trust. As an observer of media-saturated and designed surfaces, one hopes that the dark, concealed sub-media space will somehow betray and expose itself. Or, in other words, we are waiting for a moment of sincerity—for a moment when the designed surface cracks and opens up a view inside. Zero-design tries to produce this crack in the surface artificially. It offers the spectator a clearing, an empty spot through which the spectator is supposed to see things as they truly are.

Adolf Loos' famous essay of 1908, "Ornament and Crime", is an early example of this turn to zero-design—to design as the elimination of design, as anti-design. From the outset of his essay, Loos postulated a unity between the aesthetic and the ethical. That is why he condemned every decoration, every ornament as a sign of depravity, of vice. Loos saw a person's appearance as an immediate expression of their ethical stance. If he could identify in a person's appearance the wish to cover themselves by design, he rejected that person as being ethically deficient—actually, a bad person. For example, Loos asserted that only criminals, primitives or degenerates ornament themselves by tattooing their skin. Ornament was thus an expression either of amorality or of crime.

*The Papuan covers his skin with tattoos, his boat, his oars, in short everything he can lay his hands on. He is no criminal. The modern person who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate.*<sup>4</sup>

The particularly striking thing about this quotation is that Loos makes no distinction between tattooing one's own skin and decorating a boat or an oar. Just as the modern human being is supposed to present him- or herself to the gaze of the Other as an honest, plain, unornamented, 'undesigned' object, so should all the things with which this person deals be presented as honest, plain, unornamented, undesigned things. Only then do they demonstrate that the soul of the person using them is pure, virtuous and unspoiled. For Loos, true design is the struggle against design—against the criminal will to conceal the ethical essence of things behind their aesthetic surface. Only the removal of ornament—that is, of design understood as the aesthetic supplement of things—guarantees the unity of the ethical and the aesthetic that Loos sought. And he speaks about this zero-design in an almost apocalyptic way; apocalypse understood here as the revelation of the hidden nature of things. Loos writes in his essay:

*Do not weep. Do you not see the greatness of our age resides in our very inability to create new ornament? We have gone beyond ornament, we have achieved plain, undecorated simplicity. Behold, the time is at hand, fulfilment awaits us. Soon the streets of the cities will shine like white walls! Like Zion, the Holy City, Heaven's capital. Then fulfilment will be ours.*<sup>5</sup>

The struggle against design is the final struggle before the arrival of God's kingdom on earth. The modern designer does not wait for the end of times to remove the external shell of things and show them as they are. The (anti-)designer wants, here and now, the apocalyptic vision that makes everybody a reborn New Man. The body takes on the form

of the soul. The soul becomes the body. All things become heavenly. Heaven becomes earthly, material. Design becomes absolute and identical with the things themselves. Whereas Loos still formulated his argument in rather bourgeois terms and wanted to reveal the value of certain materials, craft, work and individual honesty, the will to absolute design reached its climax in Russian Constructivism, with its 'proletarian' ideal of the collective soul, manifested in industrially organized work. For the Russian Constructivists, the path to the virtuous, genuinely proletarian thing also passed through the elimination of everything that was merely artistic. The Russian Constructivists called for the things of everyday communist life to show themselves for what they were. As understood here, ethics was given an additional political dimension, since the collective soul had to be organized politically in order to act properly in ethical terms. The collective soul was manifested in the political organization that embraced both people and things. The function of 'proletarian' design—admittedly, at the time people spoke rather of 'proletarian art'—had to therefore be to make this total political organization of society visible. The experience of the October Revolution of 1917 became crucial for the Russian Constructivists. They understood the revolution to be a radical act of purifying society of every form of ornament: the finest example of modern design, eliminating all traditional social customs, ritual, conventions and forms of representation in order to permit the essence of the political organization to emerge. Thus the Russian Constructivists called for the abolition of all autonomous art. Art should rather be placed entirely in the service of the design of utilitarian objects.

At the same time, the project of Russian Constructivism was a total project: it wanted to design life as a whole. Only for that reason—and only at that price—was Russian Constructivism prepared to exchange autonomous art for utilitarian art. Just as the traditional artist designed the whole of the artwork, so the Constructivist artist wanted to design the whole of society. In a certain sense, artists at that time had no choice other than to announce such a total claim. The market—including the art market—had been eliminated by the communists. For artists it was, by necessity, all or nothing. This situation is clearly reflected in the manifestos of Russian Constructivism. For example, in his programmatic text entitled "Constructivism", Alexei Gan wrote:

*Not to reflect, not to represent and not to interpret reality, but to really build and express the systematic tasks of the new class, the proletariat... Especially now, when the proletarian revolution has been victorious, and its destructive, creative movement is progressing along the iron rails into culture, which is organized according to a grand plan of social production, everyone—the master of color and line, the builder of space-volume forms and the organizer of mass productions—must all become constructors in the general work of the arming and moving of the many-millioned human masses.<sup>6</sup>*

The goal of Constructivist design was not seen to be imposing a new form on everyday life under socialism, but rather remaining loyal to radical, revolutionary reduction and avoiding making new ornaments for new things.

At the same time, communist self-design was crucial to the self-identification of Soviet society. Indeed, the body of techniques that was used by the bourgeois societies of the West was the same as the one used by the Soviet state. Therefore, the difference between capitalism and socialism could be made visible only by means of design.

But the Rousseauistic faith in the equation between sincerity and zero-design has disappeared in our time. Nowadays, nobody is ready to believe any longer that minimalist design suggests that the subject of the design is necessarily honest and sincere. The avant-garde design of honesty has thus become a specific designer style among other possible styles. Under this condition, the only way to create an effect of sincerity is not to refute the initial suspicion but to confirm it. Or, to put it another way, we are ready to believe that the crack in the designed surface has really taken place and that we have really got a chance to see things as they truly are, only if the reality behind the façade shows itself as being much, much worse than we ever assumed it to be. Confronted with the totally designed world, we can accept only a catastrophe, a state of emergency, a violent rupture of this surface as an event that allows us to take a look behind design. And, of course, the reality that we look at also has to show itself as being a catastrophic reality. We always suspect that something terrible is going on behind design—cynical manipulation, political propaganda, hidden intrigues, vested interests and, simply, crimes. The conspiracy theory is the only form in which traditional metaphysics has survived the death of God—as a discourse about the hidden and invisible. Previously we had nature and God—today we have design and conspiracy theory.

It is no accident that—even if we are generally inclined to distrust the media—we are immediately ready to believe it when it tells us about a global financial crisis or delivers the images of September 11 into our apartments. Even the most committed theorists of postmodern simulation began to speak about the return of the real when they saw the images of September 11. Now, there is an old tradition of Western art that presents the artist as a walking catastrophe. And modern artists—at least from Baudelaire on—were always good at creating images of evil lurking behind the surface, images that immediately won the public's trust. Nowadays, the romantic image of the *poète maudit* has been substituted by the image of the artist as explicitly cynical, greedy, manipulative, business-oriented, seeking only material profit and interpreting art as a machine for deceiving the audience. We have learned this strategy of calculated self-denunciation—or,

better, of self-denunciatory self-design—from the example of Salvador Dalí and Andy Warhol through to Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst. This strategy—even if it is old enough—has almost never missed its goal. When we look at the public images of these artists we tend to think, “oh, how awful”, but at the same time, “oh, how true”. Self-design as self-denunciation still works at a time when the avant-gardist zero-design of honesty fails. In fact, contemporary art shows here how our whole celebrity culture works—namely, through disclosures and self-disclosures. Celebrities, including politicians, are presented to the contemporary audience as designed surfaces. Accordingly, the public’s reaction to them takes the form of suspicion and conspiracy theory. Thus, to make politicians look trustworthy one has to create a moment of disclosure, a chance to look through the surface. Then everybody thinks, “oh, this politician is as bad as I always supposed him or her to be”. In this way, trust in the system is restored. Here we have a ritual of symbolic sacrifice and self-sacrifice that stabilizes the celebrity system by confirming the suspicion to which the system is necessarily subjected. And, of course, according to the economy of symbolic exchange that was investigated by Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille, the individuals that show themselves as being especially bad and mean—i.e., the individuals that bring the most substantial symbolic sacrifice—get the most recognition and fame. This fact alone shows that we are here also not dealing with a true insight, but with a special case of self-design: to present oneself as ethically bad today means creating an especially good self-design in aesthetic terms (genius—swine).

But there is also a more subtle, more sophisticated form of self-design as self-sacrifice, as symbolic suicide. Following this more subtle strategy of self-design, the artist announces the death of the author, i.e., his or her own symbolic death. In this case, the artist proclaims him- or herself not to be bad—but to be dead. And the resulting artwork is presented as being collaborative, participative and democratic. A tendency toward collaborative, participatory practice is undeniably one of the main characteristics of contemporary art. Emerging throughout the world are numerous artists’ groups that assert collective, even anonymous, authorship of their artistic production. Moreover, collaborative practices of this type tend to motivate the public to join in, to activate the social milieu in which these practices unfold. But this self-sacrifice of individual authorship is also compensated in terms of the symbolic economy of recognition and fame.

The modern state of art affairs can be described easily enough: the artist produces and exhibits art and the public views and evaluates what is exhibited. This arrangement would seem primarily to benefit the artist, who shows him- or herself to be an active

individual in opposition to a passive, anonymous mass audience. The artist has the power to popularize his or her name, whereas the identities of the viewers remain unknown, despite the fact that their validation has facilitated the artist’s success. Modern art can thus easily be misconstrued as an apparatus for manufacturing artistic celebrity at the expense of the public. However, what is often overlooked is the fact that, in modernity, the artist is at the mercy of the public’s opinion. If an artwork does not find favour with the public, then it is de facto devoid of value. This is modern art’s main deficit: the modern artwork has no ‘inner’ value of its own. It has no merit, other than the public taste bestowed upon it. Statues in ancient temples were regarded as embodiments of the gods—they were revered, one kneeled down before them in prayer, one expected help from them and feared them. Under these conditions, aesthetic disapproval was insufficient reason to reject an artwork. Poorly made idols and badly painted icons were nevertheless part of the sacred order. Throwing them out would have been sacrilegious. Thus, within a specific religious tradition, artworks have their own individual, ‘inner’ value, which is independent of the public’s aesthetic judgment. This value derives from the participation of the artist and their public in communal religious practices—an affiliation that relativizes the gulf between artist and public.

By contrast, the secularization of art entails its radical devaluation. That is why Hegel asserted, at the beginning of his lectures on aesthetics, that art was a thing of the past. No modern artist can expect anyone to kneel in front of his or her work in prayer, expect practical assistance from it or use it to avert danger. The most one is prepared to do nowadays is find an artwork interesting—and, of course, to ask how much it costs. Price immunizes the artwork from public taste to a certain degree. A good deal of the art held in museums today would have ended up in the bin a long time ago, had the immediate effect of public taste not been limited by economic considerations. Communal participation in the same economic practice weakens the radical separation between artist and audience, creates a certain complicity between artist and public, and forces the public to respect an artwork because of its high price, even if the artwork is not particularly liked. However, there is a big difference between the religious and financial value of an artwork. The price of an artwork is nothing other than the quantifiable result of aesthetic value that others have identified in it. But the public’s taste is not binding for an individual in the same way that the common religion is. The respect paid to an artwork because of its price is by no means automatically translatable into its appreciation per se. The binding value of art can thus be sought only in non-commercial—if not directly anti-commercial—practices.

For this reason, many modern artists have tried to regain common ground with their audiences by enticing viewers out of their passive roles, bridging the comfortable aesthetic distance that allows uninvolved viewers to judge an artwork impartially from a secure, external perspective. The majority of these attempts have involved political or ideological engagement of one sort or another. Religious community is thus replaced by a political movement, in which artists and their audiences both participate. When the viewer is involved in artistic practice from the outset, every piece of criticism he utters is self-criticism. Shared political attitudes and convictions make the aesthetic judgment partially or completely irrelevant—as was the case with sacral art of the past. To put it bluntly: it is better to be a dead author than a bad author. The decision on the part of the artist to relinquish exclusive authorship would seem primarily to empower the viewer. However, this sacrifice ultimately benefits artists, for it frees them from the power that the cold eye of the uninvolved viewer exerts over the resulting artwork.

Today, the artistic installation is often viewed as an art form that allows the artist to democratize his or her art, to take on public responsibility, to begin to act in the name of a certain community or even of society as a whole (Liam Gillick, Rikrit Tiravanija, Thomas Hirschhorn, Claire Bishop). In this sense, the emergence of the artistic installation seems to mark the end of the Modernist claim of autonomy and sovereignty. The artist's decision to let the multitude of visitors enter the space of his or her artwork, and to allow them to move freely inside it, is interpreted as opening the closed space of an artwork to democracy. This closed space of the artwork seems to be transformed into a platform for public discussion, democratic practice, communication, networking, education, etc. But this analysis of the practice of installation art tends to overlook the act of symbolic privatization of public space by the artistic installation that precedes the act of opening the installation space to a community of visitors.

The space of the traditional exhibition is a symbolic public property—and the curator who manages this space acts in the name of public opinion. The visitor to a standard exhibition remains at all times on his or her own territory; the visitor is a symbolic owner of the space where all the artworks are exposed, delivered to his or her gaze and judgement. To the contrary, the space of an artistic installation is the symbolic private property of the artist. Entering the installation space, the visitor leaves the public territory of democratic legitimacy and enters the space of sovereign, authoritarian control. The visitor is here, so to speak, in foreign territory, in exile. The visitor to an installation space becomes the expatriate who has to submit him- or herself to a foreign law—to a law that is given by the artist. Here the artist acts as a legislator, as a sovereign of the

installation space—even, and maybe especially so, if the law that is given by the artist to a community of visitors is a democratic law.

One can say that installation practice reveals the act of unconditional, sovereign violence that initially installs any democratic order. We know that. The democratic order was never brought about in a democratic fashion. The democratic order always emerges as an effect of a violent revolution. To install a law means to break one. The first legislator can never act in a legitimate manner. The legislator installs the political order, but he or she does not belong to that order, remains external to it, even if he or she decides later to submit to the order. The author of an artistic installation is also such a legislator, giving to the community of visitors the space to constitute itself and defining the rules to which this community has to submit—but he or she does not belong to this community, remains outside it. And that remains true even if the artist decides to join the community that he or she has created. This second step should not let us overlook the first one—the sovereign one. And one should also not forget that after initiating a certain order, a certain *politeia*, a certain community of visitors, the installation artist has to rely on the art institutions to maintain this order, to police the fluid *politeia* of the installation's visitors. Jacques Derrida meditates in one of his books—*La force des lois*—on the role of the police in a state. The police is supposed to supervise the functioning of certain laws, but de facto the police is partially creating the rules that it should merely supervise. Derrida tries to show here that the violent, revolutionary, sovereign act of introducing law and order can never be fully erased afterwards. To maintain a law also always means permanently to reinvent this law. This initial act of violence can be and is always mobilized again; and it is especially obvious in our time, with the violent export, installation and securing of democracy. One should not forget: the installation space is a movable space. The art installation is not site-specific; it can be installed everywhere and to every time. And we should be under no illusion that there can be anything like a completely chaotic, Dadaistic, Fluxus-like installation space free of any control. In his famous treatise, “Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains”,<sup>7</sup> the Marquis de Sade presents a vision of a perfectly free society that abolished all laws and installed only one law: everybody has to do whatever they like, including committing crimes of any kind. Now it is especially interesting that de Sade states, at the same time, the necessity of law enforcement to prevent the reactionary attempts of some traditionally-minded citizens to return to the old repressive state, in which family is secured and crimes forbidden. So we also need the police to defend the crime against the reactionary nostalgia of the old moral order.

The turn that Loos announced in his day has proved to be irreversible: every citizen of the contemporary world still has to take aesthetic responsibility for his or her self-design—as honest, as bad or as dead. In a society in which design has taken over the function of religion, self-design becomes a creed. By designing one's self and one's environment in a certain way, one declares one's faith in certain values, attitudes, programmes and ideologies. In accordance with this creed, one is judged by society, and this judgment can certainly be negative and even threaten the life and well being of the person concerned.

(This reminds me of the discussions among Byzantine theologians as to why saints should be presented on icons wearing clothes—and not naked, as they present themselves to the eyes of God. The answer was that, as mortals, we can only recognize a person's soul by looking at their garments, because all naked bodies are alike. The differences on the level of the inner self—of the soul—can be made visible only through the differences in clothes, in fashion, in design. Thus, in fact, the body does not contain the soul. It is covered by the soul taking the form of clothes. The soul is design.)

Hence, self-design belongs not so much in an economic context as in a political one. Modern design has transformed the whole of social space into an exhibition space for an absent visitor, in which individuals appear both as artists and as self-produced works of art. The debate over headscarves demonstrates the political force of design. In order to understand that the debate is primarily about design, it's sufficient to imagine Prada or Gucci were to begin to design headscarves. In that case, deciding between the headscarf as a symbol of Islamic convictions and the headscarf as a commercial brand would become an extremely difficult aesthetic and political task. Design cannot therefore be analyzed exclusively within the context of the economy of commodities. One could just as soon speak of suicide design—for example, in the case of suicide attacks, which are well-known to be staged according to strict aesthetic rules. One can speak about the design of power, but also about the design of resistance or the design of alternative political movements. There, design is practiced as a production of differences—differences that take on primarily a political semantics at the same time.

Thus, modern and contemporary design evades Kant's famous distinction between disinterested aesthetic contemplation and the use of things guided by interests. For a long time before and after Kant, disinterested contemplation was considered superior to a practical attitude: a higher, if not the highest, manifestation of the human spirit. But already by the end of the nineteenth century, a reevaluation of values had taken place: the

*vita contemplativa* was thoroughly discredited and the *vita activa* was elevated to the true task of humankind. Hence, design today is often accused of seducing people into weakening their activity, vitality and energy—of making them passive consumers who lack will, who are manipulated by omnipresent advertising and thus become victims of capital. The cure for this lulling into sleep by the society of the spectacle is envisaged as a shock-like encounter with the 'real' that is supposed to rescue people from their contemplative passivity and to move them to action, the only thing that promises an experience of truth as living intensity. The debate seems to be only over the question whether such an encounter with the real is still possible or whether the real has definitively disappeared behind its designed surface.

Now, however, we can no longer speak of disinterested contemplation when it is a matter of self-manifestation, self-design and self-positioning in the aesthetic field, since the subject of such self-contemplation clearly has a vital interest in the image he or she offers to the outside world. At one point people had an interest in how their souls appeared to God; today they have an interest in how their bodies appear positioned in the political space. This interest certainly points to the real. The real, however, emerges here not as a shock-like interruption of the designed surface, but as the technique and practice of self-design—a practice no one can escape anymore. In his day, Joseph Beuys said that everyone had the right to see him- or herself as an artist. What was at that time understood as a right has now become an obligation. In the meantime, we have all been condemned to being designers of our selves.

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4. Loos, Adolf, "Ornament and Crime", *Ornament and Crime*, Adolf Opel ed., Michael Mitchell trans., Riverside CA: Ariadne, 1998 (original, 1908), p. 167.
5. Loos, "Ornament and Crime", p. 168.
6. Gan, Alexei, "From Constructivism", *Art in Theory, 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Charles Harrison and Paul Wood eds, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993, p. 320 (translation modified).
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Boyan Manchev

## Performative Design of Life: Perverse Capitalism vs. 'Aesthetic' Materialism

### PERFORMANCE IN THE ERA OF PERFORMING CAPITALISM<sup>1</sup>

Today we all know that the world, 'our' world, is living through a radical and perhaps irreversible transformation. The world alters before our eyes. Indeed, transformation is the very core of the contemporary condition: the ultimate horizon of the economic and political crisis we are passing through. New forms of economic production and exchange are emerging; the fields of the political and the aesthetic are also affected by a radical transformation, placing in question the modern concept of their autonomy. The symptom of this transformation is the obsession with the notion of *performance*. A true obsession with the concept—or at least with the image of performance—governs today's political, economic and media discourses. However, this obsession is not only a rhetorical oddity; it has a profound *structural* motivation. So, why performance?

In the first place, we could suggest an etymological reason for it: per-formance, coming from the Latin 'per-formare', would designate precisely the fulfilment, the total actualization of the form. The 'per-formance' of the form (of life) is incommensurable with the staging of the *representations* or the *images* of life (the spectacle): performance exceeds the traditional modern form of spectacle in the same way contemporary *biocapitalism* exceeds classical 'Fordist' capitalism, the capitalism of high modernity.

The society of the spectacle undoubtedly complies with technology-based, postindustrial capitalism, its logic of production as well as the modern logic of representation: it is the outcome of hyper-technologization and functionalization, codifying life and prescribing processes of subjectification, which are nothing less than forms of subjugation. The capitalism of high modernity was based on the idea of growth: working more efficiently and producing more meant an increase and expansion of leisure time for autonomous life beyond commerce, opening more space for forms of life that did not conform to the rules of the market. The distinct quality of the new model at stake, in contrast, lies in the attempt to absorb the subject's modern autonomy. Philosophically speaking, this means taking over the sphere of possible experimentation with different modes of subjectification, life and alternative human interaction, in short, the sphere that is the

actual site of 'human existence'. Thus, the new model introduces a commodity of a radically new type, no longer composed by material goods: *the forms of life* themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Thus cultures, behaviours and modes of existence become the matter of commodity production. *Biocapitalism* means *commodification of forms of life*. In that way, life itself—through the appropriation of forms of life—is reduced to a commodity production, to standardization as commodity. Forms of life are produced by being *per-formed* in the etymological sense of the term: they are 'played', put on stage. Thus, in the end performance takes the place of production in the strict sense of the term: new capitalism is performing, it is not producing anymore. In reference to Debord's definition of the society of the spectacle, one could define this new model as 'capital accumulated to the point that it becomes a form of life'. We have gone far beyond Debord: we live today in a *performing society*. Perverse performance has imposed itself as the new model of social contract.

### FORMS OF LIFE AS COMMODITIES

Performance today is perverse in its core. *Perversion* is a sphere of unlimited reversibility, surpassing the frame of substance and organicity. It is the exemplary field of the Thing, but the Thing as an impossibility of substance, with modifiability as the only substance. Paradoxically or not, perversion thus appears as the point of transgression of the order of libidinal economy. On an economic level, the perversion lies in separating the object from its surplus value, even going so far as to radically transform its use value by reopening the potentiality of things and the possibility of including forms of life in market exchange. If the new capitalism can be described as perverse, this is also because it perverts certain areas of our lives by transferring them into the sphere of commerce (just as 'perversion' in the psychoanalytical sense transfers desires); it absorbs all forms of life that previously resisted the economic circulation of commodities. The perversion is thus the radicalization and totalization of libidinal economy.

I have thus suggested calling the new, performing model of global capitalism 'perverse capitalism'. *Perverse capitalism* is an intensified description of a socioeconomic field, in which an unlimited exchange and functional efficiency take place between impersonal agents. In its movement it neither liberates suppressed organic forces—and with it labour force and the subject—nor the object. Contrary to the determinist and self-contained frame of the organic (work), it is infinitely reversible. It opens a sphere of unlimited modifiability, which I describe precisely as perversion.

Thus *perverse capitalism* produces a new, unlimited sphere: the neutral sphere of the inorganic, the site of experimentation with new forms of life. This is precisely the proper sphere of the *performative design of life*. The unlimited transformation of forms of life and modes of subjectification—or, rather, the production of a flexible subjectivity adaptable to the heterogeneity and diversification of the market, of virtualization and standardization of forms of life—appears as the main feature of the performing society of global capitalism. Biocapitalism means incorporating forms of life into the economy of commodities; in other words, producing and trading inorganic things with the surplus value of forms of life. Thus, through the appropriation of forms of life, life itself is reduced to a standardized commodity. In reality, ‘commodity’ is not the ideal term. Rather, it is much more the global presence, massive and uncorporeal, that makes the matter of commodity appear as a life form. Perverse capitalism turns surplus value into life form.

### PERFORMANCE TIME VS. TIME OF PERFORMANCE

The transformation of modes of production is certainly connected to a radical transformation of the modes of work. Unsurprisingly, the ideologists of neoliberalism, exalting new economic forms or ‘trans-forms’, praise the new ‘creative’ immaterial labour. In fact, a number of these theorists see in the artist’s creative work the model of the new type of work and modes of production. Thus, for the members of Richard Florida’s so-called *creative class*—the fancy creators of economic growth, who sometimes even attend art performances—work is something not clearly distinguishable from leisure time. The borderline between working and leisure time becomes increasingly fluid. However, such a reduction of labour to creation proceeds from the perverse understanding of artistic work as a sort of leisure experience—with no sign of constraint, exploitation, physical effort or sensible experience of matter.

Thus, in the end, what is being appropriated by performing capitalism is *time*—lifetime, the time of life. The first step of the biocapitalist operation is the reduction of time to commodity. Labour force and its time are thus appropriated: they have become producible—this is an operation of production of the unproducible. Time is sold as a product, like labour force itself. The question of duration becomes inseparable from the question of production.

However, according to the French economist and philosopher André Gorz—one of the most inspiring radical thinkers of the last century—labour has nothing to do with the

destiny of the human being. Gorz makes a distinction between labour for production’s sake and *autonomous* labour, which is also the true work for society.<sup>3</sup> The paradox today lies in the fact that subjects have to sell their labour—they have to produce—in order to liberate time for their true, autonomous work. And artists, unlike Florida and company, are the first to know this from their own experience. On the other hand, *leisure time* is understood today as time for consumption, the exemplary mode of commodity-time. As such, it becomes the ultimate guarantee of capitalism’s survival and the driving force behind self-inflicted exploitation. It appears as the true opposite of anarchic free time, the only condition of the autonomous work of the individual. I will propose, then, to prolong and radicalize Gorz’s thesis by making a clear distinction between these two types of time. Thus opposing, on the one hand, the over-qualified commodified time—time with multiple qualities, an eventful, totally filled up time, time of work and entertainment, gripped in the perverse pseudo-dialectical bond of labour and leisure—and, on the other hand, anarchic free time, a *time without qualities*. I will call the former ‘performance time’ and the latter ‘time of performance’. One of the critical tasks of critical thought today is to oppose the easy visions of leisure time, enslaving us softly, closing us in the cocoon of the infantile imagery of a world of total enjoyment, that is to say, of total consumption.

### PERFORMATIVE DESIGN OF LIFE: THE NEW MEANINGLESSNESS OF ART?

If the actual *transformation* is unprecedentedly radical, that is because today’s *biocapitalism* appropriates the potential for transformation of human beings, their original transformability, the transformability that makes possible the multiplicity of forms of life. Having become flexible and inventive, ‘creative’, capitalism has started to appropriate the transformability of life in order to inscribe it in the circuit of production: *design of life*. Avant-garde ‘productivism’, the ideal of constructivist art, having become design, bio-aesthetic production becomes design of life. Thus the new, total bio-aesthetics appears as the total reduction of the aesthetic field—the field of life.

Thus *performing* or *perverse capitalism* appears as the appropriation and the universalization of alternative models of experience that were developed during the last decades in artistic practice, particularly in performance art. From this point of view, Nicolas Bourriaud’s thesis on the relational aesthetics of the 1990s could be seen as disturbingly close to the ideal of ‘creative capitalism’, exalting mobility, flexibility, plasticity, fluidity, open connections, networks, leisure productivity, experimentation with the techniques

of the subject, etc. The paradox, then, lies in the fact that, in performing capitalism, contemporary art risks not only seeing its critical potential weakening, but also finding itself—against its will—in the position of an exemplary figure of performing capitalism. Apparently, in the era of performing capitalism, performance art in particular cannot accomplish its critical function any longer—the function that brought it to life as a pioneer artistic practice a few decades ago. Yet, precisely for that reason, (performance) art appears today as a field of exemplary aesthetic struggle. What are the dimensions of this struggle?

#### 'AISTHETIC' MATERIALISM VS. PERFORMING CAPITALISM

The condition in which we live—under the effects of the exigency for permanent growth, for total efficiency, for a consumption of the world—is a *super-aesthetic* condition: we are submerged by an intense flux of images, sounds, digital screens and techno-aesthetic prostheses. We are bombarded and absorbed at the same time. Our senses do not succeed in following our prostheses anymore—the latter have already ventured much too far. Nevertheless, before becoming super-aesthetic, is the super-prosthetization of the sensible space aesthetic at all? In other words, if we have to speak of aesthetics, it is nothing but a reactive aesthetics: it is always transcended by a *telos*, the fluxus is reduced to a transcendent field (ultimately, this is the consumption). The aesthetic, or, rather, the *aisthetic* field, the field of sensible experience—the word *aesthetic* comes from the Greek word *aisthesis*, 'sensible experience', from which Alexander Baumgarten coined the term *aesthetics*<sup>4</sup>—is thus reduced to a resource or a means, to the regimes of usage that are regimes of exploitation and domination. If a 'super-aesthetic' condition is imposed on us, it is not in the sense of a radical enlargement of the aesthetic field, but of its reduction to a performance: it is nothing but a privative totalization—*privatization*—of the field of the sensible, subordinated to the demand to react to all stimuli of sensible order. Therefore, the actual politics of the sensible, which reduce the political rhythm immanent to the aesthetic, are reactive if not reactionary, totalizing if not totalitarian. The actual aesthetic panic is in fact a radical limitation of the aesthetic field.

The most urgent critical, political and also ethical question today—since it is a question about the *ethos* of life—is the question, *How to persist?* The question of persistence *matters* in a world of a globalized liquidity, of a biocapitalized transformability. It *matters* to ask the question critically in order to reaffirm something; and the thing to reaffirm can't be anything but the thing that does not change and that cannot be consumed as

change. And what cannot be consumed as change is nothing but change itself. That is why the crucial word for us is matter: matter is the place where change happens without being reduced to a flexible resource of exploitation. However, matter is not a place—it is the density, the extension of change itself. Matter is the extension of the intensity of the event.

The decisive question, then, in the horizon of the aesthetic alteration, is: how to *persist* in the permanent movement—in the biopolitical aesthetic fluidity and absorption of life—without abolishing the possibility of the event? *How to persist in the event?* How to transform or alter a situation of origin in order to open the possibility for the event?<sup>5</sup> This question tries to articulate the same energy that was immanent to the becoming of radical art practices. It is the question of a radical *aisthetics*—and not aesthetics anymore: the radical sensible experience that today constitutes the very condition of our lives exceeds the idea of a closed and autonomous field of artistic activity—and a radical materialism at stake or to come.

I will try to outline a few possible starting points here for this radically materialist *aisthetic* approach:

1. Radical materialism implies a resistance to any kind of transcendent normative plane: technique, aesthetics, aesthetic technique or technical aesthetics, any codification of movement, but also modes of institutional production. What does art have to do with matter? Is this a substantialist or, even worse, a vitalist claim? No, because it is, in fact, aesthetic matter that is reduced to a resource by 'creative' biocapitalism. In this sense, the present claim for a radically materialist, aesthetic approach to art is not a claim for liberation of a substantial matter or organics—or vital energy—but a claim for the liberation of the capacity of invention of new aesthetic modes—of new sensible modes. Thus the issue of matter leads us directly to the issue of body.
2. The praxis of contemporary art appears, then, as a critical aesthetic experimentation of the potential of the body—of body as an open plane of dynamics, (dis)organization, place of the event of freedom to emerge.
3. Furthermore, it appears as a critical examination of codes, techniques and modes of production.
4. It is a practice of a critical experience of the techno-aesthetic: the transformation of aesthetic modes and of technical devices, which is a political act in itself—introduction of new forms of being into the world, i.e., of the ways of the world to be.

5. And, last but not least, contemporary art operates as a critical examination of the frame of the institution, of the modes of seeing and performing, of the frozen ideological machines and devices of domination: for instance, of the institution of seeing (a spectacle) or of the institution of performing—institutions taking place within institutions but also instituting institutions.

These critical operations open the possibility for persisting into the movement, even though they are always and unavoidably exposed to the risks of simplification, of reduction to production—or of a simple and brutal absorption.

Finally, to paraphrase Benjamin, the task at stake today is not to bio-aestheticize politics but to (re-)politicize aesthetics or, rather, to follow its immanent political rhythm. This is an aesthetic struggle, but it is also a struggle for aesthetics. Against the actual aesthetic hysteria, there is also an emerging an-aesthetics—that is, an aesthetics irreducible to a transcendent principle, aesthetics—which is an *altering* expression of the resistance proper to sensible experience or, to put it simply, of matter. This *an-aesthetics* has its singular contemporary modes: it experiments itself first through aesthetic practices in the narrow sense of the term, which try to transform the field of sensible experience, by reaffirming in fact its transformative potential, while subverting the reactionary assaults of today's hegemonic regimes. This means nothing but reopening and re-*mobilizing* the transformative power of artistic and conceptual praxis, of our praxis itself, not in order to pose again the exigency of transforming the world, but in order to transform its transformation. At a moment when the forces of global capitalism each day further absorb the potential for transformation, in order to submit it to the imperatives of (economic) growth—resulting in the alteration of 'our' world—our task is the transformation of transformation: artistic, philosophical and political. Only through this transformative praxis will the possibility of the event—of the *events*—persist.

1. In the first and last parts of the article, paragraphs are used from my lecture "Performance or Transformation? Contemporary Art and the Struggle for the Real", presented in January 2011 within the framework of the exhibition "To the Arts, Citizens!", curated by Oscar Faria and Joao Fernandes at the Serralves Foundation in Porto.
2. In what sense can the term 'forms of life' be used? This term has the critical task of introducing a different concept of life, which implies that there is no substantial life, but only forms or modes of life: *life is the modalization of life*. The political aspect of this claim is that life is neither the supreme good, nor a transcendental guarantee for the onto-political regime of modernity. Life always takes place as the modalization of life or, in other words, as a process of singularization, as the invention and formation of forms of life.
3. See André Gorz, *Métamorphoses du travail*, Paris: Galilée, 1988.
4. The notion of 'aesthetics' is introduced and developed in my book, *L'altération du monde: Pour une esthétique radicale*, Paris: Nouvelles Editions Lignes, 2009.
5. For a more detailed elaboration on these questions, see Boyan Manchev, "La Métamorphose et l'Événement: Comment penser sans fin?", *Rue Descartes*, vol. 2009/2, no. 64, *La Métamorphose*, Boyan Manchev ed., Paris: PUF, 2009, and Boyan Manchev, "Sujet événementiel et événement-sujet: Les défis d'une politique de la métamorphose", *Rue Descartes*, vol. 2010/1, no. 67, *Quel sujet du politique?*, G Bas-terra, R Ivekovic et al. eds, Paris: PUF, 2010.

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In 2008 the USA generated 3.16 million tons of e-waste. Of this amount, only 430,000 tons or 13.6 per cent was recycled. The rest was trashed—in landfill or incinerators. In Europe and in my home country Germany it's nearly the same thing. Each year, despite legal prohibitions, 155,000 tons of electronic waste are moved from Germany alone to countries like India, China and Ghana, where children search through the garbage for recyclables. Often the waste is labelled as secondhand goods or even development aid, circumventing EU countries' prohibitions and

controls. Only 20 to 30 per cent of goods are still functional; the rest is toxic waste that ends up in landfill sites in Ghana.

'Sodom and Gomorrah' is the name given to the slum and its adjacent electrical dumping ground in Agbogboshie, a district of Ghana's capital, Accra. There, it is primarily children who dismantle the toxic electrical appliances without any safety precautions. Children, who are sometimes only six years old, are involved in the recovery of the materials. The people work ten to 12 hours per day. Despite this, they live in extreme poverty.











Branka Ćurčić

## Ideology of Design: From a Socialist Perspective on Design to its Neoliberal Transformation in Ex-Yugoslavia

*Avant-gardism which carried us away is no longer ours.*<sup>1</sup>

Matko Meštrović

The development of design practices and theory in the former Yugoslavia is inevitably seen as part of the country's general industrial modernization after World War II and of the much broader consequences of this process. The idea of Yugoslav society's progress and development was embedded deeply in the state's ideological and political programme and in the practical indications of the country's industrialization and technological development. The phenomenon of modernization is therefore underlined as a general tendency toward industrial production and a market-based economy.<sup>2</sup> "What is more, design became one of the symbols of post-war reconstruction ... design was not just a feature that sold a product, but a very efficient means to promote the identity of a culture and a civilization."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the institution of design, deeply rooted in the broader social and cultural environment, represented a systematic attempt to improve the wider cultural and economic climate of the Yugoslav socialist project. Within the dichotomy of ideologies thus described, and with an understanding of Yugoslav modernism's non-monolithic character with regard to social and political conflicts in the socialist Yugoslavia of that time, there begins the significant development of the theory and practice of design, with all its progressive, critical and contradictory layers.

In young socialist Yugoslavia, the first post-war years were marked by the rejection of Stalinism and by the delimitation from capitalism as a social and economic system. Basic parameters for the socialist transformation of Yugoslav society were "*liberation* from material shortages and economic exploitation, first of all, and from political repression or, in other words, *self-determination of an individual by revolutionary praxis* through which the *new way of life* is formed in a striving toward classless human community".<sup>4</sup> At the same time, efforts were made to "overcome economic, ideological and political *monopoly*",<sup>5</sup> (although, in the future, political *monolithism* would occur in waves) through the establishment and domination of social property relations, the collectivization of agriculture, changes in material production, the liberalization of citizens' political initiative and, before long, through the development of a socialist self-management

of workers (as an alternative to the state). Rapid *industrialization* began from such a ground under the leadership of a strong state. By the end of the 1940s, within the framework of the affirmation of Yugoslavia's own path to socialism, the principal difference between the capitalist and the socialist *purpose* of production was emphasized very often, particularly the fact that socialist production was not based on the creation and accumulation of value. At that time every possibility of establishing 'market socialism' was excluded, while self-management development was considered the gateway to a differently organized community of people and production, with constant critique directed towards consumerist tendencies in society.

*The perspective of self-management understood in this way consequently opens up, where, on the ground of the growth of material production, there emerge human relations between individuals, where human creativity overcomes the rigidity both of the structure and of the system, the immobility of both the bureaucratic and technocratic relations.*<sup>6</sup>

In a certain sense, the beginning of commodity mass production within the framework of the process of industrialization had, on the one hand, paved the way to building a socialist society in which a new relation towards material culture is supposed to influence the development of more human relations between individuals. On the other hand, the growth of material production and consumerist society, the signs of which slowly started to appear, were supposed to introduce the socialist individual to the inheritance of material and spiritual civilization, in conditions of what remained a low standard of living. During the 1950s and 1960s, explicit forms of delimitation of socialist production from capitalist production were especially visible in theoretical discussions of mainly Croatian artists, architects and theoreticians of design and culture, those who were close to the artistic initiative EXAT 51. Thus, one of the members of the initiative, Vjenceslav Richter, comparing capitalist and socialist conditions of production, claimed that in capitalism "the motive of production" is "earning and profit", while "with us [it is] the satisfaction of the needs of the population and strengthening the economic power of society", and that "in capitalism the market is structured through economic categories, from the economically weakest consumers to the most exclusive luxury", where luxury appears as the agent of social distancing, while "with us—the market is evenly equalized through a general average standard of living", with a notable general aspiration towards the progress of the broadest layers of consumers.<sup>7</sup> This author certainly sees the basic component of differentiation in the character of ownership/property, which in capitalism is private, while in socialism there is a mixture of public and state ownership

of the means of production—as well as in the orientation of a socialist economy towards 'production', as opposed to the 'market'-orientation of a capitalist economy, the orientation to quality and not to quantity. Design, or designing, was viewed as an eminently social process that was supposed to make a large contribution to crucial changes in all aspects of the life of the socialist individual. Alongside the legitimation of abstract art, this kind of modernist aspiration corresponded to new historical conditions, in which a harmonious, humanist society was not only a utopian project, but the basic goal of Yugoslav socialism. In connection with this, parts of the communist political and cultural elite recognized connections between the universalism of modernist art and the universalism of socialist emancipation.<sup>8</sup>

Yet there was only ever a partial entry into industrial production and realization of the emancipatory projects of designers and architects who dealt with industrial design.<sup>9</sup> There were a few realized projects, though, above all in the interior design of public spaces: cafes, educational institutions, workers' education centres, apartment houses, exhibition pavilions; agricultural machines, street and household furniture, electronic devices, etc. With their work, protagonists of the design scene in this period promoted the general aspiration of society towards a harmonious socialist system, through the realization of objects and surroundings for self-managing Yugoslav workers, whereby basic guidelines for the creation of products remained within categories of quality, functionality and 'good form' (*gute Form*), relying on the heritage of the Bauhaus and the Ulm School of Design.

Attempts to set up a firm institutional framework were a strong marker of the development of design theory and practice. One of those institutions was Belgrade's Design Centre, established in 1972 as the institution for design education, promotion and advancement. It was established within the Institute for Household Economics and with the support of the Centre for the Culture of Habitation and its team of architects. The Design Centre operated as a public institution, a cornerstone and central gathering place for authors/professionals and for a broader audience, through galleries with permanent and thematic exhibitions of graphic and industrial design, including students' projects, an information centre, the magazine *Industrial Design*, a free monthly bulletin, a programme of public discussions, didactic traveling exhibitions of design organized in cultural centres and workers' universities in Yugoslavia, the *Good Design* award, an Index of Designers (offered to potential employers), etc. The concept and the organization of Belgrade's Design Centre were largely due, on the one hand, to the experience of the renowned British institution, the Design Council, and on the other, to the practices of

Zagreb's Centre for Industrial Design (CIO—Centar za industrijsko oblikovanje) and Ljubljana's Biennale for Industrial Design (BIO). Yugoslav institutions that dealt with the teaching and promotion of design theory and practice had in common an understanding of design as part of industrial development, of industrial culture, and not merely of the production of goods. They cooperated through the framework of the Community for the Advancement of Design, initiated by Belgrade's Design Centre in 1973. It functioned on the principle of recipients and providers of services, by directly connecting design initiatives, designers and institutions with factories and companies.

Alongside several realized economic reforms in Yugoslavia,<sup>10</sup> there was also a critique of the economy's dysfunction, which consisted in the absence of the conception of long-term development and which, beside the strong impetus of the country's industrialization, indirectly influenced the emergence of significant regional differences, social inequalities and signs of emerging nationalisms. Although growing constantly in previous years, GDP growth in 1967 was around zero. Such economic contradictions and the economy's general recession induced very complex social conflicts, which occurred by the end of the 1960s and were inevitably related to ongoing political and cultural processes. The solution to the crisis could have been sought in the development of self-management towards higher levels of society, along with the democratization of the rest of the state's functions,<sup>11</sup> but instead the road of economic liberalization and bureaucratization was chosen. The 'peaceful convergence of the system' (socialist and capitalist) was propagated, with the aim of establishing, as far as possible, social justice and political freedom on the grounds of a socialist market economy. There was talk of the transformation of the individual into a 'mass individual', in a society that, according to its main tendency, becomes a 'mass society'.<sup>12</sup> Instead of the earlier concept of liberation from all kinds of shortages, lifestyle was emphasized and the middle class was formed (actually the *bourgeois* class). The reasons for all this were seen in the fetishization of technical and industrial commodities due to the sudden rise of industrial civilization and the significance of private ownership (as the imperative of social and material safety).

The time of the strongest expansion of the Yugoslav market model was also the time of the strongest *social conflicts*, which culminated in the movements of 1968. Immediately before that—and around these events—the critical discourse about mass culture and economic liberalization became all the more obvious. Mass culture (as the production of commodities) was seen as a culture that had depersonalizing effects, whereby it didn't matter "whether commodities were ordered by a commercial manager or by a political



bureaucrat, whose bureaucratic authority needed mass averageness, the absence of one's own personal self-awareness, conformism, reproduction of the given state of affairs".<sup>13</sup> "On the present level of social and production relations, we see the further realization of the socialist programme in the domain of commodity-money relations."<sup>14</sup> Exactly that commodity-money relation was perpetuated by emerging technocrats and the managerial orientation of society. It seems that "instead of the communist utopian promise of the classless society, the public sphere was dominated by the consumerist promise based on economic and aesthetic divisions between classes".<sup>15</sup>

Belgrade's Design Centre was developed within the political and economic environment that followed the new Constitution of 1974 and the Law on Associated Labour of 1976, with the new intention of limiting the former practice of capital accumulation and the havoc of commodity production through the direct arrangements of organizations of associated labour,<sup>16</sup> moving towards a system of *self-management democracy*. This process aimed at excluding state administration from the process of production and at improving the social position of different social layers, which was the heritage of 1950s workers' self-management that had been developed on the assumption of the dissolution of the state. Direct producers were the focus, the 'real' working class, in contrast to the 'counter-class'—bank managers, technocrats in insurance companies, institutes, chambers of commerce and so on; that is, workers who produced services. The 'counter-class' was responsible for the intensification of social inequalities. Official policy proclaimed the direct connection of science, culture and design with material production, which was in contrast to the previous practice of state-based and commercial intermediaries. The need was stressed for the establishment of communities that would connect production and art, design and cultural institutions, with the aspiration that those achievements would become the ownership of workers. The Law on Associated Labour therefore proclaimed a return to the very principles of socialist workers' self-management and the historical role of the working class in paving the road to communism. In practice, the bureaucratization of self-management was strong, preventing the diminution of the state's role in production and the full emancipation of the working class.

Transition takes place through transformations in the relations of production, and it is the state's function to regulate conflicts stemming from the systematic contradictions of emergent capitalism on the fringes of the European economy.<sup>17</sup> In dramatic processes of privatization, "the role of the state as a guardian of the institution of community and social solidarity is terminated, in favour of a state with the objective of regulating the conflicts engendered within the transformation of the relations of production".<sup>18</sup>

### *The era of modernism*

*was rooted in the idea that you could simply promote the good, address the bad, and apply for compensation with the state; it was premised on the condition that international issues took place in a secluded area, and the same for the national, the regional and the local. The interplay between and bypassing of these spheres by the elusive agents of globalization was still kept at bay by the state's regulatory power. Nowadays those formerly distinct realms are getting mixed up and bring forth new forms which are sovereign and running free because they cannot be addressed by traditional institutions.*<sup>19</sup>

In such an environment, as one of the forms of the "struggle for emancipation", contemporary design practices are becoming a new production space within the existing system, instead of overthrowing what they stand against. In contemporary conditions of immaterial production, among other models of cultural and social labour, design and the position of the designer, her/his subjectivity, unreservedly participate in value production; human capital, creativity and labour are the last reserve of Western economies.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, politics is weakened, since nothing that is politically visible has any value, it is pure 'spectacle'. Domination therefore shifts from the domain of bodily, mechanical and political disciplining to that of logical and psychological disciplining. Not the body but the soul—the modelling of the soul—becomes the subject of technosocial domination today.<sup>21</sup>

In these circumstances, what is going on with the promotion of design practices with regard to promoting the improvement of design practices? This is no longer part of the state's development policies, but rather subject to the laws of competition and profit in the market of ideas, until its full realization as social capital. It is unplanned, precarious and arbitrary, and, in addition, succumbs to the diverse forms of national representation. For, with the installation of today's social and economic system in (post-)Yugoslav countries, the ideology of neoliberal capitalism and nationalism act hand-in-hand. In the development of Yugoslav socialism, the position of design was quite many-sided—design played a role in the post-war restoration and industrialization of the country, in the increase of material production, in the development of the Yugoslav economy, in the promotion of a modernist heritage, in the creation of a mass culture, in the Westernization of Yugoslav society and culture, and in the promotion of market production and consumption. Yet one must take into account that this kind of arrangement of things is by no means the only one and is certainly not rectilinear, but that the development of design theory and practice in Yugoslav society also had its progressive, critical and contradictory admixtures. The Yugoslav form of a socialist market economy in a

certain sense anticipated the complete immersion of these regions into current neo-liberal capitalism, through processes of privatization, the primacy of the market and private ownership. Can one say that progressive theories and practices of design constituted certain *exceptions* from the assertion that the logic of the market has its own life, regardless of the political system in which it acts,<sup>22</sup> whether it is capitalist or socialist? Or are they, in turn, subject to the “nightmare of modernism”, where emancipatory ideas are realized in accordance with the dictum of the spectacle of the culture industry?<sup>23</sup> It would be important to look into past emancipatory experiences critically, not nostalgically, and contrary to the paradigm of contemporary ethno-nationalism, the historicization and enthronement of the allegedly spontaneous and non-ideological, ubiquitous market economy.

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Hal Foster

## Design and Crime: A Sketch for a Political Economy of Design

The turn of one century calls up others, and 2000 was no exception. Over the last few years *Style 1900* or Art Nouveau has returned with a vengeance in museum shows and academic books. It all seems long ago and far away, this pan-European movement pledged to a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total work' of arts and crafts, in which everything from architecture to ashtrays was subject to a florid kind of decoration, in which the designer struggled to impress his subjectivity on all sorts of objects through an idiom of vitalist line—as if to inhabit the thing in this crafted way was to resist the advance of industrial reification somehow. As the aesthetics of the machine became dominant in the 1920s, Art Nouveau was no longer *nouveau*, and in the next decades it slowly passed from an outmoded style to a campy one, and it has lingered in this limbo ever since. Yet what struck me, in the midst of this recent parade of Art Nouveau manifestations, was its strong echo in the present—an intuition that we live in another era of blurred disciplines, of objects treated as mini-subjects, of total design, of a *Style 2000*.

Adolf Loos, the Viennese architect of austere façades, was the great critic of the aesthetic hybridity of Art Nouveau. In his milieu he was to architecture what Schoenberg was to music, Wittgenstein to philosophy or Karl Kraus to journalism—a scourge of the impure and the superfluous in his own discipline. In this regard "Ornament and Crime" (1908) is his fiercest polemic, for there he associates the Art Nouveau designer with a child smearing walls and a "Papuan" tattooing skin. For Loos the ornate design of Art Nouveau is erotic and degenerate, a reversal of the proper path of civilization to sublimate, to distinguish and to purify: thus his notorious formula, "the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects", and his infamous association of "ornament and crime".<sup>1</sup> This anti-decorative dictate is a modernist mantra if ever there was one, and it is for the puritanical propriety inscribed in such words that postmodernists have condemned modernists like Loos in turn. But maybe times have changed again; maybe we are in a moment when distinctions between practices might be reclaimed or remade—without the ideological baggage of purity and propriety attached.

Loos began his battle with Art Nouveau a decade before "Ornament and Crime". A pointed attack comes in 1900, in the form of an allegorical skit about "a poor little rich man" who commissions an Art Nouveau designer to put "Art in each and every thing":

*Each room formed a symphony of colors, complete in itself. Walls, wall coverings, furniture, and materials were made to harmonize in the most artful ways. Each household item had its own specific place and was integrated with the others in the most wonderful combinations. The architect has forgotten nothing, absolutely nothing. Cigar ashtrays, cutlery, light switches—everything, everything was made by him.*<sup>2</sup>

This *Gesamtkunstwerk* does more than combine architecture, art and craft; it commingles subject and object: "the individuality of the owner was expressed in every ornament, every form, every nail". For the Art Nouveau designer this is perfection: "You are complete!" he exults to the owner. But the owner is not so sure: this completion "taxed [his] brain". Rather than a sanctuary from modern stress, his Art Nouveau interior is another expression of it:

*The happy man suddenly felt deeply, deeply unhappy... He was precluded from all future living and striving, developing and desiring. He thought, this is what it means to learn to go about life with one's own corpse. Yes indeed. He is finished. He is complete!*

For the Art Nouveau designer this completion reunites art and life, and all signs of death are banished. For Loos, on the other hand, this triumphant overcoming of limits is a catastrophic loss of the same—the loss of the objective constraints required to define any "future living and striving, developing and desiring". Far from a transcendence of death, this loss of finitude is a death-in-life, as figured in the ultimate trope of indistinction, living "with one's own corpse".

Such is the malaise of "the poor little rich man": rather than a man of qualities, he is a man without them (as another Viennese scourge, the great novelist Robert Musil, would soon put it), for what he lacks, in his very completion, is difference or distinction. In a typically pithy statement of 1912 Kraus would call this lack of distinction, which precludes "all future living and striving", a lack of "running-room":

*Adolf Loos and I—he literally and I linguistically—have done nothing more than show that there is a distinction between an urn and a chamber pot and that it is this distinction above all that provides culture with running-room [Spielraum]. The others, the positive ones [i.e., those who fail to make this distinction], are divided into those who use the urn as a chamber pot and those who use the chamber pot as an urn.*<sup>3</sup>

Here "those who use the urn as a chamber pot" are Art Nouveau designers who want to infuse art (the urn) into the utilitarian object (the chamber pot). Those who do the reverse are functionalist modernists who want to elevate the utilitarian object into art.

(A few years later Marcel Duchamp would trump both sides with his dysfunctional urinal, *Fountain*, presented as art; but that's another story.) For Kraus the two mistakes are symmetrical—both confuse use-value and art-value—and both are perverse inasmuch as both risk a regressive indistinction of things: they fail to see that objective limits are necessary for “the running-room” that allows for the making of a liberal kind of subjectivity and culture. This is why Loos opposes not only the total design of Art Nouveau but also its wanton subjectivism (“individuality expressed in every nail”). Neither Loos nor Kraus says anything about a natural ‘essence’ of art or an absolute ‘autonomy’ of culture; the stake is one of “distinctions” and “running-room”, of proposed differences and provisional spaces. This old debate takes on a new resonance today, when the aesthetic and the utilitarian are not only conflated but all but subsumed in the commercial, and everything—not only architectural projects and art exhibitions but everything from jeans to genes—seems to be regarded as so much *design*. After the heyday of the Art Nouveau designer, one hero of modernism was the artist-as-engineer or the author-as-producer, but this figure was toppled in turn with the industrial order that supported it, and in our consumerist world the designer again rules. Yet this new designer is very different from the old: the Art Nouveau designer resisted the effects of industry, even as he also sought, in the words of Walter Benjamin, “to win back [its] forms”—modern concrete, cast iron, and the like—for architecture and art.<sup>4</sup> There is no such resistance in contemporary design: it delights in postindustrial technologies and it is happy to sacrifice the semi-autonomy of architecture and art to the manipulations of design. Moreover, the rule of the designer is even broader than before: it ranges across very different enterprises (from Martha Stewart to Microsoft) and it penetrates various social groups. For today you don't have to be filthy rich to be projected not only as designer but as designed—whether the product in question is your home or your business, your sagging face (designer surgery) or your lagging personality (designer drugs), your historical memory (designer museums) or your DNA future (designer children). Might this ‘designed subject’ be the unintended offspring of the ‘constructed subject’ so vaunted in postmodern culture? One thing seems clear: just when you thought the consumerist loop could get no tighter in its narcissistic logic, it did: design abets a near-perfect circuit of production and consumption, without much “running-room” for anything else.

Some may object that this world of total design is not new—that the conflation of the aesthetic and the utilitarian in the commercial goes back at least to the design programme of the Bauhaus in the 1920s—and they would be right. If the first Industrial Revolution prepared the field of political economy, of a rational theory of material production, as Jean Baudrillard argued long ago, so the second Industrial Revolution, as styled by the Bauhaus, extended this “system of exchange value to the whole domain of signs, forms

and objects... in the name of design”.<sup>5</sup> According to Baudrillard, the Bauhaus signalled a qualitative leap from a political economy of the product to a “political economy of the sign”, in which the structures of the commodity and the sign refashioned one another, so that the two could circulate as one, as image-products with “sign exchange value”, as they do in our own time. Of course this is hardly what the Bauhaus Masters, some of whom were Marxists, had in mind, but such is often “the bad dream of modernism” in the ruses of history (as T.J. Clark once termed it). Beware of what you wish, runs one moral of modernism as seen from the present, because it may come true—in perverse form. Thus, to take only the chief example, the old project to reconnect Art and Life, endorsed in different ways by Art Nouveau, the Bauhaus and many other movements, was eventually accomplished, but according to the spectacular dictates of the culture industry, not the liberatory ambitions of the avant-garde. And a primary form of this perverse reconciliation in our time is design.

So, yes, the world of total design is hardly new—imagined in Art Nouveau, it was retooled by the Bauhaus, and has spread through institutional clones and commercial knock-offs ever since—but it only seems to be achieved in our own pan-capitalist present. Some of the reasons are not hard to find. Once upon a time in mass production, the commodity was its own ideology, the Model T its own advertising: its chief attraction lay in its abundant sameness. Soon this was not enough: the consumer had to be drawn in and feedback factored into production (this is one origin-scene of modern design). As competition grew, special seductions had to be devised and the package became almost as important as the product. (The subjectivizing of the commodity is already apparent in streamlined design and becomes evermore surreal thereafter; indeed, Surrealism is quickly appropriated by advertising.) Our own time is witness to a qualitative leap in this history: with the ‘flexible specialization’ of post-Fordist production, commodities can be continually tweaked and markets constantly niched, so that a product can be mass in quantity yet appear up-to-date, personal, and precise in address.<sup>6</sup> Desire is not only registered in products today, it is specified there: a self-interpellation of “hey, that's me” greets the consumer in catalogues and online. This perpetual profiling of the commodity, of the mini-me, is one factor that drives the inflation of design. Yet what happens when this commodity-machine—now conveniently located out of the view of most of us—breaks down, as environments give out, markets crash, and/or sweatshop workers scattered across the globe somehow refuse to go on?

Design is also inflated as the package all but replaces the product. Whether the design object is Young British Art or a presidential candidate, ‘brand equity’—the branding of

a product name on an attention-deficit public—is fundamental to many spheres of society, and hence design is too. Consumer-attention and image-retention are all the more important when the product is not an object at all. This became clear during the massive mergers of the Reagan-Thatcher years, when new mega-corporations appeared to promote little else but their own new acronyms and logos. Especially as the economy slumped under George Bush I, this branding was a way to prop up stock value apart from the realities of productivity and profitability. More recently, the internet has set a new premium on corporate name-recognition for its own sake. For dot.coms such brand equity is necessary for survival, and part of the recent purge of these virtual companies stemmed from a Darwinism of the web-name.

A third reason for the inflation of design is the increased centrality of media industries to the economy. This factor is obvious, so obvious that it might obscure a more fundamental development: the general 'mediation' of the economy. I mean by this term more than 'the culture of marketing' and 'the marketing of culture'; I mean a retooling of the economy around digitizing and computing, in which the product is no longer thought of as an object to be produced, so much as a datum to be manipulated—that is, to be designed and redesigned, consumed and reconsumed. This 'mediation' also inflates design, to the point where it can no longer be considered a secondary industry. Perhaps we should speak of a 'political economy of design'.

Some of these speculations can be tested against *Life Style* by Bruce Mau, a compendium of projects by the Canadian designer who came to prominence with *Zone Magazine* and *Books* in the late 1980s. With a distinguished series of publications in classical and vanguard philosophy and history, this imprint is also known for 'Bruce Mau Design', whose luscious covers with sumptuous images in saturated colours and layered pages with inventive fonts in cinematic sequencing have greatly influenced North American publishing. Sometimes Mau seems to design the publications to be scanned, and despite his frequent denials in *Life Style* he tends to treat the book as a design construct more than an intellectual medium.<sup>7</sup> *Life Style* follows on the mammoth monograph of architectural projects by Rem Koolhaas, *S,M,L,XL* (1995), which Mau helped to design (these are not coffee-table books, they are coffee tables). With his usual wit, Koolhaas picked this title to signal not only the various scales of his work—from domestic to urban—but also that today hot architects are like hot designers—they must have lines of merchandise to suit all customers. *Life Style* aspires to be the *S,M,L,XL* of design; it too is a massive manifesto-for-myself, a history of a design studio with an extravagant presentation of its projects, plus little credos, historical sketches and laboratory studies

about design, along with several anecdotes concerning Master Builders like Koolhaas, Frank Gehry and Philip Johnson. Here, too, the title is a play on terms: we may hear 'life style' as understood by Martha Stewart, but we are asked to think 'life style' as conceived by Nietzsche or Michel Foucault—as an ethics of life, not a guide to decor. But the world surveyed by *Life Style* suggests something else—a folding of the 'examined life' into the 'designed life'. The book opens with a photograph of the planned Disney community 'Celebration', captioned: "the question of 'life style,' of choosing how to live, encounters the regime of the logo and its ages". This encounter is hardly a fair fight, and though Mau may identify with the underdog here, his design practice is contracted to the other side. For *Life Style* is a success story: bigger and bigger clients—first academic and art institutions, then entertainment and other corporations—come to Mau in search of image design, that is to say, brand equity. Bruce Mau Design, he states candidly, "has become known for producing identity" and "channeling attention" for "business value". Fair enough, it is a business after all, but Mau should have left things there. "In this environment", he goes on, "the only way to build real equity is to add value: to wrap intelligence and culture around the product. The apparent product, the object attached to the transaction, is not the actual product at all. The real product has become culture and intelligence." They are eyed as so much design. So is history: commissioned to lay out a private museum of Coca-Cola memorabilia, Mau concludes, "Has America made Coke? Or, Has Coke made America?" Biological life is seen in these terms as well. "How does an entity declare itself within an environment?" You guessed it: design.

The remaking of space in the image of the commodity is a prime story of capitalist modernity as told by Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, the Situationists, and radical geographers since, such as David Harvey and Saskia Sassen. Today it has reached the point where not only commodity and sign appear as one, but often so do commodity and space: in actual and virtual malls the two are melded through design. Bruce Mau Design is in the vanguard here. Of one "identity program" for a Toronto bookstore chain, Mau writes of a "retail environment... in which the brand identity, signage systems, interiors, and architecture would be totally integrated". And of his graphic support for the new Seattle Public Library designed by Koolhaas, he states, "The central proposition involves erasing the boundaries between architecture and information, the real and the virtual". This integration, that erasure, is a deterritorializing of image and space that depends on a digitizing of the photograph, its loosening from old referential ties—perhaps the development of Photoshop will one day be seen as a world-historical event—and on a computing of architecture, its loosening from old structural principles (in architecture today almost anything can be designed because almost anything can



be built: hence all the arbitrary curves and biomorphic blobs designed by Gehry and followers). As Deleuze and Guattari, let alone Marx, taught us long ago, this deterritorializing is the path of capital.<sup>8</sup>

Mau develops Marshall McLuhan's old insights into media, but like his countryman, he seems confused in his role—is he a cultural critic, a futurist guru or a corporate consultant? In media futurology a critical term today can become a catchy phrase tomorrow and a cliché (or brand) the next. In a wry move Koolhaas now copyrights his catchy phrases, as if to acknowledge this commercial curdling of critical concepts on the page. Yet for all the Situationist lingo of contemporary designers like Mau, they don't 'detourn' much; more than critics of spectacle, they are its surfers (which is indeed a favourite figure in their discourse), with "the status of the artist [and] the paycheck of the businessman". "So where does my work fit in?" Mau asks. "What is my relationship to this happy, smiling monster? Where is the freedom in this regime? Do I follow Timothy Leary and 'tune in, turn on, drop out?' What actions can I commit that cannot be absorbed? Can I outperform the system? Can I win?" Is he kidding?

Contemporary design is part of a greater revenge of capitalism on postmodernism—a recouping of its crossings of arts and disciplines, a routinization of its transgressions. Autonomy, even semiautonomy, may be an illusion or, better, a fiction; but periodically it is useful, even necessary, as it was for Loos, Kraus and company a hundred years ago. Periodically, too, this fiction can become repressive, even deadening, as it was thirty years ago when postmodernism was first advanced as an opening out of a petrified modernism. But this is no longer our situation. Perhaps it is time to recapture a sense of the political situatedness of both autonomy and its transgression, a sense of the historical dialectic of disciplinarity and its contestation—to attempt again "to provide culture with running-room".

Often we are told, as we are in *Life Style*, that design can give 'style' to our 'character'—that it can point the way to such semiautonomy, such running-room—but clearly it is also a primary agent that folds us back into the near-total system of contemporary consumerism. Design is all about desire, but strangely this desire seems almost subjectless today, or at least lack-less; that is, design seems to advance a new kind of narcissism, one that is all image and no interiority—an apotheosis of the subject that is also its potential disappearance. Poor little rich man: he is "precluded from all future living and striving, developing and desiring" in the neo-Art Nouveau world of total design and internet plenitude. "The transfiguration of the solitary soul appears its goal", Benjamin

once remarked of *Style 1900*. "Individualism is its theory... [But] the real meaning of Art Nouveau is not expressed in this ideology... Art Nouveau is summed up by *The Master Builder* [of Henrik Ibsen]—the attempt by the individual to do battle with technology on the basis of his inwardness leads to his downfall."<sup>9</sup> And Musil wrote as if to complete this thought for *Style 2000*:

*A world of qualities without man has arisen, of experiences without the person who experiences them, and it almost looks as though ideally private experience is a thing of the past, and that the friendly burden of personal responsibility is to dissolve into a system of formulas of possible meanings. Probably the dissolution of the anthropocentric point of view, which for such a long time considered man to be at the center of the universe but which has been fading for centuries, has finally arrived at the "I" itself.*<sup>10</sup>

Hal Foster, *Design and Crime*, London: Verso Books, 2011, pp. 13-26. Reprint by kind permission.

1. Loos, Adolf, "Ornament and Crime", *Programs and Manifestos on 20th-Century Architecture*, Ulrich Conrads ed., Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1970, p. 20.
2. Loos, Adolf, "The Poor Little Rich Man", *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897-1900*, Jane O Newman and John H Smith trans., Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1982, p. 125. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from this source.
3. Kraus, Karl, "Die Fackel", December 1912, p. 37; reprinted in *Werke*, vol. 3, Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1953-66, p. 341. See Carl Schorske, "From Public Scene to Private Space: Architecture as Culture Criticism", *Thinking with History*, Princeton MA: Princeton University Press, 1998.
4. Benjamin, Walter, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century", *Reflections*, Edmund Jephcott trans., New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978, p. 155.
5. Baudrillard, Jean, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, Charles Levin trans., St Louis MO: Telos Press, 1981, p. 186.
6. See Ash Amin ed., *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
7. Mau, Bruce et al., *Life Style*, London: Phaidon Press, 2000. Unless otherwise specified, all quotations are from this source.
8. Many young 'Deleuzian' artists and architects seem to misunderstand this basic point, as they take up 'capitalogical' positions as if these were critical ones.
9. Benjamin, "Paris", pp. 154-55.
10. Musil, Robert, *The Man Without Qualities*, vol. 1, Sophie Wilkins trans., New York: Vintage, 1995, pp. 158-59.

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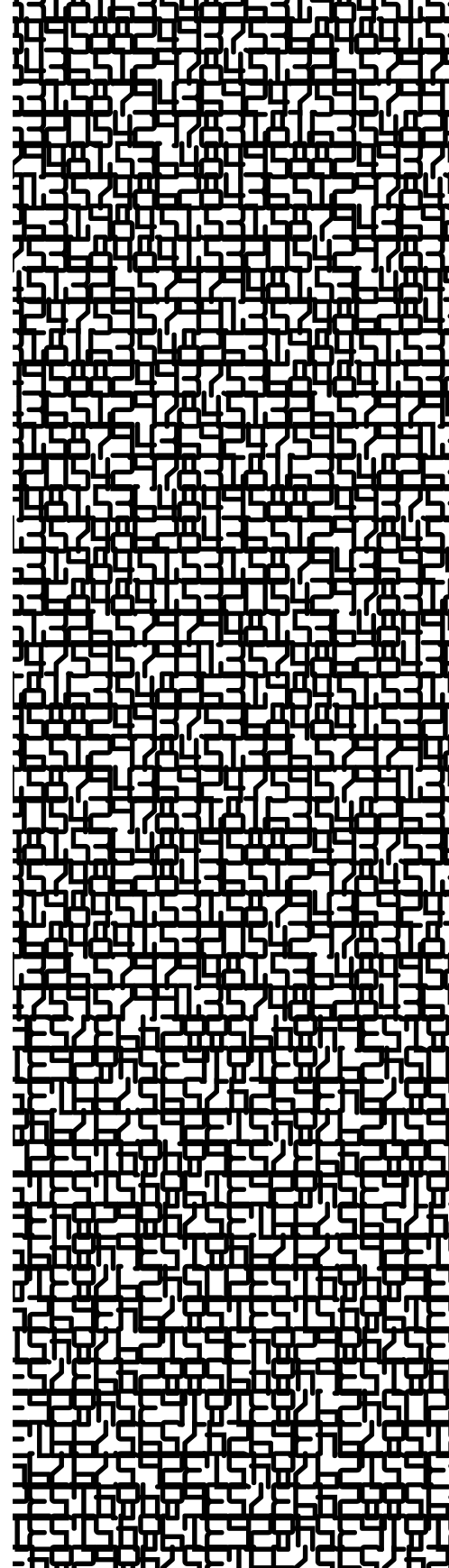


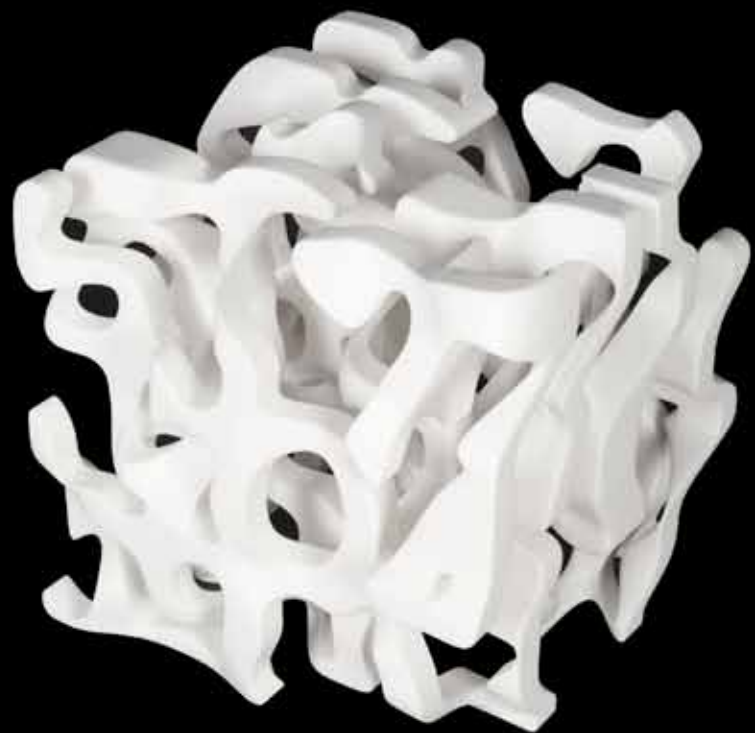
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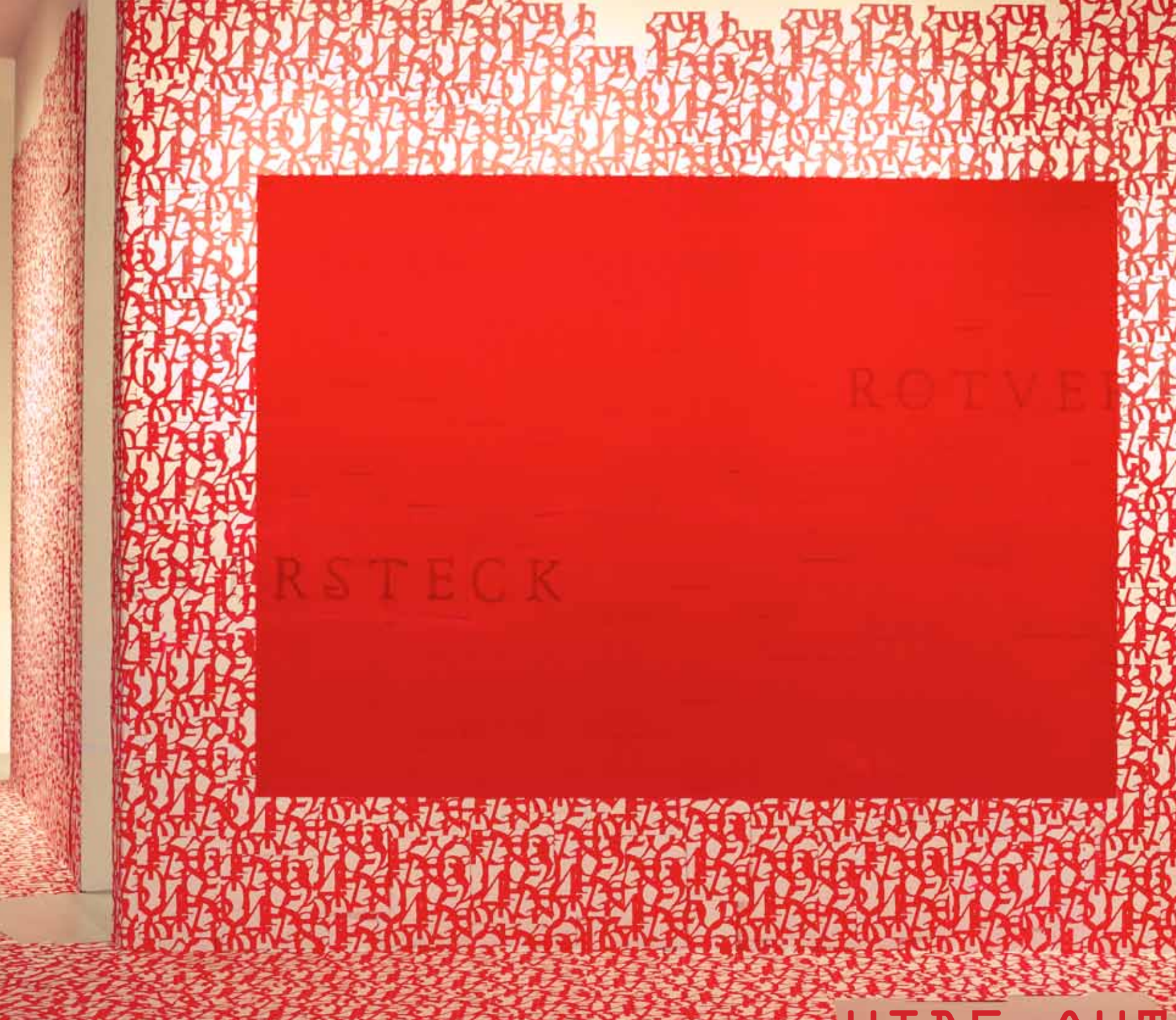
Various lines of demarcation, or even better "facades of contenance", have always separated the personal and the public. And in the case of information, the relationship between public and private becomes a complicated set of liabilities. It is a contract of confidentiality. By the beginning of the 20th century, information control generated a visual pattern called Data Protection Pattern or DPP that helps to veil personal information in print media. Letter and numbers, ingredients of information construction, are used in excess to create a speechless and slurry form of covering text. The sheer infinite spectrum of specific data protection patterns from letters, numbers and logos to organic, camouflage and ornamental graphics can be read as an "Ur-suppe", a "primordial soup" of our times, all before meaning and yet a strategic field to generate an ambivalent space from, to thicken the skin of discretion and to inhabit the flatness of exposure and control. <Jürgen Mayer H.>

Berlinische Galerie, 2011-12  
Fotos: Ludger Paffrath









Conceived especially for the specific space between the gallery walls, the large plate glass windows, and the urban context in which these are encased, the installation Rotversteck (Hide-out in Red) works in two directions. By looking in from the outside, the red film on the plate glass windows allows viewing the content, previously obscured by the DPP, by means of erasure. From inside, however, the awareness of the Rotversteck technique allows for the reinterpretation of the surrounding context: the Volksbühne building, the Rosa-Luxembourg-Platz, and the PDS (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus) Central Building. Since modernity, issues of transparency have received a heightened attention in nearly every social realm. At this point, visual transparency is maybe no more than a rhetorical exercise, a diversionary tactic. With its consideration of the possibilities of architectural transparency, the Rotversteck displays another trick of information politics. <Jürgen Mayer H.>

Magnus Müller, 2002  
Foto: Uwe Walter

HIDE-OUT IN RED



Chantal Mouffe

## Agonistic Politics and Artistic Practices

Can artistic practices still play a critical role in a society where the difference between art and advertising has become blurred and where artists and cultural workers have become a necessary part of capitalist production? Scrutinizing the “new spirit of capitalism”, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello<sup>1</sup> have shown how the demands for autonomy by the new movements of the 1960s have been harnessed in the development of the post-Fordist networked economy and been transformed into new forms of control. The aesthetic strategies of the counter-culture—the search for authenticity, the ideal of self-management, the anti-hierarchical exigency—are now used in order to promote the conditions required by the current mode of capitalist regulation, replacing the disciplinary framework characteristic of the Fordist period. Nowadays, artistic and cultural production play a central role in the process of capital valorization and, through ‘neo-management’, artistic critique has become an important element of capitalist productivity.

This has led some people to claim that art has lost its critical power, as any form of critique is automatically recuperated and neutralized by capitalism. Others, however, offer a different view and see the new situation as opening the way for different strategies of opposition. Such a view can be supported by insights from André Gorz, who notes that:

*When self-exploitation acquires a central role in the process of valorization, the production of subjectivity becomes a terrain of the central conflict... Social relations that elude the grasp of value, competitive individualism and market exchange make the latter appear by contrast in their political dimension, as extensions of the power of capital. A front of total resistance to this power is made possible. It necessarily overflows the terrain of production of knowledge towards new practices of living, consuming and collective appropriation of common spaces and everyday culture.*<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, the modernist idea of the avant-garde has to be abandoned, but that does not mean that any form of critique has become impossible. What is needed is a widening of the field of artistic intervention, by intervening directly in a multiplicity of social spaces in order to oppose the programme of total social mobilization of capitalism. The objective should be to undermine the imaginary environment necessary for its reproduction. As Brian Holmes puts it, “Art can offer a chance for society to collectively reflect on the imaginary figures it depends upon for its very consistency, its self-understanding”.<sup>3</sup>

I agree that artistic practices could contribute to the struggle against capitalist domination, but this requires a proper understanding of the dynamics of democratic politics; an understanding that I contend can only be obtained by acknowledging the political in its antagonistic dimension as well as the contingent nature of any type of social order. It is only within such a perspective that one can grasp the hegemonic struggle that characterizes democratic politics, hegemonic struggle in which artistic practices can play a crucial role.

### THE POLITICAL AS ANTAGONISM

The point of departure of the theoretical reflections that I will propose in this piece is the difficulty we currently have envisaging the problems facing our societies in a *political* way. Contrary to what neoliberal ideologists would like us to believe, political questions are not mere technical issues to be solved by experts. Properly political questions always involve decisions, which require the making of a choice between conflicting alternatives. This incapacity to think politically is, to a great extent, due to the uncontested hegemony of liberalism. ‘Liberalism’, in the way I use the term in the present context, refers to a philosophical discourse with many variants, united not by a common essence but by a multiplicity of what Wittgenstein calls “family resemblances”. There are, to be sure, many liberalisms—some more progressive than others—but save for a few exceptions, the dominant tendency in liberal thought is characterized by a rationalist and individualist approach that is unable to grasp adequately the pluralistic nature of the social world, with the conflicts that pluralism entails; conflicts, for which no rational solution could ever exist, hence the dimension of antagonism that characterizes human societies. The typical liberal understanding of pluralism is that we live in a world in which there are indeed many perspectives and values, and that—due to empirical limitations—we will never be able to adopt them all, but that, when put together, they constitute a harmonious ensemble. This is why this type of liberalism must negate the political in its antagonistic dimension. Indeed, one of the main tenets of this liberalism is the rationalist belief in the availability of a universal consensus based on reason. No wonder that the political constitutes its blind spot. Liberalism has to negate antagonism, since, by bringing to the fore the inescapable moment of decision—in the strong sense of having to decide in an undecidable terrain—antagonism reveals the very limit of any rational consensus.

## POLITICS AS HEGEMONY

Next to antagonism, the concept of hegemony is, in my approach, the other key notion for addressing the question of 'the political'. To acknowledge the dimension of 'the political' as the ever-present possibility of antagonism requires coming to terms with the lack of a final ground and the undecidability that pervades every order. In other words, it requires the recognition of the hegemonic nature of every kind of social order and the fact that every society is the product of a series of practices that attempt to establish order in a context of contingency. The political is linked to the acts of hegemonic institution. It is in this sense that one has to differentiate the social from the political. The social is the realm of sedimented practices; that is, practices that conceal the originary acts of their contingent political institution and which are taken for granted, as if they were self-grounded. Sedimented social practices are a constitutive part of any possible society; not all social bonds are put into question at the same time. The social and the political thus have the status of what Heidegger called *existentials*, i.e., necessary dimensions of any societal life. If the political—understood in its hegemonic sense—involves the visibility of the acts of social institution, it is impossible to determine a priori what is social and what is political independent of any contextual reference. Society is not to be seen as the unfolding of a logic exterior to itself, whatever the source of this logic could be—forces of production, development of the Spirit, laws of history, etc. Every order is the temporary and precarious articulation of contingent practices. The frontier between the social and the political is essentially unstable and requires constant displacements and renegotiations between social agents. Things could always be otherwise and every order is therefore predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. It is in that sense that it can be called 'political', since it is the expression of a particular structure of power relations. Power is constitutive of the social because the social could not exist without the power relations through which it is given shape. What, at any given moment, is considered the 'natural' order—jointly with the 'common sense' that accompanies it—is the result of sedimented hegemonic practices; it is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity exterior to the practices that bring it into being.

Every order is therefore political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated. The articulatory practices through which a certain order is established and through which the meaning of social institutions is fixed are 'hegemonic practices'. Every hegemonic order is susceptible to being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices, i.e., practices that will attempt to disarticulate the existing order so as to install another form of hegemony.

What is at stake in what I call the 'agonistic' struggle,<sup>4</sup> which I see as the core of a vibrant democracy, is the very configuration of power relations around which a given society is structured. It is a struggle between opposing hegemonic projects that can never be reconciled rationally. An agonistic conception of democracy acknowledges the contingent character of the hegemonic politico-economic articulations that determine the specific configuration of a society at a given moment. They are precarious and pragmatic constructions, which can be disarticulated and transformed as a result of the agonistic struggle among the adversaries. Contrary to the various liberal models, the agonistic approach that I am advocating recognizes that society is always politically instituted and never forgets that the terrain in which hegemonic interventions take place is always the outcome of previous hegemonic practices and is never a neutral one. This is why it denies the possibility of a non-adversarial democratic politics and criticizes those who, by ignoring the dimension of 'the political', reduce politics to a set of supposedly technical moves and neutral procedures.

## THE PUBLIC SPACE

What are the consequences of the agonistic model of democratic politics that I have just delineated for visualizing the public space? The most important consequence is that it challenges the widespread conception that informs, albeit in different ways, most visions of the public space, conceived as the terrain where consensus can emerge. For the agonistic model, on the contrary, the public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation. I have so far spoken of the public space, but I need to specify straight away that we are not dealing here with one single space. According to the agonistic approach, public spaces are always plural and the agonistic confrontation takes place in a multiplicity of discursive surfaces. I also want to insist on a second important point. While there is no underlying principle of unity, no predetermined centre to this diversity of spaces, there always exist diverse forms of articulation among them and we are not faced with the kind of dispersion envisaged by some postmodernist thinkers. Nor are we dealing with the kind of 'smooth' space found in Deleuze and his followers. Public spaces are always striated and hegemonically structured. A given hegemony results from a specific articulation of a diversity of spaces and this means that the hegemonic struggle also consists in the attempt to create a different form of articulation among public spaces.

My approach is therefore clearly very different from the one defended by Jürgen Habermas, who, when he envisages the political public space—which he calls the “public sphere”—presents it as the place where deliberation aiming at rational consensus takes place. To be sure, Habermas now accepts that it is improbable, given the limitations of social life, that such a consensus could effectively be reached, and he sees his ideal situation of communication as a “regulative idea”. However, according to the perspective that I am advocating, the impediments to the Habermasian ideal speech situation are not empirical but ontological, and the rational consensus that he presents as a regulative idea is in fact a conceptual impossibility. Indeed, it would require the availability of a consensus without exclusion, which is precisely what the agonistic approach reveals to be impossible.

I also want to indicate that, despite similar terminology, my conception of the agonistic public space also differs from Hannah Arendt's, which has become so popular recently. In my view, the main problem with the Arendtian understanding of ‘agonism’ is that—to put it in a nutshell—it is an ‘agonism without antagonism’. What I mean is that, while Arendt places great emphasis on human plurality and insists that politics deal with the community and reciprocity of human beings who are different, she never acknowledges that this plurality is at the origin of antagonistic conflicts. According to her, to think politically is to develop the ability to see things from a multiplicity of perspectives. As her reference to Kant and his idea of “enlarged thought” testifies, her pluralism is not fundamentally different from the liberal one, as it is inscribed in the horizon of an intersubjective agreement. Indeed, what she looks for in Kant's doctrine of the aesthetic judgement is a procedure for ascertaining intersubjective agreement in the public space. Despite significant differences between their respective approaches, Arendt, like Habermas, ends up envisaging the public space in a consensual way. To be sure, as Linda Zerilli has pointed out,<sup>5</sup> in her case the consensus results from the exchange of voices and opinions—in the Greek sense of *doxa*—not from a rational *Diskurs*, as in Habermas. While for Habermas consensus emerges through what Kant calls *disputieren*—an exchange of arguments constrained by logical rules—for Arendt it is a question of *streiten*, where agreement is produced through persuasion, not irrefutable proofs. However, neither of them is able to acknowledge the hegemonic nature of every form of consensus and the ineradicability of antagonism, the moment of *Widerstreit* or what Lyotard refers to as “the differend”. It is symptomatic that, despite finding their inspiration in different aspects of Kant's philosophy, it is common to both Arendt and Habermas to privilege the aspect of the beautiful in Kant's aesthetic and to ignore his reflection on the sublime. This is, no doubt, related to their avoidance of ‘the differend’.

## CRITICAL ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND HEGEMONY

What kind of link can we establish between this theoretical discussion and the field of artistic practices? Before addressing this question, I want to stress that I do not see the relation between art and politics in terms of two separately constituted fields, art on one side and politics on the other, between which a relation would need to be established. There is an aesthetic dimension to the political and there is a political dimension to art. This is why I consider that it is not useful to make a distinction between political and non-political art. From the point of view of the theory of hegemony, artistic practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order or in its challenging, and this is why they necessarily have a political dimension. The political, for its part, concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations—what Claude Lefort calls “the *mise en scène*”, “the *mise en forme*” of human coexistence—and this is where its aesthetic dimension lies.

The real issue concerns the possible forms of *critical* art, the different ways in which artistic practices can contribute to questioning the dominant hegemony. Once we accept that identities are never pre-given, but that they are always the result of processes of identification, that they are discursively constructed, the question that arises concerns the type of identity that critical artistic practices should aim to foster. Clearly those who advocate the creation of agonistic public spaces, where the objective is to unveil all that is repressed by the dominant consensus, are going to envisage the relation between artistic practices and their public in a very different way from those whose objective is the creation of consensus, even if this consensus is seen as a critical one. According to the agonistic approach, critical art is art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming to give a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony.

In my view, this agonistic approach is particularly suited to grasping the nature of new forms of artistic activism that have emerged recently and which, in a great variety of ways, aim at challenging the existing consensus. Those artistic-activist practices are of very different types, ranging from a variety of new urban struggles like Reclaim the Streets in Britain or *Tute Bianche* in Italy to the Stop Advertising campaigns in France and Nike Ground—Rethinking Space in Austria. We find another example in the strategy of ‘identity correction’ pursued by the Yes Men, who appear under different identities; for instance, as representatives of the World Trade Organization they develop a very

effective satire of neoliberal ideology.<sup>6</sup> Their aim is to target institutions fostering neoliberalism at the expense of people's wellbeing and to assume their identities in order to offer correctives. For instance, the following text appeared in 1999 in a parody of the WTO website:

*The World Trade Organization is a giant international bureaucracy whose goal is to help businesses by enforcing 'free trade': the freedom of transnationals to do business however they see fit. The WTO places this freedom above all other freedoms, including the freedom to eat, drink water, not eat certain things, treat the sick, protect the environment, grow your own crops, organize a trade union, maintain social services, govern, have a foreign policy. All those freedoms are under attack by huge corporations working under the veil of 'free trade', that mysterious right that we are told must trump all others.<sup>7</sup>*

Some people mistook this false website for the real one and the Yes Men even managed to appear as WTO representatives at several international conferences, where one of their satirical interventions, for instance, consisted in proposing a telematic worker-surveillance device in the shape of a yard-long golden phallus.

I submit that, in order to grasp the political character of these varieties of artistic activism, we need to see them as counter-hegemonic interventions, the objective of which is to occupy the public space in order to disrupt the smooth image that corporate capitalism is trying to spread, bringing to the fore its repressive character. Acknowledging the political dimension of such interventions supposes relinquishing the idea that being political requires the making of a total break with the existing state of affairs in order to create something absolutely new. Today, artists can no longer pretend to constitute an avant-garde that offers a radical critique; but this is no reason to proclaim that their political role has ended. They can still play an important role in the hegemonic struggle by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities. In fact, this has always been their role and it is only the modernist illusion of the artist's privileged position that has made us believe otherwise. Once this illusion is abandoned, along with the revolutionary conception of politics that accompanies it, we can see that critical artistic practices represent an important dimension of democratic politics. However, this does not mean, as some seem to believe, that they could alone realize the transformations needed for the establishment of a new hegemony. As we argued in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*,<sup>8</sup> a radical democratic politics calls for

the articulation of different levels of struggles so as to create a chain of equivalence among them. For the 'war of position' to be successful, linkage with traditional forms of political intervention such as parties and trade unions cannot be avoided. It would be a serious mistake to believe that artistic activism could, on its own, bring about the end of neoliberal hegemony.

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1. Boltanski, Luc and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2005.
  2. Interview with André Gorz, "Économie de la connaissance, exploitation des savoirs", *Multitudes*, no. 15, 2004, p. 209.
  3. Holmes, Brian, "Artistic Autonomy", *Third Text*, vol. 18, no. 6, 2004, pp. 547-555.
  4. For a development of this agonistic approach, see Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, London: Verso, 2000, chapter four.
  5. Zerilli, Linda, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom*, Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005, chapter four.
  6. See, for instance, their book *The Yes Men: The True Story of the End of the World Trade Organization*, New York: The Disinformation Company Ltd, 2004.
  7. The Yes Men website, available at <http://www.theyesmen.org>, accessed 23 August 2011.
  8. Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, second edition, 2001.



Oliver Marchart

## Staging the Political: (Counter-)Publics and the Theatricality of Acting

*“Étudiants, l’Odéon est ouvert.”*

On 15 May 1968, a crowd of students and artists stormed the Parisian Théâtre de l’Odéon. It was 11 pm and the audience of that night’s performance had just left the theatre. The students poured into the building, informing the director, Jean-Louis Barrault, a theatre legend and friend of Artaud’s, that from now on his institution was occupied, as it represented an elitist and bourgeois idea of culture and would have to be turned into a centre of revolution. For one month, the Odéon theatre would become a focus for the students’ revolt. There was no theatrical action anymore, not even alternative forms of theatre, as the theatre was entirely transformed into a place for *political* action. Political action in form of speech: the Odéon turned into a forum, an agora. It became a public space in which the fourth wall between ‘actors’ and ‘spectators’ was torn down. Instead, everybody was allowed to speak freely. “Non-stop”, as Barrault noted, “7 × 24 = 168 hours a week”.<sup>1</sup> And in a communiqué issued by the *Comité d’action révolutionnaire*, a sort of central committee of the squatters, it was pronounced that:

*L’action n’est pas dirigée contre une personne ni un répertoire, mais contre une culture bourgeoise et sa représentation théâtrale. L’Odéon cesse pour une durée illimitée d’être un théâtre. Il devient un lieu de rencontre entre ouvriers. Une permanence révolutionnaire, un lieu de meeting ininterrompu.*<sup>2</sup>

For an indefinite timespan the theatre—which ceased being a theatre—was supposed to become an undisturbed meeting place for a permanent revolution. What was not to be interrupted in this meeting place was the revolutionary flow of speech. The theatre turned into a more or less structured space for endless deliberation, a rostrum open for everybody who decided to climb onto it. With respect to the occupation of the Sorbonne and May ’68 in general, Michel de Certeau therefore spoke about “une révolution de la parole”, a revolution of speech in which the people, by way of an exemplary action, would take their right to speak—what de Certeau calls “prendre la parole” or “conquering speech”.

*Un événement: la prise de parole. En mai dernier, on a pris la parole comme on a pris la Bastille en 1789. La place forte qui a été occupée, c’est un savoir détenu par les dispensateurs de la culture et destiné à maintenir l’intégration ou l’enfermement des travailleurs étudiants et ouvriers dans un système qui leur fixe un fonctionnement. De la prise de la Bastille à la prise de la Sorbonne, entre ces deux symboles, une différence essentielle caractérise l’événement du 13 mai 1968: aujourd’hui, c’est la parole prisonnière qui a été libérée.*<sup>3</sup>

While the ‘event’ of ’68, and of the Odéon in particular, was surely about the conquest of speech, in some moments, the occupation of the Odéon was not only about talking. It was also taken back to the streets. There were instances of carnival and transgression, particularly when theatre costumes were ‘confiscated’ by the occupants, who would then confront the police on the streets in these costumes. As Richard Neville remembers, “The wardrobe department was ransacked and dozens faced the tear gas dressed as centurions, pirates and princesses. The Theatre came into the streets.”<sup>4</sup> But what is even more important from a political point of view: the streets came into the theatre. This metaphor, by which the chiasmatic intertwining between theatre and streets, between the literary public sphere and the political public sphere, is indicated, was far from original. It was not invented in ’68. It belongs to the very metaphorical arsenal of revolutions. And now, in ’68, more than a concept it was a slogan, the *‘mot d’ordre’* that had informed the occupation of the Odéon theatre.

In actual fact, the people who were instrumental in identifying the target and then planning and carrying out the occupation in the first place, were artists and actors, among them the painter Jean-Jacques Lebel, who at that time promoted the ‘happening’ in France, and Julian Beck, the founder of America’s Living Theatre.

*On 16 May, Julian [Beck] and Judith [Malina] led the insurrectionary crowd of insurgent students, workers, and actors singing the “Internationale” and waving black anarchist flags. This throng managed to transform the venerable building into what Julian [Beck] called ‘a place of live theatre in which anyone could become an actor’. The entire theatre stage became a stage for twenty-four hour periods of confrontation and debate in which anyone could freely participate. [...] In an atmosphere of tremendous ferment and intensity, reminiscent of the French Revolution in which citizens of all classes seized power and determined the fate of the state, students and workers spoke, and were answered by others. Julian believed that what he saw at the Odéon provided the ‘greatest theatre I’ve ever seen.’ As in Paradise Now, the ‘architecture of elitism and separatism,’ the*

*'barriers between art and life' that only falsified conventional theatre, had been broken, and the result had brought 'theatre into the streets and the street into the theatre.'*<sup>15</sup>

So even while *theatrical* action completely stopped as soon as the theatre was transformed into a *political* public space, what we encounter at the beginning of the enterprise is a certain illusion regarding the possible harmonious merger of art and life, theatre and politics. When Jean-Louis Barrault, the director of the Odéon, spotted Julian Beck among the crowd streaming into the theatre, he shouted, "*What a wonderful happening, Julian!*"<sup>16</sup> Yet it turned out to be less wonderful for himself, as one month later, after the evacuation of the theatre by the police, he was sacked by his minister, Malraux. But also the movement itself, during its one-month lifetime, showed increasing signs of disintegration and, in the end, gave up the building without any resistance. However, and notwithstanding Julian Beck's fantasy about 'the greatest theatre' he had ever seen, this disintegration was precisely a political disintegration, an effect of the political, not the artistic nature of the squatting movement: factionalism abounded, a core group was established, political schisms occurred within the group, which was accused of hegemonizing the project, and the remaining members of this committee eventually decided to leave the building. But the artists, among them Lebel and Beck, had already left after only two days of occupation and the political activists had taken over for good. At no point was something of an artistic activity in the strict sense involved in the Odéon occupation. When *politics* took the Odéon theatre over in the form of endless debate, art in the strict sense was of no use anymore.

In the following essay I will be interested not so much in the moment in which the artists leave, than in the moment in which they return. As we have seen, even where it does not correspond to reality, one of the peculiarities of public space lies in the obvious fact that it is frequently conceptualized as theatrical space. There seems to be a secret—or not so secret—metaphorical complicity between public acting and theatrical acting, between public space and the space of theatre; a complicity that has been observed since the times of the French Revolution. The Odéon affair is an obvious example of an actual 'theatre space' turned into a political forum for public debate. Here, culture (or the arts) is transformed into politics. Yet this is only part of the story, because we don't yet know what the source of this politicization is. I submit that what opens and grounds this sort of deliberative public space—which we also encounter in Hannah Arendt's model of public space—is a more fundamental conflict, which can be termed—following Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe—antagonism, a kind of ontological category of the political. Without the student's rebellion, without the general strike and the barricades

in the Quartier Latin, no "prise de parole" and no squatting of the Odéon theatre. Antagonism, at least ontologically, comes first. And in the moment when it occurs and the political takes over, the artistic disappears and the artists leave the building. When I say that the following will be concerned with the moment of their return, then I refer to a rather striking phenomenon that can be observed in the aftermath of revolutionary upheaval: the phenomenon namely that, in a *second* step, public space again turns back into theatrical space and the initial and founding antagonism is publicly restaged as, for instance, in the 1920 Bolshevik restaging of the storming of the Winter Palace, to which I will return in a moment. Thus, the main claim underlying my argument will be that, while the political as such *cannot be staged*—that is to say, the founding event of antagonism *escapes representation*—it nevertheless *has to be staged* in order to become visible at all. In other words, every staging of the political comes late, it is always an *a posteriori* staging of something that has already occurred (or, but who knows, may again occur at any point). This 'something' is the true cause of every public. We could say, an absent cause to which political presentation will then try to give a name. The very *theatricality* of acting—the rhetoricity but also the melodramatic pathos involved to some degree in all forms of truly political acting—is precisely the symptom of this cause.

## THE POLITICAL AESTHETICS OF THE SUBLIME

In order to substantiate these rather broad and perhaps still too abstract claims, let us start from the constitutive moment of modern politics: the French Revolution. Given what I said about the irrepresentability of radical antagonism, the fact that the French Revolution has been experienced historically in accordance with the *aesthetics of the sublime* might be more than a coincidence. The whole metaphoric arsenal of the sublime (of what Kant calls the dynamic sublime)—descriptions of the Revolution as storm, hurricane, maelstrom, landslide, earthquake, volcanic eruption—all this can be found in the reports of visitors (revolutionary 'tourists') of the events of 1789 and onwards, and still belong to our present-day vocabulary when it comes to political upheavals. All these metaphors belong to the discourse of the sublime, because they indicate from *within* the field of representation—that is, within discourse—an event that breaks into and dislocates this very field of representation, an event whose source is not at our disposal and, in this sense, lies beyond representation.

So if by 'the sublime' we do not understand a concept belonging to a particular historical theory of aesthetics but, in a more general way, the representation of something

which *as such* must always remain unrepresentable, then political discourse theory, as developed by Ernesto Laclau, may help us in understanding the close and necessary relationship between the rhetorics of the sublime, the instance of revolution and the very logic of political discourse. In Laclau's discourse theory, the question of representation and representability is intrinsically connected to the concept of antagonism. For Laclau, the systematicity of any signifying system—and in order to have meaning we need a certain degree of systematicity—can only be established vis-à-vis a radical outside to this system, a limit which he and Chantal Mouffe name antagonism. At the ground of all social (i.e. discursive) systems there lies a purely negative instance, which at one and the same time stabilizes and threatens the stability of the system. He holds that,

*if the systematicity of the system is a direct result of the exclusionary limit [antagonism], it is only that exclusion that grounds the system as such. The point is essential because it results from it that the system cannot have a positive ground and that, as a result, it cannot signify itself in terms of any positive signified.*<sup>7</sup>

In other words, the limit of the system, while it is constitutive for the system, cannot be represented directly (otherwise it would already be part of the system)—there is no positive signified corresponding to it. But what can happen, on the other hand, is that the outside or the limit of the system *shows* itself in form of the interruption or breakdown of the very process of signification. So if we “are trying to signify the limits of signification—the real, if you want, in the Lacanian sense”, Laclau says,

*there is no direct way of doing so except through the subversion of the process of signification itself. We know, through psychoanalysis, how what is not directly representable—the unconscious—can only find as a means of representation the subversion of the signifying process.*<sup>8</sup>

In politics, the name for this irrepresentable instance is, as I said, *antagonism*—a founding moment and a clash between incommensurable representations: “the antagonistic moment of collision between the various representations [cannot be reduced to space, and] is itself unrepresentable. It is therefore mere event, [mere temporality.]”<sup>9</sup> But again, the fact that it cannot be represented directly does not mean that it has no effects. On the contrary. Antagonism, we have said, is the constituting moment of the social—that is, of any signifying system. This implies that at the roots of all social meaning and all order there is a constitutive exclusion—because by drawing a line, by defining a limit, something always falls outside the system—which was afterwards forgotten and

naturalized. But as soon as those naturalized and sedimented social relations are once again reactivated by antagonism, the grounding exclusion—and with it the very contingency at the ground of every system (the fact that things could be otherwise)—becomes apparent. Laclau therefore speaks about the *revelatory function* of antagonism:

*The moment of original institution of the social is the point at which its contingency is revealed, since that institution, as we have seen, is only possible through the repression of options that were equally open. To reveal the original meaning of an act, then, is to reveal the moment of its radical contingency—in other words, to reinsert it in the system of real historical options that were discarded—in accordance with our analysis above: by hoeing the terrain of the original violence, of the power relation through which that instituting act took place.*<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, “[t]he moment of antagonism where the undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations becomes fully visible constitutes the field of the ‘political’”.<sup>11</sup> And, as I would add, this is precisely the moment in which a public sphere is opened that renders visible and brings to light things that were not visible before. ‘Public sphere’ is the name for the locus in which contingency is revealed by antagonism.

So if we come back to the rhetorics of the sublime, then the latter appears as a discursive device to speak about a moment which, as such, remains unrepresentable, or, as Slavoj Žižek puts it: “The paradox of the Sublime [...] is the conversion of the impossibility of presentation into presentation of impossibility”.<sup>12</sup> In the political sphere this becomes most obvious in the case of revolutions. If that which is ‘represented’ by the sublime is the unrepresentable, then what is ‘represented’ in the case of a revolution is not one or the other specific demand, but the entirely empty concept of a *new order* as *opposed* to the old one, to the *ancien régime*. A revolution in the strict sense does not have any precise location in the field of representation, as it happens within the very antagonistic time gap between the old and the new. And insofar as the futural new order, to which revolution points, must be diametrically opposed to the existing and all too well-known old order, it cannot have—in the moment of revolution—any content or object either. For as soon as we are in a position to sufficiently describe *what the new thing actually is*, it is not new anymore—it is already part of the known, ‘the old’. In this sense, the signifier ‘revolution’ points to the outside of signification and so becomes what Laclau calls an empty signifier.

Now, obviously, revolutionary discourse will have to cope with this structural impossibility by dividing a single political space into two opposed fields. For instance, in the French Revolution, the splitting of French society into a new nation and an old regime was the core target of revolutionary articulation. In order to achieve this target, signifiers that happened to sound royalist or to become associated with the *ancien régime* were eradicated. A new calendar was inaugurated. Personal names somehow identified with the *ancien régime* were often replaced by Greek or Roman names of classic heroes; new dress codes were invented, and so on.<sup>13</sup>

In the remaining part of the essay I would like to discuss two possibilities to publicly cope in a theatrical form with this paradox of revolution, that is, with the impossibility *and* the simultaneous necessity of representing antagonism. I will call these two possibilities the *mimetic* and the *melodramatic* aspect of sublime representation. As I am concerned with theatricality and public space, I will concentrate on examples of a theatrical restaging of the founding moment of antagonism. Again, such *mise-en-scène* of the unrepresentable of course attempts the impossible. But, nevertheless, if we look at historical instances there seems to be an urgent need to do this, to reinscribe the constituting event—a moment outside linear time—into the calendrical time of the new regime and to submit it to repetitive rituals; in short, to replace the *public of the event* with the *public of representation*.

## THE SECOND STORMING OF THE WINTER PALACE IN 1920

My example of what I call a *mimetic* re-enactment of the revolution is the 1920 mass spectacle celebrating the third anniversary of the storming of the Winter Palace. It was directed by Nikolai Evreinov, whose main target as a director—as with Julian Beck—was to merge theatre into life. But this mass spectacle would go beyond the scope of all previous revolutionary festivities, involving 500 musicians in the orchestra, 8,000 ‘actors’ and 100,000 spectators, who, as spectators, would in a sense also be participating by playing themselves, the revolutionary masses. Even the Winter Palace itself was to be involved as a gigantic actor and emotional character in the play. So how do we have to imagine the whole spectacle? Let me quote from an article of 30 November 1920:

*Towards evening the rain died down and the inhabitants of St Petersburg arrived, perhaps not in the number that had been expected, but none the less, at an approximate estimate, at least thirty thousand. And this whole mass of people, who had streamed*

*in from all sides of the city, stood with its back to the Winter Palace, facing the arch of the General Headquarters, where a huge stage had been constructed, consisting of two platforms—a white and a red—connected by a bridge and filled with structures and scenery... representing factories and enterprises on the red platform and a ‘throne room’ on the white platform.*

*At 10 o'clock a gun boomed and the commander's platform attached to Alexander's Column gave the signal to start. The arched bridge flashed and eight trumpeters gave an introductory fanfare. Then they vanished again into the darkness. In the silence Litolf's “Robespierre”, performed by the symphony orchestra of the Political Administration of the Petrograd Military District, sounded splendid. And the show began. It proceeded alternately on the white platform, the red or on the bridge between them. The characters on the white platform were Kerensky, the provisional Government, dignitaries and grandees of the old regime, the women's battalion, the junkers, bankers and merchants, front-line soldiers, cripples and invalids, enthusiastic ladies and gentlemen of a conciliatory type.*

*The red platform was more ‘impersonal’. There it was the mass that reigned, first drab, foolish and unorganized, but then increasingly active, orderly and powerful. Roused by ‘militias’, it turned into the Red Guard, made fast with crimson banners. The action was built on the struggle between the two platforms. It began with the Bolshevik June uprising and ended with the square on which the fate of the powerless ministers was decided.*

*The bridge between the two worlds was the arena of their clashes. This is where people fought and killed, here people triumphed and from here they retreated. The first light that illuminated the whites showed their triumph in caricatured form. To the strains of the “Marseillaise”, arranged as a Polonaise, Kerensky appeared before the expectant ladies and gentlemen. The actor who played Kerensky, dressed in the characteristic khaki, captured the premier's gestures very well and provoked particular attention among the crowd...*

*But meanwhile the revolution continued... The red platform became more organized after suffering losses; troops went over to the side of the ‘Leninists’. And the ministers sitting at a table peacefully in their top hats, rocked amusingly in their seats, like little Chinese idols.*



*Then came the moment of escape and vehicles started rumbling near the steps leading down from the white platform to the wooden pavement.*

*There they rushed, caught by the beam of a searchlight, and artillery roared. The air resounded with the volleys fired from the Aurora, anchored on the Neva, the rattle of rifles and machine guns.*

*Then the action transferred to the Winter Palace. Light would flash on in the windows of the sleeping giant and the figures of the people fighting would be visible. The attack ended. The Palace was captured. The banner of the victors appeared deep purple out of the darkness above the palace. Five red stars lit up on the pediment. Then rockets went up and diamond-like stars lit up the sky, and waterfalls of fireworks gushed down in a rain of sparks.*

*The “Internationale” sounded and the parade of the victors began, illuminated by the searchlight and fireworks...*

*This is a general outline of what the spectators gathered on Uritsky Square witnessed in the course of an hour and a quarter.”<sup>14</sup>*

Now, this spectacle was taking place at Uritsky Square in front of the Winter Palace, but was there in any way a *public space* emerging, *public* in the strict political sense? Another contemporary observer did express this hope by saying that perhaps this was “the beginning of a new road, a road which will lead across the square to the theatre of the future, and which may lead us back to the long forgotten Greek *agora*”.<sup>15</sup> But he hoped in vain, for if the public in the radical sense is a public established by the event of antagonism, then a mere ‘representation’ or restaging of that founding moment will not do the trick. The reason for this being—as simple as it may sound—that the dramatization of the storming is not the storming. And what is even more important, the staging of antagonism is not antagonism, as antagonism itself is, as we saw in Laclau, simply ‘unstageable’, unrepresentable. Rather, we encounter a quasi-mimetic representation of antagonistic conflict, represented by the struggle between the red stage and the white stage, and a mimicry of the public, that is to say a quasi-public.

Maybe the place within Evreinov’s arrangement that comes closest to the public in the radical sense of antagonism is the bridge as that which separates and simultaneously connects the two opposing forces. But as a *bridge* it still remains within the field of representation. And as a representational device it can be translated easily from theatre

into very different artistic genres. For instance into sculpture, as in Nikolai Kolli’s *The Red Wedge cleaving the White Bloc*, exhibited on Moscow’s Revolution Square on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Revolution in 1918. Or into other media like posters, as in El Lissitzky’s famous poster for the Western Front of 1920: “Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge”. Abstract as this may be, it is still representational—representing the Civil War between Whites and Reds—and its meaning is more than plain.

## THE MELODRAMA

The new dramatic genre corresponding to all this is the *melodrama*. It emerged within an abounding mood of theatricality and theatricalization within this sublime conjuncture, where there was a boom in new plays being put on stage. While before the French Revolution we find only a handful of premieres, in the years between 1789 and 1799, 1,500 new plays emerged. But the most important aspect of this theatrical mood—which we can also find in the political sphere—was that the Revolution was accompanied by a new dramatic genre—the melodrama. Why does the melodrama, as a genre, fit so perfectly into revolutionary situations that it became important once again for the Paris Commune and for the Bolshevik Revolution? Obviously, there is a certain analogy between melodrama and revolutionary speech. As Peter Brooks put it: “saying that melodrama was the artistic genre of the Revolution is nearly a truism, since revolutionary public speech itself [...] is already melodramatic”.<sup>16</sup>

But the most obvious similarities, as Brooks specifies, are clearly to be found in performativity. Let’s take the most famous revolutionary melodrama, Sylvain Maréchal’s *Le Jugement dernier des rois*. The plot is not particularly sophisticated: the play assembles all the European kings on an island and kills them off at the end of the play by a volcanic eruption. This volcanic eruption is obviously the metaphor of revolution as the dynamic sublime. What Peter Brooks argues is that the rhetoric of this play is performative and can be put into the following formula: “*Le Jugement dernier des rois* in effect says: ‘Be it enacted that there are no more kings’”.<sup>17</sup> And he adds, “melodrama is the genre, and the speech, of revolutionary moralism: the way it states, enacts, and imposes its moral messages, in clear, unambiguous words and signs”.<sup>18</sup> But this clearness and unambiguousness is not simply given, it has to be produced: all ambiguities have to be synthesized into a Manichean division between an ‘us’ and a ‘them’, between the friends of the people and the counter-revolutionaries. And the mechanism by which this works is precisely the mechanism of melodrama—which is why melodrama is the political genre par excellence.

In order to substantiate that claim let us consult Robert B. Heilman, who, in order to distinguish between tragedy and melodrama, has introduced the highly influential concept of monopathy as quasi-wholeness: “by monopathy I mean the singleness of feeling that gives one the sense of wholeness”.<sup>19</sup> This is typical of the melodramatic character: “In the structure of melodrama man is essentially ‘whole’”, which means that “there is an absence of the basic inner conflict”,<sup>20</sup> which one finds in the *tragic* man, who is torn apart by different conflicting forces, like passions and duties or freedom and fate. The difference, according to Heilman, is that in “tragedy the conflict is within man, in melodrama it is between men”.<sup>21</sup> Or, as James L. Smith, commenting on Heilman, puts it: “It is the total dependence upon external adversaries which finally separates melodrama from all other serious dramatic forms”—external enemies such as “an evil man, a social group, a hostile ideology, a natural force, an accident or chance, an obdurate fate or malign deity”.<sup>22</sup> In melodrama, the question is not *what* kind of sentiment is produced within the spectator—be it courage, enthusiasm, happiness, triumph, despair, hopelessness. The only important matter is that it is only a *single* sentiment that is produced—which is the reason why Heilman speaks of *mono*-pathy.

So, if in melodrama inner “dividedness is replaced by a quasi-wholeness”,<sup>23</sup> and monopathy thus has ordering function, then this unification of the inner self can only be established against an outside, against the other. In Laclau's words, a limit and antagonism has to be erected if some stability and systematicity is to be achieved. Not surprisingly, Heilman himself draws this parallel when he remarks that “melodrama has affinities with politics, tragedy with religion”.<sup>24</sup> And furthermore,

*In the competition for public power that is pragmatic politics, one conquers or is conquered: the public stance of every party, the operating ‘platform’ of every contestant, is that what is going on is a conflict between right and wrong [...] ‘Our side’ is the ‘good man’, and ‘they’ are the ‘flaw’; the Aristotelian tragic hero is broken up into two separate competitors, whose combat is the public form of political activity as we know it. Unlike the tragic hero, the political hero is a part of the human whole doing duty for the whole, that is, representing this or that crystallization of feeling or desire that is identified with ‘the good’, and striving to put opposing forces out of business.*<sup>25</sup>

The point here is that while the tragic subject could be called a paralyzed spectator of his or her own inner turmoil, the melodramatic subject definitely is an actor. The passage from dispersion to homogeneity and from dividedness to wholeness is also a passage from the spectator to the actor. Such production of a single feeling within the spectator in order to transform him or her into an actor, is precisely what lies behind the idea of agit-prop and of all those close to 100 sub- and sub-sub-genres of agit-prop, as

Daniel Gerould found them in the repertory index of the USSR of 1929: agit-etude, hygienic-agit, agit-grotesque, atheistic-satire, agit-trial or Red-Army-Performance-Pieces.<sup>26</sup> All of these genres are inheritors of classical melodrama, which was a highly important genre for Russian revolutionary theatre in its own right. And, as James L. Smith argued, it remained so in 1960s and 1970s protest theatre:

*Protest theatre has many aims: to stimulate political awareness, question established values, expose injustice, champion reform, fuel arguments on ways and means and sometimes to incite direct support for bloody revolution. The result may be a satire, homily, cartoon, revue or straight-play-with-a-message, but underneath the fashionable trimmings the essential form is melodrama.*<sup>27</sup>

Why can melodrama do this? So far, I've mentioned a couple of reasons: melodrama is agitational; it sets people in motion—by setting them in *e-motion*. It is political because it is a drama *between* actors, not a tragedy *within* actors. These other actors act as my *antagonists*, thus giving a sense of unity to my very own identity even where they, at the same time, threaten my identity. Let me, by way of ending, add a further reason. And this has to do with the fact that the melodramatic form of enactment gives an answer to the problem of the revolutionary sublime; that is, to the radical break with the past, to radical antagonism as that which cannot be represented *eo ipso*.

So, what is this answer, the answer of the melodramatic actor who is confronted with the impossible task of representing the unrepresentable? This answer is not given in speech or verbal language. Rather, it is given on the somatic level of action, in form of the well-known *hystericization of the melodramatic body*. As Peter Brooks has shown, the hystericized bodies of melodrama behave in ways that are reminiscent of the psychoanalytical concept of ‘acting out’. It is in this sense that they *enact* something—antagonism, the revolution, the new order—which as such escapes representation.<sup>28</sup> The inability to verbalize the experience of something that lies beyond verbalization—the revolutionary sublime—leads to the hystericization of the body, that is, to somatic enacting or, rather, *acting out*. For Brooks, by the way, this is also the reason that pantomime plays such an important role in revolutionary melodrama. And Heilman, concerning such bodily action, speaks of a melodramatic “catharsis” arising out of the “exercising” of certain impulses: “Where I use the term, I would give it the sense of ‘working off’ or ‘working out’ or simply ‘working’”.<sup>29</sup> What else is this ‘working out’ if not the ‘acting out’ observed by Peter Brooks in melodrama.

In order to understand this fully, it might be fruitful to refer back to the psychoanalytic origin of the term ‘acting out’. Analytically speaking, acting out originally means the attempt to break the frame of the analysis—it is a form of transference—in a non-verbal

way, for instance, by coming consistently late to the session. *A fortiori*, it can also be a form of repetition-compulsion, symptomatically reflecting, on the basis of an unconscious fantasy, some previous traumatic experience.<sup>30</sup> In our case, in the political case, it is the inability to verbalize, reflect on and work through the—as it were—‘traumatic’ event of antagonism and radical rupture that leads to forms of acting out. Seen from this angle, antagonism—as that which cannot be represented directly—nevertheless is symptomatically reflected in the form of a melodramatic acting out that is not ‘conscious’ in the same way as the (always failing) artistic representations of antagonism that I described previously. It is not a representation, but a somatic and compulsive effect triggered by an absent cause. This could then explain the physical convulsion or cartoon-like ‘deformation’ that always accompanies revolutionary speech—but also the revolutionary *journée* and its carnivalesque aspects, so that the “prise de parole” is, at the same time, a somatic enactment of something that, *eo ipso*, cannot be verbalized and escapes every *parole*.

As we said at the beginning, that which cannot be signified directly shows itself only through the very breakdown of signification. Peter Brooks’ point is that the hysterical somatic ‘enactment’, which is so typical of melodrama, must be understood as exactly the symptom of such breakdown. Our point is that every political action does have a moment of acting out, to the extent that it relates to *antagonism* as something that is not representable as such and therefore cannot be verbalized.

The whole argument of my paper can thus be condensed into the claim that we do not have access to *antagonism* in the strict ontological sense, yet this does not mean that the ontological category of antagonism is useless, nor does it mean that radical antagonism does not exist. Why? Because the theoretical ontological notion of antagonism is useful, as it provides us with a limit concept that points towards the conditions of possibility and impossibility of ‘actually existing’ antagonisms and conflicts in the plural as well as of ‘public spheres’ in the plural. And because it *does exist*, namely in the form of its dislocatory effects in reality.

## JUMPING

However, let me, by way of ending this essay, now claim the exact opposite of what I just said: there is indeed a way to gain *direct access* to radical antagonism, if only in an exceptional way. This way is indicated in psychoanalysis by a further concept, which

must be carefully distinguished from the concept of acting out: the concept of *passage à l’acte*. Where is the difference? As Jacques-Alain Miller once made clear, *acting out*—as for instance in melodrama—always happens in a scene, or on a stage, under the gaze of the other. So, according to Miller, one can only speak about *acting out* when there is a *scene* upon which the subject starts acting in front of an audience.<sup>31</sup> However, in the case of a *passage à l’acte*, which is not concerned with *acting*, but, rather, with *the act* in the radical sense, there is no stage anymore. Any such real act—that is to say, any act worth this name—is, for Miller, a transgression of a code, of law, of a symbolic whole. It risks leaving the other behind, it escapes any dialectics, any ambivalence of thinking, of the word, of language. It is, in Miller’s words, a *NO* shouted towards the other. The only way to do this is by jumping out of the scene, by leaving the theatre, as it were. But since the subject can never leap far enough and therefore never reaches the other side, s/he falls into an abyss. Every real act is a transgression, but real transgression is impossible—and this is where the model differs significantly from Deleuze or Bakhtin, who would subscribe to the first part of the sentence but renounce the second part. It is impossible—except in one case: suicide.

If we apply this to the field of politics, the question arises, of course, as to whether revolution, if it is taken seriously, isn’t just a name for such a suicidal rupture. It was Saint-Just who said that what constitutes the republic is the total destruction of everything that is opposed to it. And at some point this turned out to include the revolutionaries themselves. It is this suicidal logic of revolutions—based on the aim of enacting *antagonism* in its purest form—that explains to some extent the progressive self-eradication of the French revolutionaries. This act of transgression towards something to which we have no access, is driven by the idea of enacting Antagonism with a capital ‘A’, of establishing a total break with the past, a radical rupture, and of completely leaving the old and entering the new. But a direct enactment of antagonism and of radical rupture can only be suicidal. Antagonism may be put on stage in a vain effort at representation, but this will never be ‘the real thing’, it will always be a sublimated, dramatized, representational second-order version of antagonism. Jumping into ‘the real thing’ means jumping off the roof.<sup>32</sup>

For this very reason psychoanalysis as well as politics have to abandon this fantasy of a radical rupture and of an existential leap into the political, and to more or less restrict themselves to a passage towards an always partial and necessarily unsuccessful act—at least if one does not want to kill the patient. The name for such a politics would not be revolution, but it could be radical democracy.

But how would such a politics relate to theatre? As Janelle Reinelt puts it in her “Notes for a Radical Democratic Theatre”, this implies

*a theatrical space patronized by a consensual community of citizen-spectators who come together at stagings of the social imaginary in order to consider and experience affirmation, contestation, and reworking of various material and discursive practices pertinent to the constitution of a democratic society.*

And it implies moving “to a truly radical form of civic spectatorship [that] involves negotiation and contestation, and a fundamental transformation of the traditional ‘spectator’ function from consumer to agent”.<sup>33</sup> If such a radical democratic theatre will still be enacted on a stage, it can only be the stage of the political.

1. Quoted in Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, “Die Phantasie an die Macht”: Mai 68 in Frankreich, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995, p. 441.
2. Quoted in Paul-Louis Mignon, *Jean-Louis Barrault: Le théâtre total*, Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1999, p. 286.
3. De Certeau, Michel, *La prise de parole et autres écrits politiques*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994, p. 40.
4. Quoted in Baz Kershaw, *The Radical in Performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard*, London & New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 100.
5. Tytell, John, *The Living Theatre: Art, Exile, and Outrage*, New York: Grove Press, 1995, pp. 232-233.
6. Mignon, *Jean-Louis Barrault*, p. 285.
7. Laclau, Ernesto, *Emancipation(s)*, London & New York: Verso, 1996, p. 38.
8. Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, p. 39.
9. Laclau, Ernesto, *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*, London & New York: Verso, 1990, p. 83.
10. Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 34.
11. Laclau, *New Reflections*, p. 35.
12. Žižek, Slavoj, *For they Know not what they Do*, London & New York: Verso, 1991, p. 88.
13. See Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in French Revolution*, Berkeley & Los Angeles CA: University of California Press, 1984.
14. Quoted in Vladimir Tolstoy, Irina Bibikova et al., *Street Art of the Revolution: Festsivals and Celebrations in Russia 1918-33*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1990.
15. Quoted in Robert Leach, *Revolutionary Theatre*, London & New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 49.
16. Brooks, Peter, “Melodrama, Body, Revolution”, *Melodrama*, J Bratton, J Cook et al. eds, London: British Film Institute, 1994, p. 16. The first thing that comes to mind in this respect is the obvious tension between the tendentially non-verbal, bodily enactment of melodrama and the rhetorical maneuvers of revolutionary public speech. The main characteristic of the revolutionary years under Robespierre

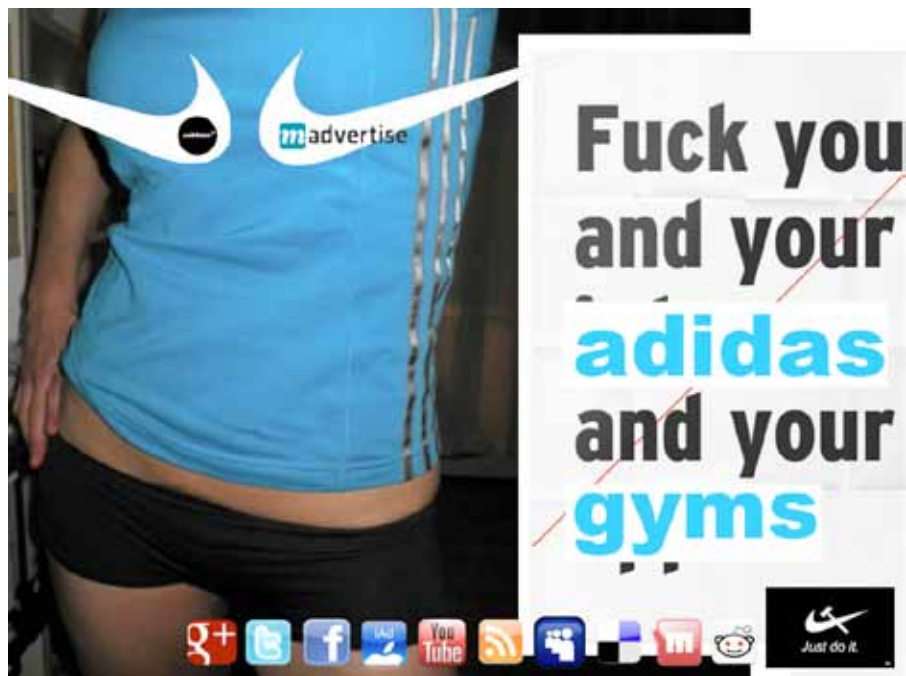
was—according to Claude Lefort—that the terror was not silent at all. Quite to the contrary, *the terror speaks* (Claude Lefort, *Essais sur le politique*, Paris: Seuil, 1986), since it is a democratic terror. It constantly has to justify itself. If Lefort is right, then what we encounter in this speech act of revolutionary ‘terroristic’ rhetorics is a strange chiasmus between terror and virtue, between enactment and justification. And if it is true that terror has to be verbally justified in terms of virtue, then it is equally true that virtue has to be enacted by means of terror. The two stages—the stage for justification (the parliament) and the stage for decapitation (the guillotine)—intrinsically belong together.

17. Brooks, “Melodrama”, p. 17.
18. Brooks, “Melodrama”, p. 16.
19. Heilman, Robert B, *Tragedy and Melodrama*, Seattle WA: Washington University Press, 1968, p. 85.
20. Heilman, *Tragedy*, p. 79.
21. Heilman, *Tragedy*, p. 81.
22. Smith, James L, *Melodrama*, London: Methuen, 1973, p. 8.
23. Heilman, *Tragedy*, p. 86.
24. Heilman, *Tragedy*, p. 90.
25. Heilman, *Tragedy*, p. 91.
26. See Daniel Gerould, “Melodrama and Revolution”, *Melodrama*, J Bratton, J Cook et al. eds, London: British Film Institute, 1994.
27. Smith, *Melodrama*, p. 37.
28. On the other hand, the Revolution has to be staged *incessantly* in order to make sure of it.
29. Heilman, *Tragedy*, p. 84.
30. Lacan himself differentiates between *symptom* and *acting out*; for reasons of space, however, I treat both aspects as synonymous.
31. Miller, Jacques-Alain, “Jacques Lacan: Bemerkungen über sein Konzept des Passage à l’acte”, *Wo Es War*, nos 7-8, 1990, pp. 39-49.
32. However, this does not do away with the necessity of radical antagonism—or the radical Act—as a limit concept. To put the argument in deconstructive terms, we may assume that the *passage à l’acte* is the condition of the (im-)possibility of acting, just as the constitutive outside of signification is the condition of the (im-)possibility of signification. On the other hand, there can be *gradual* acting out because a finally succeeding *passage à l’acte* is impossible. There can be ‘acting’ because the Act—with a capital ‘A’—never succeeds (and Act can also be read in the Lacanian sense of sexual act, in the sense of sex as Real, of something impossible that never succeeds either), at least not without destroying its own conditions of possibility.
33. Reinelt, Janelle, “Notes for a Radical Democratic Theatre: Productive Crises and the Challenge Indeterminacy”, *Staging Resistance: Essays on Political Theater*, Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S Spencer eds, Ann Arbor MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1998, p. 286.

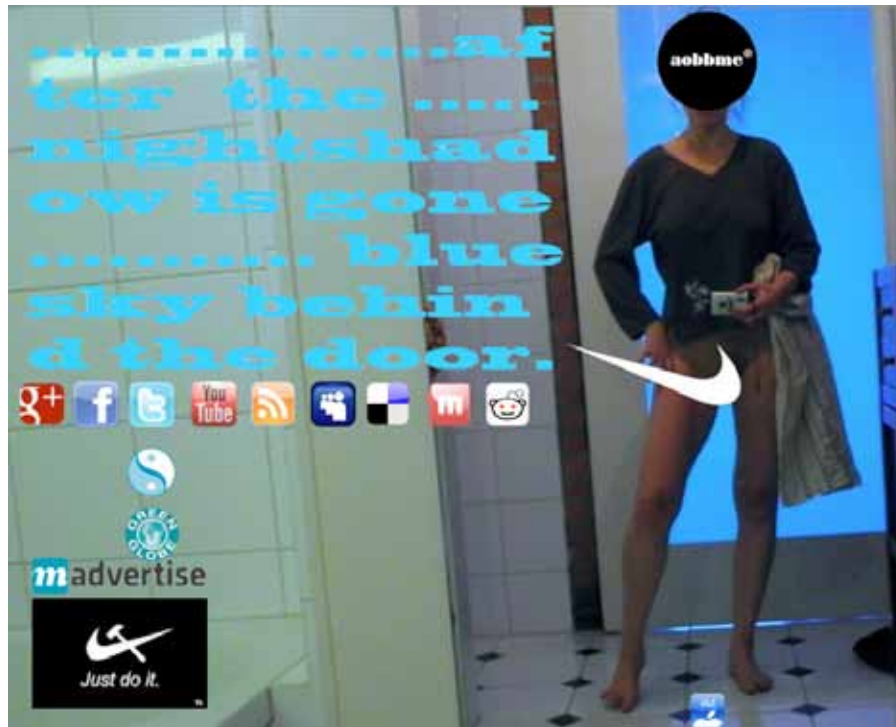


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Yana Milev

## Madvertise Yourself! The Madness of Self-Design via Mobile (App)

When Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher were tweeting details of their love lives to the world, they were still ahead of the curve in this métier of image cultivation and mediatization. People said that the Kutcher-Moore couple had a compulsive need to stage themselves in public. Their relationship was lived for six years via Twitter; they thus became the vanguard of user-generated self-design. Their Twitter liaison began in 2006, coinciding with the founding of Twitter. It ended after millions of tweets in 2011—with a tweet to their followers that announced the end of their relationship. On 16 April 2009, Kutcher even broke a record: he became the first Twitter user with more than one million followers, as reported by the breaking news agency CNN. He thanked the Twitter audience by proclaiming that he was going to donate \$100,000 to a malaria charity. Even though Twitter was one of the earliest social media platforms, it is now in bruising competition with Facebook.

The new millennium is characterized by a shift in communication: a social media revolution on the web and mobile access to apps. Social media are net platforms and net portals that can be individually shaped by their users for purposes of messaging and advertising. Yahoo (1995), RSS-Feed (2000), LinkedIn (2003), MySpace (2003), Xing (2003), Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006), Flickr (2007) and Google+ (2011), among others, are such 'portals'. All platforms are now accessible via apps, i.e., software programs that are either already installed, can be downloaded for free or are available from software companies on mobile devices (produced by Apple, Motorola, Samsung, Sony Mobile, among others) or are activated by network operators (O2, Telekom, Sprint, Vodafone, etc.). Direct access to the net allows browsers to visualize so-called user interfaces (contents, programs, pages) and to surf the web via hyperlinks. Today's mobile browsers include Opera Mini, Internet Explorer, Firefox Mobile, Safari, Google Chrome and Skyfire. With direct access to browsers, any layperson can surf the net with their mobile phone—independent of location. This was unthinkable before 1994, when such an operation was reserved for experts. In the new millennium, a complex www-market has been established, in which IT, software applications, mobile telephone systems, satellite providers and browsers converge into the largest possible business. We are dealing with an interconnection between IT revolutions, social media revolutions

and the Revolution in Military Affairs (to be described in greater detail below), all of which characterize the new www-millennium. Governments and businesses, political protagonists and private actors, stock markets and banks, wars and revolutions are all unthinkable now without net-based communication! The latest political events, such as the 2010/2011 Arab Spring or the three-part catastrophe of Fukushima 2011, show what a massive impact net-based movements can have, but also the extent of individual micro-channels' powers of transmission. Not so long ago, reporting live was the exclusive preserve of news agencies such as CNN. Now anyone—truly anyone—can do this. And it doesn't matter if we are dealing with marketing messages, uncovered scandals, media attacks or private streams. Through social media networks, Skype and webcams, as well as endless functions that are available per download through browsers, it is now perfectly normal that every smartphone user is a DIY jack-of-all-trades.

*Wir nennen es Arbeit*<sup>1</sup> ("We Call it Work") is the title of the first jointly authored book by Holm Friebe and Sascha Lobo, taking the lead in the serialized concept of the subsidized *Ich-AGs* in 2006.<sup>2</sup> The people who gave the so-called 'creative class' its very name understood the turn of the millennium's trend: mobility in all areas of life in cognitive capitalism via net access. Today, employees—a nineteenth-century concept—are also creative entrepreneurs. If someone had told that to Joseph Beuys 50 years ago, his idea that "every man is an artist" would have reached its conclusion, and he would no longer just have explained paintings to a dead rabbit, but also iPhones (had they existed 50 years ago). The creative class in cognitive capitalism is armed with smartphones, gadgets and mobile devices, is connected to software providers, to mobile network systems, banks, satellite and IT providers, and has exchanged the monthly rent on a one-bed flat for a monthly contract with a communications company. They live in cafés, in a rented office, in the gym or yoga studio, in the club at night and in fashion and Apple stores during the day. The latter deliver the latest trends in zines, sounds and lifestyle, and let customers launch their own thing, chill, blog and get to know what's in. One-bed flats have been quickly re-appropriated as holiday apartments and, let by estate agents, now offer some Berlin residents a good rental income. That means you can live well in the web and fund the contracts and bills for software, mobile phones, technology, fashion and fun, and so on. The slogan once synonymous with IKEA customers in Germany, "*Wohnen Sie noch oder leben Sie schon?*"—roughly, "Are you just living or are you alive?"—later came to be associated with LOHAS<sup>3</sup> and the spectacular shift from workaholics to nerds, and now applies to all generations of users. We are truly living in the web and net-based public space, so that, extending the synonym, 'living' now means the 'private is the new public'. All web users now call themselves designers, in flowing

transitions between the virtual and real during flexible working hours around the clock. They are creative, design their own labels, their brands, their sounds; they text, write poetry, protest, moderate, DJ, pierce, cut themselves, fuck, puke, fight, invent, buy, sell, etc. in order to demonstrate the complex communications design in the public space of the net. Design happens through apps and tools, for free or for sale; thus every protagonist of the creative class has access to programs in their mobile office with which they can dive into the wondrous world of sharing and connecting, seeing and being seen, buying and being bought. The prerequisite is to declare your creativity.

In his article “Wollt ihr das totale Design?”,<sup>4</sup> Mateo Kries contemplates the question of total mobilization in the Third Reich, “Wollt ihr den totalen Krieg?”.<sup>5</sup> He makes reference to the effects of conformity that resulted from the call to totality in German society. Total war is a war strategy in which all available resources are utilized. Additionally, in total war, the difference between homeland and the front is eliminated (resulting in the *Heimatfront* or home front). How can this historic fact be applied to current thoughts on conformity design?

What was once seen as the *Volk* (in the East German GDR), the masses or multitudes, as the working class or political hegemony, is now all the creative class. We live in a hegemony of the creative class, essentially amidst design hegemonies. Cognitive capitalism forces a new concept of ‘work’ into existence, something we have not only just learned from Friebe and Lobo. The visionary and veteran of the social media revolution, Howard Rheingold, had already presented this fact to us in his turn-of-the millennium bestseller, *Smart Mobs*.<sup>6</sup> In the meantime, net-based mainstreams and user trends are now called revolutions; they are constantly *shifting* between work and free time, between war and entertainment, between consumption and production, between politics and participation, etc. Networks, swarms and multitudes are what the new combatants of a design and media industry are called in an era of instant access. Cognitive capitalism raises its own columns of the creative class and self-design, in timeless working hours and virtual locations—in a way, ‘between the homeland and the front line’. The front’s omnipresence is something we have been cognizant of since Foucault, who assumed that the battle lines are drawn through the middle of society. We have also heard this from Žižek, who has given up trying to constantly reestablish the location of the *Lager* (the ‘camp’ or ‘compound’). The *Lager* is amorphous, everywhere and nowhere, and well-camouflaged. And it’s true! The Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) has reached the user. Crowdsourcing in the midst of society has begun: the outsourcing of business practices and structures to the intelligentsia and the manpower of a mass of

free-time workers on the web. Flocks of amateur experts and self-managers, freelancers and newcomers generate content, solve diverse assignments and problems or are involved in research and development projects of outsourced companies and campaigns. The user functions as a protagonist, a developer, a publisher and finally as a designer, in the service of industry trends such as the ‘green movement’, among others, which then also become the parties’ election trends. We live in a *front-shifting complex*: from the home front to front-end design. The new *working class as creative class* is a crowd-sourced *design class* of the design industry, in which industry-oriented think-tank strategies of a *user-centred design* and *user-generated design* set the agenda for constantly renewing forced biopolitical conformity.

From this perspective, usability is design within the framework of an industry-induced manufacturing of perception, and IT users are creative service agents in the sense of manufacturing perception, of uniformity. “Every man is an artist” has become, to cite Howard Rheingold, “every man is a smartmob agent”—an intelligent and mobile protagonist with a clear mass affiliation. We are confronted with a new nightmare because the smartmob movement has flooded into every area of society and life, and sociology and the neurosciences are confronted with new challenges. The Pirate Party Germany—currently so subversive—is generated by smartmobs, as are certain reality TV series, forms of civil disobedience and Facebook-based consumption epidemics, as well as democratically inclined global political revolts, radical right-wing conspiracies and flashmob actions, freelance marketing booms and associations for public solidarity. The list of exemplary crowds could be expanded easily. Now we stand where we are: “every smartmob agent is a designer”. The battle cry is: “Mobile (App) Advertising Design! MAD!” The smartmob agent becomes a MADMOB agent. The MADMOB agent gains access to the design world of seeing and being seen through portals, microblogs, wikis, tools for sharing, publication and discussion and through social networks. Twitter belongs to the more recent microblogs with spectacular reach, as mentioned above. The latest generations of smartphone, above all the iPhone, allow the MADMOB agent mobile and simple handling of apps, blogs and payment options, along with navigation and sharing. Thus the MADMOB agent becomes a producer, publisher and editor of their own messages and marketing. As users do with Facebook, they generate their own public sphere and messages and place them on the internet on their own. While Facebook grants a maximum of 5,000 friends, at Twitter it’s followers—and here the *online community* is unlimited. MADMOB agents design themselves, their auditoriums and arenas via portals, gates, coded access to a *gated community*—or, more precisely, in a *branded community*. It is a permanent tracking and tracing. This not only generates new trends

in surveillance, but above all the compulsion of self-design. The term self-design thus replaces the concept of self-exploitation, which has become rather old-fashioned.

*By the way, “we call it work” was yesterday.*

“Brand yourself!”, which was considered the ultimate formula of self-design (and self-subjugation) for clients ten years ago, has now been replaced by “web yourself!”. “Broadcast yourself!” then follows, to be overtaken by “madvertise yourself!”. ‘Madvertise’ means both ‘M’obile ‘AD’vertising and the madness of self-design! MAD! Since the Moore-Kutcher couple tweeted the details of their love lives, they have started a trend that is spreading epidemically. It is a trend in the MADMOB’s behaviour, and a trend for (self-)marketing. The more private, the more niche-oriented, the more unprofessional it is, the more creative—that’s what the industry says and is what can be seen in numerous ads (Comme des Garçons, Adidas, Apple, Nike and American Apparel, among others). The MADMOB agents feel spoken to, they join the game and title themselves in a mimicry that is effective for the masses. Their soft and home porn, their scribbling, their raves and after-work parties, their leisure and Frisbee games, their fun in the parks, while swimming and barbecuing, their go-cart and karaoke nights, their hedonistic “I’m gone”-skits in safari, surf and beach look, their coming-outs and other such hot issues are designed as *gigs* and placed in their followers’ arena. They live to post—as advertising for life. In real-time. For everyone. For free.

In the new millennium, MAD-users of the web have become multiple design protagonists with their tech tools, while simultaneously advancing to multiple service agents of design management—the *MADMOB agent*. The fusion of apps, portals, tools, mobile communications systems and online banking turn smartphones into portable and changeable publishing lounges, with a home, club, office, darkroom, adventure, S&M, gym or party atmosphere. The atmospheres can be switched and fitted according to synchronicity with the net audience, followers and friends, as well as moods. Thus each MADMOB agent can zap through hyperlinks, browser *parcours* and functions, the same way one once did in the Stone Age, zapping through the TV’s 108 channels. MADMOBS zap into styles and apps, while simultaneously updating followers and friends, sharing entertainment, opinions and preferences with an anonymous audience—from which one or two business ideas can be fished out or one or two political parties can be

founded. Home porn, white water rafting, Afghanistan and Las Vegas, idyllic prison life and election offices, honour killings and child labour, left and right: these are all atmospheres and scenarios in which MADMOBS can produce their own storytelling. The grey area is growing between exhibitionism and marketing.

The smartphone users—the *MADMOB agents*—are versed in all platforms made available to them as designers, producers and publishers of blogs, vectors, tags and icons. They are the representatives of interests, the messengers and the developers of individual advertising designs. Buying apps, portals, tools or mobile contracts becomes an event of self-design in a reciprocal service maximization. This event has bought into the maximum illusion of being unique, individual and creative. Instead, the facts prove that we are dealing with economies of biopolitical conformity—with billions of people moving through public space with their gadgets and who have, at any given moment, been taken over by mobile functions. In any small city, gangs of kids can be seen whose communication can’t take place without their tech toys. In any larger city, thousands of people rush past each other, sleepwalking with their eyes on their screens. If you talk to them, they first have to google to see where—and who—they even are. “The new information technologies organize networks of relations and information, and, as such, they quite obviously convey the perspective of a humanity that is not only unified but also reduced to uniformity”,<sup>7</sup> Paul Virilio has said in an interview with Philippe Petit. In this sentence he addresses mainstream conformity effects.

In the same interview, Virilio develops the theory of speed as a milieu. What he means is that speed is not a phenomenon, but rather a relationship between phenomena. The networking speed of an IT gadget can certainly be experienced as a God-like potency, as MADMOB agents can relate all phenomena to one another. This allows them the illusion of being unique—but they are in reality IT-replicants. Regardless, the replicants develop in their private sphere with the help of menus, brand symbols, functional symbols, payment symbols and endless service and sharing tools. The crowd-sourced *design class* marches in step with the MADVERTISE principle and in a milieu of speed. The largest possible profit and big business meld with the worst possible politics into a crowd-sourced *MADMOB*.

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1. Friebe, Holm and Sascha Lobo, *Wir nennen es Arbeit: Die digitale Bohème oder Intelligentes Leben jenseits der Festanstellung*, Munich: Heyne Verlag, 2006.
2. *Ich-AG*, literally, 'Me Plc'. In Germany this refers to enterprises set up with the support of a government-funded scheme to encourage jobseekers to become self-employed. The term gained currency from about 2003 onwards, after the Hartz Commission into labour market reforms.
3. Demographic term, standing for Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability.
4. Kries, Mateo, "Wollt ihr das totale Design?", *Die Welt*, 14 April 2010, p. 23. In English, "Do you want total design?"
5. Joseph Goebbels during his *Sportpalast* speech on 18 February 1943 in Berlin, "Do you want total war?"
6. Rheingold, Howard, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution. Transforming Cultures and Communities in the Age of Instant Access*, Cambridge MA: Perseus Books Group, 2002.
7. Virilio, Paul, *Politics of the Very Worst*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999, p. 12.



Yana Milev

## Cluster VI: Design Governance

With *Design Governance*, Cluster VI defines the second branch of Design Anthropology. The field of governance is observed on the basis of Michel Foucault's theory established in *The Birth of Biopolitics* that the centre of governance is dominated by the principle of the market. This principle defines three decisive changes in the economy: the rise of industry as the fifth estate; the policy of camouflage in lobbying within business and politics; and the power of media image and news empires to euphemize corporations' policy of camouflage. This is what the concept of *Design Governance* stands for.

In executing governmental techniques, camouflage is a central tactic for disguise and deception. This military term means a total disguising of clandestine operations. Today, camouflage is no longer just a military tactic, but also a business tactic and a tactic of individual protagonists. In Cluster VI, this includes criminal business strategies that operate clandestinely and illegally under the surface of legal brand names, the 'corporate designs' of globalized corporations. Relevant criminal strategies are not so much brand piracy or brand plagiarism, but rather protagonists' policies that take place in the unidentifiable inner space of the brand and create duplicitous corporate brand systems: the legal cover on the exterior (brand management) and the extralegal zone 'under cover'. At the same time, news industries operate with media shock doctrines in order to purposefully release disinformation and anomie in social fields. Business and marketing concepts such as diversity, trust or sustainability must be observed and discussed in the context of their duplicity.

The Italian media theoretician and activist Franco Berardi (Bifo) calls this double-strategy approach 'semiocapitalism'. His concept of semiocapitalism works alongside the concept of cognitive capitalism, which stands for mobile internet work, social media networks, a new economy of knowledge and cultural grammars. The term semiocapitalism also emphasizes the superficial strategies of corporations and their inherent biopolitical image and design power. What had been a combatant a decade ago is now a user/client. Additional authors in Block A also delve into so-called semiocapitalism. The Indian political and social scientist Saroj Giri uses the example of WikiLeaks to describe how information leaks from governments and corporations helped to uncover

their criminal nucleus and to make public operations in extralegal territories, but without contributing an end to double-strategy governmental principles of camouflage and global false flag operations. The Austrian architect and city planner Georg Franck develops a political economy of the *(zeit)geist* in "Mental Capitalism": a principle of the commercialization of economies of attention as created in marketing, breaking news journalism and the inducement of fear with a wide-range effect. Here, Franck describes attention as the new currency of semiocapitalism, its biopolitical components and character of submission.

In Block B of Cluster VI, we hear the voices of those who have researched zones beyond the borderline—that is, extralegal zones of illegality and corporate violence—and who have uncovered the mechanisms of a disaster industry in critical reports of investigative journalism at various locations worldwide. In his contribution, the Swiss doctor and epidemiologist Joachim Kreysler, long-term member of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the WHO, as well as Senior Medical Officer of the Emergency Forces, describes the manipulative power that emanates from governments to transform disaster areas into catastrophe markets. The result is that thousands of people suffer from lack of nourishment and from epidemics, while the disaster industry makes billions. These deals all take place in the corporate design of the ICRC, WHO, UN, etc. The Japanese social philosopher Kenichi Michima writes about lobbying between industry and the media in Japan, especially as it occurred after the triple catastrophe in Fukushima. He uncovered media manipulation that denied, renamed or simply did not mention critical voices and demonstrations, the object being to shield the Japanese public from critical dynamics. Disaster management, public images from politics and science, media and industry magnates (above all, those from Tepco) all continue to design a media surface that plays down the events; it is still effective today. This had an even greater effect on the insecure masses sitting between different worlds of information due to their access to western journalism. Krystian Woznicki and his *Berlin Gazette* team write highly critical and up-to-date reports about the contemporary phenomenon of crowdsourcing via social media networks. Live internet participation dissolves the border between commiseration and participation and between East and West. Mass media such as *The Guardian* now have the logistical capability to do process journalism through blog activism; however, blog activists are able to reach small social cells and activate their consciousness for transmitting information. The phenomenon of net-based information explosions overburdens state-created information design. In his documentary film *Schmutzige Schokolade*, Danish filmmaker and investigative journalist Miki Mistrati pursues

colonial practices of slavery and, above all, those of child slavery, as work slaves are held at cocoa plantations. This also occurs under the cover of the chocolate industry and the corporate designs of Nestlé, Lindt & Sprüngli and Côtés D'Or.

The positions in Block C are presented under the 'Counter ID Agencies' headline. Autonomous agencies such as UBERMORGEN.COM and RG (Reinigungsgesellschaft) are given a voice; they have also appropriated the cultural techniques of hacking and leaking, clandestine operations, fakes and surprise attacks. Analogous to the political instruments of sovereign agencies at war, UBERMORGEN.COM and RG operate at the anti-front, as anti-agencies.

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#### **A: Semiocapitalism**

*Franco Berardi (Bifo)*

*Saroj Giri*

*Georg Franck*

*Alexander Becherer (VE)*

#### **B: Media Politics, Disaster Industries and the Zones beyond the Line**

*Joachim Kreysler*

*Mikael Mikael (VE)*

*Kenichi Mishima*

*Krystian Woznicki (et al.)*

*Miki Mistrati (VE)*

*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

#### **C: Counter ID Agencies**

*UBERMORGEN.COM (VE)*

*(commentary: Ubermorgen.com)*

*Reinigungsgesellschaft (VE)*

*(commentary: Reinigungsgesellschaft)*

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Franco Berardi Bifo

## Aesthetic Sensibility and the Genealogy of Economic Reason: From Protestant Indust-Reality to Baroque Semiocapital

### INTRODUCTION

The infosphere and economy have increasingly intersected since semioproduction—the production of semiotic artefacts for the market—became crucial to the capitalist cycle of accumulation. The creation and development of the internet has revolutionized the labour process worldwide, globalizing the circulation of goods and of labour. From this point of view, we can speak of the creation of an info-econosphere as a unified field of research for the social sciences. Consequently, during the last two decades, economics and media sociology have undergone a process of integration. Many authors have discussed the Net economy (see: Lovink, Levy, Kelly, Kroker, De Kerckhove, among others).

I want to enhance the field of investigation, as I want to conceptualize the inclusion of the aesthetic sensibility in the present cultural evolution, which is marked by the financial globalization of the economy. Infosphere—the sphere where information circulates—directly acts on the nervous system of human society, affecting the social psychism (psychosphere), particularly sensibility. This is why the relation between economy and aesthetics is crucial to an understanding of the present cultural becoming. The etymological root of the word aesthetics refers essentially to perception (from the Greek *aisthanomai*, which means 'I perceive'). But in the philosophical tradition aesthetic thought has come to comprehend not only the production of signs stimulating sensibility (art, poetry, music), but also sensitivity, the mutation of psycho-reactivity to the epidermic side of social relation and of culture (what is the relation between skin and culture?).

During the last decade of the past century, Net art has expressed the aesthetic side of the evolution of the web. So far, it has failed to give us a cartography of the whole extent of the mutation that is investing the psychosphere in its affective erotic dimension and in its aesthetic artistic dimension.

### SENSIBILITY AND GENEALOGY OF ECONOMIC REASON

Can economics be properly defined as a science? If we think of science as the conceptual construction of an object of knowledge that exists on its own, if we think of science as the creation of concepts, the individuation of constants and laws of repetition and rules of variation, then it's hard to understand why economics might be labelled a science. Economics seems much more a technique than a form of scientific knowledge. Economists are not looking for concepts to describe the reality of exchange, production and so on. Rather, they are looking for the governance tools to force reality to bend to a certain model; they are trying to enclose social culture into the behavioural model of the *homo oeconomicus*. This is why Marx was not interested in economics, but in the critique of political economy. Economic categorization is not a description of the existing reality of human production and exchange, but an attempt to fix a behavioural model, defining a goal that is essentially political: the imposition of the economic criterion as foundation of social relations. In his seminar on the birth of biopolitics (published as *Naissance de la biopolitique*), Foucault speaks of the creation of the *homo oeconomicus* as the core of the neoliberal project. The genesis of economic reason is linked to the history of capitalist domination. Capitalism is the subjugation of social potency (physical and intellectual) to the rule of scarcity and capitalist accumulation, and economics is the ideological technique whose goal is the replacement of concrete useful objects with abstract value. In the sphere of capitalist economy, the potency of labour is forced to bend to rules of exchange that are not natural laws, but social and cultural rules, effects of a political decision and of an act of language that marks the social body.

In order to understand the particularity of capitalist economy from an anthropological point of view, Polanyi described modernity as the 'Great Transformation' that captures the natural forces of language and activity into the social categories of valorization and exchange. And Foucault described the creation of the modern disciplinary space as the modelling of the social body in order to make it the subject (*assujettissement*) of capitalist exploitation. Here I want to retrace the history of economic reason from the point of view of the modelling of sensibility. During the modern transformation, from the Renaissance perspectivization of reality to the Baroque proliferation of points of view, economic reason is installed in the space of visibility and of the image. Economics is a special way of making things visible. The old quarrel of idealism against the image has to be recalled here. Since Plato, the sphere of the visible has been despised and condemned on behalf of a higher sphere, which is the sphere of pure understanding, of spiritual intellection. A broad iconoclastic tradition marks the history of monotheistic religions.

From the point of view of the ancient dichotomy of materialism and idealism—which is also the dichotomy of the visible and the invisible—modern economic reason is playing an ambiguous game. In the industrial age, the capitalist economy acknowledged the dignity of material visibility, of the physical transformation of material stuff and of the bodily enjoyment of material things; Alvin Toffler uses the word ‘indust-reality’ to define this effect.<sup>1</sup>

But in its historical and technological development, capitalist production goes beyond the visible (usefulness of material goods) and aims at the abstraction of value. The visible, material physicality of use value is only the introduction to the holy abstraction of exchange value. This is the double movement that Marx calls the fetishism of commodities. The process of rendering the world invisible is the core of the process of abstraction, which is the main trend in the relation between the real world and the economy. Indust-reality has produced a change in the field of visibility. The physical world has been inscribed into the principles of mathematization and perspective; the world has been modelled and transformed according to the rational shapes of Renaissance urban landscape and of modern manufacturing’s standardized mass production. Simultaneously, however, the reality of social relation has been made invisible and transferred into abstract labour. The visibility of the useful stuff of goods is subjugated and recoded by invisible, abstract labour. From this point of view we may affirm that the fight against the visible, which was waged in the premodern theological world, the iconoclastic war, has resurfaced in the modern capitalist age. Abstraction and invisibility have been the aesthetic mark of Protestant culture, which has exalted the force of the word (truth, abstraction, measurement) against the proliferation of the image.<sup>2</sup> But there is also a second modernity, which comes from the Baroque and resurfaces in the semiocapitalist sphere of simulation.

#### ECONOMY OF THE IMAGE AND IMAGE OF THE ECONOMY: BAROQUE CULTURE IN THE GENEALOGY OF THE ECONOMIC SPACE

The discovery of the New World and the colonization of the Americas marked the beginning of the modern expansion in the field of knowledge, wealth and productivity.

The sudden change and enhancement of the universe of experience is the source of the Baroque spirit, which is based on the idea of the infinity of divine creation. Baroque culture and sensibility opened the door to a new ontology of infinite proliferation, thereby opening the door to the experience of modernity. Following Deleuze, we can say that

“Baroque is a transition” involving the mental, perceptive and imaginary environment.<sup>3</sup> In the Baroque century, the infosphere underwent a mutation: a distorting expansion of experience was provoked by the discovery of new lands and by the proliferation of the written text, thanks to printing technology. The written text, previously rare and an expensive sign of privilege, started to be spread widely in seventeenth-century Europe. The dissemination of copies, of reproductions, together with the propagation of perspective in paintings, opens the door to the simulation of imaginary worlds invading the sphere of daily experience and social culture.

In the seventeenth century, the economy is convulsed for the first time by inflation. In Spain, this new economic phenomenon is recorded as an upsetting event that affects economic exchange, but also the psychic and linguistic sphere.<sup>4</sup> Spanish authors (like Quevedo and Góngora) speak of *locura* (‘madness’) as one effect of the inflation of meaning that is provoked by the proliferation of semiotic stimulations. Semiological inflation can be described as the excess of signs overwhelming and eluding their referents; the aleatority and indeterminacy of signs, which no longer comply with any rule of interpretation. Baroque is the recording of this exorbitant, of this excess. The phenomenon of fashion (*moda*), the infinite game of the appearance of things (dress, buildings, styles...), is linked with the aleatority of the referent: everybody is taking the signs of the other in order to refer to the self, or rather to create the self as invention, as simulation, as becoming other.<sup>5</sup> The instauration of the capitalist cultural space is marked by a perturbation of the codes of belonging. Who are you? Whence do you come? Whose son are you? What is your role? What is your value?

Before modernity, in the aristocratic order, social hierarchy was fixed forever by theological knowledge, every question had an answer, every person had a place and a value. This was no longer the case when the Copernican revolution had declared man to be the centre of the universe no more, when a new world is discovered, and when the proliferation of printed texts and painted perspectival images are replacing divine creation with human simulation. Here, capitalism finds its space and its epistemic foundation. Value is no longer defined by God, is no longer something fixed and referable to a natural criterion. Value is the product of labour, of time and of force: simulation. The picaresque novels that were incredibly popular in Spain during its ‘Golden Age’<sup>6</sup> are the narration of this disorientation, the effect of a social and cultural deterritorialization. *Buscon* in Spanish means ‘seeker’. Lazarillo, the *buscon* par excellence, is someone who is looking for something. Looking for what? He is looking for identity. The *picaro* represents the passage from a society based on blood and traditional belonging to a society that is based on money. Blood and tradition were a guarantee of descent, of belonging



and of a relation to the origin. Traditional belonging implied a relationship to the Truth (Truth is the origin, i.e., God), a reference to the ultimate reality, beyond appearance, beyond mundane fabrications.

Money is the opposite of foundation, money is groundless, and bourgeois wealth implies a perpetual shifting from one appearance to another. Money is an abstract equivalent, not the semantic reference to a useful thing. And the *picaro* is son of nobody (the opposite of the *hidalgo*, who is *hijo de algo*, 'son of someone'), which is why he is looking for something; he is playing the game of appearance, of simulation. Baroque is the search for meaning in the magical vertiginous kingdom of proliferating appearances, as in Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*. This search is doomed to fall into *desengano* ('disappointment') because the general condition of modernity is based on the consciousness of the absence of any ontological foundation, on the perpetual sliding and shifting from one level of simulation to the next. The Baroque *desengano* is contemporary with the spread of the image, the realistic (and deceptive) representation of space. José Antonio Maravall speaks of Baroque 'cosmovision', referring to a cosmology based on the relativism of vision.

According to Panovski, perspective is the symptom of the end of ancient theocracy and the beginning of modern anthropocracy. The infosphere is getting increasingly complex, with visual space invaded by ostensible representations, simulated spaces, perceptual tricks.

The Baroque mind forgot that faith is the foundation of imagination, and acquired a new consciousness of the surface, of the persuasive power of artificial simulation. The scene of the Counterreformation is not based on ascetic contemplation, but on the spectacular profusion of images. Not the silence of monastic ecstasy, but the noisy explosion of endless image production is the condition of the propaganda feud of the Catholic Church against Protestant schism. The capitalist frenzy started in the same cultural conditions. As perceptual experience is deceptive, and proliferating simulation—labour, creation, invention, knowledge, art, technology of reproduction—overloads the mind with semiotic inflation, the economy takes the place of theology as the ultimate source of truth. From the Spanish colonization of the new continent to Hollywood's colonization of the planetary mind in the twentieth century, the saturation of the space of the imagination has always been the condition of the capitalist penetration into the social mind's unconscious.

## TERRITORIALIZATION OF BOURGEOIS CAPITALISM: COMMENSURABILITY AND TRUTH

Although the Baroque spirit has played a much more important role in the genealogy of economic reason than we are accustomed to think, modern capitalism has a dominant Protestant mark, as Max Weber argued. While Baroque draws its strength from deterritorialization (conquest, proliferation of images, triumph of the dissipative energy of the imagination), Protestant culture affirms the individuality of Christian consciousness as the site of the uniqueness of truth (in the direct relation between the Christian and God and in the direct relation between the bourgeois and his economic property). If Protestant sensibility is by nature puritanical and severe, what is the meaning of Puritanism? What purity are the Puritans actually talking about?

Modern capitalism in its prevailing form is based on the affirmation of a measurable relation between labour and value. Value, once linked to the mere relation of resources and social needs, is redefined in the age of capitalist accumulation. The value of a good is not established in the psychological domain of perception, but in the measurable domain of labour time. Need, desire, craving and so on do not define the economic value of a good. The value of a good is defined by something that is measurable: the amount of time that is socially necessary for the production of the good.

This is why, in the Protestant form of capitalism, the personal power relationship is less important than the conventional agreement. Bourgeois capitalism is based on the production of a territorialized form of wealth; the bourgeoisie is an essentially territorialized class. The very definition of this class is related to the territory of the *bourg*, the city, the place where productive energies are assembled, where factories are built and property is protected. Protestant ethics, based on direct responsibility of the individual, supports the sense of belonging to the local community—so strong in the modern bourgeoisie—because the community is the witness of the grace of God, testified by the accumulation of wealth.

Furthermore, the wealth of the bourgeois capitalist is territorialized: the factory, the place where workers produce, is located in a place and the accumulation of capital is made possible by the production of things that are made by physical material linked to the place, the land, the territory. We can therefore speak of the bourgeois' *affectio societatis*, as the capitalist is devoted to the physical place where wealth can be produced and is attached to the community of workers whose exploitation makes the

accumulation of capital possible. Consequently, bourgeois society is the place of universal rational measurement: truth, conventional agreement on something that does not depend on arbitrary will, but on the fundamental convention of bourgeois capitalism, the relationship between labour time and value. The severe, individualist culture of Protestantism is mixed with the pathos of historic progress and of the Enlightenment, the act of inscribing rationality into the social world. Language is conceived as the fixed relationship between sign and meaning, signifier and signified.

#### PURITANISM AND VIRTUALIZATION: AMERICAN CAPITALISM

The Protestant religion, especially in its Puritan form, is based on the word prevailing over the image. The old Platonic contempt for and disavowal of the image return to the cultural scene of modern culture. The colonization of the northern territories of the new continent discovered by Christopher Columbus funds the development of a new culture and a new economic world based on the Puritan religious sensibility. After the discovery of the new continent, at the beginning of the colonization, Bartolomé de las Casas, the Catholic priest who accompanied the Spaniards on their conquest, asked an interesting question:

*Should we consider the natives we have found in the new territories as humans? Do they have a soul as we do? Can they receive the Christian message, that can only be transmitted to human beings?*

The Catholic Church's answer was the evangelization of the so-called Indians, the conquest of the souls of natives and the creation of a syncretic religious imagination. Evangelization went along with colonization, the exploitation of indigenous labour and the spread of devastating epidemics that destroyed pre-Columbian civilization.

But the answer of Protestant Christians in the lands of North America was less inclusive.

The Puritans who disembarked on the East Coast of North America did not ask themselves that Baroque question about the souls of the natives. The Indians were only seen as an obstacle to expansion, not as people to convert. The people who lived in the northern prairies had to be removed, cancelled, destroyed. Their obliteration was the condition for the establishment of the new perfect humanity, whose goal was the realization of the word of God in the smooth space of Newfoundland. The Indians' genocide was not an accident, but the distinctive character of the neo-human culture that is embodied in the history of the United States.

The perfection of the capitalist paradigm is established in the space of a deterritorialization—the displacement from the European lands and the rooting out of God from the Mediterranean space. Perfect capitalism is based on the building of synthetic faiths, on the cancellation of history and of historic sensibility, and opens the way to the reformatting of the social mind in the late modern shift from the alphabetic to the video-electronic mediascape.

In the American utopia of Newfoundland as virgin territory, a neo-human society has been generated, a smooth space oblivious to the roughness of historical and cultural legacy, conceiving language in terms of information. 'Anthropos02', the perfect *homo oeconomicus*, is sensible to the code, but ill adapted to perceive the analogical impulses of sensibility. Protestant culture has affirmed the superiority of the word over the image. God is speaking words; at the beginning was the *Verbum*. The reduction of the world to calculation is a condition of the superior potency of capitalism in the field of operational efficiency. But the reduction of the world to calculation implies a deactivation of the cognitive decoders of emotional interpretation and of historical difference. American rhetoric is so full of references to the emotions because emotion is a problem for the puritanical neo-human culture.

This is why the puritanical 'Anthropos02' seems to live in a condition of perpetual misunderstanding with human kind. Humans do not comply with calculation. So the neo-human puritanical unconscious is often at odds with the impure world of historical cultures and the impure world of historical cultures often perceives the puritanical empire as an alien culture.

American history seems to develop on a tabula rasa—or better on the line of a frontier in continuous ahistorical displacement. Unlike Europe after the French Revolution, there was no feudal past to overcome after the American Revolution, no religious or national conflicts, no tradition to discard. The past is nothing on the new continent, where pre-existing cultures have been exterminated. What has to be faced on the American continent is only a frontier: the future with no contamination and no resistance. American Puritanism is first of all this purity of the horizon. The universe is smooth and geared towards a binary ethical perception. The world is totally verbal and God is the original code. The Puritan God is a code, acting in the operational space of technological perfection, and history is a text that wants to be interpreted, decoded. Only what can be verbalized is real; what cannot be reduced to Word-God is not real or is devilish suggestion.

*The primary problem of Protestantism is word-fixation. Scripture-study is at its heart. No fleshy mediator is needed between the soul and God; no images of saints, Mary or God are permitted, though portraits of the Good Shepherd began to slip into some denominations within the last century. In highly ritualized Italian and Spanish Catholicism, by contrast, there is a constant, direct appeal to the senses.<sup>7</sup>*

The capitalist God is a verbal function that can act on the minds of men, provided they are pure, clear from the impurities of cultural becoming. Protestant severity has engendered the smooth space of the puritanical reduction of the world to calculation. In this purified space, a neo-human model can take shape, one that can evolve in the process of virtualization. But the perfect operationality of this model presupposes the removal of any imperfection: emotion, culture and history are factors of insecurity and irregularity for the info-flow and economic value. The neo-human programme is cleaning the world, removing human imperfection and giving way to the identification of world and God's verbal will.

### RESURFACING OF THE BAROQUE IN POST-BOURGEOIS SEMIOCAPITALISM

During the twentieth century, the standardization of mechanical technologies and manufacturing opened the way to the process of serial reproducibility and to the creation of Indust-reality. At the end of the twentieth century, however, thanks to digital technologies, Indust-reality has been replaced by a new kind of environment, one that is essentially composed of signs, images and simulated stimulations. Indust-reality and the mechanization of labour have shaped the perception of the modern world, the modernist aesthetic that reached its peak with the experience of the avant-garde—mainly Futurism and Cubism.

The effect of the avant-garde has been the proliferation of the artistic object and the overlapping of art and production: the aestheticization of the everyday environment has been one of the distinctive features of the late modern world. Aesthetics has involved mass production; every real object, losing its singularity, appears the reproduction of a model.

From this point of view, late modernism can be seen as a process of the replacement of original reality by the artefact. Art is dead, Jean Baudrillard says, not only because critical transcendence is dead, but also because reality itself is becoming confused with its im-

age. The process of digitalization is transforming things into signs, objects carrying a message, as Alvin Toffler said in his book *The Third Wave* (1980), where he spoke of a resurfacing of animism in the electronic sphere.

The passage from modern capitalism to Semiocapitalism is marked by the end of measurability, of commensurability and the return of the Baroque spirit. In the book *Vuelta de Siglo*,<sup>8</sup> Bolívar Echeverría argues that we should differentiate between two conflicting and interweaving paradigms in the genealogy of modernity. The first paradigm was developed by the dominant bourgeois vision of modernity based on the Protestant ethic and on the territorial centrality of industrial production. The other vision of modernity emerged from the Counterreformation and the Baroque. This second modernity, he argues, became subordinate and marginalized when the industrialization of the human environment reduced the social field to a process of mechanical production and reproduction, elevating the former paradigm to become the sole depositor of modern subjectivity.

The life of the industrial bourgeoisie was based on strict dedication to tireless labour and on proprietary attachment to its products. The bourgeoisie was strongly rooted in a local territory because the accumulation of value could not have been separated from the build-up (and expansion) of material products derived from the conflictual cooperation of workers' manual skills and capitalists' entrepreneurial and financial skills. Echeverría remarks that, from the sixteenth century on, the Catholic Church has created a different strain of modernity, one based on imagination and deterritorialization. The spiritual and immaterial power of Rome has always been based on the ideological control of the imagination, but this influence was hardly taken into consideration by the pragmatic ethics of industrial culture.

The Catholic Spain of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the harbinger of a non-industrial brand of accumulation, based on massive robbery of the Americas. This strain of modernity was marginalized after the military defeat of the 'Invincible Armada' in the naval war with the British Empire, which led to the economic and political decline of Spain. The affirmation of northern European capitalism opened the way to the Industrial Revolution and to the industrial production of material goods. Protestant modernity defined the canon, but the Baroque strain of modernity was not erased: it went underground, tunnelling deep into the recesses of the modern imaginary, only to resurface at the end of the twentieth century, when the capitalist system underwent a dramatic paradigm shift towards post-industrial production.

This new sphere of production, which I call Semiocapital, is centred on the creation and commodification of techno-linguistic devices—from financial products to software to backroom service communication—that have, by their very nature, a semiotic and deterritorialized character. With the emergence of a semiocapitalist economy, economic production becomes tightly interwoven with language.<sup>9</sup>

While the territorialized bourgeois economy was based on the iconoclastic severity of iron and steel, post-industrial production is based instead on the kaleidoscopic, deterritorialized machine of semiotic production. This is why we can speak of Semio-capital: because the commodities that are circulating in the economic world are signs, figures, images, projections and expectations.

Language is no longer just a tool for representing economic processes; it becomes the main source of accumulation, constantly deterritorializing the field of exchange. Speculation and spectacle intermingle because of the intrinsically inflationary (metaphoric) nature of language. The linguistic web of semio-production is a hall of mirrors that inevitably leads to crises of overproduction, bubbles and crashes.

We need to see the social implications of the two different strains of modernity: the relationship between the industrial bourgeoisie and the working class has been a relationship based on conflict, but also on alliance and mutual cooperation. The dynamics of progress and growth, stemming from the territorial, physical space of the factory, forced an agreement between the two fundamental classes of the industrial age: industrial workers and industrial bourgeoisie. This agreement was based on collective negotiation and the creation of the welfare state. The bourgeoisie and the working class could not dissociate their destinies, despite the radical conflict opposing salary and profit, opposing living time and time of valorization.

A new alliance between labour and capital became possible in the last decade of the twentieth century. The experience of dotcom enterprises was the expression of this alliance, which made possible the extraordinary technological progress of the digital sphere. But this alliance has been broken, as financial power has prevailed over cognitive labour and the predatory behaviour of the financial class has filled the empty space of aleatory value. When language becomes the general field of production, when the mathematical relation between labour time and value is broken, when deregulation destroys all liabilities, predatory behaviour becomes the norm in the field of competition. This is what has happened since neoliberal politics came to occupy the world stage. The first principle of the neoliberal school, the deregulation that destroyed the political and legal limits to capitalist expansion, cannot be understood as a purely

political change. It has to be seen in the context of the technological and cultural evolution that has displaced the process of valorization from the field of mechanical industry to the field of semiotic production. The relation between labour time and valorization becomes uncertain, undeterminable. Cognitive labour is hardly reducible to the measure of time. It is impossible to determine how much social time is necessary for the production of an idea. When the relation between labour and value becomes indeterminate, what reigns in the global labour market is the pure law of violence, of abuse. No more simple exploitation, but slavery, pure violence against the naked life of the workers of the world.

### NEO-BAROQUE AND ALEATORY RULES

Simulation and fractalization are essentially Baroque categories. In the shift to post-modernity, the rationalist balance of industrial architecture gave way to the proliferation of points of view. In his book *L'età neobarocca*,<sup>10</sup> Omar Calabrese claims that the postmodern style recuperated aesthetic and discursive models that first emerged in the 1600s. Baroque was essentially a proliferation of points of view. Whilst Protestant rigour produced an aesthetic of essential and austere images, Baroque declared the divine generation of forms to be irreducible to human laws.

In the Fordist age, the fluctuations of prices, salaries and profit were founded on the relation between socially necessary labour time and the determination of value. With the introduction of microelectronic technologies and the consequent intellectualization of productive labour, relationships between the different quantities and different productive forces entered a regime of indeterminacy. The process of deregulation, launched by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan at the beginning of the 1980s, is not the cause of such indeterminacy, but its political registration. Neoliberalism registers the end of the rule of value and transforms it into an economic policy. Richard Nixon's decision in 1971 to 'deregulate' the US dollar, ending its direct convertibility to gold, gave an absolute role to American capitalism within the global economy, subtracting it from the constitutional frame established in Bretton Woods in 1944. Since then, the American economy has been freed from the control of economic laws (if such control ever existed), having been ruled by force alone, so that American debt was able to grow indefinitely, since the debtor was militarily stronger than the creditor. Far from being the subject of an objective science, the economy reveals itself to be a modelling of social relations, an enterprise of violent obligation. Its task is that of imposing arbitrary rules on social activities: competition, maximum profit, unlimited growth.



In *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Baudrillard writes:

*The reality principle corresponded to a certain stage of the law of value. Today the whole system is swamped by indeterminacy, and every reality is absorbed by the hyper-reality of the code and simulation.*<sup>11</sup>

The entire system fell into indeterminacy, since the correspondences between referent and sign, simulation and event, value and labour time were no longer guaranteed. The decision that inaugurated the end of the dollar's convertibility inaugurated an aleatory regime of fluctuating values. The rule of convertibility was dismissed as performing an act of political will, while during the same decade the entire technical and organizational system, ruled by the mechanical paradigm, started to crumble.

How is value established within the aleatory regime of fluctuating values? It is established through violence, tricks and falsehood. Brutal force is legitimated as the only effective source of law. The aleatory regime of fluctuating values coincides with the domination of cynicism in public discourse and in the public soul.

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2. See also Marie-José Mondzain, *Image Icône Économie*, Paris: Seuil, 1996.
3. Deleuze, Gilles, *Le Pli*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1988.
4. See José Antonio Maravall, *La Cultura del Barroco*, Barcelona: Ariel, 1975.
5. See Néstor Luján, *La Vida Cotidiana en el Siglo de Oro*, Barcelona: Planeta, 1986.
6. See Francisco de Quevedo's *El Buscón* [1626], available in *Two Spanish Picaresque Novels*, Michael Alpert ed. and trans., London: Penguin, 2003.
7. Paglia, Camille, *Sex, Art and American Culture*, New York: Vintage, 1992, p. 29.
8. Echeverría, Bolívar, *Vuelta de Siglo*, Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 2006.
9. See Christian Marazzi, *Capital and Language*, Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2008, and Paolo Virno, *Multitude*, Los Angeles CA: Semiotext(e), 2008.
10. Calabrese, Omar, *L'età Neobarocca*, Bari: Laterza, 1989.
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Saroj Giri

## WikiLeaks: the Radical Gesture and its Emptiness

If we look at the form of the WikiLeaks attack on power, then we immediately discern something exceptional—the WikiLeaks attack really came from the outside, from outside the system, from outside the accepted channels and avenues of dissent. It was ‘outside’ in a number of senses. It was not appealing to government agencies to be more transparent or accountable to the public, nor was it about mobilizing public opinion against power. Instead, it chose action or, rather, direct action—what Assange calls “a course of ennobling and effective action”.<sup>1</sup> It was Hillary Clinton who rightly called it an ‘attack’: the leak of diplomatic cables was an attack on the international community, she said.

Now the urge for “ennobling and effective action”—bypassing democratic mediation, pressure group tactics, lobbying and the like—was not a coincidence. For it clearly followed from WikiLeaks’ understanding of governmental regimes. Underneath the political and democratic legitimization that governments seek and publicly display, Assange identified something like the inner core of the system: the target of attack had to be the “inner workings of authoritarian regimes”;<sup>2</sup> it was better to deal with and attack the real, core power structure than to waste time engaging in democratic pressure-building or to appeal for transparency and accountability. Hence, in being outside the normal channels of dissent, WikiLeaks thought that it was arraying itself against the power centre behind or underneath the veil of democratic legitimacy and popular consent and public dissent. Assange at one point calls this inner power structure the “key generative structure of bad governance”.<sup>3</sup>

Assange writes that “we must develop a way of thinking about this structure that is strong enough to carry us through the mire of competing political moralities and into a position of clarity”. This thinking will, then, “inspire within us and others a course of ennobling and effective action”. Assange’s emphasis on the need to cut through the “mire of competing political moralities”<sup>4</sup> to locate the key generative structure can remind one of something like the Marxist critique of formal democracy, even though he is miles away from identifying the underlying structures of unjust social relations and class relations—he has no interest in deeper social relations, the logic of capital and so on.

The underlying structure he identifies then soon turns out to be ‘conspiratorial power’ as the real core to be attacked:

*Authoritarian regimes give rise to forces which oppose them by pushing against the individual and collective will to freedom, truth and self-realisation. Plans which assist authoritarian rule, once discovered, induce resistance. Hence these plans are concealed by successful authoritarian powers. This is enough to define their behaviour as conspiratorial.*<sup>5</sup>

Today’s so-called democratic governments and ‘people’s capitalism’ are here pared down to being just authoritarian regimes, dominated by conspiratorial power elites. This meant that in opposing power, WikiLeaks could aim at very specific targets without being deluded as it were by democratic paraphernalia. Perhaps this is what led Steve Coll of *The New Yorker* to note WikiLeaks’ “reifying language of purges and revolutions”.<sup>6</sup> From here, it was also clear that WikiLeaks could not restrict itself to playing the role of ‘media’—it was clearly more than that, more than investigative journalism.

Left-leaning writers see this as something to be welcomed. WikiLeaks went not just beyond media or investigative journalism, but also beyond ‘hackers’. Critiquing pure hacker activism, Finn Brunton writes, “to break into the system and steal a document merely provokes an organization to improve its security, and releasing the document is no guarantee of a positive social result”. Instead,

*it is vital that the materials are leaks because that will foment suspicion and paranoia among the conspirators. The ideal application of the Assange model is a kind of panopticon turned inside out, where the main guard tower is gone because any given prisoner might be an informer.*<sup>7</sup>

The radical dimension to Assange’s formulation comes out in the far more consequential and thoroughgoing attempt to think of conspiratorial power not as well-formed and already structured in a particular way, but to view it in terms of its surroundings, as taking in inputs and responding and adapting itself to the elements and factors that feed into it. Assange has the entire ecology of conspiratorial power in mind—it is only thus that a sharper, debilitating attack on power can be formulated. So there is no point cutting off only the “high weight links” in a conspiracy. “Traditional attacks on

conspiratorial power groupings, such as assassination, have cut high weight links by killing, kidnapping, blackmailing or otherwise marginalizing or isolating some of the conspirators they were connected to.” Instead, the point is to “say something about all conspiracies”, to “destroy total conspiratorial power”.<sup>8</sup>

Those leaning towards the Right, however, view precisely this radical edge of WikiLeaks as the source of its unaccountability and opaqueness. Thus Coll is quite concerned with making the distinction between dissent and vandalism as well as between insurgency and journalism, with WikiLeaks presented as erring on the side of vandalism and insurgency. WikiLeaks, similar to insurgencies, lacks a fixed address and has no accountability. This is supposed to compare poorly with the ideals of daring but responsible journalism displayed by *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in publishing the Pentagon papers leaked by Daniel Ellsberg. WikiLeaks’ radical potential is precisely what becomes the source of all the problems for this liberal viewpoint. This viewpoint, of course, would have problems with all manner of radical activism, which can always be presented as a minority, vanguardist stance in violation of the constitutional process and the rule of law—and hence ‘unaccountable’.

An interesting left-wing perspective comes from John Young, former WikiLeaks activist. He argues that WikiLeaks, in its unaccountability, is acting like a government.<sup>9</sup> But, for him, this unaccountability does not lie in WikiLeaks not acting like the supposedly conscientious liberal (big) media, but in becoming a business venture and being contaminated by the money trail. Young goes on to point out that WikiLeaks has itself become leaky and that it cannot protect the people it says it can protect. All this makes it seem that WikiLeaks is not on the outside of governmental and corporate power to the extent that it is made out to be. These questions are vital, but cannot be dealt with here.

## JOLTING THE LEFT

Thus WikiLeaks acted from the outside, since it refused to participate in the democratic sphere of pressure tactics, lobbying, mass mobilization, demonstration and so on. It identifies a core generative structure of power, and attacks not just one part of the conspiratorial network but its “total conspiratorial power”. All these features mean that WikiLeaks’ actions amount to nothing less than a radical gesture. WikiLeaks—at least in the initial volleys that it launched—could not then be counted as media or even as investigative journalism, and instead seemed to approach an insurgency or ‘revolutionary vandalism’, if such a thing exists. Most writers on the Left, particularly the Marxist Left,

tend to overlook this aspect, focussing instead mostly on the content of the cables that expose the machinations of US imperialism. What is avoided is any serious examination of the very *form* of WikiLeaks’ “ennobling action”. Here, then, we intend to look into the question of truth and truth revelations that this action assumed. Elsewhere I have discussed WikiLeaks’ understanding of power and the serious flaws in it.<sup>10</sup>

It goes without saying that there are huge and severe problems with the form of WikiLeaks’ intervention, its subjectivity. However, it has the most welcome effect of jolting certain sections of the Left out of their complacency about restricting their struggles to the terms and conditions laid out by liberal constitutional democracy and always stopping short even of visualizing a more frontal attack on the repressive state apparatus. Social movements and a huge swath of anti-war and anti-imperialist movements have lost precisely the art of fighting from the outside. I have dealt with some of these problems elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Such movements seem to concentrate mostly on shaming the powers-that-be by pointing out their excesses, so that the public may feel revolted—not much different from what the ‘media’ does. Wendy Brown points out how, with the neoliberal erosion of the basic tenets of liberal democracy, the Left has sought to speak in the name of these tenets. Thus, “it renders the Left a party of complaint rather than a party with an alternative political, social, and economic vision.” That is, what the Left has failed to understand is that “oppositional consciousness cannot be generated from liberal democracy’s false promises and hypocrisies”.<sup>12</sup> Hence WikiLeaks’ ennobling action does not suffer from this problem. Hence WikiLeaks can be seen as an occasion to contemplate Left strategies and political thinking.

Certain Marxist-Leninists have given up on what Lenin, following Marx, called insurrection as an art. Was there an element of the insurrectionary mode in WikiLeaks? There was—even though I know this is a highly contentious claim—particularly as Assange himself started packaging WikiLeaks as a media organization soon after the cable leaks. At the same time, it does provide us the occasion to recall the possibilities of insurrection and radical change today—an insurrection that, in the course of a larger revolutionary mass movement, confronts, not exactly Assange’s total conspiratorial power, then the repressive state apparatus and wider class relations.

While, however, welcoming WikiLeaks as a radical gesture from the outside, I would now like to go on to discuss some of the serious problems I have with it. These problems mean that this radical gesture is, for me, ultimately something empty, full of major conceptual flaws and practical blind spots. Here I discuss issues relating to its notion of truth—revelations of truth, in particular.

## PRAIRIE OF TRUTHS

Let's start with US Vice President Joe Biden's statement that "the leaked cables created no substantive damage—only embarrassment". We know that he may not have been at all honest here, as on another occasion he seems to admit real damage: "[Assange has] made it more difficult for us to conduct our business with our allies and our friends".<sup>13</sup> But what we can be sure of is that "the biggest leak in history", "the 9/11 of diplomatic history", did not, in fact, give rise to any mass movement or civil disobedience in the US or elsewhere. It did not bring people into the streets even though it so overwhelmingly exposed those in power. In this sense, the WikiLeaks truth revelations did not act as the proverbial spark setting off the prairie fire, even though they may surely have changed the way diplomacy is conducted or helped push the adoption of leak-proof cyber technology for state secrets.

In any case, it is perhaps safe to say that WikiLeaks—and people like Daniel Ellsberg—have all too easily assumed that the revelations will lead to public action and bring about change; unless, of course, they never meant what they were publicly stating. What we can be sure of is that people and citizens, in whose name the truth is being revealed, are getting deluged by truth exposing those in power—and there are more releases, there is more truth coming, we are told! The question is: how many more details do we need about how evil 'Empire' or imperialism is? Or are revelations and exposés, 'leaks' set to become another game in town? Not a prairie on fire but an endless and tiring prairie of truths, where truth can easily lose its spark and radical charge. From the information explosion to the truth explosion: truth without the subversive potential, truth without event, hence surely no substantive damage, only embarrassment for US power!

Truth losing its power and punch to trigger off civil disobedience or protests is, however, very empowering for the US administration. We already heard Joe Biden's confident remark dismissing the leaks as mere embarrassment. Pro-establishment writers like Dana Milbank display a similar confidence, clearly related to the inability of the leaked cables to trigger any public outcry or unrest. Indeed, she goes so far as to call the revelations of the leaked diplomatic cables "phony facts", "without any political import".<sup>14</sup> She writes that any political import the leaks have derives from the Obama administration's penchant for rampant "over-classification", "the trademark of totalitarianism". "The reflexive classifying has, by creating the perception that the government has much to hide, created a market for WikiLeaks." What is being said here, in effect, is that the

question of the details of our activities—unjust, immoral and violent—becoming public is a state or bureaucratic decision with no ramifications for inviting public anger or unrest, apart from some routine embarrassment.

Compare this to how much importance WikiLeaks and its supporters attach to these "phony facts" as carriers of subversive power. WikiLeaks' website declares that it "relies upon the power of overt fact to enable and empower citizens to bring feared and corrupt governments and corporations to justice".<sup>15</sup> That is, truth is not just "overt fact", but that which at the same time "enables and empowers citizens" to challenge power—truth that awakens people and inspires people to challenge power. Most people on the Left rightly felt exuberant and hoped that the revelations were going to have a far more serious effect and would significantly destabilize imperialism. But the extent to which that has taken place or why it did not take place are questions we need to ask ourselves.

## PEOPLE'S SELF-ACTIVITY

We must therefore point out that there is indeed a problem in this mode and practice of challenging power, which has come to the fore with WikiLeaks today. No doubt, Assange's 'scientific journalism' is impeccable when it comes to providing evidence and facts, so that people can see for themselves and test the sources of the leaks—the 'unassailable truth'. George Orwell is often quoted: "in a time of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act".

But what if telling the truth ends up positing people as only passively receiving the truth being leaked or exposed? Is the fight only between the 'key generative structure' of conspiratorial power and super-intelligent hacktivists, so that the people figure here only as a kind of 'witness' on the sidelines, expressing no more than moral outrage in the light of the revelations? An unmistakeable 'behalfism' and indulgent disconnect with the people is evident here. For example, this is what Anonymous declares, "we are here for all of you, campaign for all of you".<sup>16</sup> This is really like a handful of elite hackers educating the masses about the true oppressive nature of the system. Further, there is no attempt, in either WikiLeaks or Anonymous, to take the struggle to the factories and streets. Against this, let us recall: "The real education of the masses can never be separated from their independent political, and especially revolutionary, struggle".<sup>17</sup> A handful of elite hackers can reveal the truth, but it is not really embraced and absorbed by



'ordinary people', for only their own struggle educates people about the truth. Those, incidentally, are Lenin's words on people learning the 'truth' about the repressive Czarist regime in Russia in the aftermath of 'Bloody Sunday', where scores of protestors were fired upon and killed in St Petersburg in 1905.

It is the activity and experience of the people that reveals the truth to them, a truth that is inseparable from their struggle. Rosa Parks' defiance did not just reveal the truth about racism in the US but was at the same time part of the struggle against racism, a struggle by people in their own lives. It is in the course of this struggle that the truth emerges. Bradley Manning has been compared to Rosa Parks. However, things took a different turn in this case. His act of defiance in leaking the secret documents became far less important than the contents of what was released—the struggle within the very structures of power by an ordinary employee doing his job, taking a backseat in favour of dramatic revelations by a group (WikiLeaks) that maintains as much distance from power as from the ranks of people like Manning. It is true that the contents of the documents were of unprecedented significance, so they would of course receive the enormous attention and coverage we have witnessed. And yet, a low-ranking gay soldier's defiance could also have triggered civil disobedience within the army or among ordinary people, instead of inspiring only sundry whistle-blowers or old members of Veterans for Peace. It is no mere coincidence that Manning becomes a mere conduit, passing the leaks to WikiLeaks and then on to the corporate media. The fact of the matter is actually that, without Manning's act of defiance triggering off mass protests against power, WikiLeaks' revelations seem more like truth abstracted from the struggle of the people and then served back to them with redactions and vetting by the corporate media. Such mass protests were not entirely impossible. For example, when online fund transfers to WikiLeaks were blocked, Anonymous could have appealed to the employees of PayPal and Mastercard for support, instead of relying exclusively on hacking the company websites.

It is true that Assange and WikiLeaks are at one level part of the larger struggle of the people for justice, freedom and so on. Reports in fact say that Assange had attended the World Social Forum in Nairobi in 2006 and addressed activists in social movements. But this looks more like a one-time encounter with social movements, rather than actual engagement or proactive association.

## 'SCIENTIFIC JOURNALISM'

WikiLeaks is therefore misplaced in making the scientific veracity of the revelations the primary focus—as though 'evidence' about the truth being told is what it takes to bring people out in the streets. Assange goes to great lengths to emphasise the verifiability of the evidence: "Publishing the original source material behind each of our stories is the way in which we show the public that our story is authentic. Readers don't have to take our word for it; they can see for themselves."<sup>18</sup> WikiLeaks states that, "we want readers to know the truth so they can make up their own minds",<sup>19</sup> as if the only reason the public is not swinging into civil disobedience is that they do not yet have damning evidence of the system's corruption. This takes us back to Brown's point above about oppositional consciousness. On the other hand, one can even trace an unstated attempt here to abstract individuals from their places of work and living, places where their own struggle teaches them the truth about the system, and to render them abstract individuals who have to form their opinions from out of 'revealed truth' that is handed down, from some secret files, etc.

With such 'scientific evidence' at hand, there is this tendency to bask in the revelations as damning, as once again proving the point about the evil nature of the US, and so on. The US is presented as scared of the truth and doing everything to hide it, suppressing free speech and freedom of information and a free and independent internet. It is assumed that revelation of the truth will carry its own charge and will ignite public outrage and possibly protests. Thus Daniel Ellsberg writes, quoting Bradley Manning, "I want people to see the truth... because without information you cannot make informed decisions as a public", adding that he hoped to provoke "worldwide discussion, debates, and reform".<sup>20</sup> This expectation that the public will act upon the truth is declared constantly and is too easily assumed. In the same statement, Ellsberg himself says that "the American public should be outraged at their government".

However, for once, apart from merely attacking the US government and celebrating the supposed automatically radical effects of truth, there is a sober, slightly reflective moment in the statement. Here Ellsberg discusses what the public will do with the truth, "whether Americans can handle the truth". He answers that, yes, "we believe they can. The challenge is to make the truth available to them in a straightforward way so they can draw their own conclusions." Until now, he writes, this question "has been an academic rather than an experience-based one, because Americans have had very little access to the truth. Now, however, with the WikiLeaks disclosures, they do."<sup>21</sup> So what

will happen now? Is there a WikiLeaks movement, are people mobilizing, is there a social disobedience movement against the government? Why were there so few people at the demonstration outside the White House, comprised mostly of members of Veterans for Peace? These questions are not even raised, let alone answered.

It is clear, therefore, that without public upheaval or a movement, the revelation of the truth only has the status of an 'overt fact', without its subversive political charge, without any life. Are we, then, not confronting an overaccumulation of truth, a stultifying economy and circulation of sting operations, exposés and so on?<sup>22</sup> No discomfort is expressed about this situation, where you have a surfeit of the most incisive truths exposing the evil workings of power, combined with a passive citizenry, who seem wedded to the system in more ways than one. 'Speaking truth to power' and 'anti-capitalism' here become another moment in the reproduction of capital. WikiLeaks brings this contradictory situation into sharp relief.

It was no different during the anti-war mobilization in the US, where exposing the immoral and corrupt character of the ruling classes and the unjust war did not by themselves mobilize people to action. As Wendy Brown points out:

*much of the American public appeared indifferent to the fact that both the Afghan and Iraqi regimes targeted by Bush had previously been supported or even built by earlier US foreign policy. It appeared indifferent as well to the fact that the 'liberation' of Afghan women was touted as one of the great immediate achievements of the overthrow of the Taliban while overthrow of the Baath regime has set into motion an immediately more oppressive regime of gender in Iraq.<sup>23</sup>*

One shudders to think that there are going to be many more rounds of the release of diplomatic cables—our saturation with all this truth about the vile machinations of power and 'Empire' might produce some serious and calamitous mass disorientation!

## THE ONE AND THE MANY

Finally, how does one make sense of the idea that the leaks are an example of info-liberation, of the vulnerability of state power in the age of the internet and its fluidity. In WikiLeaks' famous letter to Daniel Ellsberg, the organization writes, "New technology

and cryptographic ideas permit us to not only encourage document leaking, but to facilitate it directly on a mass scale. We intend to place a new star in the political firmament of man."<sup>24</sup> More crucial is the point typically made in decentred-network activist circles about conventional state power, the enemy, being the 'One' fighting against the many, a reified, ossified structure of power against the multiplying, faceless, rhizomatic swarm.

The faceless swarm of the anonymous many is supposed not to be co-optable. However, as the present WikiLeaks episode shows, the anonymous many seem to be bugging and embarrassing power, but they are without any vision of real change. The anonymous many, even in their constant cyberwar with conventional power, can very well end up as the absent basis, as the oppositional ally of the One—not a static relationship, but a moving, dynamic equilibrium and adjustment between 'power' and 'anti-power', with 'power' as the dominant aspect. Is this the way in which we can understand WikiLeaks—anti-power—and its relationship to corporate media and the structures of US power?

You have a situation here of 'the many', the anonymous being internal to power and yet always 'outside' power: 'anti-power' as a constitutive feature and operative principle of power. This dynamic might constantly displace the possibility of any real struggle on the ground, and it is this that immediately makes of Bradley Manning a facilitator, a mere conduit for activism in cyberspace, rather than a symbol of the actual act of defiance against power.

It was, however, pretty clear that the supposedly non-co-optable 'many' does not have the vision nor the interest in including the majority of the people in struggle. This much was apparent during the cyber attacks on Amazon and other sites, which could have inconvenienced their customers who are in turn ordinary people. 'Anonymous' withdrew its attacks on Amazon soon enough, giving the reason that this "would affect people such as consumers in a negative way and make them feel threatened by Anonymous. Simply put, attacking a major online retailer when people are buying presents for their loved ones, would be in bad taste."<sup>25</sup> No doubt disrupting people's routine lives would be in bad taste, but the larger point is that the disconnect between hacktivists and 'ordinary people' became totally clear. The 'many' are not that many after all, and in fact 'the many', the masses do not even exist for the 'info-liberators'.

## TRUTH-EVENT

What is clear is that a passive citizenry, or even a citizenry active on a narrow 'right to know' plank, will not suddenly spring into action on the basis of a revelation of truth. On the other hand, a mobilized people, in the midst of a movement, its own struggle, does not need a prairie of truths, thousands of diplomatic cables to be revealed—a single spark of truth can start a prairie fire. One incident, one act of defiance, one standing up to repression or power in the midst of a larger struggle, acquires a charge and a replicating force that soon engulfs the masses. Knowing the truth about power and fighting to abolish it must therefore be a part of the process whereby people organize and discover their own strengths and power. Lenin again: "Only struggle discloses to [the masses] the magnitude of its own power, widens its horizon, enhances its abilities, clarifies its mind, forges its will".<sup>26</sup>

Truth as the end product of an anti-conspiracy operation, truth as digital activism of the elite 'many', truth that has not emerged through people's struggle against power, only means that people know the truth but do not realize their own power to topple the present order—this will lead merely to reformist calls for transparency and good or open governance, without challenging the basic structures of socio-economic inequalities and state power.

We must then rework the Orwell quote and ask, "in a time of universal exposés and so much downloadable truth swarming around us, what is the truth which is revolutionary?" What is the truth which is a truth-event?

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Georg Franck

## Mental Capitalism

Everything smacks of publicity. Wherever we look, there are logos, whatever the event, we are reminded of sponsors. Advertising finances mass culture, but, increasingly, high culture, too. Consumption has shifted from products to brands. Branded goods are commodity-shaped advertisements. We are witnessing an invasion of brands. Before our eyes, cities and landscapes mutate into advertising media. Publicity settles like mildew on everything open to public view. It determines the shape of everything intent on making a public impression; also the shape of politics. Political parties are advertised like registered trademarks. The thirst of politics for promotion outlays has reached a point where it corrupts the traditional party system and has become a major source of political scandal.

What is it that endows publicity with such power? Is it technological progress or dominant economics? Are we confronted with a new phenomenon or with the culmination of old trends? Is publicity a symptom of information society? Or is it a novel manifestation of technology and social economy?

### THE PUBLICITY FLOOD: SYMPTOM FOR WHAT?

There are standard economic reasons for promotion activities. Expenditure on advertising pays where economies of scale can be exploited. Economies of scale are characteristic of Fordist production. They are sizeable in the case of information goods, since information products involve high overhead costs but negligible reproduction costs. In a communication network, both economic efficiency and attractiveness increase with the number of network participants. Accordingly, the role played by advertising in an industrial society expands in information society. Still, all those reasons do not sufficiently explain the penetrating force of publicity and its spillover beyond the limits of sales promotion. They may explain why the incitement, channelling and seduction of attention today regularly accompany economic activity, but they fail to explain why the scramble for attention has turned into the overriding objective. Publicity depends on media: media presenting a message while absorbing attention. Electronic media are particularly well-equipped for presentation. Electronic ways of

reproducing, multiplying and spreading patterns of stimulation have a clout in reinforcing presentation. At the same time, distribution via technological channels facilitates the measurement of attention being skimmed off. The effective sales of information delivered by the media are measured via circulation figures, audience ratings or number of visits to web sites. Together with today's technological media, an infrastructure has sprung up that provides wholesale access to entire populations while at the same time continuously surveying demand. And yet: not even state-of-the-art information and communication technology fully explain the impertinence of publicity. We can switch off the TV, but cannot forego facing advertisements. Wherever we look, wherever we run, advertising is in place already.

The involuntary consumption of publicity amounts to a tax being levied on perception. This tax is irrational from the point of view of the rational consumer posited by economic theory. It also contradicts the technological media's role as mind amplifiers. However, can a phenomenon of such overwhelming presence be explained by sheer absence of reason? Shouldn't we rather wonder whether our conceptions of economics and technology are too narrow? Could the omnipresence of advertising not be symptomatic of a dynamic of social change that so far has gone unnoticed in economics and media theory?

The contention that we are dealing with some profound change takes shape if we remember similar upheavals in the past, like the ones that accompanied industrialization. Industrial capitalism led to new ownership relations, to the transformation of common land into private property, to the growth of vertically integrated markets, to the enforcement of homogenous currency systems and to the evolution of finance as a specialized economic sector. In the following, I shall elaborate on the conjecture that we are witnessing another revolution of this kind, taking place beneath the surface on which advertising spreads. I suspect that we are dealing with a new kind of capitalism, a capitalism different from the one usually addressed as New Economy. Let me sketch this—mental—kind of capitalism<sup>1</sup> in the form of four propositions:

1. What we are witnessing is a new type of privatization of public space: privatization of the space of experience.
2. The privatization of this 'experience-space' is connected with—and promoted by—the emergence of new markets. New, in the sense that it is not money that is exchanged for information, but attention.



3. Attention as such is not a means of payment. It only becomes a currency when it is measured in homogenous units and made to circulate via anonymous exchange acts.
4. The currency system of attention relies on specialized financial services. This banking and stock-exchange function is performed by the mass media.

*(ad 1) Privatization of public experience-space*

Advertising would not be ubiquitous if presentation were only taking hold of the technological media. Particularly striking, however, is the way in which public space in cities or areas along traffic routes, and increasingly also the open landscape, are incorporated. Those kinds of spaces epitomize public goods. Even when buildings or land are privately owned, urban space or the open landscape keep their public, communal nature. This public-good quality is the object of building and landmark regulations. Precisely this public-good quality of public space is now being privatized. Public space is studded with billboards and installations serving as eye-catchers; it is transformed into an advertising medium. A lot is paid for utilization as advertising medium—both by those active in the advertising business and those suffering from the disfigurement of public space. However, while the benefit involved is appropriated privately, the respective costs are borne by the general public.

The same development can be observed in public television and in publicly financed culture. The existence of publicly-owned television companies goes back to the same reasons that account for aesthetic commissioning in building codes and landscape protection regulations. Their rationale lies in defending public experience-space against the baseness of private profit-seeking. Quality standards are established and fees are levied, so that people will have something decent to look at. But what will public television companies do next? They will maximize their audience ratings in order to use their medium as advertising vehicle. They will engage in the same racket as private television companies, perhaps hampered by a few inconvenient rules and standards. Their business, too, is the collection of as much attention as possible. Audience ratings measure the attention a medium attracts in return for the information it offers. This service of attraction is sold to the advertising industry. Private television lives entirely on selling this service, but public television profits from it, too. Both kinds of television companies thus feel encouraged to investigate what the public wants to see or hear in order to maximize the attraction of attention; this attraction can then be re-sold for money.

Nothing different is happening when sponsors take over the financing of culture. Sponsors, too, buy the service of attraction. Whatever culture is on offer, it performs this service of attraction; sponsors buy the service in order to plant themselves in the lime-light. Financing via advertising always means that nominally public space is transformed into a market where, on the one hand, the information offered is paid for by attention and where, on the other hand, the service of attraction is sold for money.

*(ad 2) New markets*

The emergence of those new markets is crowding out traditional forms and kinds of public space. They are the new arenas for culture and sports, for political debate and the struggle for power. One notices their operation by the pungent ferment of publicity. The new markets are markets in the full sense of the term: they organize supply by testing preparedness to pay. Only, in this case, payment is not effected in money but in attention. The attention paid is measured through number of visitors, audience ratings or opinion polls. By being measured, attention is homogenized. Attention, when taken as such, is not a homogenous measure of value. The value of attention we receive in interpersonal exchange is thoroughly individual. It depends on our own esteem for the person paying attention to us and on the appreciation conveyed by way of the payment. But when we measure the size of editions, number of viewers or circulation figures, attention is reduced to sheer quantity. Anything individual in it is neutralized by homogenization. Adaptation to sheer quantity lies behind the transition from elitist culture to event- and rating-culture; behind the invasion of brands; behind the change of party democracy into media democracy. The consequences are even more profound. Attention as a means of payment induces further technological change and establishes a new slant between the rich and the poor.

Technological change induced through the new markets is not limited to information and communication technology. Through competition for attention a very special kind of technology has entered the scene. It is linked to communication techniques, but differs from networks and technical equipment. The technology applied to maximize editions, audience ratings or circulation figures consists in certain methods of filling the channels. This form of maximization relies on a technology of attraction differing from the technology of engineers. Traditionally, the methods of mass attraction were not even recognized as technology. They were developed in advertising agencies and film studios, by the mass media and in the world of fashion. They are not based on any theory but on experience and informed intuition. Meanwhile, they have developed into a

sophisticated technique. Mass attraction is staged with a high degree of professionalism and is the technological basis of advanced industries.<sup>2</sup>

A concept of technology not encompassing the technology of attraction would be too narrow to account for the new economy. A narrow concept of technology would suggest that, in information society, social classes are differentiated by being “information-rich” or “information-poor”. Such a view would not just be simplistic; it would overlook the crux of the matter. For the wealth accumulated in the new markets does not consist of knowledge; poverty in them does not just mean unsatisfied thirst for knowledge. The wealthy ones, those who are successful in the new markets, are wealthy in recognition. The poverty of those who are passed over consists in lack of recognition. Wealthy people in the new economy are those whose attention earnings are larger by orders of magnitude than their spending. The poor are those who do not get enough attention to keep their self-esteem intact.<sup>3</sup> This wealth of some and the poverty of all others are interrelated: the amount of recognition available for distribution is not unlimited. The attention circulating in society is finite. Those who have, can only be given if something is taken away from those who have not.

*(ad 3) From exchanged attention to psychic currency*

Traditionally, it was the privilege of high birth, exceptional talent or ravishing beauty to grow rich in attention. Today, anyone can become a celebrity. In the new economy, the office boy turned millionaire is the candidate in a casting show who rises to be a media star. The production of media prominence, progress in attraction technology and the growth of new types of markets are all different aspects of the same thing. They are possible because attention is minted into an anonymous means of payment. The overall effect is that the currency in circulation is expanding.

The volume of attention diverted by the media and redistributed in the competition over ratings or reach is not identical with the total amount of attention circulating in society. What is circulating is both attention exchanged person-to-person and attention spent on mediatized information. Only the latter kind is homogenized by quantitative measurement, thus assuming the nature of an anonymous means of payment. Only through unprecedented growth in the volume of this currency could fortunes like media prominence arise. Only the rise of mass business led to the emergence of a technology of mass attraction. The key to understanding the development of mental capitalism

thus lies in answering the question as to how the spending and earning of attention became a technologically advanced economy. Which growth factors were at work that turned the exchange of information for attention into big business?

Provision of information in return for attention has been the job of culture since it was industrialized. Looking for the driving forces at work, therefore, means tracing the mutation of cultural life into a mass business. The prerequisites for this mutation were the development of a technological infrastructure enabling mass distribution of information, as well as the evolution of certain types of popular culture engaged in finding out what mass audiences wanted to see, hear or read. A further, decisive influence stimulating the unprecedented increase in the volume of anonymously paid attention was the existence of an internal circuit for the collection and reinvestment of attention. Only those genres of popular culture succeeded in becoming mass media that invested a sufficiently large amount of attraction power in breeding champions capable of mass attraction.

Stars drawing large audiences cannot be created simply with money. Something else is needed. Talents have to be offered presentation space or broadcasting time. Attention must be granted in advance. Only those suppliers of information who are known for reliably attracting vast amounts of attention are capable of granting such credit. Media of this kind can sell services of attraction to the advertising business, but they can also reinvest their power of attraction to increase their magnetism. Guaranteed attention can give talents a chance or can be used for piling up so much attention on successful personalities that they become known by everybody, and even become known for being known by everybody. The high technology of attraction works with this kind of selfreinforcing publicity. It works with known faces everybody wants to see because everybody knows that all the others also see them. What would become of cinema, sports, talk shows or soap operas without those stars?

But not only the stars profit from all the commotion around known faces. In fact, through their stars, the media presenting them become major earners themselves. A medium that invests in promoting a star will participate in the profit created with the credit it offers. The analogy with banks goes even further. Attention credit creates psychic currency in the same way that bank credit creates money. The money supply grows if bank credit surpasses deposits, and the amount of attention turned over by the media increases if it pays to expand presentation space beyond realized attraction capacity.

*(ad 4) The financial industries of mental capitalism*

That the media are functioning as banks is exemplified by their interaction with politics. Politics, like advertising, is pushing its way into the media. Politicians are no longer happy with just being shown; they want to be presented in the best possible way, by the most attractive channels, during primetime.<sup>4</sup> They demand the advance payment of guaranteed attention that is also granted to people whom that medium presents on its own initiative. Therefore, the conditions for receiving this financial service will depend on the politicians' personal performance in the medium. If a politician is likely to increase the attention paid to that medium, it will grant him attention credit. If the politician's presentation is not profitable, or not profitable enough, then cash will have to be taken in hand.

The media are financing the making of politicians in the same way that banks are financing business. Like business, politics is shaped by the respective financing conditions. Politicians will make an effort to present themselves in a way appreciated by the medium: they will not only watch out for their own image, but also for the ratings. If they are willing to act as carthorses for the respective medium, they can maximize their credit and minimize the money spent on media presence. They will thus be interested in making use of professional attraction technologies. They will entrust themselves to advisers well-versed in those technologies and also familiar with the credit sector of attention.

The transition from party to media democracy is marked by politicians no longer being satisfied with their role as objects of reporting. They become the medium's business partners. In this new role, politicians use the media not only for selling their policies; they also serve the medium's self-interest in order to get hold of as much advertising space as possible. This change of role brings about a change in the requirements for and the patterns of political careers. Being telegenic is necessary today, but no longer sufficient. You have to have the makings for media prominence. A politician's typical career pattern will combine moving up in the party hierarchy with increasing affluence in media attention. Prominence is that level of attentive wealth where the affluence becomes conspicuous and itself turns into a source of attention income.

What does this cooperation with politics reveal about the media? It shows that the media, within the attention economy, are what the financial sector is in money capitalism. The media are capitalizing attention: they receive attention with such

regularity and certainty that they are able to offer it on credit as starting capital; they make use of fortunes by reinvesting attention wealth into attraction; they list the market value of fortunes by measuring their power of attraction. Just as banks are providing growing economies with an expanding money supply, the media are supplying expanding information markets with growing amounts of attention. Lastly, in the same way that financial markets have transposed the internal capitalization strategy of companies to the macroeconomic level, the media are transposing the capitalization of attention from the level of personal dexterity to that of an organized public sphere.

**IS THE CONJECTURE OF MENTAL CAPITALISM TENABLE?**

If the economy of attention has in fact assumed the stature of a capitalist system, the furnishing of experience-space with advertisements appears in a new light. Capitalism is an exceedingly dynamic, thoroughly mobilizing and aggressively expanding economic system. A capitalist economy of attention means that the struggle for attention becomes professional, technological and indispensable. Anything that lives on being noticed will be drawn into this struggle. No selling without mind-grabbing; no social impact without strategic placement in public awareness.

Admittedly, speaking about a new stage of capitalism is no small matter. Capitalism in terms of attention goes further than any apprehensions of cultural criticism. It culminates in the idea that the cultural suprastructure not only reflects the economic base, but that it has assimilated it. Such an assumption must withstand testing in the counter-current. It must satisfy all the criteria implied in the concept of capitalism. In order to reverse the burden of proof, the four initial propositions discussed above will be tested against the following control propositions:

1. The term capitalist production relations signifies more than production for markets. Characteristic of those relations is the replacement of use value by exchange value. Hence, the replacement of differences in quality by differences in quantity ought to show up in cultural self-perception.
2. The successful establishment of capitalist production relations is heralded by the unprecedented unleashing of productive forces and by a hitherto unknown degree of creative destruction. This trait, too, would have to be discernible in mental capitalism.

3. It is characteristic of capitalist production relations that they are ideologically justified and beautified to camouflage unfettered commercialization. Such ideological removal of all inhibitions would have to be noticeable in mental capitalism.
4. No capitalism without exploitation and social conflict. Capitalism in what is mental would have to manifest itself in a tendency for growing psychic destitution and in revolts against narcissistic injuries.

*(ad 1) Qualitative difference dissolving into quantitative difference*

The arrival of postmodernism marked a break in cultural self-perception. This not only meant noting that current production constituted a completely new era, but also realizing, in retrospect, that indications of change had been building up for a long time. Postmodernist discourse distanced itself from modernism, characterizing it as an era in which rigid categorization, binary dichotomies and searching for essential differences were dissociated from the historical background and cultural context. Accused of being typically modernistic, sharp distinctions between nature and culture, male and female, high art and popular art, the arts and sciences, economics and epistemology came under critical scrutiny. Essential distinctions were replaced by systems of variation and differentiation and ontological distinctions gave way to varying social constructs. The borderlines between historical genesis and logical validity, between discovery context and justification context, between the invention of hypotheses and the discovery of facts began to be blurred. Everywhere, one noted sliding scales, moving ratios, fuzzy interfaces, hybrid mixtures, opportunistic adaptations.

Deconstruction goes all out, knows no ultimate limits, does not respect any central core. If one takes it seriously as a way of perceiving cultural change, it is in fact a reaction to the liquefaction and homogenization processes actually taking place. Deconstruction undermines a paradigm that partitions cultural life according to bureaucratic departmentalization; this old paradigm is replaced by chaotic self-organization. In the social context, systems of chaotic self-organization able to replace bureaucratic organization take the shape of markets. Markets in this most general sense are decentralized bargaining systems whose firm structures consist in habitual exchange relations and established exchange values.

If cultural life has, in fact, arrived at a stage where it can be described as a capitalist economy of attention, this change of paradigm was indeed a highly sensitive reaction, even more remarkable since it took place outside the trodden paths of economic

thought. In the economic sphere, the replacement of a use value oriented regime by an exchange value oriented one would have been registered. Under capitalism, factual validity assumes the format of capital—capital in the shape of confidence, creditworthiness, reputation, whatever. The validity established and maintained by this regime is relative from the outset and remains in force only as long as it withstands erosion by constant competition and aggressive forces of dissolution. Whatever survives will do so only as long as it satisfies effective demand; i.e., if there is preparedness to pay—preparedness to pay attention, of course.

The spearheads of deconstruction are targeting the status of scientific theories and facts. Proponents of the “strong programme” in the sociology of science view scientific theories just as means of production used in the production of other theories, fabricated to replace the preceding ones.<sup>5</sup> Even scientific facts, they assert, are social constructs, valid only as long as they prove their productiveness through the construction of other facts. This extreme form of relativism affects the issue of mental capitalism for two reasons. First, it means that the scientific economy of attention must be taken into account. Second, it marks the point where its provocation has had consequences. What happened was the declaration of ‘science wars’.

*(ad 2) Unleashing of productive forces*

Science is a closed economy of attention.<sup>6</sup> Scientists invest their own attention to obtain the attention of other scientists. They are not only intent on satisfying their own curiosity and desire for exploration; what they also want is to be reviewed and cited. Review and citation measure the value of scientific information. They measure other scientists’ preparedness to pay attention to a fellow scientist’s production. Scientists spend their own attention on the production of others in order to increase their own productivity. They are interested in prefabricated knowledge acting as means of production in the production of knowledge.

The scientific economy of attention is a capitalist one. The major inputs in knowledge production are prefabricated knowledge and fresh attention. Scientific information, being a produced means of production, is a capital good. The market in which this kind of capital good is traded is called scientific communication. Supply takes the shape of publication. Through publication, the respective information becomes accessible for everyone, but it also establishes intellectual property. Permission to use somebody else’s property as one’s own means of production is obtained by acquiring a licence and

by paying a fee. The licence for productive reuse of published information is obtained through citation, the fee takes the shape of attention that the citing author transfers to the cited one.

Science is a model economy in the dual sense of the term. It is a model both with respect to its capitalist mode and because of its efficiency in production. It is characteristic of the capitalist mode of production to employ prefabricated means of production and to transform the heterogeneous assemblage of means of production into a homogenous good called 'capital'. Scientific information acting as means of production consists of theses, hypotheses, theories, theorems, facts; that is, chunks of information that are factually incomparable and which, taken by themselves, do not contain any common—e.g. information-theoretic—measure. For this heterogeneous assemblage to be transformed into units of capital, it must be evaluated, i.e., measured by homogenous units. In the case of assets of production, this measurement is effected by their transformation into financial capital; that is, by translation into shares entitling the holder to obtain some of the profit. In the case of scientific assets of production, no financial profit accrues—unless the assets are cast in the mould of patents; but, by being patented, the information completely disappears from the capital market of scientific communication. The profits negotiated in this market accrue in terms of attention. The respective measuring unit is the citation. The number of citations collected by a particular piece of scientific information is a measure both for the amount of its reuse in production and for the attention income earned by the author. The list of citations is the functional equivalent of financial capital; scientific real capital must assume this form in order to operate as capital in the full sense of this concept. Scientists' personal accounts of citations represent the kind of wealth they are out to maximize. Personal wealth of this kind is called scientific reputation.

Science is a capitalist sector of the attention economy, whether or not the rest of the economy is organized in a capitalist way. Science is also an example of the unleashing of productive forces brought about by the introduction of capitalist production relations. The scientific economy of attention has been capitalist ever since the scientific division of labour became common practice and since scientific communication began to function like a market for published information. Scientific capitalism arose in parallel with industrial capitalism. Both these capitalisms were characterized by an unprecedented degree of productive destruction; they both revolutionized traditional production relations and were both accompanied by a new, ruthless style of rationality. They both ran into philosophical opposition—and have continued to do so until today.

However, in contrast to industrial capitalism, the capitalist mode of knowledge production did not become the subject of radical economic criticism. From the very start, the scientific economy of attention was a model economy. If mental capitalism has in the meantime also become a category deserving criticism, then this must be due to some fundamental change. The markets in which information and attention are exchanged must have assumed a new character.

### *(ad 3) Economic base and ideological superstructure*

Mental capitalism, manifesting itself in ebullience of advertising, actually serves a kind of market that differs from the market of scientific communication. Scientific communication is a capital market. Here, producers offer means of production to other producers. The media, on the other hand, are markets for consumption goods. The markets for mental assets are small and refined. The attention earned there is limited in amount, but of superior quality. It comes from people sharing the same interests, education and professional ethos. When this market opens up to the general consumer, then small, noble attention incomes become ordinary and large.

The way in which this opening up is happening has a visible effect on science itself. The potential customers of scientific information are now not only other scientists, but also the mass media and the entertainment industry. Scientists can earn hefty side-incomes of attention by running columns in newspapers, by appearing on talk shows or by going into the popularization business in some other way. Scientists who succumb to such temptations—but also members of disciplines with a longer tradition of serving large markets—will enjoy the message that, anyway, what science is about is causing a stir. They will be pleased to hear that hard boundaries between scientific and non-scientific communication are nothing but pretence, certainly nothing essential. The greatest hit for them would be if someone managed to unmask all hard scientific facts as social constructs.

If one considers the deconstruction of scientific objectivity from this perspective, the 'science wars' are revealed to be classic cases of ideological debate camouflaging fights over market share. Fighting is done on an eminently intellectual plane, but the heat of the battle is produced by solid economic interests. The opening up of firmly sealed capital markets requires a certain absence of inhibitions, a loosening of restraints formerly imposed by strict professional codes of conduct. It is very helpful indeed when intellectual libertinage and frivolity become fashionable. In order to establish that a



connection between this observed loosening up and some economic motive exists, it would be necessary for the deconstruction message to land exclusively where opening up promises profits. And, indeed, actual battlefronts in the 'science wars' run between disciplines that owe their exceptional prestige to their rigorous sealing off of internal scientific capital markets and other disciplines that are only able to enrich themselves through outside sources, not having enjoyed their rival disciplines' traditional prestige.

Although the differentiation between capital goods markets and consumption goods markets is particularly sharp within the scientific economy of attention, science is by no means the only sphere where such a differentiation is made. Wherever a clear slant between high culture and popular culture exists, this distinction can be observed. High culture is autonomous, guided exclusively by its own criteria and responding only to demands articulated from within. One's own personal criteria are the same as those of one's fellow producers; demands arising within the sphere are formulated by members of one's guild. High culture is staged for coproducers and relies on judgement by colleagues. A brilliant example of this is literature, as described by Pierre Bourdieu with respect to French nineteenth-century literary writing. The only people allowed to express any opinions apart from the producers are, perhaps, critics, who are themselves good at the trade. But even in the literary field one can today observe restrictions melting away. A prime example is the business of literature presentation on television. However, even without TV involvement, quite generally, the borderlines between cultural capital goods markets and cultural consumption goods markets are eroding. A clear indicator of the crumbling of those borderlines is the presence of advertising. One cannot fail to observe that the message of dissolution and liquefaction dominates wherever the lure of larger audiences is at work. Ideological justification and the removal of intellectual restraints on profiteering are features not unfamiliar to mental capitalism.

*(ad 4) Exploitation and social conflict*

Conflicting economic interests, hiding behind the facade of postmodern discourse, are nothing but internal struggles between different factions of capital. Real conflicts in capitalism are something else. True and existential conflicts in capitalism are those between the class of capitalists on the one hand and the class of those feeding the capitalists on the other hand. At first sight, one might think that mental capitalism, in this respect, is more harmless than financial capitalism. What we are confronted with is a blatantly unequal distribution of attention between those who appear in the media and those who do not. The masses behave as if they could never get enough of celebrities.

However, taking a closer look, we notice signs of protest. Alongside the invasion of brand names and logos we have witnessed the infiltration of graffiti. Graffiti artists have turned the tables. They react to the organized mass struggle for attention by piercing the onlookers' eyes. Early opposition expressed by graffiti developed into a protest movement against the brands' occupation policy. Today, opponents of globalization are protesting against this occupation not just in optical ways and no longer surreptitiously. They view invasion by brands as one example of negative globalization. Another negative aspect of globalization is economic exploitation of low-wage workers and of low-wage countries—but this is not all. There is also the global export of Western mass culture. The protest movement is reacting with adequate sensitivity—if rather confused analyses—to the fact that exploitation is taking place at two different levels: the level of labour markets and the level of markets in which information is exchanged for attention.

In the economy of attention, the units corresponding to national economies are differing cultures. Exchange goes on between cultures, just as between national economies. Cultures export information goods and earn attention for them or they import information goods and export attention for them. For exchange to be fair and profitable, trade balances need not be balanced for each individual exchange act, but they ought to be balanced on a global scale. However, if we consider today's global cultural situation we observe an extreme imbalance between the culture of advanced mental capitalism and the culture of the rest of the world. The most advanced—Western—cultures export information massively and import huge amounts of live attention for it, while the cultures of other regions export very modest amounts of information and accordingly earn little attention for it.

Also, in the sphere of culture—perhaps particularly in culture—there are clear winners and losers with respect to globalization. The world is submerged by Western mass culture, with the export culture barely camouflaging its predominance by interspersed bits of multiculturalism that are exported as well. The gap between cultures poor or rich in attention is widening just like the economic gap between economically poor or rich countries. The cultural gap is no less ominous. One may not be able to make a living on attention income, but the attention one earns nourishes self-esteem. People's attention income determines how much feeling of their own worth they can enjoy. The self-esteem of both individuals and cultures depends on the appreciation they receive. If their self-esteem is shaken, both individuals and countries may feel forced to resort to self-defence. They may feel forced to convince themselves and others that those who refuse to pay attention to them are unworthy of their own attention. Forced denigration

of others, whose lack of esteem one cannot bear, is an ancient source of aggression between people. Under mental capitalism, it becomes a natural defence mechanism, as it were, of those who find themselves on the exploited side.

The kind of exploitation characteristic of mental capitalism is the exploitation of large numbers of people who always pay attention but are hardly ever respected. The form of self-defence typical of this kind of capitalism consists in denigrating what one desires, so one will suffer less from missing it. Misery due to a lack of self-esteem may hurt as much as physical destitution; thirst for recognition may render one as aggressive as an empty stomach. The desire to humiliate those who refuse to respect others who need that respect to keep up their self-esteem lies behind self-sacrificing terrorist attacks on symbols of Western export culture. It is also the cause of resentments that new right-wing populist movements manipulate and explains the demonstrative violence and Nazi symbols that the attention economy's *lumpenproletariat* use to grab some attention they would otherwise never receive. The split between social classes follows the dividing line between, on the one hand, the owners of cultural and social capital that provides them with more attention than they can spend, and, on the other hand, the have-nots who can only pay attention to each other.

## NARCISSISTIC CULTURE

Mental capitalism is hard and frivolous. It conquers the inner core of the self and intervenes in identity-building. It is frivolous because of the unequal distribution of chances and because of the extravagance it engenders. Here, on this side, there are celebrities and sumptuously staged personalities bathing in attention; over there, people are starving and committing acts of desperation to get into the limelight just once. This inequality, as such, is not completely new. The innovation lies in the systematic way in which it is created. What is new is the sheer volume of attention being collected and redistributed; the self-organizing economic regularity expressing itself through anarchic fights over distribution; the deterministic linkage between the wealth of some and the poverty of all others.

Publicity, a surface phenomenon of this economic sphere, becomes symptomatic. It is symptomatic of societies in which the desire for social status has overtaken the desire for material wealth. No status without attention. The general fight for attention leads to the mass production of means for inciting attention, as well as to the development of

means for the public registration of attention income. Publicity is the most direct, most mundane and least differentiated application of those means. Advertising facilities and slogans are products exclusively manufactured to attract attention. Their mass distribution is pungent to the point of giving offence and is, at the same time, a means of documenting the successful accomplishment of attraction. Something we stumble across constantly is not only pushing itself into our consciousness; at the same time, it tells us that everybody is familiar with it. With primitive but effective methods it conquers the status of prominence. Advertising, symptomatic of mental capitalism, means producing prominence of things and symbols.

For things and symbols, the *via regia* into subjective experience is their promise that consuming them will make the consumer irresistible. It is clear that, in a society where attention income becomes a major objective, consumption will follow the pull of self-esteem. Consumption subjected to the pull of self-esteem means that labour is being spent on one's attractiveness. This individual labour opens up unexpectedly ample fields of action for publicity. Advertising assumes the role of personal counsellor on individual attractiveness. It can now unfold its subtle qualities. The social psychologist Christopher Lasch has described the cult around one's own attractiveness as an aspect of narcissistic culture.<sup>7</sup> This is a social expression of fragile self-esteem. When consumption style becomes a feature of this culture, products have to carry the promise of conferring fitness in the fight for attention. The nature of mental capitalism is such that advertising never tires of drumming home this message.

*Translated from the German by Silvia Plaza*

*First Published in What People Want: Populism in Architecture and Design, Michael Shamiyeh and DOM Research Laboratory eds, Basel, Boston & Berlin: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2005, pp. 98-115. First published in German in Die Kanäle der Macht: Herrschaft und Freiheit im Medienzeitalter, Philosophicum Lech, vol. 6, Konrad Paul Liessmann ed., Vienna: Zsolnay, 2003, pp. 36-60.*

1. The term “mental capitalism” is introduced in Georg Franck, *Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit (The Economy of Attention)*, Munich: Carl Hanser, 1998. Translation in parts available online at <http://www.iemar.tuwien.ac.at/publications>, chapter 6, accessed 16 August 2011.
2. For an account of this type of industry in terms of conventional economic theory, see Arthur de Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
3. On the economy of self-esteem, see chapter 3 of Franck, *Ökonomie*, 1998, and chapters 2 onwards of Alain de Botton, *Status Anxiety*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 2004.
4. For illustrations, see Charles Derber, *The Pursuit of Attention: Power and Ego in Everyday Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. xxii-xxiv.
5. See, for example, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986, and Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
6. For a more comprehensive account of the scientific economy of attention than given here, see Georg Franck, “Scientific communication—a vanity fair?”, *Science*, 1999, vol. 286, pp. 53-55, and Georg Franck, “The scientific economy of attention: a novel approach to the collective rationality of science”, *Scientometrics*, 2002, vol. 55, pp. 3-26.
7. See Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*, London: Abacus, 1979.

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Our current age, the twenty-first century, is characterized by worldwide urbanization, sprawling agglomerations of cities and a growing rural exodus. As recently as 1970 there were merely three so-called megacities: New York, Tokyo and Shanghai. Thirty years later there are already 24. This trend and transformation—and the continuing expansion of existing cities—impacts individual biographies as well as society as a whole.

Today, more than three billion people—almost half the world's population—live in ever-growing and barely governable urban agglomerations. Studies predict that close to two thirds of the world's population will be living in cities by 2030. For the first time in human history, significantly more people will be living in urban spaces than in rural areas, with the neon lights of countless billboards replacing the need for natural sunlight.

Miles of intersecting streets form the neural network of a sleepless, restless living city, ripe with advertising spaces, marketing and hundreds of opportunities to buy, sell and buy again—a consuming function in the post-neoliberal branding zones.

The Paratropolis-Project embraces this vision and develops a detailed, realistic and continually expanding city model of an urban space for life, work and entertainment, which, within its critical dimensions, is also discussed in the Design Anthropology positions of Franco Berardi Bifo and Georg Franck.













Joachim Kreysler

## Relational Design between Disaster Capitalism, Public Health Diseases, Security Industries and Media Politics

### INTRODUCTION

Health in context: globalization, rapid change and conflict

Worldwide, disasters are on the increase. As a consequence, health outcomes, health security and long-term social performance are in crisis.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, deterioration in people's baseline health status and the condition and capacity of healthcare likely increase the health burden of disaster. Ageing populations in many countries and the associated increase in the prevalence of degenerative diseases and special needs, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the deterioration of nutrition in some populations, the increase in diabetes, etc., all shift the health 'normal' upon which the impact of disaster and displacement are overlaid.

Economic globalization also interacts with both health and disaster. On all continents, accelerated economic growth is strongest in coastal areas and has for many reasons encouraged rapidly increasing voluntary and forced migration to the mega-agglomerations. As a rule, new migrants live in substandard housing, often in hazardous areas under crowded conditions, while governments focused on economic growth continue to ignore environmental concerns, resulting in deforestation, unregulated, unsafe housing and a proliferation of sealed-surface roads, which have a major impact on microclimates. Since the engine of economic growth is cheap labour in weakly-regulated manufacturing industries, massive human rights violations and public health concerns for the workforce are the consequences, often multiplied through potentially hazardous processes with toxic substances, which often affect residential areas. In fast-growing industrial areas, local authorities often insufficiently appreciate the complex nature of the risks of these industrial hazards.<sup>2</sup> Concomitant problems concern transport safety, both in the rapidly expanding volume of air traffic as well as in road accidents, with exponentially increasing social costs in the area of health-related rehabilitation/invalidity.<sup>3</sup>

Current global prospects indicate increased numbers of violent conflicts, which underscore the loss of livelihoods and are always combined with a negative impact on healthy living. With increasingly destructive weapons, the human cost in health will steeply increase during conflicts, while the protection of civilians has become a dangerous task.<sup>4</sup> Marginalization in drawn-out and often undeclared wars carries its own specific health burdens and negative social consequences. Under this prospect, major emphasis must be given to health during rehabilitation post-conflict and the restoration of appropriate health services.

9/11 has somewhat changed the notion of disaster, its relationship with health and implications for emergency management. While concerns such as the management of refugee camps or disease threats for large numbers of displaced people persist and even increase (for instance following the earthquake in Haiti), one of the key issues raised by 9/11 is 'health-security'. This is a focus on threats to health and safety posed by terrorism and by pandemic diseases. The anthrax poisoning of letters after 9/11 heightened the attention given to bioterrorism, which has since remained a priority issue on the global health agenda. It is a notion taken on board across the planet by global strategists and think-tanks, as well as being applied to global governance.<sup>5</sup> In addition, advances in real-time monitoring and information technology have completely overhauled not only the approach to disaster health management but also to control strategy and long-term vision; the field of complex health emergencies has become larger. The development of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN) by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the WHO's Health Action in Crises (HAC) department are only two outstanding examples of these developments.

The response by the global health system

Until the beginning of the 1990s, public health operations and the general promotion of 'tropical disease' research were widely perceived as 'the main issue' of global public health. They were given high priority in the WHO as the designated UN agency mandated to set health standards and to promote "physical, mental and social health", as stated in the *WHO Constitution*. This view was shared by a group of well-defined international non-profit organizations and the Red Cross and Red Crescent system. However, there have been significant changes since. The AIDS pandemic (recognized in about 1984/1985) mobilized civil society—on a particularly large scale in the western

hemisphere—and moved the health industry (particularly pharmaceutical producers) to engage significantly in this new venture, which turned out to be a profitable market. When it was realized that AIDS-related diseases (such as tuberculosis) were re-emerging on a large scale, private foundations (such as the Carter Center and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) began to engage in public health. In this constellation, the notion of ‘public-private partnerships’ (PPP) was conceived and systematically explored around 1990, and ethical and legal implications of health governance in a changing world came to the forefront of the shifting global health agenda. This led to a fundamental revision of international health regulations, a binding legal construct for the otherwise sovereign health legislators at country level.

As a result, global health policy and governance is increasingly shared by a broad international and private front of public health promoters, and the monopolistic role of the WHO as ‘international standard-setter’ has been increasingly eroded.

The resulting international health policy landscape in the twenty-first century is now populated by initiatives that have emerged from the broadened range of health policy stakeholders, such as the large foundations. These initiatives are called Global Emergency Health Initiatives (GEHI) or Public-Private Partnerships in Emergencies (PPPiE). In order to improve the performance of these recent initiatives, certain essential functions of prevention and control must be agreed upon. The *core functions* in this system transcend the sovereignty of any one nation state<sup>6</sup> and can be summarized as:

- *promotion of international public goods in health (e.g. research and development, documentation, training, etc.);*
- *surveillance and control of international priorities (e.g. environmental risks and spread of pathogens);*
- *development and application of standards (e.g. health facility safety and functionality in disasters; minimum standards of health protection in disasters, such as the Sphere Standards).*

Supportive functions deal with problems that take place within individual countries and territories, but which may justify collective action at international level owing to shortcomings in national health systems—such as helping the dispossessed (e.g. victims of human rights violations)—and technical cooperation and development financing. Core functions serve all countries, whereas supportive functions assist countries with *greater needs*.

Some considerations of the current global health situation have led to the conclusion that worldwide health management is a disaster in itself. Garrett<sup>7</sup> cites the following to justify such a claim:

- *Negative biomedical statistical trends (e.g. static maternal mortality; resurgent tuberculosis; little progress in immunization coverage in some countries; high malaria morbidity and mortality rates despite Global Fund inputs);*
- *Non-functioning of social welfare;*
- *Privatization of health in a neoliberal era;*
- *Disastrous effects of globalization (e.g. poor living conditions and health of migrant labour; trafficking of women and children; rising food prices; adulterated and counterfeit pharmaceuticals);*
- *Underachievement of the Millennium Goals (e.g. poorest achievement in areas of maternal mortality, global food security rates and chronic malnutrition).*

Do such claims have at least partial value? Or are they made for political or other reasons? Have we not wiped out smallpox, soon to be followed by polio and guinea worm, while the United Nations Secretary-General requests elimination of an “old foe”, namely malaria, which is one of the earliest and best researched tropical diseases in the world? In addition, the WHO has established a department to deal with ‘neglected’ diseases,<sup>8</sup> in which a bundle of diseases, mostly prevalent in the poor populations of the *tristes tropiques*—such as trypanosomiasis, leprosy or buruli ulcer—are to be given increased research attention. The term ‘neglected’ appeared at a time when certain diseases, while having high prevalence in the industrialized world (e.g. chronic cardiovascular afflictions, road accidents, etc.), were insufficiently considered in the Third World’s emerging health systems. Two factors brought the notion of ‘neglect’ again to the forefront of health researchers’ agendas. These were the recognition that demographic and economic transitions change the ranking of epidemic disease incidence, increasingly resembling the pattern in industrialized countries, and, second, that the impact of the AIDS epidemic, particularly in Africa, demonstrated the re-emergence of infectious diseases. Other factors, such as urbanization and the exponential growth of air travel increased the recognition of ‘neglect’ as one of the main factors in the persistence of epidemics.<sup>9</sup>

The food price crisis of 2007/2008<sup>10</sup> had a huge impact on numbers of people at risk in any natural and complex emergency, anywhere, anytime. The lessons drawn from the Niger crisis in 2005 had given advance warning and eventually helped the



development agenda refocus on nutrition. Earlier famines and massive epidemics of under/malnutrition were understood as linked exclusively to natural hazard events, such as drought and flood (how the Tunisian revolution will affect the whole of the Maghreb or other countries affected by the current 'food price crisis' remains to be seen).

However, more recently the role of social, economic and political factors has been recognized. This made it easier to identify groups at risk early on and prospectively. Innovation in the social scientific approach to food crisis ran somewhat parallel to the acceleration in technological development (e.g. lipid-based foods used as supplement carriers for nutritional rehabilitation), as well as to the innovation in community-based rehabilitation techniques and logistics.<sup>11</sup> The combination of social and technological approaches has saved many lives.

This paper on relational strands between disaster capitalism and public health outcomes in crises tries to point to some innovative approaches in the new millennium, rather than listing only technological, planning and logistics issues, which have filled the research agendas in academia and the international community during the last decades of the last century.<sup>12</sup> Many 'how to' questions have been solved, while the complexity of global health emergencies across the social and international spectrum has increased.<sup>13</sup>

### HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN DISASTERS 'À LA CARTE': BITS OF THE MENU

As a result of the increasing number, size and severity of humanitarian disasters during the 1990s, a large number of authoritative documents and textbooks on long-term development were produced by the international community, all of which had the aim of improving and rationalizing the science of 'health in disasters'. A good summary of relevant websites can be found in the Sphere Project's chapter on health services.<sup>14</sup> Within the limitations of this essay I highlight only some remarkable and innovative examples of new approaches to systematic health management guidelines for current disaster response, looking mainly at the 'why?' and 'how to' questions.

### Health system preparedness

Following a recommendation of the World Health Assembly (WHA59.33), in 2007 the WHO Secretariat undertook a global survey assessing the national health sector emergency preparedness and response. As a consequence, the WHO developed a six-year strategy for the health sector and community capacity development. Health, security, housing, access to food, water and other life commodities are addressed. While major emergencies are often unpredictable, much can be done to prevent and mitigate their effects, as well as to strengthen the response capacity of communities at risk. As the lead agency for addressing the health aspects of emergency preparedness and response, the WHO has developed a strategy—based on the recommendations of a global consultation held by the WHO in February 2006—to help mitigate the effects of crises, coordinate the response and thus save lives and reduce suffering.

Many countries have not yet developed mass casualty management plans, and communities are too often left alone to develop preparedness and response plans. Building capacity at the community level to develop emergency management plans for mass casualty incidents requires strong involvement by health authorities at all levels, especially the national level, as well as support from other sectors. In September 2006, the WHO held a global consultation on mass casualty management, which produced a set of guidelines to help policymakers, decision-makers and emergency managers to overcome the gaps in health system preparedness for managing mass casualty incidents.

There are now minimum standards of preparedness in WHO country offices. All aspects of eventual emergencies and crises need to be covered by a preparedness plan to be activated as soon as the government and the UN Country Team declare a state of emergency. Specific plans include health preparedness and response to chemical and nuclear incidents and emergencies, as well as the development of a national plan for action.

Finally, the WHO has been active since 2008 in a worldwide effort to promote and facilitate the protection of health facilities (hospitals, health centres, dispensaries) from hazards such as earthquakes and high winds. This involves the inspection of facilities and their sites, and possible investment in retrofitting them, as well as careful selection of new sites, hazard-aware design and scrupulous inspection of construction practices.



## Minimum health standards: the Sphere Project

The Sphere Project<sup>15</sup> originated in 1995 in the context of the Rwanda refugee crisis and the tragic cholera outbreak in Goma, Zaire; it is co-managed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the WHO,<sup>16</sup> amongst others. A *Lancet* editorial underlined the fact that, when public health response in emergencies is poorly designed, coordinated and executed, a large number of preventable deaths will occur.<sup>17</sup> The growing number of humanitarian agencies in Zaire at that time, each with its own mission, strategies and systems of accountability, further complicated efforts to ensure the quality and precision of humanitarian assistance. The science and evidence base underlying humanitarian action was at best sketchy in that period, with few established 'best practices' and no generally agreed upon standards. The resulting health outcomes were further aggravated by erroneous media reporting and a resulting misconception of the emergency measures to be undertaken by the international community.

Against this background, a broad cross-section of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) made a commitment to collaborate on a process, initiated by the IFRC, that would promote the quality and accountability of disaster response. The resulting Sphere Standards and their associated indicators represent perhaps the most significant development in the theory and practice of humanitarian health assistance over the past decades.

For the first time, disaster-affected populations, humanitarian agencies, governments and donors could refer to established standards of service that have been generally accepted as 'industry norms'. However, Sphere is more than a collection of technical standards. There is no question that the basic philosophy of the Sphere approach (the "Humanitarian Charter")—including all actors in the new disaster ethics of the 1990s—has contributed to the Global Emergency Health Initiatives mentioned earlier.

Through the "Humanitarian Charter", which represents the cornerstone of its *Handbook*, Sphere also strongly asserts the universal right of individuals to humanitarian assistance; the Charter itself is derived from several bodies of international law and is based on a number of core principles:

- *All possible steps must be taken to minimize suffering in disasters and emergencies;*
- *A distinction between combatants and non-combatants must be maintained, as well as the principle of non-refoulement (commitment not to return refugees to places where their lives would be in danger);*
- *Disaster-affected people have a right to life with dignity and a right to health;*
- *Accountability of states and humanitarian agencies needs to be improved.*

Sphere represents a unique voluntary initiative, triggering new initiatives to global health governance and reflecting the collective will and shared experience of a broad array of humanitarian actors. Partners include international and national NGOs, the IFRC, United Nations agencies, donor agencies, host governments and representatives from affected populations. After producing and testing the initial *Handbook*, a small project team based in the IFRC developed the 'minimum standards' over the years. Since inception, the Sphere process has endeavoured to be inclusive, transparent and globally representative. Support services are available to all interested parties.

*Guiding principles for the project are based on:*

- *International humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law;*
- *The Code of Conduct: Principles of Conduct for the IFRC Movement and NGOs in Disaster Response Programmes.*

*There are five strategic objectives:*

- *To improve the commitment to and effective use of Sphere by all actors involved in humanitarian action;*
- *To strengthen the diversity and regional balance of organizations in the governance and implementation of Sphere;*
- *To develop and nurture a cadre of people who are able to use Sphere effectively;*
- *To coordinate and interact with other humanitarian activities, and work together when that complements Sphere's aim;*
- *To make Sphere widely understood and increase its impact.*

Throughout the development of the three currently existing versions of Sphere, more than 4,000 people from 400 organizations and 84 countries were consulted. Twenty humanitarian agencies also agreed to pilot the first version of the *Sphere Handbook*; the feedback from their experiences was invaluable in the development of the revised versions. Each of the technical chapters consists of three main elements: the minimum standards,

indicators and guidance notes. Most minimum standards for health are qualitative in nature. They specify the minimum level to be attained in the provision of health services. Each standard has two or more indicators, which provide a means of measuring relevance, appropriateness, effectiveness and impact in process and outcome.

#### Public health and environmental health in disasters

A number of resources exist to guide planning and practice in the areas of public and environmental health in disasters. Johns Hopkins University has produced a *Public Health Guide*.<sup>18</sup> The second edition of this volume is an action book to help implementers manage emergencies on a solid footing. It provides scientific guidance in practical terms toward the solution of the many technical and management issues that challenge health workers in manmade, natural and complex disasters. Technical and operational advances in recent years are included and will improve the skills of emergency staff outside their areas of expertise. All phases of disasters, from prevention to mitigation, are covered, with an in-depth focus on development needs and improved coping capacity of vulnerable populations. The complex management issues, including capacity building and coping, are detailed in an exemplary manner.

The analysis of health systems and infrastructure (in Chapter 2 of the *Guide*) closely follows the Sphere Standards. Emphasis is given to support for local health services, which often are inadequate to meet needs in an emergency. Of paramount interest is the integration of methods and personnel at a local level to avoid parallel health activities for the affected population. Capacity building is therefore a major objective in prioritizing health services and includes the following essential tasks. The capacity to:

- *Conduct an initial assessment;*
- *Identify the major causes of morbidity and mortality;*
- *Use evidence-based intervention to address major causes of morbidity and mortality;*
- *Develop a health information system to identify epidemics and guide changes needed in interventions.*

All four tasks require specific skills, which are applied through standard protocols, which in turn are clearly quantifiable. The degree of health system competence determines the efficacy and efficiency of disaster response outcomes. It is now well

understood that many disaster situations are directly linked to deficient planning, information management and logistical frameworks in use by local administrations.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps one of the most important developments in emergency management has been that of the Incident Command System (ICS) (in Chapter 3 of the Johns Hopkins *Guide*). This is particularly important in low-income countries, which typically have a heavily centralized hierarchy, where implementation of command from the site of the incident can greatly improve responsiveness. The ICS is a vertical command structure, originally developed in the United States in 1970, that plans, controls and coordinates an effective emergency response among all agencies involved in a disaster. It is designed to organize all vital resources for allocation to the affected population. The ICS is composed of five major components:

- *Incident command*
- *Operations*
- *Planning*
- *Logistics*
- *Finance*

The ICS<sup>20</sup> and the corresponding Hospital Emergency Incident Command System (HE-ICS) are not yet used as disaster management tools worldwide and even less so in developing countries. However, ICS and HEICS are progressively being introduced at a country level and being incorporated in disaster preparedness plans. Experience has shown that the ICS structure cannot be used from a distance (e.g. ministry of health headquarters), which has otherwise often resulted in major losses of life and unnecessary illnesses caused by the sluggishness inherent in 'telecommanding'.

#### The role of water and sanitation in emergencies and disasters

Most epidemic diseases in disaster situations are related to the disruption of safe water supplies and the destruction of housing and sanitation infrastructure. There are now widely agreed basic standards, with ample evidence that the use of these measures is very effective in emergencies of large populations. Relief workers need competence to identify and quantify problems of the environment, water supply and sanitation, and the hygienic situation of affected populations in an emergency. Likewise, basic know-how in the installation of control measures for environmental health problems is a

necessary competence of any relief team. The assessment and prediction of long-term problems in this realm is a core activity of assessment in order to optimize not only health outcomes but also social cohesion in the rehabilitation phase. The Sphere Standards mentioned earlier also cover water and sanitation.

Few emergencies leave people displaced for only a short time. Since emergencies result in stress, fatigue and other ailments apart from injuries, unsanitary living conditions such as substandard sanitation, inadequate water supplies and poor hygiene make disaster-affected people particularly vulnerable to disease. In this respect, child-headed households, people scattered among the host community and those without access to the administrative focus of relief assistance are of high priority, but are often overlooked, since relief efforts concentrate on the 'classic' vulnerable groups (children, pregnant and lactating women and old people).<sup>21</sup>

Since water, sanitation and hygiene-related diseases are controllable and preventable, most cases of death and morbidity due to diarrhoea, acute respiratory infection, measles, malaria and malnutrition (the most common causes of death in any emergency) must be classified as excessive, as they are caused by inadequate prevention.<sup>22</sup> The risk factors are known and are present in most water-borne, water-washed, water-based, food-borne and vector-borne illnesses. Of highest importance are diarrhoeal disease and upper respiratory infections, especially in children, and both are closely related to emergencies in poor populations.

The full participation of disaster-affected communities in the planning, establishment and control of sanitation and hygiene measures has been essential in the control of preventable infectious diseases. In most evaluated cases<sup>23</sup> the role of community volunteers has been emphasized. Again, in well-managed projects, community ownership has been the key to avoiding epidemics.

#### Epidemiological assessments and surveillance in emergencies and disasters

Epidemiology is a fundamental tool in emergency management.<sup>24</sup> Planning and priority setting are possible using rates, ratios and event counting. Outbreak investigations and surveys are the basic methods to determine needs and measure changes of health management requirements. Control of communicable diseases is an ongoing process

analyzed with epidemiological methods; likewise, the assessment of risk and the prediction of future vulnerability require probability assessments. The management of certain diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, meningitis and diarrhoeal disease are hard to control in normal circumstances and require constant epidemiological vigilance in emergencies.

Relief workers need training in the collection and basic analysis of reliable findings in order to improve essential healthcare in emergency response. However, applied epidemiology is also used to determine long-term requirements of affected communities. Basic needs in the disaster preparedness phase include village mapping, identification and counting of special vulnerable groups at high risk from disease. These skills are highly valuable for communities far beyond any given emergency, since they increase the ownership of decision-making in communities.

The following overall epidemiological objectives in all emergencies must include:

- *Identification of priority health needs during and after a disaster;*
- *Measuring the extent and severity of disease within affected communities;*
- *Determining the cause of disease and relative risk;*
- *Prioritization of health interventions as a result of initial assessment;*
- *Surveillance of disease trends during disaster response;*
- *Measurement of efficiency and impact of disease control programmes;*
- *Inventory of damage and destruction in the health infrastructure, including human resources.*<sup>25</sup>

Practical experiences during complex, large-scale emergencies in recent years (e.g. in Darfur and in Sri Lanka's post-tsunami situation) have simplified and standardized epidemiologic methods in the area of Rapid Needs Assessment (RNA), demographic studies, the estimation of death rates, incidence/prevalence of disease, and the nutrition and immunization status of affected populations.<sup>26</sup>

In many countries, public health surveillance in the recovery phase of disasters is now a routine activity of the health sector and has a positive impact on the quality and precision of routinely collected health statistics.<sup>27</sup> As a consequence, disaster mitigation, but also prediction of epidemic outbreaks and movements, has become easier, so that early and seasonal resource deployment in crisis regions has often become a routine

activity (e.g. health planning for the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia). On a global scale, international health regulations were adapted in 2005 in order to deal proactively with complex epidemiologic emergency situations and to create increased worldwide prevention responsibility on the 'state' (sovereign) legislative level.<sup>28</sup>

The poor understanding of epidemiologic principles and measurement techniques by many health staff are still the main constraint on epidemiologic assessments. Medical training in many countries does not include public health issues in sufficient depth, while emergency response is often perceived as a clinical subject. Additionally, because of the unpredictability of disasters, in most countries disaster response is entrusted to civil defence, the military or non-governmental institutions (e.g. the Red Cross). The consequence is a large turnover of staff with inadequate routine experience.

A general constraint in most emergencies is limited access to a significant fraction of the affected population due to chaos or insecurity. In many countries, insufficient resources are allocated to processing of information, often leading to wrong estimates of population size and consequent erroneous resource allocations. Since survey samples may not represent all of the affected population, it becomes difficult to investigate long-term needs and to develop exit strategies for the disaster response. In conflict situations there is often a lack of support for the assessment of needs for the internally displaced (IDPs), particularly when governments are part of the conflict. Since the original mandate of UNHCR does not cover IDPs, the situation may deteriorate further.

Participatory epidemiology has become an important technique for estimating post-emergency populations when reliable census or registration data are lacking. With a group of individual members representing all affected population groups, the boundaries and important landmarks of affected zones are mapped, and settlements and estimated numbers of affected people are progressively included. These semi-quantitative estimates have proven surprisingly accurate,<sup>29</sup> particularly in conflict-affected emergencies, when strategic consideration by the conflict parties might make official information unavailable.

Triangulation considerably increases confidence in the collected data through cross-checking with information from different sources or using different collection methods. Epidemiological bias can be avoided by including local people with different backgrounds and perspectives in the assessment team, thereby avoiding an exclusively outsider viewpoint. To avoid the interests of a narrow group of people in the assessment,

different genders, leadership roles, service providers, beneficiaries and ethnicities need to be represented.

Judging the quality of mortality surveillance data is crucial for planning specific public health measures over time, and it should therefore be entrusted to members of the assessment team with considerable experience. The calculations of Crude Mortality Rates (CMR) and Under-Five Mortality Rates (U5MR) are very sensitive to the number used to estimate the population size (i.e. the denominator). A reliable estimate is therefore crucial for eventual interventions, particularly since CMR and U5MR in small populations may 'jump' over time. A detailed discussion of these issues is available in the work of Checchi and Roberts.<sup>30</sup>

#### Reproductive healthcare in emergencies and disasters

Until recently, reproductive healthcare in emergencies was a neglected area of relief work, as it was not realized that poor care in this area is a significant cause of death and disease, particularly among refugee populations living in camps and among displaced persons. The following statistics underline the importance of reproductive healthcare:

- 75 per cent of most refugee populations are women and children, of whom about 30 per cent are adolescents;
- 25 per cent are in the reproductive stage of their lives, between 15 and 45 years old;
- 20 per cent of women of reproductive age (15-45), including refugees and the internally displaced, are pregnant;
- More than 200 million women who want to limit or space their pregnancies lack the means to do so effectively;
- In developing countries, women's risk of dying from pregnancy and childbirth is one in 48. Additionally, it is estimated that every year more than 50 million women experience pregnancy-related complications, many of which result in long-term illness or disability.<sup>31</sup>

The introduction of the Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP) has increased enormously the efficiency of a comprehensive response in reproductive health during the initial phase of an emergency involving large numbers of people (refugees, IDPs), mostly composed of women and children.<sup>32</sup>

The Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations (IAWG)

was formed in 1995, when, in the wake of the Rwanda refugee crisis of 1994, the importance of these health issues was finally perceived as being of the highest priority.<sup>33</sup> The IAWG comprises UN agencies, governments, NGOs and academic institutions, and has become very important over the years in identifying key challenges and in establishing mechanisms for collaboration. Their *Interagency Field Manual*<sup>34</sup> remains an excellent source of information for reproductive health service delivery in crises. The 2004 IAWG report<sup>35</sup> on progress toward reproductive health service provision for refugees and IDPs observed that services are generally available, albeit with gaps in antenatal care, in access to emergency obstetric care, complete range of family planning methods and comprehensive services relating to HIV/AIDS, as well as assistance in cases of gender-based and sexual violence.

The 'Minimum Initial Services Package' (MISP) (see the Sphere Project) should always focus on four priorities:

- *Safe motherhood (antenatal care, delivery care and postpartum care);*
- *Family planning;*
- *Prevention and care of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS;*
- *Prevention from and response to sexual and gender-based violence.*

The MISP for reproductive health is a coordinated set of priority activities designed to:

- *Prevent and manage the consequences of sexual violence;*
- *Reduce HIV transmission;*
- *Prevent excess maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity;*
- *Plan for comprehensive reproductive health services in the early days and weeks of an emergency.*

The MISP is based on documented evidence. An assessment, although desirable, is not absolutely necessary before implementation of the MISP components.

As highlighted in the MISP objectives and activities,<sup>36</sup> four core reproductive health services are included in the planning stage:

Family planning:

- *Make contraceptives available on demand, if possible*
- *Offer sustainable access to a range of contraceptive methods*
- *Provide staff training*
- *Provide community information, education and communication (IEC)*

Sexual and gender-based violence (GBV):

- *Coordinate systems to prevent sexual violence*
- *Ensure health services available to survivors of sexual violence*
- *Ensure staff trained in sexual violence prevention and response systems*
- *Expand medical, psychological and legal care for survivors*
- *Prevent and address other forms of GBV, including domestic violence, forced/early marriage, female genital cutting and trafficking<sup>37</sup>*

Safe motherhood:

- *Provide clean delivery kits*
- *Provide midwife delivery kits*
- *Establish referral systems for obstetric emergencies*
- *Provide antenatal care*
- *Provide postnatal care*
- *Train traditional birth attendants and midwives*

STIs/HIV/AIDS:

- *Provide access to free condoms*
- *Ensure adherence to universal precautions*
- *Ensure safe blood transfusions*
- *Identify and manage STIs*
- *Raise awareness of prevention and treatment services for STIs/HIV/AIDS*
- *Source and procure antibiotics and other relevant drugs as appropriate*
- *Provide care, support, and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS*
- *Provide community information, education and communication (IEC)*



Additional details about MISP can be found in *Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations: A Distance-Learning Module*. This document includes an online certification programme, as well as a monitoring and evaluation tool and a helpful checklist.<sup>38</sup>

### Global public health risks in the twenty-first century

In 1951, the WHO issued the first legally-binding health regulations with the aim of preventing the international spread of six diseases that could be 'quarantined':

- *Cholera*
- *Plague*
- *Relapsing fever*
- *Smallpox*
- *Typhus*
- *Yellow fever*

Since then, the situation has changed through the effects of globalization, population growth and migration, as well as incursion into formerly non-settled areas, rapid urbanization, innovative and intensive farming methods, environmental degradation and the misuse of antibiotics, which has disrupted the equilibrium of the microbial world.

The global disease situation at the beginning of the third millennium is highly unstable, with new diseases emerging at an unprecedented rate. The high capacity of international air travel (more than two billion aircraft passengers per year) provides infectious organisms and their vectors the opportunity for the rapid spread of disease. While the climate debate has increased global awareness of potential health hazards, the dependency on chemicals has grown and the worldwide industrialization of food production, processing and marketing transforms a local disease outbreak into a potentially international threat. At the same time, microbial resistance to antibiotics is growing at a faster rate than the emergence of new infectious microbial strains.

The ever-increasing speed of mobility and economic interdependence mean that traditional defences at national borders are becoming ineffective against the invasion of a disease or vector. Panics spread with equal ease and reverberate as shocks to the economy, tourism and business continuity in areas well beyond the affected area, so

that vulnerability has become universal. As a result, priority discussion of global health has emerged as to how to protect the world from, for instance, pandemic influenza, the health consequences of conflict and natural disasters, and bioterrorism.

The tools for this collective defence include the revised international health regulations (IHR).<sup>39</sup> These are an international legal instrument designed to achieve maximum security against the international spread of disease. They also aim to reduce the international impact of public health emergencies. The IHR expand the focus of defence from a few infectious diseases to include "any emergency with international repercussions for health", including the outbreak of emerging and epidemic-prone disease, foodborne disease, disasters triggered by natural hazards and chemical or nuclear events, whether accidental or deliberate. The IHRs provide a strategy of proactive risk management and move away from the traditional focus on passive controls at border crossings. Recognizing the importance of rapid response, the new regulations require that member states report potential public health emergencies to the WHO within 24 hours after they have identified and assessed them. The new regulations also allow the WHO to consider unofficial "reports from sources other than notifications or consultations".

In addition to protecting public health, another important goal of the regulations is to prevent unnecessary economic harm. The closing of borders during the cholera outbreak in Peru and eastern Africa in the 1990s were estimated at US \$770 million for Peru alone. In 1994, India was hit with extensive restrictions on travel and trade during a localized outbreak of plague, contrary to WHO advice; the estimated cost to the Indian economy was more than US \$2 billion.<sup>40</sup> A multifaceted approach is necessary to limit economic damage from public health emergencies effectively.<sup>41</sup> The new regulations attempt to prevent unnecessary interference with international travel and trade by making the WHO the primary arbiter on decisions related to controlling public health threats. In future, the Director-General of WHO is responsible for determining—on the advice of an expert committee—whether the event constitutes a "public health emergency of international concern". The issuing recommendations must take into account the views of the affected country, scientific principles and evidence, the least intrusive measures that would provide protection, and relevant international agreements.

For many developing countries, early detection and reporting of a public health emergency may be of little benefit if the country lacks the capacity to control the outbreak in its early stage. Early reporting could also trigger rapid closing of international

borders to travel and trade, which could be devastating to their economy. Furthermore, investment in surveillance infrastructure, also required by the regulations, may divert scarce resources away from areas of public health that have greater need, such as the treatment and control of tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/AIDS.<sup>42</sup> A warning that the concerns of less developed countries may undermine the IHRs has emerged with the ongoing efforts to control the current influenza pandemic. The insecurity in current arrangements was partly responsible for Indonesia's decision in 2008 to withhold virus samples from the WHO and instead to consider entering an exclusive agreement with Baxter Pharmaceuticals.<sup>43</sup>

On the other side of the world, the proposed Global Pathogen Surveillance Act (GPSA) would make the provision of financial assistance to poorer countries to develop the capacity to detect and respond to public health threats conditional on permitting investigation of outbreaks by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the WHO, and on the transfer of surveillance data.<sup>44</sup> The US Department of Defense's Global Emerging Infections Surveillance and Response System is a network of overseas centres that conducts independent global disease infection surveillance.<sup>45</sup>

The above examples are cited to illustrate the interconnected strategic and financial stakes in the public health emergency arena. These approaches are not necessarily detrimental to international health disaster control strategies, particularly if wealthier countries interact with international organizations, as the USA does with the WHO. In fact, such approaches could be a feasible solution for countries needing financial support to build and maintain their basic health infrastructure. However, such strategies open the door to countries taking actions based on self-interest alone, where surveillance information and biological data are in essence purchased and not necessarily shared with the international community.

#### Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)

As noted at the beginning of this discussion, the consideration of health and disaster is only realistic if it is done in the context of baseline health status and the normal condition and functionality of healthcare facilities and professionals. NTDs are an important part of that context.

Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa and other mostly tropical zones led to a slowdown in Tropical Disease Research (TDR) within and outside the WHO during the 1980s.<sup>46</sup> Some argue that this trend was facilitated by the emergence of HIV/AIDS monopolizing the scarce public health, human and economic resources available at that time; others say that the economic return from poverty disease control is too low to invest large resources in healthcare delivery in this area.

As a result, the current disastrous caseload concerns over one billion people affected by one or more NTDs. They are termed 'neglected' because these diseases persist exclusively in the poorest and the most marginalized communities, and have been largely forgotten elsewhere. There are primarily 14 diseases currently listed as NTDs. Most can be prevented and eliminated. They thrive in places with unsafe water, poor sanitation and limited access to basic healthcare. They cause severe pain and lifelong disabilities, are often less visible and therefore have low priority in complex emergencies occurring in low-income populations in remote rural areas, urban slums or conflict zones, affecting people with little political voice. Some NTDs can be tackled with simple and affordable diagnostic tools that cost as little as US \$0.04 per test. The rest require skilled health workers and hospitalization.

The economic impact of NTDs is staggering and will rise in view of the new agricultural crisis, having resulted in over one billion people with permanent food insecurity,<sup>47</sup> since NTDs often affect areas of fertile land. The case of river blindness (black fly disease, onchocerciasis) is edifying. Over 25 million hectares of fertile land in west Africa were resettled for crop growing and cattle raising after an effective prevention strategy and treatment was found and systematically applied in the affected countries. There are other success stories in the management of complex chronic health emergencies: over the past 20 years, 116 of 122 endemic countries have eliminated leprosy as a public health problem. Since the introduction of multidrug therapy in 1985, 14.5 million people have been cured of leprosy.<sup>48</sup>

NTDs are now high on international health and disaster prevention agendas. The successes achieved to date prove that the interventions are technically feasible, immediate, visibly powerful and highly cost-effective. They demonstrate that programmes to tackle NTDs can and must be rapidly scaled up to prevent future economic disasters.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the past decades, increasing numbers of emergencies and disasters have disproportionately burdened the health systems of low-income and middle-income countries. Pandemics and re-emerging diseases have contributed to the disease burden caused by disasters, so that half the world's population, for instance, is at risk of contracting malaria, while about one million of an estimated 250 million people with malaria died in 2006.<sup>49</sup> Since 2000, several Global Initiatives for Emergency Health (GIEH) have resulted in a concerted response to such challenges with effective health interventions, health system improvements and telecommunications. GIEHs have capitalized on the urgency that has been generated by the media, but also by the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals. GIEHs show the increased involvement in healthcare of the private sector (NGOs), philanthropic trusts and civil society.

While new technology in many areas of emergency health is being developed, certain Global Public-Private Partnerships (GPPP) focus on a small number of priority diseases, which in themselves constitute a health emergency.

GIEHs have rapidly become an established part of the international health emergency framework and have been used to leverage substantial additional financial and technical resources for targeted health interventions in emergencies. Additional resources on a large scale have been provided for emergency health systems in low-income countries, but the effects of these increased resources have not been evaluated. The involvement of new groups of people in this debate (notably civil society organizations) has garnered the political will of donors and led to an increased focus on social justice.

New performance-based approaches involve communities and provide support for interventions that had previously been thought unsustainable. Decades of neglect and insufficient investment have weakened health systems in most developing countries.<sup>50</sup> Structural adjustment policies that were designed to improve the stability of fragile economies led, in many cases, to cuts in public spending and the maldevelopment of effective health disaster management. Moreover, the globalization of labour markets, which gathered pace during the 1990s, increased the emigration of health workers from countries that had invested in their training.

Although new resources, partners, technical capacity and political commitment were generally welcomed, critics soon began to argue that increased efforts to meet minimum standards in disaster preparedness and response with selective interventions

were exacerbating the burden on already fragile health systems.<sup>51</sup> While the positive effects of GIEHs are unquestionable, they are limited by the weaknesses of country systems, such as inadequate infrastructure, shortages of trained health workers, the interruption in the procurement and supply of health products, insufficient health information and poor governance.<sup>52</sup> The tensions that have been caused have contributed to a longstanding debate about the interplay of disease-specific programmes or selected health interventions with integrated health systems in emergencies. These problems need to be addressed urgently, as it is likely that climate change and continuing violent conflict will increase demands on the emergency healthcare sector even further.

In addition, the early manifestations of global warming in the first decade of this century—intensifying hurricanes and typhoons, torrential rains followed by severe flooding in some areas and prolonged, even record-breaking droughts in others, melting icecaps and glaciers, and rising sea levels—will all become more pronounced in the second. Significant parts of Africa are likely to be devastated by rising temperatures and diminished rainfall. More cities will experience flooding and destruction as experienced by New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Blistering summers, as well as infrequent or negligible rainfall, will limit crop production in key food-producing regions. As a consequence, the health of large populations will be affected, and the current strategies for emergency preparedness and response will need constantly to be adapted.

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Wh  
Noise  
Wh  
Out  
Wh  
Cube

White noise. Uncorrelated random variables. Background noise. White is the color of innocence. White space. Empty space with no letters. The uncharted territory, yet undiscovered, empty space. A military zone, that may not be represented on the map. The White Cube. White Out. Boundaries dissolve and blur into infinite white.



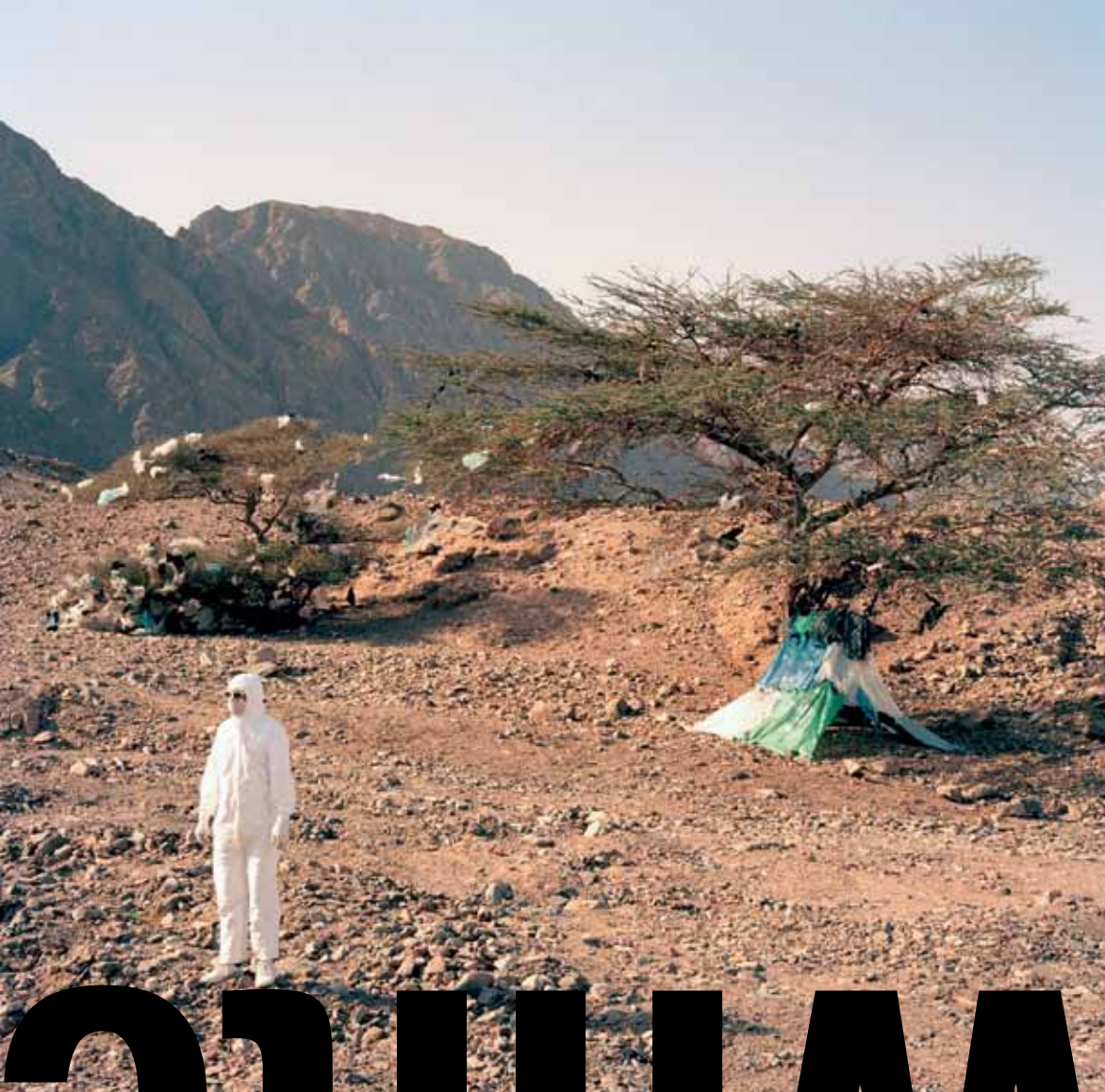
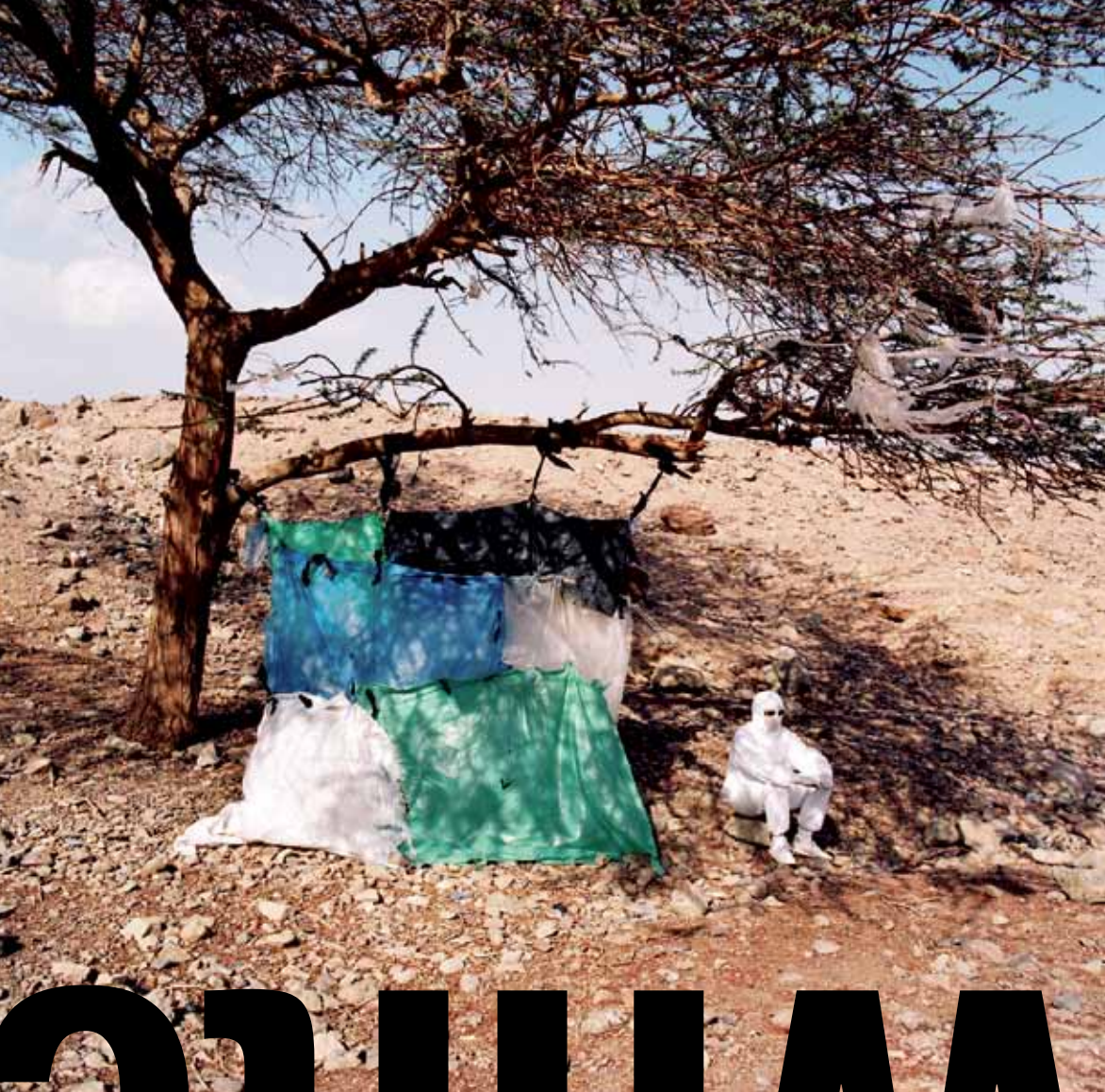


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## 635





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Kenichi Mishima

## The Disempowered Public

### IMPRESSIONS

The internet is awash with biting sarcasm, even gallows humour. Take, for example, the tagline of a TV ad for Tepco, “Our radioactivity is clean”, whereupon someone subsequently commented: “The triumvirate of the operating company Tepco—its president Tsunehisa Katsumata, CEO Masataka Shimizu and executive vice-president and chief nuclear officer Sakae Mutô—should be executed”. This prompted the following response: “No. Execution is too merciful, they should be slowly exposed to radiation”. And in a bar, one day, I heard this telling anecdote: a professor for reactor technology at the University of Tokyo, who had been invited to appear on television to allay public fears with his ‘expertise’, on returning to his institute from the TV studio is reported to have instructed his assistants to seal all the windows with tape—as a shield against the radioactivity in the air.

The public mood has reached boiling point. The feelings of anger and indignation, fear and anxiety are palpable, and the sense of impotence, even desperation, can also be gleaned from such sarcastic and often aggressive comments. However, such outpourings of emotion are unlikely to prompt any political consequences. In political terms, the cited remarks—jotted down and posted onto a shadowy, semi-official, rather private internet chatroom message board—are even less effective than the reactionary barroom slogans. Emotions, however, can be exploited, and serve as an ideal breeding ground for popularism.

On one beautiful Sunday afternoon, an anti-nuclear demonstration was staged in one of the local centres of the mega-city Tokyo, drawing an estimated 15,000 protestors. Among them were many young people, together with families and children, some old people in wheelchairs with their carers. After a rock concert, the demonstration began to march forward slowly. There were many humorous banners, some of them in German: “Atomkraft? Nein Dankel!” The mood was relaxed and cheerful, recalling those headline-grabbing protest marches in Bonn’s Hofgarten park in the 1980s against NATO’s Double-Track Decision.

For the first time in many years, this was a political demonstration comprising normal citizens, instead of the usual professional revolutionaries, anarchists and troublemakers, whose appearance and eagerness to engage in violent confrontation with the police tended to deter most people from demonstrating, even if they were highly politically motivated. But this time—just normal citizens—they did join in the march. I also joined the march.

For many years, Japan’s radical Left has posed a huge obstacle to raising political awareness among the general public. Since the emergence of the Existentialist movement during the 1950s and the student revolts of the late 1960s, we have had a long tradition of criticizing ‘bourgeois democracy’. ‘Really existing’ democracy, with its patronage and lobby-driven power struggles, has continually fuelled disappointment and disaffection among intellectuals, who turned away from the business of everyday politics. This applies not only to the classical Marxists, whose relationship to parliament is of an instrumental nature anyway, but also to the postmodernist Left, among whom the word ‘democracy’ elicits a wry smile. Shortly after the Beijing massacre and the collapse of the Eastern bloc countries, a good friend of mine and an exponent of post-structuralism, Nishitani Osamu, wrote—perhaps subversively—that it ultimately makes no difference whether the body politic is democratically organized or not. Left-wing radicalism, be it a blanket rejection of capitalist society, a vague hope for a total reversal of empire (after Hardt and Negri), or a damning critique of modernity, appears to be suffering from political apathy. For many years, their cynical view of everyday political reality paralyzed political discourse. On the one side were the classical activists, who conflated political struggle with attacking the police, and, on the other, the theory-satiated opponents of institutionalized politics in general. It was against this backdrop that, after many years of silence, voices of protests were heard once again. And in alliance with the anti-nuclear movement, which emerged more or less by accident, these voices seem able to speak the language of the political system.

Back to the demonstration. In the Japanese media, the protest march was afforded only scant coverage. Some ten hours later, however, on German TV’s primetime news show, the *Tagesschau*, extensive footage of the Tokyo demonstration and the flying banners was transmitted straight into German living rooms. The contrast is startling. Is the media’s reticence attributable solely to manipulation, or even to self-censorship? Or does it merely reflect the general acceptance of nuclear power—despite the disaster in Fukushima?

At 8 pm the same Sunday evening, a few seconds after the polling booths closed, all TV channels reported the landslide victory by the incumbent governor of Tokyo in the gubernatorial elections. This notoriously chauvinistic man was voted into office for the fourth consecutive term. Although Ishihara had toned down his usual ringing endorsement of nuclear power during the election campaign, he never retracted it. He campaigned on the populist platform of mobilizing Japanese voters against 'decadence' and for reconstruction.

How can I reconcile the furious rants on the internet with the long-predicted election victory for Ishihara? Or the systemic silence of the now Tepco-critical media over the demonstration?

## WARNING VOICES

Of course, warning voices, relying on scientific evidence, have been highlighting the dangers of a tsunami and of a power outage to nuclear reactors for a considerable time. Back in March 2006, the Communist MP Hidekatsu Yoshii tabled this question to the parliamentary budget committee<sup>1</sup>: What would happen if, during an abnormally low tide—which often presages a tsunami—cooling water could no longer be drawn from the sea? In addition to pointing out the danger posed by a tsunami, Yoshii, a qualified nuclear engineer himself, also warned of the possibility of a total loss of power, which could precipitate a hydrogen explosion and a meltdown of the reactor core.

Katushiko Ishibashi, emeritus professor at the University of Kobe, a highly respected earthquake specialist and an expert on disaster management, has for the past ten years or more been consistently sounding warnings based on his geological expertise. In October 2007, he published a paper entitled "Earthquake Disaster—Averting a Nuclear Catastrophe", which was written in language accessible to the layperson. It reads like a meticulous reconstruction or some divine prophecy of what transpired as a consequence of the flood wave in the nuclear reactor in the days following 11 March. His account matches the actual events that went on to hold the global public in thrall down to the smallest detail. The essay was published in a popular science magazine —'popular science' construed in its most positive sense—by the respected Iwanami publishing house, the Japanese counterpart of Germany's Suhrkamp Verlag. As a member of the governmental sub-committee for reactor safety, Professor Ishibashi had advocated bolstering the protective sea walls around the plant. When he realized that

his warnings cut no ice with his hardline colleagues due to the added costs, he resigned his seat on the committee.

I sincerely hope that Professor Osako's resignation as special adviser to the prime minister on radiation problems is not merely a continuation of our 'tradition' of resigned resistance.

There were many such scientifically sound expressions of concern—yet these arguments also fell on deaf ears. Just as the primacy of vested interests prevailed over systemic criticism, so too did the profit imperative take precedence over safety concerns. But there was more. Not only have scientists at the influential faculties of distinguished universities allowed the aforementioned criticisms of their fellow academics to go unheeded; they have systematically marginalized any of their younger colleagues who expressed reservations over several aspects of nuclear facilities or nuclear power altogether. Many of those now posting their past studies rejecting nuclear power on the internet are still working as assistants, even at the age of 60. By following their consciences, they have virtually resigned themselves to the deleterious consequences this would have on their careers and, by extension, on their families.

At the same time, countless shelves of books opposing nuclear power have been written over the past decades. Any medium-sized municipal library is well stocked with anti-nuclear literature, focusing not only on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but also containing conclusive and critical analyses of the hazards that consciously or unconsciously have been accepted in harvesting nuclear power. Allow me to name just one author whom I admire, namely Jinzaburo Takagi.<sup>2</sup> After a stellar start to his promising career as a nuclear scientist—in the early 1970s he was a guest researcher at the Max-Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics—he turned his back on the profession and decided to apply his expertise to informing the public on nuclear issues through the civil research institute that he founded himself. My local library currently stocks 33 of his titles.

However, objectively speaking, it must be recognized that, despite the international acclaim Takagi enjoyed in his twilight years, he remained largely in the so-called 'crypto-public' or politicized private sphere. Despite their wide dissemination, his books retained something of the character of a *samizdat*. Jinzaburo Takagi could never have become a Klaus Traube, nor could he ever have exerted an impact such as Holger Strohm did with his book *Friedlich in die Katastrophe* (1973). However, his influence

did extend to inspiring the formation of a kind of anti-nuclear 'club', whose members congregate to demonstrate their mutual solidarity and opposition to nuclear power. Yet this club is confronted by a powerful lobby, comprising the nuclear industry, the scientific and political establishment and the trade unions, which has dubbed itself coyly the 'nuclear village'. The anti-nuclear club is largely impotent against such a behemoth. And whereas both Holger Strohme and Klaus Traube have since been honoured by the German Federal Republic with orders of merit, Japan would never dream of conferring similar prestigious awards upon such diehard malcontents and mavericks. For the Japanese state they are merely losers, deserving of nothing more than our pity.

### STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS—THE DISEMPOWERED PUBLIC

This raises the question, how is such a thing possible? How, in a democratic, liberal society, can such an important author as Takagi—and he is not alone—be systematically ignored to the extent that the persistent warnings of the anti-nuclear groups and other sceptics have been largely exorcised from the broad spectrum of public opinion?

Many reasons can be cited: the depoliticization of young people as a hangover from the highly politicized decades of the 1960s and 1970s; the continual appeasement of social conflict through the elixir of mass and conspicuous consumption; and the longer working hours dictated by the neoliberal intensification of competition, which have curtailed interest in public debate—in addition to many other factors. However, here I would like to focus on one particular aspect, namely the disempowerment of the public through Tepco's PR machine.

According to one reliable study, Tepco's annual PR budget is approaching one billion euros—a figure surpassed only by transnational giants such as Toyota and Panasonic (included in this total are not only the expenditure on advertising, but also on political lobbying and costs incurred by the energy industry's confederation, which accounts for 2 per cent of total turnover). A truly astonishing figure, when one considers that Tepco is a de facto monopoly. In terms of sales, it is the unchallenged market leader among the top ten electricity-producing regional monopolies. Furthermore, Tepco has donated a great deal of money towards the founding of faculties at reputable universities, particularly at the University of Tokyo. The company has not just funded new institutes specializing in reactor technology, but channelled funds into those institutes dedicated to assessing the impact of technical disasters. Why does such a monopoly invest so much

money in advertising campaigns? Essentially, to boost the acceptance of nuclear energy. High-profile sporting personalities, actors and talk show presenters are appearing in TV ads to endorse the safety of nuclear energy. They highlight reduced carbon emissions from reactors compared to conventional electricity-generating technologies—evidently for astronomical fees. Leading newspapers and TV stations have now become dependent on advertising revenues from electricity companies. It is difficult to obtain airtime for anti-nuclear documentaries in the broadcasting media. Already in the pre-production phase, phones in the managerial boardrooms of TV stations start ringing, a Tepco manager at the other end threatening to withdraw sponsorship. For understandable reasons, not every TV executive has the backbone to resist such pressure. This also applies to a lesser degree to the print press. As a constitutional democracy, the freedom of the press and media is, of course, guaranteed in Japan, but ultimately it is not legislation that safeguards editorial independence.

Academics at distinguished universities were often invited to attend various public information events staged by Tepco for astonishingly high fees. Many politicians, particularly from remote, structurally weak regions, were only too eager to offer up their constituencies as possible sites for nuclear power plants. Then there are the powerful trade unions of the electricity industry. Even after the disaster, an MP from the governing Democratic Party, who was planning to convene a parliamentary working group on the future of nuclear energy, received a phone call from a trade union boss. When he intimated that such a move was not perhaps in the interests of the working population, the minor politician lost his nerve and backed down. Similarly, academics and critics in the crypto-public sphere are seldom granted the opportunity of appearing in the media. Reviews of Takagi's books, if published at all, were usually tucked away on the inside pages. And, as already mentioned, the press has devoted scant coverage to anti-nuclear demonstrations.

This is how the disempowerment of the public operates. This is how the "colonization of the lifeworld" by administration and industry, as described by Jürgen Habermas some 30 years ago, operates in Japan. Legal, yet corrupt, judicially unimpeachable, yet criminal, the nuclear lobby is waging a structural and ceaseless campaign of terror against its own population. And within this leak-proof nuclear mafia, the much vaunted 'safety myth' has firmly taken root and gained credibility. The degree of cynicism involved here is breathtaking. However, even such cynicism eventually fell victim to the naive belief in the 'safety myth', enabling the industry's managers to remain in denial over the real threat. The cataclysmic outcome, which, without the earthquake, would have remained latent, is now there for the world to see.



Part of this myth is that nuclear energy accounts for 30 per cent of total energy supply. Yet this figure of 30 per cent applies only during the few hottest days of summer, and under the precondition that the coal- and gas-fired power stations, which were decommissioned in favour of nuclear power facilities, are not in operation. Now most of those are undergoing rapid refitting—thanks to the fabled efficiency of Japanese engineering—to ensure that we can get through the summer with only modest cutbacks in electricity consumption.

Instead of showing commercials, TV stations are currently broadcasting repeats of famous actors or sports personalities—including footballers well-known even in Europe—exhorting the public to stay calm. The message is clear: the population must “hang in there!”, because “together we Japanese are strong!”. My own concerns relate less to the dark undercurrent of nationalism implied, and more to the deliberate intention of diverting people's minds from the real issue.

And these nationalistic slogans—including the appeal, “People! Be nice to each other!”—are being financed by AC Japan, an acronym for Advertising Council, a conglomerate of different companies that acts as a kind of insurance company for TV sponsors. It provides coverage to firms advertising on television—essentially for the eventuality that they have to pull their TV ads for whatever reason, be it due to insolvency or to revelations about the poor quality of products.<sup>3</sup> Sitting on the executive board of AC Japan are, of course, representatives of the major energy suppliers, such as Tepco. And therein lies the crux of the matter.

People are unwilling to see through the structure of the nuclear lobby, the close links and interdependence between the nuclear industry and politicians and the economic and power-related interests that drive them. Or, perhaps, they understand the structures well enough, but are unwilling to articulate their concerns and to translate them into active protest. Hence the AC slogans continue to hold sway. Although the public's acceptance of nuclear energy has become more fragile, the population confines itself to emotional outbursts and their populist instrumentalization. It requires a painstaking and protracted process in which the disempowered public regains its potentially communicative power and finds its voice in a diverse number of ways.

*Translated from the German by John Rayner.*

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1. The most important committee in the Japanese parliament, which debates key policy decisions.
  2. For more information, see <http://cnic.jp/takagi/english/> and <http://www.rightlivelihood.org/takagi.html>, accessed 26 August 2011.
  3. For more information, see <http://www.ad-c.or.jp/eng/>, accessed 26 August 2011.

Krystian Woznicki in collaboration with Christiane Schulzki-Haddouti, Magdalena Taube, Andi Weiland

## CPJ: Project on the Media and Public Sphere in Times of Disaster Industries

### INTRODUCTION

In an age of global networking, the current 'crisis boom' has enveloped virtually every country throughout the world, including Germany. Of course, the media have also contributed to this development—but what role do they play? Never before has the media landscape been as pluralistic as it is today. Over both the short- and long-term, there is a decisive difference in whether and how the various actors in the media collaborate in times of crisis: grassroots initiatives, networked activists, bloggers, social networkers and journalists in the traditional media organizations. The prototypical model for such cooperation is a journalism that develops and updates 'stories' collaboratively: collaborative process journalism (CPJ). The crisis in Japan (11 March 2011 onwards) serves as the starting point from which to model and implement this concept.

On the first day of the crisis, the *Berliner Gazette* compiled a position paper seeking to set out the latest opportunities for networked collaboration (including crowdsourcing). Over 130 comments have since contributed to fleshing out this position paper. This direct input was also augmented by web and content syndication, including through Twitter, Facebook, rohrpost, CARTA, politik-digital, Journalistenakademie Munich, WDR 5 and RBB Radio Fritz. In this way, the theoretical objectives elaborated in the paper succeeded in finding a degree of practical implementation: thus collaborative process journalism has advanced from mere theory into operational practice.

At this juncture, we would like to present the revised theses.

The original document that tracks the process can be found online at <http://berlingazette.de/thesen-katastrophe-prozess-journalismus/>.



Radiation Map from  
Safecast.org (2011)

### OBJECTIVES

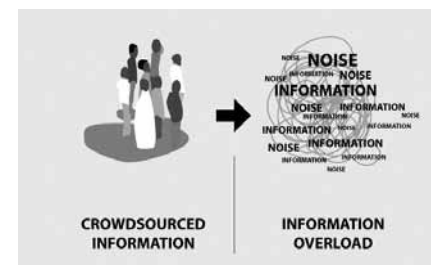
What is the aim of this project? The special circumstances of 11 March 2011 onwards provide an opportunity to formulate an overview of the relationship between the media and the public sphere in times of crisis, and, in this context, to explore the potential of collaborative process journalism. Essentially, the aim is to promote an awareness (for a new kind of disaster relief) and competence (in dealing with it), and to address 1) the short-term impact on the most visible damage and problems arising from the crisis and 2) the long-term impact on the public and its competence to prevent disasters. More detailed background questions serve as a platform for developing further ideas, conducting more intensive research and preparing implementation.

### THESES

1. At the beginning of the twenty-first century crises are increasingly becoming a focus of global media attention, thereby transcending local boundaries. The states of emergency imposed in the wake of crises constitute a highly undemocratic moment: decisions can be made over the heads of the masses that do not necessarily correspond to the will or meet the actual needs of those affected.

1.1. The lack of public accountability can generate situations in which the aforementioned decisions (see 1.) are aimed at merely retaining power or the existing structures on a political and economic level. Collaborative process journalism via the real-time internet can serve as a public control mechanism and render transparent democratically illegitimate processes.

2. A crisis tends to invoke a 'state of emergency' in the media, characterized by greater media consumption and a lack of transparency. On the one hand, those who are far removed from the scene of the crisis can follow events essentially passively and sympathetically. On the other hand, the information available to those affected on the ground is insufficient: driven by events, the coverage documents primarily the progression of the crisis and furnishes insufficient information to enable victims to weigh up their options for action.



2.1. At the same time, however, the greater the disaster, the greater the potential of the media to attract an international audience, which connects people beyond cultural and political borders. This is the fertile breeding ground for collaborative process journalism.

3. The real-time internet is dynamic—by virtue of which it can intensify the media's 'state of emergency'. Acceleration begets chaos and thus compounds the lack of transparency: the live format promotes voyeurism and passivity.

3.1. At the same time, however, by virtue of the dynamics of the real-time internet, the media landscape is becoming increasingly more porous and pluralistic; gatekeeper structures serve to foster this development. This, in turn, lays the groundwork for collaborative process journalism, which ushers in a redistribution of responsibility within the public sphere.

4. Sympathy manifests itself in collaborative engagement, i.e., everyone can furnish information via social media and, through easier access to the classical media, express opinions, raise questions and, in cooperation with others, engage in process journalism.

4.1. At the same time, however, in times of crisis, personal concern and emotional involvement are decisive factors, since communication motivated in such a way can, with the aid of social media, ensue directly.

5. Societies are becoming increasingly networked. When, in times of crisis, critical infrastructures are damaged, the focus of attention turns to the supply and circulation of material goods. The communications infrastructure plays an essential role in ensuring the necessary coordination, planning and implementation.

5.1. At the same time, however, societies today cannot only share data more rapidly, but also more inclusively and democratically. By disclosing data relating to the crisis (statistics, costs, transparency in the awarding of reconstruction contracts, etc.), the various actors on the media landscape can engage in research within the framework of collaborative process journalism, without having to negotiate high entry thresholds.

6. Particularly in times of disaster, transparency is hugely significant in ensuring a well-functioning public sphere. With the aid of internet tools and forums, vast quantities of data from the archives of live media, crowdsourcing or governments and enterprises can

be structured, analyzed and worked into journalistic form in the collaborative process.

6.1. At the same time, however, spontaneous collaboration on the internet is reliant upon the competence of moderators. For example, 'edit wars' in Wikipedia, covering politically controversial topics, demonstrate that time and energy are not being deployed efficiently and that decision processes can lead to dubious outcomes.

7. The attention economy of the media grants any crisis a window of between seven and 14 days. The spontaneous emotional reactions triggered by the live format bind sympathizers and participants to this moment. Coverage of such media events is becoming ever more dramatic, then abruptly petering out. The future is either shut out or painted in the bleakest colours (end-time scenarios, etc.).

7.1. At the same time, however, as yet unheard actors on the media landscape appear within the live format and have the potential to reform existing media legislation. The voices of social networkers, bloggers and traditional experts are granted equal attention. Within such a pluralistic media landscape, the coverage of a disaster cannot be so easily controlled and then merely abandoned. The networked public sphere can initiate a long-term and democratic discourse. Against this backdrop, collaborative process journalism should be regarded in times of crisis as an open-ended, unfinished project. Only in this way can the spontaneous cooperation of the various partners be extended beyond the sell-by date of the previously mentioned attention economy and thus substantially reinforce the weakened structures of civic society in times of crisis.

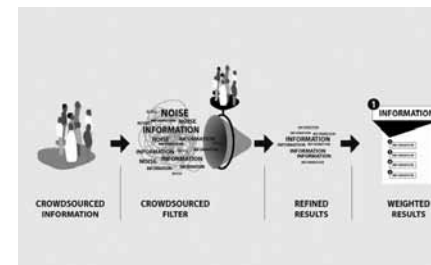
## BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

### *Democracy and crisis*

To what extent can the current 'crisis boom' be attributed to capitalism as the all-embracing and ubiquitous economic system, the failures of which are no longer mere exceptions, but identifiable as routine events?

How suitable are the classical instruments and social contracts of democratic societies in times of crisis? How is the crisis 'boom' transforming the foundations of democracy?

What are the most probable political demands in times of crisis? What are the politically relevant questions raised by the crisis?



Crowdsourcing filter

'Swift River'

Which tasks can, in this context, be assumed by the UN, with its non-commercial, neutral and autonomous founding principles?

What, in this context, can realistically be expected of the UN, both as the representative of the international community and its global responsibility?

To what extent must this be accompanied by the formation of a “global civil society” (Mary Kaldor)?

### *Media, democracy, crisis*

How, in times of crisis, can the media both strengthen democracy and devise measures to counteract the ‘angst society’ and the doom industry?

How can the media, in times of crisis, bolster the public sphere and, by extension, democracy itself?

How can the participation of the masses forge a better journalism?

Against the backdrop of the crisis, how can non-journalists create a public sphere in an ethical and responsible manner?

### *Cooperation in the media landscape*

How, in concrete terms, can the collaboration between the various actors in the media landscape be structured? What models and best practice examples are there?

How can collaborative process journalism be combined with data journalism?

How can crowdsourcing be facilitated in a social context in which public action by well-known individuals is uncommon?

Are there constraints governing cooperation between classical journalism and other sectors of society?

To what degree (with regard to the media’s responsibility as the Fourth Estate) should one engage in cooperation with the state?

## **MEDIA-SUPPORTED EMERGENCY RELIEF (I)**

What can history teach us about cooperation between professional and citizen journalists post-9/11 (for example, Asia 2004, London 2005, Kenya 2007, Haiti 2010, Australia 2011)?

What are the concrete repercussions in terms of individual responsibility arising from the fact that crowdsourcing renders many existing distinctions obsolete, including the distinction between eyewitness/interlocutor or producer/consumer of a news item?

How can globally networked crowdsourcing help people who are affected by the crisis on the ground? What types of projects have proved themselves successful in this regard?

Who on the ground is actually reached by the worldwide noise? Who is actually helped in micro-sociological terms?

Where does the boundary lie between the transfer of knowledge and the transfer of panic? How can the psychology of the live format be overcome, without impairing participation in the live event?

## **MEDIA-SUPPORTED EMERGENCY RELIEF (II)**

Are there quality criteria governing the gathering of information? When does the attention of the participating masses help people on the ground?

Mobility is increasingly shaping the everyday lives of many people, and, as the example of Haiti demonstrates, mobile applications such as SMS can play a decisive role in delivering emergency relief—but what significance do the mobile text cultures have in the official media landscape? What must the classical media undertake to meet the requirements of these sources/formats?



What role is played by data visualizations in general and maps in particular? In this context, what function is assumed by filters and moderators?

What role in this context is assumed by whistleblowers and whistleblowing platforms?

Can crowdsourcing be relied upon in times of crisis? Should one wait until the noise subsides? Should more formal processes be found in order to represent the facts correctly—in a situation in which everyone is able to make their voice heard?

## LINKS

The crisis in Japan (11 March 2011 onwards) has demonstrated how both national and international masses can participate in emergency relief in real-time via the internet and crowdsourcing. A brief overview follows here (all websites accessed 3 November 2011):

### *CouchSurfing*

For victims of the Japanese crisis who are looking for a roof over their heads, CouchSurfing launched its own website.

<http://www.couchsurfing.org/group.html?gid=39703>

### *CrisisCommons*

The voluntary network CrisisCommons has set up an hourly-updated wiki, onto which all information relating to relief organizations and aid campaigns can be posted.

[http://wiki.crisiscommons.org/wiki/Honshu\\_Quake](http://wiki.crisiscommons.org/wiki/Honshu_Quake)

### *ESRI*

Specializing in geoinformation systems, the software company ESRI assigns Flickr images and YouTube videos from Japan to their respective locations on an interactive map of Japan.

<http://www.esri.com/services/disaster-response/japan-earthquake-tsunami-2011-map/index.html>

### *Facebook*

In Facebook groups such as Tokyo Radioactive NOW victims exchange information on where the situation in Japan is hazardous, how one should behave and how mutual assistance can be provided.

<http://www.facebook.com>

### *Global Voices Online*

Global Voices Online is an international network of bloggers and citizen journalists involved in the monitoring and documentation of international blogs.

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/specialcoverage/japan-earthquake-tsunami-2011/>

### *Google Crisis Response*

For the crisis in Japan, Google set up a dedicated search engine in 2011 to find people, maps, news and details of the accessibility status of roads.

<http://www.google.com/crisisresponse/japanquake2011.html>

### *iReport*

iReport invites users to post material onto the CNN news website. By making their own voice heard, people can influence the formats and content of CNN together with other 'iReporters'.

<http://ireport.cnn.com>

### *Japan: Request for Better Information*

The Institute for Information Design Japan provides visualizations for crisis relief. Using crowdsourcing procedures, data are gathered, checked by experts and then visualized using graphics (data journalism).

<http://iidj.net>

### *Japan Volunteers*

On their website, the Association of Japan Volunteers gathers information and opinions in order to rapidly coordinate aid for those most badly affected.

<http://japanvolunteers.wordpress.com>

### *Open Home Project*

In addition to providing donations and logistical support, foreign countries have the possibility of actively providing emergency aid via the internet, for example by launching web initiatives such as the Open Home Project, which uses the web to find earthquake victims a bed.

<http://love4japan.com>

### *Open Platform*

The Open Platform collates a package of offers for partner initiatives in order to develop multimedia applications in cooperation with *The Guardian* newspaper.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/open-platform>

OpenStreetMap

The OpenStreetMap team plots vital information onto maps. Empirical experience: after the earthquake in Haiti the OpenStreetMap was the most accurate available map of the island state. Based on satellite images, the community members marked the sites with destroyed infrastructure (e.g. streets, hospitals) on local maps. [http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/2011\\_Sendai\\_earthquake\\_and\\_tsunami](http://wiki.openstreetmap.org/wiki/2011_Sendai_earthquake_and_tsunami)

Person Finder

Person Finder enables users to search for missing relatives or quickly relay information on crisis victims. <http://japan.person-finder.appspot.com/?lang=en>

Radiation Network

The Radiation Network has posted online a map updated in real-time that shows the radiation levels in the regions of Japan. Anyone equipped with a Geiger counter and the corresponding software can upload the current readings from their location. <http://radiationnetwork.com/Japan.htm>

RDTN.org

RDTN.org sees itself as a complement to the official statements released by the Japanese government. User data are matched against government figures. In order to ensure a reliable body of data, the website also compares the data furnished by the users with that of Pachube and Geigercrowd.net. Originally at <http://www.rdtm.org>, now online at <http://www.safecast.org>

Standby Task Force (SBTF)

Following the successful, but generally uncoordinated, emergency aid provided by Patrick Meier and Ushahidi in Haiti, the SBTF was launched to train small ad hoc groups. From the coming together of volunteers, technically skilled groups can be formed, which can be deployed rapidly in crisis regions. <http://blog.standbytaskforce.com>

SwiftRiver

SwiftRiver is a free open source platform, aimed at helping people to gain timely access to important information. The platform was born from the necessity of having to process large quantities of data particularly in the first 24 hours after a crisis. Other service providers, such as newsrooms or monitoring services, also use this tool. <http://swift.ushahidi.com>



Live map from the OpenStreetMap Foundation in Japan

The Stream

The Arab TV broadcaster Al Jazeera evaluates social media information as part of its new format, The Stream, which selects and collates Twitter messages, YouTube videos and blog items and presents them as a theme. Beta users can watch the streams on the internet. <http://www.ajestream.com>

Twitter

Twitter set up special hashtags for news on the situation in Japan: #311care for medical information, #Hinan for information on the evacuation and #J\_j\_helpme for distress calls/cries for help. Trendistic gathers the tweets and charts the course of the discussion. <http://trendistic.com/japan>

Ushahidi

The OpenStreetMap Foundation in Japan uses Ushahidi to manage coordination on the ground. Volunteers can either enter reports on a form or via a tweet, using the hashtag #osmjp. The data are gathered via crowd-sourcing and classified into various categories (e.g. 'Reliable Reports', 'State of Infrastructure'). Data from the meteorological services on the latest earthquakes are fed in automatically. <http://www.sinsai.info/ushahidi>

Wikinews

Wikinews is a project set by the Wikimedia Foundation that sees itself as a free and open news source. The website was created in collaboration between citizen journalists from a wide range of countries. <http://www.wikinews.org>

ZEIT Online/Twitter

ZEIT Online operates its own Twitter list called 'Japan Earthquake', which was set up during the preparations for compiling a report on "Life in a state of an emergency". <http://twitter.com/zeitonline/japan-erdbeben>

A project of the *Berliner Gazette* e.V.

With the support of Jens Badura, Stefan Beck, Gisa Funck, Dennis Holewa, Florian Kuhlmann, Geert Lovink, Lili Masuhr, Patrick Meier, Yana Milev, Chris Piallat, Pit Schultz, and many more.

Translated from the German by John Rayner.













# THE DARK SIDE OF **Chocolate**

A FILM BY MIKI MISTRATI & U. ROBERTO ROMANO

**FREE SCREENING**

**Wednesday, Feb. 9th**

**McKenzie 125 at 6:00 PM**



**SLAVERY STILL EXISTS OREGON**



Yana Milev

## The Chocolate Industry's Camouflage Politics

*A Commentary on Miki Mistrati*

Most people love chocolate, with Europeans eating half of all chocolate worldwide. One and a half million tons per year—that's 15 billion bars. On average, each German eats approximately 11 kilograms annually. However, eating chocolate isn't as harmless as we may think—above all, not for African children. Aid organizations suspect the chocolate industry profits from child trafficking and child labour in Africa and is therefore covering up criminal acts. The investigative journalist and filmmaker Miki Mistrati looked into these allegations; he travelled to West Africa with a cameraman, then to Mali and the Ivory Coast, the world's largest producer of cocoa beans. It was a dangerous trip. Just a few years ago, a journalist was kidnapped while doing similar research—he hasn't been heard from since.

*The Dark Side of Chocolate* shows that child trafficking and child labour on cocoa plantations are not rare and that this is covered up and denied by the chocolate industry. The largest cocoa exporter in the Ivory Coast feigns ignorance of child labour, so Mistrati often worked with a hidden camera. In open interviews with the largest cocoa exporter in the Ivory Coast and a state secretary who is responsible for the fight against child trafficking, both proclaim that child trafficking and child labour do not exist on cocoa plantations. Mistrati proves the contrary. He found young boys working on plantations. He met an Interpol police officer who had just led a raid in which 65 children were freed; they had been forced to work as cocoa plantation slaves.

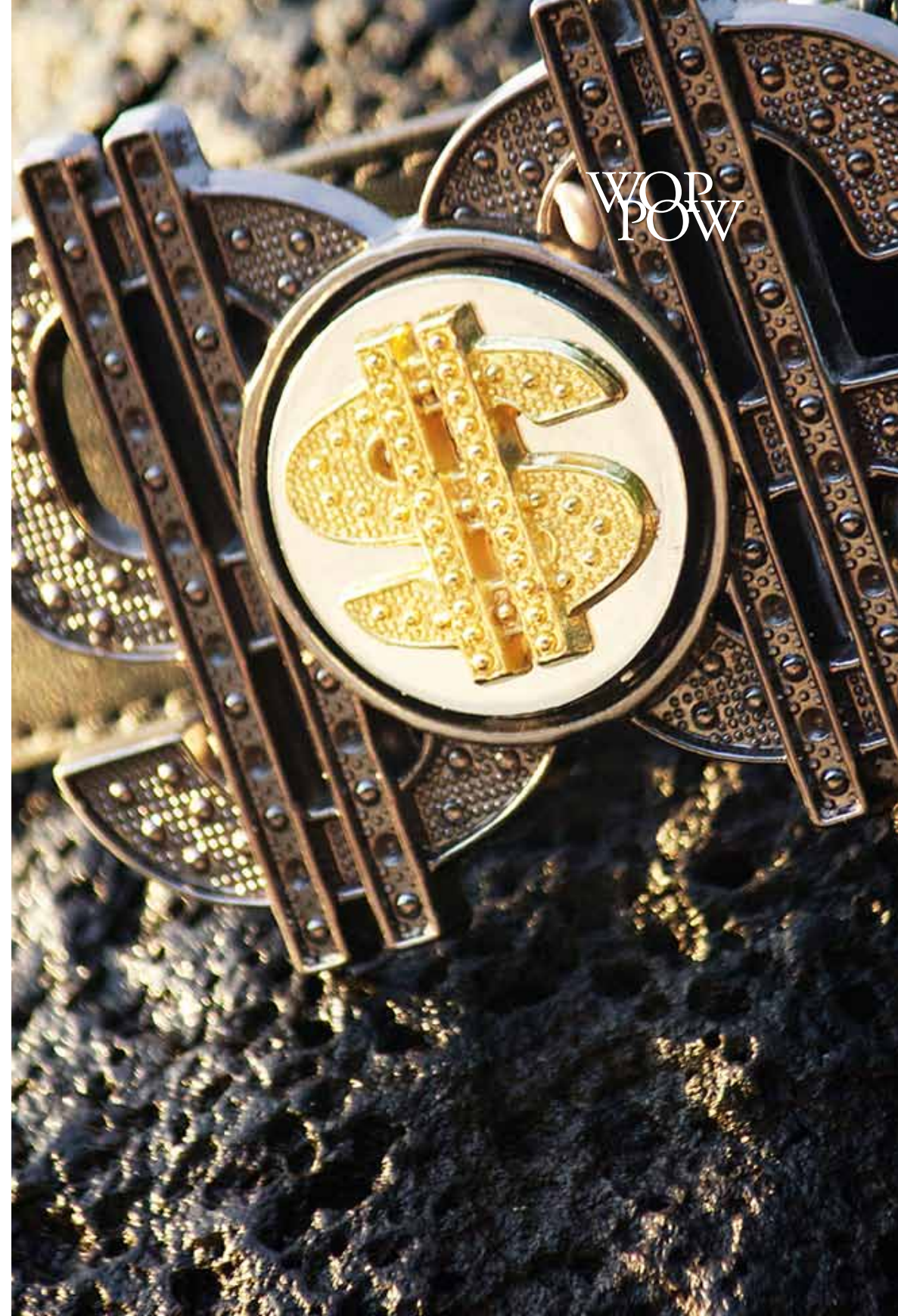
A child costs 230 euros. The cocoa farmer from the Ivory Coast says this as though child trafficking were the most normal thing on earth. "If you tell my brother how many you need, then he can get them for you." The man talks about slave workers, children between the ages of ten and 14, who are kidnapped from Mali and other neighbouring states to work on the Ivory Coast plantations. Farmers like him supply the entire world. Forty-two per cent of worldwide cocoa production stems from the Ivory Coast. Mistrati's documentary, *The Dark Side of Chocolate*, shows how the slave traffickers' business works—and how confectionery companies profit from it. And he shows the perfidious involvement of camouflage politics in a network of agents who work for the chocolate

industry. These profits are undercover profits; they are reaped in the face of the legality and legitimacy of regulations, and they are especially life-threatening to those critics who stand in their way.

Back in Europe, Miki Mistrati wanted to confront the chocolate industry with his proof. The reaction was sobering. Not one of the many companies that he contacted was willing to look at the evidence and react to it. Instead, a written statement was released by their trade association spokesman. His argument: the plantations are not owned by the companies, so these companies are not responsible for events on the plantations. The argument demonstrates that the chocolate industry tolerates child trafficking and child labour and, up to now, is unwilling to do anything about it. Otherwise the producers would have to change their predator-prey systems, control more plantations and only purchase cocoa from those farmers who are legally certified as not implementing child labour.

*The Dark Side of Chocolate* was first screened in Germany by the public-service broadcaster ARD on 6 October 2010 between 23:30 and 00:15. According to the official ratings, the film reached an audience of 880,000. One should compare these numbers to those that result from product advertising by companies such as Nestlé that were outed as being complicit in criminal corporate strategies, not only in human rights abuses. While the audience's psyche is floating around among more consumption-friendly programming, the parallel channel is making the repressed unconscious of commodity culture visible. Given an audience of 880,000, it's clear that the news didn't reach the majority of viewers. From this perspective, the TV-programming plot fits into the ad industry's plot and its sales-promoting politics of camouflage.





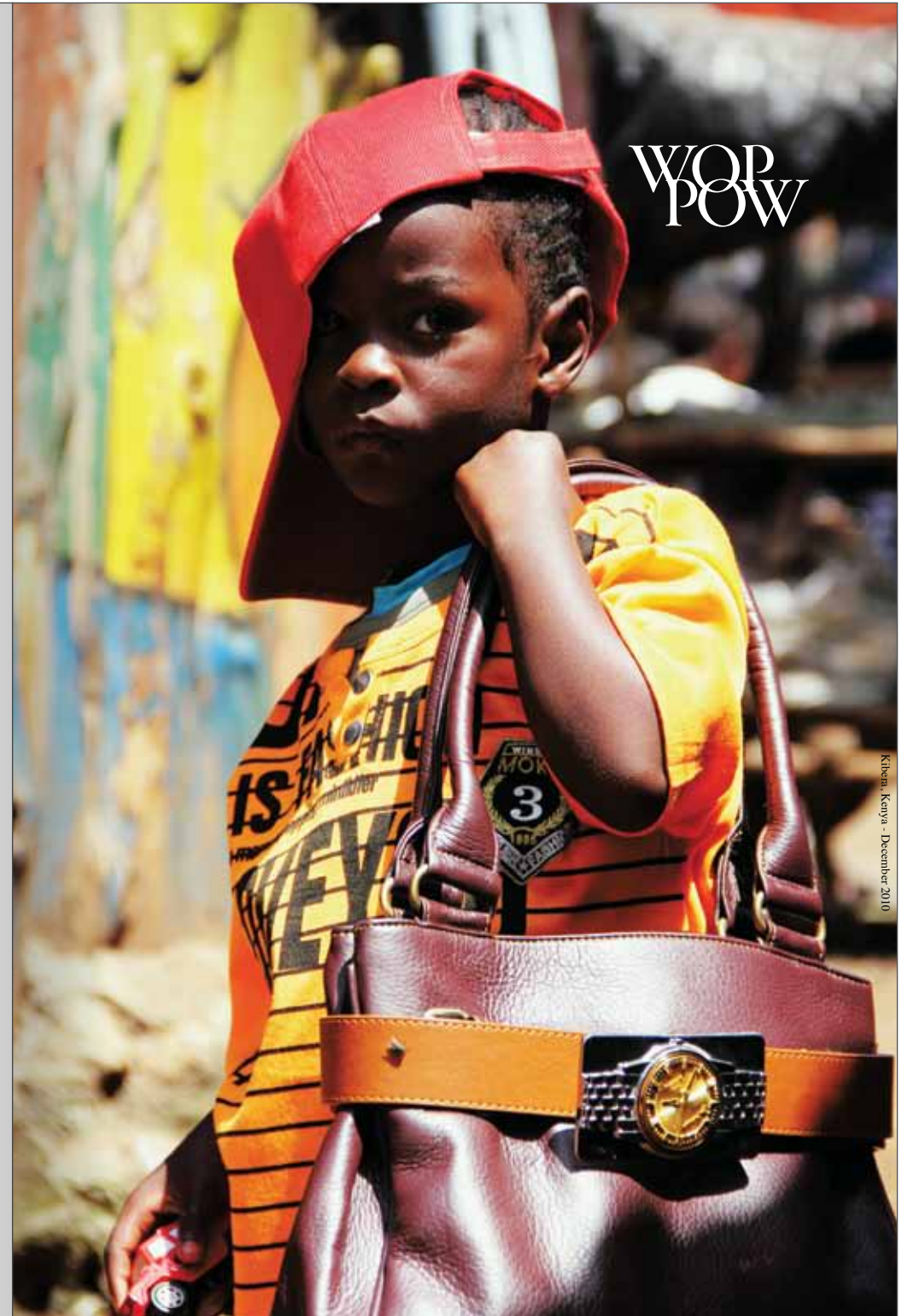


<http://www.woppow.net>

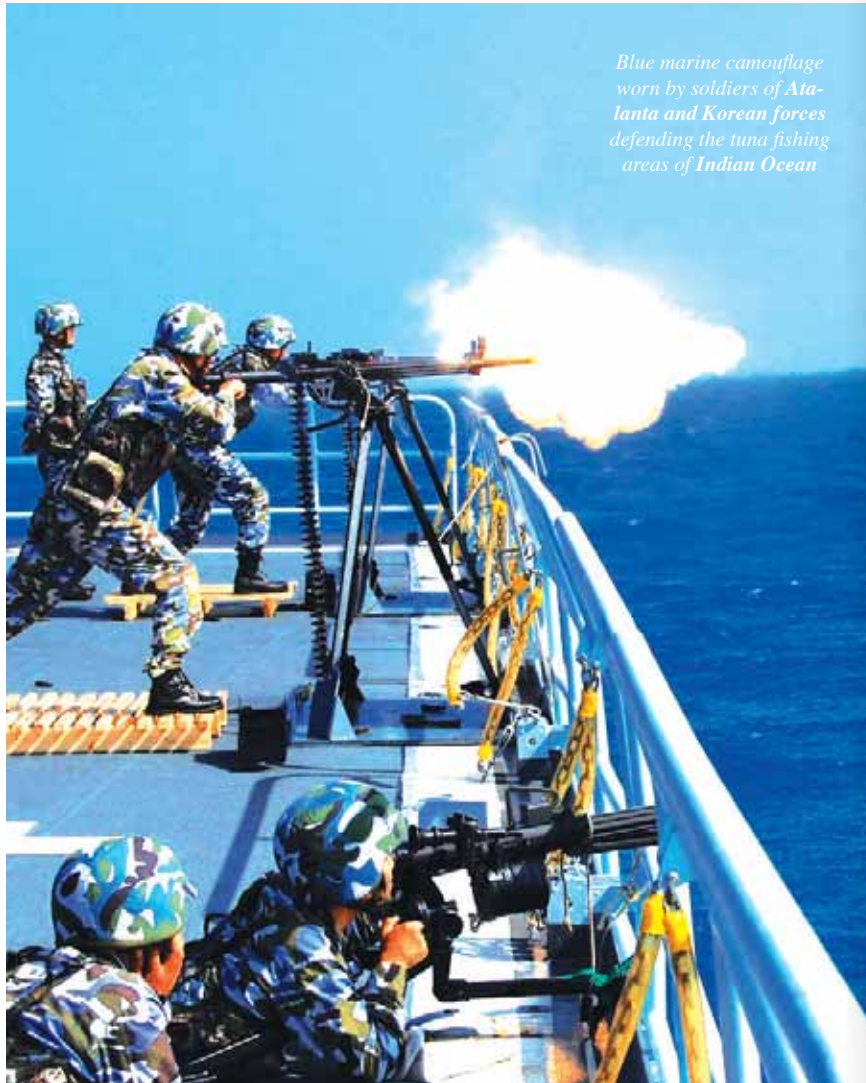
# Wop pow!

Photography & Realisation UBERMORGEN.COM

*Bag and shirt from Shiftaz  
Collection for children,  
Woppow, Kidnap bag with  
safety belt, Mitumba, un-  
titled color T-shirt*



Kibera, Kenya - December 2010



*Blue marine camouflage worn by soldiers of Atlanta and Korean forces defending the tuna fishing areas of Indian Ocean*



*Scarf by WOPPOW, infinite tons of raw tuna, under beautiful Somali sunset as worn by two male fishermodels.*

*Inspired by the Vastness of the Indian Ocean.*



*Markay dani meeday tidhi,  
 Maxaan talo meel ka dayey,  
 markay dani maaha tidhi.  
 Weydiyey qof meel ka dayey  
 Markay dani maaha tidhi,  
 Ku laabtay halkaan ka dayey  
 Markay dani maaha tidhi,  
 Ka sii dayey meel la dayey,  
 maxay doqonimmo I tidhi  
 Ruuxaan jirin raad ku doon  
 Intaan isku duubay been,  
 ka buuxsaday labada dacad  
 maxay runi daadi tidhi.  
 waxaan duluc sii ridnayn  
 Indhuhu ku daraandareen  
 Maxaan dogob beer is idhi,  
 dariuuro u soo sasabay  
 daryeelka ku maal is idhi  
 biyuhu uga sii dareen.*

BEING  
 POLITICAL  
 IS SUCH  
 A HUGE  
 TREND.

GPS 12.656418, 50.240479 - PHOTO EUNAVFOR EU

<http://www.woprow.net>

Alain Bieber interviews UBERMORGEN.COM

## WOPPOW: Somali Pirate Fashion

Skype interview, 10 June 2011, 17.33 CET

lizvlx (Basel), Hans Bernhard (Vienna),

Alain Bieber (rebel:art, ARTE Creative, Strasbourg)

Alain Bieber: Have you already seen the new *Pirates of the Caribbean 4*?

lizvlx: Damn. I didn't like it because it was such a straight pirates movie. I thought the previous one, the third, was really good; it wasn't chaotic but it had a really weird story—actually there wasn't even a storyline—and I didn't care about the storyline any more. It was just really beautiful pictures and crazy stuff. Everybody was crazy and they were all thrown together on weird ships, which was interesting, you had to figure it out. This new one is just like, “we're looking for this and then we'll find it and in between we have sword fights”. It was for men.

AB: Two media images currently coexist: fictional pirates from Hollywood movies like this and Somali pirates from the news. What do they have in common?

Hans Bernhard: They have a lot in common in terms of the mediality of the image of pirates. But it's a completely superficial characterization, which is like a rough outline of what they could be. In an exaggerated way, the outlines are very, very thick. I think in terms of the actual images it's very similar. So what the Hollywood movie has in terms of perfect makeup and perfectly-styled costumes and set design, the Somali pirates make up for with pseudo-authenticity. I wouldn't say it's fake, they're just very strong stories. That's why everybody's so attracted to them and it's also why the Hollywood pirates are featured in a positive way and the Somali pirates are globally portrayed as completely negative. Now this doesn't really make sense if you look at aesthetics, the perfect set design and the hyperaffirmative authenticity with weapons and style. As we were researching the WOPPOW project—www.woppow.net—it made sense to look more deeply into that and to think about how the image was turned into a negative one through commercial propaganda. The question basically answers itself, because for *Pirates of the Caribbean* you create a positive marketing spin, while the Somali pirates are countered by broad negative propaganda on a global scale.

AB: You just spoke about propaganda. When I first saw WOPPOW I thought it looked like a Michael Moore movie. You know what I mean? Positive propaganda for Somali pirates...

L: We definitely wanted to create positive propaganda for Somali pirates. Even the negative political stuff that's out there in the media is so superficial that it gets really boring. So although there's lots of news, people hardly read it because it's presented in a boring fashion. That's when we started to think about what was really lacking here. Usually the media wants to be unbiased, to show both sides and so on, which is why we thought, “let's focus on the other side”; and also because WOPPOW is about Somali pirate fashion. We can be superficial as well, which makes it easy to turn it into propaganda. If it were a Michael Moore movie, obviously it would be a lot more expensive and it would be political. Of course some parts of the WOPPOW movies do become partly political, but that's just because of the content—it's not our objective. But that's what the Somali pirates need; they need positive propaganda. We don't want to show reality, I mean that's ridiculous. I don't have a problem with Michael Moore movies, I have a problem with lots of Steven Spielberg movies because they tend to make history and I think that's bullshit. I think history should make history, not a movie. That's absurd. But even when it comes to Michael Moore movies, they still have to remain documentaries and the WOPPOW movies are not documentaries. Some of the stuff we filmed ourselves, lots of the stuff we didn't film ourselves, some of the stuff we twisted around a bit ... We don't claim authenticity and we wouldn't want to because, fuck authenticity, what's that good for? So people become more aware? We don't want anybody to be aware of anything, we don't want the reality to get out there. We just want it to be cool. It's propaganda. I think it's less documentary and more advertising.

HB: It's not that we're not interested in reality per se; the rockumentary is just one output channel for the whole project. But what we've always been interested in—and still are—is the entanglement or the ambivalent combination of fact and fiction; the unresolvable dilemma of these two poles, which are themselves a fiction, as they don't exist or exist only in our imagination. So our approach was to go out and collect little pure data units and then to put them together into a large mosaic. That's also the answer to your “what makes it an artwork” question; it's just basically an image we paint in different media, but it's an image we paint of what we found and that's about it on this level.

AB: If you are not interested in reality—what are you interested in then?



L: We always said we were not interested in the reality of Somali pirates because it's not attainable. You can't go to Somalia unless you hire a whole group of armed militia, which makes it absurd again because then you're not in reality any more, you're constructing reality. You can't get to the reality there, so from the beginning we were interested in the mediality of the pirates, how they pass along their ideas, their actions in the media. That's also why we used lots of footage we found on YouTube and on other online video sites. It's reality defined via the internet, which of course is not reality as such and is the reason we call it a media reality.

AB: How did you find 'woppow'? What did the designer with whom you've been on tour think about the project? And what about the end? I remember that the other guy, the prison guard from Guantanamo Bay, from your Superenhanced project, was not that happy at the end?

HB: True. We met Gomba Otieno from the artist collective Maasai Mbili in one of Nairobi's slums—Kibera, the biggest slum in northeast Africa. We did an interview and had a discussion with him about Somali pirates. He told us about his brother who was in Somalia, who is an actual pirate, and of him visiting Somalia. That's how we came to build this original story, this combination of fiction and reality, with the original tale surrounding the whole venture, which is actually the basis and the golden thread that runs through the *WOPPOW: Somali Pirate Fashion* rockumentary.

L: Yeah, that's right, the guy from the Guantanamo project—Chris Arendt—wasn't really happy in the end. We were happy about that in a way, because every soldier is a murderer and every Guantanamo prison guard is a concentration camp guard and a torturer and a (war) criminal, by definition. But regarding Gomba, the project has not ended yet, so he is still happy with it. Maybe he will be pissed off at the end, but so far he is really happy about how it's proceeding and he enjoys being woppow. Earlier last year he was throwing ideas around, doing projects on Somali pirates, which is something lots of Nairobi artists and creative people do, because it's a big issue there. So it was easy to work with him and he was really enjoying it—at least that's what he told us—and he had a good time in Europe. That wasn't the case with Chris from the Superenhanced project, who of course was never our friend or happy coworker—he was more of a project, an object of study for us that we were researching. It was a tainted relationship from the beginning, but with WOPPOW it's fine. Gomba is a good guy; a live actor.

AB: I talked with other people about these two projects, WOPPOW and Superenhanced. Some think you use these people as protagonists for your artworks without the people really understanding what is happening to them.

L: Yeah. Yeah maybe [laughs]. Sorry. Sorry for laughing.

HB: Could you please shut the fuck up and be serious, we are trying to put some sense and context into this project, which is not bloody easy! There are similarities and I think it's no accident that in both cases a protagonist was not chosen but was naturally incorporated into the project. These are both long-term research projects and over the course of the last 15 years our work has changed from actionist media hacking into more conceptual work and now into deep, research-based work. The problem with such analytical procedures and production is the manifestation of the data. In WOPPOW, the rockumentary is one way, which is the very specific way. The more open, more physical way is the installation, a very large installation with a lot of surface and a lot of depth, documents, videos, technical applications, stuff like that. But for that you need a protagonist, a—what do you call it in advertising, Liz—?

L: Oh, you mean a testimonial.

HB: A testimonial. And that's basically what you need so people can project a popular theme, like a face and a person, on top of a very information-rich environment and a project (or brand).

L: The other question is really funny.

HB: I don't really understand what's happening to them. That is true. It is true, yeah.

L: Of course we use them, but I wouldn't say use; it's a bad word in that context.

HB: Actually, there is only one answer to this question. Yes, it's true.

L: Hans, why don't you just shut up for a bit! It gets annoying listening to your greyscale and boring Swiss-ness, to your compromising worldview! To go back to your question about the people really understanding what is happening to them... These are research-based projects, so we don't approach people and tell them exactly what we think we want to see as outcomes of a specific project. That would be really, really boring! And that's cool with woppow because he enjoys that. In a negative aspect, I hope that we really and utterly used Chris Arendt for the Superenhanced project—because maybe that way we helped him get rid of a bit of bad karma.

AB: In your last projects (GWEI, Amazon Noir, Sound of eBay) you were researching weak spots in the 'system'. Did you find some in *WOPPOW: Somali Pirate Fashion*, too?

HB: The EKMRZ (e-commerce) projects target very structured corpses [i.e., corporations], such as Google, Amazon and eBay. With WOPPOW, it's completely different. We found two agencies, basically, but they are too heterogeneous. They are not even units, not even networks—the pirates are not even networked. The navies and the military, these are networked and organized via NATO and the EU, so they have a system. But we were not interested in that system. We were instead interested in the pirates, who have no identifiable system and therefore it is impossible to find a weak spot—maybe the funding could be attacked, but even that is so clandestine that it's probably a hard thing to track down and cut off. Or maybe it's just that we have not yet found any weak points. We have spotted a very large system, but it's more that we have learned that this system tells us that there is no system. It grew organically out of violent and exploitative European and Asian fishing piracy. The Somali fishermen started to arm themselves and, logically, the first kidnappings happened, from where it spun out of control. As it stands, there are different groups, different teams, different actors in the business. Except for the financing of the hijackings via Somali diaspora funds, there is no common denominator. There are quite a lot of different groups in Somalia—there is no central actor, there is no central objective, there is no general technique, although they do use similar techniques. The only element where you could say there is an overall system is in the gathering of intelligence and the financing of operations, which is actually done using funds with distributed risk. Somalis in London and in Canada invest X amount of money in such a fund; there are maybe ten attacks clustered in one investment to distribute the risk. A successful action pays between one and five million US dollars—you can do the maths... But we are not interested in finding weak spots in the piracy system. Quite the opposite—we're trying to enhance a system that doesn't exist and to popularize what is happening, to create a marketing or propaganda position similar to that which Al-Qaeda created very successfully. Somali pirates should become a brand way beyond the generic brand they already are.

L: Yeah, plus I also think it's wrong that tuna fish is so popular and Somali pirates are not. Pirates aren't even present in big media; not really, at least not until now. It's just beginning to change in Germany due to the Hamburg pirate trial. And I think that's just wrong. I think that Somali pirates are the way more interesting thing to come out of the Indian Ocean.

AB: One funny thing is that it's not really 'cool' to be an Arab terrorist, but it is cool to be a pirate in Somalia; it still has this 'cool' image in Europe. And now you've made a 'cool' documentary. Why do you think that it's 'cool'?

L: Okay. Yeah, why would you be that interested? In the beginning it was really just chance. I remember you, Hans, got interested in it because you were reading something in the news, as you read hundreds of different news items per day—he really does read lots of news—and I wasn't interested in it. I mean I was interested in the topic...

HB: The basic intention was to research the difference between the tribal behaviour of piracy groups in the digital field (crews) and Somali piracy. We immediately started to lose interest in digital piracy, because it's a simple but effective marketing term used by the recording industry (RIAA, MPAA), a term that has got out of control and has since become a cool thing for kids. But it's not the right thing; it's not actually piracy by definition. So we dropped that aspect. We started to focus on Somali piracy. And the moment you start reading about it, you understand that there is primarily superficial information available; pure data. It just gives you facts: this ship was hijacked then, this ransom money was paid, etc. This reality gap caught our interest and that's why we jumped at it. And then there is the question of the 'cool'. But I think we talked about that at the very beginning—the difference between Somali pirates and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Piracy has a cool image; it's still what kids play in kindergarten. The pirate has a positive image, but the Somali pirate is similar to the economic refugee. That's because Somali piracy has economic reasons as well—as does *Pirates of the Caribbean* [laughs]. It's the same difference as there is between Che Guevara and Carlos [the Jackal]. People don't see that here is a country that barely exists.

AB: There is also an element of 'investigative journalism' in your project. Even hackers like Julian Assange with WikiLeaks are doing the job that investigative journalists should be doing. Do you think it's important that artists also do more research, ask questions that nobody asks any more?

HB: Yes, I do think so. WikiLeaks has found a very nice way to publish the stuff. There are some really good artists doing research-based work who publish large-scale installations with their findings. Actually, we started working in a similar direction and one of the most spectacular outcomes is my favourite installation, "Asylabwehramt" (Asylum Defence Agency). It is an office installation of about 400 square metres, with different information-layers. You can just jump in and grasp the visual and get a feel for the room, or

you can zoom in, read and research online, browse documents or watch the educational video. This is a very effective and aesthetic format in which to publish such large amounts of data. It's a big problem communicating research-based projects; one main obstacle is that we lost interest in publicity. So we look at what is really interesting to us and we find a lot of material. And then the information grows and grows even further and you start to produce video, photos, writing and websites on top of the research materials. Then the question arises, how do I structure this and how do we bring it back to the public—and, also, why do we need to do this? How do we formalize it, package it and then publish it? A very good example is TORTURE CLASSICS, a metastasis from the hyper-complex, long-term and very deep and dark Superenhanced project about torture and newspeak (enhanced interrogations). In contrast, <http://TORTURECLASSICS.COM> is a very simple, very easy to understand pop project, a 24-hour music torture performance and an infomercial promoting a "Time Life Music presents..." torture music compilation. So we're looking for these kinds of releases, yeah, sure.

AB: I imagine that it's also quite hard to sell such artwork? Are you also doing some 'sellable' multiples linked to WOPPOW? Perhaps some fashion objects by WOPPOW? I am sure the bags made by children would sell like hell at ART Basel.

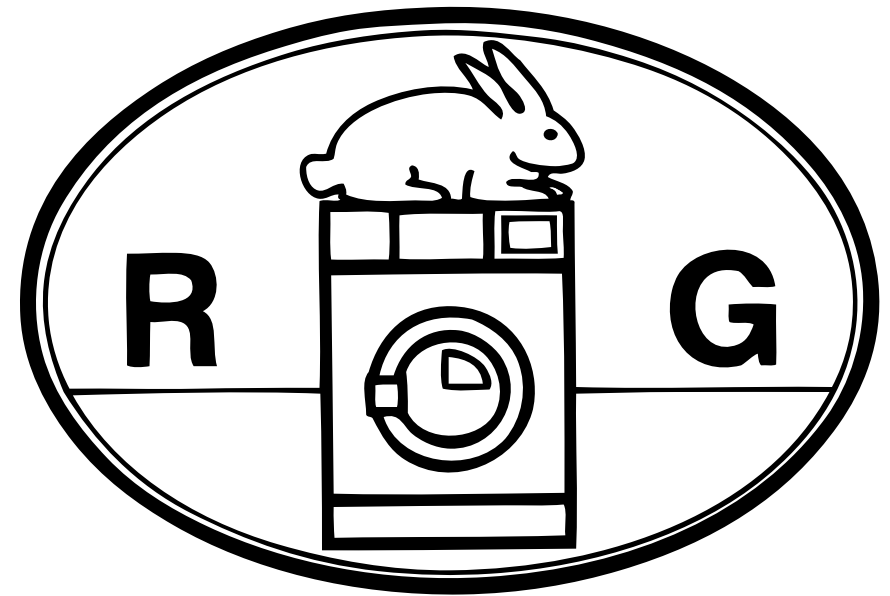
HB: [Laughs.] Another difficulty is that our trade representatives (galleries) need to be able to explain the project accurately, otherwise at art fairs like Basel and Madrid, or in other commercial contexts, the work can easily be perceived as superficial recycling of popular media topics. It's not easy to seriously sell this kind of stuff to the right people. Yes, there are a range of products, videos, prints, photos. But for me the main sellable object is the installation. Large pieces compiled from hundreds or thousands of documents, objects, images, videos and analogue/digital artefacts. But these installations are for museums—you don't sell them to the common collector.

AB: OK, last question: is WOPPOW finished now or is it ongoing? After Guantanamo, Somalia—will you again do another research/conceptual work? What's next?

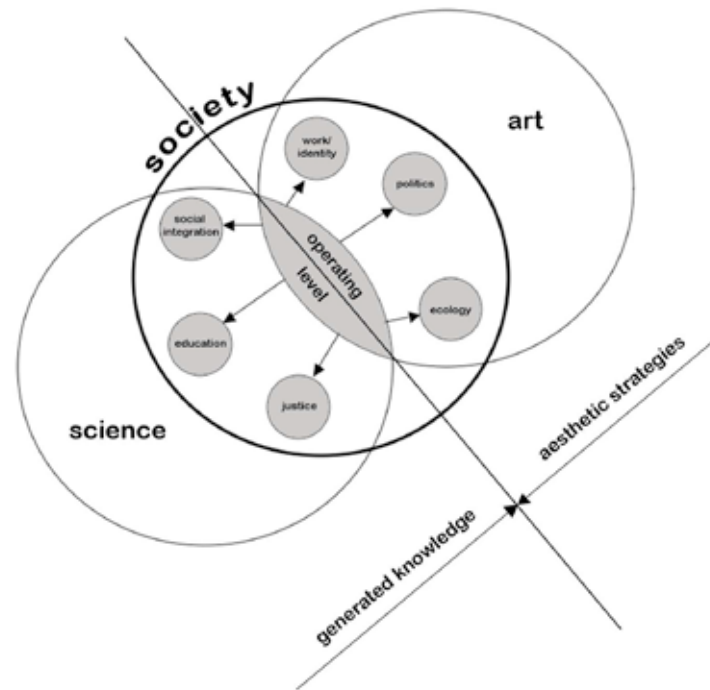
HB: There are two topics we are interested in. One is the financial market, the analysts and investment bank cluster, and the technical dispositive to attack this infrastructure. The other is the KRAFT series, which started in 2010 with DEEPHORIZON (<http://ubermorgen.com/DEEPHORIZON>), looking at the oil spill as a large-scale painting. Painting is a dead art form, only valid as dynamic action on very large canvases, such as the Gulf of Mexico, and with hundreds of millions of litres of oil, visible through satellite

technology or aerial photography and then computer-manipulated into series of videos and photos. The second project in the KRAFT series is called DOTOILDOT (<http://dotoildot.com>), which deals with oil as a high-end luxury good. The core of the project is a photo-shoot we did in Norway, combining a Terry Richardson style of head-on photography with the "Be Stupid" campaign from DIESEL. An installation including extremely superficial videos will be shown at the Gwangju Design Biennale 2011 and at the HMKV Dortmund. The next projects in this series are about basic physics and energy, and will deal with pixelpeople in nuclear infrastructure (TOIM Japan) and with fracking and astronomy, which we will research in Sutherland, South Africa, the base for some of the biggest telescopes on earth. With the KRAFT series we intend to research physics and the way we humans deal with resources, with a special focus on Japan.

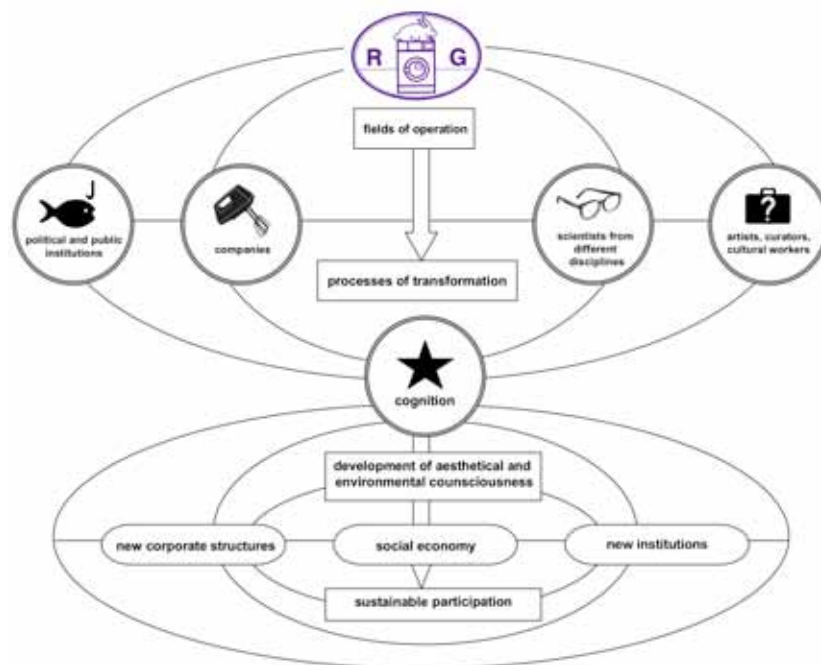
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REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT: relations between art and science



REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT fields of operation



Power the City! - The Electricity Activists during the project of RG in the Berlin Kreuzberg Gym Hardcore, Electric power is being produced and fed into the distribution network.



Stimulate the eco turn: the muscle power station uses elements from wind and solar equipment.





The City of Cool - renaming street in Leipzig/Germany by REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT; Street of Investors



Street of the Unknown Unemployed/Street of Investors



Street of Self-Employment/Street of Motivation





The Cow Demonstration – intervention in public space, in Zagreb/Croatia by R6



REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT (RG)

## Creating Social Practice

### REGENERATIVE ART

How can an idea of society be developed from the perspective of an art practice that affects society discursively, comprehensively, as an intervention and a means of connection? Economic growth and prosperity have to be reinterpreted and new growth indicators are necessary for a future-proof development. One of the most challenging issues in society is the crisis of the ideology of growth.

With the pilot project *Power the City! – The Electricity Activists*, REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT<sup>1</sup> gatecrashes the debate on renewable energy by exploring a new form of energy and feeding it into the power distribution system. Exercise machines in a gym are used to produce electrical power. The energy spent on training is transformed into electric currency.

Four spinning bikes in a Berlin gym were equipped with generators to feed the power generated into the electricity distribution network. This gratis energy donation helps to improve the ecological balance of energy in the distribution network and decreases the demand for conventional carbon or nuclear energy. The gym as micro power station also supports the future-oriented concept of a decentralized energy supply. Lowering dependency on centralized power production strengthens diversified and self-organized structures.

The electricity activists are clients and guests of the gym, which is in Berlin Kreuzberg, a city quarter with a high number of migrants. The project involves young people who are rarely included in debates about ecology and economy. The activation of their energy also provokes the question of value production and participation in social processes.

### THE (RE)SOCIALIZATION OF ART

How can art contribute to social transformation processes? REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT looks at the concept of creating social practice with a regard for practicability.

Practice here means deliberate action. To examine this concept of action, it is important to look not only at the effects of this practice on society but also at the retroactive effects. REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT—whose German connotations range from 'Cleaning Service' to 'Purification Society'—is an artists' project group that works at the point of intersection between art and social reality. The projects of RG bring to consciousness emancipatory processes for all the people they include and therefore create the preconditions for social renewal. RG demonstrates this objective through its name and defines cleaning as a process of renewal. Art practice becomes a social process and affects diverse areas of life. This definition states that art has a function: to be part of social value discussions and contribute to social transformation processes. Art practice becomes a social process and adds a supplementary dimension to political, economic and scientific discourses. Strategies of action are developed, the concerns of which are the structure of economic and social relationships.

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT suspends the concept of authorship through its integrated approach. Partners in various projects become emancipated protagonists. All the participating people and institutions have the opportunity to bring in their perspectives and experiences. The concept of direct participation integrates people and enables them to act as independent political individuals.

Hannah Arendt's concept of political interaction<sup>2</sup> could play an important role in art and culture, in that this interaction can affect other areas of society and contribute to its development. If the field of integrated art practice is seen as a potential form for the interdisciplinary interaction of different cultures, it can also help create a new political understanding. It regards mutual reactions and dependencies, which conventionally create separation, as chances for integration. The prerequisite is, of course, to abandon existing definitions in order to reconstruct them in a networked and integrated way.

It would be a misunderstanding to speak of 'applied social art', so RG coined the term 'The (Re)Socialisation of Art'.<sup>3</sup> This concept incorporates the reciprocal effects of the fields of art and society. This resocialization is a demand to create a free space beyond politics and the established structures and institutions.

With the shift from a material definition of art towards a process-based approach in the social sphere, it becomes possible to implement direct interventions in everyday life and reduce social deficits. Integrated forms of cooperation and participation can help to formulate cultural and social values in society and bring them to consciousness or, as the



British-based researcher and writer François Matarasso says, “raise questions, imagine alternatives, communicate experiences and share ideas”.<sup>4</sup>

## PLAYING WITH REALITIES

The ‘renaming projects’<sup>5</sup> of RG allocate temporary names to streets to visualize transformative processes in society. Jacques Rancière speaks about the redevelopment of a common territory.<sup>6</sup> For that reason it is important to analyze the political potential of space. By placing in question the established determinants of, for example, the urban space, the potential for critique can unfold.

A new street name changes the perspective and plays with different and ambivalent realities, so that contradictions become apparent. We try to create a new utopian space beyond preconceptions and definitions. With a change in perception by means of a public intervention or action, a social dialogue becomes possible that can reach different audiences.

Starting point of the project is the fact that street names have always expressed a specific idea on how history or reality should be viewed. This becomes evident when we remember how many streets have been renamed in times of change in political systems.

The renamings are a flexible intervention that analyses a specific social environment, networks local activists and creates consciousness for current and future issues. The concept deals with the exploration of interfaces and transformations between physical and socio-psychological processes. We are interested in individual and group-dynamic cultural relationships between citizens and the environment.

The objective of the activities is to create a new consciousness for local identities, get starting points for a public dialogue, create awareness of the function of public space, explore the relation between people’s personal and social needs and to develop an artist’s practice that explores and interacts at the same time.

The artist’s assignment is to initiate, moderate and map processes. Fredric Jameson speaks of the development of aesthetics, theories and policies of ‘cognitive mapping’.<sup>7</sup> This implies that artists and theoreticians can orientate the global social space.

The practice oscillates between social-scientific analysis and aesthetic realization to catalyse critical thinking about structural changes. Core topics are migration and urban development, environmental consciousness, safety and the role of art in society. The idea is to strengthen public consciousness of social-political issues, network the different involved partners and institutions and raise awareness of the city as a space for social dialogue.

## GRAZING FOR LIBERTY

Social inclusion, mainly in Western post-industrial societies, often takes the simple form of consumerism. The erosion of social and political institutions leads to a loss of trust in democratic processes and creates parallel worlds. The predetermined value systems continue to dominate the social, political and economic space and the media. In a society that has lost its solidarity, there are fields of action for artists and cultural workers in which they are able to generate solidarity with excluded groups and promote critical consciousness.

A discursive cultural practice can contribute to rethinking and redeveloping social values. It is therefore important to synchronize aesthetic principles with ethical, social and ecological policies. There is an emancipatory task in challenging existing structures of governance and institutions. Identification is created by the participation and integration of various collaborators. Together with urban activists and an environmental group, RG organized ‘The Cow Demonstration’<sup>8</sup> in Zagreb, Croatia. The intervention brought attention to the endangered banks of the river Sava, an undeveloped area within the city. The question was whether the banks would continue to be a green spot open for public use or whether the area would be developed and commercialized. The Cow Demonstration was a peaceful demonstration on the riverbanks, where a herd of cattle wore slogans on their backs. Protest banners were developed in cooperation with the local environmental NGO, ‘Green Action’. The cows grazed against the interests of private investors and for the unique opportunity to protect a free space for future use as a green area.

## A COGNITIVE CONCEPT OF ART

Art is neither a fig leaf to cover society's bareness nor a condiment, like ketchup to French fries. Rather, we consider art a field with a precise function, meaning that it is cognitive, that it helps gain insight and includes an element of learning. The art field therefore has a role in facing up to the challenges in contemporary society. In such a way we see connections to fields like education, sports, environment and social dialogue. An integrated art practice can also contribute to transforming education and finding new ways of learning in dialogue with other disciplines. The emphasis is on process-oriented, dialogic forms, including participation and creation of social values.

In the field of art, one can speak of a cognitive concept of art that applies empirical methodologies and merges research areas with the aim of gaining knowledge. Sociologists, for instance, speak about art that activates an artistic research of society and consciousness. The sociologist Karl-Siegbert Rehberg puts the emphasis on the quality of its catalyzing potential:

*Sociological artists deliver a cool, so to say de-ideologized critique of ideology, an analysis of camouflage formulas and power interests by simply exposing them, a decoding of those things never questioned and taken for granted whose background we are not aware of any more. This is the purpose of any critical analysis. And art projects of this kind contribute to transform it into a new discursive space and successfully apply it.*<sup>9</sup>

Art and culture cannot solve the structural problems of society, which are always to be seen in a global context. But they can contribute to a public consciousness of the problems and find solutions through individual and local implementations. By working in an integrative way, critical content is also being communicated. The protagonists have to remain vigilant in order to stay independent and to avoid instrumentalization.

From this, strategies of action can be derived that are capable of developing new cultural and governing techniques. It is also about reaching new forms of integrated learning and knowledge production beyond predefined areas. Subversion occurs when new cultural techniques are applied in the form of new policies.

Copy-editor: Mark Brogan

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Yana Milev

## Cluster VII: Design Sociology

With *Design Sociology*, Cluster VII defines the third branch of Design Anthropology. The field of (social) bodies deals with sociological concepts such as behaviour, communication and exchange, but also mobility and survival in the focus of an expanded concept of design. Crowds and masses, bodies and containers appear as networks, swarms and multitudes that negotiate revolutions, migrations and disasters. Gilles Deleuze summarizes his essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control” with the statement that “The operation of markets is now the instrument of social control”. Here the euphemistic instrumentalization of crowds through markets and marketing becomes a strategy of biopolitical submission, crowd affiliation and conformity. The global expansion of the marketing zone has attained a radical influence on the creation of identities, identifications and emotions. This is what the *Design Sociology* concept stands for.

What began with Pierre Bourdieu as a sociology of symbolic forms has now reached a new dimension as a sociology of brands and branding. The aesthetics of commodities are not the only product of brand name capitalism. In general, government strategies and governance—that of companies, agencies, supranational organizations and so on—are unthinkable without brand name capitalism (semiocapitalism). It is interesting to note the social, emotional and cognitive usurpation through the presence of advertising and corporate brand names in public spaces, as well as the creation of consumption groups (in other words, associations to brands or corporations) and, conversely, the exclusion from brand consumption. On the level of brands and other affiliations that can be attained through money, distinction can be purchased, inclusions and exclusions are performed, and religious affiliations, affiliations with elites or even a family are questioned and defined anew. The role of brand name sociology and especially the analysis of neuromarketing, which should not be underestimated, stand in a proportional relationship to phenomena of *angst*. If brands have an influence on behaviour, identities and emotions, then exclusion from the consumption of brands—for example, in the case of a precarious social position—creates specific fears. *Angst* is created and investigated in the biopolitics and psycho-politics of marketing and governance as symptom and pathogenic effect, belonging to the group of symptoms that result from mental concentration camp effects (*Lagereffekte*), among which are the standardization and fitting of perceptions, diseases and basic needs of consumption. In the conceptual

outline of this seventh chapter, I am making reference to the theories of the sociologists Kai-Uwe Hellmann and Eva Illouz. Their contributions could not be integrated here, but they should certainly be mentioned by name. I would also like to give special attention to Walter Benjamin's short essay “Kapitalismus als Religion”; it has influenced entire generations of sociologists and cultural critics and should be seen as a visionary anticipation of brand name norms and battles that have been established worldwide.

In Blocks A, B and C of this chapter, central sociological terms such as society, mobility and survival are discussed.

In Block A, the attempt is made to sketch out three perspectives of design sociology from three different positions. In the French criminologist and social psychologist Gabriel Tarde's essay, the subject of mimesis is taken up repeatedly, not as a form of knowledge and cultural technology as in Cluster IV (“Design of the In/Human”), but rather in a sociological sense as a law of imitation for the creation and renewal of social phenomena. In reference to the German sociologist Martina Löw's concept of a sociology of space, her contribution discusses the active role of communication and negotiation for the creation of spaces or spatial atmospheres in a sociological sense. The contribution by the German sociologists and cultural scientists Stephan Moebius and Sophia Prinz introduces a recent position in design sociology. In the essay, Moebius/Prinz outline design as an aesthetic signature of society.

The authors from Block B investigate the idea of mobility in different ways. The German psychologist and migration researcher Mark Terkessidis and the German cultural scientist Tom Holert have worked as an authors' collective on articles on migration and precarity since the beginning of the millennium. Among other things, they have analyzed the phenomenon of trans-nomadism and described the proportional relationship between migration and tourism in their book *Fliehkraft*. In their contribution for this volume, they speak of the “state of mobility” as analogous to a “state of emergency”.

The American/Swiss art historian Philip Ursprung investigates the correlation between globalization, biopolitics and architecture in his contribution to this volume. The concept of work has been changing radically in the context of global governance, combining cognitive work with increasing mobility and flexibility, but also with an increase in precarity. The container as a symbol of transport, dwelling and work has become significant. Since the Tunisian revolution in 2010, mobility has reached a new sociological dimension. Individual, user-specific crowdsourcing of image and text

messages via mobile devices has not only changed the role of journalism and political agents in areas of disasters and violence, but also that of consumers. The French photographer Olivier Coulangue reproduces anonymous images from the internet, thus giving them a quality that internet images have long since lost in their abundance and from the perspective of debates on information pollution. In addition, Coulangue generates the location of an anonymous gaze in every single reproduction. It is here that chance, technology and political presence join to form an emotion in the image.

The authors in Block C have oriented their contributions towards questions relating to the survival of social systems and the potential for the transformation of emergent orders, including their potential for design. For the constitution of Block C, as well as the constitution of emergency design theory, the position of the eminent disaster sociologist Lars Clausen († 2010) is definitive. American positions from the cultural anthropologist Anthony Oliver Smith, the sociologist Mike Davis (*Planet of Slums*) and the author Gregory Button (*Disaster Culture*), among others, are in correspondence with German disaster sociology. In contrast to the pioneers of disaster sociology and anthropology, positions from younger authors are given a podium here. Mark Kammerbauer, a German-American urbanist and architect, writes about the design character of 'schismourbanism'. Gabriele Hadl, an Austrian media sociologist who lives in Japan, writes about 'emergency design' during the Fukushima catastrophe. For this volume, architect and artist Marjetica Potrč designs a series of 'urgent houses' that all stand in a direct relationship to zones of emergencies. Her project shows selected examples of 'emergency designs'

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#### **A: Society**

*Gabriel Tarde,*

*Perspectives for a Design Sociology I*

*Martina Löw,*

*Perspectives for a Design Sociology II*

*Stephan Moebius, Sophia Prinz,*

*Perspectives for a Design Sociology III*

*Yana Milev (VE)*

#### **B: Mobility**

*Mark Terkessidis, Tom Holert*

*Philip Ursprung*

*Olivier Coulangue (VE)*

*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

#### **C: Survival (Emergency Design)**

*Mark Kammerbauer*

*Gabriele Hadl*

*Marjetica Potrč (VE)*

*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

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Gabriel Tarde

## Mimikry: Social Resemblances and Imitation

In the first place, many points of anatomical or physiological likeness between two living species belonging to different types cannot be explained, apparently, by hereditary repetition, because in many cases the common progenitor to whom they may both be traced, is, or theoretically should be, without the characteristics in question. The whale, for example, assuredly does not inherit its fishlike shape from the common hypothetical forefather from which both fish and mammals must have developed. If a bee reminds us in its flight of a bird, we have still less reason for thinking that bird and bee have inherited their wings and elytra from their very remote ancestor, who was probably a creeping and non-flying creature. The same observation may be made about the similar instincts that are displayed, according to Darwin and Romanes, by many animals of very distant species. Take, for example, the instinct to sham death as a means of escape from danger. This instinct is common to the fox, to certain insects, spiders, serpents and birds. In this case, similarity of instinct can be accounted for only through homogeneity of physical environment. All these heterogeneous creatures have depended upon the same environment for the satisfaction of those fundamental wants which are essential to all life and which are identical in each one of them. Now, homogeneity of physical environment is nothing else but the uniform propagation of homogeneous waves of light or heat or sound through air or water that is itself composed of atoms in constant and uniform vibration. As for the homogeneity of the fundamental functions and properties of every cell, of all protoplasm (of nutrition, for example, or of irritability), must it not be explained through the molecular constitution of the ever homogeneous chemical elements of life, that is, according to hypothesis, through the inner rhythms of their indefinitely repeated movements, rather than through the transmission of characteristics, by fission or some other kind of reproduction, from the first protoplasmic germ, admitting that in the beginning only a single germ was spontaneously formed? Therefore, although the above class of analogies is not due to the vital or hereditary form of repetition, it has originated in its physical or vibratory form.

In like manner there are always between two separate peoples who have reached an original civilization by independent routes, certain general resemblances in language, mythology, politics, industry, art and literature, where mutual imitation plays no part. Quatrefages relates that "when Cook visited the New Zealanders, they were strangely

like the Highlanders of Rob Roy and MacIvor" (*Espèce humaine*, p. 336). Now, resemblance between the social organization of the Maoris and the ancient Scotch clans is certainly not due to any common ground of traditions, and no philologist would amuse himself by deriving their respective tongues from a common parent language. When Cortés reached Mexico, he found that the Aztecs, like many Old World nations, were possessed of a king and orders of nobility and of agricultural and industrial classes. Their agriculture, with its floating islands and perfected system of irrigation, was suggestive of China; their architecture, their painting and their hieroglyphic writing, of Egypt. Their calendar testified, in spite of its peculiar character, to astronomical knowledge which corresponded to that of contemporary Europeans. Although their religion was sanguinary, it resembled Christianity in some of its rites, particularly in those of baptism and confession. In certain instances the coincidences of detail are so astonishing that they have led some people to believe that Old World arts and institutions were brought over directly by shipwrecked Europeans.<sup>1</sup> But in these comparisons and in an infinite number of others of the same kind, is it not nearer the truth to recognize the fundamental unity of human nature on the one hand and the uniformity of external nature on the other? In human nature, those organic wants whose satisfaction is the end of all social evolution are everywhere the same; all human beings have the same senses and the same brain structure. In external nature, about the same resources are offered for the satisfaction of about the same wants, and approximately the same spectacles to approximately the same eyes, consequently the world's industries, arts, perceptions, myths and theories must be all pretty much alike. These resemblances, like those referred to above, would be instances of the general principle that all likeness is born of repetition. But, although they are themselves social, they are caused by repetitions of a biological or physical order, by the hereditary transmission of the human functions and organs which constitute the human races, and by the vibratory transmission of the temperatures, colours, sounds, electrical currents and chemical affinities which constitute the climes and soils inhabited and cultivated by man.

Here we have the objection or the exception in its full force. In spite of its apparent gravity, it merely offers an opportunity of copying in sociology a distinction that is usual in comparative anatomy between *analogies* and *homologies*. Now, resemblances such as that between the insect's elytra and the bird's wings seem superficial and meaningless to the naturalist. They may be very striking, but he pays no attention to them.<sup>2</sup> He almost denies their existence. Whereas he attaches the highest value to resemblances between the wing of the bird, the limb of the reptile and the fin of the fish. From his point of view these are close and deep-seated resemblances, quite different from the

former kind. If this form of discrimination is legitimate for the naturalist, I do not see why the sociologist should be refused the right of treating the *functional analogies* of different languages, religions, governments and civilizations with equal contempt, and their anatomical homologies with equal respect. Philologists and mythologists are already filled with this spirit. To the philologist there is no significance in the fact that the word for deity in Aztec is *teotl*, and in Greek, *théos*. In this he sees nothing but a coincidence; consequently he does not assert that *teotl* and *théos* are the same word. On the other hand, he does undertake to prove that *bischof* is the same word as *episcopus*.<sup>3</sup> The reason of this is that no linguistic element should ever be detached at any instant in its evolution from all its anterior transformations nor considered apart from the other elements which it reflects and which reflect it.

Accordingly, any likeness that may be proved to exist between the isolated phases of two vocables which have been taken from their own language families and so separated from all that which goes to make up their real life is only a factitious connection between two abstractions and not a true link between two real things. This consideration may be generalized.<sup>4</sup>

But this answer, which is nothing more than the denial of troublesome resemblances, is inadequate. On the contrary, I hold that there certainly are many real and important resemblances which have been spontaneously produced between civilizations without any known or probable means of intercommunication. Moreover, I admit that, in general, when the current of human genius has once set towards inventions and discoveries, it finds itself confined by a sum of subjective and objective conditions, like a river by its banks, between narrow limits of development.

Accordingly, even in distant regions there may be a certain approximate similarity between its channels. It may even chance to show, less often, however, than we might suppose, a parallelism of certain pregnant ideas,<sup>5</sup> of ideas which may be very simple or, at times, quite complicated, which have appeared independently and which are equivalent to, if not identical with, one another.<sup>6</sup> But, in the first place, in as much as men have been forced by the uniformity of their organic wants to follow the same trend of ideas, we have a fact that belongs to the biological, and not to the social, order of resemblances. Consequently the biological and not the social principle of repetition is applicable.

In a parallel manner, when conditions of light and sound, identical to all intents and purposes, force animals belonging to different families to develop organs of sight and

hearing which are not without some points of resemblance, the likeness, in this respect, is physical, not biological; it depends upon vibration, and therefore comes under the principle of physical repetition.

Finally, how and why did human genius come to run its course at all, unless by virtue of certain initial causes which, in arousing it from its original torpor, also stirred up, one by one, the deep potential wants of the human soul? And were not these causes certain primordial and capital inventions and discoveries which began to spread through imitation and which inspired their imitators with a taste for invention and discovery? The first crude conceptions of the rudiments of language and religion on the part of some ape-man (I will speculate later on upon how this was done) carried man over the threshold from the animal to the social world. This difficult step must have been an unique event; without it, our richly developed world would have been chained to the limbo of unrealized possibilities. Without this spark, the flame of progress would never have been kindled in the primeval forests of savagery. This original act of imagination and its spread through imitation was the true cause, the *sine qua non* of progress. The immediate acts of imitation which it prompted were not its sole results. It suggested other acts of imagination which in turn suggested new acts and so on without end.

Thus everything is related to it. Every social resemblance precedes from that initial act of imitation of which it was the subject. I think I may compare it to that no less extraordinary event which occurred on the globe, many thousands of centuries in advance, when, for the first time, a tiny mass of protoplasm originated in some unknown way and began to multiply by fission. Every resemblance between existing forms of life is the outcome of this first repetition in heredity. For it would be futile to conjecture, purely gratuitously, that protoplasm, or language, or mythology originated at more than one centre of creation. As a matter of fact, granted the hypothesis of polygenism, we could not deny that, after a more or less prolonged struggle and competition, the best and most prolific of the different spontaneous specimens must have triumphed alone in the extermination or assimilation of its rivals.

There are two facts which we should not overlook: first, that the desire to invent and discover grows, like any other desire, with its satisfaction; second, that every invention resolves itself into the timely intersection in one mind of a current of imitation with another current which re-enforces it, or with an intense perception of some objective fact which throws new light on some old idea, or with the lively experience of a need that finds unhopd-for resources in some familiar practice. But if we analyse the feeling

and perceptions in question, we shall find that they themselves may be resolved almost entirely, and more and more completely as civilization advances, into psychological elements formed under the influence of example. Every natural phenomenon is seen through the prisms and coloured glasses of a mother tongue, or national religion, or ruling prejudice, or scientific theory, from which the most unbiased and unimpassioned observation cannot emancipate itself without self-destruction. Moreover, every organic want is experienced in the characteristic form which has been sanctioned by surrounding example. The social environment, in defining and actualizing this form, has, in truth, appropriated it. Even desires for nutrition and reproduction have been transformed, so to speak, into national products. Sexual desire is changed into a desire to be married according to the different religious rites of different localities. Desire for food is expressed in one place as a desire for a certain kind of bread or meat, in another, for a certain kind of grain or vegetable. This is all the more true of the natural desire for amusement. It expresses itself as desire for circus sports, for bull-fights, for classical tragedies, for naturalistic novels, for chess, for piquet, for whist. From this point of view several lines of imitation intersected one another in the brilliant eighteenth-century idea of applying the steam-engine, which had already been employed in factories, to the satisfaction of the desire for ocean travel—a desire which had originated through the spread of many antecedent naval inventions. The subsequent adaptation of the screw to the steamboat, both of which had been known separately for a long time, was a similar idea. When Harvey had optical proof of the valves of the veins, and when this combined in his mind with his existing anatomical knowledge, he discovered the circulation of the blood. This discovery was hardly anything more, on the whole, than the encounter of traditional truths with others (namely, with the methods and practices which Harvey had long followed docilely as a disciple, and which alone enabled him to finally advance his master proposition). The development of a new theorem in the mind of a geometrician through the combination of two old theorems is pretty nearly analogous.

Since, then, all inventions and discoveries are composed of prior imitations, excepting certain extraneous accretions, of themselves unfruitful, and since these composites are themselves imitated and are destined to become, in turn, demerits of still more complex combinations, it follows that there is a genealogical tree of such successful initiatives and that they appear in an *irreversible*, although otherwise indeterminate, sequence, suggestive of the pangenetic theory of the old philosophers. Every successful invention actualizes one of the thousand possible, or rather, given certain conditions, necessary, inventions, which are carried in the womb of its parent invention, and by its appearance it annihilates the majority of those possibilities and makes possible a host of heretofore

impossible inventions. These latter inventions will or will not come into existence according to the extent and direction of the radiation of its imitation through communities which are already illuminated by other lights. To be sure, only the most useful, if you please, of the future inventions—and by most useful I mean those which best answer the problems of the time—will survive, for every invention, like every discovery, is an answer to a problem. But aside from the fact that these problems,<sup>7</sup> inasmuch as they are themselves the vague expressions of certain indefinite wants, are capable of manifold solutions; the point of interest is to know how, why and by whom they have been raised; why one date was chosen rather than another and, finally, why one solution was chosen in one place, and another in another place.<sup>8</sup>

All this depends upon individual initiatives, upon the nature of the scholars and inventors of the past. From the earliest of these, the greatest, perhaps, our avalanche of progress has rolled down out of the zenith of history.

It is difficult for us to imagine how necessary genius and exceptional circumstances were for the development of the simplest ideas. To tame and make use of harmless indigenous animals, instead of merely hunting them, would seem at first to be the most natural, as well as the most fruitful, of initiatives, an inevitable initiative, in fact. Yet we know that, although the horse originally belonged to the American fauna, it had disappeared from America when that continent was discovered, and, according to Bourdeau, its disappearance is generally explained (*Conquête du monde animal*) on the ground that “in many places (in the Old World as well) it had been annihilated by the hunter for food, before the herdsman had conceived the idea of domesticating it”. And so we see that this idea was far from being an inevitable one. The domestication of the horse depended upon some individual accident. It had to occur in some one place whence it could spread through imitation. But what is true of this quadruped is undoubtedly true of all domestic animals and of all cultivated plants. Now, can we imagine humanity without these prime inventions!

In general, if we do not wish to explain resemblances between communities which are separated by more or less insurmountable obstacles (although these may not have existed in the past), through the common possession of some entirely forgotten primitive model, only one other explanation, as a rule, remains. Each community must have exhausted all the inventions which were possible in a given line save the one adopted, and eliminated all its other useless or less useful ideas. But the comparative barrenness of imagination which characterizes primitive people is opposed to this hypothesis.

We should then accept the former hypothesis and refuse to renounce it without good reason. Is it certain, for example, that the idea of building lake dwellings came to the ancient inhabitants of both Switzerland and New Guinea without any suggestion of imitation? The same question arises in relation to the cutting and polishing of flints, to the use of tendons and fish-bones for sewing or to the rubbing together of two pieces of wood for fire. Before we deny the possibility of a diffusion of these ideas through a worldwide process of gradual and prolonged imitation, the immense duration of prehistoric times must be brought to mind, and we must not overlook the evidence of the existence of relations between very distant peoples not only in the age of bronze, when tin was sometimes brought from a great distance, but also in the smooth stone and perhaps even in the rough stone age. The great invasions which have raged at all periods of history must have aided and often universalized the spread of civilizing ideas. Even in prehistoric times this was true. Indeed it must have been especially true in those times, for the ease with which great conquests are effected depends upon the primitive and disintegrated nature of the people to be conquered. The irruption of the Mongols in the thirteenth century is a good instance of these periodic deluges, and we know that it broke down, in the full tide of medievalism, the closest of race barriers and put China and Hindustan into communication with each other and with Europe.<sup>9</sup>

Even in default of such violent events, a worldwide interchange of examples could not have failed to take place eventually. At this point, let me make the following general remark: the majority of historians are not inclined to admit the influence of one civilization upon another unless they can prove the existence of some intercommercial or military relations. They think, implicitly, that the action of one nation upon another at a distance, of Egypt upon Mesopotamia, for example, or of China upon the Roman Empire, presupposes the transportation of troops or the sending of ships or caravans from one to the other. They would not admit, for example, that currents of Babylonian and Egyptian civilization may have intermingled before the conquest of Mesopotamia by Egypt in the sixteenth century before our era. Oppositely, in virtue of the same point of view, as soon as a similarity of works of art, of monuments, of tombs, of mortuary relics, proves to them the action of one civilization upon another, they at once conclude that wars or regular transactions of some kind must have occurred between them.

In view of the relations which I have established between the three forms of universal repetition, the above preconception suggests the error of the old-time physicists, who saw in every physical action between two distant bodies, like the imparting of heat or light, the proof of a transmission of matter. Did not Newton himself think that the

diffusion of solar light was produced by the emission of particles projected by the sun through boundless space? There is as much difference between my point of view and the ordinary one as there is in optics between the vibratory theory and the theory of emission. Of course I do not deny that social action is effected, or rather aroused, by the movements of armies or merchant vessels; but I challenge the view that such movements are the sole or even the principal mode through which the contagion of civilization takes place. Men of different civilizations come into mutual contact on their respective frontiers, where, independently of war or trade, they are naturally inclined to imitate one another. And so, without its being necessary for them to displace one another in the sense of checking the spread of one another's examples, they continually and over unlimited distances react upon one another, just as the molecules of the sea drive forward its waves without displacing one another in their direction. Consequently, long before the arrival of Pharaoh's army in Babylon, sundry external observances and industrial secrets had passed from hand to hand, in some way or other, from Egypt to Babylon.

Here we have the first principle of history. Let us note closely the continuity, the power and the irresistibility of its action. Given the necessary time, it will inevitably reach out to the ends of the earth. Now, in view of the fact that man's past is to be reckoned in hundreds of thousands of years, there is ample reason to think that it must have spread through the entire universe before the nearby historic ages which we call antiquity, began.

Moreover, it is not necessary that the thing which is propagated should be beautiful or useful or rational. In the Middle Ages, for example, a grotesque custom existed in many different places of parading, seated backwards upon an ass, husbands who had been beaten by their wives. Obviously such an absurd idea could not have arisen spontaneously at the same time in different brains. Was it not due to imitation? And yet M. Baudrillard is led by current prejudice to believe that popular festivals originated of themselves without any conscious or deliberate individual initiative. "The festivals of *Tarasque* at Tarascon, of *Graouilli* at Metz, of *Loup vert* at Jumièges, of *Gargouille* at Rouen, and many others, he says, were never established, in all probability, by a formal decree [I admit this] or by premeditated desire [the error is here]; they were made periodic by unanimous and *spontaneous agreement*". Imagine thousands of people simultaneously conceiving and *spontaneously* carrying out such extraordinary things!



To sum up, everything which is social and non-vital or non-physical in the phenomena of societies is caused by imitation. This is true of both social similarities and dissimilarities. And so, the epithet *natural* is generally and not improperly bestowed upon the spontaneous and non-suggested resemblances which arise between different societies in every order of social facts. If we like to look at societies on the side of their spontaneous resemblances, we have the right to call this aspect of their laws, cults, governments, customs and crimes, natural law, natural religion, natural governments, natural industry, natural art (I do not mean naturalistic art), natural crime. Now, such spontaneous resemblances have, of course, some significance. But, unfortunately, we waste our time in trying to get at their exact meaning, and because of their irremediable vagueness and arbitrariness of character, they must end by repelling the positive and scientifically trained mind.

I may be reminded of the fact that although imitation is a social thing, the tendency to imitate in order to avoid the trouble of inventing, a tendency which is born of instinctive indolence, is an absolutely natural thing. But although this tendency may, of necessity, precede the first social act, the act whereby it is satisfied, yet its own strength and direction varies very much according to the nature of existing habits of imitation. It may still be argued that this tendency is only one form of a desire which I myself hold to be innate and deep-seated and from which I deduce, later on, all the laws of social reason, namely, desire for a maximum of strong and stable belief. If these laws exist, the resemblances which they produce in people's ideas and institutions have, in as much as there can be nothing social in their origin, a natural and non-social cause. For example, the savages of America, Africa and Asia all explain sickness on the ground of diabolical possession, the entrance of evil spirits into the body of the diseased—this, in itself, is quite a singular coincidence; then when they have once adopted this explanation they all conceive of the idea of curing through exorcism as a logical outcome. In reply, I say that although it cannot be denied that there is a certain logical orientation on the part of the presocial man, the desire for logical coordination has been enhanced and directed by the influences of the social environment, where it is subject to the widest and strangest fluctuations, and where, like every other desire, it waxes strong and definite according to the measure of satisfaction which it receives. We shall see the proof of this at another time.

Tarde, Gabriel, *Laws of Imitation*, Elsie Clews Parsons trans., New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1903, pp. 37-51.

1. In fact, there are many striking points of comparison. Civilization in America, as in Europe, has passed successively "from the age of stone to the age of bronze by the same methods and under the same forms. The *teocalli* of Mexico correspond to the pyramids of Egypt; the *mounds* of North America may be compared to the *tumuli* of Brittany and Scythia; the *pylônes* of Peru reproduce those of Etruria and Egypt" (Clémence Royer, *Revue scientifique*, 31 July 1886). It is a still more surprising fact that the only affinities of the Basque tongue seem to be with certain of the American languages. The bearing of these resemblances is weakened by the fact that the points of comparison are not drawn from two given civilizations, but, more artificially, from a large number of different civilizations in both the Old World and the New.
2. The phenomenon of *mimicry* receives more attention. Hitherto this enigma has been undecipherable, but if the key to it were really given by natural selection, it might be explained by the ordinary laws of heredity, by the hereditary fixation and accumulation of the individual variations most favourable to the welfare of the species which, in this way, comes to take on the lineaments of another as a disguise.
3. The coincidence is the more singular, too, because the *tl* in *teotl* may be ignored, since this combination of consonants is the regular termination of Mexican words. *Téo* and *théo* (in the dative) have absolutely the same sense and the same sound.
4. Although customs of mutilation, circumcision, for example, tattooing, or cutting the hair, in sign of religious or political subordination, are found in the most distant parts of the globe, in America and in Polynesia, as well as in the Old World; although the totems of the South American savages remind us, if only a little, of the coats of arms of our medieval knights, etc.; these *coincidences* and resemblances merely prove that actions are governed by beliefs, and that beliefs are largely suggested to man through the phenomena of external nature and through the innate tendencies of his own nature. The depths of human nature are the same everywhere, and in the phenomena of external nature there is, in spite of climatic variation, more similarity than dissimilarity. I admit that such analogies may not be caused by imitation. But they are at any rate only gross and indefinite. They are without sociological significance, just as the fact that insects are possessed of limbs, like vertebrates, and of eyes and wings, like birds, is insignificant from a biological point of view. On the other hand, although the bird's wing looks very different from the wing of the bat, they are really part of the same evolution and are possessed of the same past and of the possibility of experiencing the same future. In their successive transformations, these organs correspond in an endless number of particulars. They are *homologous*. Whereas, the bird's wing never has anything in common with the wing of the insect, except during one phase of their very unlike developments. Did the same ceremonies and the same religious meaning attach to circumcision among the Aztecs as among the Hebrews? On the contrary, there was as much difference between them as between the Aztec rite of confession and ours. And yet this matter of ceremonies is the important thing from the social point of view; for it is the special part of the social environment which is directed by individual activity. Besides, this part is constantly on the increase.

5. They are all the more apt to be simple ideas, ideas exacting but a slight effort of the imagination. This is true of some of the strangest freaks of custom. For example, in reading the work of M. Jametel upon China, I was surprised to see an account of the custom of *eructation* practised as *an act of courtesy* at the close of a meal. Now, according to M. Garnier and M. Hugonnet (*La Grèce nouvelle*, 1889), the same ceremony is observed by modern Greeks. In both countries, evidently, the desire to give ample proof of repletion had suggested this ridiculous, although natural, custom.
6. The same needs, for example, both in the Old World and in the New, prompted the ideas of domesticating the ox and taming the chamois in the former, and in the latter, of taming the bison, the buffalo and the llama (see Bourdeau, *Conquête du monde animal*, p. 212).
7. In politics they are called questions: the Eastern question, the social question, etc.
8. Sometimes the same solution is adopted almost everywhere, although the problem may have lent itself to other solutions. That is, you may say, because the choice in question is the most natural one. True, but is not this the very reason, perhaps, why, although it was disclosed only in one place, and not everywhere at the same time, it ended by spreading in all directions? For example, almost all primitive peoples think of the future abode of the wicked as subterranean and of that of the good as celestial. The similarity of such conceptions is often minute. According to Tylor, the Salish Indians of Oregon believe that the bad dwell after death in a place of eternal snow, where they "are tantalised by the sight of game which they cannot kill, and water which they cannot drink" [Tylor, Edward B, *Primitive Culture*, II, 4, London, 1871 – translator's note].
9. In a very interesting article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of 1 May 1890, M. Goblet d'Alviella aptly comments upon the rapidity and facility of the circulation of religious symbols by means of travellers, of slavery and of *currency*, the latter of which is a veritable system of moving bas-reliefs. This is true also of political symbols. *The two-headed eagle*, for example, on the arms of both the Emperor of Austria and the Czar of Russia has come down to them from the ancient Germanic empire. It was brought there through the Eastern expedition of Frederick II in the thirteenth century, when he borrowed it from the Turks. Furthermore, M. Goblet d'Alviella says that there are reasons for thinking that the astonishing likeness between this two-headed eagle and the eagle which is also two-headed and which figures upon the most ancient bas-reliefs of Mesopotamia, is due to a series of imitations. Note in this same article the reference to the widespread imitation of the *Gamma* cross as a luck piece. It is probable, on the other hand, that the idea of using the cross to symbolize the god of the air or the compass-card arose spontaneously and not through imitation in Mesopotamia and in the Aztec empire.

Martina Löw

## The Emergence of Space through the Interplay of Action and Structures

If one considers space as the relational order(ing) of social goods and human beings, one has to systematically differentiate between the elements of that order and the process in which that order comes about. Human beings do not merely act as building blocks in the constitution of space; rather, they are usually perceived or defined as constituents by the set of social goods through which they undertake their everyday actions, be it in planning, art or science, and through which they are also linked to other constituents. Thus it is only *through its link to human beings* that space can at first emerge. Through its emergence, human beings are not only able to link things but are also able to link other people or social groups (who are themselves part of this interlinking process). Consequently, the emergence of space mainly involves this process of linking or ordering. This occurs under pre-structured conditions, as I will exemplify in stages below.

### SPACING AND THE CAPACITY FOR SYNTHESIS

I distinguish two fundamentally different processes in the construction of space. First, space originates through the ordering or positioning of social goods and living beings, or, rather, through the positioning of primary symbolic markers, in order to identify goods and beings *per se* (for instance, entrance and exit signs). This process will from now be referred to as *spacing*.<sup>1</sup> 'Spacing' thus denotes locating, constructing or positioning. Examples of this formation of space include the display of goods within a supermarket, the self-positioning of people in relation to others, the construction of buildings, the mapping out of national boundaries and the networking of computers. It is an act of positioning in relation to other positions. In terms of portable goods or people, 'spacing' refers both to the moment of positioning as well as to the movement from one position to the next. Secondly—as already pointed out by Norbert Elias<sup>2</sup> and Dieter Läßle<sup>3</sup>—the construction of space also necessitates a *capacity for synthesis*, which entails the capacity for goods and people to be connected to space through the processes of perception, ideation and recall.

In the day-to-day activity of constituting space, 'spacing' and synthesis are concurrent, since action is always processual. Indeed, locating, building or positioning—in other words, 'spacing'—is impossible without synthesis, i.e., without the simultaneous contextual connection of social goods and human beings to form space. For instance, although municipal buildings can be spatially connected through movement, the buildings' connection to a space can only be initially formed by cognitive and/or analytical synthesis. Even in macrosociological systems, the constitution of space is based on these dual processes. The space created collectively by global cities is based both on 'spacing' processes, which, in this case, take the form, above all, of digital networks carrying permanent flows of information and data transfer, as well as on the synthetic processes carried out by the individual actors involved. Just as the behaviour of business people, working in the single global space that is the synthesis of New York, Tokyo, London, Paris and Hong Kong, is determined by that synthesis, so the 'spacing'—in the sense of the positioning and transfer of information—determines the synthesis, and vice versa.

Moreover, synthesis as a conceptual abstraction does not solely correlate to the subsequent 'spacing' within the financial world, but can also apply to the realms of art, urban planning and architecture. In these instances, objects are linked to space on the drawing board, through computer simulations or on paper. This linking can guide or affect further action but need not directly correlate onto subsequent 'spacing'.

This aspect within the constitution of space—the aspect of synthesis—makes it possible, through the process of perception, recall or ideation, for groups of social goods and people to become a single element, a building block, in the construction of space. My thesis is, therefore, that space is the relational order(ing) of social goods and living entities. Two analytically different processes—'spacing' and synthesis—constitute space. The latter process enables groups of social goods and people to be joined into becoming a single element.

Space comes into being through action, through linking and positioning/building/storing, etc. It is worth taking a closer look at the stages of this emergence—the process of 'spacing' and synthesis. When I turn to focus on the day-to-day activity of constituting space, I am drawn to observe, first of all, the need to make a conceptual distinction for those special cases when space is constructed on the drawing board, the blank sheet or the computer, as it is exactly here that two quasi-spaces can arise simultaneously. One plans a space—for example a family home—and positions it within another space, an architect's office. This latter positioning also requires synthesis. Thus it involves the

constitution of two spaces, but without allowing the perception of one space to interfere with the constitution of the other. This ability, the ability to conceptually constitute different spaces simultaneously, is a necessary requirement for the understanding of cyberspace and its associated technologies.

But before going any further, I want to focus on the day-to-day act of constituting space through action and behaviour. I return once more to the use of an example. For the sake of simplification, I will ignore the fact that this particular construction of space involves the use of memory, using it instead as a working draft for the purposes of research. While walking through the Old City of Jerusalem—in performing an action—Josef Tal synthesizes narrow streets, high walls, ashlar and a narrow strip of blue sky into a space. His steps relate to the objects that are combined into a space. Eventually, he situates himself before the Wailing Wall, the key element of the spatial construction, to pray. Although the ashlar of the Wailing Wall symbolically constitute the most significant element of the spatial construction, they do not have an effect per se, but only in their given order(ing). Tal relates how the act of praying has altered since the demolition that took place. Since then, it is the interlinking of Wailing Wall, the terrain of the square and the people that constitutes the space.

This passage illustrates all the essential dimensions of the constitution of space: the routine paths of action, the structural dimension of spatiality, the deployment of the body and the potential for change. I now want to consider the derivation of each dimension, beginning with the repetitive constitution of spaces and the possibilities of change.

### REPETITIVE EVERYDAY LIFE

Tal leaves no room for doubt that others would constitute this space in the same way. He uses the generalized subject 'one' in his descriptions. He is thus describing two things: both that each time he approaches the Wailing Wall he would do so in the same way and for the same reasons (to pray or in celebration of religious occasions); and that he assumes every Jew would do so in the same way.

What he describes is true of most actions. People generally act repetitively. This means that they do not have to think long about which route they take, where they situate themselves, how they store goods or how they link things and people. They have developed

a series of habit-determined activities that help them organize their day-to-day life. Even when daily practices are disrupted or when there is a novel situation, it is possible to fall back on to routines. This can be further understood by a distinction made by Anthony Giddens<sup>4</sup> between discursive consciousness—that is, all of the things that social beings are capable of expressing verbally—and practical consciousness, which is the knowledge (both in the physical and the emotional sense) that beings actualize in everyday life without conscious reflection. These two forms of consciousness are further added to in everyday activity by the unconscious and repressed motivations that lie behind action.

The constitution of space, as a rule, is formed through an act of *practical consciousness*, which is illustrated by the fact that people are seldom self-aware of how they construct space. If a roadblock obstructs the route to the Wailing Wall or a demonstration prevents access to it, Tal has practical consciousness at his disposal offering alternatives, which, although deviating from day-to-day routines, also draw on repetitive action. He is also in principle able to put the construction of space into words and does so for his autobiography. That is to say, on enquiry or in reflexive contexts, part of the knowledge about spaces that, in everyday life, is driven by practical consciousness can be transferred to discursive consciousness. In line with Giddens, I understand reflexivity to be both the monitoring influence that social beings or agents exert on their lives, as well as their ability to justify their actions. Thus, people like Josef Tal can verbally express the constitution of space, reflect on it, discuss it and exert control over it. So what is essential to empirical research, for example, is also true for the constitution of space: that people are able to comprehend and explain how they construct space.

Elsewhere I turn to the question of reflexivity in the context of the potential for change. What interest me here are the repetitive nature of spatial construction (Tal's routines) and the generalizability of spaces presupposed by Josef Tal, which I will refer to as the institutionalization of spaces. Anyone strolling through various cities or differing neighbourhoods will discover the same order(ing) over and over again. Train stations throughout Germany increasingly resemble one another through the positioning of brightly coloured structures that serve as signposts, in the grouping of shops to form 'market squares' and in the positioning of oversized television monitors. Pedestrianized areas all over Germany also replicate the same order(ing) with one another. The spatial areas inside and around churches, parliament buildings, cemeteries or supermarkets are laid out in the same way, regardless of place and time. In supermarkets, for instance, the relational order(ing) of the shelves, the positioning of goods in relation to other



goods, the aisles people take to navigate around the shelving, the order(ing) of the tills, the trolleys and unavoidable entrance barrier are all institutionalized.

The order(ing) of people can likewise be institutionalized. All order(ing)s are tightly established when receiving a head of state. The space between a doctor and a patient is controlled. Marianne Wex<sup>5</sup> discovered, through analysing photographs, the same order(ing) across men and women. Men sit with their legs wide apart, holding their arms at a considerable distance from their body, whereas women sit with their legs tightly together, holding their arms across their body.

In habitual or customary social practices, these institutionalized order(ing)s are brought to life through behaviour. Without having to think too much, a person knows that the enclosed area next to the church is a cemetery and that it can therefore be synthesized into one space along with the church and churchyard. Shelves are routinely erected in a similar way across outlets, yet adult customers neither clamber over nor under them, but walk the frequently long distances around the display of goods. One does not come too close to the doctor and as a woman one leaves the armrest in an aeroplane to a man.

For Anthony Giddens, routines are a key factor for understanding social processes:

*Routines are as constitutive to the continuing reproduction of an individual's self in their everyday life as they are for social institutions; in fact institutions are what they are only by virtue of their continuous reproduction.*<sup>6</sup>

According to Giddens, it is within routines both that institutions are reproduced and actions are habitualized. He views routines as the ground on which the recursive nature of societal life is based. Social structures are recursively reproduced in the habitual repetition of day-to-day action. Routines provide certainty and "ontological security". Whilst the concept of routine developed out of microsociology in an attempt to solve problems within structural theory, the concept of institution presupposes the opposite rationale. Giddens argues that institutions are "the enduring features of societal life".<sup>7</sup> Institutions are permanent structures that are reproduced through routine.

If Josef Tal has no doubts over his constitution of space, this is because of both the certainty of his own routines and the institutionalization of synthesis and 'spacing'. Institutionalized spaces are those in which order(ing) remains effectual over and above the actions of agents within them and entails normative synthesizing and 'spacing'. As

institutionalized order(ing), space becomes objectified, meaning that—as a product of human activity—it is experienced objectively.<sup>8</sup> 'Spacing' and synthesis are institutionalized, for example, in a court of law. There are clear rules on how judges, barristers, public prosecutors, defendants and the public are to place themselves, not only for a specific court: the relational order(ing) is the same or similar in all comparable courts in Germany. The individual groups of people synthesize the space of the court through routines and thus take up their customary positions.

It must be kept in mind that positioning involves the negotiation of power relations. Power in this context is to be understood as a relational category, immanent in every relationship. The extent to which opportunities for action can be realized depends on the means of power available in a relationship and in a situation.<sup>9</sup> The space of the court is constituted differently from the position of the defendant than from that of the judge. Both, however, generally accept the institutionalized order(ing).

Michel Foucault<sup>10</sup> argues that the history of space as a concept and of order(ing) cannot be separated from the exercise of power.

*A whole history remains to be written of spaces—which would at the same time be the history of powers (both these terms in the plural)—from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat, institutional architecture from the classroom to the design of hospitals, passing via economic and political installations.*<sup>11</sup>

According to Foucault's analysis, just as there is resistance to power wherever it is practised and this resistance cannot exist outside the exercise of power,<sup>12</sup> so too positionings are linked to 'other' positionings, which Foucault terms 'heterotopias'. Heterotopias are positionings that are distinguished by the capacity to mirror other positionings. They are connected to other positionings, yet stand in contradiction to them.

Like in a mirror, heterotopias are spaces where one is not, whilst one is simultaneously expelled from the actual space one is in. Foucault differentiates between 'crisis heterotopias' and 'heterotopias of deviation'. Crisis heterotopias only exist as a relic or artefact. They are the spaces occupied by people when they find themselves in a state of crisis with respect to society, for instance adolescent youths or the elderly. There was a plethora of such heterotopias in earlier societies, for example the wedding procession as a form of organized ritual so that the deflowering of a young woman could take place in a 'nowhere'. Now-days, crisis heterotopias have mainly been replaced by heterotopias of deviation.

People who have deviated from the norm live in these latter spaces: care homes, psychiatric clinics, prisons. Retirement homes lie on the border of crisis and deviation heterotopias. Heterotopias can enclose or amass time, as in a museum, or can be very variable and adaptable, as in a celebration. Heterotopias function as spaces of illusion and compensation.

The concept of heterotopias is misleading, as it applies to a spatial phenomenon and thus does not distinguish specifically between space and place. Aside from that, however, the Foucauldian model does specify that space as illusion or as compensation can be institutionalized. McDonald's in Beijing, for example, is not just a fast food outlet of a global company, but is, at the same time, a heterotopia in Chinese society, a space of illusion, which demonstrates where one is not, thereby exposing where one is. Likewise, a techno club that gives its members the impression of being a virtual world is also a heterotopia, precisely through its total dependency on the spaces of the day-to-day.

What, in conclusion, can be said thus far about the constitution of space? I began with the assumption that space was constituted through action. I described this action more specifically as processes of synthesis and 'spacing'. This included the observation that, as its name suggests, day-to-day activity, i.e., routine, is principally repetitive. This is also true of the constitution of space. Through routine behaviour, space is continuously constructed. Many routines are learnt from a young age (childhood), in order for people to have practical consciousness of the possibilities and requirements for the constitution of space.

The constitution of space through action has, until now, been discussed in relation to how it shapes social structures. Both the institutionalization of spatial order(ing) and its rival position have been explored. Social institutions or structures owe their existence to their reproduction through everyday activity. However, they continue to exist even when certain social groups no longer reproduce them. One must now, therefore, examine how space is constituted through action or behaviour in interaction with social structures.

## SPATIAL STRUCTURES

I return once more to my initial argument. By spaces, I mean relational order(ing) of people (living entities) and social goods. The term order(ing), particularly as it is

deliberately written with 'ing' in parentheses, denotes two aspects: both the stative order created by spaces and processual ordering, the dimension of action. Therefore, both dimensions of action and of structuring are inherent in relational order(ing).

I do not share the same view of structures that is frequently taken in sociology,<sup>13</sup> as rigidly determinant and stabilizing. Structures cannot be considered in isolation from action. They enable and constrain action, but they remain inextricably bound to its course. Although structures can subsist for a period of time without the necessity of reproduction or through the reproduction of only a few social groups, they eventually lose their structural capacity or power. In recent years, the discourse on 'spatial structures' has become more prevalent, initiated by the works of Pierre Bourdieu<sup>14</sup> amongst others. However, what exactly is meant by this term remains to be elucidated. Bourdieu's view, which equates structures with the "principles of social classes", makes it at the same time systematically impossible to study spatial structures as societal structures. Space and society stand in opposition to each other within this theoretical model, whereby only society has the ability to determine or shape space, rather than inversely allowing for space to pre-structure social practices.

If, on the other hand, spaces come into being through action, then spatial structures cannot be opposed to societal ones: rather, the constitution of space that is generated through the reproduction of structures must also include a reproduction of spatial structures. Therefore, my thesis is that the spatial cannot be differentiated from the societal, as it is a specific category of it. *Spatial structures*, like temporal structures, are forms of societal structures. This will now be elaborated further.

In order not to lose sight of the forces that shape social processes, in particular the periodic constitution of space, I concur with Anthony Giddens' view of structure as rules and resources that are recursively involved in institutions. Here, rules apply to the construction or framing of meaning or to the sanctioning of behaviour. They encompass everything from the procedures by which social relations are dictated, through to their codification. Because they form part of structure, they cannot be conceptualized independently from resources. Resources are "media through which power is exercised, as a routine element of the instantiation of conduct in social reproduction".<sup>15</sup> Thus Giddens makes a distinction between "allocative" resources, i.e., material resources that derive from control over nature, and "authoritative" resources, which are the symbolic resources that relate to or control people.

The recursive nature of structures is best understood through the example of language. Everyone who uses language employs, give or take a range of relatively minor variations, the same set of rules of syntax and linguistic practices. These rules reproduce themselves through language, whilst bringing about the possibility or potential for language in the first place.<sup>16</sup> This applies in the same way to social structures. Social structures enable action and are then reproduced again through action, through the action of reverting to the rules that initially formed them. Giddens differentiates between structure and structures. Structures are isolable components of rules and resources, for example legal, economic, political structures, etc. Structure denotes the entire totality of different structures.

Along with structure, Giddens sets out the notion of systems. He defines system(s) as “reproduced interactions between individual actors and larger collectivities, regularized as routine social practices”.<sup>17</sup> As Giddens’ notion of system can only exist in space when space is defined as location—i.e., as tied or bound to a place or site, thereby slightly reducing the complexity of space—I have chosen to distance myself from this particular term.

My view of the Giddensian definition of structure(s) demands a fundamental adjustment. I do not regard structures, as Giddens does, to be independent of time and space. I employ the Giddensian definition of structure(s) to the extent that it allows for the possibility of both the enabling and the constraining of action. I also do so because of its distinction between structure and structures, and because of its ability to distinguish between the totality of rule-resources complexes and isolable components that are arranged as institutions. I expand the definition of structures so that it also encompasses not just legal, economic and political, but also spatial and temporal dimensions. The combination of various societal structures forms the societal structure.

We can explain this by looking at the societal structure of separation between the public and the private. Civil society makes a structural distinction between the public and the private. However permeable and contradictory this distinction may be, it is a constitutive societal principle upheld by rules and resources. This structure manifests itself in a range of isolable and recursively reproduced structures. There are legal structures, which, for example, guarantee privacy; social structures that prescribe a different code of conduct in public and in private; economic structures of unpaid housework as opposed to gainful employment, etc. But the separation of public and private is also articulated in spatial structures, in the design of buildings, in the sealable nature of

homes, in the idea of the living room as a space accessible to the public by arrangement, in the design of cafés to resemble private spaces, etc.

These spatial structures enable action: in the careful arrangement of the living room in preparation for a visit from the neighbours, the hosts recursively reproduce spatial structures. But spatial structures also constrain action. It is deemed impossible to receive the neighbours in the bedroom. In such cases, failure to respect the structures would incur negative sanctions.

Structures are anchored in institutions. Institutions are based on the ongoing regularity or habitual repetition of social actions. They can be societal constructions with an organizational shape, such as the planning and building control department or the dance course, initiating public behaviour. They can, however, also be the pre-arranged social models for action, like the institutionalized acts of arrangement that underlie the design of a living room.

The team of researchers in design at the Berlin University of the Arts, for instance, are studying the everyday handling or use of objects. The researchers are attempting to uncover, in explicit detail, how the constitution of space differs when it is arranged as a living space. For example, low-income individuals or families always arrange or order their social goods in the same way:

*What is of greatest significance is the combination of couch, table and wall unit furnishings. The furniture is often large and decorated or patterned correspondingly. Existing and readily available decorative objects are displayed in a wall unit that often takes up the space of an entire wall. The ceiling lights are consistently dated in style (from the 1950s-1970s), and there is, in addition, usually one, at most two, further substantial items in the room (TV, houseplant amongst other things).<sup>18</sup>*

The constitution of space occurs through the selection and placement of social goods. The researchers from the design study team point out that the furnishing and design resemble that seen in home decorating magazines. The living room is turned into a space through the recurrent constellation of couch set, table and wall unit. They are accordingly institutionalized and are reproduced through routine. In the perpetually analogous constitution of ‘living room’, spatial structures are brought into being: rules of ordering that are dependent on resources. The middle classes, by comparison, do not place discreet objects in wall units, but display them as individual centrepieces,

thus giving them more prominence in the construction of the space. The middle classes constitute their living space differently from the lower classes through their use of blank walls, large pictures and large houseplants, etc.

If one therefore follows the view that space is constituted through action, then the only conclusion that can be drawn is that it is reproduced in social structures day-to-day, through the routine of everyday behaviour, and that this process is recursive. It follows that social structures enable space-constituting behaviour or action, which in turn renews and reproduces the structures that enable (or constrain) this action. The societal systematization or organization of this reproduction occurs through institutions. Societal structures are anchored in institutions.

Let us return to Josef Tal in Jerusalem. Tal, too, reproduces institutionalized order(ing)s by synthesizing and 'spacing'. The majority of Jews living within Israeli society will reproduce his synthesis of Wailing Wall, narrow streets and sky into a space, as well as reproducing his endowment of the space, through practical consciousness, with metaphorical meaning. This space is institutionalized, but owing to its highly symbolic importance, it is tied up with and to the actual site, in contrast to other institutionalized order(ing)s, such as those in railway stations or supermarkets, which are repeated throughout many different sites. Embedded in the institutionalized space of the Wailing Wall are societal structures that can be studied by using the Wailing Wall as a valuable example. At this site, Tal writes, "one can only pray to the Almighty, hovering unattainably above the immeasurable stonework".<sup>19</sup> Interwoven with the institutionalized space is a spatial structure typical of order(ing)s that turn the gaze upwards, a spatial structure found not only at the Wailing Wall, but common to skyscrapers, cathedrals, castles, etc. In such cases, a power relationship is constituted within the space, where specific order(ing)s ascribe a huge potential for power to persons or personifications, such as the benevolent Almighty experienced by Tal, for example. The demolition of the neighbouring narrow streets has transformed the institutionalized space. The reproduction of the power of the One God, created through spatial as well as economic, social, legal and other structures, is transformed into the security-oriented, secular demonstration of power secured by an expansive space. Josef Tal, too, examines such a change. The expansive space, he writes, directs the mourning echo in the horizontal plane (towards other people and away from a God who is symbolically situated in heaven), giving a new meaning to prayer.

Anthony Giddens contributes to the description of this mutual conditionality of action and structure with the term "duality of structure and action", also referring to it as the duality of structure. The term 'duality' denotes a two-ness, not an opposition or dichotomy as implied by the concept of dualism. The duality of structure and action emphasizes that "rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction".<sup>20</sup>

The aforementioned notions of spatial structures in relation to space-constitutive action can now be brought together through the concept of duality. An answer can also be given to the hitherto unresolved questions in space theory about the relation between action and structures.

I will for the time being summarize my conclusions: spatial structures are defined as the constitution of space that is constructed either through the order(ing) of goods in relation to people or through the synthesis of goods and people to space (through recall, connection or emotion), which are set out by rules and secured through resources that are, independently of time and space, recursively embedded within institutions. Spatial (and temporal) structures exist alongside political, economic and legal structures amongst others. Collectively they form societal structure. Spatial structures must, like all structures, be realized through action whilst at the time structuring that action. The duality of action and structure can thus also be expressed as the *duality of space*. This means that spatial structures bring about a form of action that, in the constitution of space, reproduces precisely those spatial structures.

To speak of a duality of space is to express the idea that spaces do not simply exist, but are created in (generally repetitive) action, and that, as spatial structures embedded in institutions, they guide action. Institutionalized spaces secure the rule-bound communication and interaction between human beings. They offer certainties of behaviour, but also constrain the possibilities of behaviour. Together, the routines of day-to-day activities and the institutionalization of social processes ensure the reproduction of social (and thus of spatial) structures.

However—and this is a point that has not been covered by Giddens—it is not merely a single variation of structure that is enabled through action. Many structures, including economic, social or legal, are formed through the constitution of spaces and thus characterized by it. Legal structures, to take an example, enable a form of jurisprudence that is reproduced in the enforcement of the rule of law. This does not, however, imply



that it is only legal structures that shape jurisprudence. Economic structures (the cost of the court) and spatial structures (the arrangement of the courtroom) also influence jurisprudence and are similarly reproduced through action as well. The constitution of societal structure is thus a result of a structural plexus, in which, naturally, a parity or consensus between various structures can take place. Oppositions or inconsistencies between structures are possible.

*Extract from Martina Löw, Raumsoziologie, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001. Printed by kind permission. Translated from the German by Maria Vlotides.*

1. I use the English word 'spacing' as the German word 'räumen' can either mean 'clearing out/emptying' (Wahrig, Gerhard, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, Munich: dtv, 1997, p. 1009), which runs counter to my meaning in this context, or it can mean 'moving something to another place' (Wahrig, *Wörterbuch*, p. 1009), which only captures part of its formation and not its entire complexity.
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3. Läßle, D, "Essay über den Raum: Für ein gesellschaftswissenschaftliches Raumkonzept", *Stadt und Raum*, H Häußermann et al. eds, Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus Verlag, 1991, pp. 157-207.
4. Giddens, A, *Die Konstitution der Gesellschaft: Grundzüge einer Theorie der Strukturierung*, Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 1988.
5. Wex, M, *Weibliche und männliche Körpersprache*, Hamburg: Verlag Marianne Wex, 1979.
6. Giddens, *Konstitution der Gesellschaft*, pp. 111f.
7. Giddens, p. 76.
8. For the concept of objectification, see PL Berger and T Luckmann, *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit: Eine Theorie der Wissenssoziologie* [1966], Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1972.
9. See N Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976, and Giddens, *Konstitution der Gesellschaft*, p. 227.
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11. Foucault, M, "The Eye of Power: A Conversation with J.-P. Barou and M. Perrot", *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, C Gordon ed., New York: Vintage, 1980, pp. 146-165.
12. Foucault, M, *Sexualität und Wahrheit: Der Wille zum Wissen* [1976], vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983.
13. See summary in WH Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation", *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 98, no. 2, 1992, pp. 1-29.

14. Bourdieu, P, *Sozialer Raum und 'Klassen'*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991.
15. Giddens, *Konstitution der Gesellschaft*, p. 67.
16. Giddens, *Konstitution der Gesellschaft*, p. 76.
17. Giddens, *Konstitution der Gesellschaft*, p. 77.
18. Fächergruppe Designwissenschaft, *Objektalltag – Alltagsobjekte*, Berlin: Hochschule der Künste, no date, p. 123.
19. Tal, J, *Der Sohn des Rabbiners: Ein Weg von Berlin nach Jerusalem*, Munich: dtv, 1987, p. 87.
20. Giddens, *Konstitution der Gesellschaft*, p. 70.

Stephan Moebius and Sophia Prinz

## Society's Design/Designing Society

In today's society, hardly any space is unpopulated by objects. In almost every area and situation of life, in one way or another, artefacts commingle with our cultural and social practices—be it a computer, desk lamp or pair of pliers at the workplace, a shopping bag, bargain bin or escalator in the shopping centre, or a wooden spoon, sofa cushion or slippers in a domestic setting. In all of these cases, the objects are more or less directly involved in the respective activities—either explicitly, as instrumental extensions of physical or mental acts, or as accessories carrying symbolic weight that display one's lifestyle or group affiliation, something that is particularly apparent in fashion and interior design. But few objects are used quite as purposefully as a specific tool or a carefully chosen piece of clothing. The contemporary individual is surrounded by innumerable inconspicuous articles of daily use, common forms and ubiquitous materials—juice cartons, subway cars, IKEA shelves. These mute companions are used and registered without being recognized consciously—the eye and the hand have long become accustomed to employing them. It is exactly these all too customary things, however, that shape cultural patterns of perception, thought and action, and they do so all the more lastingly due to our merely peripheral perception of their imbrication and the silent force of their material persistence. In other words, the—anonymous—design reproduces a culturally and historically specific language of materials and forms, which not only mirrors a deeper underlying social structure, but also has such a structuring effect itself, in that it always accompanies the many different routine practices or even makes them possible. The world of objects and its choreography cannot therefore be reduced to a mere epiphenomenon of the process of socialization, but must be understood as a factor constitutive of practices and subjects. This is because it actively shapes physical movements and postures, visual interests and sensory impressions, possessing its own logic in contrast to discursive meaning structures and rituals of action. In this sense, the design of industrially produced things is always tied to the formation and transformation of modern forms of life and society.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the beginnings of organized modernity—when non-ornamental, functionalist machine aesthetics confronted the established middle-class way of life with a rationalized and standardized arrangement of things—there seem to be no limits to surface design, variety of form and variations in use in the post-Fordian consumer culture, which is essentially based on the differentiation of lifestyles and continual aesthetic innovation.<sup>2</sup> Despite design's

omnipresence in today's world—from graphic, product and fashion design to landscape, urban and interior design and on to food, service or sound design—there are few approaches to date in the current sociological research landscape that focus on the social and cultural significance of modern artefact design.

One reason for this may be the traditional 'object blindness' of classical sociology, which has been remedied a little only very recently.<sup>3</sup> Separate from the archaeological and ethnological analyses of material culture, sociology is traditionally occupied with the order of social relationships: the (intersubjective) patterns of action, social structuring and the cultural systems of norms and meanings. Even if the classics of sociology mostly deal with *things* only peripherally, they contain the first fruitful approaches with which to grasp theoretically and empirically the social significance and activities of the world of objects (*Dingwelt*). For instance, both Marx, who emphasized the socially constitutive function of product fetishism,<sup>4</sup> and the Durkheim school, whose representatives researched the symbolic and relationship-building function of objects in collective and intersubjective rituals and identity constructions,<sup>5</sup> supply important impulses for a 'sociology of things', a sociology that was later taken up and developed further by consumption and lifestyle sociologies as well as by material culture studies. The American pragmatist George H. Mead, who identified the function of the act of perception in shaping community and culture<sup>6</sup> and investigated the childlike empathy with objects,<sup>7</sup> counts as one of the few classic sociologists and social theoreticians to have dealt explicitly with the further questions of object constitution, object *design* and how they are perceived visually and in a tactile manner. We should further mention the French sociologist and Durkheim student, Marcel Mauss. In his essay on the gift,<sup>8</sup> but also, for example, in his 1903 *General Theory of Magic*, Mauss explores socially induced perception and the symbolic loading and assessment of artefacts or objects as sacralized, self-contained things, 'ensouled' by a supernatural force (*mana*); in turn, these things call forth, require or instigate certain social practices and perceptions.<sup>9</sup> This research agenda was pursued further in the interwar period at the *Collège de Sociologie* by Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois and Michel Leiris, among others, and on the basis of the Durkheim school.<sup>10</sup>

Corresponding approaches were being developed concomitantly in the German cultural sociology of the turn of the century and the Weimar Republic. In the face of the unchecked proliferation of technical and consumer goods on the one hand and the growing alienation of his contemporaries on the other, Georg Simmel, for example, expounded on the "Tragedy of Culture" and on modernity's changed conditions of

perception, which, in his view, led to indifference and anomie.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, his studies on fashion, jewellery and the handle are classic approaches to design sociology.<sup>12</sup>

Motivated by explorations of the modern world of objects, Sigfried Kracauer, a student of Simmel's, set out to decipher the places and hieroglyphs of cities with a proto-ethnographic method<sup>13</sup> and to promote "thinking *through* things instead of about them".<sup>14</sup> Above all, however, it was Walter Benjamin in his major outline of nineteenth-century history who conceded a central role to the (un)earthly life of artefacts for gaining an understanding both of the unredeemed promise of modernity and of the phantasmagoria of products.<sup>15</sup> Finally, Norbert Elias' sociological theory of civilization provides important evidence for a cultural sociology of design, considering as he does, for example, the historically altered ways of using knife, fork and spoon.<sup>16</sup> In subsequent years, these individual attempts to contemplate the visual and material activity of things were at first unable to establish themselves.

Only the renewed growth and differentiation of the post-Fordian world of commodities triggered wider discussion among sociologists of lifestyle and consumption of the social relevance of objects, beginning in the 1970s. Under the rubric of the 'linguistic turn', however, the *thing* was not allowed any autonomy. With recourse to Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of everyday culture,<sup>17</sup> lifestyle elements were rather deciphered as passive bearers of sociocultural meaning. The social positioning of the consumer—rather than the concrete artefact—was placed at the forefront of the sociology of consumption. While Bourdieu interpreted the choice of cultural goods and consumer objects as an expression of class-specific dispositions of taste, thereby emphasizing consumption's function of social reproduction,<sup>18</sup> representatives of cultural studies highlighted the individual's creative achievement in repositioning the meanings of goods through clever resignification processes.<sup>19</sup> At about the same time, social anthropology began to transfer ethnological instruments and methods onto Western consumer culture<sup>20</sup> in order to investigate the identity-creating function of everyday implements. In accordance with cultural studies, anthropologists of consumption set out by presuming an instability in the meanings of things and pointed out—in marked similarity to Marcel Mauss<sup>21</sup> a few decades earlier—that artefacts cultivate their own social biographies through the various processes of exchange and acquisition that they undergo.<sup>22</sup> For instance, material cultural studies<sup>23</sup> discovered that consumer goods lose their character as commodities as soon as they are transferred to the private household and merge, as affect-laden 'sacred objects', with an idiosyncratic familial system of symbols and identity.<sup>24</sup> Precisely due to the richness of their ethnographic detail, these studies provide

valuable preliminary work for the cultural sociology of design when it comes to the cultural significance of specific materials or the fetishizing of individual consumer goods. However, the activity of design with its own particular logic—meaning its sensory qualities as well as its practical and knowledge-building functions—remains underrepresented in this perspective, as studies in the anthropology of consumption deal primarily with the social relations hidden behind domestic objects and trace the symbolic and psychological weight of everyday implements first and foremost back to the interpretive achievement of an actor.

Sociologists first began to open up their attention to the structuring potential of visual ordering and material things under the influence of poststructuralism,<sup>25</sup> which no longer took for granted stable social structures and patterns of meaning, but reversed the perspective and interested itself in the effects of the shift that occurred on the surface of signifying formations. Among these newly formed theories are visual cultural studies, on the one hand, and artefact theory, on the other. Inspired by the transdisciplinary 'visual turn' initiated by Anglo-American visual culture studies,<sup>26</sup> factions within sociology that are oriented towards cultural science have increasingly turned toward the analysis of visual phenomena in recent years. In contrast to approaches rooted in the sociology of consumption or anthropology—which explain the semiotic power of things on the basis of social relationships—these newer analyses of visual culture set out from the visible object itself in order to uncover the knowledge- and meaning-creating effects of regimes of cultural representation. However, due to their theoretical instruments being (post)structuralist and discourse-analytical, these studies have so far limited themselves to illustrative representations—advertisements, school books or scientific graphics—and are hardly interested in the forms of the object world or the physical-sensory practices of seeing. The cultural sociology of design adopts a different position, making the assumption that cultural patterns of perception and visual knowledge develop not only from semantic structures of iconographic schemes, but also from the formations of artefacts experienced by subjects visually and haptically. As a result, the analytical strategies of visual culture studies must be carried over to the world of things, on the one hand, and supplemented with those positions that consider the activity of concrete materiality, on the other.

In reference to the latter aspect, the newer areas of science and technology studies (STS) and, especially, actor-network theory<sup>27</sup> (ANT) provide connections that emphasize the practice-constitutive materiality of the world of artefacts, in contrast to the textual and cognitive impulse at the foundation of most (post)structuralist approaches. For

example, on the basis of the 'Berlin key'<sup>28</sup> and the 'gendarme couché',<sup>29</sup> among others,<sup>30</sup> Latour determines that the social effects of things originate from the "program of action" inherent in their materiality, which, beyond emblematic communication, brings human actors to do or not to do something. In his symmetric anthropology,<sup>31</sup> Latour attributes their own social agency to things, an agency that unfolds in network-like associations with other human and nonhuman actors. However, because the focus of analysis lies in the formation of so-called 'hybrids', in which people coalesce with non-human entities to become an active unit, ANT has no access to a differentiated concept of body or knowledge, which means that the superordinate cultural orders of symbol and visibility are disregarded, nor can the sensory perception of human actors be explained.

A cultural sociology of design cannot therefore rely solely on any one of the theories introduced here. In order to allow the mute world of things to speak, it needs instruments of theory and method that conceptually combine the socially negotiated meanings of things with the structuring function of their visual orders as well as the artefacts' programmes of action. In this sense, a cultural sociology's view of design seems located in the area between the 'visual' and 'material turn', the analytical programmes of which must be interconnected with the help of a concept of sensory perception. Such a comprehensive approach, one that attempts to integrate aspects of the symbolic, the visual, the material and the sensory-physical, can, for example, be developed on the basis of a practice-theoretical perspective. According to Reckwitz,<sup>32</sup> this is characterized by locating the social primarily in routinely performed physical-mental practices, rather than in superordinate social and symbolic structures or in intersubjective interactions. In contrast to action theory, a praxeological perspective comprehends everyday practice first and foremost as non-intentional action steered by physically settled patterns of unconscious action, thought and perception. As Reckwitz<sup>33</sup> emphasizes, this implicit know-how feeds not only on linguistic structures of meaning and intersubjective learning, but also develops through practical physical use and the meaningful handling of artefacts. With the concrete artefact and complexes of practice, the sensory-symbolic interobjective relationship is created by the specific interplay between things and practices. On the one hand, cultural practices determine the social meaning of things affectively connoted, symbolically laden and attributed with various uses, depending on context. On the other hand, things themselves structure physical-sensory practices, in that they demand to be perceived in a certain way on the basis of their aesthetic composition and material resistance, their use amenable to adaptation only to a limited degree.<sup>34</sup> In Bourdieu's sense, therefore, the *thing* appears as both structured and structuring—it is determined by existing cultural practices and semantic correlations, yet can evoke new practices and uses at the same time due to its material and aesthetic design.

Despite this fundamental theoretical opening to the world of artefacts, the various praxeological approaches considered still leave the *thing* relatively indistinct in terms of its sensory-affective and practical-material design. The first approaches to integrate the dimension of sensory perception into a practice-theory perspective<sup>35</sup> developed only very recently, having recourse to borrowings from phenomenological theory and studies in the "Anthropology of the Senses".<sup>36</sup> Among these newer theoretical approaches to explore the connection between materiality, practices and sensory perception is the sociology of architecture, which, on the basis of ANT or Deleuze, comprehends the constructed environment in terms of actants<sup>37</sup> or an affect-filled "medium of the social".<sup>38</sup>

In connection with these considerations, the anthology at hand can be seen as a first investigation into theoretical and empirical avenues of access, which, from various perspectives, reflect on design as symbolic order, practice-directing materiality and manifestation of the cultural "distribution of the sensible".<sup>39</sup> In this way, the project brings together 'design history', 'design studies' and the 'anthropology of design',<sup>40</sup> areas of research that have lately been referencing material culture studies, practice theory and ANT, among others, in order to analyze the cultural significance of design and the implicit knowledge of design practices.<sup>41</sup> We can thereby discern at least three theoretically and thematically intertwined points of intersection that will occupy a cultural sociology of design informed by praxeology: first, the semiotic and material-sensory dimensions of using things, in other words, the receptive practices; second, the artefact and complexes of practice that are linked to the drafting and production of design; and third, a culturally comparative perspective occupied with the migration of forms.

In the first instance, therefore, a cultural sociology of design asks about the various receptive practices that are coupled with a designed artefact. It deals first with the symbolic character of artefacts that play a role in various interobjective and intersubjective relations and that can vary depending on the respective cultural, historical and social context. The symbolic content of things is derived here not only from their assigned purpose and possible use, but also attaches itself to the visual forms, colours, sounds and materials employed. This denotative and connotative force of 'product semantics' has been purposefully employed in industrial design since the 1980s to generate specific feelings and associations in consumers.<sup>42</sup> From a semiotic perspective, there can accordingly be no pure functionality as propagated by Modernism. It is much more the case that modernist design, with its use of new industrial materials and emphasis on sober dispassion, for example, emblemizes an anti-bourgeois value orientation.<sup>43</sup> In this sense, several gender-theoretical works from within 'material culture studies' have shown that the gender-specific coding of private living spaces also



becomes apparent in the materials, furniture forms and decorations used for 'women's rooms'.<sup>44</sup> Along with design's superordinate connotations of class, milieu and gender, however, certain forms and object aesthetics also possess a psychological-affective significance. This means that artefacts do not only function as mediums to structure social positions or intersubjective relationships, but also exist in connection to culturally defined processes of psychological symbolism and fetishization. For instance, with reference to Lacan, Kaja Silverman<sup>45</sup> has shown that individuals develop their own 'thing biographies' based on their structures of needs, in the process of which various objects are attributed with affect. On the basis of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–1927) and Freud's psychoanalytical teachings on dream and symbolism, Benjamin also highlighted the revolutionary force of involuntary memory that is evoked by particular objects and pictures.<sup>46</sup> Along with this practical semiotic knowledge derived from the cultural reshaping of things, the concrete interobjective relationship and sensory materiality of design play an important role in the process of reception. Of foremost interest here are the activity and material resistance of things, which pre-structure and lend order to physical practices, sociality and ways of subjectification. For example, a sofa provokes a completely different sitting posture and corporal feeling than an office chair; a round table makes egalitarian communicative behaviour more possible than a square one, while public space obtains a new profile for use as soon as benches and skateboard ramps are built.<sup>47</sup> In a certain sense, a programme of action is inherent in the materials used because they partially determine the shaping of objects. It was the invention of rubber, Bakelite and plastics that made it possible to design the outer surfaces of things in a completely flexible way.<sup>48</sup>

These two levels in the use of things—the symbolic and the formal-material—cannot be separated; we must rather assume that things constantly interact with their recipients on both levels. In order for an artefact to be used properly, it must possess an interface that connects to its user's cultural practice knowledge at a symbolic and a material level. In this process, the communicative factors of the interface include not only visual design, but also the tactile surface design, the sound design or even the orchestration of certain smells. From this perspective, a soft material cover as a laptop surface would seem quite absurd, given the disciplined strictness that denotes work, and ebooks may not yet have gained acceptance because we associate the pleasurable experience of reading with the sound and haptic feel of turning pages. Everyday routine practices and interobjective forms of use, then, are irritated when the interface design fails.<sup>49</sup> In particular, new artefacts and complex technical devices that require a new form of practice are not self-explanatory, but usually require instructions for use that attempt to con-

vey the necessary practical knowledge through linguistic directions. Therefore, novel things also always imply an innovation in practices. Put the other way round, the actors change the design themselves, in that they recode the programme of action intended by the design through conversion and 'misappropriation', thereby adapting the things to their own practices.<sup>50</sup> Beyond these everyday 'perversities' of objects, however, the symbolic-material dual structure of design must be reflected on in terms of its ethical and political dimensions, as the material and aesthetic longevity of things represents a precondition of cultural and ecological sustainability.<sup>51</sup>

Along with the symbolic processes and physical-sensory handling that arise in the use of designed artefacts—that is, in receptive practices—a cultural sociology of design is interested, in the second instance, in the practices, forms of knowledge and artefact complexes that are coupled with the drafting and production process.<sup>52</sup> The rules of the design field can be determined by first establishing—with the help of discourse or dispositive analysis—which objects of design are considered recognized classics of "good design"<sup>53</sup> and which guiding principles lie at the root of various historical design methods. For instance, modernist functionalism was strongly influenced by the classic, product-oriented aesthetics of the Enlightenment,<sup>54</sup> whereas postmodern user-centred design is increasingly oriented toward the needs structures of consumers, which are researched today with the help of sociological methods. As in all fields of cultural production, therefore, the design field can also be separated into commercial and non-commercial groupings, whereby the latter seem closer to the logic of the fine arts. This proximity to the 'rules of art' is in part produced intentionally by the design field, which, since the 1980s, has drawn on forms of legitimation and discourse established in the art field for product aesthetics, by making use of the concept of 'authored design' or museum exhibitions of design icons. Conversely, in the course of the twentieth century there were attempts on the side of art to approach the world of design. Along with the avant-garde's classic approaches of working against the separation of art and life, various artistic positions—such as Minimal Art, Pop Art or the 'institutional critique'—have, since the 1960s, explored the tension between the utilitarian aesthetics of design on one side and the autonomy of art on the other.<sup>55</sup> However, it is not to be supposed that these artistic strategies have levelled the original barrier between the fields of art and design—it seems much more likely that the internal "illusion" (Bourdieu) of the art field continues to distance itself from the economic and populist orientation of the 'applied arts'.<sup>56</sup> To complement the analysis of discourses, institutions and rules, concrete design practices form a further focal point for the cultural sociological analysis of the design field. The process of designing is understood here as a complex of practices that includes

both explicit and implicit (visual) knowledge, ritualized creative techniques (such as brainstorming or mindmapping), computer programs (CAD) and certain architectonic orders, artefacts and devices. Consequently, to some extent design appears to be an “epistemic object” that is only educed and stabilized through the interplay of various human and nonhuman actants and a succession of different developmental stages.<sup>57</sup>

A third thematic complex is formed by the phenomenon that is best circumscribed by the concept of the historical and cultural “migration of forms”.<sup>58</sup> What is meant here is that things, discourses and practices can be transferred to other historical and cultural contexts, where they link up with existing formations of artefacts and practices.<sup>59</sup> This hybridization of object cultures did not emerge for the first time during the age of globalization, but has always existed. Throughout history, consumer goods and artworks have been transported from one culture to another along trade routes, by individual travellers or through occupation in times of war. For instance, Persian cobalt blue was used in fourteenth-century Chinese porcelain production to decorate porcelain with the famous white-and-blue pattern, which, in turn, reached Europe in the sixteenth century via the East India Company, and was imitated there by various ceramics manufacturers. Ever since the opening up of sea routes and the violent colonization of greater parts of the world, the transfer of cultural forms has been mostly one-sided, that is, in the form of Western cultural imperialism. Through to today, designs and products developed in Western industrial nations dominate the global market. It would be reductionist, however, to maintain that these same cultural forms and materials in their different local manifestations also arouse the same practices, affects and associations. As Bick and Chipper<sup>60</sup> have identified by means of the Nike logo, it is rather to be assumed that a design language’s meanings, as well as programmes of action and perception, connect with the visual orders, symbolic schemes and practice patterns of respective local cultures. For example, modernist design principles and architectural models that were essentially developed in Western industrial capitalism were also transplanted to non-Western societies and propagated in socialist-ruled regimes under altered political circumstances.<sup>61</sup> The ethnographic comparison alone of these different ‘modernisms’ and their cultural embedding can help determine what effect the practice-generating action programmes of design have in different contexts and at what point they are reshaped by local practices, meaning the structures and orders of perception.

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Title: *Frida meets Dr. Tina Alexander*Block: *Me Myself & I - Release your true Image*

Production: Lambda print on aludibond behind 2 mm acrylic glass, 120x170 cm

Realization:

Idea, production, director, accoutrement: Yana Milev

Performance: Yana Milev, Tina Alexander

Makeup &amp; Hair Styling: Christa Raqué

Photographer: Philipp Beckert

The performance series *Frida meets Dr. Tina Alexander*, part of the corpus *Me Myself & I—Release your true Image* by Yana Milev and Philipp Beckert, is presented in the context of the DA volume and especially of Cluster VII, "Design Sociology", under the title "Destination Eternal Beauty / Beautiful Eternity: Designing a Societal Obsession".

The whole body of works entitled *Me Myself and I* is dedicated to the subject of constructions of the 'I'. Yana Milev is interested in the experience of facets of the 'I', which are activated by meetings with other figures (from film and media). In this, the question always remains open who or what the 'I' really is and according to which patterns it actually operates. This topic touches on several debates about 'identity', 'free will' and

societal obsessions like 'beauty', 'eternity' and 'immortality'. In this series, figures who are charged with fictional identities meet each other. In the presented performance, the idea of the historical Frida meets Dr. Tina Alexander, a plastic surgeon. At Frida's feet is a gallery of breast implants and medical instruments. The Diego-puppet stands as a symbol of Frida's symbiosis with Diego Rivera, as well as for her accident trauma, which becomes clear in many of her paintings and drawings. The result in the sequences of pictures is actually a grotesque. For neither the breast implants of plastic surgery, nor the options of reproductive medicine can really help Frida Kahlo, whom this serious accident left paralyzed. Both figures are involved in a slightly helpless conversation, marked by minimal gestures, in search of a wonder.

# DESTINATION







ETERNAL BEAUTY

BEAUTIFUL ETERNITY





Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis

## The State of Mobility and its Territorial Effect

### MOBILITY AS DANCE?

"Job Mobility – Your future?" This is the question that, barely veiling its rhetorical character, lured readers into a brochure published on the occasion of the European Commission's information campaign on the topic of mobility in 2003/2004. The document was meant to sensitize people to "the advantages of occupational and educational mobility". In graphical visual terms, this aim was underpinned by an X-ray image of a suitcase. Inside the suitcase, made visible by means of the aesthetic of optical border-control technology, one can discern an ideal-typical collection of various insignia and instruments of professional life: a wrench, a stethoscope, a chef's hat, a microscope, a brush, a circuit board, a computer mouse, a safety helmet and a certificate. The suitcase is the object of travel and border-crossing par excellence, "the 'zero degree' of displacement both temporally and symbolically, an originary moment after which all familiarity is lost while change and difference shape life".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the image of its screening turns the suitcase into an object of extensive surveillance, which in this case simultaneously aims at the competencies, qualifications and diplomas of the subjects on the move. This symbol of the "Employment and European Social Fund" section of the European Commission is therefore also an ideal or programmatic image. The abstract demand made on educated and professionally trained persons to be mobile is accompanied by the concrete installation of a system for controlling precisely this mobility, which takes place in the European Commission's sphere of responsibility and is thus to be legitimized by economic demand and institutional certification.

Having become curious and clicking on the offered link to EURES (European Employment Services), a European cooperation network for employment,<sup>2</sup> a logo-like graphic appears, perfectly complementing the scanned suitcase: in the diagram, depicting a sequence of dance steps, the letters of the acronym EURES are distributed on pictograms of feet that are in turn networked via arrows. The logo suggests that mobility is a dance-like, even playful affair. At the same time, however, the diagram refers to the required discipline associated with dance. Accordingly, workers in the European Economic Area are performers of human labour who ask to set themselves in motion in geographical and professional terms, albeit along controlled channels and routes.

This conflict and harmony between dynamization and surveillance is typical of a notion of mobility, the supposed inconsistency of which is indebted to a specific rationality of governance: the pressing demands made on individuals to become mobile are always linked to controlling and interrupting precisely this movement. Mobility is not a given, but is produced and managed according to this logic: through a complex interplay between facilitation and obstruction, guarantees and restrictions.

While internal mobility is given top priority by EU planners regarding the success of the European project, the abstract ideal of mobility is impeded by a host of concrete—administrative, legal, political, economic and cultural—barriers.<sup>3</sup> The inconsistencies appear even more striking when we consider the geopolitics of mobility with regard to the possibilities of movement of EU residents and those of non-EU residents.<sup>4</sup> The police and political controls at the external and internal borders of the EU necessitate longer or shorter periods of immobilization—deportation camps, waiting for the opportunity to cross borders, etc.—but they also create a space for informal kinds of mobility—transnational migrant networks, immigrant smuggling organizations, etc.—which are stimulated not least by the economic demand for 'cheap' labour.

In this combination of limiting and loosening the circulation of non-EU residents, mobility is revealed in a particularly evident way as a double effect of *projection* (geographical and social mobility of individuals as economic resource) and *reaction* (geographical and social mobility of individuals as a threat to national hegemony and the privileged ways of life of EU residents).<sup>5</sup> The emblem of the X-rayed suitcase and the EURES dance diagram of mobility visualize this logic of projection and reaction in a quite vivid way. Both images seek to symbolize mobility, yet they become—no matter how unintentionally—icons of an interplay between mobilization and control.

### THE 'NEW MOBILITIES'

One reason for the difficulties caused by the theme of mobility lies in the fact that the descriptions and definitions of mobility always also possess a normative core. Mobility *should* exist, not only because mobility is tied to the fundamental value of freedom, but because mobility is deemed useful and profitable. Interest-driven concepts envision mobility as a resource of economic productivity, as a key factor of a radical reordering of economic-political and social relations—according to neoliberal economics. The paradigm of mobility is constantly *programmatically turned*, i.e., declared a requirement

in times of globalization that “is demanded of all organizations as a structural feature and expected of more and more individuals as a personal feature”.<sup>6</sup>

In the field of tension between the ‘pressure to be mobile’ and ‘the readiness to be mobile’, a ‘mobility culture’ emerges, in which differentiated flexibility (*Beweglichkeit*) becomes part of the requirement profile. The change between circulation and migration, the transitions between *transfer* (temporary or permanent movement to one place) and *transport* (routine flexibility that does not interrupt everyday life) bring experiences and values with them, the sum of which can be called “mobility”.<sup>7</sup> Society—often grasped more statically than dynamically—can no longer be adequately understood without acknowledging the geographic, regional, professional and social mobility of its members. Instead of ‘mobility’ in the singular, talk is increasingly of (new) ‘mobilities’. This pluralization of mobility can be put down to, among other reasons, the replacement of a Fordist concept of mobility—based on routine and being bound to one place—by a post-Fordist destabilization of space-time relations. In the wake of globalization’s intensified dynamism after 1989, the ‘new mobilities’ articulate themselves in ‘new types of migrations’: international commuters, seasonal workers, ‘suitcase migrants’, tourists, foreign residents, and others traveling to and fro, engendering a unique typology of traversing space and time inside and outside the EU’s borders, in turn oriented toward different border functions and regimes: arriving, departing, entering and leaving, tourist stays, second places of residence, remigration, vague, nomadic vagabonding.<sup>8</sup>

The multiple mobilities restructuring economic and social life in the form of a network are grasped as productive forces that are to be unleashed, on the one hand, yet observed, registered and theorized, on the other. The sociologist John Urry sharpens the debate by contending that, under the impression of new mobilities, the social as society is being replaced by the social as mobility. He claims that the global movements of individuals, companies and goods create a space beyond society and institutions.<sup>9</sup> Urry repeatedly stresses that the transformation of the social to mobility is not a linear, uniform process of liquefaction. The dialectics of mobility and immobility remain—along with the social and economic inequalities caused by differing access to the technologies and infrastructures of mobility.

Yet the analysis of the ‘new mobilities paradigm’, which is currently expanding to become an interdisciplinary research field of its own,<sup>10</sup> is not free of mobility euphoria. At times, current mobility research is reminiscent of postmodern thinkers such as

Paul Virilio, Michel de Certeau, Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari, James Clifford or Iain Chambers, who envisioned “a wonderful new mobile world of nomads and travelers”.<sup>11</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the authors of *Empire*, also position themselves within this tradition of giving a subversive twist to the epic of mobility. They write that, in the global Empire, a resistive, tactically operating, “transversal mobility” engenders “new, nomadic desires”, which the state and society have a hard time disciplining.<sup>12</sup> The biopolitics of mobility, of which there are signs in this vision of a transversal mobility, potentially works toward a “mechanism that can coordinate politically the new dynamics of the global domain of capital and the subjective dimension of the actors”.<sup>13</sup> Of course, in this call for coordination, Hardt and Negri reveal a socio-technical moment one must also presume behind the restructuring of social sciences necessitated by mobility. The new, allegedly de-territorializing mobility is thus re-territorialized—in sociological typologies and philosophical-political projects. And it is exploited where state institutions produce and control mobility. For government mobility policies no longer consist merely in restrictive and immobilizing measures, they instead adapt to the general developments and processes of mobility from case to case. The “strategic application of immobility to specific cases” is thus “coupled with the production of (certain kinds of) mobility” that promise dynamizing and deregulating effects.<sup>14</sup>

In a symptomatic coproduction between the different collective and individual actors of mobility who observe and learn from each other, an informal and irregular sphere emerges, a specific mobility culture. This sphere gives rise to peculiar architectures and infrastructures in and through which mobility is embodied and performed. These spaces of mobility should not be mistaken for the virtual landscapes of a techno-imaginary in which individuals float in a bodiless fashion; the materiality of these spaces and the individuals and groups populating and traversing them is unquestionable. Equally, one must not criminalize, ‘precarize’, marginalize or simply write off the informal spaces and the subjects circulating in them. What is at issue here instead is an examination of how the geography and practices of mobility change in view of population-political and border-police regulations; how, in the informal sphere, a ‘political economy of migration’ arises, increasingly supplementing the older subjectivization patterns, as labour migrants increasingly occupy the position of the entrepreneurial subject;<sup>15</sup> and how totally new dance steps are rehearsed in this space, which one cannot get a hold of using the old graphics.

## MOBILITY IS 'FROZEN MOVEMENT'

So what is the special feature of what today can be called mobility? First, it may have become clear that it is not only about flexibility, as in the prevailing demands for 'professional mobility', but also not exclusively about movement in the sense of shifting from one place to another, be it in daily transport or long-term transfer. While individuals do change their location by moving from one point to another, they simultaneously remain at that other place where their movement began. This quite evidently applies to tourists. But it is also true of immigrants, who in a number of respects maintain a relationship to their country of origin or that of their parents. In this case, the country of origin functions as an *imago* of a lost homeland, as a room in the space of a transnationally extended family or as a relay station of an equally transnational entrepreneurial activity. Hence, the specific characteristic feature of a concept of mobility that distinguishes itself from normative or euphoric notions of mobility can only be found in a paradox: mobility is a state in which individuals are simultaneously present and absent in a place or are, at the same time, located somewhere else. People physically spend longer periods of time in a certain place, but their 'real life', or at least a relevant part of it, seems simultaneously to take place elsewhere. Mobility, then, would be neither flexibility nor movement; instead, its peculiarity would lie in being a state of *present absence*.

Understood in this way, mobility doubtlessly requires both flexibility and movement. One could describe flexibility as the *readiness* to set oneself in motion—to relocate, leave a country, constantly travel, and so forth. In the case of mobility, however, a person has settled down in one place, while simultaneously maintaining a relation of 'ownedness'<sup>16</sup> to another place. This ownedness can be chosen or attributed. For example, embassy staff members or employees of cultural organizations are mobile because they have settled down abroad, while 'actually' understanding themselves to be members or representatives of their 'own' country. While returning to their homeland is a calculable affair for diplomats, the relation to the country of origin is far more difficult for exiles, refugees and first-generation migrants. Exiles and refugees are barred from returning to their 'own' country. In this sense, their 'authentic life' has become impossible. Despite having ensconced themselves in the host country, their political activities are usually still directed toward their country of origin. The longer their life abroad lasts, the more the return and the country of origin are shifted to the imaginary. The belief in returning can be upheld for decades—even if there is no longer any real foundation for this.

With first-generation 'guest workers', the return and the country of origin often attain an imaginary quality. The stay, which was initially planned to last 'one or two years'

to earn money, in reality turns into settling down. The return was postponed, but not abandoned. And so the real country of origin increasingly turns into an ideal image of the homeland. For the children of these 'guest workers', born in the country of immigration, this *imago* of the country of origin offers a quasi-inherited projection screen for a better, an 'authentic' life. In the urbanized Palestinian 'refugee camps' of the West Bank, too, even the inhabitants born there claim that their real place of residence lies in Israeli national territory, from where their relatives were expelled in 1948 by the Haganah.

Of course, this relation to ownedness is also ascribed from the outside; exiles, refugees and migrants often find themselves in a precarious situation in the host country as far as their residence status is concerned. Even decades later, they are still regarded as 'aliens', as people whose real homeland is elsewhere. For people who want to emigrate, on the other hand, Europe holds the promise of an 'authentic' life, a life one cannot lead in one's homeland due to external circumstances. Since emigration has become largely incalculable and informal, due to the European Union's border protection measures, life in one's homeland has turned into waiting for the right opportunity. In transit countries such as Morocco, it is no accident that certain cities and regions are called *salles d'attentes*, waiting rooms. In these zones, people seeking to emigrate are permanently set to leave, although they do ensconce themselves provisionally. Some set off and then get stuck at an intermediate stop or a closed circuit of such stops. This is what happens to migrants from sub-Saharan Africa in Morocco: they, too, accommodate themselves in a makeshift way in self-organized camps, where they live in an extremely precarious state of present absence.

All the groups mentioned have in common that people who have moved to a certain place also settle down there—for a longer or shorter period of time—but never ultimately arrive. Their position resembles a freeze frame, in which the actors are momentarily captured in their respective activities. Mobility in this sense, then, would be a *frozen movement*.

## MOBILITY AS DECENTRALIZATION

How can this state of frozen movement be described in a more succinct way? The subjectivity of mobility is decentred and paradoxical. The relation to space is fragmented. People inhabit a space that, conceived mostly as a space of some sort of kinship, is at first continuous—those willing to emigrate from Africa also already have 'family' in Europe; either in the literal sense or in the sense of shelters with ethnically coded

'brothers'. But, since this space spreads across the borders of nation states, it is simultaneously discontinuous, split into two or more sections. Labour migrants, for instance, who return to their homelands in large numbers during vacations, mark a space there that is characterized by intimacy (the space of the family), on the one hand, and anonymity, on the other. First, borders need to be crossed to reach this space of intimacy; second, this space is only established during the summer vacation season; and third, the mobile inhabitants of these spaces maintain an extremely limited relationship to the reality and people in their 'own' country, since they only live there during the summer as temporary homecomers. Therefore, a paradoxical 'tourist intimacy' arises in this space.

Moreover, mobility, as *frozen movement*, produces a specific set of problems regarding legality—the legal conditions in the state of mobility are also decentred and paradoxical. Where the issue is not the repeal of human rights (as in many cases of flight or undocumented migration) the problem has to do with the subjects' relation to ownedness and origin. In the state of mobility, the individual dispenses in various ways with certain civil rights. Exiles, migrants, expats, tourists or foreign residents (*Residenten*) usually don't live in the place where they possess the full range of civil rights. They do have rights, but only in that faraway country to which they maintain a relation of ownedness. Yet they become politically active in their place of residence. Even foreign residents take part in the local political life of their adopted country, for example, where the expansion of infrastructure or legal or fiscal questions are concerned. The individuals are therefore decentred in a twofold way: they are politically active in a territory in which they are not full political subjects, and they are recognized as political subjects in a country in which they can only be politically active in a very limited way due to distance.

This decentring also has an impact on the subjects' schematic mental positions regarding a sense of belonging. Either people don't feel that they belong to the local community—which is the case with most foreign residents—or they are regarded as not belonging to the community due to ascriptive features, something that happens to many labour migrants, even if they have been living in the host country for decades. At the same time, the affiliation to the country of one's 'authentic life' is also partially suspended. This affiliation receives an abstract note because it can no longer be performed in everyday life. Therefore, mobility has little to do with traditional notions of identity. Individuals do not conceive of themselves in regard to a future unity; instead, they unfold their paradoxes in the present. And this, by the way, is cause for neither complaint nor joy: mobility is neither a deplorable state 'between two stools' nor a subversive, daily tactic to destroy traditional models of subjectivity.

## HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURES OF MOBILITY

Mobility as a state of *frozen movement* is performed in certain kinds of housing and in a specific infrastructure. The residential housing of mobility is a *permanent interim solution*. These kinds of housing, makeshift, temporary accommodation such as tents, containers, trailers, hotels, vacation homes and second homes, are just as paradoxical as mobility. They are used not only in the sense of flexibility, but also in the sense of mobility. These *permanent interim solutions* transform the topography and urbanity of the places where they emerge. The architect Georges Candilis, who in the 1960s was responsible for the tourist-oriented redesigning of the Languedoc-Roussillon region in southern France, emphasized in 1972 that vacation is becoming "the ever more decisive element in the development and order of space".<sup>17</sup> Flight and migration have spatial effects similar to those of tourism—without meaning to blur the differences here, of course. In war regions, for example, the destruction of immobile architectures is compensated for by mobile tents and containers. The more war becomes part of everyday life—e.g. in Afghanistan, where war has been waged for more than twenty years—the more provisional solutions become part of the permanent spatial order. The hotel, which is actually at the service of flexibility, can also attain a new meaning within the frame of mobility. In former Yugoslavia, hotels such as Libertas in Dubrovnik accommodated refugees for several years during the war. In large European cities like London and Paris—but also on the outskirts of metropolises—a system of hotel accommodation for refugees, asylum seekers and people without legal documents has evolved over the past years, occasionally making the headlines on account of fatal incidents like the fire at the Paris-Opéra hotel on 15 April 2005. In tourist regions, older, often dilapidated hotels and apartment buildings on the outskirts of towns, unable to compete with newer buildings, are frequently used as living spaces by labour migrants.

The proliferation of *permanent interim solutions* manifests itself in zones that one could in turn designate using a further paradoxical term: *mobilized spaces*. One can find these mobilized spaces in the most varied places and contexts. In the protectorate of Kosovo, the United Nations and other international bodies have built quasi-new quarters for their employees that are clearly set off from the local quarters. The residents, however, rotate according to the agreed period of stay. As already mentioned, Palestinians in the West Bank and Jordan have been living in spatially clearly defined 'refugee camps', administered by the UN since 1948, with the unpractised eye unable to distinguish these camps from other city districts. Benidorm, a town on the Spanish Mediterranean coastline, actually only has a population of 40,000, but in the summer



months swells to become Spain's fifth largest city—the entirety of urban life ultimately becomes a *permanent interim solution* here. Large parts of the Mediterranean coast form such *mobilized spaces*, because construction resulting from decades of tourist appropriation of land and development has created an increasingly uninterrupted band of hotel facilities, vacation home complexes, foreign resident urbanization, second homes and camping sites. Migrants also establish mobilized spaces. In the Idrissia district of the Moroccan port city of Tangier, for instance, normal urban life prevails only in August. Moroccan emigrants have built houses here that are only used as vacation homes during the holiday season—the rest of the year one encounters yawning emptiness.

Emptiness is, in fact, of immense importance to mobility, for one could also describe the *mobilized spaces* as *cities without citizens*, in which citizens live without cities. In the state of mobility, individuals are decentred, both as political and legal subjects. Hence, *mobilized spaces* have little to do with the notion of a 'polis'. One can justifiably speak of a 'mobility culture', for mobility is materially embodied in certain subjectivities, receptacles and in entire zones. The origin of this 'mobility culture' goes back to the activity of mobile actors, but its premise must be sought in the conditions given by the political economy of neoliberalism, in the diffuse light of mobilization demands and movement blockades. As already mentioned above, this whole development has until now predominantly been grasped in a normative manner. But today the issue is to *understand* mobility. Both the euphoria of flexibility and the scandalization of movement, the celebration of hybrid modes of existence and the complaints about being 'in-between', contribute to the constitution of a 'mobility culture'—but not to an analysis of mobility.

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Philip Ursprung

## Precarious Bodies: Containerization and Design

Containers, together with computers, form the backbone of globalization. Today, 98 per cent of international freight traffic is transported in standard-size containers—8 feet tall, 8 feet wide and 10, 20 or, mostly, 40 feet long. More than any other artefact since the early 1970s—that is, since the start of what is now described as globalization—containers have changed the way people live in industrialized and developing countries. Containers are key objects within the design of globalization, understood as the planning and execution of the flow of goods and services unrestricted by national boundaries. They are also inseparable from global design, namely the shapes we give to our consumer objects. They have contributed to the fact that we perceive our environment, our ideas, our history and our future as something modular, as sequences of discontinuous events, self-sufficient and isolated from each other. They shape the way we work, live, dress and feed ourselves, how we spend our time, shop, transport our goods and design our houses and cities. They have altered our perception of space and time, even though they are typically overlooked. Our daily life is unimaginable without them, but there is essentially nothing to say about their form. “The standard container has all the romance of a tin can”, Marc Levinson states bluntly in his cultural and historical study of the container, *The Box*.<sup>1</sup> A container is a metal box with a wooden floor and two doors on one side. But what is important is not how it looks, but how it works.

Earlier forms of container existed in classical antiquity in the shape of amphorae, standard vessels for the transport of oil and grain in the Mediterranean region. But the history of the container in the contemporary sense dates back a mere 50 years. The *Ideal X* is regarded as the first container ship. A World War II-era ship rebuilt by the American transport company Malcolm McLean, it was loaded with 58 truck trailers on 26 April 1956 and travelled from Newark, New Jersey, to Houston, Texas. What began as a small shipping company became an international presence in the course of the 1960s. Container sizes were standardized in order to allow for containers to be stacked, lifted by crane, transported on trucks and freight trains and thus to become the central element of a system. The organization of a seamless, computer-operated transport network encompassing ship, rail and truck meant transport costs in international freight traffic became practically negligible from the 1970s onwards. According to economists Edward Glaeser and Janet Kohlhase, “It’s better to assume that moving goods is essentially costless than to assume that moving goods is an important component of the production process”.<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-1960s transportation costs still constituted nearly half the price of goods. Above all, handling in ports—unloading, storing and reloading—was labour-intensive and cost both time and money. With the introduction of containers, handling time was reduced from several days to just a few hours. Today, at computer-operated terminals like Singapore, Hong Kong or Rotterdam, it takes just 90 seconds to unload a 40-foot container with 35 tons of freight. The huge ships—run by crews of just 20 and carrying 3,000 containers—rarely lie at anchor for more than 24 hours. To save time, loading begins while ships are still being unloaded, so that, as far as possible, they remain constantly on the move.

### MOBILE CAPITAL

As a consequence of container shipping, capital has also become more mobile. Globalized corporations can set up production anywhere in the world that labour is cheaper or infrastructure better. Consumer products have become cheaper for consumers in industrialized countries, raising their standards of living while making their own jobs more insecure at the same time. The post-World War II trend of wage increases accompanied by reduced working hours has gone into reverse since the 1970s. The effect of the container on individuals is thus ambivalent.

A look at film history reveals how changes in the transport industry affect people. In Elia Kazan’s *On the Waterfront* (1954), Marlon Brando embodies the drama of a port worker caught up in the struggle between corrupt factions that are fighting over the lucrative business just prior to the industry coming under pressure. In Steven Spielberg’s TV thriller *Duel* (1971), an innocent traveling salesman is threatened by a truck—a “train without tracks”, as Spielberg called it. The nameless rusting brown tanker truck looks strikingly like a container. One could read Spielberg’s debut as a symbol of the fear of the future instilled in people by the economic transformations of the time. By presenting the empty transport container as a monster that has set its sights on the innocent hero out of sheer delight in killing, Spielberg creates an image of the power of transportation when it no longer transports content but follows its own mysterious laws and defies any form of control.

The deregulation of labour markets, which also began in the 1970s, forced increasing numbers of people to migrate. The UN estimates the current number of migrants worldwide at 191 million.<sup>3</sup> Global mobility is something enjoyed by those who exercise choice,

i.e., scientists, artists, business people and tourists, but it is a tragedy for many who have no option but to leave their country and family behind. Didier Faustino created an image of this precarious situation in *Body in Transit* (2000). The container with which a person can be transported in the belly of an aircraft shows how vulnerable and exposed the human body is in the phase of migration, while at the same time demonstrating the cynicism of an economic system that treats people like goods and moves them from place to place. The television programme *Big Brother*, launched in 2000, transferred the container to the level of a game, where it forms a stage for the reality TV protagonists. Christoph Schlingensiefel adopted the motif of *Big Brother* in his action *Please Love Austria – First Austrian Coalition Week*, which was produced for the 2000 Vienna Festival. He applied *Big Brother* to the reality of the xenophobic discourse then dominating Austrian politics by placing 12 asylum seekers in a container and allowing the public to vote on which of them should be deported.

Container shipping affected port cities first. Ancient ports like Genoa, which had flourished for centuries, decayed, while formerly unassuming ports such as Seattle, Los Angeles and Kaohsiung developed into global hubs. Of all major cities, New York was most strongly affected by the change. The waterfront of Manhattan and Brooklyn, still one of the biggest transfer centres in the world in the mid-twentieth century, became a mere shadow of its former self within only a decade. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs when the shipping companies turned their backs on the expensive, strike-prone and crime-ridden Manhattan piers for the new container ports in New Jersey. At the same time, light industry that had previously benefitted from proximity to the port moved from the inner city to outlying areas or to New Jersey. In New York, as in other large cities, warehouses and factories either completely disappeared from the face of the city or were converted. The spaces in which goods are stored, distributed and consumed began to blend and, in the suburbs, gave birth to a new kind of global spatiality in the form of the enormously enlarged containers of global manufacturers, such as Ikea, for instance. In these buildings, hermetically sealed against the outside, consumers move through a globalized space of consumption that is factory, warehouse and market all in one. In such spaces the assembly lines of remote factories seem to run directly toward the belts that move goods to the till. In fact, the assembly line seems to continue directly into the home of the consumer, who is made to believe that they participate in the production process by carrying out the final assembly of their 'Billy' themselves.

## TOPOLOGICAL SPACE

What is containerization's effect on design? The intention here is not to describe mimicry of the container—that is, the literal use of containers in architecture, scenography or store design, as for example in the form of the Freitag shop in Zurich, which consists of stacked containers. The focus is instead more on the specifically globalized spatial logic and its relationship to the container. It is characteristic of the container that there is no relationship of any kind between the outside and the inside. From outside all containers look the same and the interior, as a rule, remains invisible between loading and unloading. In a factory in China a door is shut behind the load of cardboard boxes filled with toys; it will be opened six weeks later in a distribution centre in Cincinnati. Naturally, the discontinuity and deterritorialization that we know from our own experience is not exclusively a consequence of container shipping. But the transport of goods around the globe has become so entirely taken for granted that it inevitably shapes our perception of time and space. When we move through airports, subways, shopping centres or the internet, we essentially behave like the cyberneticists after World War II—that is, we perceive our environment as a system of interrelations rather than as distinct forms. We move within a network of functions, calculating our routes according to the dimension of time rather than linear, spatial distance.

This leads, on the one hand, to the fact that every kind of design articulating this discontinuity interests us as being contemporary. The daily experience of discontinuity—the fact that we are used to moving about in fragmentary, spatiotemporal surroundings—is a reason why any kind of design that deals with such discontinuities is attractive. The term 'discontinuous design' can be used, for example, to describe the Freitag bag made of pieces of truck tarps or the iPhone that tells us where we are at any given time. The Walkman and the iPod that move us from our specific surroundings into a world of song also fall into this category. Under this heading we can also include 'ethnic' food, the ten-minute neck massage before our flight's departure and the habit of communicating by means of key words sent in text messages or emails. On the other hand, the experience of discontinuity leads us to see our experience reflected in the spatiality that has been described since the 1990s as 'topological' space—in other words, as space that eliminates the conventional differences between inside and outside, above and below. One can understand Peter Eisenman's Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio (1993), for example, as topological architecture. It was Eisenman's first large commission and it made him an international star architect. The Center's form

reacts both to the flow of the highway and to the direction of the railway line. The large volume of the conference halls and trade fair spaces is not designed as a rigid box, but as a vehicle that appears to be in motion. It is a bundle of curved lines in which urban infrastructure's pace and dimensions are perceptible. Although they do not directly depict anything, the hangar-like building parts evoke the spectacle of the delivery of goods, their flow and distribution, the containers that are delivered and taken away. They are compressed, curved, stacked, folded, broken open, sliced up and amalgamated once again. This structuring is additionally underscored by the different colours—pink, blue, yellow. The iconic effect of the Convention Center is recognizable above all from a bird's-eye view. This reveals the "fifth façade"<sup>4</sup>—which is in fact the main view—a roofscape in different colours that forms a spectacular figure clearly distinguished from the fragmentary ground of its surroundings.

One can also understand the Möbius House by UN Studio (Ben van Berkel and Caroline Bos 1998) in terms of topological spatiality. The house enables a couple to work separately from each other and yet live together. It illustrates the blending of working and living, of private and public, that is so typical of globalization. Zaha Hadid's furniture designs and the products by Yves Béhar, produced from algorithms that give the user the impression of being part of a dynamic system, are also topological. As are, finally, Issey Miyake's fashion designs, in which fabrics develop into a spatiality of innumerable overlaid surfaces that cover the organic spatiality of the human body with their own artificial spatiality. The artefacts appear to consist entirely of surfaces, of pleats, bends, deformations, as if there could no longer be depth in the usual sense. Naturally, they occur in three-dimensional space, but there no longer exists a substance that can be cut through. Rather, there is a quasi-virtual spatiality that is stretched between surfaces. This leads, among other things, to the fact that openings of every kind, whether doors, windows, neck openings or even eyelets for laces, become a challenge, a 'theme' for design and architecture—precisely because continuity as such has become questionable. In place of incisions and openings there is a kind of interface—that is, a mediating substance that both links and separates, that interlocks real and virtual, experienced and imaginary space. The need for the interface could be a reason for the boom that membranes and projection planes are experiencing in all areas of design, from architecture to interiors and on to product design. The same is true for the opaque, perforated and porous surfaces that function as filters between inside and outside. Even though at first glance nothing may seem to connect the architecture of Peter Eisenman with that of Peter Zumthor, both are interested in articulating the transitions between inside and outside that have become so precarious in an environment where traditional

continuity has been annulled. In Zumthor's spa in Vals the windows are not incisions, but rather hollows within a spatiality that seems to consist entirely of surfaces. The mediation between inside and outside takes place as in a film, where one scene is connected with the next by a cut and where the narrative is organized as a sequence of ever-new framings.

### THE EMPTY LOFT

The second structural element connected with the container is emptiness. The introduction of containers made possible the use of just-in-time production, developed in the 1960s by Toyota and Honda and present globally beginning in the early 1980s. Just-in-time is a method of flexible production in which individual components are produced at different locations and assembled at the last possible moment. This precise system saves on storage costs, as, unlike the classic Fordist assembly line, reserves of components need not be kept in stock. Additionally, only what is required is produced. The computer manufacturer Dell, for example, has no warehousing, producing only the machines ordered by customers. Just-in-time has fundamentally changed our notion of value. In just-in-time production, a full warehouse—indeed any kind of accumulation—is equated with economic failure. In contrast, old empty warehouses have paradoxically become a synonym for surplus and thus a symbol for value per se. Like a trophy, they recall a pre-globalization era and, at the same time, have the potential to bring about a new transformation of values. What the aristocratic lifestyle represented for the late-nineteenth-century bourgeoisie—i.e., the middle-class imitation of aristocratic systems of representation that it overcame and appropriated at one and the same time—is represented for the winners of globalization by the industrial ruin. Just as financiers once erected their villas outside the city in the style of Renaissance palaces, today hedge fund managers occupy entire floors of factories in gentrified harbour districts. They confirm Charles Jencks's ironic thesis that minimalism is a "boutique Cistercianism" that "lends itself to spirituality but also lends itself to shopping".<sup>5</sup> The loft embodies the catastrophic ups and downs of the market that the managers must be able to deal with. It is suitable for moving out quickly—and also, after the crisis, for moving in again. In the globalized economy the empty loft has become an emblem of luxury par excellence, a coveted and rare resource that is suitable as a setting for luxury apartments, a stage for post-industrial art exhibitions or for fashion boutiques.

The paradoxical connection between value and emptiness on the one hand, luxury and post-industrial spatiality on the other hand, is crucial to the fact that minimalism is a



kind of basic grammar for global design. Minimal Art is, strictly speaking, an artistic movement from the second half of the 1960s that includes artists such as Frank Stella, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Robert Morris and Sol LeWitt. The triumph of minimalism up until the present is linked not only to the fact that it passes on central values of modernism—abstraction and reduction—but that it is based primarily on the connection between emptiness and luxury. Donald Judd hit the nail on the head. As well as having his loft building in Manhattan, from the 1970s onwards he explored a former garrison town in Marfa, Texas. In disused military hangars and factory buildings he created a unique museum of minimal art, complemented by furniture he designed. The highpoint is provided by his concrete sculptures that look as if they could extend across the entire globe. One can interpret them as monuments to the container as both the invisible and indispensable material building block of global expansion.

The closed-down factory abandoned both by machines and workers, or the former warehouse now standing available again outside the cycle of economic circulation, are steeped in the aura of that which existed before globalization. Starting with New York in the mid-1960s, a similar kind of transformation took place in all major cities, from light industry into creative industry and subsequently into luxury district.<sup>6</sup> This process reached a high point in London in 2000. The turbine hall of the Tate Modern by Herzog & de Meuron is a giant urban loft, so to speak. The empty hall in the former power station attracts millions of visitors annually, even though—or precisely because—it remains empty for most of the time. If the thesis is correct that the empty loft per se embodies a value, then the attraction of this space results less from the events that are presented there and more from the fact that each of us can have a share of this precious substance, in the same way that our ancestors in the nineteenth century could enjoy the landscape of a former aristocratic park.

Thus container and loft are connected like a mirror image. Lofts, too, were often originally stacked containers—i.e., modules of a vertically laid-out factory organized behind a uniform façade. In the course of globalization the significance has shifted. With the container, inside and outside are incompatible, the continuity of time and space is out of joint. However, with the loft this continuity appears intact, albeit only as memory. Just as industrialization once framed the very 'nature' it had crushed into an aesthetic phenomenon and evoked it as an 'image', so the globalized economy, which resists all representation, frames the industrial age it has ousted as 'atmosphere' and 'space'.

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1. Levinson, Marc, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 1.
  2. Glaeser, Edward L. and Janet E. Kohlhase, "Cities, Regions, and the Decline of Transport Costs", *NBER Working Paper 9886*, July 2003, p. 4. Cited in Levinson, *The Box*, p. 8.
  3. "In 2005, the number of international migrants in the world reached almost 191 Million, which was 3 per cent of the world population. Between 1990 and 2005, the world gained 36 million international migrants." United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *International Migration Report 2006: A Global Assessment*, New York: United Nations, 2009, p. xiv.
  4. Kwinter, Sanford, "Challenge Match for the 'Information' Age: Maxwell's Demons and Eisenman's Conventions", *A + U Architecture and Urbanism* 276, no. 3, 1993, p. 147.
  5. Jencks, Charles, "Open Discussion", *Architectural Design* 69, no. 5/6, May/June 1999, pp. 15–16.
  6. See Zukin, Sharon, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Global Change*, Baltimore: Rutgers University Press, 1982.

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Yana Milev

## The Revolution Will Not be Authorized

*On anonymous authors of images and the role of the photographer Olivier Coulangue during the revolution in Tunisia 2010-2011*

In the spring of 2011, Olivier Coulangue's first images of the Jasmine Revolution, as the Tunisian revolution of 2010-2011 is called, appeared in *Lettre International* #92 and caused a strange oscillation effect in observers' perception. Titled "The Cell Phone's Point of View", photographs of mobile phone internet film stills were taken and copyrighted by Coulangue. On the one hand, these images were brand new and from a location of ongoing unrest when they were published; due to the temporal synchronicity, the images were journalistic in character. On the other hand, these were photos from mobile phones, or rather stills from mobile phone videos, by anonymous authors of street battles and victims. In addition, the same images are authorized photos by the French photographer Olivier Coulangue, an established protagonist in the photography and art business and whose rights are represented by agencies. These three facts tie the reception of the images to an initially inexplicable entanglement and lead to the question why Coulangue usurps these anonymous images in this way.

If Coulangue weren't a socially critical photographer who had already entered many risky areas in the past, the readers of *Lettre* #92—and specifically the online viewers of the images of the revolution—could assume that the photographic author simply heisted and commercialized the image sensations created by anonymous activists. The suspicion that this is a case of colonialism in times of revolution and prospering art markets is understandable. If the creators of the cell phone videos had not been anonymous, then we would also be dealing with copyright problems. Neither can be the photographer's motivation.

The odd oscillation in the reception of these images of revolution continues—it is truly paradox. We are dealing with a case of double authorship: of the authorship of the mobile phone videos and of the publication by a famous photographer who is protected by copyright.

What we see are production formats of images, overlaid and related to one another; thus they initiate an odd discourse.

On the one hand, we see the democratization of the power of images during the Arab Spring, which, especially since the Tunisian revolution in 2010, has been copied in smartmob activity. What is now termed crowdsourced journalism had its premiere during the Tunisian revolution. This type of journalism was performed by anyone who was equipped with a smartphone or a mobile device and a laptop. The images went global and started a domino effect, particularly in the Arab region. Inspired by the Tunisian protests, on 5 January 2011 unrest began in Algeria, on 25 January 2011 in Egypt, and further protests started in the Arab world that generally had comparable motives.

On the other hand, we see images by an artist/author, or photographer/author, whose copyright is represented by agencies and who usually makes money by producing his images. You could also say that this oscillation in the image production formats not only begins a discourse about copyright and authorship, but also a discourse about media politics: between the placement of net-based media in the public sphere and the placement of authorized media products in exclusive spaces.

Having arrived in the midst of these discourses, on the basis of Coulangue's revolutionary images we end up speculating about the unbridled capitalization of non-authorized images for commercial and publishing purposes by an authorized producer who profits from the revolution's spectacle, its victims, the freedom of the internet and the cool aesthetics of randomness and a lack of focus. Here, these discourses would soon come to an end and, for Coulangue, it would have a rather disadvantageous conclusion.

The paradox contained in these images is their actual subject and thus, in the end, it legitimizes Coulangue's taking over the authorship of the anonymous net images. He is their patron and representative, whose assignment it is to offer the anonymous authors a space. With his work, "The Cell Phone's Point of View", the photographer asks where the author is and what political role information has, and, in the process, he demands that we appropriate what we see from a critical perspective. In this way, Coulangue gives the anonymous producers a voice, a face and a space. What does this mean?

Starting with an area that was considered absolutely peripheral, a historical shift began. Things started in a location on the periphery of the periphery. In Sidi Bouzid a young man immolated himself; beginning in Tunis, this event caused waves in the blogosphere and thus initiated a historical process that gave a new character to what is considered marginal.

Marginality means that the revolution began at the edges. It began at the fringes, from where it then moved to the capital. And it came to Egypt from Tunisia, which itself is rather on the fringes of the Arab world.

The periphery can gain the status of a centre through various dynamics. As we have seen in the example of Tunisia's revolution and the Arab Spring, this occurred with virulent and net-based crowds. In this case, the political revolution synchronized with a social media network revolution and the periphery suddenly sped, like a tsunami, into the centre of international participation. The periphery can attain the status of a centre in other ways. As we could see in the example of Olivier Coulangue, it takes place in the authorized patronage of non-authorized anonymous authors and in their placement in established spaces of public interest, print media and galleries.

And there is another reason to give the periphery the status of a centre: the Tunisian revolution took place more than a year ago and in the meantime the journalistic world has stopped asking what has happened in the Arab upheaval—it's much worse. In the spirit of a breaking news agenda, the face of the Tunisian revolution has been long since swept from the global smartmob's sight. This is when the photos by Olivier Coulangue become interesting and important.

In the floods and masses of internet data, he has fixed and enhanced several moments in time, and in fact imbued them with image status in the first place. Whoever talks about photographic internet images when they can be fished out of the net at a maximum resolution of 50 dpi? Who is even interested in these low-quality images from a past news era? The issue is far more that of information pollution and data garbage.

Coulangue's photographs emphasize the moment, remind one of the event and speak for the unknown and anonymous producer—for one thing has become clear in this age of the Arab Spring: the power of images originated from the mob and not from authorized journalism.

Coulangue's photographs allow one to feel the poetry of excitement in a state of emergency and they give anonymous voices a right to permanence.

We could say that the images that Olivier Coulangue appropriated from the Arab Spring and specifically the Tunisian revolution were not swept away in the following live-news avalanches of Fukushima, the war in Libya and the Bin Laden execution. Instead, they remain—first in the sphere of Coulangue's attention, then for his public: he makes the photos available to them due to his authority, the galleries and news media in a quality that has an effect of its own, that is captivating and reminds one that each such image, or a similar one, circulated around the world in millions of copies.

Coulangue's photographs thus have a maieutic character: they assist marginal and anonymous voices in achieving an authorized presence that only awaits reappropriation by the authors.

Because: *the revolution will not be authorized.*

Mark Kammerbauer

## Socio-spatial Phenomena of Urban Disaster: Schismourbanism as 'Design'

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina led to a catastrophic urban disaster in New Orleans and its metropolitan area, resulting in the long-term displacement of citizens across the country. While disasters<sup>1</sup> are generally conceptualized as occasions in which return is possible after a limited amount of time, the long-term character of Katrina challenges this view. This is related to the slow, ongoing and incomplete repopulation and long-term recovery of New Orleans, and particularly the interrelation of institutional planning and the vulnerabilities of populations during both the response and recovery phase of disaster. Long-term evacuation of vulnerable populations has turned into new settlement in other American cities, most notably Houston. The author conceptualizes this as an integrated process of 'schismourbanism'—a socio-spatial praxis of adaptation<sup>2</sup> that differs from typical 'return to normal' after disaster. Schismourbanism is a neologism consisting of schism, "[a] break or division in a social group" and urbanism, which "refers to patterns of social life thought typical of urban populations".<sup>3</sup> This concept addresses the interrelation of vulnerability and planning in the context of urban disaster and is oriented towards both disaster researchers as well as urbanists. It contributes to an improved understanding of the role of planning and 'design' in disaster-related mobility between cities and metropolitan areas. It also offers us a glimpse of socio-spatial processes of adaptation within future climate change scenarios relevant to coastal and peri-coastal metropolises worldwide.

The term 'uneven recovery' seems appropriate when characterizing the reconstruction of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. An immense degree of institutional intervention in the form of response and recovery plans and programmes was activated due to the disaster. In response, failures of the emergency management system became apparent to a global audience, most notably exemplified by FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.<sup>4</sup> From the perspective of a planner, the question arises as to which spatial, institutional and social aspects influence the occurrence of urban disaster in the USA and contribute to uneven recovery. The assumption that drives this research is that institutional plans and programmes are disconnected from the vulnerabilities of impacted populations. To verify this assumption, this contribution draws from the author's socio-spatial mixed-method empirical case study research on evacuation



1. Lower Ninth Ward rebuilding efforts: Katrina Cottages (2011)

planning and vulnerabilities of a particular population.<sup>5</sup> The presented data indicates the lack of a capacity to return to New Orleans due to particular spatial and social circumstances, leading to 'schismourbanism'. To discuss this complex, particular aspects are outlined here. Beginning with a framework for socio-spatial research of urban disaster, emergency management in the USA and the concept of 'normality' as well as vulnerabilities in an urban setting are illustrated. Against this background, the vulnerabilities of evacuation in the context of New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina are described briefly. The view is then redirected to Houston's response to the evacuee situation and the involved local nonprofit coalition. In closing, this contribution attempts to conceptually reintegrate the related processes of socio-spatial fragmentation in order to better understand its multidimensional relevance.

### SOCIO-SPATIAL RESEARCH OF URBAN DISASTER

Reviewing the literature on cities and disaster shows that sources represent two relatively separate discourses. However, socio-spatial perspectives in these two discourses offer the potential for a theoretical integration of both in the case of urban disaster. This serves as a basis to analyze contingent spatial, institutional and social aspects of urban disaster in a multidimensional way. Socio-spatial perspectives originate in observing interactions between societies and the spaces they inhabit. Lévi-Strauss<sup>6</sup> posited that the city, in particular, comprises a context in which social and spatial aspects appear closely interrelated. Lefebvre<sup>7</sup> employed the term 'praxis' for urban socio-spatial interactions, and Gottdiener and Hutchison<sup>8</sup> apply socio-spatial perspectives to the analysis of the American city. While sociologically oriented disaster research emphasizes the importance of an interpretation of disaster as a social occasion, there is an awareness that communities as the generic research unit for studying the impact of disasters inherently refer to a spatial context.<sup>9</sup> Oliver-Smith specifically points out how the interrelation between populations and the spaces they inhabit can influence the outcome of disaster as

*a process/event involving the combination of a potentially destructive agent(s) from the natural, modified and/or constructed environment and a population in a socially and economically produced condition of vulnerability.*<sup>10</sup>

In vulnerability research, this is exemplified by a distinction between 'social' and 'physical' vulnerability<sup>11</sup>—while other directions within that interdisciplinary field maintain a terminological differentiation between 'social' vulnerability and 'hazard-prone'





2. Lower Ninth Ward rebuilding efforts: Make It Right Foundation (2011)

locations.<sup>12</sup> In the context of disaster, vulnerability research strives to identify the reasons for the differential impact of disasters in relation to social and demographic characteristics of age, health, gender, ethnicity, class, etc. These are considered connected to preexisting, historic 'root causes' of vulnerabilities. In an urban context, urbanist research on social disparities in American cities analyzes preexisting conditions that can be interpreted as such 'root causes'. The notion that preexisting conditions inform disaster (and recovery) is an important one, notably formulated in Haas, Kates and Bowden's seminal comparative study on reconstruction after disaster.<sup>13</sup> Correspondingly, legislative frameworks for emergency management and related plans and programmes for recovery are based on a 'return to normal' paradigm oriented on preexisting conditions. Beyond that, there is a recognition that vulnerabilities are influenced by the social capital produced by communities when responding to disaster,<sup>14</sup> also with the support of nonprofit organizations. A multidimensional perspective of this complex of spatial, institutional and social aspects thus offers research an integrated analysis of who the vulnerable people are, where they live and what institutional plans and programmes are in place in the case of disaster.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE USA AND THE CONCEPT OF 'NORMALITY'

Governmental institutions in the USA have a long history of responding to disaster. Early on, natural disasters were considered phenomena that required institutional intervention. The federal government generally provided assistance, while local and state organizations served as first responders.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, intervention due to natural disaster became disaggregated within institutional structures and developed into a system of comprehensive emergency management. After World War II, the recognition was made that researching short-term disasters could contribute to an understanding of the assumed outcomes of potential Soviet nuclear attacks on US cities.<sup>16</sup> Definitions of identifiable phases within the occurrence of disaster are related to research on social coordination processes resulting from them and include planning and preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. The differentiation of these phases became the basis for specialized organizations, plans and programmes. FEMA was originally created as an integrated government institution to address hazard and disaster in the USA and displayed various degrees of performance in its history, with the failures in response to Hurricane Katrina the most notorious example.<sup>17</sup>

When a fast-onset and short-term disaster occurs, evacuation is assumed to be followed by quick return and recovery, enabling a 'return to normal'.<sup>18</sup> The principal framework behind this is constituted by the Stafford Act, which calls for a 'return to normal' after disaster.<sup>19</sup> Disasters have generally been conceptualized as disruption of 'normality' or 'order', which for one prompts institutions to intervene and reestablish 'order' based on prior experience,<sup>20</sup> but may also lead to what Button describes as "production of uncertainty".<sup>21</sup> Here, planning comes into effect as an instrument to "alter the existing course of events",<sup>22</sup> which may contribute to a return to 'normal' after disaster and everyday conditions seen to possess "a higher degree of predictability".<sup>23</sup> However, researchers note that, for one, emergency management has been detached from social issues due to cost.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, vulnerabilities may be recreated after disaster and vulnerable individuals may not be able to return to normal, eventually finding themselves in a condition termed as 'new normal'.<sup>25</sup>

## VULNERABILITIES IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

Disaster researchers employ the interdisciplinary vulnerability concept to determine the reasons for the differential impact of disasters on populations.<sup>26</sup> It originated in researching disasters and food insecurity in developing countries and focuses on social and demographic characteristics of race, ethnicity, poverty, religion, gender, age, health, etc. These characteristics are seen to indicate the differential impact of disaster on particular populations. At the same time, there is an awareness that these characteristics are related to socio-economic and cultural 'root causes' that are embedded in a community's history and everyday life. The generic quality of the employed characteristics doesn't prohibit an application of vulnerability research within other contexts, such as industrialized and developed nations.

Vulnerability is viewed to have an opposite: the concept of resilience serves to illustrate the capacity of populations to 'rebound' after disaster by either returning to 'normal' or even exceeding preexisting 'normality'.<sup>27</sup> Beyond that, research acknowledges that social capital produced by social networks or structures may also benefit vulnerable populations in coping with disaster.<sup>28</sup> Urban environments are generally seen to possess an ambivalent character in regard to vulnerabilities.<sup>29</sup> For one, due to their economic centrality, they can provide access to resources and safety. Yet, because of particular land-use patterns, they can also produce disparities of a socio-spatial nature, related to the proximity of settlement spaces to nuisances and hazard.<sup>30</sup> In the context of access to



3. Lower Ninth Ward: N.  
Johnson Street (2009)

resources, spatial segregation is a possible example, but also car ownership. In urban environments, spatial constellations and public transportation may prove advantageous for populations with low degrees of car ownership, which eventually can lead to disadvantage in the case of disasters that require household-based evacuation procedures.

In American cities, the concepts of stratification and uneven development<sup>31</sup> serve to describe social and demographic disparities according to characteristics of ethnicity, income, gender, health, age, etc. Stratification is reinforced by corresponding spatial patterns, and uneven development inherently refers to socio-spatial constellations indicative of differential access to resources. One example relevant for such disparities in social and spatial terms is homeownership, as “a potent cultural symbol in our society”<sup>32</sup> and as indicator for socioeconomic status and access to resources. In the USA this complex is linked to ethnicity, and Massey points out the relation between access to resources and “the unequal distribution of people across social categories”.<sup>33</sup> The interaction of ethnicity and poverty is most pronounced in the form of inner-city ghettos inhabited by poor African Americans, a condition that was exacerbated by loss of inner-city jobs due to historic economic developments, suburbanization and ‘white flight’, but also alternative opportunities for middle-class African Americans.<sup>34</sup> These aspects can be interpreted as ‘root causes’ of vulnerabilities in the context of American cities.

## NEW ORLEANS, KATRINA AND VULNERABILITIES OF EVACUATION

Before Katrina impacted New Orleans, the city had an evacuation plan in place, the ‘New Orleans Plan’. It called for announcing a ‘mandatory’ evacuation 72 hours before landfall, while acknowledging that a substantial proportion of citizens didn’t have access to a personal vehicle. However, the plan never determined how these citizens were to receive necessary support in the case of disaster. As a result, while a majority of citizens evacuated the city by car as part of one of the largest successful peacetime evacuations in US history, approximately 100,000 citizens remained in the city due to various reasons—by choice or because they lacked the capacity to leave on their own.<sup>35</sup> In late August 2005, Katrina made landfall, the local flood control system collapsed and the city and its remaining inhabitants were flooded, necessitating a massive post-landfall search and rescue operation. Survivors were brought to various high points in the city or to the city’s Superdome, the ‘shelter of last resort’, which did not have adequate

capacity, supplies or staffing. Eventually, evacuees were dispersed all across the country, with Houston comprising a major destination.<sup>36</sup>

Against the background of the ongoing recovery of New Orleans, the population stabilized at roughly 350,000 in 2010, but with 100,000 fewer African American citizens than in 2000, when 480,000 residents lived in the city.<sup>37</sup> Preexisting socio-spatial conditions in the city contributed to the outcome of disaster, including a history of spatial segregation, ‘white flight’, economic problems and environmental degradation.<sup>38</sup> This was met with the city government’s ‘laissez-faire’ attitude to return and recovery.<sup>39</sup> For vulnerable citizens, the lacking capacity to evacuate in part resulted in dislocation to distant places and difficulty in returning, also related to deficits in available housing, work and income, or duration of displacement. Certain parts of the city are seen to represent the heterogeneous, citywide process of ‘uneven recovery’, by either recovering in a strong or in a weak way, as existing data indicate.<sup>40</sup> The Lower Ninth Ward was selected as the case study research unit due to its perceived ‘weak’ recovery. This area of the city has come to worldwide recognition, also related to activities of nonprofit organizations, in part with prominent Hollywood support.

Before the storm, it comprised a working-class, majority African American community with high rates of poverty and elderly citizens, as well as above city-average homeownership.<sup>41</sup> In late summer 2005, Hurricane Rita led to renewed flooding, particularly in the Lower Ninth Ward, which was the last part of the city officially reopened by local authorities to residents intent on returning. After the storms, it remains to this day an area of the city with below average reconstruction and rebuilding rates, despite a history of dense social networks based on neighbourhood and family, disrupted by disaster. Return became difficult due to insufficient funds, but also because family and friends had also not returned, in addition to problems in public service provision and safety.<sup>42</sup> For those who returned, available interim housing was rare and thus costly. However, it was necessary to be in town to repair destroyed houses, against the background of overly complex application processes to access institutional federal, state or local support or the funding shortfalls they produced.<sup>43</sup> This interrelation of spatial, institutional and social aspects sheds light on the reasons for the below average repopulation rates of the Lower Ninth Ward and the socio-spatial ‘schism’ that eventually occurred among evacuees remaining in other cities. Reconstruction of the city is only possible if residents can return. But how, as a particular example of socio-spatial fragmentation, did the Houston situation develop?

4. Lower Ninth Ward: N.

Rocheblave Street (2009)



## HOUSTON'S RESPONSE AND THE LOCAL NONPROFIT COALITION

Return seemed impossible for many. Was there a connection between the lacking capacity to evacuate and to return? Were both related to vulnerabilities? In previous disasters, people who had to leave their homes were typically able to return after a short-term disaster and engage in recovery processes. Thus, viewing evacuation and return as an integrated complex relates not only to circumstances of the response phase, but also of the recovery phase. To research this complex of 'urban crisis mobility', the author employed a case study with quantitative and qualitative mixed methods. Data researched in a quantitative questionnaire survey in 2007 relate to the vulnerabilities of a population from the case study area. Lower Ninth Ward residents who had returned or had not returned were interviewed within the survey. Two rounds of survey interviews were held in the Lower Ninth Ward and a third round was held in an apartment complex in Houston, where former Lower Ninth Ward residents (along with many other New Orleanians) were still living at the time of the survey in 2007. Most of the Houston group respondents noted that they had been renting and that their residence had been destroyed, in addition to being post-landfall evacuees due to lacking car ownership.<sup>44</sup> This quantitative data is complemented by qualitative interviews in 2009 with representatives from nonprofit organizations in Houston.

In the wake of 250,000 Katrina evacuees coming to Houston, the city's mayor and Harris County's judge quickly coordinated efforts with the local apartment owner association to move evacuees from short-term shelters such as the Astrodome or the George R. Brown Convention Center into vacant apartments within the city. FEMA, however, was initially opposed to transitioning evacuees from their shelters into what seemed a long-term housing situation. Despite this opposition, New Orleanians in Houston, the majority of whom were African American, soon found themselves in previously vacant apartments in the city.<sup>45</sup> In addition, FEMA regulations requiring pre-storm households to live together again to receive housing support led to individuals rejoining family members. This process was complemented by the actions of a local coalition of nonprofit organizations that assisted evacuees in Houston. The nonprofit coalition formed to supply evacuees with basic needs, such as food and clothing, but also furniture in their new apartments, as well as long-term case management services. They also supported evacuees in finding and rejoining family members, not only within the city of Houston, but also between Houston and the other major Katrina evacuation destinations, such as Atlanta. This process is seen to span six to eight months after the hurricane, in which families 'reassembled' in their new locations. In Houston, larger

groups of evacuees eventually found themselves in apartment complexes situated in the city's northwest and southeast.<sup>46</sup>

Not only was social capital created by the activity of the nonprofit coalition in supporting the New Orleans evacuees in Houston. In addition, local stores began to carry New Orleans or Cajun-style food items. Further, the 'reassembly' or new settlement of social networks enabled families and community members to reconstitute the social capital that was disrupted by disaster. In the apartment complex visited by the author, one interviewee operated an informal store with snacks and soft drinks for other New Orleans evacuees living in the complex.<sup>47</sup> This gains particular relevance against the background of the general difficulty that New Orleanians encountered when trying to move around town. Houston is larger than New Orleans, but even with access to cars, New Orleans evacuees who cooperated with the nonprofit coalition as case managers would get disoriented in the city. The examples of social capital observed can be seen as contributing to coping with the outcomes of disaster.

## RECONNECTING THE DOTS BY SEPARATING THEM: SCHISMOURBANISM

In terms of the interaction between spatial, institutional and social aspects in disaster, New Orleans' evacuation plan at the time Katrina struck neglected the vulnerabilities of the city's populations.<sup>48</sup> Car ownership comprises an example of differential access to resources that refers to historic 'root causes' of ethnicity and poverty as prevalent vulnerabilities in this context. Homeowners are confronted with uninsured losses or funding application delays and related recovery financing gaps. Tenants are exposed to difficulties based on their landlords' decision to return and rebuild or the decline in available rental properties in New Orleans. Here, vulnerability as an explanatory concept for the differential impact of disasters on populations can be correlated to the social and demographic disparities of everyday life in an American city. After disaster, these aspects are related to hardships in returning, uninsured losses and housing damages and complex, contingent planning issues in urban recovery. Long-term recovery is impaired by long-term displacement, as affected populations become 'involuntary evacuees'.

In Houston, a majority African American, low-income group of evacuees from New Orleans required the assistance of the local nonprofit coalition. While preexisting social capital was disrupted by disaster, the activity of the nonprofit coalition not only reactivated social capital, it also helped to reassemble, to a certain degree, the



5. Lower Ninth Ward: N. Miro  
Street @ Caffin Avenue (2009)

preexisting social networks that it was originally based on. Does this mean New Orleanians in Houston are resilient? They didn't 'return to normal' in New Orleans, but remained displaced. But does this mean that they are *not* resilient? While they continue to be vulnerable, they established a 'new normal' in a new city. In the case of long-term evacuees from New Orleans in Houston, a different praxis of adaptation was employed—evacuate and stay, as opposed to evacuate and return. This represents socio-spatial fragmentation followed by new settlement, which eventually resulted in a 'new normal'. However, while social networks have been, to a certain degree, reclaimed, location of settlement has (potentially permanently) changed. While long-term evacuees retained their 'New Orleans-ness', they have also become Houstonians. A population with an urban 'split personality' has emerged, exemplifying the concept of 'schismourbanism'.

In urban disaster, return and recovery may remain incomplete or 'uneven' for prolonged amounts of time. This contribution indicates how the interaction of spatial, institutional and social aspects, in the form of planning that disregards vulnerabilities of populations, plays a role in this process. The 'schismourbanism' displayed by New Orleanian evacuees in Houston can be interpreted as an alternate praxis of adaptation with the potential of reestablishing social networks in a different location. If social capital is produced by this process, it can contribute to the coping capacity of vulnerable populations displaced by disaster. However, before generalizing from this case, further comparative research is required. It is important to point out that the situation in Houston, the quick action taken by the city and county government and the contributions of the nonprofit coalition comprise a potentially exceptional case.<sup>49</sup> Yet the scenario that it entails may provide a valuable contribution to planning for future disasters, if planners can address vulnerabilities of populations in the context of evacuation due to disaster and potential long-term or permanent environmental change. Mobility between cities and metropolitan regions in the context of disaster and catastrophe as socio-spatial praxis emerges as 'design subject', with potentially far-reaching relevance not only for policymaking, but also for architecture and urban and regional planning. The question arises where populations at risk evacuate to, and whether those potential 'safe havens' are prepared and become active in supporting their new arrivals.

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6- Lower Ninth Ward: N Villere St @ Cherbonnet Street (2009)

Photo and photo collage

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19. 42 USC 5121-5207, *Robert T Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, and Related Authorities*, United States Code 42, Chapter 68, Disaster Relief, FEMA, 592, 2007: p. 48.
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47. Author's field research in Houston, June 2007 and May 2009.
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Gabriele Hadl

## “This is a human emergency” – Ecology and Media after Fukushima

This emergency is a distraction.

I had no idea I would be writing this piece as an eco-refugee under a state of nuclear emergency. I had agreed to write on emergency design from an alternative media perspective. I had planned to sit at my desk in Japan, surrounded by books, considering, quoting, thinking methodically, writing academically. But some events crack reality, showing our plans to be puny, our priorities insane, our habitual concerns irrelevant. It can be the loss of a loved one, an epiphany gained in meditation or a dream, or a catastrophe affecting a whole society. Then, some things that *should* fall apart actually *do*.

We have set priorities myopically, pulled about by news: fast, bright, tawdry, short-lived, focused on money and human suffering. We panic about mediated emergencies, misunderstand their gravity, fail to conceive appropriate responses and forget about them almost instantly. There are crises—plain to see—if we lived more in our bodies than in media worlds: rivers without the sound of frogs, few bees buzzing, butterflies in winter, birds forgetting to migrate. Yet such things escape our notice until some media labels them an eco-emergency.

The mainstream media rarely break stories of eco-crisis. They report them only strategically, in the ‘emergency’ slot of the headlines, to curious anaesthetizing effect. Viewers have predictable emotional reactions, then mostly forget the oil spills, record ice-melts, catastrophic storms, flooding, bleaching of corals, and failed climate summits. The Fukushima nuclear disaster, raised as the apocalypse one week, is swiftly displaced by Middle East upheaval. Geiger counters can suddenly be bought second-hand on the cheap.

Word of eco-crisis often comes first from ‘alternative’ publications: small environmental magazines, scientific journals, books, talks, not-for-profit organization (NPO) websites and the blogs of independent journalists. Those who regularly read such sources are rarely surprised by the headlines in the mainstream media.<sup>1</sup> It was hard to foresee the exact location, size and timing, but in a land of earthquakes, tsunamis and nuclear

power, something like the Fukushima disaster was bound to happen. Social movements had argued such a scenario for years and independent scientists had pointed out faulty designs and insufficient backup plans, including in the Fukushima area.<sup>2</sup> Residents trying to halt nuclear facilities had filed lawsuits arguing a “worse-than-foreseen scenario”,<sup>3</sup> organized referenda against nuclear facilities and even started up wind farms as positive alternatives.<sup>4</sup> Slogans such as “Stop Rokkasho!” (a nuclear facility in northern Japan) and “No Nukes More Hearts!” had become somewhat widespread, even fashionable in recent years.<sup>5</sup> For every community that was persuaded or coerced into hosting a nuclear facility, one managed to resist. Prior to this emergency, alternative magazines had for months been running specials on nuclear power and printing ads for antinuclear books (in preparation of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Chernobyl), while news of antinuclear demonstrations and civic actions regularly appeared in many alternative publications. The permit extension for the doomed Fukushima Dai-ichi facility was heavily criticized, and its MOX fuel—now leaking plutonium—was introduced over vociferous protest.

Yet here it is upon us, and we are unprepared.

### EMERGENCY VS. CRISIS

Emergency is commonly defined as “a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action”.<sup>6</sup> Artist and cultural philosopher Yana Milev argues in her theory of ‘emergency design’ that it is much more. A post-World War II concept, emergency acts as justification for states and corporations acting beyond their appointed powers.

*[The] concept of emergency thus applies to insecurity of whatever kind—from natural catastrophe to war, from national debt through democratic intervention to social decline—that plunges the (subjective) space inhabited by a person, network or corporate entity into a state of exception, with fundamental impact on such institutions and values of daily life as justice, crime and the market.*<sup>7</sup>

11 March 2011. The earthquake with tsunami and nuclear accident occurs. The Japanese cabinet declares a state of emergency. The self-defence force mobilizes, acceptable radiation levels are raised to more convenient levels, people are told to stay calm, volunteers urged to stay at home so as not to impede government efforts, the

national press is encouraged to self-censor, information is handed out in small bits. Conjuring a spirit of national unity bolsters the fraying cabinet, while (self-)stereotypes of Japaneseness and even nationalist slogans are heard everywhere. Corporations have a chance to look good by putting a donation box at the register. People are watching television again and even buying newspapers. Abroad, shock and awe and offers of help, panic in places unlikely to be physically affected (as media collapse space and time), constant updates on the news until the lack of new visible horror makes it expedient to move the headlines on to Libya. On the stock market, whispers that this is an opportunity.

I first found myself thinking Milev's writing prophetic, custom-written for my situation. Yet emergency theory is necessarily timely, she explains. The current world system, which she calls "Emergency Empire", is based on an endless flow of emergencies. Her complex analysis in a nutshell: corporate/state actors transform events, from disruptive to catastrophic, into a series of "states of emergency" and "cultural catastrophes".<sup>8</sup> If it had not been Fukushima, it would have been something else.

Milev's analysis snaps us out of a state of constant surprise by unmasking the flow of emergencies as a strategic construction and intentional distraction. The undifferentiated representation of catastrophes confuses people and impedes decision-making. Emergencies are culturally produced for political, social and economic use.

For example,<sup>9</sup> few people realize that the 9/11 attacks were, in terms of loss of life and damage to the environment, a minor event in comparison to the Asian Tsunami of 2004. Neither rates in comparison to the big wave of extinction that characterizes the current period in Earth's history, the Anthropocene. Small events can be rendered as big cultural catastrophes, while big crises can go almost unnoticed (except, of course, by those physically affected).<sup>10</sup>

Crisis, on the other hand, is in Milev's view the natural state of the world.<sup>11</sup> Many premodern/nonwestern cultural practices—such as martial arts and religious rituals—are efforts to engage creatively with crisis. She also points to contemporary practices such as policy activism, migration, culture jamming, squatting and dumpster diving that "use the resources of crises to repair the damage wreaked by cultural catastrophes".<sup>12</sup> She calls these "technologies of survival" or "Emergency Design Strategies".

Emergencies are elaborate distractions, while crises contain opportunities for regenerating balance.

### FIRST THINGS FIRST

Our priorities have been monopolized by perennial social issues: capital, power, empire; consumption and control; identification with the downtrodden; censure of injustice; celebration of resistance; the shortcomings of 'the media'; support for Enlightenment ideals; and the defence of civil society against state and market. Somewhere on this list, usually last, is the destruction of the environment. These are dangerously outdated priorities.

First, many of what we have considered 'big' problems are now dwarfed by human destruction of the natural world. With climate change proceeding unchecked, mass migration will be a mass phenomenon for humans. For many less mobile and adaptable creatures, by many estimates a third of all species, it will be the end within a few decades. 'Habitat loss' is homelessness for whole species, 'extinction' would be called 'holocaust' if it were a group of humans.

Nor can we continue imagining our 'big issues' separate from ecocide. Theories like ecofeminism have linked patterns of oppression among humans with human treatment of nature. Environmental sociology has long analyzed how cultural issues affect the natural environment. But now no field can ignore the opposite angle: ongoing climate change strongly affects every 'human' issue. For example, democracy and human rights are hard to defend in a world where weather extremes are always on hand to justify states of emergency. Food? Water? Health? Education? Justice? Rights? The science is unequivocal: without climate change adaption and mitigation, all these issues will quickly become intractable.<sup>13</sup> Thus adding a few words about ecology or environmental justice to our considerations is not enough. We need to fundamentally change the way we think about the things we habitually identify as 'our issues'. Every feminist needs to be an ecofeminist, every democracy lover needs to resist the hegemony of fossil fuels, every social justice campaigner needs to address intergenerational justice and climate debt, every human rights activist needs to fight for the rights of trees, every designer needs to be a low-carbon artist, every anthropologist needs to be a nature-realist.

Finally, we have to adjust our sense of urgency. Conventional thinking went along the lines that environmental issues need to be tackled gradually and systematically alongside other big problems. With regard to 'traditional' problems such as urban pollution, this has been a sensible approach. However, climate change is a different matter. A growing number of scientists believe that we are approaching or have already reached the 'tipping point' where greenhouse gas emissions force world climate into "dynamic and irreversible change",<sup>14</sup> with likely "catastrophic" consequences. The next few years are considered critical for action, when CO<sub>2</sub> emissions should peak. Environmentalism used to be one of many 'isms', long-term and slow-simmering. No more. Environmentalism is our chief technology of survival.

We must thus reprioritize, however unfashionable and inconvenient that may be. There are many good reasons why prioritizing has gone out of (academic) style. It has taken too long to debunk ideas such as those that women's rights must wait until after 'the revolution' or that only high art is deserving of study. It has become clear that issues such as race and gender are connected, and that most problems can only be tackled by taking into account such interconnections. The cultural turn in the humanities taught us that important information is found in the most unlikely places, including in research on apparently trivial things.<sup>15</sup> However, is it reasonable to have more research on audience responses to *Harry Potter* than to climate change reporting, on social movements for Palestinian independence than for climate justice? Prioritizing is risky. That does not mean we can do without it. Nor does it mean ignoring interconnections. But we must keep asking—what is my work for? What are my means and what are my ends? In the medium-term, we must focus beyond the merely interesting, on what is both urgent and important.

I suggest we make ending ecocide our first priority.

So, let us quickly sketch the spectrum of options for greening our thinking:<sup>16</sup> pale green (anthropocentric), medium green (intermediate) and dark green (ecocentric).

In the broad sense, human thought and action are necessarily anthropocentric, as they rely on human perception and experience, expressing themselves through the human body and language.<sup>17</sup> In the narrow sense, anthropocentrism considers humans the only beings of value. It is perhaps the world's most pervasive ideology. It holds humans as exceptional, separate from nature and justified in using other beings in any way that serves their ends, a view long bolstered by religion<sup>18</sup> and science.<sup>19</sup>

Even here there is room for ecological thought, a green anthropocentrism. Consideration towards other living beings can elevate one's moral standing. Other beings and ecosystems are indeed important—in their impact on human well-being. Pale green focuses on human self-interest, and meshes well with capitalism and individualism. It also appeals to many Left positions, especially where it uses collectivist analysis, for example with regard to the impact of pollution on marginalized populations. Pale green is the dominant shade of ecological discourse in research and policy, popular even with green activists. In fact, for tactical reasons I have framed the argument for ecology above mostly in anthropocentric terms. Milev's theory is also anthropocentric, as far as I can see, though it has dark green potential (discussed below).

Medium green perspectives value nonhuman life for its own sake, although in a conflict human interest is usually prioritized. Rights are extended to some nonhuman beings, usually ranked according to similarity (such as dolphins) or closeness to humans in evolutionary or sociohistorical terms (such as, respectively, primates or pets). However, medium green tends to focus on individual species (or groups of species) and has difficulty conceptualizing ecosystems. Extending rights also leads to difficulties about where to draw the line, the balance of rights and duties, etc.

Ecocentrism is the most radical type of perspective. Neither humans nor any other species are most important. The whole interdependent system of beings—ecosystem—is at the centre. The Gaia Theory, for example, views Earth as one organism, of which humans are but one part. Theories of ecofeminism and some work on environmental justice and indigenous peoples belong to this type. In practical terms, where human activity damages the organism, it must be terminated instantly and efforts made to restore balance.<sup>20</sup>

In the short term, Maxwell and Miller<sup>21</sup> argue, any shade of green will do. For example, quibbles about details aside, climate science now projects we have about ten years until we reach a tipping point.<sup>22</sup> With this threat looming, even anthropocentrists should agree to the "immediate termination of ecologically unsound practices".<sup>23</sup> So why is it business as usual everywhere? Hamilton<sup>24</sup> analyzes the question "why we are all climate change deniers".<sup>25</sup> Psychologically, "we reinterpret the threat, engage in pleasure-seeking, shift blame and cling to unfounded hopes". Culturally, commercialism and individualism impede progress. Politically, mass political action should "force governments to legislate for fast and deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. Yet here we come



up against a democratic system corrupted by professionalization, careerism, spin and money politics.”<sup>26</sup>

It is hard to imagine how we can untangle this without considering the role of media.

### DE-DESIGNING THE MEDIA SOCIETY: TERMINATE THE UNSOUND, RESTORE BALANCE

In a media society, almost all we know about what is happening in Fukushima—or anywhere else on the planet—and how that will affect us, comes through media. We must de-design and redesign our media systems from an ecological perspective. But how? How deeply?

Research on the political economy of communication has documented how the current media systems reinforce individualism, consumerism and political passivity, and how patterns of ownership and funding impact the content of communication. Journalism research shows that reporting privileges the unexpected (such as emergencies) and the powerful, relies mostly on government and corporate sources (not social movements), frames things in preset terms, and obscures the majority of important issues by focusing on a small number. Media researchers have also argued that democratizing communication enables the kinds of popular pressure and political change Hamilton<sup>27</sup> deems necessary. In my field of alternative media research, we have analyzed ‘techniques of survival’—community radio stations in slums, women’s media, websites of ecological organizations, “Nikeplatz” culture jams, the counterculture of “San Precario”, lobbying for media access by marginalized communities, videotapes and blogs in fighting colonialism, etc.<sup>28</sup> The area of indigenous media research, in particular, shows how to revive knowledge systems that can help restore balance.<sup>29</sup>

Alas, Maxwell and Miller<sup>30</sup> point out, media studies has only footnoted ecological concerns. Worse yet, the field has glorified technology and ignored its ecological impact.<sup>31</sup> What we know is that the media system is stacked against ecological communication, and that people are engaged in counter-efforts. So in which directions should these efforts be taken?

As part of a general “toolkit for survival”, Milev suggests the following:

1. break patterns
2. learn to undo habitual action
3. dismantle hierarchies
4. displace institutional orders (identities)
5. decode access privileges to systems
6. downshift consumerism and image hysteria
7. diversify
8. slow down [*Entschleunigung*]
9. become sustainable.<sup>32</sup>

Granted these strategies are interconnected, what if we reshuffle the order toward an *ecological media reform* agenda, with sustainability on top?

“How much communication and entertainment media is enough to attain a system that serves everyone on the planet fairly without contributing to ‘ecological suicide’?”<sup>33</sup> The short answer may be, “not much”. We would terminate many practices, redesign technologies and structures, and redistribute access according to the first eight strategies. For example, Maxwell and Miller<sup>34</sup> identify glossy magazines as obvious candidates for the axe, based on the damage they do to culture (touting consumerism and image hysteria) and nature (with their exceptionally wasteful production and distribution system). Mobile phones, Maxwell and Miller<sup>35</sup> concede, are trickier: they have enormous ecological impact, but they have arguable social benefits. Depending on one’s shade of green, the options run from collectively foregoing them to finetuning their lifecycle design. In this context, digital television is hard to justify, computers and internet infrastructure would be curtailed. Technologies would aim to use a minimum of resources (also through shared use, blagging, etc.) while maximizing the common good (of humans, animals and/or Gaia, depending on your shade of green).

Let’s also add “What kind of media?” Entertainment and information would primarily connect humans to themselves, each other and the environment. For example, what (if anything) would replace ‘the news’? First, no more emergencies, but slow news, good news and ‘olds’ (historical perspective, continuity). Ecology would be the dominant frame. Instead of stock market ticker and weather forecast, current CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations and climate forecast. The main sources would be environmental social movements and

local communities. Perspectives of nonhuman beings would be represented—imagine video cameras for monkeys, translations of dolphin conversations, technologies hacked and redesigned for humans to communicate with other living beings. It would be multi-lingual (including sign languages), but most important would be indigenous languages. And there would be lots of silence.

Of course, all this entails ownership, distribution and production structures very different from those we have now, which means the governance system would be quite different as well. An ecological media society would have fewer of the kinds of things that dominate our mental environment now, and more of what our souls have been craving.

## FUKUSHIMA AS CULTURE JAM

Implausible? First, let us remember that prototypes already exist on the margins of the current system. What is now called 'alternative', 'tactical' and 'community media' can become the new mainstream.<sup>36</sup> Existing practices of ecologically sane democratic governance wait to be widely adapted and adopted.<sup>37</sup> Sure, what we know about vested interests, the inertia of institutions and the current state of human psychology (attached to habits and gadgets, cantankerous, given to denial, selfish, easily frightened, fascinated with death, impervious to rational argument, etc.) make it hard to be sanguine about de-designing our media society. Yet here we can use 'emergency capital'. To resist the tyranny of constructed emergencies, climate change is the real crisis to tend to.

Getting rid (by legal action?) of, say, the whole magazine industry may seem outrageous. But in a medium green perspective, the rights of trees to exist (enshrined in the Bolivian constitution<sup>38</sup>) would trump the (corporate) right to free speech. Even in an anthropocentric perspective, Maxwell and Miller<sup>39</sup> argue, the overall benefit to humans can justify such measures. In fact, in this nuclear emergency, when many magazines curtailed distribution, no grumbles were heard. Commercial-free television for days on end proved possible.<sup>40</sup> The whole country is wondering why the mainstream media have never reported on the dangers of nuclear power before. Many people realize how important it is to have diverse sources of information, low-tech alternatives, to be media-literate enough to pick one's way through them and to express oneself through media. Suddenly, the government gladly licenses community radio stations. Young

people dispatch to the affected areas to help by the busload, discovering the gap between mediated reality and lived experience. Tokyoites find their city functions without 24/7 electricity. Neon signs, it turns out, are dispensable, along with heated toilet seats and Coca-Cola vending machines. Japan does not fall apart when several nuclear power plants are down, it merely becomes its old self a bit more—slower, less convenient, more convivial. Hamilton<sup>41</sup> says that system change may take a long time, time we do not have. But emergency experience shows there can be change overnight. Who, of the thousands involved in the antinuclear movement, thought they'd live to see the Japanese government backtrack on nuclear policy? Fukushima is one big heart-wrenching culture jam.

To pull something good out of emergencies, disaster-preparedness is key: social movements and experiments in ecological living, and theoretical grounding. I agree with Maxwell and Miller<sup>42</sup> that we should use anthropocentrism tactically. Economics became dominant partly by convincing us that it is the key to further human self-interest. Eco-emergencies demonstrate that human self-interest is best served by treating Gaia as number one. Simultaneously, we need to popularize and develop darker/deeper green analyses. This would include the connection between ecology and feminism, ecology and democracy, nature's and human rights, humanism and environmentalism, cultural diversity and biodiversity, media ecology and natural ecology, etc. There may be many dangerous discussions, which should be held (at least in the early stages) without climate change deniers, cultural conservatives and technocrats.

We should not be cowed into doing nothing because we cannot do it perfectly. No doubt, my argument would be more consistent if I had reached eco-enlightenment, living off the grid and eating only fruits and nuts, but you would probably not hear it anytime soon. In the meantime, little would change. Insistence on eco-sainthood is the standard excuse for inaction ("I cannot say anything on green matters because I have a car") and for dismissing green arguments ("She's writing this on a computer and it's being published on paper!" or "He's a vegetarian but wears leather!"). How come we do not reject out of hand an analysis of trade exploitation if the author shops at the supermarket? Because we accept that hypocrisy cannot be completely avoided and periodically confront the contradictions that arise thereby. We need to extend this courtesy to ecological arguments.

But haven't we also learned to be wary of utopian ideas? And isn't one person's heaven another person's hell? I am not suggesting that we think up 'eco-topia' and then

force our way towards it. But we have been too cautious, too complicit and too afraid to dream. We need to stop what we are doing, whatever it is, and reevaluate it in the light of the climate crisis. This may be a painful process, leading us to give up many of our habitual ways of thinking and doing, abandoning cherished projects, even things we considered our lifework. But we must confront the fact that doing the right thing at the wrong time is wrong. It is time to snap out and to wholeheartedly dedicate ourselves to restoring balance between the human and other realms of living beings.

This we must do not only in our intellectual work, but in all realms of life and society. We may be served well by rewriting the "First Things First Manifesto" not only for designers, but for all professions and areas of life and society.<sup>43</sup> And we must transform ourselves and our institutions with it—fast. We need to de-design, redesign and do nothing in appropriate measure. Rather than criticize each other for our shortcomings, we need to pat each other on the back wherever we can. We need to listen better and to shut up when we have nothing urgent and important to say. We need to do less and do it better. We need to be efficient and focused. And, most importantly, we must be visionary, fearless and pragmatic.

From empires of emergency, the emergence of a new reality. The enemy is business as usual.

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2. Kyodo News, "Late expert gave forewarning of Fukushima nuke plant disaster", *Japan Times*, 8 May 2011, available at <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110508a6.html>, accessed 20 May 2011.
3. Kyodo News, "Suits to halt atomic plants have all failed", *Japan Times*, 26 April 2011, available at <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110426a2.html>, accessed 20 May 2011.
4. Hasegawa, Koichi, "Collaborative Environmentalism in Japan", *Civic Engagement in Contemporary Japan*, Henk Vinken et al. eds, New York: Springer, 2010, pp. 85-100.
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6. "Emergency", *New Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
7. Milev, Yana, "Emergency Designs: New Semiotic Orders of Urban Survival (Über/Leben)", *TRANSDIS-COURSE 1*, Jill Scott, Andrea Gleiniger et al. eds, Vienna/New York: Springer, 2010, p. 146.
8. Milev implies that this is facilitated by the mainstream media, though she does not include an analysis of this process.
9. This paragraph is not a summary of Milev.
10. Media research, which Milev does not refer to, would help explain how exactly 'real' events are made into cultural catastrophes; this is especially true of work on crisis communication and media panics, on ownership and on newsroom routines.
11. Asian Studies scholar Rey Chow has pointed out in a different context that the Chinese word for crisis, *weiji*, consists of the characters for 'danger' and 'opportunity' (*Writing Diaspora*, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1993 p. 25).
12. Milev, Yana, "Emergency Design: Krise als Moment der Reparatur", *Berliner Gazette*, available at <http://berlinergazette.de/emergency-design-krise-aikodo-reparatur/>, accessed 20 May 2011 (translation mine). Milev has developed a detailed typology and calls them "emergency design" and "anthropotechniques of survival". In my field of media research, these are studied as community, alternative, civil society and tactical media.
13. Archer, David and Stefan Rahmstorf, *The climate crisis: An introductory guide to climate change*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
14. Hansen, James et al., "Dangerous human-made interference with climate: A GISS model E study", *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics*, vol. 7, pp. 2287-2312.
15. Among the less positive consequences are the rise of postmodern relativism and the pull of funding towards certain kinds of research and away from others.
16. Following Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller's lead ("Ecological Ethics and Media Technology", *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 331-353), I take this outline from Patrick Curry, *Ecological Ethics: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006.

17. Though certain kinds of non-thinking and un-doing that Milev suggests do have such potential.
18. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are notable. However, Buddhism (including most schools of Zen and Tibetan Buddhism) also tends to emphasize human exceptionalism, though certainly not separation from nature. Some types of animism, on the other hand, eschew human exceptionalism.
19. Research that challenges human exceptionalism has made an impact only in the last decade; for instance, research on aesthetic sensibilities in chickens and fish; complex tool use by birds; language in primates and dolphins; the perception of moral justice in dogs; artwork by birds; cultural transmission in macaque and marine mammal societies; ageing patterns in primates, etc.
20. A caveat. Eco-centrism can be conveniently used to argue inaction, as in the attitude "The earth will go on without us" or in the joke that cockroaches will be the winners of the current wave of mass extinction, which is only fair considering reptiles and mammals had their heyday. There is indeed a serious epistemological question here ("Can we know what is right action within the ecosystem?"). However, people who use this argument are often susceptible to arguments for survival—even if only their own personal survival—based on self-interest. Only nihilists and hard-core misanthropists are immune to all of the above.
21. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
22. Hamilton, Clive, *Requiem for a Species*, London: Earthscan, 2010.
23. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
24. Hamilton, Clive, "Are we all Climate Deniers?", Earthscan blog, 16 April 2010, available at <http://www.earthscan.co.uk/blog/post/Are-we-all-climate-deniers.aspx>, accessed 20 May 2011.
25. 'Climate change denier', in analogy to 'holocaust denier', is a derogatory term for people who disavow the scientific consensus that human activity, especially burning of fossil fuels, contributes to climate change with potentially catastrophic impacts (though few deny that world climate is changing). Among many rhetorical strategies, they use minor mistakes to discredit the entire field of climate research. For details see Washington Haydn and George Cook, *Heads in the Sand*, London: Earthscan, 2011.
26. Hamilton, "Are we all Climate Deniers?"
27. Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species*.
28. Downing, John, "Our Media and the State: Introduction", *Making our Media*, Dorothy Kidd, Laura Stein et al. eds, Cresskill NJ: Hampton Press, 2010.
29. Alia, Valerie, *The New Media Nation: Indigenous Peoples and Global Communication*, New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009. Roth, Lorna, *Something New in the Air: The Story of First People's Television Broadcasting in Canada*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005. Wilson, Pamela and Michelle Stewart eds, *Global Indigenous Media*, Durham NC, Duke University Press, 2008.
30. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
31. Research on e-waste and the communication practices of green movements have happened at the margins.
32. Milev, Yana, „Mediale (Des)Orientierung als Kulturkatastrophe und Emergency Design als Kulturtechnik der Transformation“, in: *Orientierung/Desorientierung*, Design2context, Lars Müller Publishers, Baden 2010, pp. 150-167.
33. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
34. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
35. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
36. Downing, John, "Our Media and the State: Introduction".
37. Wainwright, Hilary, *Reclaim the State: Experiments in Popular Democracy*, London: Verso Books, 2003. Vidal, John, "Bolivia enshrines natural world's rights with equal status for Mother Earth", *The Guardian Online*, 10 April 2011, available at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/apr/10/bolivia-enshrines-natural-worlds-rights>, accessed 20 May 2011.
38. Vidal, "Bolivia enshrines natural world's rights".
39. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
40. Cunningham, Philip J, "Japan Quake Shakes TV: The Media Response to Catastrophe", *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus Newsletter*, vol. 9, no. 13, 28 March 2011.
41. Hamilton, "Are we all Climate Deniers?"
42. Maxwell and Miller, "Ecological Ethics and Media Technology".
43. The original "First Things First Manifesto" (1963), signed by graphic designers, photographers and students, proposed to designers "a reversal of priorities in favour of more useful and lasting forms of communication." *Adbusters* magazine launched an updated version in 1998 with echoes far beyond the design community. One published example is in *Eye Magazine*, available at <http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/first-things-first-manifesto-2000>, accessed 31 August 2012.



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'The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbour'

2009, building materials, energy infrastructure, vegetable garden

Stedelijk Goes West, Nieuw West, Amsterdam

Project by Marjetica Potrč and Wilde Westen (Lucia Babina, Reinder Bakker, Hester van Dijk, Sylvain Hartenberg, Merijn Oudenampsen, Eva Pfannes, Henriette Waal)

Supported by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Far West, Amsterdam; The Netherlands Architectural Fund, Rotterdam

Photo by Henriette Waal and Lucia Babina

Courtesy of Marjetica Potrč and Wilde Westen



The project is a community garden and community kitchen in the Nieuw West district of Amsterdam. A previously unused site at Lodewijk van Deysselstraat 61 becomes a community kitchen. The vegetable garden is located behind the kitchen in a former fenced-off 'look-only garden' (kijkgroen). The garden and the kitchen create bonds within the neighbourhood and become a catalyst for transforming not only the public space but also the community itself. The project is an example of 'redirective practice', with people from various disciplines and backgrounds working together to find new ways to build a shared community. The project is a case study for redesigning the modernist neighbourhood from below and redefining rural and urban coexistence.





**Marjetica Potrč**  
***Ramot Polin Unit with Sukkah***

[photograph of source on left]

2011

Building material and water-supply infrastructure

In a New Land

Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin

Photo by Gerhard Kassner

Source image: photo by Marjetica Potrč

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin

*Ramot Polin Unit with Sukkah* is an architectural case study from Israel that combines the pentagonal architecture (by the architect Zvi Hecker) of the Ramot Polin housing development in Jerusalem with a sukkah, a temporary shelter used for the Jewish festival of Sukkoth. The experimental modernist architecture of Ramot Polin was built in 1970s as a social housing project by the Israeli state; it was part of the expansion of Jerusalem into land gained after the Six-Day War of 1967. The residents of Ramot Polin are Orthodox Jews, who over the years have added rectangular extensions on to the facades – in most cases sukkahs – which have substantially transformed the look of the neighbourhood. Perched on the pentagonal facades, they convey a dual message that illustrates the internal divide in Israeli society between secular and religious Jews. On the one hand, by 'balkanizing' modernist architecture, the sukkahs are an implied critique of the modern lifestyle; on the other, as intentionally temporary shelters, or tabernacles, they reaffirm the nomadic spirit of the settlers.



**Marjetica Potrč**  
***Hybrid House: Caracas, West Bank, West Palm Beach***

[photograph of source on left]

2003

Building materials, energy and communication infrastructure

Marjetica Potrč: Urgent Architecture

PBICA, Lake Wovrth, FL, 2003;

MIT, List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA, 2004;

Photo by Michael Price

Source image: photo by Marjetica Potrč

Courtesy the artist and Meulenstein Gallery, New York

*Hybrid House* juxtaposes structures from the temporary architecture of Caracas, the West Bank, and West Palm Beach, Florida, and shows how they negotiate space among themselves. Each of the community-based structures formulates its own language, which, in all three cases, has much in common with archetypal (and not modernist) architecture. Emphasis is placed on private space, security, and energy and communication infrastructures.



Marjetica Potrč  
*Caracas: Growing Houses*

[photograph of source on left]  
 2012

Building materials; energy, communications, and water-supply infrastructure

Architektonika

Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum of Contemporary Art, Berlin

Photo by Thomas Bruns

Source image: photo by Marjetica Potrč

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin



*Caracas: Growing Houses* is an architectural case study of two buildings in the informal city of Caracas. It shows the negotiations between the built structure and the infrastructure (energy, communications, and water supply). Unlike the urban culture of the modernist formal city of Caracas, the informal city represents a rural culture, which consists of small, self-built neighbourhoods that form village-like communities. Here, community space prevails over public space, and oral regulations, negotiated through discussion, are more important than written regulations. The rural culture of the Caracas barrios has proved resilient to changes from the outside, particularly from the neighbouring urban culture. The barrio residents prefer to live in a city of communities and not in the modernist city of individualism. Today, around the world, the informal city is one of the two fastest-growing forms of residential organization in cities (the other is the gated community).

Marjetica Potrč  
*Tirana House*

[photograph of source on left]  
 2009

Building materials; energy, communications, and water-supply infrastructure

New Citizenships, Lingen Kunstalle, Lingen, Germany, 2009;

Insiders: practices, uses, know-how, Arc en Reve Centre

d'Architecture, 2010;

Photo by Roman Mensing and Vincent Monthiers

Source image: photo by Marjetica Potrč

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin



*Tirana House* is a case study of a family house in present-day Tirana, Albania. After the political changes of the 1990s, the Tirana cityscape exploded. A new city built by the citizens themselves celebrates a multiplicity of personal architectural styles, astonishing constructions, and richly decorated facades. Here, patterns turn the facades into a living surface, the skin and shield of the building. As former Mayor Edi Rama said: 'Facades are not like a dress or lipstick. They are organs.' Patterns and numerous staircases merge in an Escher-like landscape, expressing the many voices that make anew democracy. In a city in transition, the building facades give visual expression to the construction of a new social contract, a new citizenship.



Marjetica Potrč  
*New Orleans: Shotgun House with Rainwater-Harvesting Tank*

[photograph of source on left]  
 2008

Building materials, energy, communications and water-supply infrastructure

Future Talk: The Great Republic of New Orleans

Max Protetch Gallery, New York, NY, 2008;

Heartland, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, the Netherlands, 2008;

Strange and Close, Evento 2011, Arc en Rêve Centre d'Architecture, Bordeaux, France, 2011;

Photo by Eli Ping Weinberg and F. Deval

Source image: photo by Marjetica Potrč

Collection of Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands

*Shotgun House with Rainwater-Harvesting Tank* points to two recent trends in New Orleans: the revival of the local architectural style known as the Shotgun House, and the move toward self-sustainability. Both are post-Katrina developments and correspond with the deconstruction of modernist architecture and the search for a new, 21st-century social contract for democracy. Local harvesting of energy resources points to the emergence of new environmental and, consequently, political boundaries. The two caryatids serve as reminders that New Orleans is being rebuilt by its citizens.



Marjetica Potrč  
*Acre: Rural School*

[photograph of source on left]

2012, building materials, energy and communication infrastructure

Marjetica Potrč

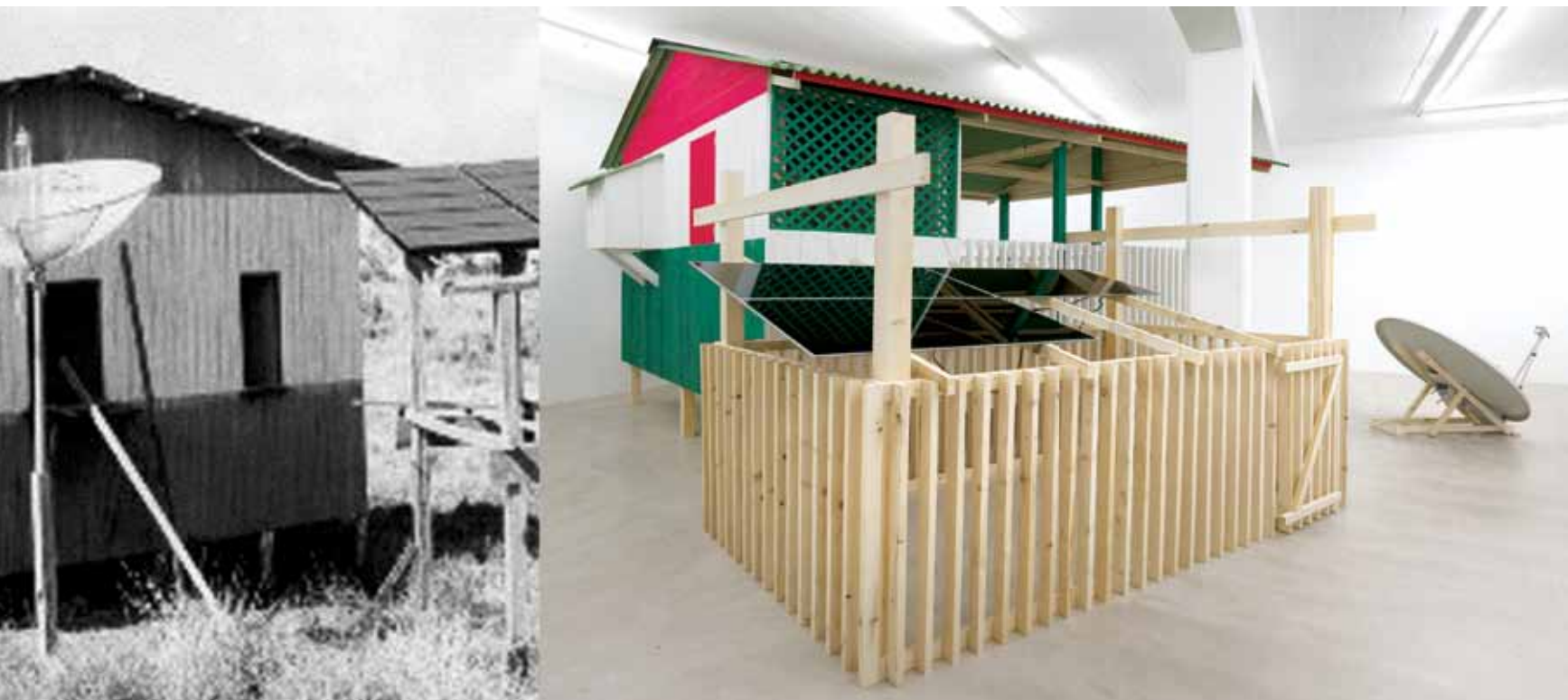
Nicolas Krupp Contemporary Art, Basel

Photo by Serge Hasenboehler

Source image: Courtesy of SEPLANDS and PRODEEM, the State of Acre, Brazil

Courtesy the artist and Nicolas Krupp Contemporary Art, Basel

*Acre: Rural School* is a case study of a school built in the forest in the Brazilian state of Acre in Amazonia. The roofed open structure is a typical building typology of the region that existed long before colonial architecture introduced walls. The school is equipped with solar panels on top of the chicken coop and a satellite dish. Local residents call such a school a 'power kit', meaning that it is a source of knowledge, communication, and electrical power. After school hours, the building becomes a community center, so the whole village benefits from it. Acre: Rural School represents an example of an inspiring collaboration between the Acre state government (which provides the technology) and the people who live on extraction reserves (self-managed sustainable territories).





Yana Milev

## Hybrid Dwellings in the Zones of Anomy

*The Urgent Houses of Marjetica Potrč*

There are many causes for zones of anomie, with anomie understood as the phenomenon of a lack of law and order in social fields. However, it is above all disasters, wars, exigencies and emergencies of any kind that lead to anomie.

An emergency is a sudden event that leads to a *state of emergency*—an extra-legal space or an extra-legal or regulation-free zone, which is precisely the definition of anomie. The annulment or obliteration of law and justice—in a sovereign decision, for example—is the prerequisite for wars or what is now termed government business. The state of emergency in law is the juridical prerequisite for a law-breaking that has traumatic consequences in social fields. The (sovereign or governmental) state of emergency in law is the prerequisite for political—and finally social—catastrophe or *cultural catastrophe*. In my view, the definition of a political state of emergency can only be found in this cause-and-effect constellation, which establishes that a state of emergency in law—or a lack of laws and regulations (anomie)—and an extra-legal space are prerequisites for the irruption of (political) catastrophes or war. Seen the other way round, the creation of extra-legal spaces also serves the business of politics and of the economy. Here a causal event—usually the irruption of a catastrophe, disaster or sudden event—leads to a change in laws; government business is then conducted in its shadow. Independent of the emergency's direction, it always leads to the same social consequences. Lars Clausen calls them “crass social changes” in his book of the same name, *Krasser sozialer Wandel*;<sup>1</sup> they include disgust, disorientation, shock and trauma.

The French sociologist Émile Durkheim defines social and personal anomie from a sociological perspective as a result of social catastrophes; their final consequence is anomic suicide.<sup>2</sup> Durkheim establishes that both a sudden social “state of emergency (of poverty)” as well as sudden social “prosperity” are the results of economic events, which, equally, lead to states of anomie. The sudden triggering of a rapid lack of rules and an unleashed dynamism in social systems of order and values is what I call ‘emergency’. The anomic society is, according to Durkheim, a society in which so-called ‘deregulation’—that is, the sudden suspension of conventions of any kind—becomes the

rule, whereby collective conscience is no longer in a position to provide psycho-social or psycho-political norms. On a collective level, there follows the suspension of social rules and conventions for the orientation and preservation of values; on the subjective level, the consequence is psychic anomie. Both are anomic dynamics, and both lead to an anomic suicide that can be transcribed as *sociocide*, *domicide* and *urbicide*. At this point, the concept of the *state of emergency* is written anew. It no longer applies only to the realm of constitutional law, but also to social, psychological and geographical spaces. It refers to a psycho-political paradigm of shock and terror and deterrence and disturbance that can have its effect internally and externally, suddenly and traumatically, as a *paradigm of suddenness*.<sup>3</sup> The Italian star philosopher and expert on the state of emergency, Giorgio Agamben, conceptualizes the state of emergency in terms of zones and—in reference to Carl Schmitt's concept of *zones beyond the line*—formulates the concept of the ‘zone’ or anomie.

The Canadian journalist, author and globalization critic, Naomi Klein, who attained prominence with *No Logo* (2000), her critique of globalization and consumerism, speaks of an artificial and manipulated creation of global areas of crisis—disaster capitalism—in *The Shock Doctrine* (2007).<sup>4</sup> Disaster areas are areas that entail or result in partial or national states of emergency—the precondition for big business. Business structures are brand structures. It is only with the brand and corporate design of the venture that the game becomes a global one, a corporate game. The central strategy of a lobbyist enterprise is a shock strategy for the creation of extra-legal spaces under the cover of the staged brand.

When I developed the “Emergency Design”<sup>5</sup> project in 2005, it was initially concerned with research into economies of survival that I had observed before the fall of the Berlin Wall and the period of change that immediately followed. Pursuing my research further, I discovered the global character of the Emergency Design (ED) imperative. Here, architectural and design strategies based on states of emergency are confirmed as primary economies of survival. Urban/rural/tribal survival designs in zones of anomie—caused by globalization, the lobbyist protection of private and profit interests, and a simultaneous expansion of poverty and deportation—are EDs of the first order.

According to global statistics, emergency phenomena and the zones of anomie they produce are on the increase. Take for instance the daily increase in the world's population, in pollution and poisonous waste, in homelessness; the growing abundance of cheap products and junk media; the increase in exclusions from public space—that is,

from zones of knowledge and education—and in the relegation to peripheral zones; the increase in design garbage, in mobility and flexibility, etc. Worldwide statistics confirm the fact that emergencies lead to the destruction of social habitats, identification and identities. The consequences are discussed in critical sociological texts, for instance in Eve Chiapello and Luc Boltanski's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*.<sup>6</sup> We live on a planet of slums or, in the words of Peter Sloterdijk, in a “worldwide ocean of poverty”.<sup>7</sup>

*According to the careful calculations of the [UN-Habitat] report, a billion people currently live in slums, and more than a billion are fighting for survival in irregular work situations. The spectrum reaches from street merchants to day jobbers, child care workers and prostitutes through to people who sell their own organs for transplants. These are disturbing numbers that should be all the more troubling, since our children and grandchildren will experience humanity at its greatest quantitative extent. Somewhere around 2050 or 2060 the human population on earth will reach its maximum, probably at approximately ten or ten and a half billion. This number lies well below past, apocalyptic predictions, but no less than 95 per cent of this growth will take place in cities of the Global South. This means: the entire future growth of the human race will take place in cities, mostly in poor cities, and more often than not in slums.*<sup>8</sup>

Mike Davis' description of the global crisis in employment and homelessness represents an emergency that, from a social science perspective, is a consequence of neoliberal industrialization. Other emergencies are climate change—leading to a higher incidence of natural disasters—new military doctrines of asymmetric and hyper-industrial proxy wars, as well as service and designer wars under the cover of UN aid organizations and UN emergency forces. Emergencies force emergency designs into existence.

The examples of EDs of the first order all show the management of *Lebensraum* in a state of direct, existential shock—in a state of “crass social change” and “appalling social processes”, such as garbage housing, squatting or survival in prisons and camps.

Marjetica Potrč's urgent houses are, in my view, impressive ‘Emergency Design’ projects. They show economies of survival, not just in the form of emergency-based strategies of architecture and design, but above all in the form of emergency-based ethnographies, psychographies and biographies. Potrč is herself an architect, something that is reflected in her artistic projects and objects. Above all, she is an ethnographer—a researcher and artist between worlds. Originally from Slovenia, in what was then Yugoslavia, she has a multi-layered history in Balkan traditions and cultures

that have integrated their ideological deformation between communism, Stalinism, democratization and their respective wars. Socialist Yugoslavia lived with the ideological media and design surfaces of actually existing socialism and Stalinist communism, as all the other countries in the Eastern Bloc also did. In “Design Politics”, presented in Cluster V of this volume, Branka Ćurčić, Serbian curator and author, writes about the appropriation and transformation of socialist design ideologies in Yugoslavia by neo-liberal ideologies of design. After the implosion of the Eastern Bloc and the war in Kosovo, Yugoslavia was broken up into six enclaves and autonomous areas: Slovenia, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the Kosovo war, the people of former Yugoslavia were subject to policies of ethnic cleansing, national socialism and UN interventionism, particularly serious emergencies and phases of disorientation and anomie. The confusion of war and genocide, as well as neoliberal colonialism and mafia politics have inflicted serious damage on the people and on Balkan identity. All ethnic conflicts that occurred after so-called ‘democratization’ in southeastern Europe—the privatization of public property, the emigration and flight of Gypsies, the poor and intellectuals, as well as their deportation from Germany, France, Italy and so on—were multiplied for the population in Yugoslavia during the Kosovo war. Refugees from the Kosovo war were added to the usual migrants from southeastern Europe. Within the borders of what had been Yugoslavia, incomparably devastating (political, military, ethnic and civil) catastrophes and massacres occurred within a short period of time (1998 and 1999). During the entire conflict, especially in 1999, hundreds of thousands of inhabitants of Kosovo fled. Approximately 650 towns were damaged or destroyed, among them several with historically valuable architecture. The Kosovo war is a layered, multiple catastrophe. From the destruction of territory, identifications, identities, traditions, families, architectures, archives, infrastructure and ethnicities, what remains are memories, stories and fragments that are condensed within a new historiography into a new semiotic, linguistic and cultural fabric.

Marjetica Potrč's works contain this violent background. They are an attempt to allow the variety of Balkan ethnicity—Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, Bosnian—their identities and traditions to survive and continue to live in patchworks and hybrids. The large rift at the base of the cultural memory of this Balkan region, which was once Yugoslav state territory, but that has an even deeper scale and sedimentation of history and stories, is also found in Potrč's objects. Her hybrids are made up of emergency housing for survival. Small set pieces, fragments, details, ornaments, images, etc., which all carry past stories in the fragments and are combined with set pieces of temporary architectures and new surfaces (security, screens, energy, communication, marketing).

This story is Potrč's own story.

In the 2010s, Potrč transferred the principle of hybrid shelters to other geographic areas that were affected by disasters, wars, annihilation and other emergencies. In her visual essay for *Design Anthropology*, she selected objects whose stories characterize rural and tribal survival in Israel, New Orleans, Caracas, Brazil and the West Bank, among others.

All her objects encompass an ethnographic task: the challenge of searching for traces of archetypal patterns of ethnicities and cultures, the way they deal with neighbours, guests, seasons, age, birth and death, the way they celebrate, pass on culture and decorate themselves. If, since the last millennium, innumerable cultures have had to give up their differentiability and singularity in the face of the urban mainstream shock strategy, then Potrč's objects are signposts for self-preservation and tribal preservation, for a survival as a hybrid dwelling in the diaspora, slums, camps and other zones of anomie.

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1. Clausen, Lars, *Krasser sozialer Wandel*, Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 1994, p. 19.
  2. Durkheim, Émile, *On Suicide*, Robin Buss trans., London: Penguin, 2006.
  3. Milev, Yana, *Emergency Design*, Berlin: Merve, 2011, p. 62.
  4. Klein, Naomi, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt, 2007.
  5. Milev, Yana, "Emergency Design: New Semiotic Orders of Urban Survival (Über/Leben)", *TRANSDISCOURSE 1: Mediated Environments*, Jill Scott, Andrea Gleiniger and Angelika Hilbeck eds, Vienna: Springer, 2010.
  6. Chiapello, Eve and Luc Boltanski, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Gregory Elliott trans., London: Verso, 2006.
  7. Sloterdijk, Peter, *Weltinnenraum des Kapitals*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005.
  8. Davis, Mike, "Planet der Slums: Urbanisierung ohne Urbanität", Dossier Megastädte, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, available online at <http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/staedte/megastaedte/64695/planet-der-slums?p=all>.

Yana Milev

## Cluster VIII: Design Ethnology

With *Design Ethnology*, Cluster VIII defines the fourth branch of a Design Anthropology. The field of (ethnic) spaces is centrally focused on concepts of ethnology and anthropology, such as habitus, relations, islands, migrations and demarcations. Here, the dynamic shape of emergent social orders is considered and specified in Arjun Appadurai's concept of 'ethnoscapes'. In some cases, the ethnic groups involved in emergent processes can radically shift normative and traditional social spaces and orders. Thus design ethnology examines practices from everyday life in areas of crisis, war and violence that lead to precarious situations, superfluity, exclusion, deportation, escape, displacement or annihilation, or that lead to forced mobility and flexibility in living, work and family conditions. Although one can observe disturbances in cultural fabrics within emergent social orders, communities—especially in the diaspora—still make their cultural affiliation and origins significant and renew these on the level of design. In the face of these processes, it is equally important to establish to what extent questions of cultural representation and identity politics are tied to spatial presence and shaping. Both the problem of social visibility and the current issue of integration appear closely tied to processes of the politics of space and cultural staging. The assessment of ethnic currents, spaces and relations occurs in ethnographic methods such as expeditions/trips, photography, interviews and field research; in other words, in participatory observation. This is what *Design Ethnology* stands for in the focus of an expanded concept of design.

Block A is thematically titled "Habitus and Habitat". Pierre Bourdieu's pioneering research was not just concerned with habitus, the sociology of symbolic forms or the development of the concept of precarity; it was also concerned with the methodological renewal of sociology. Bourdieu was one of the first sociologists who was active integrating ethnographic methods into sociological research. He performed his field research during the Algerian war by learning languages, but also with the help of photography. As a result, Bourdieu is currently being re-evaluated on the basis of his photographic studies of the Algerian diaspora. It is of great importance for the project at hand that we have been granted permission to print a number of Bourdieu's photographs in this context of design ethnology. My sincere thanks are due the German sociologist Franz Schultheis and Camera Austria.

Block B investigates emergent ethnic spaces on the basis of two ethnographic concepts: relation and cooperation. The Dutch cultural philosopher and designer Henk Oosterling and the American sociologist Richard Sennett use these concepts to understand current forms of coping with social life, everyday life and approaches to life. Oosterling's theory, "*Dasein* is design", encompasses the quintessence of a design anthropology, namely that all forms of communication, behaviour and exchange create 'relational designs' in intermediary spaces and immersive zones. He thereby establishes links to Peter Sloterdijk's theory of immersion and anthropotechnology. In *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett not only makes a plea for craftsmanship, but also for a theory of social cooperation. As a sociologist, Sennett observes the cooperative relationships between making and using. Sennett's contribution is a manifesto for a human culture of making and producing that requires cooperation and is in the deepest sense *Gestalt*-like. The concept of design immanent in Sennett's and Oosterling's work is an anthropological one.

Block C is thematically titled "Scapes and Islands" and makes direct reference to the Indian ethnologist Arjun Appadurai's 'scape theory'. With the term 'ethnoscape', Appadurai created a concept for currents, layers and scales in the era of a global cultural economy. Transmigrations such as tourism or work migration create new demographic orders and sensations that are no longer appropriate for the historic role models of producer/consumer or centre/periphery, which are inadequate to describe a temporary cultural economy. The American journalist, producer and cultural critic David d'Heilly, a resident of Japan, writes about the phenomenon of creating global islands, drawing on the example of the Galapagos metropolis.

In contrast, the Spanish legal scholar Manuel Arias Maldonado writes about Wikipedia, a digital island on the web, as a new dimension of political ecology. An essential contribution to Cluster VIII is Rémy Markowitsch's visual essay. This is the point where we come full circle: from the introductory quote by Claude Lévi-Strauss at the beginning of this anthology to its deeper ethnographic meaning in travel and participatory observation. In his project *On Travel: "Tristes Tropiques"*, Markowitsch documents the results of his expeditions into the interiors of travel books and photo catalogues. In the series on which his visual essay is based, Markowitsch overlays photographs of Caduveo and Mundé Indians from the Mato Grosso from Claude Lévi-Strauss' book *Tristes Tropiques*.

Block D is titled "Migration and Demarcation". Mobile, usually provisional living spaces for migrants and exiled dissidents are especially impressive. There has been plenty of field research into this area, for instance on African war refugees living in Europe,



on refugees from former Yugoslavia in Italy or Austria, on displaced people put up in emergency housing during the 2011 three-fold Japanese catastrophe, on East European economic migrants housed in container villages, and on refugee camps in Calais. Improvised living spaces require an all the more powerful will to shape the staging and demonstration of a political, cultural and familial background and affiliation—distinction—as solid and stable integrations into economic and political networks come into question. Migrations create an increased need to demarcate in situations of deportation and dissociation, even in the basic nomadic structures of clans or tribes; quite often this even results in violence. The German cultural anthropologist Nils Zurawski describes an extreme situation of doubling that includes both the psycho-political aspect of control and surveillance, as well as the aspect of the significant—that is, dissociation via signs and design—using the example of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The German art and design theorist Christian Ritter adds a study on migration design to this subject. In his touching project “Exodus 2048”, the Israeli-Canadian artist Michael Blum constitutes a migration design that also addresses different dimensions of deportation, forced displacement and survival. The term ‘exodus’ has been constantly reinvented since Biblical times, no longer referring exclusively to the forced displacement and genocide of Jews.

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#### **A: Habitus and Habitat**

*Pierre Bourdieu (VE)*

*(commentary: Franz Schultheis)*

#### **B: Relation and Cooperation**

*Henk Oosterling*

*Richard Sennett*

*Yana Milev (VE)*

#### **C: Scapes and Islands**

*David d'Heilly*

*Manuel Arias-Maldonado*

*Remy Markowitsch (VE)*

#### **D: Migration and Demarcation**

*Nils Zurawski*

*Christian Ritter*

*Michael Blum (VE)*

*(commentary: Michael Blum)*

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All images © Pierre Bourdieu / Fondation Bourdieu, St. Gallen. Courtesy Camera Austria, Graz

fig. 1

Blida, N56/475x.

fig. 2

Street vendor Bab el Oued, Algiers, April 1959, R12

fig. 3

Untitled, N 68/576

fig. 4

Untitled, N 55/207

fig. 5

Cheraïa, Well, Matmatas, Chélif, N 31/7

fig. 6

The resettlement camp of Djebabra, Chélif, N 29/2

fig. 7

Cheraïa, Resettlement camp under construction. Cover image of *Le Déracinement*, N 85/766

fig. 8

Djebabra, Chélif, O 9/4

fig. 9

Avenue de la Marne, Algiers, April 1959, O 36/168

fig. 10

Cheraïa, O 83/771

fig. 11

Untitled, R10

fig. 12

The tailor of the new village Sangona, R 2

fig. 13

Street vendor with his son, Orléansville, Chélif, R 14



fig. 1



fig. 2



fig. 3



fig. 5



fig. 4



fig. 6





fig. 7



fig. 9

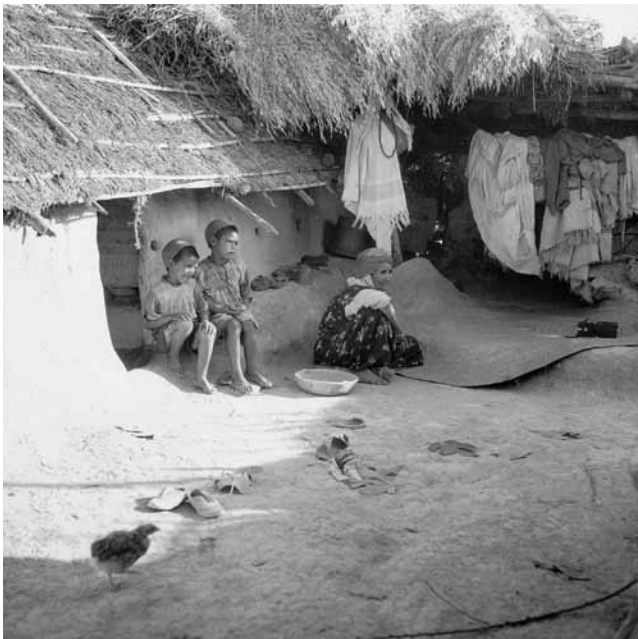


fig. 8

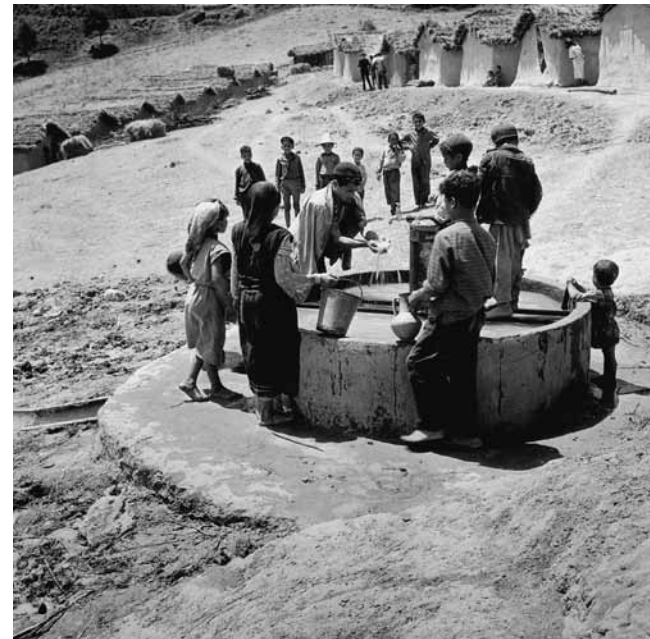


fig. 10





fig. 11



fig. 12

fig. 13



Franz Schultheis

## Pierre Bourdieu and Algeria: An Elective Affinity

*I regarded Algeria with the ethnologist's comprehending gaze, which I was also able to apply to myself, the people from my home, my parents, my father's and my mother's accent, reappropriating it all in a totally undramatic manner—for this is one of the greatest problems of uprooted intellectuals, whose only remaining option seems to be the choice between populism and bashful self-denial (as a reaction to the symbolic power of class society). I encountered these people, who are very like the Kabyles and with whom I spent my youth, from the perspective of an understanding that is mandatory in ethnology and that defines it as a scientific discipline. Practising photography, first in Algeria and then in Béarn, definitely contributed a great deal to this change of perspective, which presupposed a veritable—and I don't think this is too strong a word—conversion of my senses. Photography, you see, is an expression of the distance of the observer, who records and never forgets that he is recording (which is not always easy in such informal situations as a village dance); but at the same time photography also assumes familiarity, attention and sensitivity, even to the least perceptible details, details that the observer can only immediately understand and interpret thanks to this very familiarity, a sensitivity for the infinitely small detail of a situation that even the most attentive ethnologist generally fails to notice. But photography is equally tightly interwoven with the relationship that I have had to my subject at any particular time, and not for a moment did I forget that my subject is people, human beings whom I have encountered from a perspective that—at the risk of sounding ridiculous—I would refer to as caring and often as emotional.<sup>1</sup>*

The photographs that Pierre Bourdieu took in the course of his ethnological and sociological research during the Algerian War of Independence allow for a new angle on his view of the social world. These photographs, which lay buried in dusty boxes for 40 years, testify to a journey of initiation and a profound conversion that served as the starting point of an extraordinary scientific and intellectual trajectory.

Pierre Bourdieu's vocation as a sociologist began to crystallize at the end of the 1950s, in an Algeria shaken by an exceptionally brutal colonial war and torn by anachronisms and burning social contradictions. In this giant "social laboratory" (as he himself called

it) he subjected himself with increasing consciousness and methodology to a radical conversion that was founded on laborious work—in the almost analytical sense of the word—on the philosopher's habitus that his teachers at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris had sought to instill in him. In view of the crisis situations that he experienced at first hand and the omnipresent dangers with which he was faced during his years in Algeria, however, his profound aversion to the scholastic point of view and his inability to 'act the philosopher' would take a critical, constructive turn.

### CONTEXT OF THE EMERGENCE OF A SOCIOLOGICAL VIEW

This journey of initiation on which Bourdieu was to embark as a newly-qualified philosopher, returning, four years later, as a field-tested sociologist, opened up a theoretical, empirical approach to the social world that is characteristic of his work, an approach that, being self-taught, he had to develop for the most part on his own, under exigent, dangerous conditions. In this climate of physical and symbolic violence, the young Pierre Bourdieu forged his conceptual weapons and methodological tools, which would help him, first in the field and later in France, to formulate a comprehensive, coherent theory of the social world and to test it in a wide range of research fields. This Algeria, so foreign and yet, in many respects, so like the rural everyday world of Béarn, seemed in every respect to resist the utilitarian spirit of capitalism and the one-dimensional rationality of the economic man ('business is business'), given that this largely agrarian society was still firmly rooted in traditions according to which the logic of exchange was always fundamentally founded on the principle of honour and the "ethics of brotherly love" (Max Weber). The—in every sense—violent introduction of foreign economic principles (the rapid destruction of an agricultural mode of production and the concomitant traditional relationships of solidarity, the growing economic and social precarity of wide sections of the population and their geographical and cultural uprootedness) made this society in upheaval a particularly fascinating field of sociological observation and analysis. This raised a number of fundamental questions. What happens to a society when it is confronted with radically new economic and social conditions that run counter to all of its generations-old rules? How does its characteristic traditional economic habitus limit the field of possibilities of its economic actors, trapped in their traditional logic, and how does it prestructure what is thinkable and unthinkable? What are the economic conditions for accessing economic rationality? What do such terms as *credit* and *savings* mean in such a context?

The young Pierre Bourdieu asks these questions with astonishing theoretical maturity by translating the philosophical questions that arose during his studies at the École Normale Supérieure into empirical sociological questions. He incorporates his philosophical knowledge into an analysis of interdependences between economic structures and temporal structures. His interest in the phenomenology of emotional structures, the subject of his doctoral thesis, planned but never written, manifests itself in an analysis of forms of suffering that result from the clash of mental and emotional dispositions—the habitus of the social actors—and the economic and social structures imposed by colonial society.

### A 'CASUAL' SOCIOLOGIST

Having the feeling of being left empty-handed in view of this vast social laboratory in a state of war, which made field research a veritable adventure, Bourdieu threw himself with total commitment into his work, experimenting, testing and using all possible ethnological and sociological research techniques. From participant observation to depth interview, from reconstructing kinship systems to analyzing the Kabyle house as the architectural implementation of cosmological views and classifications of the world, from the statistical survey of household and time budgets that he carried out with his friends working for INSEE, the French statistics office, to systematic observation of modes of gender-specific divisions of labour and the associated forms of male domination to analyzing the logic of gift exchange, from creating topographical sketches of the physical space of a Kabyle community to the systematic use of photography as an instrument of documentation and testimony—all research techniques, all methodological approaches and instruments were put to the service of untiring field research. As a firm opponent of French colonialism and military oppression, Bourdieu saw his research in the compass of a radical political and committed approach: he wanted to bear witness to all that he saw, to understand a totally unsettled social world rife with contradictions and anachronisms. In view of the unbearable violence of what he was seeing, he found his sole refuge from sheer desperation in reflective detachment and a stance that he would later refer to as “participant objectivation”.

This committed objectivation also corresponds to his way of using the photographic lens: materializing and memorizing observations. But these images of Algeria, as we see them today, have attained another function, for they can also serve as a mirror. Our contemporary societies are faced with a brutal neoliberal radicalization of capitalism

and its market-economy logic. By visualizing such social contexts, these photographs help us better understand the dimensions and consequences of current economic and social upheavals that are affecting more and more sections of the population. They too are faced with a new economic logic, which demands completely flexible and mobile labour, innocent of history and ties, a logic that simply cannot be reconciled with their fundamental thought and action schemas. The parallel between the ‘deruralized’ farmer from Kabyle and the damaged, deregulated employee of today’s capitalist societies is obvious, and we need only compare the testimonies presented in the collective work *The Weight of the World*, supervised by Pierre Bourdieu, with the testimonies summarized 40 years earlier in the two works *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* and *Le Déracinement*. It is quite credible, then, when, toward the end of his life, Pierre Bourdieu said of his Algerian research, “This is my oldest and at the same time my most current work”.

However, this implies that we are dealing with a social and political question of preeminent topicality; a topicality due not least to a sociological objectivation made possible by a militant use of photography. Here we see Bourdieu’s view, a sociological view common to all the pictures. At the same time, however, the view is a profoundly political one. As Pierre Bourdieu emphasized on many occasions in our conversations, he saw his photographs not only as testimonies, but as a form of political commitment: seeing in order to make something visible, understanding in order to make something understandable.

1. From the conversation between Pierre Bourdieu and Franz Schultheis, Collège de France, 26 June 2001; in Pierre Bourdieu, *In Algerien: Zeugnisse der Entwurzelung*, Edition Camera Austria, Graz 2003; English edition: *Picturing Algeria*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2012.

Henk Oosterling

## Dasein as Design: Every Thing is Made of Some Thing

How intelligent can design be? And how complete? The most intelligent kind of design of all dominated debates just eight years ago, with God—the Christian version of Plato's Demiurge, i.e., Craftsman—as the theological zenith. Whether there is a designer behind life's brilliant complexity is disputable, but, if so, (s)he will share structural characteristics with less pretentious competitors, such as the engineers of the Dutch landscape. It will be a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art, in itself.<sup>1</sup> In creating a new world, every design aims to be complete in itself and therefore to be a symbol of unity and perfection, like the astrophysical variation *The Grand Design* of Stephen Hawking.<sup>2</sup> A totality without reference to an outside. Imperfection is a sign of decline and dependence.

Karlheinz Stockhausen characterized the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center towers as the total work of art of all time: a catastrophic collision of 'survival art' and geopolitics. Global society's wish for political control was frustrated in a radical reversal: the creative destruction of the existing world order. Creative, because a piece of industrial design—an airliner—was deployed as the weapon of destruction. With this fatal gesture, the world was fundamentally changed.

We can look down on this in politically correct condemnation or laugh dismissively. But what about the secular counterpart of that radical jihadist gesture: Western consumer society's disastrous everydayness? Present-day climate change is caused by the uncritical overconsumption of natural resources. At the dawn of industrialization there may have been such a thing as primary needs. Mass production eased the desperation of the needy, the homeless and the sick in the early twentieth century. Today, however, with increased daily comfort and hypermobility, multi-layered communication and leisure activity, in the West the satisfaction of primary needs has been replaced by the consumption of design. Design has become life's basic need.

### PREFACE: A VERY SHORT HISTORY OF DESIGN

Through design's brief history—about 150 years—its critical self-definition has repeatedly returned to the same themes: the role of craft in design, design's ambiguous

relationship to art and the avant-garde, and the designer's social and ethical responsibility. These debates are paradigmatic, indicating the great changes that design has undergone since the guild system ended in 1798. The applied arts and art education derived their power from the critical ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris, the founder of the British Arts and Crafts movement. After that, designers went in search of their own plastic and flexible language of forms, a kind of 3D visual syntax. Though their search was initially founded on values of craftsmanship, they eventually grudgingly accepted industrial values.

The second wave of design arose in the 1960s. By linking itself to the visual language of the mass media, design became a discourse in itself. Semiotics mapped the sign value of products. These took on symbolic capital. Hence, design no longer needed to be useful to be functional. It worked primarily as a status object, however useless it might be. In his theory of distinction, Bourdieu showed how cultural consumers use cultural products to distinguish themselves within groups of like minds. But these minds must be alike, or else they will not value all the tiny fluctuations in quality. The gold versions of Philippe Starck's famous *Juicy Salif* lemon juicer cannot be used; the gold plating would be damaged by the citric acid. Starck elevates his product's function to a different plane: "My juicer is not meant to squeeze lemons; it is meant to start conversations".<sup>3</sup> The juicer remains functional as a provoker of discourse. Products that are functional in the second degree and technically or technologically state-of-the-art constitute cultural capital that is invested in a unique lifestyle. In short, grammar and syntax—the play of forms—were supplemented by a semantics, with status-raising significance.

Design's third phase appeared in the mid-1990s. With the digital revolution, interactivity became an issue, technologically facilitated by PCs and Macs. Ideologically, the demand for more democracy and transparency strengthened this process. Designers responded to users' need to be creative by themselves. This pragmatic programming has facilitated unforeseen social interaction. As fine artists' work became increasingly interdisciplinary, designers, paradoxically enough, were becoming increasingly autonomous in their mediatory role. Creativity moved out of the designer's inner world into the space between disciplines and between the producer and the consumer. The issue was no longer *what is within*, but *what happens between*: crossovers, interdisciplinarity, multimedia and interactivity were raised, while conceptuality and reflexivity gained importance.



In short, in the course of a century, there has been a shift from form via content to context, from syntax via semantics to pragmatics—from “How does it look?” via “What does it mean to me?” to “How does it work between us?” In the current epoch, the convergence of these three structural tendencies is accelerating a new paradigm shift, a discursive turn, in design, due to the urgency of sustainable, cyclical production processes. Not only is our perception of design changing, so too are design practice and its social role. A survey of this diversity of shifts suffices to sketch a picture of this new turn. What is appearing—as yet in a diffuse way—is what I call relational design from an ecological perspective. It breaks away from the monomaniacal, hyperindividualistic ideology within speculative ADHD capitalism, which launches every gadget as an ego document and covetable item that eco-relationally suffers from an attention deficit.

## 1. MODERN LIFE AND BEYOND: FROM RADICAL MEDIOCRITY TO INTER-ESSE

Daily life is thoroughly designed. For designers, this statement is as flattering as it is problematic. It is flattering because it reflects design's smashing success. It is problematic because designers' role as innovators seems to be played out. They are the ‘vanishing mediators’ in the networked society, Žižek would say. When everyone is a designer, the designer is everywhere and nowhere.

Peter Sloterdijk, borrowing from Heidegger's work, refers to the lives of individuals as ‘Dasein’: being-in-the-world. Dasein is never a closed capsule—a cogito—but rather situated existence. Paraphrasing Nietzsche, we are a throw of the dice on the table of the gods. Authentic Dasein is an incessant throwing oneself into the contingency of one's life: thrown into the world, we design ourselves. For Heidegger, Dasein is *Ent-wurf*,<sup>4</sup> an effort of enduring the arbitrariness of life. The etymology of design also refers to working itself out of chaos in sketching and marking out.

In *Sphären*, Sloterdijk presents design as the crux of a different way of looking at and engaging with the world.<sup>5</sup> He opts for a Nietzschean revaluation of all values. Recycling scarce resources does not suffice; instead, the principles of abundance and generosity will be new starting points for thought and action. Like the modern concepts of freedom and autonomy, scarcity is turned inside out. Once, freedom meant independent self-determination; nowadays, it means claiming the right to limitless mobility and the festive wasting of energy.<sup>6</sup>

Dasein is styled through the consumption of design. Without design, Dasein is meaningless. Shopping and consuming are biopolitical duties of citizens, to which they are called in times of emergency, such as terror attacks and credit crises. Shop, consume! In everyday life, the decision to buy something is driven by threatened comfort and the need for identity. Media are quintessential in this process. We do not only depend on media, they have become our routes—our connections—to reality: *in medias res*, because, as McLuhan stated, the medium is the message.

### a. Paradox of modernity: scarcity in abundance

Shopping is as addictive as oil. ADHD capitalism systematically maintains craving by producing scarcity in abundance. The lifespan of products keeps getting shorter. There is no real shortage, but we still feel a fundamental lack if we are unable to buy the newest of the new. Product design positions itself at the threshold between abundance and scarcity. In practical terms the discipline depends on abundance (mass production), while ideologically it feeds on scarcity (uniqueness). Scarcity is reproduced through this abundant creation of new needs. Through design we are massaged into a system of extreme comfort, where mediations have become basic needs. According to McLuhan the medium is also the message. Living in the media aims at frictionlessness.

In this world of paradoxical abundance, we acquire a constricted self-image of ourselves as imperfect beings that have limited means at their disposal and must efficiently distribute finite resources. One is either staying alive or living it up. There is no such thing as living together. In this culture of lack, victimhood prevails in the form of a claim-culture in which victims try to compensate their loss financially. How can we visualize this? Deyan Sudjic, director of London's Design Museum, laments the rubbish we are saddled with on this earth, and describes our contemporary urge to consume in an extremely graphic way:

*Like geese force-fed grain until their livers explode, to make foie gras, we are a generation born to consume. Geese panic at the approach of the man with the metal funnel ready to be rammed forcibly down their throats, while we fight for a turn at the trough that provides us with the never-ending deluge of objects that constitute our world.<sup>7</sup>*

Forced hyperconsumerism generates a concept of scarcity. Historically, this concept arose in the sixteenth century together with the ideal of equality. That is, scarcity goes right to the heart of our democratic consciousness. The other appeared as someone you

might be, and he had something you might have. You could change and make a career. The future was suddenly cast in the light of possibilities experienced in a dual way, both as a right and as a lack.

Sloterdijk's revaluation of values implies this self-reflexive consciousness of scarcity and abundance. Spherical self-reflexivity requires the aesthetic distance that is granted by modern art. The design of products, houses, public space and cities, combined with media, have produced an aesthetic sensibility. We have become perceivers of ourselves, living in a big open-air museum without an exit. This awareness has to counter the structural forgetfulness that is triggered by the hyperconsumption of pure comfort.

#### b. Design as relation

The globe as a mega-installation is a super-greenhouse, like Crystal Palace, built for the 1851 World's Fair in London. Though Joseph Beuys' social sculpture is dated and the political project of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* has been brought into disrepute by totalitarian experiments, Sloterdijk still positions his idea of a super-installation firmly in the tradition of these aesthetic-political practices. The political issue is, who is responsible for this complex intelligent design? Sloterdijk argues that responsibility is less a moral concept than an ontological—or, rather, a “technorelational”—concept.<sup>8</sup> We are ontologically connected via technology. Being-in-the-world, *Dasein*, is relational and medial. Our most pressing responsibilities lie with our technologies, an insight that is acknowledged in a critical tradition from Adorno to Ulrich Beck. In their ubiquity, our technologies give account of our relationships, of our connectedness. We account for ourselves via the media that surround and connect us, from automobiles to mobile phones.

But how reflexive is this relationality? First, a simplistic, purely instrumental understanding of media has to be avoided. Media have long since ceased to be things that we can totally control because we invented and constructed them ourselves. Media immediately create their own worlds, and we are seduced to live in their milieu. TV has changed from an information medium into a pleasurable ambience. The mobile phone is no longer a communication medium; it is a socializing assemblage. Media shift from form/function into content/message. They are not mere containers or pure format. The media are a discourse, a set of regulating meaningful practices. Media society is a directive environment. The idea that there is still an outside no longer even occurs to us, because to be outside is to be unlinked, offline. It means being psycho-technologically alone or existentially logged out.

#### c. Relational philosophy

I qualify this non-reflective embeddedness as radical mediocrity. Like responsibility, radical mediocrity is not a moral concept or a corrupted state of mind. As a psycho-technological state of being in modernist terms it is a paradox. Radical mediocrity indicates that everyday life, with its hectic rhythm and its excessive pace of medial interactions and transactions, is literally directed by the tempo of the media, from headphones, car GPS systems, mobile phones, via TV and computers to cars and planes. But also by pacemakers and neurotransmitters. We are measured by our media (*Mittel-mässigkeit*). Our lives are ruled (Greek: *kratein*) by media: mediocrity. Moreover, this mediocrity is radical (Latin: *radix*, root): we are rooted in reality by our media. Precisely because of our frictionless comfort, radical mediocrity feels like second nature, like a bespoke suit. It is our next nature.<sup>9</sup>

Once we reflect upon our radical mediocrity, we perceive the abundance with which we surround ourselves. The exponential increase of relations, resulting from technological mediation, forms a dynamic midfield, a creative in-between or *inter*; creative because, by implementing a new medium, unknown use values are generated that must be explored. These new assemblages produce collective desire resulting in individual preferences. The self-reflective consciousness of this creative being-in-between is the lining, the interior of a non-reflexive, radically mediocre life. Supplementing Sloterdijk's insights with Hannah Arendt's—who also refers to Heidegger—this extrovert interiority, this being-in-between, can be qualified as *Interesse*.<sup>10</sup>

*Interesse*, or interest in a strict sense, is the core business of a philosophy that focuses on relations. The concept of being (*esse*) in-between (*inter*) deconstructs the ideology of hyperindividualism, based on identity-philosophical presuppositions. Like scarcity, the autonomous individual is an ideological construct. Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault painstakingly dismantled this construct, showing how an individual is always a ‘we’ first—a plural—and an ‘I’ only as a result of the reduction of a plurality of differences. We are ‘dividuals’ that are woven into individuality. In this fabric, daily routine is the warp and media the weft. Within this discursive texture, an individual appears as an assembled desiring machine that attains coherence through a network of meanings. In Foucauldian perspective, docile bodies are discursively disciplined from cradle to grave, from neonatal care to the old people's home. Town planning and architecture join forces with the human sciences that legitimized interventions upon docile bodies. Architects aim at designing volumes ringed by brick or concrete walls, yet they also produce relational networks and construct collective consciousness.

With the expanding urge to consume and the undermining of traditional bastions of power and authority in the 1960s, disciplining and normalization became the job of the market. Excess and abundance were externalized as market values. Scarcity became a deficient lifestyle and was internalized as always-unfulfilled desire, the lack that sustains both discipline and ambition. Thus, disciplining gradually shifted from private and marginal spaces—the soul, the home, clinic and prison—to public places and the public domain, eventually the media. Today, control as surveillance is accomplished through media. Spies are no longer necessary when mobilized citizens inform on themselves via their browsing and texting behaviour. The society of control inserts surveillance micropolitically.<sup>11</sup>

Where does design enter this stage? Our needs, desires and preferences are driven in the same ultra-diffuse, affective manner. Vance Packard wrote about 'hidden persuaders' in the 1950s. Affects—love and hate, pleasure and pain, hope and fear, to name a few—often have more of an impact on buying than rationality does. Production thrives by seduction. Emotions are crucial to the choices we make: we react out of deep-seated affect (viscerally), with an eye toward comfort (behaviourally), and reflectively. This division maps onto the parts of the brain: the stem, limbic system and neocortex. The first part has to do with the feel-good aspect; the second values efficiency of use; and reflection is where design helps to determine status. "We are all designers."<sup>12</sup> According to Donald Norman, design is relational by definition.

## 2. AVANT-GARDE ART: GESAMTKUNSTWERK AND INTERMEDIALITY

During the period of modernity, this relational aspect and the idea of the in-between were overdetermined by the cult of the individual necessitated by the emancipation of modern man from sovereign authority. In the artistic lifestyle of the misunderstood genius—the aesthetic prototype of individuality—who created autonomously, relations were purely secondary. In the twentieth century, this bohemian artistic life became one big *Gesamtkunstwerk*: Kurt Schwitters and his Merzbau, the artistic lives of Marcel Duchamp, Picasso, Dalí, Warhol, Beuys and, in a more contemporary setting, Jeff Koons, Mick Jagger and Peter Greenaway. But this was embedded in artistic interdisciplinarity and political interculturality.<sup>13</sup>

### a. Intermediality: the Urge for a Total Work of Art

The *Gesamtkunstwerk* as an aesthetic of existence has a collective counterpart in artistic projects such as Arts and Crafts, Wiener Werkstätte, Bauhaus and Berlage's community art. Harald Szeemann coined the term *Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk* (urge for a total work of art) to describe this irresistible urge to give every artistic-political intervention meaning from an all-encompassing perspective. The guiding notion is good design for a better world. Ethics and aesthetics coincide in the deep-seated intuition that beautifully designed objects and environments appeal to the good in human beings.

Craftsman-designers took part in this *Gesamt*-discourse, along with architects and artists. Industrial entrepreneurs and engineers joined in the second decade of the twentieth century, but consumers were only invited to the table after the 1960s. Despite the interdisciplinarity and interactivity—in performance art—that were influential by then, the creative artistic genius still stood pontifically at the centre of artistic practices, striving for his own *Gesamtkunstwerk*. But when, in retrospect, we look back from a relational point of view, every failed *Gesamtkunstwerk* hides within it an interdisciplinary experiment. Paradoxically, the failure releases the binding force: the relational, the between or 'inter'. In the 1990s, collaboration between disciplines—interdisciplinarity—cross-pollination between artistic and technological media—multi-media—and the attempt to style products co-creatively with 'prosumers'—interactivity—generated an international art-theoretical discourse on the role of the 'between', termed 'intermediality', launching concepts such as media reflectivity and media sensibility, favouring conceptuality, incorporating architecture and design in its art-theoretical discourse by focusing on the borders between art, politics and philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

### b. The end of art, the end of design?

This intermedial discourse frees designers from their fixation on autonomy-based avant-garde art. Functionality and craftsmanship, community art and installation art are redefined within the context of conceptual and new media art.<sup>15</sup> Virtuality transforms the concept of public space, connectivity situates interiority, creativity becomes a function of the in-between. Legitimizing design practices using modern art discourse becomes highly disputable. After post-, neo- and retro-avant-garde, modern art had already met its end, proclaimed by Arthur Danto, in the 1990s. Modern discourse on art was exhausted, lacking adequate concepts.

In the overall aestheticization and digitization of life, the role of design has changed. Like public and private, design and art begin to overlap. Damien Hirst's *The Golden Calf* (2008) went directly to Sotheby's, where it was sold to a private investor for a cool £10.3 million. *For the Love of God*, a platinum cast of a human skull set with 8,601 diamonds, took the same path. Hirst hereby withdrew his work from public debate, and no increase in artistic value took place. The work's uniqueness becomes absolute because it circulates in a closed circuit, from studio via auction house to safe. Art, kitsch and commerce start rubbing against each other. If contemporary designers identify with this short-circuited uniqueness in an attempt to increase their own artistic value, they will unfortunately miss the point. At most, design can be art because contemporary art has become a brand.

There is another option, however. When Hirst's skull was vouchsafed to the semi-public space of the museum, the viewers' verdict was: nice craftsmanship, but is it art? Indeed, craftsmanship is increasingly recognized in art. One wonders whether craftsmanship is not precisely the criterion that unites design and art, once these merge with everyday life and quality again becomes its distinctive feature.

### 3. INTERCULTURALITY: JAPANESE AESTHETICS OF EXISTENCE

A different approach is needed to localize this quality. Let me illustrate this from an intercultural angle. Hirst's diamond skull is perfect. Perfection annihilates time and suggests totality. It evokes immutability, eternity, immortality. Yet Hirst explains his work—as if it were a seventeenth-century vanitas—with a reference to imperfection: it is supposed to remind viewers of the transitoriness of life. As with Heidegger's *Dasein*, Hirst's design is an *Entwurf*. But the pseudo-theological discourse that still rules the West does not accept this thought of imperfection. Anything wrinkled, dented, torn or stained is mercilessly set out with the rubbish to be replaced with a new one or, better still, the latest model. The shelf life of products is getting shorter and shorter, the mountains of rubbish higher and higher.

#### a. Imperfection: *wabi-sabi*

There are, however, cultures in which design and imperfection are more tolerant of each other. In Japan, design relates not to the avant-garde, but to life as art, to the arts of life. Pouring a cup of tea for your guests with egoless attention on a rainy Sunday afternoon

may not be the first example we would think of, and yet it gives an idea of what design is about: paying concentrated attention to qualitative relations in substantially affirming form. Every product has a performance. Objects have always been embedded in rites, rituals and routines. This designed *Dasein* produces a sensitivity in traditional Japanese aesthetics that is called *wabi-sabi*. *Wabi* is a sensitivity to materials that have been affected by the passage of time, to long-term deterioration, and *sabi* is a slight sadness and melancholy. This affect makes palpable the tension between the temporary and the eternal, between appearance and reality, between life and death, but, unlike Hirst's skull, in *performing*, not solely in *perceiving*. The fleetingness of Japanese beauty provokes a nostalgic reverie about the brevity of existence. Aesthetics and spirituality merge in the tension between detachment and attachment.

Japanese art is not about grandeur but about *utsukushisa*: beauty. Sublimeness in the Western, Romantic sense of the word is nowhere to be found, as star designer Starck discovered. Japanese people do not appreciate his *Golden Flame*, the arty object he placed on the roof of the Asahi Beer headquarters in Tokyo. Western design connoisseurs will immediately recognize this three-ton metallic object, which resembles a golden droplet lying on its side, as a Starck icon. But the average Japanese knows it merely as the 'shit building'; to them, the object looks like a manga cartoon turd.

#### b. Craftsmanship and responsibility: measure and proportionality

Identification with a medium sensitizes perceivers to the inner lining of radical mediocrity, to relatedness as a socio-cultural interest. Autonomy and genius have no place in Japanese aesthetics. Individual authorship is hard to find, though responsibility is a hallmark of craftsmanship. Artisanal skill supersedes artistic scandal. Devotion to form—*kata* in Japanese, as any judoka will know—enables bodily reflection.<sup>16</sup> Design is not the expression of individual autonomy, but the articulation of the group's harmony (*wa*), which is always proportioned to the proper scale. The product affirms the harmony of given relations. From the outside, Japanese culture seems rigid and highly formalized. But all these rules for specific gestures, words and behaviour in different situations are motivated by the idea that there are no universal ethical laws. Every situation has its proper form.<sup>17</sup>

Life is related to design as nature is to art. The latter has primacy. A bonsai tree is more natural than a 'real' tree. To the Japanese, nature is revealed precisely in its cultivation. Naoto Fukasawa and Jasper Morrison articulate this idea in *Super Normal*:



*Sensations of the Ordinary.* They selected 210 existing design archetypes and characterized them as “super normal”. As “sensations of the ordinary”, these products intuitively feel very natural. They expose the beauty in normalcy. “Beauty can refer to form or shape, but in this case we’re thinking in terms of the beauty of the relationship between people, the environment, and circumstances.”<sup>18</sup> They do not treasure any Romantic idea of a pre-existing natural order. Life is form, style. But lifestyle is only turned into an art of life when radical mediocrity becomes self-reflective through a proportioned handling of the medium.

#### c. Ambiguity of the gift

This Japanese awareness of quality can be an inspiration for spiritual-aesthetic design. In contrast to providing Bourdieuan distinction, these products confirm the fundamental connectedness of everything around them. Design as gift affirms relations, and is, as such, always performed. Consider Japanese gift wrapping. The Japanese offer gifts en masse on New Year’s Eve and All Souls’ Day—the Bon festival in July. An expert wrapping not only expresses mutual respect, but, according to Shinto views, also articulates the object’s soul. The wrapping is not the message; it is the milieu, the in-between. The message is atonement to the coherence of the relational field, the network, the environment. It establishes or confirms a relationship.

But a gift is always ambiguous: it can be both present and poison, as Jacques Derrida always emphasized. A gift is like a drug: it has to be in proportion. The gesture must be ‘interested’—attuned to the relationship. If the gift is out of proportion, the receiver is burdened with the duty of giving back something at least equivalent. And this throws everything off balance.

### 4. RELATIONAL DESIGN AND DEMOCRACY

What is the importance of this intercultural side track? In Japan, design is part of an ecological debate. Whole villages are trying to reorient themselves competitively in an ecological manner. In an attempt to diminish the mountains of packaging waste, the government has been waging a campaign to reintroduce the traditional carrying cloth, the *mottainai furoshiki*, in which anything can be wrapped. Is all this instructive for the West, which is developing an allergy to hyperindividualist consumerism? The recent excesses in the banking and insurance world even inspired the Republican Senator

Charles Grassley to advise top managers at AIG, the insurance firm, either to bow very deeply or to commit hara-kiri. This is probably too high a price to pay, but it is at least an indication that the times they are a-changing. It is indeed time for a revaluation of all values. Long before ‘corporate responsibility’ becomes an issue, responsibility has to be rescaled. This revaluation will touch upon the core business of design.

#### a. Relational aesthetics, relational architecture, relational design

“We live in a time when our relationship with our possessions is undergoing a radical transformation.”<sup>19</sup> Indirectly, Sudjic suggests that materials should be recycled, as in the work of Ron Arad. Obviously art objects remain Sudjic’s frame of reference. However, the emphasis in the third design paradigm has already shifted to processes. Design moves from semantics to pragmatics, placing the designer’s creativity in the service of end users by programming in an open-ended way. Nicolas Bourriaud introduced ‘relational aesthetics’ as the basis for Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Art as an interactive process is “a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space”.<sup>20</sup> The Canadian-Mexican artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer intervenes in public space with dynamic installations, calling his work ‘relational architecture’.

Design took account of this ‘relational turn’ in architecture and urban planning, manifesting itself increasingly as social design.<sup>21</sup> But the term ‘relational design’ surfaced in 1969 in database design, having a purely programmatic meaning. ‘Relational’ referred solely to a table representing a set of relations. Tools such as the impact graph visualized how elements of a system changed when one parameter was altered. There was as yet no such thing as user interactivity, let alone open-source design. The radicalization of relational design nowadays is not even found in open-ended processes and generative systems like Wikipedia, YouTube and Facebook. These still have web addresses. If a revaluation of values is traced in the combination of abundance and equality a BitTorrent swap of music files is the proper example: no web address and no file owner or manager. It is about purely relational nodes with referential functions.

#### b. Sustainable innovation: responsibility for the in-between

In this nodal open-source network, uncritical radical mediocrity is unfolded, spread out, explicated as mutual interest. Democratic creativity moves from the designer’s interior

to a medial 'inter', in which creative end users are involved. With this basic democratic gesture, creativity no longer *lies within* individuals, but *happens between* them: form is informance as performance.<sup>22</sup> Do-it-yourself design even goes a step further with the hacking and transforming of product design, such as the Dutch projects *Hacking IKEA* and *Repairing*.

By implication, designers are redefining their relation to the cornerstone of modernity, innovation. Sustainability has become an emotional value as well. With his 'No Sign of Design' credo, Richard Hutten has tried to keep the functional in-between space open and to make non-design a provocative design stance. The initiators of *Eternally Yours*, Ed van Hinte among them, value the ageing of products, such as certain kinds of cameras and jewellery, making an argument against waste and perpetual replacement. *Super Normal* introduces an interesting form of recycling, too. Even Starck, tired of ego-driven design, calls for transgenerational responsibility. He opts for a serviceable and sustainable design that leaves behind the cynicism of big money and the narcissism of individual uniqueness. But how do Starck's transgenerational responsibility and *Super Normal's* intragenerational reinvestment relate to relational design?

## 5. LOCAL ECOPOLITICS AS GLOBAL GEOPOLITICS: EVERY THING IS MADE OF SOME THING

With globalization, awareness of being part of a greater whole has increased exponentially, but began way back in the 1960s, when Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* (1962). We realized that the pesticides sprayed over the fields down the road were in the cod on our plates and, if swallowed uncritically, would be inside us. In 1972, the Club of Rome used computers to calculate the limits to growth, and this ecopolitical insight became a geopolitical issue after the 1973 oil crisis. That made clear at a stroke how raw materials, production lines, transport and consumption were vulnerably interlinked. Imperatives of energy conservation, reuse, reduction and recycling followed. But these only make sense if linear production lines are turned into cyclical ones. The unavoidable growth of mobility demands cyclical relations—in design as well. Waste must become fuel for a new cycle, as in Braungart and McDonough's 'Cradle to Cradle' (C2C) concept.

### a. Hydrogen Energy Web

Against this background, product design acquires an ecopolitical and geopolitical urgency. Abundance and equality demand small-scale, decentralized production, shortening vulnerable supply lines, creating local independence and stimulating local craftsmanship. If fair trade is imperative, fair production lines are needed. Such are the geopolitical implications of design in a globalized world. The local-global relationship is ripe for redefinition within design. Alastair Fuad-Luke and Ezio Manzini point to the importance of creative communities and cosmopolitan localism. In their efforts at "revitalizing the idea of design"<sup>23</sup> they propagate "design with, for and by society".<sup>24</sup> For them, the network society is first of all a multilocal society, in which communities, like the BitTorrent network, are nodes.

Relational design can tackle scarcity. In the post-fossil fuel era, there is an abundance of information, energy and relationships. The ideology of scarcity is democratically deconstructed via the openness particular to open-source relationships that act as networks. With the global transition from scarcity to abundance, we are moving from life maintenance to the sharing of life, to '*partage*', as Jean-Luc Nancy calls it, on a global scale.<sup>25</sup> Abstinence and reduction are noble goals, but the most effective approach to our environmental problems is to bring unused energies into cyclical circulation. Kevin Kelly, one of the gurus of the virtual New Economy, was still thinking in Web 1.0 terms when he defined a dearth of attention as the only remaining scarcity in a world of abundance.<sup>26</sup> Now Web 2.0 provides a digital basis for inter-esse beyond ADHD.

Attention and inter-esse become ecopolitical and geopolitical only when we reflect on our economic-political presuppositions: what makes my frictionless radical mediocrity possible? Monopolized power relations have to be made explicit, in and through design. Jeremy Rifkin's vision in *The Hydrogen Economy* (2003) becomes politically eco- and geo-proof, once the electricity necessary for electrolysis to produce hydrogen is not generated conventionally—using fossil fuels or uranium—but sustainably, using sun, wind and water. This ecopolitical dedication takes on a geopolitical quality in Manzini's creative communities' effort to generate power in a decentralized way: "a balanced interaction between the local and the global dimensions, on the one hand, and a sustainable enhancement of local (physical and socio-cultural) resources on the other".<sup>27</sup> It goes without saying that the big energy companies are not champing at the bit to decentralize, at least as long as they cannot keep control of distribution.

Cradle to Cradle offers an alternative to the raw materials dilemma in the form of the design of reusable polymers, switching from scarcity-based eco-efficiency—doing more with less—to abundance-based eco-effectivity.<sup>28</sup> C2C, however, remains corporate: it leaves undisturbed the large-scale power monopolies Rifkin would like to dismantle. Rifkin favours linked networks à la Web 2.0 and argues for small-scale power generation close to users, with neighbourhoods and companies or other units making their own energy using small 'stations' the size of beer crates. Unused energy, like music files, would be delivered back to the source via the Hydrogen Energy Web. According to Rifkin, this network could meet the whole world's energy needs. The interest in his ideas being shown by leaders of European countries is promising, especially after the recent nuclear disaster in Japan.

#### b. Eco-relational Design

Global warming is as closely bound up with extreme hyperconsumerism as the September 11 'meltdown' of the World Trade Center towers was with extremist fundamentalism. Relational design is in need of a new shift: eco-relational design. The ecosphere, noosphere and the technosphere can no longer be distinguished from each other. The linearity of technology—progress as an accelerating process to a better future—must be bent back on itself, as Adorno suggested in *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1944) and Beck does in his writings on the risk society. The cyclical processes of the ecosphere are in need of a 'mental ecology'—as Gregory Bateson foresaw<sup>29</sup> and Félix Guattari actualized in *Three Ecologies* (1989)—in order to turn, as C2C states, intergenerational terror into intergenerational responsibility. Once the circle is closed, there is no outside. In this immanence the centre is dispersed, becoming an in-between for all.

In his 1972 book *Design for the Real World*, Victor Papanek, one of the pioneers of ecodesign, characterized rising consumerism as "our Kleenex culture".<sup>30</sup> This throwaway culture has reached astronomical proportions: parts of the oceans, the size of Europe, are cluttered full of plastic bags. Debris is circling around the earth that has to be cleaned up to ensure future space-travel programmes. Instead of throwing away, we have to accept being thrown, as Heidegger stated. Resignation has to be transformed into a will to design. The 'realization'—in the double sense of understanding and actualizing—of an eco-consistent lifestyle requires an urge to a total work of art with ethical and political dimensions. But the politicization of design—making ecopolitical and geopolitical choices for cyclical production processes—first and above all requires

the acceptance of the ambiguity of design. After all, design is as ambivalent as a Japanese gift. Design is comfort and waste, it produces beautiful things and rubbish. As such, it needs values to guide it.

What will design become in the twenty-first century? Design, which, like art, finds itself at a loss thanks to its smashing success, faces the task of transforming itself into a living discourse. Relational design is the overture to a creative lifestyle, the cornerstones of which will be ecopolitical sustainability and geopolitical responsibility. As such it is better qualified as eco-relational design. Craftsmanship as a qualitative sense of proportion has to be reinvented. Yet this is not a call for a return to nineteenth-century craftsmanship, but for a revaluation of some of its inherent values, such as responsibility, honour and respect, so as to limit the excesses of hyperindividualism and hyperconsumerism.<sup>31</sup> At the heart of the rush to consume that we call survival, lies a geopolitical waste or throwaway culture. The transformation of that throwaway culture into an eco-political global culture based on a lifestyle as an aesthetics of existence—as Foucault once proposed, life as an open design—seems to me to be a micropolitical precondition for a society that aims to be both civil and global.

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Richard Sennett

## The Craftsman or: The Relational Design Between Hand, Head and Social Cooperation

### MAN AS HIS OWN MAKER

Pandora's casket: Hannah Arendt and Robert Oppenheimer

Just after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the days in 1962 when the world was on the brink of atomic war, I ran into my teacher Hannah Arendt on the street. The missile crisis had shaken her like everyone else, but it had also confirmed her deepest conviction. In *The Human Condition*, she had argued a few years previously that the engineer, or any maker of material things, is no master of his own house; politics, standing above the physical labour, has to provide the guidance. She had come to this conviction by the time the Los Alamos project created the first atomic bombs in 1945. Now during the missile crisis, Americans too young for the Second World War had also felt real fear. It was freezing cold on the New York street, but Arendt was oblivious. She wanted me to draw the right lesson: people who make things usually don't understand what they are doing.

Arendt's fear of self-destructive material invention traces back in Western culture to the Greek myth of Pandora. A goddess of invention Pandora was "sent to earth by Zeus as punishment for Prometheus' transgression".<sup>1</sup> Hesiod described Pandora in *Works and Days* as the "bitter gift of all the gods" who, when she opened her casket (or in some versions, her jar) of new wonders, "scattered pains and evils among men".<sup>2</sup> In the working out of Greek culture, its peoples came increasingly to believe that Pandora stood for an element of their own natures; culture founded on manmade things risks continual self-harm.

Something nearly innocent in human beings can produce this risk: men and women are seduced by sheer wonder, excitement, curiosity, and so create the fiction that opening the casket is a neutral act. About the first weapon of mass destruction, Arendt could have cited a diary note made by Robert Oppenheimer, director of the Los Alamos project. Oppenheimer reassured himself by asserting, "When you see something that is technically sweet, you go ahead and do it and you argue about what to do about it only after you have had your technical success. That is the way it was with the atomic bomb."<sup>3</sup>

The poet John Milton told a similar story about Adam and Eve, as an allegory for the dangers of curiosity, with Eve taking the Oppenheimer role. In Milton's primal Christian scene, the thirst for knowledge, rather than for sex, leads human beings to harm themselves. Pandora's image remains potent in the writings of the modern theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who observes that it is human nature to believe that anything that seems possible should therefore be tried.

Arendt's generation could put numbers to the fear of self-destruction, numbers so large as to numb the mind. At least 70 million people perished in wars, concentration camps and gulags in the first 50 years of the twentieth century. In Arendt's view, these numbers represent the compound of scientific blindness and bureaucratic power—bureaucrats minded just to get the job done, embodied for her by the Nazi death-camp organizer Adolf Eichmann, to whom she attached the label "the banality of evil".

Today, peacetime material civilization posts equally numbing figures of self-made self-harm: one million, for instance, represents the number of years Nature took to create the amount of fossil fuel now consumed in a single year. The ecological crisis is Pandoric, manmade; technology may be an unreliable ally in regaining control.<sup>4</sup> The mathematician Martin Rees describes a revolution in microelectronics that creates at least the possibility of a robotic world beyond the powers of ordinary human beings then to rule; Rees envisions such exotica as self-replicating microrobots intended to clean smog that might instead devour the biosphere.<sup>5</sup> A more urgent example is genetic engineering of both crops and animals.

Fear of Pandora creates a rational climate of dread—but dread can be itself paralysing, indeed malign. Technology itself can seem the enemy rather than simply a risk. Pandora's environmental casket was too easily closed, for instance, in a speech given by Arendt's own teacher, Martin Heidegger, near the end of his life, at Bremen in 1949. On this infamous occasion Heidegger "discounted the uniqueness of the Holocaust in terms of the 'history of man's misdeeds' by comparing 'the manufacture of corpses in the gas chambers and the death camp' to mechanized agriculture". In the historian Peter Kemp's words, "Heidegger thought that both should be regarded as embodiments of the 'same technological frenzy' which, if left unchecked, would lead to a world-wide ecological catastrophe".<sup>6</sup>

If the comparison is obscene, Heidegger speaks to a desire in many of us, that of returning to a way of life or achieving an imaginary future in which we will dwell more simply

in nature. As an old man Heidegger wrote in a different context that “the fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing and preserving”, against the claims of the modern machine world.<sup>7</sup> A famous image in these writings of his old age invokes “a hut in the Black Forest” to which the philosopher withdraws, limiting his place in the world to the satisfaction of simple needs.<sup>8</sup> This is perhaps a desire that could be kindled in anyone facing the big numbers of modern destruction.

In the ancient myth, the horrors in Pandora's casket were not humans' fault; the gods were angry. Pandora-fear in a more secular age is more disorienting: the inventors of atomic weapons coupled curiosity with culpability; the unintended consequences of curiosity are hard to explain. Making the bomb filled Oppenheimer with guilt, as it did I. I. Rabi, Leo Szilard and many others who worked at Los Alamos. In his diary, Oppenheimer recalled the Indian god Krishna's words, “I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds”.<sup>9</sup> Experts in fear of their own expertise; what could be done about this terrible paradox?

When Oppenheimer gave the Reith Lectures for the BBC, subsequently published as *Science and the Common Understanding*, in 1953—broadcasts intended to explain the place of science in modern society—he argued that treating technology as an enemy will only render humanity more helpless. Yet, consumed by worry over the nuclear bomb and its thermonuclear child, in this political forum he could offer his listeners no practical suggestions about how to cope with it. Though confused, Oppenheimer was a worldly man. He was entrusted at a relatively young age with the bomb project during the Second World War, he combined a first-class brain with the talent to manage a large group of scientists; his skills were both scientific and corporate. But to these insiders, too, he could provide no satisfying picture of how their work should be used. Here are his parting words to them on 2 November 1945: “It is good to turn over to mankind at large the greatest possible power to control the world and to deal with it according to its lights and its values”.<sup>10</sup> The creator's works become the public's problem. As David Cassidy, one of Oppenheimer's biographers, has observed, the Reith Lectures thus proved “a huge disappointment for both the speaker and his listeners”.<sup>11</sup>

If the experts cannot make sense of their work, what of the public? Though I suspect Arendt knew little about physics, she took up Oppenheimer's challenge: let the public indeed deal with it. She had a robust faith that the public could understand the material conditions in which it dwells and that political action could stiffen humankind's will to be master in the house of things, tools and machines. About the weapons in Pandora's

casket, she told me, there should have been public discussion about the bomb even while it was being made; whether rightly or wrongly, she believed that the secrecy of the technical process could have been protected even as this discussion occurred. The reasons for this faith appear in her greatest book.

*The Human Condition*, published in 1958, affirms the value of human beings openly, candidly speaking to each other. Arendt writes, “Speech and action... are the modes in which human beings appear to each other, not indeed as physical objects, but qua men. This appearance, as distinguished from mere bodily existence, rests on initiative, but it is an initiative from which no human being can refrain and still be human.” And she declares, “A life without speech and without action is literally dead to the world”.<sup>12</sup> In this public realm, through debate, people ought to decide which technologies should be encouraged and which should be repressed. Though this affirmation of talk may well seem idealistic, Arendt was in her own way an eminently realistic philosopher. She knew that public discussion of human limits can never be the politics of happiness.

Nor did she believe in religious or natural truths that could stabilize life. Rather, like John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, Arendt believed that a polity differs from a land-marked building or ‘world heritage site’: laws should be unstable. This liberal tradition imagines that the rules issuing from deliberation are cast in doubt as conditions change and people ponder further; new, provisional rules then come into being. Arendt's contribution to this tradition turns in part on the insight that the political process exactly parallels the human condition of giving birth and then letting go of the children we have made and raised. Arendt speaks of *natality* in describing the process of birth, formation and separation in politics.<sup>13</sup> The fundamental fact of life is that nothing lasts—yet in politics we need something to orient us, to lift us above the confusions of the moment. The pages of *The Human Condition* explore how language might guide us, as it were, to swim against the turbulent waters of time.

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As her student almost a half-century ago, I found her philosophy largely inspiring, yet even then it seemed to me not quite adequate to deal with the material things and concrete practices contained in Pandora's casket. The good teacher imparts a satisfying explanation; the great teacher—as Arendt was—unsettles, bequeaths disquiet, invites argument. Arendt's difficulty in dealing with Pandora seemed to me, dimly then and more clearly now, to lie in the distinction she draws between *Animal laborans* and

*Homo faber*. (Man does not, clearly, mean just men. Throughout this essay, when I have to deal with gendered language, I'll try to make clear when *man* refers generically to human beings and when it applies only to males.) These are two images of people at work; they are austere images of the human condition, since the philosopher excludes pleasure, play and culture.

*Animal laborans* is, as the name implies, the human being akin to a beast of burden, a drudge condemned to routine. Arendt enriched this image by imagining him or her absorbed in a task that shuts out the world, a state well exemplified by Oppenheimer's feeling that the atomic bomb was a "sweet" problem or Eichmann's obsession with making the gas chambers efficient. In the act of making it work, nothing else matters; *Animal laborans* takes the work as an end in itself.

By contrast, *Homo faber* is her image of men and women doing another kind of work, making a life in common. Again Arendt enriched an inherited idea. The Latin tag *Homo faber* means simply 'man as maker'. The phrase crops up in Renaissance writings on philosophy and in the arts; Henri Bergson had, two generations before Arendt, applied it to psychology; she applied it to politics, and in a special way *Homo faber* is the judge of material labour and practice, not *Animal laborans*'s colleague but his superior. Thus, in her view, we human beings live in two dimensions. In one we make things; in this condition we are amoral, absorbed in a task. We also harbour another, higher way of life in which we stop producing and start discussing and judging together. Whereas *Animal laborans* is fixated in the question "How?" *Homo faber* asks "Why?"

This division seems to me false because it slights the practical man or woman at work. The human animal who is *Animal laborans* is capable of thinking; the discussions the producer holds may be mentally with materials rather than with other people; people working together certainly talk to one another about what they are doing. For Arendt, the mind engages once labour is done. Another, more balanced view is that thinking and feeling are contained within the process of making.

The sharp edge of this perhaps self-evident observation lies in its address to Pandora's box. Leaving the public to 'sort out the problem' after the work is done means confronting people with usually irreversible facts on the ground. Engagement must start earlier, requires a fuller, better understanding of the process by which people go about producing things, a more materialistic engagement than that found among thinkers of Arendt's stripe. To cope with Pandora requires a more vigorous cultural materialism.

The word *materialism* should raise a warning flag; it has become debased, stained in recent political history by Marxism and in everyday life by consumer fantasy and greed. 'Materialistic' thinking is also obscure because most of us use things like computers or automobiles that we do not make for ourselves and that we do not understand. About 'culture' the literary critic Raymond Williams once counted several hundred modern usages.<sup>14</sup> This wild verbal garden divides roughly into two big beds. In one, culture stands for the arts alone, in the other it stands for the religious, political and social beliefs that bind a people. 'Material culture' too often, at least in the social sciences, slights cloth, circuit boards or baked fish as objects worthy of regard in themselves, instead treating the shaping of such physical things as mirrors of social norms, economic interests, religious convictions—the thing in itself is discounted.

So we need to turn a fresh page. We can do so simply by asking—though the answers are anything but simple—what the process of making concrete things reveals to us about ourselves. Learning from things requires us to care about the qualities of cloth or the right way to poach fish; fine cloth or food cooked well enables us to imagine larger categories of 'good'. Friendly to the senses, the cultural materialist wants to map out where pleasure is to be found and how it is organized. Curious about things in themselves, he or she wants to understand how they might generate religious, social or political values. *Animal laborans* might serve as *Homo faber*'s guide.

In my own old age I've returned mentally to that street on the Upper West Side. I want to make the case my juvenile self could not then make to Arendt, that people can learn about themselves through the things they make, that material culture matters. As she aged, my teacher became more hopeful that *Homo faber*'s powers of judgement could save humanity from itself. In my winter, I've become more hopeful about the human animal at work. The contents of Pandora's box can indeed be made less fearsome; we can achieve a more humane material life, if only we better understand the making of things.

[...]

## THE HAND

Technique has a bad name; it can seem soulless. That's not how people whose hands become highly trained view technique. For them, technique will be intimately linked to expression. This section takes a first step in investigating the connection.

Two centuries ago Immanuel Kant casually remarked, “The hand is the window on to the mind”.<sup>15</sup> Modern science has sought to make good on this observation. Of all the human limbs, the hands make the most varied movements, movements that can be controlled at will. Science has sought to show how these motions, plus the hand’s varied ways of gripping and the sense of touch, affect how we think. Advanced hand technique of – for example musicians or cooks is a specialized human condition but has implications for more ordinary experience.

### THE INTELLIGENT HAND

How the hand became human: grip and touch

The image of ‘the intelligent hand’ appeared in the sciences as early as 1833 when, a generation before Darwin, Charles Bell published *The Hand*.<sup>16</sup> Bell, a devout Christian, believed the hand came from God the Creator perfectly designed, a fit-for-purpose limb like all of his works. Bell accorded the hand a privileged place in creation, using various experiments to argue that the brain receives more trustworthy information from the touch of the hand than from images in the eye—the latter so often yielding false, misleading appearances. Darwin dethroned Bell’s belief that the hand was timeless in form and function. In evolution, Darwin surmised, the brains of apes became larger as their arms and hands were used for other purposes than steadying the moving body.<sup>17</sup> With greater brain capacity, our human ancestors learned how to hold things in their hands, to think about what they held, and eventually to shape the things held; man-apes could make tools, humans make culture.

Until recently, evolutionists thought that it is the uses of the hand, rather than changes in its structure, that have matched the increasing size of the brain. Thus a half-century ago Frederick Wood Jones wrote, “It is not the hand that is perfect, but the whole nervous mechanism by which movements of the hand are evoked, coordinated, and controlled” which has enabled *Homo sapiens* to develop.<sup>18</sup> Today we know that, in the near history of our species, the physical structure of the hand has itself evolved. The modern philosopher and medical doctor Raymond Tallis explains part of the change by contrasting chimpanzee and human freedom to move the thumb at the trapezio-metacarpal joint: “As in chimpanzees, the joint is composed of interlocking concave and convex surfaces which form a saddle. The difference between ourselves and chimpanzees is that the saddle interlocks more in chimpanzees, and this restricts movement;

in particular, it prevents opposition of the thumb to the other fingers.”<sup>19</sup> Research by John Napier and others has shown how, in the evolution of *Homo sapiens*, the physical opposition between thumb and fingers has become ever more articulate; the opposition of thumb to other digits has combined with subtle changes occurring in the bones that support and strengthen the index finger.<sup>20</sup>

Such structural changes have allowed our species a distinctive physical experience of grip. Grips are voluntary actions; to grip is a decision, in contrast to involuntary motions like the blinking of the eyelids. The ethnologist Mary Marzke has usefully sorted out three basic ways we grip things. First, we can pinch small objects between the tip of the thumb and the side of the index finger. Second, we can cradle an object in the palm and then move it around with pushing and massaging actions between thumb and fingers (though advanced primates can perform these two grips, they cannot perform them as well as we can). Third is the cupping grip—as when a ball or other biggish object is held by the rounded hand, thumb and index finger placed opposite the object—and is even more developed in our species. The cupping grip allows us to hold an object securely in one hand while we work on it with the other hand.

Once an animal like ourselves can grip well in these three ways, cultural evolution takes over. Marzke dates *Homo faber*’s first appearance on earth to the moment when, as it were, someone could grip things securely in order to work them over: “Most of the unique features of the modern human hand, including the thumb, can be related to... the stresses that would have been incurred with the use of these grips in the manipulation of stone tools”.<sup>21</sup> Thinking then ensues about the nature of what one holds. American slang advises us to ‘get a grip’; more generally we speak of ‘coming to grips with an issue’. Both figures reflect the evolutionary dialogue between the hand and the brain.

There is, however, a problem about grips, especially important to people who develop an advanced hand technique. This is how to let go. In music, for instance, one can play rapidly and cleanly only by learning how to come off a piano key or how to release the finger on a string or on a valve. In the same way, mentally, we need to let go of a problem, usually temporarily, in order to see better what it’s about, then take hold of it afresh. Neuropsychologists now believe that the physical and cognitive capacity to release underlies the ability of people to let go of a fear or an obsession. Release is also full of ethical implication, as when we surrender control—our grip—over others.



One of the myths that surround technique is that people who develop it to a high level must have unusual bodies to begin with. As concerns the hand, this is not quite true. For instance, the ability to move one's fingers very rapidly is lodged in all human bodies, in the pyramidal tract in the brain. All hands can be stretched out through training so that the thumb forms a right angle to the first finger. A necessity for cellists, pianists with small hands can likewise develop ways to overcome this limit.<sup>22</sup> Other demanding physical activities like surgery do not require special hands to begin with—Darwin long ago observed that physical endowment is a starting point, not an end, in any organism's behaviour. This is certainly true of human hand technique. Grips develop in individuals just as they have developed in our species.

Touch poses different issues about the intelligent hand. In the history of medicine, as in philosophy, there has been a long-standing debate about whether touch furnishes the brain a different kind of sensate information than the eye. It has seemed that touch delivers invasive, 'unbounded' data, whereas the eye supplies images that are contained in a frame. If you touch a hot stove, your whole body goes into sudden trauma, whereas a painful sight can be instantly diminished by shutting your eyes. A century ago, the biologist Charles Sherrington reformatted this discussion. He explored what he called "active touch", which names the conscious intent guiding the fingertip; touch appeared to him proactive as well as reactive.<sup>23</sup>

A century on, Sherrington's research has taken a further turn. The fingers can engage in proactive, probing touch without conscious intent, as when the fingers search for some particular spot on an object that stimulates the brain to start thinking; this is called 'localized' touch. We see an instance of this in how the medieval goldsmith made an assay; his judgements were made by the fingertips rolling and pressing the metallic 'earth' until a particular spot that seemed impure was found. From this localized sensate evidence, the goldsmith reasoned backward to the nature of the material.

The calluses developed by people who use their hands professionally constitute a particular case of localized touch. In principle the thickened layer of skin should deaden touch; in practice, the reverse occurs. By protecting the nerve endings in the hand, the callus makes the act of probing less hesitant. Although the physiology of this process is not yet well understood, the result is: the callus both sensitizes the hand to minute physical spaces and stimulates the sensation at the fingertips. We could imagine the callus doing the same thing for the hand as the zoom lens does for the camera.

About the hand's animal powers, Charles Bell believed that different sense limbs or organs had separate neural channels to the brain and thus that the senses could be isolated from one another. Today's neural science shows his belief to be false; instead, a neural network of eye-brain-hand allows touching, gripping and seeing to work in concert. Stored information about holding a ball, for instance, helps the brain make sense of a two-dimensional photograph of a ball: the curve of the hand and the hand's sense of the ball's weight help the brain think in three dimensions, seeing a flat object on paper in the round.

## PREHENSION: TO GRASP SOMETHING

To say that we 'grasp something' implies physically that we reach for it. In the familiar physical gesture of grasping a glass, the hand will assume a rounded shape, suitable for cupping the glass, before it actually touches the surface. The body is ready to hold before it knows whether what it will hold is freezing cold or boiling hot. The technical name for movements in which the body anticipates and acts in advance of sense data is *prehension*.

Mentally, we 'grasp something' when we understand the concept, say, of an equation like  $a/d = b + c$  rather than simply perform the operations. Prehension gives a particular cast to mental understanding as well as physical action: you don't wait to think until all information is in hand, you anticipate the meaning. Prehension signals alertness, engagement and risk-taking all in the act of looking ahead; it is in spirit the very opposite of the prudent accountant who does not exert a mental muscle until he or she has all the numbers.

Human newborns begin to practice prehension as early as their second week by reaching for baubles held in front of them. Since the eye and the hand act in concert, prehension increases when the baby can hold up its head; with the neck more under control, an infant can better see what it is reaching for. In the first five months of life, the baby's arm develops the neuromuscular capacity to move independently toward what the eye sees. In the next five months, the baby's hand develops the neuromuscular capacity to shape itself into different grasping positions. Both skills are tied to the development of the pyramidal tract in the brain, a pathway between the primary motor region of the cortex and the spinal cord. By the end of the first year, in Frank Wilson's words, "the hand is ready for a lifetime of physical exploration".<sup>24</sup>

The verbal results of prehension are illustrated by an experiment the philosopher Thomas Hobbes conducted in tutoring the young children of the Cavendish family. Hobbes sent the young Cavendishes into a darkened room into which he'd placed all sorts of unfamiliar objects. After they'd groped about, he asked them to leave the room and describe to him what they 'saw' with their hands. He noted that the children used sharper, more precise language than the words they used when they could see in a lit space. He explained this in part as a matter of them "grasping for sense" in the dark, a stimulus that served them to speak well later, in the light, when the immediate sensations had "decayed".<sup>25</sup>

Reaching for something, in the prehensive way, establishes facts on the ground. For instance, when a conductor gives directive hand gestures a moment ahead of the sound. If the hand gesture for a downbeat came exactly in time, the conductor would not be leading, since the sound would already have happened. Batsmen in cricket get the same advice: "get ahead of the swing". Beryl Markham's remarkable memoir *West with the Night* provides yet another example. In the days when pilots lacked much guidance from instruments, she flew through the African night by imagining that she had already made the lift or turn she was about to make.<sup>26</sup> All these technical feats are based on what anyone does in reaching for a glass.

Raymond Tallis has given the fullest account we now have of prehension. He organizes this phenomenon into four dimensions: anticipation, of the sort that shapes the hand reaching for the glass; contact, when the brain acquires sense data through touch; language cognition, in naming what one holds; and last, reflection on what one has done.<sup>27</sup> Tallis does not insist that these must add up to self-consciousness. One's orientation can remain focused on the object; what the hand knows is what the hand does. To Tallis's four I'll add a fifth element: the values developed by highly skilled hands.

## HAND VIRTUES

At the fingertip: truthfulness

In learning to play a string instrument, young children do not know at first where to place their fingers on the fingerboard to produce an accurate pitch. The Suzuki method, named after the Japanese music educator Suzuki Shin'ichi, solves this problem instantly by taping thin plastic strips onto the fingerboard. The child violinist places a finger on

a colour strip to sound a note perfectly in tune. This method emphasizes beauty of tone, which Suzuki called 'tonalization', from the start, without focusing on the complexities of producing a beautiful tone. The hand motion is determined by a fixed destination for the fingertip.<sup>28</sup>

This user-friendly method inspires instant confidence. By the fourth lesson, a child can become a virtuoso of the nursery tune "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star". And the Suzuki method breeds a sociable confidence; an entire orchestra of seven-year-olds can belt out "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" because the hand of each knows exactly what to do. These happy certainties erode, however, the moment the strips are removed.

In principle, habit should have ingrained accuracy. One might imagine that the fingers would simply go down on the unmarked fingerboard exactly where the tape had been. In fact, habit of this mechanical sort fails—and for a physical reason. The Suzuki method has stretched small hands laterally at the knuckle ridge but has not sensitized the fingertip that actually presses down on the string. Because the fingertip doesn't know the fingerboard, sour notes appear as soon as the tapes come off. As in love, so in technique; innocent confidence is weak. A further complication ensues if the player looks at the fingerboard, trying to see where the fingertip should go. The eye will find no answer on this smooth, black surface. Thus, a child orchestra when first untaped sounds like a howling mob.

Here is a problem of false security. The musical child's problem recalls Victor Weisskopf's caution to adult scientific technicians that "the computer understands the answer but I don't think you understand the answer". Another adult analogy to taping would be the 'grammarcheck' functions of word-processing programs; these give the button-pusher no insight into why one grammatical construction is preferable to others.

Suzuki well understood the problem of false security. He counselled removing the tapes as soon as the child feels the pleasure of making music. A self-taught musician (his interest in the late 1940s began when he heard a recording by Mischa Elman of Franz Schubert's "Ave Maria"), Suzuki knew from his experiments that truthfulness lies at the fingertips: touch is the arbiter of tone. There is a parallel here also to the goldsmith's assay, the slow, probing touch of materials at the fingertips that eschewed instant, false security.

We want to know what sort of truth is this, which casts off false security.

In music, the ear works in concert with the fingertip to probe. Put rather dryly, the musician touches the string in different ways, hears a variety of effects, then searches for the means to repeat and reproduce the tone he or she wants. In reality, this can be a difficult and agonizing struggle to answer the questions “What exactly did I do? How can I do it again?” Instead of the fingertip acting as a mere servant, this kind of touching moves backward from sensation to procedure. The principle here is reasoning backward from consequence to cause.

What follows for someone acting on this principle? Imagine an untaped boy struggling to play in tune. He seems to get one note exactly right, but then the ear tells him that the next note he plays in that position sounds sour. There's a physical reason for this trouble: in all stringed instruments, when the pressed string becomes shorter in length, the width between the fingers must also diminish; feedback from the ear sends the signal that lateral adjustment is needed at the knuckle ridge (a famous exercise in Jean-Pierre Duport's *Études* explores the interplay between diminishing lateral width and maintaining the rounded hand as the cellist moves across all strings for their entire two-foot length). Through trial and error the untaped neophyte might learn how to contract at the ridge, yet still no solution will be in sight. He may have held his hand at a right angle to the fingerboard. Perhaps now he should try sloping the palm to one side, up toward the pegs; this helps. He can produce an accurate sound because the slope equalizes the relations between the first and second fingers, which are unequal in length (moreover, a perfectly right-angle address to the string strains the second, longer finger). But this new position makes a hash of the lateral ridge problem he thought he had solved. And on it goes. Every new issue of playing in tune causes him to rethink solutions arrived at before.

What could motivate a child to pursue such a demanding path? One school of psychology says that the motivation is lodged in an experience fundamental to all human development: the primal event of separation can teach the young human to become curious. This research is associated with, in the mid-twentieth century, D. W. Winnicott and John Bowlby, psychologists interested in humans' earliest experiences of attachment and separation, beginning with the infant's disconnection from its mother's breast.<sup>29</sup> In pop-psychology, the loss of that connection begets anxiety and mourning; the British psychologists sought to show just why it is a much richer event.

Winnicott posited that once no longer one with the maternal body, the infant is newly stimulated, directed outward. Bowlby went into the nursery to study the difference

separation makes in the ways young children touch, weigh and turn around inanimate objects. He observed with care daily activities that before him had been taken to be of little consequence. For us, one aspect of this research is particularly valuable.

Both psychologists emphasized the energies children come to invest in ‘transitional objects’—technical jargon for the human capacity to care about those people or material things that themselves change. As psychotherapists, this school of psychologists sought to aid adult patients who seemed fixated in infantile traumas of security to dwell more easily in the realm of shifting human relationships. But the idea of the ‘transitional object’ more largely names what can truly engage curiosity: an uncertain or unstable experience. Still, the child submitting to the uncertainties of tone production, or indeed any highly demanding hand activity, is a special case: he or she seems confronted by what might seem an unending, mushy process yielding only provisional solutions that give the musician no sense of increasing control and no emotional experience of security.

Matters don't quite become so dire because the musician has an objective standard to meet: playing in tune. It might be argued that high levels of technical skill can be reached only by people with fixed objective standards of truth. Musically we need simply observe that *believing* in correctness drives technical improvement; curiosity about transitional objects evolves into definitions of what they should be. The quality of sound is such a standard of correctness—even for Suzuki. This is why he begins with tonalization. The belief in and search for correctness in technique breeds expression. In music, this passage occurs when standards modulate from physical events like playing with a good tone to more aesthetic measures of, for instance, a well-shaped phrase. Of course, spontaneous discoveries and happy accident inform what a musical piece should sound like. Still the composer and the performer must have a criterion to make sense of happy accidents, to select some as happier than others. In developing technique, we resolve transitional objects into definitions and we make decisions based on such definitions.

Both composers and performers are said to hear with the ‘inner ear’, but that immaterial metaphor is misleading—famously for composers like Arnold Schoenberg, shocked by the actual sounds of what they've written on the page, equally for the performer whose study of scores is necessary but not sufficient preparation for putting bow to string or lips to reed. The sound itself is the moment of truth.

This is therefore also the moment when error becomes clear to the musician. As a performer, at my fingertips I experience error—error that I will seek to correct. I have a

standard for what should be, but my truthfulness resides in the simple recognition that I make mistakes. Sometimes in discussions of science this recognition is reduced to the cliché of 'learning from one's mistakes'. Musical technique shows that the matter is not so simple. I have to be willing to commit error, to play wrong notes, in order eventually to get them right. This is the commitment to truthfulness that the young musician makes by removing the Suzuki tapes.

In making music, the backward relationship between fingertip and palm has a curious consequence: it provides a solid foundation for developing physical security. Practising that attends to momentary error at the fingertips actually increases confidence: once the musician can do something correctly more than once, he or she is no longer terrorized by that error. In turn, by making something happen more than once, we have an object to ponder; variations in that conjuring act permit exploration of sameness and difference; practising becomes a narrative rather than mere digital repetition; hard-won movements become ever more deeply ingrained in the body; the player inches forward to greater skill. In the taped state, by contrast, musical practice becomes boring, the same thing repeated over and over. Here handwork, not surprisingly, tends to degrade.

Diminishing the fear of making mistakes is all-important in our art, since the musician on stage can't stop, paralyzed, if she or he makes a mistake. In performance, the confidence to recover from error is not a personality trait; it is a learned skill. Technique develops, then, by a dialectic between the correct way to do something and the willingness to experiment through error. The two sides cannot be separated. If the young musician is simply given the correct way, he or she will suffer from a false sense of security. If the budding musician luxuriates in curiosity, simply going with the flow of the transitional object, she or he will never improve.

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This dialogue addresses one of the shibboleths in craftsmanship, the employment of 'fit-for-purpose' procedures or tools. Fit-for-purpose seeks to eliminate all procedures that do not serve a predetermined end. The idea was embodied in Diderot's plates of L'Anglée, which showed no litter or wasted paper; programmers now speak of systems without 'hiccups'; the Suzuki tape is a fit-for-purpose contrivance. We should think of fit-for-purpose as an achievement rather than a starting point. To arrive at that goal, the work process has to do something distasteful to the tidy mind, which is to dwell temporarily in mess—wrong moves, false starts, dead ends. Indeed, in technology, as

in art, the probing craftsman does more than encounter mess; he or she creates it as a means of understanding working procedures.

Fit-for-purpose action sets the context for prehension. Prehension seems to prepare the hand to be fit and ready, but this is an incomplete story. In making music we certainly prepare yet cannot recoil when our hand does not then fit its aim or purpose; to correct, we have to be willing—more, to desire—to dwell in error a bit longer in order to understand fully what was wrong about the initial preparation. The full scenario of practice sessions that improve skill is thus: prepare, dwell in mistakes, recover form. In this narrative, fit-for-purpose is achieved rather than preconceived.

[...]

## SUMMARY

In craftwork, people can and do improve. The twists and turns that happen occur because *progress* is not linear. Skill builds by moving irregularly, and sometimes by taking detours.

Development of an intelligent hand does show something like a linear progression. The hand needs to be sensitized at the fingertip, enabling it to reason about touch. Once this is achieved, problems of coordination can be addressed. Integration of hand, wrist and forearm then teaches lessons of minimum force. Once these are learned, the hand can work with the eye to look ahead physically, to anticipate and so to sustain concentration. Each stage, though challenging, grounds moving on to the next; but each is also an independent challenge.

Taking guidance from expressive directions aids this process in ways that more denotative directions would not. Expressive directions provide guidance about the sense of a practice whole. I've described here and elsewhere, among many possibilities, three expressive tools that can provide this guidance: sympathetic illustration, which identifies with the difficulties a neophyte encounters; scene narrative, which places the learner in a strange situation; and instruction through metaphor, which encourages the apprentice to reframe imaginatively what he or she is doing.

The necessity of imagination appears in the use of tools. If these tools prove limited or difficult to use, still inventiveness enables a certain kind of repair work, one that I've



called dynamic repair. And imagination is required to make sense of potent tools, or all-purpose tools, full of untapped and perhaps dangerous possibilities. I have tried to take some of the mystery out of the imaginative use of tools by explaining the structure of an intuitive leap. No one draws on all these resources all the time, and in labour as in love, progress occurs in fits and starts. But people can and do get better. We might wish to simplify and rationalize skills, as teaching manuals often do, but this is not possible because we are complex organisms. The more a person draws on these techniques, the more he or she plumbs them, the more will that person gain the craftsman's emotional reward, the sentiment of competence.

*Taken from Richard Sennett, The Craftsman, Penguin Books 2009, pp. 1-8, 149-161, 237-238. First printed in the USA by Yale University Press (2008). Reprint by kind permission of the author.*

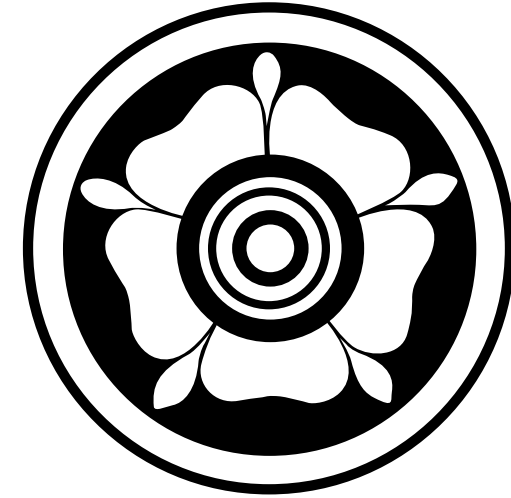
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fig. 1–13

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*Kyudō*, the way of the bow, is an old art of war that belongs to the traditional Japanese martial arts (*Budō*). It is also considered a spiritual art, in the sense of Zen archery, which—similar to the tea ceremony, flower arranging and calligraphy—belongs to the traditional Japanese arts of the way or the fine arts (*Geidō*).

In *Kyudō*, however, technique, craft, rhythm and cooperation are of central importance. It is a matter of course for *Kyudōkas* to maintain their bows and arrows. Regular maintenance must be performed, such as renewing and producing grips, bowstrings, arrowheads and the relevant tools. Various materials are used, such as bamboo, hemp, paper, leather or horn. Basic knowledge of arts and crafts is a prerequisite. The practice of shooting requires a

trained, physical technique in order to master the choreography. The series of steps, knee and standing positions, the individual phases between tensing the bow and letting the arrow fly are all oriented towards breathing, a centred stance and a set of rules shared with other marksmen. In *Kyudō* you can find all of the aspects of mind-hand relationships, cooperation and craftsmanship that Richard Sennett describes in *The Craftsman*.

In *Kyudō*, as in all other traditional arts of war and ways, you can also find the contexts that Henk Oosterling describes as "Dasein as Design", as a relationship in the "inter", as Relational Design. I call this process "Designing Resonance Architecture".











David d'Heilly

## Global Islands: Learning from the Galapagos Megalopolis

### URBANIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Former US Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers commonly began his speaking engagements in the early 2000s by discussing “the transformative event of our lifetimes”—how it took more than two millennia, from Ancient Greece to the mid-nineteenth century, to raise the economic prospects of the average person by 75 per cent, after which, in a corner of northern Europe, a generation experienced 75 per cent growth in a single lifetime. Indeed, for each successive generation, in an increasing number of cultures worldwide, this miracle has become a given. Today, billions of children born in developing nations will enjoy economic prospects hundreds of times better than those their parents or grandparents knew. Summers described this as the natural outcome, in the first instance, of our shift from being nomadic to building and dwelling in cities. Indeed, it is an almost exclusively urban phenomenon. The world's rural population peaked at some three billion about a decade ago and has since been in decline, though global population growth continues unabated. Studies suggest that rapid population growth will continue for another 40 years or so, until the world's population peaks at between nine and ten billion, at which point three out of every four people will live in cities. The enormity of this shift tends to be lost on the developed world because we are already there, with the level of urbanization at about 75 per cent.

Yet even though cities are central to our vastly improved standard of living, we remain profoundly ambivalent about them. Until the nineteenth century, cities were centres where politics, science and culture were developed and were disseminated to the rural majority. Cities were not for everybody. Urbanites lived literally and figuratively shorter lives: they were shorter in stature and died earlier. All of that changed in the last century. Still, urbanization and economic growth have been so swift that we can't yet begin to grasp their toll on the natural world and on what used to be our cultures. It is apparent that cities are the one common vessel carrying our civilization into the future and, at the same time, it is equally apparent that cities epitomize all the dilemmas of globalization: economic vitality vs. entrenched disparity, ecological per capita efficiency vs. concentrations of waste and devastation, social mobility vs. zoning-as-segregation, diversity vs. monoculture. We have been dominantly rural for thousands of years. It has

been a scant three years—since late 2008—that we have had an urban majority. How can we hope to know the long-term effects?

But if we say that actions speak louder than words, then the fact that the global urban population is currently increasing by nearly 1.5 million new urbanites per week certainly makes it easy to register popular opinion. According to the UN, the twentieth century saw a surge in urban population from 13 per cent of a global population of 1.7 billion to 48 per cent of a global population of 6.5 billion, mid-point on a trajectory towards 75 per cent of a global population of between nine and ten billion in 2050. In a century, humanity has gone from a situation in which one in every seven or eight people was urban to one in which roughly every other person is urban, at the same time as experiencing a fourfold increase in overall population. Cities are definitively where our species will live until, for example, we upgrade to spaceships, the design of which will no doubt be based on what we know about building and managing cities well.

So what do we know about cities? First, that they're not what they used to be. As cities have exploded in scale, they have become increasingly difficult even to quantify. Cities throughout most of the world used to be defined as populations centred around religious institutions or castles. The Christian cathedrals around which European cities were often built are typically sited on ancient Roman temples, for example. Minervan temples apparently had the right footprint for Christian places of worship, so many of Europe's grand cathedrals were built on top of them. The Minervan temples were, of course, similarly built on the sacred sites of earlier conquered peoples. This genius loci daisy chain was no doubt important for conferring legitimacy on successive conquerors, but it's efficacy beyond that is questionable. Today we know that godless sewage treatment facilities are a far more effective definition of a viable city centre and of urban extent.

Arguments in support of the modern city tend to return, at some point, to the merits of cities' scale. Big cities are responsible for 25 per cent of the world's economy. Urban areas typically account for between around 50 and 80 per cent of any nation's GDP. Cities such as Tokyo, Beijing, Paris, London and Toronto, which have economies larger than those of many countries, are each home to the headquarters of about two-thirds of their host countries' Fortune 500 companies (America is anomalous: New York is home to the headquarters of only one-seventh of the USA's largest firms, which speaks to the extent that the country remains rural and multipolar). But scale is not just about economic performance. Studies show that scaling cities larger tends to result in a growth

exponent of between around 1.15 and 1.2 in higher wages, more patents, more colleges, more police, more waste, more savings per capita on energy, return on infrastructure, and so on; everything shows increases of about 15 and 20 per cent. If everyone in the United States lived at the population density of central Tokyo, for example, they would all fit in the state of New Hampshire. Their energy needs would be roughly halved. The rest of the country could be a greenbelt or a solar farm. This would dramatically alleviate global warming (or oceanic acidification) and the energy crisis, while providing a dramatic increase in available farmlands. There is every reason to believe that this USA-in-New Hampshire would be as powerful, if not more so, than the USA is today. Of course, you could also analyze cities by their traffic, and determine by the ratio of privately-owned cars to public transport that those with fewer private vehicles—and fewer traffic jams—are more sustainable. You wouldn't be wrong. But not everybody wants to take the bus. Still, if 75 per cent of between nine and ten billion people are going to be living in cities, then it is clear that creating economic, social, ecological and cultural sustainability for the city is to do so for the planet as well.

The critical growth moment is, of course, the initial urbanization phase—the next two or three decades of global urbanization. Most of the world's rural populations have always lived on subsistence farming, enjoying few appreciable improvements over the lives of their ancestors thousands of years ago. Aside from the individual satisfaction for themselves, their impact on humanity has always been potential, unrealized. Just as the last of a plant or animal species in the wild is not indemnified, and therefore vanishes without any record of the potential value lost or understanding of the cost, so rural humans have historically not been registered in the ledgers of history. Moving to the cities means skill specialization, access to information and infrastructure and, most importantly, becoming consumers and producers, market participants: hence the dramatic increase in economic performance through urbanization. By 2017, half of the less developed world is predicted to be urban; not coincidentally, this is also when emerging economies' share of world GDP is expected to become larger than that of the developed nations. Over the next few decades, in the burgeoning cities, we should expect to see the continuation of growth in these exceptional economic numbers—as well as social and ecological calamity. The enormity of civilization's risk will be on full display. People who were not connected to the grid are now consuming energy. And tennis shoes. And mobile phones. And refrigerators. And cars. Eventually we should start to see marginal decreases in this same consumption. The power grids will have been upgraded to provide the additional wattage, producing more acidifying CO<sub>2</sub> or risking more nuclear contamination. Housing and transport will have been built or,

more often than not, retrofitted for those who settled but were not initially provided for. Eventually, these new urbanites will have settled in and be working towards greater social mobility, in more highly-skilled jobs and saving to put their kids through college. With more women working, birth rates should drop and global population level off. But today we are still in the middle of the growth arc; more new labour inputs multiplied by growth exponents. The media narrative is, naturally, all about mass consumption and massive strains on the natural environment, as the newly urbanized tune in and turn on. These families in Mumbai, in Shanghai, in Rio de Janeiro—the first university graduates in the family; the first to be competitive with, and contribute to, and further exacerbate everything that is good and bad about modern society. These are the people that capture the popular imagination.

### SOMEWHERE BETWEEN THE IDEAL AND THE IRRELEVANT

So where do we turn in the face of such an epochal phenomenon? A brief survey of studies on 'world cities', 'global cities' and megacities finds two main camps: those in favour of the citadel and those in favour of the skyscraper; Vienna or New York. 'Liveability ratings' used by multinational recruitment firms and lifestyle magazines consistently indicate a preference for cities with around one to two million inhabitants and with population densities of between 4,000 and 6,000 per square kilometre, such as Vienna. Urbanism specialists tend to present New York (or London) as a second perennial critical favourite. Indeed, Vienna represents the last vestiges of Habsburg might, much as New York represents the first intimations of a new kind of speculative wonder. London has the best of both; it was the first modern city and the first megacity, with ten million inhabitants. But all three had the good fortune of realizing their extent with the wind in their sails. They were aspirational places representing vast global empires at their peak, and the ambitious from throughout their domains competed to rise there and to enjoy a taste of the finest that the world had to offer.

Few of the cities that emerge between now and 2050 will, in reality, have such a pedigree. None of the tens of millions currently surging into emerging megacities along the Congo, the Buriganga River (Old Ganges), the New Ganges or the Malir or Pearl Rivers can look to well-appointed 'liveability' to answer their problems. Neither can these cities hope to provide the world's largest economic structures to fuel their peoples' urban integration. This is clear if you consult the lists of megacities. You begin with London, then New York. But as you follow the trajectory until planetary urbanization

is forecast to peak, what you find is that while some of the cities have been capitals of empire, ancient and modern, such as Cairo, Tehran, Delhi, Moscow, New York, London and Paris (most of which have already essentially completed their megacity upscaling), the majority of the newly urbanizing population will arrive in places like Lagos, Dhaka, Kinshasa, Chongqing, Tianjin, Chennai and Guangzhou. These are not the seats of the world's largest financial exchanges. Their cultural institutions are not the envy of the world. But they may soon be larger than London. It is hard to imagine how they could become places like London, where a majority of new-borns are born into immigrant families, much less New York, the archetypical 'melting pot', consisting entirely of people from different cultures. Instead, they will be made up primarily of a small number of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds from the city's periphery. The bravura of "if you can make it there you'll make it anywhere" New York—the ideal of the city as a mechanism for weeding out all but the best and the brightest—assumes the luxury of a majority that can fail and have a functioning rural hinterland to return to. Statistically, this is not the case. Rather than being gatekeepers, most of these newly developing urban centres will be remade by an urbanizing deluge, and the way that they manage to integrate these new populations and provide infrastructure and opportunity for them in a sustainable manner will be what makes them or breaks them as powerful or poisonous.

Modern Tokyo was created by just such a flood of the disempowered. A devastated city, bombed continuously for nine months at the end of a punishing war, Tokyo in 1945 was a city and people that had lost its religion, lost its legal structure, lost its identity in many profound ways. Infrastructure and most of the city's functions were substantially damaged. Yet within two decades Tokyo managed to rebuild and become a very successful city by most measures. Today, Greater Metropolitan Area Tokyo—Tokyo at its greatest extent—is listed as the world's largest conurbation; it has been since the mid-1960s and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future. At some 36 million inhabitants, this would mean that one out of every 197 people lives in Tokyo. To put that in perspective, imagine a World Cup football match on TV. A World Cup-class venue probably holds something under 100,000 spectators. The biggest matches reach a global TV audience of 250 million. Statistically, then, there should be around 500 Tokyo-ites in that football stadium and 1.25 million Tokyoites watching the match on TV. Yet they are most likely not the ones trashing the stands or brawling in pubs after the game. Tokyo has one of the world's lowest rates of personal and property crime (0.29 per cent), highest life expectancies (83 years), highest literacy rates (99 per cent) and greatest long-term economic vitality (Tokyo has twice the number of Fortune 500

headquarters and twice as many firms over 200 years old as any other city). It has excellent restaurants and retail (the most Michelin Stars of any city) and the world's largest public transport system, with just under 1,000 stations typically running on-time, even with the largest station serving some six million passengers on a busy day.

Surely, one might say, this is all just accounting. Obviously we want to have the numbers, but what do they mean? Is this the way we want to live? Is Tokyo actually relevant? According to *The Endless City*,<sup>1</sup> a project by the London School of Economics and the Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society, which is probably the most thoroughly researched and widely promoted study of global urbanization in recent memory, the answer would seem a firm "no". Tokyo is mentioned exactly six times in the course of 500 pages, the same number as Lagos. One mention simply lists it among large cities. Two other mentions are about the efficiencies of Tokyo's public transport system. A fourth mentions Tokyo as one of three "financial command centers"—whereby Tokyo represents "an East Asian division of labor" that complements New York as representing a division of labour in the Americas and London as representing a division of labour in Europe, Africa and South Asia. Those familiar with Tokyo or East Asia probably know that foreign labour is not a large factor in Japan's economy and that most Koreans, Chinese or other East Asians will likely disagree that they are somehow "represented" by the "financial command center" of Tokyo. These days they probably consider it more of an economic cautionary tale. What is fascinating is that the other two mentions of Tokyo, the ones that attempt to define its irrelevance, are probably the strongest arguments for why Tokyo is an important reference for our problem.

Both of these reasons offer a kind of 'ethnic' rationale for Tokyo's failure-as-success. One states that it is "the uniquely Japanese ability to manage chaos into order" that makes Tokyo work so well. The second states that "it is the comparative ethnic uniformity of Tokyo that has kept it from fully transforming itself into a true world city. Despite its enthusiastic embrace of all things exotic in terms of appearance, in substance it remains essentially Japanese." The thinking seems to be that "comparative ethnic uniformity" makes the embrace of other cultures superficial and therefore eliminates a city's potential for being a "true world city".

The first point seems explicit: there is an innate Japanese ability to manage chaos into order. Since its establishment in 1600, this city—Tokyo, and Edo before it—has experienced major disasters every 30 years or so, with many producing casualties in the thousands and tens and hundreds of thousands. The 1657 Meireki conflagration



claimed 30,000 lives by the most conservative estimates (nine years later, the Great Fire of London officially claimed six). The 1857 earthquake and resulting conflagration also killed tens of thousands. The 1923 Kanto earthquake and resulting conflagration killed more than 100,000 and left 1.9 million homeless. World War II bombings in 1945 once again left more than 100,000 dead and millions dispossessed. I can imagine an argument that the Japanese excel at managing chaos because Tokyo has seen so much of it; I don't understand the argument for it being unique or innate.

The second point seems euphemistic. The authors certainly don't mean that when London enthusiastically embraces "all things exotic" the city becomes, in essence, substantially less English. The point is rather whether comparative ethnic uniformity (or xenophobia) keeps Tokyo from becoming a "true world city". And this speaks to our current urbanization. It is easy to imagine that most of the emerging megacities of Nigeria, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, etc. will be populated very unselectively by formerly rural populations that are culturally if not ethnically fairly similar. If many—perhaps most—of our emerging megalopolises are not going to be true world cities, then what will they be?

### THE REFUGEE MEGACITY

Tokyo as we know it was created by a deluge of impoverished people from throughout a devastated country. Archaeological evidence exists of neolithic peoples cooking and using pottery around the area of what is now Tokyo as far back as 10,000 BCE. In the seventh century, when administrative law was introduced in Japan, it was registered as a small fishing village. Several hundred years later a villa was erected, which was then reformatted as a castle; the castle was expanded to become the seat of government, Edo, from 1603. With the onset of modernization in 1868, Edo took the name Tokyo. Its feudal lord was deposed, his properties—fully 60 per cent of the land in the city—was parcelled out, with titles, to industrialists and others useful to the new post-shogunate government. Although residential zoning was introduced in 1919, being a land-owning member of society was still only for a very limited social strata. The vast majority of Tokyoites continued to share the facilities of long, low and exceedingly flammable wooden tenements downwind in the east of the city.

When people from throughout the devastated nation flooded into Tokyo, post-war policy dictated that upper-class families divest their land in favour of corporations or

release the land into the markets. The financial system, geared to rebuilding Japan's devastated industry, flooded the markets with liquidity, affording long-term employment and undervaluing the land. As inflation outpaced interest rates, the average Tokyoite turned to home ownership as a stable investment vehicle. Tokyo rapidly became a metropolis characterized by high concentrations of single-family dwellings, purchased with easy loans paid for by ordinary pay cheques. Today, central Tokyo has an average population density of some 35,600 per square mile. This is similar to Brooklyn, at 34,920 per square mile. Whereas Brooklyn, however, has a high percentage of multi-unit dwellings, Tokyo is predominantly two-story single family dwellings owned by middle-class working families.

Further exacerbating density, in the 1970s, when the children of these new urbanites grew up, a family's assets still essentially equalled their land holdings, so subdivision became the popular solution, both selling what they could to finance the family's expansion and using the rest to rebuild on whatever land remained. This is what created the unpredictable high-density mazes of freestanding low-rise buildings that characterize the city. As late as 1997 there were only 70 buildings over 30 storeys high (around 100 metres) in all of Tokyo. Bland and ugly as each of these micro-footprint maximizations may be, the result is that virtually no two blocks of Tokyo are organized quite the same. Tokyo's oft-reviled cityscape of 'rabbit hutches' is therefore a portrait of policies of individual ownership and innovation. The completely indiscriminate mix of large footprint with small footprint, l-shaped with z-shaped with indescribably-shaped, means the overlapping fabric of the city provides owners with literally millions of places for retail and restaurants, small manufacturing and artisanal craftsmanship. Yes, and also residences.

Compare an aerial photograph of Tokyo with an aerial photograph of Los Angeles or Mexico City. The vast cyberspace-like grids stretching out into the horizon tell you that these cities are predicated on the automobile, but they also speak of mass development, a vast number of tenants in interchangeable housing units: decades without personalization in real estate. Perhaps you could say that Tokyo more closely resembles a middle-class version of the slums of Mumbai or the favela of Rio de Janeiro, two of today's burgeoning megacities. Their original inhabitation might not have been that different. But with Tokyo, the crucial difference is that the infrastructure actually did get built and the inhabitants were accorded legal recognition of ownership, so that the financial gains of being able to buy and sell their property and to develop assets are in evidence. Tokyo, which 150 years ago was a city of nothing but gates and moats, breached only

under penalty of summary execution, is today a vast city of tightly woven neighbourhoods where anyone can walk freely and safely, without a single gated community.

In this fabric of horizontal density we find a rich ecology of small, niche, semi-public and seemingly half-private spaces, like lost rooms down the urban hallways of your never-ending network of spaces for distributed living. Karaoke rooms and internet cafes, where you can register your legal address and shower or get a bite before bedding down for some rest; or any one of hundreds of thousands of tiny pubs and restaurants, some as small as a Volkswagen bus, some vast and epic. Self-cleaning high-tech toilets, equipped with motion sensor infrared-heated seats to make sure they're warm within six seconds of your entering the cubicle; the best ones can be found throughout the city at a moment's notice if you have a mobile phone, as they're user-rated. The Tokyo blogosphere is awesome. It famously supports the national meteorological agency with spotting urban squalls; and cherry trees blossoming.

The process of urban refinement in a city this vast, of people with essentially the same cultural background, is one of very high levels of implicit knowledge about the way things operate. People of like minds assemble by word-of-mouth or other such exclusive practices. Neither the owners nor the clientele of these thousands of inclusive spaces need or want publicity. Spun into the fabric of the intensely horizontal city, most of these spaces are run more like a hobby than a profit-maximizing enterprise.

What's being developed are not business models that are in any way exportable. And this can make Tokyo—a megacity predicated on the commonality of its populace—a very tough read. Streets don't have names, buildings rarely assert identity. Shops may have cryptic signage or none; in most cases, their addresses aren't even easily identifiable. Dinner parties are not the norm in Tokyo. One meets people outside, joining each other in a landscape of destinations for like-minded sensibilities, which are everywhere, if not apparent. In-between, in transit, no one knows you and no one bothers you. If one of the freedoms afforded by urbanization is the freedom of self-reinvention, then this refugee city affords you the freedom of not having to reinvent yourself. In Tokyo, you can always choose “none of the above”.

## GALAPAGOS MEGALOPOLISES

The Galapagos Islands are, of course, an archipelago of volcanic islands straddling the equator in the Pacific Ocean, some 972 kilometres west of continental Ecuador. They

are geologically young and famed for their vast number of endemic species. Charles Darwin's observations there contributed to his theory of evolution by natural selection. The Galapagos are not where anyone discovered the milk cow. Galapagos is a name that we all know, precisely because so many of its species are anomalous: land iguanas which Darwin himself described as having “a singularly stupid appearance”, the flightless cormorant, the only tropical penguin, the Blue-footed Booby...

Of course, Tokyo may not be a subject of concern to economists because Tokyo is rife with systemic weaknesses. First, it is a city by and for the Japanese. Its labour markets are notoriously inflexible. Even for its own citizens, the norm for salaried workers has been one company per career. Foreigners rarely, if ever, have careers in Japanese corporations, unless they are partially Japanese by blood, in foreign branches, or are Koreans born and raised in Japan, although even they may still choose not to take Japanese citizenship. The foreign community is a scant 1 per cent of Tokyo's population, and while illiteracy is unheard of in Tokyo, English or any other international language facility among the population is uniformly dreadful. Tokyo is simply not set up for multinationals. Its accounting, legal code and research facilities are typically non-porous. Tokyo has minimal expectations of tourism generating revenue (a trait only exacerbated by ‘recent events’). For decades, Japan has watched its population ageing, and, so far, national downsizing seems to be the agreed consensus. It is famously in its second decade of economic stagnation. Its national debt is nearly twice its GDP, second only to Zimbabwe. But this debt is held domestically. Even with the crises of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown, its currency remains strong because of the volume of carry-trade business conducted in it. Investors have confidence in it, precisely because it is a Galapagos: interesting on its own terms, as an anomaly, divorced from all but its particular ecosystem.

Saskia Sassen's ground-breaking work on ‘global cities’ looks at the fact that cities increasingly have more to do with each other than they do with their host nations.<sup>2</sup> Some 75 cities worldwide contain just about all the headquarters of globally operating firms. Cities like London or New York attract and process a great deal of capital, but this capital may have very little to do with the host population or nation. It generally comes and then is gone again within a matter of milliseconds. The FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate) speculators in such cities move extraordinary amounts of money back and forth. As valuable urban economic forces, they are often taxed at lower rates. They siphon off their profits, while some income goes to their lawyers and accountants, the restaurants at which they eat and the art galleries at which they impress each other. It is, in many ways, a legitimate manner of creating cosmopolitan refinement, but the

question is how we should value it if the refinement never really circulates outside of a handful of people. We might well question their actual utility to anyone but themselves.

There is no such thing as the Japanese corporation that headquarters in the Caymans or offshores its profits. Taxes are assessed, collected and put to public use. However corrupt that allocation might become through collusion between Japanese bureaucracy and Japanese industry, it is still returned to the collective. Japanese corporate executives earn about eight times the average salary within the corporation, even in the largest banks. There are few common explanations for these facts, besides the idea of shared responsibility. Whether the Toyotas and Sonys of the world are disadvantaged by this is surely something for the markets to decide.

My argument is not in support of performative xenophobia, but rather to say that Tokyo does work for the average Tokyoite. If anything, it puts them first. And if, in doing so, much of what it produces does not translate into export-quality goods, is that really a basis for irrelevance? One might even say that Tokyo functions, in some senses, precisely because of its incompatibility with global norms. You do produce a lot of Blue-footed Boobies; but sometimes you also get a milk cow or two.

In the discourse about global cities, we see a 'common sense' position emerging around an ideal of 'efficiency' in the global city, which is rooted in perfect access to perfect markets. I would argue that this is idealistic and naive. The thing to study, the thing to aspire towards in 2050, when world population peaks and most everyone really does live in a city, is how we can develop the constituent technologies and policies to make each city encourage its own Galapagos of ecological, social and economic difference—derived from the idiosyncrasies of its inhabitants. Now that cities seem to be a truly common model for our inhabitation, it must be time to develop thousands of ways to make them more sustainable, egalitarian and, of course, economically competitive. The first competition should be within the ecologies of each individual city, to give each a distinctive richness. And if this makes each more 'Galapagopic', like Tokyo, in the service of its own communities of irreconcilable difference and mutual incomprehension, then let a global archipelago of thousands of 'irrelevant cities' of viable irrelevance bloom. Just because Japan's modernization, as best represented by Tokyo, flies in the face of our contemporary liberal conception of what constitutes a world city, does not make Tokyo—'Galapagopic' Tokyo, in the world and not of it—in reality, less of the world or more in it.

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Manuel Arias-Maldonado

## Wikipedia: The Collective Design of a Digital Planet

Ten years after it was created, almost everybody knows about Wikipedia. This is in itself an astonishing achievement for a project that did not seem set for success back at the beginning of the century, when the idea of a viable online encyclopedia built upon the free collaboration of any user seemed hardly plausible. But that is not less surprising than the vastness of its numbers: Wikipedia now exists in 273 languages and contains 18 million articles, is read by 365 million readers and is consistently ranked as the seventh most visited site on the internet. It has become a densely populated digital planet, a collectively designed space for the production and dissemination of knowledge that, paradoxically, disrupts the traditional ways of knowledge production and manages to penetrate the everyday life of netizens all over the world. Thus Wikipedia is more than an encyclopedia—it is a symbol. But it is not clear what it represents. It is too new and peculiar a phenomenon to remain unambiguous.

Wikipedia may be seen as a renewal by other means of the enlightened purpose of spreading knowledge, but also as the postmodern demotion of that very ideal, due to the dissolution of any hierarchical criteria for ordering knowledge: Pokémon may be treated more carefully than Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Therefore, it can either be welcomed as a democratizing device that allows anyone to contribute to the production of knowledge, or be denounced as delusory and even dangerous, overlooking the difference between laypeople and experts. In the same vein, is it a collective way of looking for the truth via the aggregation of different perspectives, or is it the emergence of a weak view of the former, demanding the consensus of everyone involved irrespective of the validity of their arguments? Moreover, does it do this by fostering a kind of interaction that is close to the deliberative ideal, or rather a less pure one closer to a Hayekian epistemology with market resonances? Likewise, it can be considered either as a purposefully collective design or as a spontaneous order that grows without a central guide. Finally, it is not clear whether it operates as a community of reason or as a community of attachment—whether it is a typically modern site for generating knowledge or a postmodern site wherein identity and play are the prevailing motives.

Obviously, there is no way to suppress this ambiguity: Wikipedia is *simultaneously* all that. If the concept of design is to be understood as an element of daily practice, a

sociological phenomenon of cultural practices, and as an agent of a cultural and even an anthropological turning point (see Milev in the Introduction to this volume), then Wikipedia constitutes a major example of a contemporary social design—as well as of its inherent complexities. It is by exploring these apparent contradictions that both the operation and meaning of this particular design will be elucidated, albeit naturally not resolved.

Wikipedia is a cultural design rooted in technology. This is a determinant feature not to be underestimated, since Wikipedia can be described as the fortunate combination of the encyclopaedic ideal of yesteryear and the information technologies of today, plus a democratic ethos and a corresponding belief in the wisdom of crowds. Hence Wikipedia is a technological design, but the technology in question is facilitating a radically human activity—that of communication among strangers. It does so by making it possible for any user to edit at any time the content of any given page, thus providing the means for realizing Umberto Eco's declaration: that every educated man's duty is to be ready to rewrite the encyclopedia.<sup>1</sup> The particular software tool involved is the 'wiki', named by its author Howard G. Cunningham after a Hawaiian word meaning 'quick', one of the many fruits of the free software movement that promotes the free use, adaptation and reconfiguration of computer programming.<sup>2</sup> The rationale behind this demand is obvious: programming will improve if everybody contributes. In the case of a wiki, the content of a page can be freely edited by users without the intervention of any moderator or the action of any filter, although the changes can in turn be suppressed or amended by other users.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, a wiki is as much a technological tool as a way of organizing collaboration among people. Interestingly, though, it is a *collective* device based on individual performances. A design that is in itself ambiguous.

In the case of Wikipedia, such software is the means for a very specific end, i.e., giving shape to an online encyclopedia open to everyone. After all, a digital community that uses a wiki can be completely or partially closed—but Wikipedia is different in that it is *prima facie* completely open to all. Furthermore, it differentiates itself radically from traditional encyclopedias by realizing the possibilities that are intrinsic to its technological foundation. Thus Wikipedia is not static, nor does it possess a definite shape, since every article is by definition a provisional one.<sup>4</sup> A liquid knowledge for a liquid modernity? Maybe. Yet there is another key feature of Wikipedia that reminds us that it is not just an encyclopedia, but also a digital one: the use of hypertext. Every article includes links to other articles, both inside and outside the encyclopedia: a page is a page. It constitutes a network—a network of users and a network of contents.



By being so, it breaks up the traditional hierarchization of knowledge creation and the separation between experts and laypeople. And it does so in the name of an ambitious goal, as stated by one of its founders: "Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge. That's what we're doing."<sup>5</sup> No more, no less.

For all its democratic intonations, though, the underlying epistemological assumptions at work here belong to a different strain of thought, one that runs against the planned organization of knowledge: the social epistemology of Friedrich Hayek.<sup>6</sup> His assumptions about the use of social knowledge were a confessed inspiration for Wikipedia's founders Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, probably just because Hayek's analysis is very perceptive. In a nutshell, Hayek takes as a starting point the fact that knowledge is dispersed throughout society *and* the premise that central planning does not solve the problem of *how* we can take advantage of our resources beyond the reach of individual minds. He goes on to defend a decentralized order as the most adequate system for distributing information in view of "the unavoidable imperfection of man's knowledge and the consequent need for a *process* by which knowledge is *constantly* communicated and acquired".<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia applies this reasoning to the production of encyclopaedic knowledge, taking advantage of the dramatic reduction in the operational costs that the internet brings about: "Wikipedia urges its many readers to become writers, fact-checkers, and copyeditors, allowing anyone to ask a question or fix incorrect information".<sup>8</sup> It seems to work.

However, a technological framework is not enough to produce a cultural design. The former in fact requires further work on the part of users, work consisting in the creation of those rules that will regulate the exchanges between them and will set the standards to which the articles should conform. Thus Wikipedia is not that free: it is governed by rules. Such rules cover everything, from editing to conflict resolution, although not all of them are equally compulsory: some of them are simply recommendations, whereas others are supposed to constitute the core of Wikipedia's encyclopaedic aim. On the other hand, some of them were there from the beginning, while others have been gradually adopted by the community of users itself. It is precisely this that is an important point when considering Wikipedia as a cultural design—namely, the way in which contributors have negotiated and implemented the rules that, lest we forget, make collaboration on this scale possible. It has been an adaptation by practice, without anyone being in charge. Interestingly, though, what began as a sort of

spontaneous order of collaboration and discovery has evolved into something more complicated, due to the emergence of a body of bureaucrats—called administrators—who settle disputes by searching for a consensual solution, while trying to make the encyclopedia complete and reliable. Some critics point out that the consensual mode of conflict resolution imposes a heavy burden on newcomers and discourages them from participating.<sup>9</sup> It may be so. That is the price of becoming a *lived* design, wherein the division between insiders and outsiders, experts and laypeople, can be reintroduced in unexpected ways.

Therefore, two emerging features should be pointed out regarding the regulative development of Wikipedia. First, although an initial set of rules is outlined, they are negotiated and renegotiated by a multiplicity of users, giving way to new written rules as well as to customs full of normative value. Hence it is obvious that a spontaneous order is not an order devoid of rules, but rather an order whose rules emerge and evolve organically *while* the technology is being used and *while* design is experienced by users. Second, however, if we accept that an encyclopedia cannot be just anything, but has to keep some substantive and formal standards, there is therefore a problem with Wikipedia—or at least there is still a problem with it. It does not have to do with the rules themselves, but with the fact that they are mostly ignored. This should not be a problem, given that one of Wikipedia's official mottos suggests precisely that users must "ignore all rules". But we may object that Wikipedia is meant to be an encyclopedia. It is not exactly a matter of credibility, although credibility matters too. Wikipedia is committed to a set of non-negotiable principles that are meant to direct the efforts of all users to its primary purpose: building up a systematic body of knowledge along encyclopaedic lines. It may then be a peculiar, online, free encyclopedia—but an encyclopedia it must remain. Yet it does not—or at least it only does sometimes.

More to the point, there are a number of policies that all editors should follow, the fulfilment of which would certainly make Wikipedia a reliable encyclopedia. To begin with, all articles should be written from a *neutral point of view*, avoiding biases and stating facts rather than opinions. Their content must be *verifiable*, that is, be based on sourced material properly quoted and not including original research. Additionally, although this is formally a guideline and not a policy, the topics included in the encyclopedia must be *notable* enough to deserve inclusion, a notability that in turn requires verifiable evidence from third-party sources. A last policy can be added, regarding the behaviour that editors must observe among themselves, which in turn

influences the kind of truth-seeking Wikipedia engages: the need for consensus. Every dispute must be solved through deliberation, appealing to the encyclopedia policies and guidelines. All this is reasonable. However, the actual Wikipedia is not the same thing as the intended Wikipedia. They beg to differ.

Above all, the principle of verifiability is not rigorously implemented. Many articles or parts of articles simply do not disclose the source for statements or data.<sup>10</sup> This has to do partly with the fact that most of Wikipedia's content comes from the web, not from printed books, at a time when the information available outside the internet is still arguably more significant than that available inside it—especially if you are trying to give shape to an encyclopedia that often deals with historical topics. Naturally, this is changing, as more and more books are digitized and made publicly available, so that this flaw can eventually disappear. Yet this shows the degree to which Wikipedia's triumph—its becoming *the* encyclopedia at the expense of the formerly iconic *Britannica*—has been based initially on a very simple fact that is also technologically induced: how much more comfortable it is to remain seated than it is to stand up and start looking on the shelves. A very human reason for the success of a cultural design, if there ever was one.

Be that as it may, the lack of rigorous, or sufficient, attribution makes Wikipedia a rare sort of encyclopedia: one whose information must be verified before it is used. This may reflect the difficulties associated with the usage of wikis as a means to generate knowledge, given that they were originally tools for refining software programs, whose proper functioning can be easily checked: either they work or they do not. Plainly, the same cannot be predicated from knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Mistaken historical data, say, can survive without anybody noticing it, since it *seems* to work. Wikipedia's reasonable bet is that its huge scale will accelerate the rate of exchanges and hence the rate of amendments, but so far its impressive number of contributors have helped more in expanding the contents than in refining them—although they tend to become more reliable nonetheless, albeit in a non-systematic, often capricious way.

Therefore, rather than a model of uncontested truthfulness, Wikipedia would be a non-hierarchical framework in which an approximate truthfulness is pursued. This happens at a time when popular culture is rapidly swallowing up high culture. In this regard, Wikipedia embodies the consolidation of postmodernism as a cultural perspective. This is not only evident in the crowdsourcing upon which it relies for generating encyclopaedic content, suppressing the authority of the expert and granting expertise to those who

show it by way of editing, but also, less flattering, in the content itself. Apart from the issues encyclopedias have traditionally dealt with, all kinds of phenomena and characters have made their way into Wikipedia, ranging from porn stars to motion picture heroes, from chess games throughout history to comic books. But do they belong in an encyclopedia? This question opened a gap within Wikipedia between inclusivists, who claim that nothing human is alien to it, and exclusionists, who defend stricter criteria of inclusion. Such conflict in fact caused the breakup of its founders: whereas Larry Sanger advocated *reliable* knowledge, Jimmy Wales preferred *useful* knowledge.<sup>12</sup> It could be added: either reliable knowledge for a minority or useful knowledge for everyone. Wikipedia has chosen, or simply evolved towards, the latter. In doing so, it has become the first truly popular encyclopedia—or, rather, the first encyclopedia to grant as much room to popular culture as to high culture. Partly thanks to technology, again, since space is not a problem in a digital encyclopedia, which can afford the luxury of being all-inclusive.

It is worth noting that the combination of the availability of space and the predominance of postmodern criteria for attributing notability leads to one of the greatest virtues of Wikipedia, that of becoming a vast cultural archive through the collaboration of a great number of users. Where other encyclopedias do not reach, Wikipedia does, providing us with the data we need—data that would never have been collected if fewer people were involved. Let us think of the compilation of all relevant chess games in history, the recollection and indexing of classic comic books, or the exhaustive lists about topics such as train stations or river bridges in Great Britain, to name just a few. By including this sort of data, Wikipedia is turning into a formidable cultural deposit, a bizarre duplicate of the world. It is an achievement built on the sheer scale of human collaboration.

Yet does it amount to a conscious assault on high culture, or is it just the reflection of its public? For all the insurgent talk employed by social scientists when talking about cultural designs, it is debatable whether Wikipedia is characterized by a counter-cultural purpose. The revolutionary feature of Wikipedia lies in its openness and subsequently in the means by which it intends to build up an encyclopedia. The media is the novelty! But leaving this aside, the goal remains that of writing an—inherently dynamic, not static, more varied—encyclopedia, whose sources are credited and trustworthy. Both the partial failure to maintain rigorous encyclopaedic standards and the thematic enlargement that blurs the dividing line between the notable and the irrelevant, in practice making everything relevant, are the outcome of Wikipedia's constituency, a varied array of users who engage themselves in a given design and

transform it unconsciously. Thus the relationship between users and the resulting collaborative network is the key to this successful cultural design. For it is, indeed, a collective design. A couple of considerations are to be made about this interaction.

On the one hand, it is a singular type of interaction. It is neither direct nor personal, since hardly anybody knows anyone else. It is distant and only rarely instantaneous: except in the case of conflict resolution, where an answer is expected fairly quickly, the labour of editing and correcting is not marked by deadlines, nor does it demand a reaction when something is changed on a page—rather, the encyclopedia is there to be edited and an editor just responds to the impersonal work of others as expressed in articles and amendments. This deferred interaction helps to avoid some of the problems associated with group thinking: online deliberation is not like real-world deliberation. It is not perfect, either. We have already mentioned the emergence of a bureaucracy that makes the consensus dependent on social alliances, hence blocking intruders or newcomers. Besides, vandalism and bad faith are difficult to eradicate. But, generally speaking, it is a kind of impersonal communication that works fairly well in sharing information and editing a collective text.<sup>13</sup> The lack of personal interaction lightens the psychological burdens associated with group deliberation, whereas the intrinsic diversity and scale of the participants increases the chances that the information will be allocated in the right place and mistakes will be more easily corrected. In fact, being right is not as important as being corrected. Therefore, the performance of each editor is relevant to the final outcome, although it is the total aggregation of performances that shapes the actual encyclopedia. It is a more specialized action than that of the voter or consumer, whose choices can or cannot be grounded on a proper reflection and which are not directly accountable before others—as is the case to the contrary with editing decisions that others will scrutinize and correct. Wikipedia's editing process is thus initially conceived of as meritocratic, rather than purely democratic, for while everyone has the opportunity to participate, not every contribution will be accepted. Yet the lack of rigour in implementing the encyclopedia's self-given rules undermines the meritocratic claim, whereas the rejection of contributions on behalf of bureaucratic deviations or ideological biases can be said to introduce an oligarchic element into the editing process. This messy reality, however, is a further testimony to Wikipedia's openness.

After all, participating in Wikipedia is not just about a rational decision to contribute to a more open knowledge generation: it is an experience, a game, a form of expression. When discussing Wikipedia as a social design, this is something not to be overlooked.

Jimmy Wales himself has defended the funny and addictive side of Wikipedia, a side that the author Nicholson Baker also experienced when he immersed himself in it: "It seems chaotic [...]. But it's a game."<sup>14</sup> People write, edit, plot. As Baker adds, "it is a solitary way to be social", where the 'extimacy' of social networks such as Facebook is replaced by anonymity and hence is no extimacy at all. Wikipedia is, to take Huizinga's classic view of gaming, an instance of a *played* culture—without implying that the game is not serious.<sup>15</sup> However, it is not *that* serious. This communitarian dimension is related to the consensual view of the truth that Wikipedia adopts. The truth is not out there, waiting to be recognized; rather, it is socially constructed through an argumentative process where power relations—alliances among editors—also count. Stacy Schiff has suggested that Wikipedia offer countless opportunities for self-expression that mirror our informal relationship to truthfulness: "We're on the open road now, without conductors and timetables. We're free to chart our own course, also free to get gloriously, recklessly lost. Your truth or mine?"<sup>16</sup> This may of course help to explain Wikipedia's success, a success that has, in turn, changed our perception of what an encyclopedia is supposed to be and how it is supposed to work. That is why Paula Berinstein may be asking the wrong question when she asks whether the public can develop a reliable encyclopedia.<sup>17</sup> It is wrong, because the public on the whole doesn't care. A majority prefers Wikipedia's participative immediacy to the supposedly greater certainty offered by a whole but mediated knowledge produced by a group of experts. However, on the other hand, Wikipedia has subtly changed public expectations about the process of knowledge creation: it is no longer acceptable to offer an encyclopedia whose sources remain undisclosed—openness is now required. It has thus done remarkable cultural work.

Be that as it may, Wikipedia deserves attention if we are to attend to and if the social sciences are to research new social designs as part of an effort to understand the deep changes provoked by the twin forces of democratization and communication technologies. It is hard to predict the future of a successful design that has just turned ten years old. As has been underlined, it features a series of ambiguities that seem hard to resolve. But it clearly represents a new model for knowledge creation, whose virtues and vices stem from the open nature of the enterprise itself. Maybe its final value lies in offering a blueprint for smaller, more specialized communities that contribute to the advancement of a pluralistic society. Yet it may also be the case that Wikipedia is paving the way for a more subtle conception of the relationship between knowledge generation and community belonging, a decentralized and open site for interaction and collaboration that makes the world flatter but also smarter.

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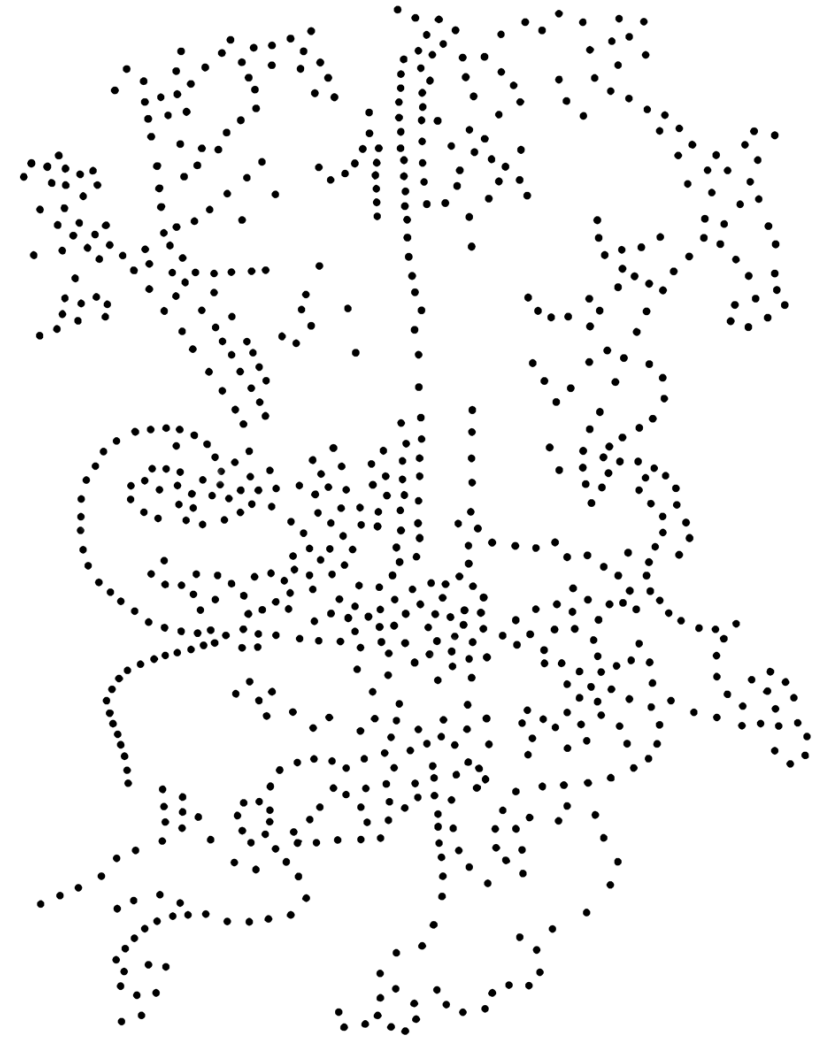


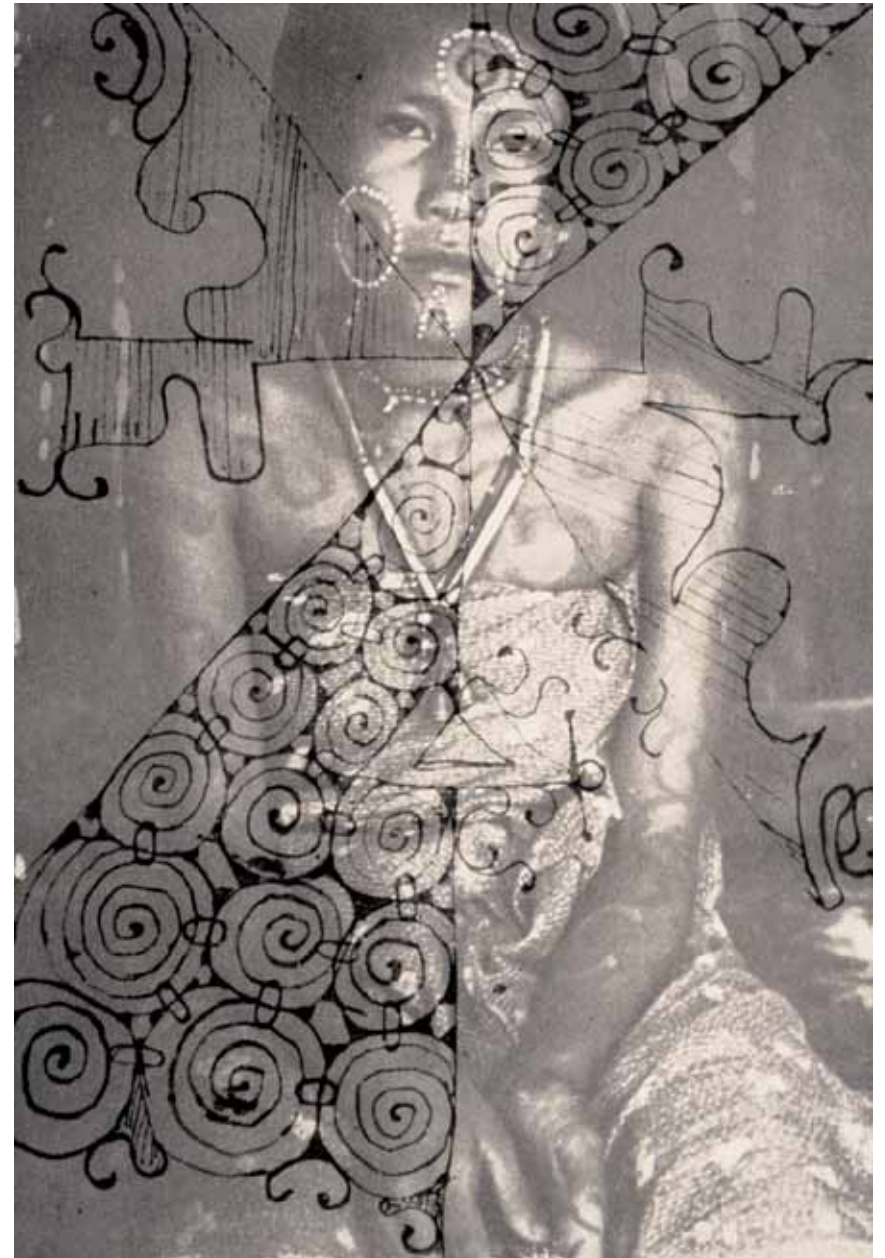
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Based on photographs of the Caduveo and Mundé Indian in the Mato Grosso  
taken by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss.













Nils Zurawski

## Divided by Design: On Cognitive Maps and Material Culture in the Northern Ireland Conflict

### AN ANECDOTE

In 2010 I organized a field trip to Belfast for 15 students, one of whom explored the city on his own and recounted the following experience. He took the bus to Belfast Castle and went back into the city on foot. We had already been in Belfast a week, so the students had some idea about the city, its social divisions, political topography, as well as a sense of directions. Halfway along his walk back from the castle towards the city, he came through the Protestant Shankill Road, the heart of a loyalist Protestant culture in Belfast. This three-mile long road runs through North Belfast from west to east and ends close to the city's centre. Over much of its course it runs parallel to the Falls Road, with its staunchly republican Catholic neighbourhoods that make up West Belfast. Much of the Northern Ireland conflict in Belfast has been associated with these two roads and its adjacent neighbourhoods: Protestant here, Catholic there. Both roads are connected to each other by intersecting streets, which are closed off at night along the so-called peace lines, which cut through the back of both neighbourhoods, separating the two communities.

Standing at the entrance to such an intersecting street on the Shankill Road, the student asks passers-by for directions back to the University Quarter, where the youth hostel is located. Knowing that the shortest of all ways would follow the intersecting street, right through the Catholic Falls Road and then on to Sandy Row and the university, he is provoking an answer that he knows will not mention this particular path. Instead of sending him through the peace line—the direct route—they describe a way that takes him east into the (neutral) city centre and, from there, south to the University. This is a detour of approximately 45 minutes, depending on one's walking pace. It does not occur to those giving directions to suggest a route that would take the student through the, in their view—hostile neighbourhoods of the Falls Road, least of all when the person is on foot. Although cars do today cross the line of division marked by the walls and gates of the peace line, there are rarely any people on foot walking across this quite visible border. For the people the territory beyond the borders is perceived as being a 'hostile' territory. However, they are neither interested in its content, nor do they



Peace line and gate at Lanark Way, Belfast, May 2010  
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even know about it in any more detail—other than in clichés or stereotypes. They simply avoid such spaces and accept even time-consuming detours through the city. Directions are explained accordingly to strangers to the city. On the other hand, residents on both sides of the wall will vigilantly scrutinise every person passing through the gates, especially on foot, trying to find out who it is—friend or foe—and what their agenda may be. Surveillance and control were and remain—not only here—an important aspect of Northern Irish society on both sides of the divide.<sup>1</sup> This is the case even more so for the working-class neighbourhoods that have borne most of the conflict's share of devastation, grief and death.

Even if this anecdote only tells of a minor event, it can be seen as relating to more than the ability of particular residents of the area and their sense of direction and orientation; i.e., it is not a case of individual lack of spatial knowledge evidenced by not describing the seemingly obvious route, nor is it a case of mean-spiritedness. What the story makes apparent is the importance of cognitive maps, in which the conflict has inscribed itself over the past 40 years. Directions, orientation and the urban topography of Belfast are not a matter of choice or taste, but rather a matter of socially distinct perceptions that become manifest in the cognitive mappings of the city and its different spaces. Moreover, these are dependent on the lines of conflict that have developed and constantly changed in Northern Ireland. The socio-spatial imaginations of residents of Belfast—and indeed of other places in Northern Ireland—mirror the division generated by the conflict that always had major spatial implications, as has its legacy, more than ten years after the 1998 peace agreement. However, the spatial aspects are not only manifest in cognitive mappings—i.e., the social-spatial imaginations of people—but can be seen all over the city in the form of murals, paintings, flags, banners, colours on diverse spaces and places, architecture and events. More than anything, they mark territories and are the material manifestation of the divisions that are the legacy of a long-lasting conflict, one that shaped Northern Irish society as a society of antagonisms and a multitude of dichotomies, even if in reality it is often not as clear-cut as one thinks or is made to believe.

In this article I want to draw attention to the idea of cognitive mapping, in which the perceptions of space and social realities are brought together, confronting the legacies of the conflict and the vivid memories among Northern Ireland's population. Thus the cognitive mappings can be used to track the lasting impact of the conflict on the segregation, the divisions and socio-spatial dynamics of Northern Ireland. This also implies looking at the many forms of material culture and their role in producing spaces

of division and cohesion at the same time. Design, as it were, is not the root cause of Northern Ireland's divided society, but through design in the broadest sense this division is sustained and negotiated; and it impacts on the cognitive ability to see and to use space—then and now.

### COGNITIVE MAPS—A WAY TO THE IMAGE OF THE WORLD

What the example above made clear is how important spaces, territories and borders are in everyday life in Belfast. What also becomes apparent are the various aspects of daily life—material artefacts, perceptions of space and how these are valued—that, only when taken together, help to make sense of the above story as a narrative of everyday life in Belfast rooted in the conflict's legacy. The story can be read in many ways, highlighting various aspects of the conflict's legacy. Most striking to me is the stated relation between spatial knowledge, orientation and the social context this took place in. Thus the story can also be read as an example of cognitive mapping.

Cognitive mappings are not the product of people's fantasies about spaces, territories and particular socio-spatial settings, but are deeply connected to the social and material conditions that have to be confronted every day. The image of the world—a world view<sup>2</sup>—is the basis for our spatial behaviour.<sup>3</sup> Although the term cognitive mapping has undergone massive change and been discussed widely,<sup>4</sup> it seems apt to borrow from this concept and to analyze the wider implications that surfaced in the story above; i.e., the socio-spatial imaginations and consequences in a context such as Northern Ireland.

In the setting of a (formerly) violent geography,<sup>5</sup> it seems that the conflict has designed the city that, in turn, was impacting on the minds, perceptions and general social imaginary of the people, which eventually led to designing the city as it is today. Thus, both the material manifestations as well as the ideas and perception of space are viable objects of study on the relation between space, design and social context. Cognitive mappings are formed by experience, tradition and spatial limits and possibilities. They are a system of orientation that has collective roots and individual consequences. Through cognitive mappings, social and spatial relations are negotiated, enabled and consequently formed. Being the product of collective ideas and social conditions, they represent part of a cultural consciousness and collective memory,<sup>6</sup> not only in regard to space itself, but to all those contexts that show a spatial meaning and connection. Cognitive mappings are intergenerational, as Leonard proves in discussing



Religious distribution in Belfast, based on 1991 census, available at [http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/maps/belfast\\_religion.gif](http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/maps/belfast_religion.gif)

the everyday lives of young people growing up in divided, segregated communities in Belfast and how they perceive, use and negotiate sectarian space. Although her focus is on young people's day-to-day interactions with peers in micro-settings, these interactions must be seen in relation to the specific historical, social, cultural and economic contexts in which their communities are located. Childrens geographies, she stresses, cannot be separated from the society of which they are a part;<sup>7</sup> and such geographies are not merely imaginary, but also manifested in artefacts, symbols and what can be called urban technology.<sup>8</sup>

### IMAGINING, EXPERIENCING AND MAPPING TERRITORIES OF CONFLICT

The conflict has always had territorial and spatial dimensions. This is especially true of the history of Irish colonization, of which the Northern Irish conflict is a remnant. Kearns reminds us that the violence of colonial war and repeated conquest was formalized in a succession of new orderings of property and territory.<sup>9</sup> Even if there is no direct link between seventeenth-century British plantations and ethnic segregation in Belfast and other towns in Northern Ireland, the management of space and, hence, population was and is an important aspect. Violence in this setting was a mnemonic for historicizing space and spatializing history. As such, space was a resource for repertoires of historical narratives and collective action.<sup>10</sup> Thus, there was no chance for anyone growing up in these surroundings to escape the power of these ideas, which formed part of the cognitive mappings of collectives—through cultural memories—and individuals—through experience and routinization.

Geographies of violence share the common feature of dividing spaces into safe and unsafe ones. Bound to such a conceptualization of space and social order, i.e., by division and segregation rather than by unity, is the notion of fear of the other. The geographer Peter Shirlow analyzes the complex role of fear in establishing and maintaining a communal deterrence and the production of the other as part—and indeed source—of such fear.<sup>11</sup> Geographies of violence produce fear and inscribe this fear onto space, e.g., in the form of security walls, the euphemistically-named peace lines, which make divisions concrete instead of overcoming them. Belfast has many so-called interface areas, where the segregated areas 'meet', and where heightened tensions among the separated populations have produced violent clashes and a framing of the other as 'danger' and the object of constant fear.<sup>12</sup> This is also due to the fact that the segregated areas are laid out like a patchwork across the city (see map) and do not form larger distinctive areas. Areas of one or the other identity are very small-scale, hence they do

Republican mural, Falls Road,  
West Belfast, May 2010  
© N. Zurawski



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Orange Parade, May 2010,  
North Belfast, May 2010  
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Flags in front of city walls,  
Derry, May 2010  
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live side by side, facing each other. Peace lines are one answer to conditions at those interfaces, where most post-peace agreement violence takes place today. A third of the victims of politically-motivated violence between 1966 and 2001 were murdered within 250 metres of an interface, while around 70 per cent of deaths occurred within 500 metres.<sup>13</sup> In the case of the peace lines, while the segregation and the cognitive mappings about these divided spaces have materialized, cognitive mappings are generally stronger than any change in the landscape.

In most cases, they resist efforts at redrawing.<sup>14</sup> Since the 1998 peace agreement, many parts of the city have undergone regeneration. However, it is the internal mental geography that lags behind the physical transformation, a reluctance to acknowledge the facelifts.<sup>15</sup> This can be shown most notably in studies conducted by Shirlow and Murtagh.<sup>16</sup> Their survey revealed how conditions of separation impacted the mobility of residents of the respective communities. This goes so far as not using the supermarket located across the road, but which is in the 'other' neighbourhood. Residents would rather undertake a longer journey to a facility—such as a shopping mall—that is either in a neutral area or in an area of one's own group. Issues of fear and safety are the foremost reasons for these decisions, which are arguably not thought about every time, but are instead part of the routines of everyday life<sup>17</sup> and therefore part of the cognitive mappings of spatial arrangements in Belfast. Spatial patterns of movement are also dictated by such fears, while acts of violence engrained the fear of specific places in the minds of the city's inhabitants. Thus memories of the Troubles are directly related to these cognitive maps of conflict.<sup>18</sup> For Shirlow, residential segregation is still regulating ethno-sectarian animosity by means of complex spatial devices.<sup>19</sup>

## MURALS, FLAGS AND URBAN TECHNOLOGY

The material devices by which ethno-sectarianism is regulated can take many forms and shapes. Among the most visible are the hundreds of murals and commemoration sites that can be found across Northern Ireland. In Belfast, these mark spaces and territories as belonging to the one or the other group. Related to these rather static paintings and artefacts are the visual display of banners and flags during the parade season. These are mainly Protestant-loyalist, but evoke responses from the Catholic-republican side in many areas and on many occasions. All of these symbols are part of what Jarman calls the 'performance of memory',<sup>20</sup> and can be seen as the materialization of the cognitive mappings that regulate and order social and individual lives. The symbols are mainly directed towards one's own group, to strengthen identity and to mark one's own territory.<sup>21</sup>

Although they are not necessarily meant to be aggressive, they became so in the context of the conflict. Many disputes over symbols have influenced the conflict, but even more so the peace process;<sup>22</sup> for instance, in the context of marching routes, over flying particular flags or displaying symbols associated with the state, such as the police badge with its crowned harp, which had been changed early on in the peace process. These markers are used on different occasions, many of them part of a recurring season of festivals, in public rituals with which the group's identity ensures its own unity and belonging through acts and symbols. Thus the material artefacts are means of linking history, community and spatial discourses. To the neutral or uninformed observer/tourist these displays may be interesting to look at, almost omnipresent and rather objects of art, but in fact they are integral parts of vivid cultural and ethnic discourses on identity, territorial disputes, communal self-consciousness and the collective memories of the different groups. Murals, flags and other artefacts are part of the design of the conflict, embodying the history of the community, and thus creating the meaning of space and spatial arrangements that materialize in the cognitive mappings and, consequently, in the routines and perceptions of the people living within the city who are constantly in opposition to one another.

As for the artful design of the symbols that embody much of the conflict's discourse, the manifestation of the conflict extends to what Brand refers to as urban technology: the design of houses, neighbourhoods and the streets behind them. The footpaths in the Pologlass development, for example, were allegedly constructed to full road specification to facilitate access for heavy armoured vehicles. Similar observations—or rumours?—have been circulating in the planning community for many years. But there is enormous danger of taking a wrong turn when trying to un-design given artefacts, in the sense of reverse engineering in order to read the designer's original intention. What can be taken as fact is that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive consults with the police where security issues arise on interface areas.<sup>23</sup> Brand refers to the many barricades of concrete, corrugated iron and fences designed to avert ballistic attacks with stones and other dangerous objects, citing Latour's 'how to do words with things' to indicate that design is neither neutral nor innocent, but has consequences, and that it is at the same time derived from the very perceptions of space and territory found in cognitive mappings. By calling them "physical scars on the landscape",<sup>24</sup> this relation becomes even more compelling. The scars on the minds, hearts and bodies of the people, the wounds that the conflict has left, can also be found on the landscape, on the spaces and, hence, on the ideas of those spaces and on the perceptions of how space is used and seen, or what it symbolizes.

Protestant neighbourhood,  
close to peace line near  
Shankill Road, Belfast,  
May 2010  
© N. Zurawski



Back of housing row in  
Catholic neighbourhood at  
peace line, West Belfast,  
May 2010  
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## CONCLUSION

Design is not the original reason for the conflict in Northern Ireland. There is no space here to discuss its origins, but it has become clear that design in many ways and facets has been carrying, mirroring or facilitating the conflict. The conflict has impacted on the urban design of Belfast and other places in Northern Ireland; not only in material terms, but also concerning immaterial aspects—the ideas, perceptions and memories—that are important for people. When cognitive mappings are immaterial ideas about socio-spatial relations, they are expressed in or manifest themselves through material forms, such as symbols, flags, paintings, fences, patterns of mobility or walls. As Brand rightly puts it, conflict architecture tends to influence people's spatial perception even more strongly than 'ordinary' landmarks,<sup>25</sup> and is important for the day-to-day lives of people. If, through cognitive mappings, the world is appropriated to one's own limited view of it and one's own position is negotiated in relation to the wider world, these are an essential key to understanding not only conflicts in particular, but, more generally, how space, the design of space and social dynamics are interlinked. It is almost impossible to say if the city's design forms the cognitive maps or if the former is an outcome of the latter. However, it can be stated that design, in its material forms, is of central importance to the conflict. It is filled with meaning, transporting history, generating collective memories and marking spaces, which in themselves are parts of the performances of memory itself. The many and highly complicated divisions that have emerged throughout the past 40 years are clearly manifested in the city's design and its perceptions, uses and ongoing debates around them. Using cognitive mappings—that is, the ideas and perceptions of the socio-spatial conditions—in relation to the conflict, proves to be an effective tool to analyze both the immaterial ideas and ideologies, as well as the material manifestation of them. Design is never neutral or just there. It carries histories, memories and meaning, and enhances or limits social dynamics. With this understanding in mind, the anecdote of the student asking for his way on the Shankill Road not only becomes clearer, but enables us to see the wider implications of a seemingly harmless episode that resulted in assumedly wrong directions. The conflict in Northern Ireland offers itself to many kinds of analysis—design, urban technology and material culture as well as cognitive mappings offer a unique perspective to link space, social dynamics and the visible/invisible, material/immaterial effects of such conflict.

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Christian Ritter

## Migration Design: Research on Aesthetic and Social Practices in the Context of Transcultural Identity Formation

Aesthetic processes create worlds, organize social processes and contribute to the transfer of cultural practices, norms, values and narratives. In recent decades, social science research—from Bourdieu's social theory to the project of Cultural Studies—has therefore included the study of the social functions of everyday aesthetic processes. The world of everyday objects and signs has increasingly become a focus for cultural and social science investigations. In particular, the empirical research studies that follow the Subcultural Studies approach of the Birmingham School have placed design processes as cultural practices at the centre of their analyses. They are fundamentally based on an understanding of culture as a practice through which groups “give *expressive form* to their social and material life-experience”<sup>1</sup> and which makes it possible “to understand aspects of everyday life as an expression of culture.”<sup>2</sup> When John Clarke in his famous essay “Style” speaks of the discourse of fashion as a fundamental form of discourse to which the “subcultural *bricoleur*” must make reference,<sup>3</sup> he always also speaks of *aesthetic processes*, which—as design processes that create meaning—are involved in social processes. The perspective of Cultural Studies, which treats design processes as matters specific to a particular milieu and class, is undoubtedly particularly valuable with reference to the political dimensions of global and aesthetic processes. Against the background of global consumerism and the importance of the communication forms of Web 2.0, design processes are, however, increasingly constitutive of groups whose social relationships are increasingly organized in the overlap rather than between the frontlines of various lifestyles. For a research perspective that focuses on the present, it would therefore appear sensible to emphasize the aesthetic and media dimensions of design just as much as its social functions.

### DESIGN PROCESSES AS A SUBJECT MATTER FOR RESEARCH

Through design processes, objects and shapes are semantically (re-)configured and become visible as well as legible and comprehensible, according to the particular contexts of their reception. Belonging to an everyday system of orientation and



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contributing to a common horizon of meaning, design creates “visual agreement in the process of interaction between individual and collective human agents so that communication becomes possible”.<sup>4</sup> Boris Groys talks about the design of subject and self and the task of modern men and women to take “personal ethical-aesthetic responsibility” for the images they project into the external world.<sup>5</sup> Questions concerning the degree of intention or chance, originality or imitation, reproduction or creative autonomy that determine design processes are at this point of secondary importance to their social function.

As part of everyday communication and in the mutual interpenetration of their various aesthetic and social dimensions, as well as their political implications, design processes appear predestined to be objects of cultural research. Engaging with such a ‘new’ subject matter, however, also means reflecting on classical empirical approaches to ethnographic cultural studies and updating them, particularly with regards to the global production and distribution of images and to a subject matter of research that can be an image, a visual motif, a graphic, a style, an identity—and often several of these at the same time. On the basis of the research project “*Migration Design*” - *Codes, Identitäten, Integrationen* (2008-2010, <http://migration-design.zhdk.ch>), conducted by the Institute for Critical Theory at the Zurich University of the Arts and the Institute of Popular Culture Studies at the University of Zurich, I want to sketch the opportunities and problems of empirical research in the field of visual (design) culture.

With the increasing significance of social networking sites on the internet and the global media practices that revolve around them, the engagement with design takes on additional relevance. Aesthetic and media practices in the ‘in-between’ and ‘both-this-and-that’ of cultures and lifestyles are highly determined by the mutual interpenetration of various—and sometimes contradictory—references to the culture of the receiving country, the global pop and consumer culture, and their countries of origin. As figures 1 and 2 show, in addition to the global repertoire of identification options (Dolce&Gabbana, Playboy, Burberry) and symbols from ‘home’ (national flag, Serbian Orthodox cross), the codes of subculture and youth culture (styling, poses, gestures, etc.) also play an important role in processes of cultural inclusion and exclusion—particularly in the image-based communication of social networking sites such as Netlog.com.

In the same way that design processes are involved in the transfer of cultural narratives they are also co-responsible for (stereotypical) external attributions: wherever identities become visible and customary views are irritated, aesthetic qualities serve as argu-



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ments for distinction and exclusion. As a specific aspect of communication in the context of diaspora and youth cultural identity, design is often co-responsible for problematic social relationships—for example, between young people and adults, between ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’, etc.—which are often difficult to bridge by means of common references.

Against that background, the research project “*Migration Design*” considered aesthetic and media processes of self-representation and communication of youth subcultures and their significance for the construction of identities in a transcultural space. The project focused on young people from the countries and regions of the former Yugoslavia who are resident in Switzerland; on the one hand, because the group is heavily stereotyped and discussed as a social ‘problem’ on the other, because it lends itself particularly well to the observation of constellations of geographical, cultural and religious proximity and distance. A special focus concerned the visual performances in Web 2.0 social networking sites, particularly on the ‘Netlog’ and ‘meinbild’ platforms, which are popular among young people.<sup>6</sup> We were interested in observing how agents position themselves in their everyday contexts of migration, milieu and youth groups, how they reference and update their origins and traditions, and how they “develop their own meaning and autonomy within a new social and cultural environment”.<sup>7</sup> Our questions regarding the visual strategies (as design strategies) and media practices of agents always also revolve around the “innovative power of everyday practices”<sup>8</sup> posited by Cultural Studies and the *Eigensinn* that European ethnography regards as “passive or hidden resistance against hegemonic impositions”.<sup>9</sup>

### IMAGE DESIGN AS IDENTITY DESIGN

The fact that these young people are situated in a particular confluence of socio-economic conditions, educational opportunities and the subcultural resources developed in their peer groups becomes explicitly manifest in the related design processes and the repertoires of relevant codes and visual languages. Design functions here as a specific mode of self-representation in the context of transcultural identity formation: a variety of relevant lifestyle codes—from stylistic features (dress, hairstyle, makeup, etc.) to the staging of body and gender (poses, gestures, glances) to the approach to brands and branding—are combined and condensed in the “hybrid image-text amalgamations” and “audio-visual affect clusters” of social networking sites (figs 3, 4).<sup>10</sup>



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From a methodological and analytical perspective, we need to distinguish between the codes that are represented in the images (as motifs) and the design of the images (their style of production). At first, the distinction appears to be simple: the former is about what the images (self-portraits, collages, image-text-hybrids) represent. That includes not only dress, styling, accessories, poses and gestures, but also the props of the performance situation, cabinets and mirrors in the background, emblems and brand logos, posters and cuddly toys, the arrangement of artefacts and machines such as figures, trophies, computers, but also the representation of image-making devices (figs 3-6). A mere analysis of the images themselves cannot determine what is intended to be part of the performance and what has entered the picture by chance. Our interviews, however, indicate that the design of the image background—in addition to pose and styling—is an important aspect for evaluation and recognition by the peer group. Design processes thus involve not only the performance of the body, but also—as part of a more comprehensive projection of identity—the spatial settings of image production.

The boundaries to the second case—the way in which the image is designed—are fluid: the position of people and objects in the room has a decisive influence on the formal design of the image. Representing oneself in the ‘right’ image aesthetic also means handling the framing of the image, its background, lighting and use of flash, according to the recognized visual conventions of the peer group. It is also patently obvious how much the production technology of mobile phones and compact cameras co-determines the formal design of the images and inscribes itself into the identity projections of the agents. Certain technological configurations enable particular image forms, visual aesthetics and framings. When we talk about image design as an aspect of visual self-representation we therefore also need to talk about its technical construction, since technological dispositives are always also constitutive of identity and subjectivization processes.

The same holds true not only for the production, but also for the distribution technology of social networking sites, particularly for the approach to imaging software. Exemplary cases are collage images and image-text-hybrids, as well as the condensation of typographical, photographic and graphic elements from the horizon of youth culture, global pop and consumer culture and the young people’s cultures of origin. Portrait images, ornaments, digital effects, youth cultural codes, global brands and national-religious symbols combine into an eclecticism of styles and meanings. This demonstrates clearly that images represent design processes as much as they form part of a design process.



Images from the research project "Migration Design", ZHdK 2010. Found on:

01 <http://de.netlog.com>, 8 October 2009

02 <http://www.meinbild.ch>, 29 December 2006

03 <http://de.netlog.com>, 8 October 2009

04 <http://de.netlog.com>, 21 October 2009

05 <http://www.meinbild.ch>, 27 April 2009

06 <http://www.meinbild.ch>, 27 April 2009

07 <http://www.mypix.ch>, 30 May 2007

08 <http://www.mypix.ch>, 30 May 2007

The precision with which visual elements are composed is striking, and it shows that a large number of aesthetic and content decisions are made in the production of these images. It is not an easy task: on the one hand it involves the self-representation of the user, on the other hand the image design must be recognized in the evaluation processes of the peer group. Due to the copy/paste, sampling and re-contextualization strategies that underlie these images and because of the fundamental ambivalence of semiotic processes, it is hard to determine what is intended as design and what is owed to accidental copying and reusing.<sup>11</sup>

Since this question cannot be answered through visual analysis alone, it is important to consider the social context of the offline world as well. The user intention is not so much to make new contacts, but rather to "represent or articulate personal networks and relationships that already exist offline".<sup>12</sup> Social structures such as education, gender, class, etc. are reproduced online, and existing patterns of interaction and culture in the offline world are "transferred and reproduced, occasionally even strengthened, in the social space of online practice".<sup>13</sup> Common experiences of milieu, migration and youth groups, in particular, constitute the sources from which the criteria for the negotiation, evaluation and recognition of aesthetic practices on the internet emerge. The quality and intensity with which issues such as nationality, religion, sexuality and physicality, but also the imagination of a 'better life' (glamour culture), are negotiated in design processes also demonstrate how virtual space is used as a resource to deal with questions of belonging and future beyond the regulated regimes of school and parents.

#### DESIGN AND ETHNOGRAPHY: OPPORTUNITIES AND PROBLEMS OF A TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

In the research project "*Migration Design*" we investigated connections between aesthetic and social practices, which, in the past, were mostly observed separately according to the distinct special interests of the respective disciplines. Quite understandably so: design processes are a complex research matter, the investigation of which involves empirical and theoretical problems, of which I want to discuss three important ones.

First, the meanings of codes are fundamentally ambivalent and context-dependent. Umberto Eco's notion of interpretational variability indicates that the meaning of codes is always dependent on the context of their reception and the media

competence of their recipients.<sup>14</sup> The perspective of the research and the researchers themselves must take that into account. Particularly in the engagement with the often non-conformist semantic concepts of youth cultures and with regards to self-representation in the context of migration and visibility, one must be careful not to reduce aesthetic processes to the "dominant definition" of hegemonic identity politics.<sup>15</sup> This can be exemplified in the staging of national and religious symbols (fig. 7) and of the national flag (fig. 8), which, contrary to hegemonic readings, are less about emphasizing Serbian or Croatian identity, etc., but rather about the—often unconsidered and politically unintentional—negotiation of common experiences of migration, stigmatization and cultural hybridity.<sup>16</sup>

Second, the sensual-aesthetic material of media processes creates "a constant 'surplus' of meaning, and 'added value' of signification that was not at all the intention of the sign users and which is certainly not subject to their control".<sup>17</sup> According to Sybille Kraemer, it is because of their materiality as media that signs say more than is intended by their users. Empirical approaches to media processes are therefore always uncertain, imperfect or overdetermined.

Third, we are dealing with a primarily non-verbal subject matter, the production and reception of which for the most part take place outside forms of knowledge that can readily be verbalized—that is, through implicit knowledge and understanding in aesthetic action itself. In this context, implied knowledge refers to Polanyi's concept of the "tacit dimension", indicating "knowing more than we can say"<sup>18</sup>—as an expertise of representation, reception and evaluation that cannot be inferred through purely verbal approaches.

How, then, are we to deal with a subject matter whose effects are problematic, both in social processes and in the research perspective? The fact that some of its qualities—as a medium, in its sensual event character, as an agent in social processes—tend to make empirical research more difficult than easier was a challenge for us, and led us continuously to check and update our approaches. The methodologies used were primarily characterized by ethnographic approaches focused on the everyday world and by the inclusion of specifically visual methods. These two strands were connected by various links of ethnographic and visual practices—in the exploration, interpretation and in the transfer of knowledge. Many patterns gained clarity, although not always with the depth of precision that would be desirable from a research perspective. The project was never intended to provide comprehensive 'insight' into the subject matter, but rather an

approximation to issues that elude verbal grasp and that are—for precisely that reason—increasingly significant and problematic in everyday life as well as in academic discourse. Against that background, I finally wish to sketch the research strategies with which we worked in the project “*Migration Design*” and the ways in which we attempted to investigate and communicate the connections between the social, the aesthetic and the political, which are inherent in design:

- *Transdisciplinary organization* of the knowledge cultures involved in the research, i.e., academic research, artistic and visual research, empiricism and experiment as premises of research work focused on the present.
- *Methodological interrelatedness* between verbal and non-verbal, ethnographic, artistic and image analysis techniques of exploration and interpretation such as interviews, photographic experiments, ‘photo elicitation’, video-tracking, sampling, etc.
- *Polyphony* in the layering of various—at times contradictory—research perspectives, authorships, quotes, media formats, textual styles and image-text-combinations.
- *Own image productions* to interrogate the design as well as the contexts of production and reception: by young people (self-portraits, collages, PowerPoint slides), by the researchers (mood boards, samplings, visual essays) and through professional productions (artists as ‘embedded researchers’ in the field).
- *Equal status of various media* as a paradigm of visual research; verbal ‘approaches’ are not meant to anticipate the epistemic quality inherent in visual media: “Images or General Visualizations must take on functions as arguments—not just illustrations—in the discursive context” and thereby “expose specific forms of rationality”.<sup>19</sup>
- *Consideration of media-specific qualities*, their affects and technical dispositives within a research context and particularly in the context of knowledge transfer: changes of media are made transparent, irritations are admitted—for example, by taking into consideration varying image qualities and image formats from the net, from photo production, as screenshots, etc.

The options listed here are, of course, only intended as proposals, and they have demonstrated their validity primarily in the unique experiences with individual projects at the Institute for Critical Theory at the ZHdK.<sup>20</sup> The question whether and how a general strategy for the relationship between empirical research and design can be inferred from these experiences will need to be tested in each individual case and—I particularly wish to emphasize this point again—by following the contours of the given subject matter. There is no question, however, that we are faced with a challenge that is

as exciting as it is necessary: to treat research on and about design processes as an area in which aesthetic processes—whether in the form of images, objects, architectures, atmospheres, etc.—always need to be regarded as aspects of social, cultural and political processes, structures and formations.

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© Michael Blum, "Exodus 2048", mixed media installation, 2008-2009.

fig. 1 + fig. 2

Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2008. Photo Michael Blum

fig. 3

Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2008. Photo Michael Blum

fig. 4 + fig. 5

New Museum, New York, 2009. Photo Michael Blum

fig. 6

New Museum, New York, 2009. Photo Benoit Pailley

fig. 7

New Museum, New York, 2009. Photo Michael Blum

fig. 8

New Museum, New York, 2009. Photo Benoit Pailley

fig. 9

New Museum, New York, 2009. Photo Michael Blum



fig. 1



fig. 2





fig. 3



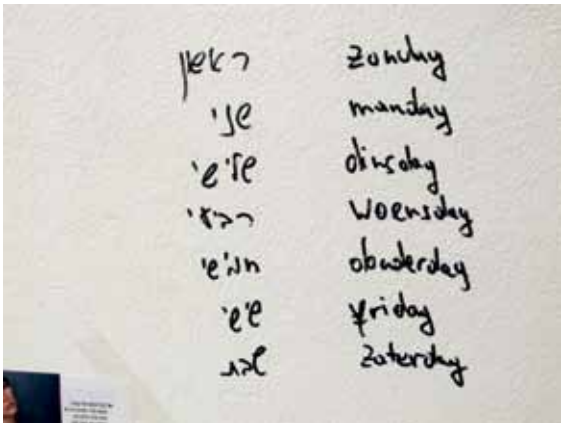


fig. 4

fig. 5



fig. 6



fig. 7





fig. 8

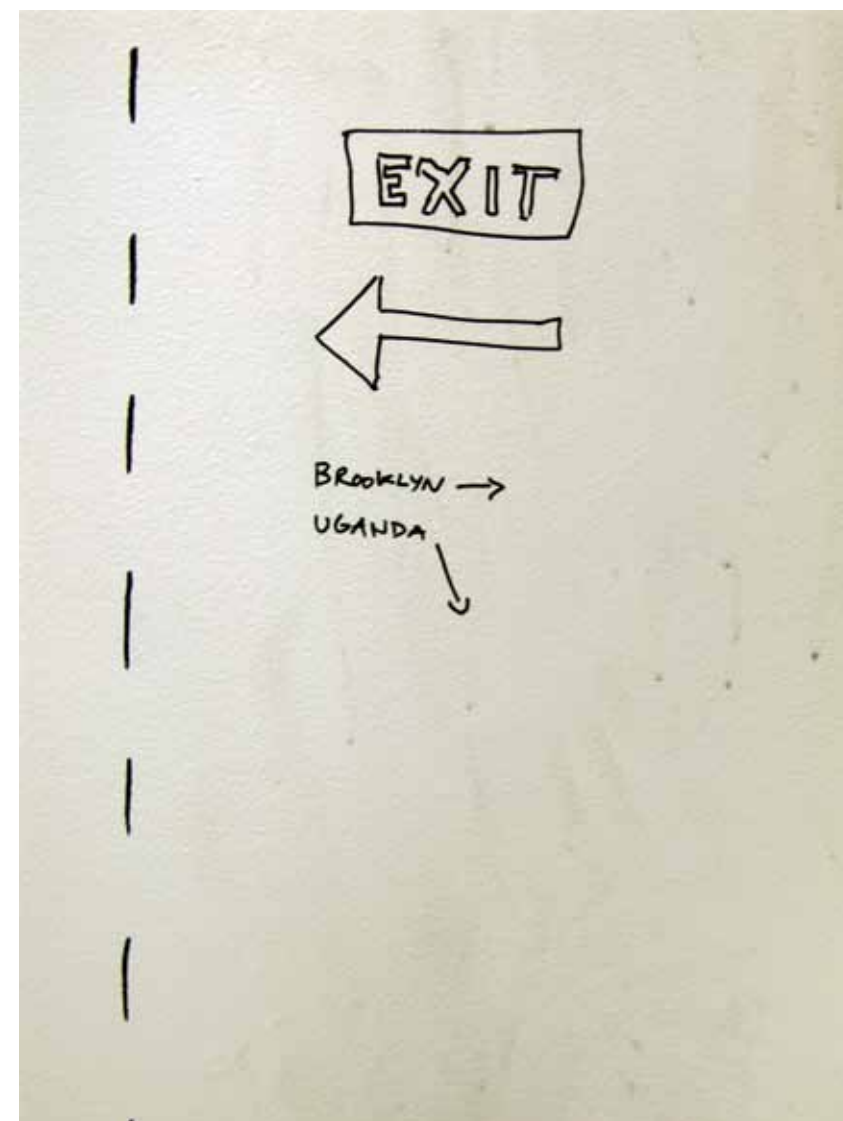


fig. 9

## Miri Stern interviewed by Lotte Müller in *Voice of the Buurt*, Rotterdam, 20 March 2068

*By the last days of 2048, most Israeli citizens had left their country in one of the most massive transfers of population in the twenty-first century. The relocation of the Israeli government in Brooklyn as well as the creation of the New State of Israel (Israel Hakhadasha) in Uganda are now well known. Miri Stern, a scientist and founder of the Eretz Hoven kibbutz, spoke to journalist Lotte Müller about the ordeal of the Exodus 2048 and her own experience on board.*

*Lotte Müller:* Twenty years after the events of December 2047, I would like to recall the chain of events. You are among the active witnesses of the time...

*Miri Stern:* That's true, these months now seem very close and far at the same time. In retrospect, it's hard to believe that I had to leave my country forever. We always take countries for granted, hence the shock when one ceases to exist.

*LM:* Can you tell me in which conditions you left Israel?

*MS:* The situation had been very explosive since September and the beginning of the Grand Jihad. In November came the takeover of the Sinai and the bombings of Haifa and Tel Aviv. But most Israelis were living as ever, oblivious to what was happening. A few weeks later came rumours, saying that Arabs were about to take over all of Israel. At one point, they took all of Jerusalem's neighbourhoods, went back to the Green Line, then moved on west. They were getting closer to Tel Aviv and we had to go, quickly. It was like a steamroller that couldn't be stopped. We didn't have much time to think about what we should do.

*LM:* What eventually convinced you to leave?

*MS:* Fear. The rumours were getting more persistent and we grew really scared. As informed and liberal as we were, there was a level of fear that could not be withstood. When you hear stories of Arabs taking over Jewish houses and entire neighbourhoods over and over again, you start believing in them, they gain currency.

*LM:* You followed a basic instinct for survival.

*MS:* In hindsight, I know that the whole country deserted upon a mere rumour. We had the news, but never saw actual fighting. It was ridiculous, yet very powerful. Nothing contaminates faster than fear. We were all scared, and the fear of one fed the fear of the other. The whole country sensed a danger and was frantically running away. Everyone was thinking that only the fastest ones would be able to leave... And I was no different, I admit it. I wanted to save my children above all. The rest I didn't think too much about. We all thought we'd be back shortly.

*LM:* When you read the accounts in the press of that time, it's hard to build an opinion, to understand what was really going on.

*MS:* As in any war, the media become a mere vector of propaganda. They use the situation for other purposes. They don't really report. It has always been the case, but in the last decade it became extremely sophisticated, with the help of technology. At the same time, war became more and more brutal and sophisticated.

*LM:* So you didn't witness fighting in Tel Aviv?

*MS:* No, I didn't. I know it sounds crazy today, that we left without fighting, just by hearsay. But it's how it happened. I could hear remote gunshots and fire exchange, but it was relatively light, and never too close to the city centre—we lived on Allenby at Rosenblum.

*LM:* And bombings?

*MS:* Aside of the Haifa bombing in September, we took Iranian threats very seriously. They had hundreds of missiles aimed at us and no one was protecting us anymore. Remember that the US had entirely given up any form of support after the Dubai treaty. But the fact is that Iran never launched the missiles and I was never sure, for a couple of years, whether they were bluffing or not.

*LM:* Do you remember the exact circumstances of your departure?

*MS:* It was 15 December I think, a Tuesday. This I remember because I had had a dentist appointment for a long time, it's one of these insignificant facts that enter your memory for no reason. The Friday before, I thought that I should cancel it. Finally, I decided to go but the office was closed and the building apparently empty. The area [Allenby at

Bialik], normally very lively, was even calmer than on Saturdays. It was surreal. That's what scared me. I called my children—David was 13 and Leah 15 at the time—and summoned them home. In school, the teachers were calling parents to come and collect their children, they didn't want to let them go on their own as usual. At this point, there was no more sense of normality. Everywhere you could see people loading cars. I didn't fully understand what was going on, events were sliding on the surface of my conscience. We packed just a bag each and left—I had always heard from my parents that life was more precious than commodities. We closed the door as if we'd return the day after. It's the last time I was there.

*LM:* What were your thoughts then?

*MS:* I can only remember that I was thinking of my dentist appointment, and that it was a shame I missed it.

*LM:* Didn't you think of fighting back instead of leaving?

*MS:* No one was fighting... Of course, there was a military solution and Israel had a good record in trying to solve political problems by force. But what was failing us was a moral drive. We had basically oppressed Arabs for a century, and there's no way you can negate that. The whole country was oblivious to the facts, but deep down, you knew that what you'd done, or what had been done in your name, was not in line with the moral standards you would have liked to live up to. From South Africa to Israel, a regime that has no moral legitimacy cannot last forever. We had fought the Arabs for a hundred years, but we knew that one day we'd have to account for the hardships inflicted upon them. So yes, we simply left, we all deserted ...

*LM:* Can you describe what happened after you left your house, how you managed to get out of the country?

*MS:* It was a huge mess, and I must have forgotten most details. I had heard that Lod had already fallen, so I thought that trying to reach the airport would be suicidal. I knew that the UN was negotiating a humanitarian corridor, but in Israel we had grown sceptical of UN initiatives. So instead, my children and I attempted to reach the harbour in Jaffa, which was walking distance from the apartment. We were a bit anxious because of the Arab population there, but there was nowhere a safe and ideal situation. Buses were not running and taxis were all stuffed with people and luggage, so walking was

best. On the way to Jaffa, we discovered that many others had had the same idea—the harbour was packed and in total chaos.

*LM:* And how was the situation in the city of Jaffa, outside the harbour?

*MS:* Very confusing. The news were very contradictory. For people with a double identity, and double to a point of total schizophrenia like in the case of most Israeli Arabs, it must have been a terrible moment—to choose one side at the expense of the other. Some of them were parading and chanting victory, but on our way to the harbour, we also saw many families preparing to leave, as anxious as everyone else.

*LM:* What happened once you had reached the harbour?

*MS:* It was packed with tens of thousands of people, unbelievable! The Jewish Agency and KKL were there with volunteers, trying to organize. People were attributed numbers and places on ships that were supposed to come. But there were few docks and the harbour was not equipped for docking large ships, which slowed down the whole evacuation process and led to a major balagan. Since nothing was happening, we tried to find an alternative. Leah talked to people who were in touch with a fisherman. We ended up paying GBL\$4,000 per person and embarked on a fishing ship, bound to Cyprus. The trip was horrendous, I really thought we would die at sea. The weather was bad and the boat loaded way beyond its maximum capacity. But we landed the next day, exhausted but alive.

*LM:* Why Cyprus?

*MS:* I suppose it was the only destination possible with a small ship. Egypt, Lebanon, Syria were ruled out, and friendly countries were too far. Cyprus had always been special for Israelis—as the closest part of the 'Free World', as they used to say—and then turned into the major hub for Israeli refugees.

*LM:* Did you then embark on the Exodus 2048 right away?

*MS:* Not right away, but it didn't take too long. The UNHCR and a variety of NGOs were there, trying to organize chaos, apparently more efficiently than the Jewish Agency and KKL in Jaffa. In Larnaca, the dramatic balagan of Jaffa turned into a refugee machine. It was a huge camp organized like a little army—and guarded like a prison. And refu-

gees were pouring in continuously, night and day. I've read that 80 per cent of Israel's population transited in Larnaca within a couple of weeks. Apparently there had been a deal made with Cyprus that no refugee would exit the harbour area. Most of the refugees quickly embarked on cargos, ferries and requisitioned cruise ships headed towards Libya, where a humanitarian corridor to Uganda had been negotiated.

*LM:* Did you know at the time that Israel Hakhadasha had been inaugurated in Uganda, after Herzl's plan of 1903?

*MS:* That was the main discussion topic among refugees and there were very heated debates!

*LM:* What was your position on that?

*MS:* You can't just relocate like that, establishing a state is more complex than writing the myth of its creation. And the official government, at this time, had just relocated to Brooklyn, so there was a real confusion about authority and legitimacy. I personally believe that the split between Uganda and Brooklyn was the very end of Israel, not the Palestinian takeover. You cannot physically save a country which has already vanished in its essence. And everyone was responsible for that—the Ashkenazim with their class racism and the Mizrahi themselves, who were happy to be rid of the Ashkenazim. It's the old story, you know...

*LM:* In spite of that, have you been tempted by Uganda?

*MS:* I have, but I thought that Europe would offer my children a better future. There was nothing in Uganda. The Jewish Agency purchased the land in part with government funds, but everything had to be done from scratch. I felt I was too old for a new utopia, I needed safety more than the prospect of a new society I didn't really believe in. Since I and my children also had an EU passport, there was no visa issue—at least we thought so.

*LM:* That's why you were allowed to board the Exodus 2048, which was reserved for dual EU-Israeli citizens and visa holders?

*MS:* I suppose. What we didn't know, though, was that EU authorities would consider us Israeli citizens only and deny us any of the rights of EU citizens!

*LM:* On which grounds? This must have been illegal.

*MS:* It was illegal indeed. But the EU and local governments quickly tailored laws that legalized our treatment.

*LM:* Was the Exodus 2048 initially bound to an EU city?

*MS:* Yes, to Bari. But we didn't even approach the harbour. Police speedboats were surrounding us and preventing the ship to reach the dock. We were forced to drop anchor at good distance from the shore. The morale started to decline. The next day, we saw demonstrators chanting "Italians in Italia, Jews in Uganda" on TV. We realized we were pariahs, no one wanted to see us, have us. It's that evening that I had a long argument with Leah. She was very upset at inheriting our mess, and she basically blamed the entire situation on my generation. We had been incapable of remembering our ideals and had, with the previous generations, produced a great country which had gone badly astray. That was her point, and she was not entirely wrong...

*LM:* Maybe these arguments simply revealed the level of tension...? For how long were you stuck in Bari?

*MS:* It seemed very long, maybe two weeks? There were negotiations going on, but no good negotiator who could impose a compromise was present. Every party was, as ever, protecting one's own selfish interests with no understanding or compassion whatsoever.

*LM:* How was life on board?

*MS:* The ship was decent when we embarked in Larnaca—it originally was a cruise ship. But it loaded 4,500 people for an allowance of 1,400. So hygiene and living conditions deteriorated quickly. Food was sparse and of declining quality, water got contaminated, there were not enough toilets... We were in a cabin for six, with six other people in the beginning, and then more and more came. Life in the cabin itself was hellish, but outside it was even worse. People were lying across the corridors everywhere, it was difficult to move to or from the cabin, the smell was horrendous... Leah was very combative and optimistic, she was probably the strongest of us three. But David went into depression, he would just lie anywhere and do nothing. That really worried me. Everyone hoped to disembark quickly, because we all knew that the situation would only get worse, but we couldn't do much about it.



*LM:* So you weren't allowed to disembark in Bari, right?

*MS:* Right, neither in Bari nor elsewhere. No country was willing to make an effort. European leaders and public opinion thought that we had somehow deserved our fate, that we had planted the seed, the product of which we were now harvesting. We could sense a great deal of schadenfreude. Then there was a final round of negotiations and France accepted that the ship would dock in Marseilles.

*LM:* How was the news received on board?

*MS:* The main thing was to dock, where was secondary. I think the French government did that to lift the first round of negotiations, but had no intention of letting us in. So when we arrived in Marseilles it was the same old song again. This time we docked, but we were not allowed to disembark. The French government had passed a law while we were en route preventing any people carrying diseases to enter the country. Only a few people in poor health and with good connections were taken to hospitals, in spite of the new law. As for the dead, they were kept in the ship's freezers.

*LM:* But everyone knew that the sanitary situation would only get worse...

*MS:* Absolutely. But that's how people in charge think: they want to get rid of the problem at the expense of a weaker partner. It doesn't matter if it gets worse, as long as someone else ends up taking care of it. But to us, it was devastating. Living conditions were deteriorating every day; it was now a matter of survival. In Marseilles, there were already breakouts of scurvy and tuberculosis. The toilets were in such a state that we couldn't use them anymore. And most of us were very depressed.

*LM:* What happened next?

*MS:* We were rerouted towards Valletta, Malta. But when we reached Malta, the ship went back right away. Malta was threatening to sue the EU if the ship approached their coast. That's what all EU countries wanted to do, but it was not acceptable to say it bluntly. So we came back to Marseilles, as if we hadn't left.

*LM:* Is it when the uprising took place?

*MS:* Yes, it was. Refugees had elected a board to represent them, and the board decided that we should seize the ship, which we did, quite easily. The crewmembers were upset with the situation and somehow happy to be forced to disembark.

*LM:* Was it the board who took the decision to head to Kingston-upon-Hull?

*MS:* The board put the question to the vote and won with an overwhelming majority. There was a rumour on board that only the UK could take us, that they had a better record with immigration—which was a hoax! I remember the Exodus leaving Marseilles escorted by hundreds of police speedboats. They left only once we had reached international waters. But in Hull, guess what: the same thing happened again. We were used to it at this point. We were pariahs everywhere, carrying diseases and little hope. But, at the same time, we were also becoming a source for EU embarrassment; they needed to solve the issue and have us disappear from the headlines. We had been on the Exodus 2048 for almost three months...

*LM:* Is it why the Istanbul meeting was called?

*MS:* The Turkish government took the measure of the disaster, both morally and politically, and decided to call an extraordinary meeting of EU's crime and immigration ministers. In her opening speech, Gülsün Dink, Turkey's Prime Minister, said that no one would leave the premises before an agreement was reached. A motion was later put to vote, which forced the Netherlands to let the ship dock and take care of the refugees.

*LM:* Why the Netherlands?

*MS:* Apparently because they had the biggest debt in the EU budget, and other countries were annoyed with their constant vetoes on many issues. In addition, it was close to Hull and Rotterdam was equipped with quarantine piers and quarters.

*LM:* So you docked in Rotterdam.

*MS:* Yes, and in the beginning, the same thing happened. This time, we would be allowed to disembark, but only after a quarantine period. There were obviously very heated debates within Dutch society and parliament, and a group of opposition representatives managed to freeze the Istanbul process. But we were at our wits' end and had to take a ground-breaking initiative to force our entry into the country. That's when most of us went on hunger strike. The general feeling on board was that we had to pressure the EU with guilt, our only weapon... After three weeks or so, the Queen decided to end the nightmare and treat us like they used to treat refugees in the

twentieth century. We called off the hunger strike then, and that was the end of almost four months on board the Exodus 2048. It was an odd impression to walk on firm ground again.

*LM:* What were your thoughts then? Did you see it as a victory?

*MS:* We were all too wrecked to think of a victory, it was rather a relief. Also because upon disembarking, we were in the care of a medical team. After a week, we started feeling much better, even though I had no idea what would happen to us in a world that had no place for us. Yet the exhausting journey was over, and we were very happy. Hope was possible again.

*The interview was conducted in English and published in a Dutch translation. Above is an excerpt of the original transcript. Miri Stern was born in Tel Aviv in 2007. After studies at Haifa University and Oxford, UK, she devoted her time to research and teaching, both in Israel and abroad. She was the founder of the Department of Particle Physics of Tel Aviv University and the author of numerous articles. Since the collapse of the State of Israel, Stern has been associated with institutions both in Europe and North America. She was also one of the founders of the Eretz Hoven kibbutz, the first kibbutz on European soil. She lives in Eindhoven and New York. Lotte Müller is a writer and journalist. She recently published Rise And Fall Of The Jewish Utopia: A Critical Reader, Macmillan, New York-Shanghai, 2067.*

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Yana Milev

## Cluster IX: Designing Technologies

While Book 2 introduces the cornerstones of an expanded concept of design and Book 3 presents the four branches of a Design Anthropology that are based on this expanded concept of design, Book 4 is devoted to the various manufacturing programmes that, from a design-anthropological perspective, are understood to be complex anthropo-technical programmes of ‘designing’. The titles of Clusters IX and X indicate—in contrast to the previous cluster titles—that design is the situational result of shaping processes that are constantly at work (*Prozessgestalt*). As in Book 1, reference is made to an infinite list. In *Designing Technologies* and *Designing the In/Visible*, examples are introduced that belong to the (auto)poietic processes of ‘designing’, such as ‘programming’, ‘recognizing’, ‘deconstructing’, ‘masking’, ‘communicating’, ‘spacing’, etc.

In *Designing Technologies*, engineering and IT-specific fields of knowledge are less at issue; instead, the focus is on complex design and self-design programmes that are here termed “Programming Intelligence”, “Artificial Intelligence” and “Deconstructing Intelligence”. In this case, wars, machine control and technological accidents are the precursors to film, robotics and computer games. In the meantime, science has been interested in the complex shaping of artificial worlds created with the help of motion capture and performance capture in 3D animations. Films such as *Avatar* are just as relevant as animations of life on Mars in the future. Information, data and computer programs create intelligent representations that serve humans either as an interface, plug-in or hybrid, and thus have a strong relationship with semioses, mythologies and the production of meaning, with an expanded concept of design.

Technologies are, in relation to social conditions, *technologies of governance*. In terms of engineering, the theory of *technological accidents* is central. Technologies of governance and technological accidents are causally related. In this context, the politics of design is a technology of governance and ‘wars’ are media-technological transmissions of military-technological revolutions (RMA/Revolution in Military Affairs)—revolutionary designs—whose objective is a technological accident. The concept of technology cannot be considered beyond the synthesis of cultural achievements and an expanded concept of design, and it is thus only interesting as a solitary

theorem within ontological contexts. Therefore, Block A lies within the gaze of the philosophy of technology. The Austrian artist, media theorist and curator Peter Weibel writes about the auto-poietic redesign process of cultures. His thesis indicates that this takes place in overwriting programs when, for example, superimposition and obliteration are one and the same act. His statements are also a reference to the great German philosopher of technology Friedrich Kittler († 2011).

In *War and Cinema*, Paul Virilio had already created a philosophy of technology in relation to media wars. The field of fire has turned into a location for a shoot; the battlefield has become a film set that is closed—for the time being—to civilians.

The contributions presented in Block B investigate artificial intelligence: an endless pool from which embodiment, interaction and game design is created. The American economist Roger Frantz, professor at the University of San Diego, wrote a contribution on the American social scientist Herbert A. Simon. This contribution is remarkable, as all design scientists in the German-speaking region make reference to Simon’s book *Sciences of the Artificial* when developing their theories. The Danish design theorist Joachim Halse introduces a contribution to Design Anthropology from the standpoint of design science. The French anthropologist and sociologist Sophie Houdart’s contribution introduces human/inhuman (design) constellations that make reference to plug-in theory and Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory while offering new perspectives for the human sciences.

The visual essay by Peter Welz introduces a project he developed with the choreographer and dancer William Forsythe in 2004. In “whenever on on on nohow on” he designed a poetic version of motion tracking and cyber embodiment.

In Block C, de-design models are introduced that presume a so-called ‘deconstructing intelligence’. This block deals with various examples of the deconstruction of war technologies. The American political scientist Bruce Larkin takes the de-design project head on. In “Denuclearization Design” he shapes a programme that gains particular importance after the Fukushima catastrophes. His colleague, the German political scientist Wolfgang Fach, describes “Worlds After” from a viewpoint of political philosophy. The question remains whether a ‘government of freedom’ can even exist after a war, since war (technology) and liberalism (markets) are closely tied together, although in an unrecognizable design.

The art collective Knowbotic Research renews the project “be prepared! tiger stealth” in their visual essay, a work that deals explicitly with war technology. Matthew Fuller, a theorist at Goldsmith College, has written an article on the subject that precisely describes the design aspects of the project at the interface of aesthetics, society and technology.

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**A: Programming Intelligence: Technikphilosophie**

*Peter Weibel*

*Paul Virilio*

**B: Artificial Intelligence: Embodiment and Interaction**

*Roger Frantz*

*Joachim Halse*

*Sophie Houdart*

*Peter Welz (VE)*

*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

**C: Deconstructing Intelligence: De-Design (War)Technologies**

*Bruce Larkin*

*Wolfgang Fach*

*Knowbotic Research (VE)*

*(commentary: Matthew Fuller)*

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Peter Weibel

## The World as a Rewriting Program: On the Progress of Culture through Transcription

In 1919 Paul Valéry wrote in *The Crisis of the Mind*, “We later civilizations... we too now know that we are mortal”. A tremendous sentence, for it points to the fact that not only people and animals, dinosaurs and plants die and become extinct, but that even the bastions of immortality—cultures, nations, buildings, languages, sciences, which were created by mortals in order to attain immortality—disappear, die and become extinct. What does it mean that the deaths of empires, nations and civilizations have recently spurred the imagination of the authors and readers of books such as Jared Diamond’s *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed* (2005) through to Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* (1996)? Are these books and their findings cause for concern, or is it only the books that worry us? Does climate change not only mean the ‘End of History’, to reference the title of Francis Fukuyama’s book from 1992, but also the end of the world and humanity? Do Hollywood disaster films conjure up or even seal the fate of humankind’s traumatic future, which extraterrestrial intelligence will in retrospect describe as the age of stupidity, as in the film of the same name<sup>1</sup> about the end of the world, because there was clearly not enough terrestrial intelligence to save the earth?

The transformations of today’s global world are frequently seen from the perspective of a conflict or a confluence.<sup>2</sup> However, the question is whether these terms correctly reflect the fundamental changes of the present. What new forms does this change take? How have the concepts and practices changed?

In order to answer this, I will consider the term ‘world’ as an equation with several variables. Within formal logic, the expression ‘variable’ refers to a ‘linguistic sign for which any expression of a particular type can be employed’. Variables are placeholders for the elements of a particular primary field (language, religion, forms of government, etc.). In contrast to logical constants, variables ‘do not have any independent meaning’ and are ‘meaningless signs which only serve to indicate the positions where the meaningful constants are to be employed’. The expressions that are employed for certain variables are also called the values of these variables, factors (‘values’) that occur during a calculation process.

What characterizes the term *rewriting program*, which has its origin in computer technology, is that it only functions when the parameters are variables. Parameters are variable in form, that is, they are variables which appear together with other variables, but which are of a different quality. One says that a parameter is arbitrary but fixed. In distinction to constants, parameters are fixed for the particular case under consideration, but can be varied in the next case.

It is my thesis that socially relevant terms such as politics are mere parameters, not constants. For the political landscape is changing continually, as a form of evolution, a rewriting program. These parameters only apply for the case and time period under consideration. They are variables in an equation that can take on different values. Think of a map as it would have looked around 1900. You read the names of powerful monarchist empires, principalities and kingdoms. At the edge of this map there was a white spot called America. Twenty years later the great empires no longer existed and America had risen to become a world empire. A hundred years later we also divine the contours of a new cartography. We see the names of powerful countries, nations and cultures, and at the edge new names appear which we are hardly able to pronounce, and once spoken are hardly able to repeat. Today we are experiencing a *rewriting* of power, technologies, economies, populations, religions and cultures. We are experiencing a *remapping*, which is neither to be understood solely on the basis of an analysis of economic hegemonies and transnational concerns, nor by tracing the lines and trajectories of multiculturalism.

In Europe, for example, there are the following instances of such a cultural rewriting. In his four-volume work *Observations sur l’histoire de France* (1765), Gabriel Bonnot de Mably—a famous philosopher and historian, brother of the positivist Étienne Bonnot de Condillac—expressed his astonishment that the Gauls (more familiar to today’s readers from Goscinny and Uderzo’s Asterix and Obelix comics than from Julius Caesar’s *De Bello Gallico*) call their country the Frankish Kingdom, *La France*. This, although the Franks were only the foreign aristocracy that ruled for several centuries before disappearing completely. In principle, France should be called the Gallic Kingdom, *Galland* or *La Galle*, but not La France or the Frankish Kingdom. The USA is not called the United States of England or Spain or Indians, after its original inhabitants or rulers. Here a minority has overwritten the majority, overruled them. Only France’s most famous cigarette, Gauloises, still bears witness to the Gallic Kingdom. It is for this reason that Asterix and Obelix along with Gauloises are so popular—compensation for offended and humiliated national pride.

Conversely, in 1492 the Spanish drove the Moors, Muslims and Arabs out of their kingdom. However, their most familiar phrase, the one with which Spain is immediately associated, namely 'Olé', is a modification of 'Allah', the God of the Arabs. Here the losers have effectively overwritten the victors, overruled them. In the same way, the architecture of the annihilated and massacred Indians in New Mexico—clay adobe buildings—became the preferred architectural form of the victors and rulers, particularly the rich. Here, too, the losers have superimposed themselves on the victors.

We owe to Esteban Buch's book *Beethoven's Ninth* (2003) the insight that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Schiller's "Ode to Joy" has been rewritten ideologically by various regimes, nations and epochs. Premiered in 1824, the Ninth Symphony has been appropriated by French republicans, English freemasons, German National Socialists and even the apartheid regime of Rhodesia. Time and again, Beethoven's Ninth has undergone a radical ideological rewriting, from Rhodesia's national anthem to the wordless "Anthem of Europe" from 1972.

The famous myth of *l'amour fou* (the mad love, the passionate love that leads to death)—as, for instance, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan and Iseult*—has found its way through European languages and cultures, from *Layla and Majnun* in seventh-century Arabia down to *Le Fou d'Elsa* (1963) by Louis Aragon.

The word 'marzipan' has its origin in a silver coin of the Byzantine Empire from around 1000 AD that shows Jesus Christ sitting on a throne, in Arabic 'mawthaban' (seated king). In Venice around 200 years later the doge Enrico Dandolo minted a silver coin corresponding to the Byzantine currency, which was therefore called 'matapan'. Soon the institution that produced the coins was also called 'matapan'. As a result, the small wooden boxes on which the sign of the coin was imprinted, its customs stamp, were also called 'matapan'. In sixteenth-century France, these small boxes, which were now used to store sweets, were also called 'matapan'. Slowly, as a result of phonetic drift, 'matapan' became the word 'marzipan', from the Italian 'marzapane', and since then denotes the contents of the boxes themselves, sweets—a linguistic process known as metonymy. So it was that over the course of many centuries the Arabic name for a silver coin became the German and English name for a sweet made from sugar and almonds.

I have made a film that shows the changes within the territory of Europe: at one point certain countries are small, at others they are large. It changes constantly, and if one

assigns the countries, nations and peoples a colour, then it becomes a constantly changing patchwork of colour. At one point France is large, then it is small again, then Germany is large. Everyone believes that this has now stopped. This is not the case, it will continue into the future. It means that the political landscape will change constantly.

Mediation, transference, translation are central concepts for world culture. These transferences, *rewritings*, transformations and transcriptions serve to enrich all cultures. To be engaged in cultural activity means to transpose, continually transferring the activity from one technical medium to the next, which also brings change with it. We delete something, consider something else important, add a chapter here and there. In postmodern films—for example those of Tarantino—old films are simply taken and rewritten. We must ensure that what has until now related to the *rewriting* of the content is also carried out on the technical plane; and during the technical transposition or rewriting the content is also rewritten. This is the only way to keep culture alive.

The problem, however, lies in the fact that a false explanatory model is employed for this form of evolution, namely the Darwinian (more precisely, today's interpretation of Darwin as random mutation and hard selection). In contrast, evolution as a rewriting program is to be understood as a process, as the innovation of progress. And it is not the case here that everything is governed by chance and selection. It can be proved mathematically that this model is not sufficient to explain the acceleration of progress—this acceleration is simply too fast. If nature simply consisted of random mutations and selection, then the progress of the universe would not be so fast. Today there is a general consensus, even amongst physicists, that nature must be considered a teleological system after all. There still is a purposiveness, which is why evolution proceeds so quickly. However, my answer here is a completely different one: namely the graph theory. If one observes a leaf, then one can see that it forms branches at a certain point that have the task of storing as much water as possible, thus enabling many further branches to be produced. Effectively, the bearing surface is extended in size. Nature produces this using a grammar, so to speak; that is, a language that it follows, i.e. generates. This means that the purpose is inscribed in the mathematics. It is the graph itself that does this. The famous coral—which is the symbol of life for Darwin, rather than the tree, as many people assume—is actually a mathematical graph, only Darwin did not know this. In principle, graph theory means nothing more than optimization by means of mathematical models. In a manner of speaking it is consolidation. Matter has mathematics, a structure, within it.

In respect of art, one can say that it has existed since there have been people, emerging simultaneously with the emergence of language, even before societies came into being. Art exists as graph and inscription, as objectification. There is an additional principal witness to rewriting, namely the Bible itself: “In the beginning was the Word”. This can be a sign or the spoken word. However, it would be better to say, “In the beginning was the script”. Normally, speech comes before the written word. But culture per se begins with script, as it is here—and this is the decisive point—where one finds a set of technical rules. The spoken word is fleeting. We know the famous books about memory theatre, but culture begins with the written word itself. That is why one has to correct the Bible slightly. However, in principle, with its dictum “In the beginning was the Word”, the Bible is referring to the same thing: culture. This is especially clear today as a result of the banking crisis. The banks and the financial world have presented themselves as the masters of the universe, and politics acquiesced, maintaining that art does not play a role, science does not play a role, only the economy is important. However, it is precisely the economy and the financial world that have brought society, and with it the whole world, to the edge of disaster. Despite everything, culture and science continue to flourish. Man begins to exist, so to speak, in the instant when he is capable of working with these cultural tools.

*Translated from the German by Colin Shepherd*

1. Armstrong, Franny, *The Age of Stupid*, London: Spanner Films, 2009.
2. Trojanow, Ilja and Ranjit Hoskote, *Kampfabsage: Kulturen bekämpfen sich nicht—sie fließen zusammen*, Munich: Blessing, 2007.

Paul Virilio

## Cinema Isn't I See, It's I Fly\*

It was in 1861, whilst travelling on a paddle steamer and watching its wheel, that the future Colonel Gatling hit upon the idea of a cylindrical, crank-driven machine-gun. In 1874 the Frenchman Jules Janssen took inspiration from the multi-chambered Colt (patented in 1832) to invent an astronomical revolving unit that could take a series of photographs. On the basis of this idea, Etienne-Jules Marey then perfected his chronophotographic rifle, which allowed its user to aim at and photograph an object moving through space.

It was partly thanks to information provided by *L'Entreprenant*, the first battlefield observation balloon, that General Jourdan won the victory of Fleurus in 1794. In 1858 Nadar took his first pictures from a balloon. During the American Civil War, the Union forces equipped balloons with an aerial-mapping telegraph. Soon the army was rigging together the most varied combinations: camera-kites, camera-pigeons and camera-balloons predated the intensive use of chronophotography and cinematography on board small reconnaissance aircraft (several million prints were made during the First World War). By 1967 the US Air Force had the whole of Southeast Asia covered, and pilotless aircraft would fly over Laos and send their data back to IBM centres in Thailand or South Vietnam. *Direct vision was now a thing of the past*: in the space of 150 years, the target area had become a cinema 'location', the battlefield a film set out of bounds to civilians.

During the First World War, D.W. Griffith was the only American filmmaker authorized to go to the front to shoot propaganda footage for the Allies. Son of a Civil War veteran, Griffith had previously worked in the theatre and, in the summer of 1914, had filmed the great battle scenes of *Birth of a Nation* just as Europe was plunging into a real war. In this film, the battlefield appears in a long-distance shot taken from a hilltop, the director being in the position of Pierre Bezukhov, the hero of King Vidor and Mario Soldati's *War and Peace* (1955), as he contemplates the fighting at Borodino with all the risks of direct vision. In fact Griffith filmed 'his war' less as an epic painter than in the style of those stage-managers who meticulously note down the slightest movement to be performed in the theatre. Karl Brown has related: "Every gun emplacement was known. Every motion of every section of the crowd. I say section, because each section was

put under a sub-director—one of Griffith's *many* assistants—Victor Fleming, Joseph Henabery, Donald Crisp".<sup>1</sup> All the action was organized not by megaphone (since nothing would have been heard above the explosions and blank rifle-fire) but through variously coloured pennants relaying a kind of naval semaphore. "Take away the crowd scenes", writes Kevin Brownlow,

*and any of today's home movie enthusiasts could duplicate the conditions under which Birth of a Nation was made. Infinitely more labour saving devices are at his fingertips than were available to Griffith and his cameraman Billy Bitzer. They used no lights—Bitzer employed mirrors to bounce the sun around. There were no exposure meters or zoom lenses or lightweight cameras. Just a heavy wooden Pathé, sturdy and well designed, cranked by hand. Yet photographically it was outstanding, and the direction was often inspired.*<sup>2</sup>

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Billy Bitzer had made what were known as 'motion demonstrations'—short music-hall films inspired by the Lumière brothers—and had then been sent to Cuba on behalf of the American Mutoscope Company at the height of the Spanish-American War. But although, as early as 1898, the ingenious Bitzer had strapped his Mutograph camera to the buffers of a locomotive travelling at full speed, the cinema he made with Griffith still belonged to the world of the Lumières' *Salon Indien*, where, in 1895, they first showed their *L'Arrivée du train en gare de la Ciotat*. In other words, he looked from a stationary outside at objects moving before him: the camera reproduced the circumstances of ordinary vision, as a homogeneous witness of the action. Although his images have an inbuilt time-lag, their power lies in the illusion of proximity they give to the spectator within a coherent temporal unity.

It is well known that many filmmakers, in order to avoid as much cutting as possible at the editing stage, used to rehearse the whole film from beginning to end, timing each scene so that the total length would be approximately known in advance. This method of shooting, quite common in Germany in the 1920s, influenced directors like Carl Dreyer, who would strive to create an *artificial* unity of time by means of a *real* unity of place, thereby illustrating Walter Benjamin's observation about a kind of cinema which was able to "present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times".<sup>3</sup> This "at all times" of architecture dominated early twentieth-century cinema, particularly in Europe. Cinema light is not opposed to the opacity of architectural matter (of the camera obscura); it is only, like electricity, an unexpected technical measure of its duration, a *new daylight*. And architecture resists the nihilism



of the shooting camera as the ramparts of a fortress, 500 years earlier, resisted the fitful flickerings of artillery before they were destroyed by the shattering development of its projective power.

At the end of the last century, Oskar Messter, not having a camera, used the room in which he lived as a camera obscura by blacking it out and leaving only a tiny hole at the street side. He then used his projector as a mechanical device to draw across the unexposed film. Messter came before the *Kammerspiel* theorists like Lupu Pick, who believed that the “unbearable pressure of time and place” could replace the psychology of actors. In 1925 Dreyer shot *Master of the House* in the smallest possible space, a two-room abode scrupulously reconstituted as a cinema studio. Two years later, he made *Joan of Arc* on a single set—a truly compact piece of architecture at the city limits of Paris—and his chronological sequence of shooting coincided with that of the actual trial. One thinks also of Edison's famous tar-paper hut, the ‘Black Maria’—another camera obscura—which served as both studio and projection room, capable of revolving on its pivot base so that its opening roof would trap the maximum amount of sunlight.

Chronological development gradually did away with the *longueurs* of the old photographic pose; the architecture of the set, with its spatial mass and partitions, supplanted free montage and created a new narrative ellipsis. Rather like my granddaughter, who, when she moved from one room of her flat to another, used to think that a different sun was shining into each one, so the cinema marked the advent of an independent and still unknown cycle of light. And if it was so hard for the photograph to move, this was above all because the operation of moving cinematic time—of perceiving its original speed in an old, static and rigidly ordered environment—was as astonishing for those early pioneers as it was difficult to invent.<sup>4</sup>

When the engineer Joseph Cugnot invented self-propulsive haulage in the eighteenth century, his main way of demonstrating it was to launch his army trolley against a wall with destructive impact. Curiously enough, a century later the Lumière brothers demonstrated *cinematic self-propulsion* by projecting a film called *Demolition of a Wall*. In the first part the wall collapsed in a cloud of dust; then the scene was projected in reverse, and the reconstitution of the wall introduced trick photography to the world of the cinema. Méliès also liked to perform this ritual of accidental destruction: in *Voyage à travers l'impossible*, for instance, which was made in 1904, the ‘automaboulof’ belonging to experts from the Institute of Incoherent Geography resumes the work of Cugnot's trolley by smashing down the wall of an inn. The next shot, inside the inn, shows the

customers dining peacefully before the event—as if the wall had nevertheless absorbed cinematic time. In the years to come, directors would not hesitate to move from one setting to another, making their actors glide through walls. Doors would open in houses without a facade, so that the cross-sectioned partitions between rooms appeared as thin as the chinks between frames on the film.

In this way, film directors showed that they paid little attention to shifts in cinematic time, to the fact that even in a confined architectural space the whole problem is one of speed. For a camera motor works by holding back its potential energies, much as those schoolchildren of Pagnol's avoided playing in their tiny recreation ground so that it would appear larger to them.

Towards the end of the First World War, when Griffith arrived at the French front to make his propaganda film, the last romantic battle had long since taken place, in 1914 on the Marne. The war had become a static conflict in which the main action was for millions of men to hold fast to their piece of land, camouflaging themselves for months on end (years in cases like Verdun) amid a fearful proliferation of cemeteries and charnel-houses. With his experience of filming old-style battles, Griffith suddenly found himself out of his depth in events that depended on the breathtaking advance of new and unfamiliar technologies and placed greater emphasis on the means than on the ends.

To the naked eye, the vast new battlefield seemed to be composed of nothing—no more trees or vegetation, no more water or even earth, no hand-to-hand encounters, no visible trace of the unity of homicide and suicide. Between the German and Allied trenches, separated by a mere 60 or 80 metres, the famous slogan ‘they shall not pass’ took on a new meaning, as literally noone passed across the field of vision. Numerous veterans from the 1914-1918 war have said to me that although they killed enemy soldiers, at least they did not see whom they were killing, since others had now taken responsibility for seeing in their stead. What was this abstract zone that Apollinaire accurately described as the site of a blind, non-directional desire? The soldiers themselves could identify it only by the flight-paths of their bullets and shells (*‘Mon désir est là sur quoi je tire’*)<sup>5</sup>, a kind of telescopic tensing towards an imagined encounter, a ‘shaping’ of the partner-cum-adversary before his probable fragmentation.

As sight lost its direct quality and reeled out of phase, the soldier had the feeling of being not so much destroyed as derealized or dematerialized, any sensory point of

reference suddenly vanishing in a surfeit of optical targets. Being constantly in the enemy's sights, he came to resemble Pirandello's cinema actors, in exile both from the stage and from themselves, who had to make do with acting in front of a little machine that then acted with their shadows for the audience:

*They are confusedly aware, with a maddening, indefinable sense of emptiness, that their bodies are so to speak subtracted, suppressed, deprived of their reality, of breath, of voice, of the sound that they make in moving about, to become only a dumb image, which quivers for a moment on the screen and disappears, in silence!*<sup>6</sup>

Just as the nitrocellulose that went into film stock was also used for the production of explosives, so the artilleryman's motto was the same as the cameraman's: lighting reveals everything. By 1 October 1914 anti-aircraft artillery was already combining guns with searchlights. By 1918 the British Home Defence, for example, not only had 11 fighter squadrons but 284 anti-aircraft guns and 377 searchlight installations. On 9 January 1915, when the Kaiser ordered the first bombing attacks on London and its industrial suburbs, the British anti-aircraft defence was capable of producing remarkable films of the Zeppelin night raids. Whereas civilian cinematography lagged behind and remained largely dependent on sunlight, the Tsarist armed forces were already using searchlights to defend Port Arthur in 1904, and it would not be long before these were hitched to camera-machineguns.

Griffith declared that he was "very disappointed with the reality of the battlefield", and everything indicates that modern warfare had become incompatible with the art of cinema as both he and his audiences still conceived it. Nevertheless, he and his cameraman, Captain Kleinschmidt, shot some interesting footage of mainly logistical activity on the front, which can still be seen at the Imperial War Museum in London. Griffith then moved to England to recreate battles that were actually taking place a few hundred kilometres away. *Hearts of the World* (1918) was partly shot on Salisbury Plain, which later served as a 'special cemetery' for victims of the influenza epidemic that claimed 27 million more lives throughout the world in the space of a year. Griffith then returned to Hollywood to complete the film on the Lasky Ranch, with von Stroheim as his military adviser but with a quite limited budget. Despite its banal script, it was a big success in the United States and had a considerable impact on public opinion.

In the face of modern warfare, Griffith doubtless felt the same kind of bitterness that he had already experienced in watching Pastrone's *Cabiria*, which was begun in Italy

in 1912 and reached America in 1914. According to Karl Brown, "the reviews of *Cabiria* had such an effect on Griffith that he and key members of his staff took the next train to San Francisco to see it". And Brownlow adds:

*To have made a film hailed as the world's greatest masterpiece must have been exhilarating; but then to see a film like Cabiria must have been immeasurably depressing. Not that it exceeded the standard of The Birth [of a Nation] in terms of story, but in terms of physical production and technical dexterity, it made The Birth look primeval.*<sup>7</sup>

*Cabiria* came from the land of the Futurists, whose manifesto had appeared three years earlier. For both Pastrone and the Futurists, the linear-Euclidian organization of thought had come to an end, human sight was on the same footing as energetic propulsion. Quite intentionally, Pastrone downplayed the element of plot in favour of technical effects and the dynamic improvement of cinema photography: "Obsessed by the third dimension, director Giovanni Pastrone (under the pseudonym Piero Fusco) created shots of remarkable depth, separating the planes with a constantly moving camera".<sup>8</sup> In refining and often misusing the *carello* or travelling shot, Pastrone showed that the camera's function was less to produce images (as painters and photographers had long been doing) than to manipulate and falsify dimensions.

"In order to create a dream-like effect—that is, visual hallucination", states Ray Harryhausen, a contemporary master of special effects, "it is no more necessary to copy 'cinema motion' than a painter copies a photograph".<sup>9</sup> This remark poses a clear-cut problem: cinema-truth may be produced 24 times a second by the motor of the camera, but the first difference between cinema and photography is that the viewpoint can be mobile, can get away from the static focus and share the speed of moving objects. Ever since Marey's experiments, the shooting camera had been mobile—stability had no longer implied fixity. After Pastrone, however, what was 'false' in cinema was no longer the effect of accelerated perspective, but the very depth itself, the temporal distance of the projected space. Many years later, the electronic light of laser holography and integrated-circuit computer graphics would confirm this relativity in which speed appears as the primal magnitude of the image and thus the source of its depth.

Pastrone's film was made at the time of the colonial war in Libya, which was one of the consequences of the patriotic delirium and industrial-military expansion that had gripped Italy after the fiftieth anniversary of national unification. Gabriele d'Annunzio,

who collaborated on the script of *Cabiria*, was himself a bellicose dandy close to the Futurists who became a war pilot and went on to play a key role in the capture of Fiume.<sup>10</sup> It is strange that cinematic self-propulsion counted for so little in Futurist activity—just two films, in 1914 and 1916, one of which Marinetti dismissed as worthless—even though Marinetti himself was beginning to join together war, aviation and a vision that, in its fleeting aerial perspective, might be called ‘dromoscopic’.<sup>11</sup> In 1912 he published *The Pope's Monoplane*, the account of a trip by a Futurist aviator, and almost simultaneously *The Battle of Tripoli*, inspired by his enthusiastic period on the Libyan front. In this latter book, the author's hand “seems to detach itself from the body and to stretch out in freedom, a long way from the brain which, itself somehow detached from the now aerial body, looks down from a great height, and with a terrible lucidity, on the unexpected phrases flowing from the pen”.

At the turn of the century, cinema and aviation seemed to form a single moment. By 1914, aviation was ceasing to be strictly a means of flying and breaking records (the *Deperdussin* had already passed the 200 kilometres per hour barrier in 1913); it was becoming one way, or perhaps even the ultimate way, of *seeing*. In fact, contrary to what is generally thought, the air arm grew out of the reconnaissance services, its military value having initially been questioned by the general staffs. Indeed, the reconnaissance aircraft itself, whose function was to supply ground troops with information, to direct artillery barrages or to take photographs, gained acceptance merely as a ‘flying observation post’, almost as static as the old balloon with its cartographers, pencils and paper. Mobile information remained the province of the deep-penetrating cavalry until Joffre, at the Battle of the Marne, turned to the aviators for the first time in deciding on the offensive dispositions necessary for victory. The lot of the airborne crews was not an enviable one, since they had to maintain a constant altitude and thus expose themselves to enemy fire in order that the photographic scale should remain the same. Jean Renoir belonged to one of these reconnaissance squadrons, and when he was filming *La Grande Illusion* he asked Jean Gahin to wear his old flying jacket from the war. “The plot of *La Grande Illusion*”, Renoir recalls,

*was absolutely authentic; it was told to me by a number of comrades from the '14-18 war, particularly Pinsard. He was with the fighters, while I was in reconnaissance. Sometimes I had to go off and take pictures of the German lines. On several occasions he saved my life when the German fighters were becoming too insistent. He was brought down seven times, was imprisoned seven times, and escaped seven times.*

Once the general staffs began to take aviation seriously, aerial reconnaissance, both tactical and strategic, became chronophotographic and then cinematographic. Although the aircraft had direct contact with the ground by means of wireless telegraphy, the considerable time needed to analyze the photographic information created a lag between the taking of pictures and their reinsertion into military activity.

Really exceptional pilots were few and far between. First there were the ‘sporting types’ like Védrières and Pégoud; then recruits started to come from all the other arms, particularly the specialist cavalry. At the start of the war pilots preferred to fly alone, but they had to perform extraordinary feats to keep navigating, filming and often firing as well. This tended to attract innovative minds—people like Roland Garros (d. 1918), whose machine-gun could be safely synchronized to fire through the propeller, or Omer Locklear, who earned his reputation in the Air Corps by climbing onto the wing of a moving aircraft and so proving that it could bear the weight of an extra machine-gun. In 1919 he began a Hollywood career as a stunt-flyer, just like Roland Toutain in France (the sentimental aviator of *La Règle du Jeu*). Another war pilot, Howard Hawks, won the financial backing of Howard Hughes in 1930 to make *The Dawn Patrol*, based on his own experiences in the war.

In July 1917 Manfred von Richthofen, the famous ‘Red Baron’, introduced his tactic of the ‘flying circus’—wing formations containing four squadrons of 18 aircraft each. In principle there was no longer an above or below, no longer any visual polarity. War pilots already had their own special effects, which they called ‘looping’, ‘falling-leaf roll’, ‘figure of eight’, and so on. Airborne vision now escaped that Euclidian neutralization that was so acutely felt by ground troops in the trenches; it opened endoscopic tunnels and even brought ‘blind spots’ within the most astounding topological field—vistas whose precursors could be found in the big wheels and other fairground attractions of the nineteenth century, and which were later developed in the roller-coasters and scenic railways of post-war funfairs, especially in Berlin.

In Vietnam, after 40 years of stagnation, the Americans were quick to see the importance of rethinking problems of aerial observation. A technological revolution gradually pushed back the limits of investigation into space and time until aerial reconnaissance, with its old modes of representation, disappeared in instantaneous, ‘real-time’ information. Objects and bodies were forgotten as their physiological traces became accessible to a host of new devices—sensors capable of detecting vibrations, sounds and smells; light-enhancing television cameras, infrared flashes, thermographic pictures that

identified objects by their temperature, and so on. When time-lags were lost in real-time, real time itself broke the constraints of chronology and became cinematic. No longer frozen as in an old photograph, military information allowed the past or the future to be interpreted, since human activity always gives off heat and light and can thus be extrapolated in time and space. In 1914, however, systematic aerial cover of the battlefield was still at the mercy of darkness, fog or low cloud. Only bombers had already freed themselves from the alternation of night and day: they began with simple electric lamps and were later fitted with spotlights under their wing tips or landing gear.

The pattern of this research, in which lighting and climate set the rhythm and airborne and terrestrial vision are dominant by turns, forms the dialectical web of Losey's little-known film *Figures in a Landscape* (1970). Just like a Civil Defence or Traffic Police helicopter, the machine tracking Losey's two fugitives superimposes landscape pictures of the West. Combat here is a game in which all the instruments take part in the saturation of space. Those who conduct the hunt visually are concerned to annul distance, first on board their means of transport, then with their guns. As for the escapees, they use their weapons not so much to destroy as to establish a distance: they live only in what separates them from their pursuers, they can survive only through pure distance, their ultimate protection is the continuity of nature as a whole. Avoiding roads, houses and anything that points to human uses, the two men coil up in creases of the land, seek out the cover of grass and trees, atmospheric disturbances and darkness. It is useful to recall that *Figures in a Landscape* was made at the height of the Vietnam War, when the First Cavalry Division—the same that once chased Indians across the Great Plains—was carrying out its traditional missions in combat helicopters. Ten years later, Coppola drew extensively on Losey's film to stage the helicopter ballets of *Apocalypse Now*, following the rhythm of a Western and using a bugle call to sound the charge of a cavalry squadron.

When commercial flights began again in 1919, often using converted bombers like the Bréguet-14, aerial vision became a widespread phenomenon with a large public. Right from the beginning, however, aerial photography had posed the problem of knowing which, in the technical mix of 'chrono/camera/aircraft/weapon', would gain the upper hand in the making of the war film, and whether the topological freedom due to the speed of the engine—and later due to its firepower—did not create new cinematic facts incomparably more powerful than those of the camera motor. "I still remember *the effect I produced* on a small group of Galla tribesmen massed around a man in black clothes", reported Mussolini's son during the Abyssinian War of 1935-1936. "I dropped an aerial torpedo right in the centre, and the group opened up just like a flowering

rose."<sup>12</sup> In this account, the action of the weapon (dive-bomber) is described as subversive: one form suddenly dissolves before the war pilot's eyes, and in an extraordinary fade-out/fade-in another form appears and reconstitutes itself. He has created it, just as a director working on a viewer can edit a scene in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

Since the battlefield has always been a field of perception, the war machine appears to the military commander as an instrument of representation, comparable to the painter's palette and brush. As is well known, great importance was attached to pictorial representation in the Oriental military sects, the warrior's hand readily passing from brush to sword. Similarly, the pilot's hand automatically trips the camera shutter with the same gesture that releases his weapon. *For men at war, the function of the weapon is the function of the eye.* It is therefore quite understandable that, after 1914, the air arm's violent cinematic disruption of the space continuum, together with the lightning advances of military technology, should have literally exploded the old homogeneity of vision and replaced it with the heterogeneity of perceptual fields. At that time, explosion metaphors were widely used in both art and politics. Filmmakers who survived the war moved without any break in continuity from the battlefield to the production of newsreels or propaganda features and then 'art films'. Dziga Vertov, who joined Lenin's first agit-prop train in 1918, had this to say about the filmmaker's 'armed eye':

*I am the camera's eye. I am the machine which shows you the world as I alone see it. Starting from today, I am forever free of human immobility. I am in perpetual movement. I approach and draw away from things—I crawl under them—I climb on them—I am on the head of a galloping horse—I burst at full speed into a crowd—I run before running soldiers—I throw myself down on my back—I rise up with the aeroplanes—I fall and I fly at one with the bodies falling or rising through the air.*<sup>13</sup>

These filmmakers, who seemed to 'hijack' the image as the surrealists hijacked language, were themselves merely being hijacked by war. On the battlefield not only did they become warriors, they thought that like airmen they formed part of a kind of technical elite. It was a final privilege of their art that the First World War showed them military technology in action, and interestingly enough this technological surprise triggered a potent fusion/confusion in 'avant-garde' productions of the immediate post-war period. While war footage or aerial chronophotography remained under lock and key or was simply shrugged aside (as it mainly was in the United States), filmmakers served up the technological effects to the public as a novel spectacle, a continuation of the war's destruction of form.



Let us take the famous example of Colonel Steichen, who directed air-reconnaissance operations for the US expeditionary corps during the First World War.<sup>14</sup> Nearly 1.3 million prints ended up in his private collection, and a good number of these were exhibited and sold as his personal property. With 55 officers and 1,111 men under his command, Steichen had relied on a division of labour and intensive production methods to organize a factory-style output of war information. The photograph thus ceased to be an episodic item, as Steichen turned out a veritable flow of pictures that fitted perfectly with the statistical tendencies of this first great military-industrial conflict. As in the case of D.W. Griffith, the pressure of the war arsenal on pictorial production (Ford's assembly-lines had come into operation in 1914) did not fail to revolutionize Steichen's ideas about photography.

Like most photographers, Edward Steichen was first and foremost a 'painter-photographer', fond of France and so admiring of Rodin that he attended his funeral in 1917. Steichen's own photographic self-portrait, depicting him with palette and brush, is quite plainly a 'camera replica' of Titian's *Man with a Glove*. American filmmakers like De Mille or Griffith also took pleasure in such photographic 'responses' to well-known paintings. The journal *Camera Work*, which ceased publication just as the United States was entering the war in 1917, soundly rejected 'pictorialism' as an avant-garde method in its final issue. Steichen himself lost no time in immersing himself in his military duties. But after the Armistice he retired in utter dejection to his French country home, burned his canvases and swore never to paint again. Indeed he dismissed any pictorial inspiration as 'elitist' and based himself on the planning methods of aerial reconnaissance in order to arrive at a redefinition of the image. With Steichen war photos became pictures of the 'American dream', soon to merge with those of the Hollywood system of industrial promotion and its codes for mass consumption.

In *Cahiers du cinéma*, Bergala once wrote, "The star pin-up did not have to be invented... it was enough to *deepen the act of isolation* that the image of a star already involved in the great days of Hollywood".<sup>15</sup> When I read this sentence, I think of the scene in Renoir's *La Grande Illusion* where the prisoners-of-war, in preparation for a *fête*, go through a collection of theatrical costumes and take out the faded instruments of feminine seduction. Intimate underwear, rustling petticoats are passed from hand to hand to the accompaniment of manic laughter and knowing gestures, until suddenly the men's faces cloud over as each individual withdraws in secret communion with himself, the Host being the very insubstantiality of that clothing cast off by women, who have disappeared in the separation of war. In a parallel sequence, a rich Jewish prisoner played

by Marcel Dalio is offering a festive meal that embodies a further sense of apartness. Here, too, an indirect, non-logical form of perception is created, so that each prisoner ends up transferring his tastes, judgement and sense of things from being to figuration, from the form to its reflection. A general interpretation mania is thus imposed by the very facts of military logistics, for the soldier receives in his mail-packet the bare outlines of a meal rather than a meal itself, a lock but not a real head of women's hair. Renoir shows that even outside the field of battle—which never actually appears in the film—war subverts the proper experience of sex and death.

One is reminded here of Irma Pavolin, Maupassant's syphilitic young prostitute, who delightedly totted up the numbers as she turned her sexuality into a means of waging bacteriological warfare on whole battalions of Prussian soldiers. Or take Henny Porten, the German cinema star, who appeared in anti-French propaganda films and became one of the first known pin-ups to hang in the soldiers' quarters in 1914. The exemplary pin-up, representing an idealized young woman, took over the tradition of the carefully retouched photograph that serving soldiers used to receive from a female correspondent, a distant, intangible and often unknown fiancée of death, who appeared only in letters containing, in addition to a few 'sweet nothings', such personal relics as a lock of hair, a glove, a trace of perfume or some dried flowers. Rudolf Arnheim once remarked that, after 1914, many film-actors became props while the props took the leading role. Similarly, women became *objective tragedy* in the wars from which they were excluded.

The leer that the conquering soldier casts on a woman's now-distant body is the same as that which he directs at a land turned into desert by war. It is also a direct antecedent of the cinematic voyeurism with which a director films the star as one does a landscape, with its lakes, contours and valleys. He alone has the task of 'lighting it up', thanks to a camera which, in the words of Marlene Dietrich's creator, Josef von Sternberg, "hits at point-blank range". (Many directors who were imported by the Americans after 1918 had served in the war, particularly in the Austro-Hungarian and German armies.) In more recent times Carol Reed told an aspiring actress, "Being good isn't what counts; *the camera has to fall in love with you*".<sup>16</sup> During and after the Second World War the widespread popularity of striptease, with its allusion to film as well as sexual excitation, indicated the scale of this technophilic transfer in a society undergoing militarization. Overcoming censorship restrictions, it was imposed in Britain by the armed forces, particularly with the famous Phyllis Dixey. Like the soldier, the striptease dancer who undresses on stage becomes a film for spectators, slowly taking off her clothes in a series of takes in which her lascivious body movements act as the overlapping dissolve and the music as the soundtrack. This dimension has become even clearer

in those shows where a glass-caged nude faces the customers through a 'screen', while they fire off their still- or cine-cameras 'at point-blank range'; or in those videogames which are considered 'won' when a small red light symbolizing orgasm appears on the screen within 90 seconds.<sup>17</sup>

Bergala's point about the actor's progressive isolation may thus be complemented by a quotation from Sydney Franklin: "Every ounce of creative energy was harnessed to bring the star closer in every sense to the audience". And he adds, "You could take 1,000 feet of Norma Talmadge in a chair, and her fans would flock to see it".<sup>18</sup> The star system and the sex symbol were the result of that unforeseen perceptual logistics which developed intensively in every field during the First World War. The United States, being nomadic by nature, secured the triumph of its own methods in a Europe still lacking in mobility and breadth of geographic vision. For example, the fact that America was able to field 20,000 tank wagons during the war, against France's 400, enabled it to win one of the first oil wars, as a result of which the French market effectively fell into the hands of Standard Oil. Clearly it was not so much consumption needs as the supply system itself that was now creating the market, and in the 1920s, long before the New Deal, the US media lost their neutrality as they fell under the control of industrial-commercial interests bent upon economic warfare. These powers kept a tight grip on Hollywood and those auxiliary industries that "fanned out around the studios, as towns spread around castles".<sup>19</sup>

In 1889 the circular terrace of the Eiffel Tower, with its floodlights and a telegraph office that opened to the public on 9 September, had greatly excited both Thomas Edison and a group of Indians from Buffalo Bill's 'Great Wild West Show'. But it was Lieutenant-Colonel Gustave Ferrié, a graduate of the Ecole Polytechnique, who first thought of using the tower as a giant aerial, and when war broke out in 1914 he was immediately given responsibility for the whole of radio-communications. On his initiative, all the Allies' radiotelegraphic equipment was subsequently produced in France, and soon the old wireless telegraphy was transformed into a radio service. In 1915 the first electronic tube—the TM [military telegraphy] valve, invented by one of Ferrié's team—entered mass production, and by the end of the war people were already beginning to dream of television.

It is significant that the RKO logo was to be an outsized pylon whose purpose was no longer, like the Eiffel Tower, to 'astound the world', but to cover with messages a globe that it already dominated. To pictorial logistics (photographic or cinematographic), war

added a logistics of sound and then of music, thanks to the 'popular radiophonics' that took off between the wars in huge auditoria and public broadcasts. "Roses of Picardy" (1914) and "Lili Marlene" (1940) are two wartime landmarks of the new musical logistics, while Glenn Miller, who came to a mysterious end, developed as one of its effective patrons. The ambivalence of these systems appeared clearly during the Blitz, with its nervous giggling, its cryptic musical arrangements conveying coded information to shadowy partisan fighters on the Continent. In Britain, the Ministry of Information housed a 'propaganda think-tank', one of whose best-known members was the actor Leslie Howard, star of *Gone with the Wind*. After his return from Hollywood in August 1939, he broadcast to the United States, while an Englishman named William Joyce was addressing the British from Germany.

For his part Joseph Goebbels, that ex-journalist turned head of propaganda, had come up with many new ideas in the interwar period. In helping Hitler to power, he had sent 50,000 fascist propaganda records to gramophone-owning households and had forced cinema managers, often under threat of violence, to screen ideologically loaded shorts. Once he became a minister, he ensured that radio sets were within reach of everyone's pocket.

In 1914 it was still up to the pilot whether he wore a helmet, and his only means of 'insulation' were protective goggles and pieces of cotton wool in the ears to muffle wind and engine noise. Some 30 years later, towards the end of the Second World War, the pressurized cockpits of US Superfortress bombers had become artificial synthesizers that shut out the world of the senses to a quite extraordinary degree. However, the effects of technological isolation were so severe and long-lasting that Strategic Air Command decided to lighten the dangerous passage of its armadas over Europe by painting brightly-coloured cartoon heroes or giant pin-ups with evocative names on top of the camouflage. In a kind of CB system, honey-tongued female announcers not only assumed radio guidance of the crews, but also helped them through their mission by blurring the image of destruction with jokes, personal confidences and even songs of love.

Stanley Kubrick accurately reproduced this audio-visual effect when he used Vera Lynn's singing of "We'll Meet Again" to soften the long series of nuclear explosions that conclude *Dr Strangelove*. Some reviewers criticized him for using old newsreel footage of Hiroshima or Christmas Island—inexpensive material that everyone had had the chance of seeing many times before.<sup>20</sup> But in fact Kubrick was motivated by the highest sense of realism, going straight to the heart of the war image. Here nothing

is left but the recording of successive states of discharged matter and the record of a faraway voice which sings of the desire for reunion that has now become physically impossible, only this time for everyone and for evermore.

Through its hyper-generation of movement, mixing the accomplishments of the means of destruction and the means of communicating destruction, war falsifies appearance by falsifying distance. For the military commander, every dimension is unstable and presents itself in isolation from its natural context. Hermes, the god of all logistics, was baptized Trismegistus, three times great, as was the Egyptian god Thoth, while the *Iliad* has the 'giant' Achilles advancing to the walls of Troy. Conquerors such as Rameses or Stalin take the form of overblown stone or bronze colossi, seemingly capable of moving through an expanded, emptied world that no one had previously thought of as a field of action. In the same way, Gulliver or Alice would say: "I've been changed several times". But for Alice the visible world does not run up against the screen of the mirror; the luminous reflection is not a limit but a point of passage. Lewis Carroll, of course, was also the mathematician Charles Dodgson, co-inventor of a kind of mathematical logistics ('transcendental mathematics'), in which continuity and discontinuity communicate with each other. He was also passionately keen on photography. The star system stemmed from this same instability of dimensions, which not everyone received with equanimity. Indeed, some audiences were quite disconcerted by the breaks in spatiotemporal continuity dreamt up by the filmmakers.<sup>21</sup>

Again, it is no accident that one of the last stars, Marilyn Monroe, was discovered by a US army photographer at the height of the Korean War. Nicknamed Miss Flamethrower (itself reminiscent of Marinetti's "flame-women", "lightning-carriages", "engine-heart" and similar couplings), she earned 150 dollars a week and became the most popular pin-up on barrack-room walls. The power of Marilyn and her 'sisters' lay not only in their perfectly photogenic bodies, but also in the fact that their pictures were not life-sized. Always in exile from its immediate, natural dimensions, never seeming to be connected to anything else, Marilyn's body was at once expandable like a giant screen and capable of being folded and reproduced like a poster, a magazine cover or a centre-spread. This helps to explain the passion with which agents subsequently insisted on their stars' 'real' dimensions: bust, waist and hip measurements became necessary for proper appreciation of the picture, just as the scale reference on a headquarters map enabled it to be read and interpreted by a military user. Marilyn's body, which the Seventh Division doctors said they would most like to *examine*, yet which no one claimed from the morgue, reminds one of that penetrating gaze of the surgeon or cameraman that came into its own in the First World War. "The painter", writes Benjamin,

*maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law.*<sup>22</sup>

Like aerial reconnaissance photography, whose reading depends on everything that can be drawn from the rationalized act of interpretation, the use of endoscopy or scanners allows hidden organs to surface in an instrumental collage, an utterly obscene reading of the ravages of a trauma or a disease. This capacity to make the invisible visible—in the endless study of a picture to find significance in what appears to be a chaos of meaningless forms, or in that visual ease of examining film by hand which, according to Painlevé, roots cinema in scientific discovery—links up with the ways in which an army officer studies the enemy landscape, assesses the damage done to mostly camouflaged positions (trenches, encampments, bunkers), "performing with observed procedures those unknown procedures that cinematic technique likes to summon forth" (Germaine Dulac).

The cinema industry made no mistake with its publicity. Once the star had been named 'body' and her picture painted on bombs and bombers, this body with no stable dimensions would soon be offered up in 'fragments' to the audience, in a repetition of the heterogeneous perception of the military voyeur. From Jean Harlow to Jane Russell, Lana Turner or Betty Grable, attention was drawn to a blown-up detail—legs, eyes, bottom or whatever. The cinematic 'exposure' of external forms took over from the *écorché* of the old anatomy.

Griffith readily assimilated the Futurist lessons of *Cabiria* for his own *Intolerance*: the blurring of temporal elements, improvisation without prior cutting, mobility of the camera, extensive use of montage to join in a relation of simultaneity actions taking place in ten different places and four different centuries, and so on. But, as we have seen, he experienced a new and 'intolerable' technological surprise on the military-industrial battlefield. This time it was the civilian camera which, despite the recentness of its invention, appeared prehistoric beside the lightning advance of the military tracking shot. Griffith's great period came to an end shortly after the war, in 1922 or thereabouts.

Abel Gance—a great admirer of Griffith, who was his elder by 14 years—had also worked for the army during the First World War. He began his *J'Accuse* in 1917 when the rank-and-file troops were mutinying at the front, and many of his extras were wounded

soldiers who were convalescing or had been invalided out (one of these was Blaise Cendrars). Gance's definition of the cinema was close to that of the 'war machine' with its fatal autonomy: "Magical, spell-binding, capable of giving to the audience, in every fraction of a second, that strange sensation of four-dimensional omnipresence cancelling time and space".

*War is cinema and cinema is war*, but in fact Gance did not yet realize the provisional character of this amalgam as far as the cinema was concerned. His numerous inventions (the triple screen—patented on 20 August 1926—sound perspective, polyvision, magirama, etc.) give the sense of a tragic race after the all-pervasive dynamism of the military, a knock-on from their visual and acoustic techniques. The premature decline of Gance's work spelt the end of the race, the certainty that to overtake was now materially impossible, the defeat of a civilian cinematic power that "had been incapable of inventing its own atomic bomb".<sup>23</sup>

From now on the cinema would be no more than a bastardized form, a poor relation of military-industrial society. The art film, which had seemed an avant-garde of cinema, passed away of its own accord.

In 1905 Einstein enunciated his theory of energy and ten years later, in the midst of world war, he published his general theory of relativity. Giuseppe Peano, Hausdorff and von Koch made contributions to mathematical logistics and ideography; Kurt Gödel mathematically proved the existence of an object without producing it, his *existential proof* becoming, together with von Neumann's work and the famous *game theory*, the basis for contemporary nuclear strategy. Deviating from shapes and representations of physical reality, the scientific theory that underpinned the military effect also reached in half a century the surrealist heights of unknown cinematic territory, where the old fields of perception were completely destroyed.

While Hollywood, after the First World War, took to the most extravagant camera movements, Eisenstein in the Soviet Union talked of the series of engine combustions that drove a film forward. In his view, "the concept of collision or conflict is the expression of Marxist dialectics in art". Here too there were variations in the frame, fades and divided images, unexpected camera movements, back-tracking, sudden and unexplained intrusion of objects, characters and places, huge crowd movements.<sup>24</sup> As with Marinetti, the revelation of depth became strictly apocalyptic, since it aimed at dynamically 'finishing off' the dimensions of the world: "As creators", wrote the German architect Mendelsohn, "we know how diversely the motor forces, the play of tensions, actually work at a detailed level".<sup>25</sup>

Distance, depth, three-dimensionality—in just a few years of war, space became a training-ground for the dynamic offensive and for all the energies it harnessed. And since "the harsh accents of its forward motion impel us towards a new clarity, the metallic roar of its matter plunges us into a new light", cinema became the metaphor for this object-shaping geometry, this fusion/confusion of genres which prefigured the terrifying species-mutation of later years, and for the exorbitant priority accorded to speed of penetration by war and the war industry which, after 1919, converted to producing means of communication and transport and commercializing air space.

It was not long before a mass industry, basing itself upon psychotropic derangement and chronological disturbance, was directly applying cinematic acceleration to the realism of the world. This new cinema was particularly aimed at the ever wider public, which had been torn from its sedentary existence and marked down for military mobilization, exile and emigration, proletarianization in the new industrial metropolises... and revolution. War had everyone on the move, even the dead. Following the success of the cabs that carried troops to the Marne battlefield in 1914, the taxi companies made a fortune by ferrying the corpses back to their families.

This to-and-fro movement, which made everyone a passer-by, an alien or a missing person, extended war's aphasia into peacetime. In 1848, in his famous *Principles of Political Economy*, John Stuart Mill had written that "to produce is to move". But after 1914, the cinema became such a powerful industry because now *to move was to produce* (for his part, Alain thought that "superstition is to believe that one can move things").

At the time, few means of persuasion were available to the various states. Newspapers could only reach a limited number of readers—one of the largest, the *Daily Mail*, having a circulation of barely a million. Public rallies were frequently held, but they too had a restricted impact since political leaders could only address the crowd through short-range megaphones. This lack of propaganda instruments partly accounts for the air of conspiracy that surrounded cinema technique: a kind of industrial pragmatism, born out of intensive production of war pictures, generated films that were the work of organized groups rather than a single author, so that the old 'nickel odeon' soon became a nationalized activity, as in Lenin's Russia. But it is often forgotten today that, after the separation of Church and State in France, the fall of the divine-right monarchies and empires all over Europe provided a unique historical opportunity for cinema in the early part of the twentieth century.



The First World War brought an end to the privileged relations between old religions and young military-industrial states. These states, founded as in the Soviet Union upon overt violence, needed to create a new consensus in order to be accepted by the greatest possible number (in order, that is, to become legal)—hence the urgent necessity of imposing replacement cults on the masses. The mystical, scientific materialism of the nineteenth century had, in assuming effective power, become a question of working ‘miracles’ of science by means of technology. Paradoxically, the supposed advent of Reason in History became a cultural farrago, a technophile syncretism, complete with a demonology and inquisitorial apparatus of which the personality cult is one of the best-known aspects.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, recent scientific discoveries and technological applications had unexpectedly brought mesmerism and Swedenborgism back into fashion in Britain and the United States. It was the hour of new illuminati, for whom ‘the spirit’ (God, the Eternal) was a magnetic fluid, an electrical phenomenon, kinetic heat. In 1845 the first spiritualist rappings were heard in the home of the Fox sisters in Hydesville. In the United States séances, dictations from beyond the grave and other forms of hypnotic or medium-induced communication were used by individuals and religious sects “to move hack in time or across space without too much effort”, as Polytechnic director Colonel de Rochas put it in 1900. The American Catholic Church itself did not completely disapprove of such goings-on. For it was a question of seeking out *new vectors of the Beyond*, after the provisional decline of the great religions and their loss of prestige to the state.

Meanwhile photography penetrated everywhere and in every milieu, even into the cloisters of Lisieux, where the future saint Thérèse Martin had her convent retreat violated by the camera lens. This was the time when polemics began over the newly-discovered Shroud of Turin, the ‘first photographic phenomenon in history’, a veritable ‘revelation’ of photographic technique as a medium of iconolatry. Walter Benjamin quickly grasped and vigorously rejected the place that cinema could occupy within this mystical-scientific structure, although he too was fascinated by the photographic aura. He saw that for many people (particularly in Germany, since a French invention was involved), “photography remained a mysterious, disconcerting experience”, with shadow and light which, as Jarry noted, could not easily penetrate each other.

This climate soon gave rise to a flourishing ‘ghost industry’, which used not only human but also photographic mediums. Since, for the new illuminati, ghosts were phenomena

of electrical energy, why should they not also give off light and even be actually photogenic? After the Franco-Prussian War, Leymarie, the editor of *Revue Spirite*, called on the professional assistance of Buguet to photograph the first ghosts—in reality, over-exposures superimposed on images of ‘the living’ in such a way that they appeared among ordinary mortals as they passed through the darkroom. Leymarie was convicted of fraud and sentenced to a year in prison plus a fine of 500 francs. Except when direct use was made of aura effects enhanced by skilful erasure, these ghosts were young and pretty models dressed in the pre-Raphaelite style. Given the high rates of mortality at that time, the customers who ‘bought’ the apparition were forging often tragic relations with the image itself.

As war was succeeded by epidemic, hitting especially hard the age-group between 15 and 35, the ‘ghost industry’ had a huge impact on the aesthetic and technical vocabulary of cinema. This was particularly striking in Germany, whose young cinema had only acquired artistic force during the war and which now counterposed supernatural dimensions to the crisis of natural dimensions revealed by the Futurists and by the inordinate retribution of the Versailles Treaty.

Oskar Messter was one of the first to use twin projection to experiment with superimposition, and Stellan Rye—who died on the French front in 1914—scored a major breakthrough for German cinema with his *Der Student von Prag*, the premonitory tale of a student who sells his reflected mirror-image to a wizard.<sup>26</sup> This image begins to act in the student’s place, ‘dishonouring’ him and forcing him to remain a war-fixated conqueror. The student shoots at this irksome double in the hope of destroying it, but it is he who dies as a result. Noël Simsolo has written of this film, “It is perhaps the first film which speaks of cinema. A person’s picture, framed like a cinema-image, is stolen... the actor is responsible for the deeds that his image performs in accordance with another’s wishes—director or wizard.”<sup>27</sup> Simsolo goes on to remind us that the two scriptwriters, Hans-Heinz Ewers and the great actor Paul Wegener, later worked on Nazi propaganda films during the Third Reich.

In cinema there is no longer such a thing as an ‘accurate’ reflection. “Everything”, Wegener said in 1916, “depends on a *certain flow in which the fantastic world of the past rejoins the world of the present*”. The chaos of a non-sensory order installed itself alongside the quite visible order of the senses. Delirious new ghostly images, having been stolen, touched up and invoked anew, could be taken and sold as the enthralling object of a profitable trade in appearances or could be projected in every direction

in time and space. "Already", Duhamel remarked around 1930, "I can no longer think what I like. *Moving images substitute themselves for my own thoughts.*" Cinema is war because, as Dr Gustave Le Bon wrote in 1916,

*War touches not only the material life but also the thinking of nations... and here we meet again the basic notion that it is not the rational which manages the world but forces of affective, mystical or collective origin which guide men. The seductive promptings of these mystical formulas are all the more powerful in that they remain rather ill defined... immaterial forces are the true steerers of combat.*<sup>28</sup>

In the United States the first film actors had no surname or even Christian name, but when the papers reported the death of the 'Biograph Girl' in 1910 this anonymity disappeared. The girl was finally identified as Florence Lawrence, and by a miracle she happened to be in the best of health. The announcement of her death, rather like those terrorist actions referred to in my essay "Military Force Is Based Upon Deception", had been no more than a publicity stunt. It is significant that the star system only really triumphed after 1914 in the new cinema industry, at a time when optical illusion became confused not just with the illusion of life but with the illusion of survival.

*Reprint from Paul Virilio, War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception, London: Verso, 2009, pp. 15-39. Reprint by kind permission.*

\* Paraphrase of Nam June Paik.

1. Browlow, Kevin, *Hollywood: The Pioneers*, London: HarperCollins, 1979, p. 63.
2. Browlow, *Hollywood*, p. 64.
3. Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations*, Harry Zohn trans., London: Fontana, 1973, p. 236.
4. For Benjamin, whereas "a clock that is working will always be a disturbance on the stage..., film can, whenever appropriate, use time as measured by a clock" (Benjamin, "Work of Art", p. 249). Benjamin saw in this a reciprocity of action between object and man that could be placed at the service of materialist thought. Today it seems more like a proof of independence of cinema time.
5. "My desire is where I'm firing at." Apollinaire, Guillaume, "Desir" in "Lueurs des Tirs", *Calligrammes*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1918.
6. Pirandello, Luigi, *Shoot! The Notebooks of Serafino Gubbio, Cinematograph Operator*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1927, p. 20.
7. Brownlow, *Hollywood*, p. 71.

8. Brownlow, *Hollywood*, p. 71.
9. Interview on French television.
10. Lista, Giovanni, *Marinetti*, Paris: Seghers, 1976.
11. In *Les Carabiniers* (1963) Godard draws a parallel between the dive-bomber and the picture postcard. In 1914 Apollinaire's first calligramme incorporated a postcard from his brother, and in the same year Marinetti wove into the film texture of *Zang Tumb Tumb* the full text of a leaflet dropped by a Bulgarian aeroplane during the Balkan War. On 9 August 1918 the Italian 'Serenissimo' squadron, under D'Annunzio's command, saturated Vienna with leaflets. After the 1870-1871 war, the postcard industry launched the transporting of photography with cheap, *mediated*, often anonymous images from a mass market. Apart from their sentimental, erotic or merely product-boosting pictures, these postcards were the bearers of nationalist-revanchist or scientific propaganda and the promotion of high birth-rates. Above all, many of them prefigured surrealist collage with their photographic assembling of real landscape views, hand-drawn adjuncts, science-fiction vessels and burlesque human shapes. Their aesthetic vision was close to that of Méliès or Zecca in the future of cinema.
12. Quoted from Allan Sekula, "The Instrumental Image: Streichen at War", *ArtForum*, December 1975, p. 33.
13. In 1919 Vertov published an article in Mayakovsky's avant-garde *Lef* that condemned the narrative film and, in terms reminiscent of the Futurists, declared war on the psychology of bourgeois film-scripts.
14. See Sekula's study ("Instrumental Image"), which has been extensively used in this account of Streichen's activity.
15. See the special issue of *Cahiers du cinéma*, "Special photos de films", 1978.
16. Interview on French television.
17. One of the first happened to be called "General Custer's Revenge"; in it, a model of the general wearing no more than a cap can be moved around in an ambush-ridden desert. The action ends with the rape of a squaw.
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21. See Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1969, p. 33.
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24. Vogel, Amos, *Film as a Subversive Art*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974, p. 36. Compare György Kepes, *Language of Vision*, New York: Paul Theobald, 1967.
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Roger Frantz

## Herbert A. Simon and the [Design] Sciences of the Artificial

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Herbert Simon made overlapping substantive contributions to the fields of economics, psychology, cognitive science, decision theory and organization theory. Simon's work was motivated by the belief that neither the human mind, human thinking and decision making nor human creativity need be mysterious. His life work was devoted to proving this point. His motto was "Wonderful, but not incomprehensible".<sup>1</sup> Where he carried this out was at the intersection of economics, psychology, cognitive science and organization theory. A major part of this intersection was creating computer programs that allow machines to 'think' and make choices.

It was after he helped create 'thinking' machines that Simon came to understand human intuition as subconscious pattern recognition. In doing so, he showed that intuition need not be associated with magic and mysticism.<sup>2</sup> He also showed that "intuition is not a process that operates independently of analysis; rather the two processes are essential complementary components of effective decision making systems".<sup>3</sup>

Intuition is often described by what it is *not*: intuition is a residual concept. Intuition is not a conscious analytical—logical, sequential, step-by-step and reasoned—process of thinking. The most common terms used for intuition reveal intuition's residual nature: gut feeling, educated hunch, sixth sense. Bunge, in his book *Intuition and Science*, states that intuition is what we call "all the intellectual mechanisms which we do not know how to analyze or even name with precision, or which we are not interested in analyzing or naming".<sup>4</sup> The intellectual mechanisms Bunge cites include rapid reasoning, synthesizing disparate elements into a grand vision and sound judgement. Simon's preference was to refer to intuition as subconscious pattern recognition.

Although the logical and analytical nature of economic thinking has kept intuition in the background of the profession, Simon is not the first economist to discuss intuition. Adam Smith,<sup>5</sup> John Stuart Mill,<sup>6</sup> Alfred Marshall,<sup>7</sup> John Maynard Keynes,<sup>8</sup> Schumpeter<sup>9</sup> and Frank Knight<sup>10</sup> are other famous names who wrote about intuition. For the past

25 years it has become almost commonplace for an economist to state during a presentation that "The intuition behind the model (and/or result) is...". In *The Making of an Economist*, Klammer and Colander<sup>11</sup> interviewed graduate students from various departments throughout the USA. Students consider both mathematics and intuition to be important, and they express an appreciation for the intuitive elements in the work of their professors.

This paper will show some of the overlaps among Simon's work on economics, psychology, cognitive science and organization theory, and how these overlaps affected his view towards intuition.

### 2. INTUITION: THE 'PROBLEM' ILLUSTRATED

Simon's philosophy of intuition may be said to begin with the publication of Chester Barnard's *The Functions of the Executive*,<sup>12</sup> specifically an appendix titled "Mind in Everyday Affairs", in which Barnard discusses intuition. Herbert Simon, in his lecture given in Stockholm upon receiving the Nobel Prize in Economics, referred to Barnard as an "intellectually curious business executive who distilled from his experience as president of New Jersey Bell Telephone Company... a profound book on decision making...".<sup>13</sup> Yet when it came to Barnard's philosophy of intuition, Simon says that Barnard "presents an interesting, but perhaps too optimistic view of the 'intuitive' elements in administrative decisions...".<sup>14</sup> What makes Barnard's presentation too optimistic for Simon?

Barnard's philosophy about intuition was stated matter-of-factly. First, intuition may seem abstract because it arises from the subconscious, but it is not abstract. Intuition is a non-logical process, defined by Barnard as a process that takes place in the subconscious or is so rapid as to seem subconscious and hence also seems to be instantaneous and devoid of reasoning. Examples of intuition cited by Barnard include studying a complex balance sheet for only a few minutes or seconds before being able to derive a coherent picture of the company.

Second, intuition is as much an expression of intelligence as is logic. Third, intuition is useful and so people should use it. Fourth, many people use intuition at work but it is "frequently scorned"<sup>15</sup> because of psychological reasons. The reason is that many people feel the need to rationalize their beliefs and have them appear plausible and hence do

not want to admit using something that is unexplainable. The “most interesting and astounding contradiction in life”, he says, is that regardless of intellect, people’s insistence upon using logic is coupled with their inability to use it and to accept it when used by others. The bias against intuition among scientists is understandable, among non-scientists it is “unintelligent”.<sup>16</sup>

Fifth, intuition is most appropriate when working with short time horizons and data that is either of poor quality and/or very limited. According to Barnard, this covers the majority of situations used in everyday affairs in both business and government. He says that it is “impossible effectively to apply the logical reasoning process to material that is so insecure that it cannot bear the weight of ponderous logic... The much ridiculed ‘women’s intuition’ is the only mental process that can apply to it”.<sup>17</sup> Understanding organizations also calls for intuition. He says:

*Our logical methods and our endless analysis of things have often blinded us to an appreciation of structure and organization... You cannot get organization by adding up the parts... To understand the society you live in, you must feel organization—which is exactly what you do with your non-logical minds ...*<sup>18</sup>

Simon’s approach was very different. As a scientist he needed to understand the phenomenon we call intuition. In the early part of his career there was not a scientific—rational, logical—theory of intuition, and so Simon considered intuition to be a mystery. In time and with advances in cognitive science and AI as a framework, Simon concluded that intuition is subconscious pattern recognition. Simon did not consider intuition to be irrational, he considered it to be a rational but not a conscious analytical method of decision making.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. RATIONALITY

For Simon, problem solving was a “search through a vast maze of possibilities, a maze that describes the environment”.<sup>20</sup> Rationality is *bounded rationality* or limited by the vast maze of possibilities that is our environment. The maze makes the *procedures* we use in decision making, one of which is subconscious pattern recognition, more important than traditionally given in economics. And it means that the decisions we make are more *satisficing* than maximizing. Thus, Simon challenged the economic orthodoxy on the definition of rationality by proposing the concepts of bounded and procedural rationality, and satisficing.

The orthodox definition is represented by ‘economic person’ (EP), who is a *substantively* rational maximizer of subjective expected utility. Substantive rationality occurs when behaviour is appropriate to attain a given goal under given conditions (constraints). In other words, substantive rationality is about *outcomes*. EP is substantively rational because she is assumed to have at least a sufficient amount of information about all relevant aspects of their environment, the ability to compute benefits and costs of available alternative courses of action, information about the probability of each outcome of each chosen behaviour, and a willingness and ability to understand and consider simultaneously all current and future available alternatives. Assuming that individuals are substantially rational and that they have a definite goal, economics can be ‘done’ with calculus. Moreover, it can be done without psychology. But, Simon says, “...there is a complete lack of evidence that, in actual human choice situations of any complexity, these computations can be, or are in fact, performed”.<sup>21</sup>

Simon’s ideas on bounded rationality (BR) were initially contained in the first (1947) and subsequent editions of *Administrative Behavior*,<sup>22</sup> and in more formal models published in 1955 in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*<sup>23</sup> and in 1956 in the *Psychological Review*.<sup>24</sup> In 1956, Simon wrote a short story as an attempt at a “transmigration of the soul” of his model of BR. The story, “The Apple: A Story of the Maze”,<sup>25</sup> is about a young man named Hugo who lived alone in a large castle. Hugo’s problem was that he had to find food, which, mysteriously, was being left on the tables in some of the rooms. Some of the food left was of a variety he had never seen, so he had to discover his tastes and preferences for food. He also needed to save time at finding the right room so he began looking for *clues* to tell him which room had which variety of food. For example, the rooms containing his favourite foods had various paintings on the wall. His preference for certain paintings had developed *unconsciously* as an *association* with certain preferred foods. With experience, finding his preferred foods became easier. Hugo’s search for food did not continue until he found his favourite food. Hugo was often hungry and he did not know when he would find food again, so his searches ended when he found food that was satisfactory. His experience showed him that finding the right food depended upon the number of turns or choice points in the maze, the number of available paths at each choice point, the number of moves or steps between choice points, the number of moves and choice points the individual can see ahead, and the ability of the individual to find clues (patterns) in order to avoid walking around in circles. The hungrier he was, the greater the number of food types and groups that fell under the category of satisfactory. Hugo was a satisficer whose rationality was bounded by the shape of his world and the circumstances of his life. Associations or patterns were stored in memory and



retrieved automatically from memory when it served to satisfy his goal. Hugo engaged in subconscious pattern recognition; that is, he engaged his intuition. Substantive rationality and global maximization in a maze is possible, but only when the maze is very small.

### 3.1. Substantive vs. bounded and procedural rationality

In contrast to EP, 'bounded rational person' (BRP) lives in a world that offers a set of objectively available behaviour alternatives, but a more limited set of 'perceived' behaviour alternatives. BRP lacks both the information and the computational capacities to be globally rational. Real World Person (RWP) lives in a world with too much uncertainty—unintended consequences and computational limits. Given our computational limits the environment that we are aware of is only a fraction of the 'real' environment within which decisions are made. The number of possible alternatives is so immense that they cannot be examined. The best and only feasible solution is to find a satisfactory solution.

In psychology it is aspiration levels that perform this function. And "problem solving and decision making that sets an aspiration level, searches until an alternative is found that is satisfactory by the aspiration level criterion, and selects that alternative"<sup>26</sup> is called *satisficing*. The concept of satisficing is common within psychology.<sup>27</sup> It is part of a model of behaviour in which the motivation to act comes from 'drives' and the termination of action occurs when the drive is satisfied. The definition of drive-satisfaction varies upon aspirations and experience. Satisficing in economics is assumed to be less important because standard economics assumes that individuals are objectively or globally substantively rational, expected-utility maximizers. Of course these assumptions amount to nothing more than assuming away the importance of satisficing.

However, in the real world inhabited by BRP, perception and cognition do not merely passively filter only a small part of the entire environment into our consciousness. Our senses filter out more than 99 per cent of the entire amount of new information generated by our entire environment before it reaches our consciousness. Given these facts, human behaviour is in most cases restricted to satisficing behaviour. Rationality is thus bounded by the complexity of the world we live in relative to our cognitive abilities. It seems intuitively obvious to the casual observer that BR is more descriptive of the way people with modest computational abilities make decisions, stay alive and even thrive.<sup>28</sup> Intuitive rationality (IR) is a subset of BR, but more about this later.

Because rationality is bounded, the process we use in making the best decisions we can becomes more important. Simon thus considers behaviour to be rational when it is the outcome of an appropriate deliberation *process*. Behaviour is procedurally rational when it is the outcome of an appropriate deliberation process. Behaviour is procedurally irrational when it is the outcome of impulsive behaviour.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.2. Rationality and chess

There are about 30 legal moves in a chess game. Each move and its response creates an average of about 1,000 contingencies. In a 40-move chess game there are about 10<sup>120</sup> contingencies. Chess masters are believed to look at no more than 100 contingencies, only 10 per cent of the possibilities existing for *one* move and a response.<sup>30</sup> Beginning with an inordinately large number of possibilities, chess masters—and humans in general—search for outcomes whose utility values are at least satisfactory. Once found, the search stops. In other words, chess masters are satisficers, and their rationality is bounded by their limited cognitive capacity relative to their environment.

Chess grandmasters take so little time to decide on a move that Simon says that it is not possible for their moves to be the product of "careful analysis".<sup>31</sup> A grandmaster takes five or ten seconds before making a strong move, which 80-90 per cent of the time proves to be correct and one that is "objectively best in the position".<sup>32</sup> Their skill barely diminishes when they play 50 opponents at once rather than one opponent. How do they do it? When grandmasters are asked how they play, they respond with the words intuition and professional judgment. Simon says that intuition is a "label for a *process*, not an explanation of it".<sup>33</sup> The process is subconscious pattern recognition based on experiences stored in memory and retrieved when needed. While short-term memory can store only a relatively small amount of information, long-term memory is, metaphorically speaking, a large encyclopedia with an elaborate index, in which information is cross-referenced. Cross-referencing means that information is associative with one piece of information linked or associated with other associated thoughts. Cross-referencing and chunking makes subconscious pattern recognition or intuition easier.

Studies on recognition among chess masters have used eye movements to assess recognition abilities. Chess masters examining a previously unknown board position taken from an actual game, immediately—within two seconds—shift their eyes to the most relevant part of the board. This means that they immediately grasp or 'see' the most important relationships on the board. Simon concludes that it is sufficient to state

that a chess master's performance is based on a knowledge of chess and an act of (subconscious) pattern recognition. In fact, Simon helped develop a computer program with the ability to mimic the eye movements of a chess master. His computer program and human chess masters make the same mistakes and both recover in a similar way. For example, in one game in which a queen was in trouble, the program did exactly what a human would do, not only to save the queen but to checkmate the opponent. Simon adds that the ultimate nature of human intellectual activity is best known through a chess-playing machine. Human or machine experts at chess—or experts in any field of activity—are expert (in part) because of their ability for subconscious pattern recognition.

#### 4. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Writing in 1966, Simon<sup>34</sup> believed that the word 'mysterious' was the adjective most often used to describe thinking, but that mysterious no longer applied. The reason being increases in knowledge about the process of thinking based on AI—that is, computer programs that mimic human problem solving.<sup>35</sup> Simon's view of thinking affected by AI is that thinking is a form of information processing. Both human thinking and information-processing programs perform three similar operations: they scan data for patterns, they store the patterns in memory and they apply the patterns to make inferences or extrapolations. In fact, some programs reproduce and even outperform human experts at problem solving. Simon concluded that there is sufficient reason to believe that some kinds of human thinking closely parallel the operations of an information-processing computer program. AI also led him to conclude that intuition is a subset of thinking. The fact that the mind is a serial information processor—it performs one (or only a very few) operations at a time—places severe limits on human attention, binds our rationality and limits our capabilities for problem solving to a set of satisficing rather than maximizing solutions.

Problem solving thus involves two generalizations. First, a selective trial-and-error search is made, which by necessity can only consider a relatively few possible solutions. The solution is thus a satisficing solution and the search is based on rules-of-thumb or heuristics. Second, one of the basic heuristics is means-end analysis. Means-end analysis involves three steps. First, the current situation is compared to a goal and differences between them are noted. Second, a memory search is performed to identify an operator that can bring the current situation more in line with the goal. Third, the operator is applied in the hope of getting closer to the goal.

Since computers solve problems as humans do, using heuristics and means-end analysis, Simon concluded that computers display intelligence, defined as behaviour that is appropriate to the goal and adaptive to the environment. Intelligence allows the limited processing capacity of the organism, be it man or machine, to use efficient search procedures to generate possible solutions, with the most likely solutions being generated early in the search process.<sup>36</sup> In order to test whether machines display intelligence, Simon (and his colleagues) identified tasks requiring intelligence and then built computer programs which carried out these tasks. These tasks included playing chess, solving maths and physics problems, diagnosing disease, making discoveries in science and even formulating hypotheses and testing them empirically. In doing these things, Simon showed that computers 'think' and that they possess—artificial or man-made—intelligence.

##### 4.1. Machines who 'think'

Simon's machines think, in that they recognize patterns and apply 'if-then' rules in making decisions. Boden, in her book *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms*,<sup>37</sup> uses the example of soybean diseases to show that a set of 'if-then' rules incorporated into a computer program allows the program to find patterns in a maze of data on soybean symptoms and then correctly to diagnose soybean diseases. Programs such as the ID3 algorithm not only diagnose soybean diseases with an accuracy that would make any psychic jealous, but do so with maximum efficiency. That is, they ask the right questions in the right order so as to make the right diagnoses in the minimum amount of time. ID3 has discovered patterns in data that humans have not and it has discovered strategies in chess previously unknown by chess masters. Computer programs have been developed that input and output words, formulae, images and musical notations. These computer programs have been said to display creativity.

The first AI program, developed by Simon, is the logic theorist (LT). Written in 1956, LT discovers proofs for theorems contained in Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell's *Principia Mathematica*.<sup>38</sup> In order to do this, LT mimics expert human decision makers by working 'backward'. Both LT and expert human decision makers use information about the goal to eliminate many paths without having to try them. Human novices, on the other hand, solve problems in a more time-consuming, inefficient 'forward' manner.

Work on LT demonstrated to Simon that trial-and-error (a procedure of science) and insight (an apparent discontinuity or mystery) are complementary with each other. LT also led Simon to conclude that the human brain is analogous to a digital computer. The value of the brain-as-computer metaphor is that it takes the mystery out of concepts such as intuition and insight.<sup>39</sup>

The general problem solver (GPS), an early program developed in 1957, engaged in means–end analysis, a basic heuristic in problem solving. The EPAM program<sup>40</sup> simulates human recognition or learning, while the MAPP program<sup>41</sup> simulates the ability to recognize patterns in a manner similar to chess (grand) masters. The ‘adaptive production system’ (APS) program engages in learning-by-doing and learning-by-example. The APS program learns-by-example to solve algebraic problems, inspecting each step in an algebraic problem placed in its memory. When faced with any algebraic problem it goes through the steps and arrives at a solution to a particular problem. The APS program learns-by-doing an algebraic problem and then uses that example to learn how to solve other algebra problems.

Simon and his colleagues also developed several programs that make discoveries in science, including BACON, BLACK, GLAUBER and STAHL. BACON analyzes data sets and derives quantitative relationships among data sets. BACON ‘discovered’ many well-known scientific laws, including Galileo’s law of uniform acceleration, Kepler’s third law, Boyle’s law and Ohm’s law.<sup>42</sup> It does so by considering the simplest explanation (pattern) first, before moving on to more complex explanations. BLACK, named after Joseph Black, works on situations in which two substances are additive. If analyzing the data shows that the two substances are not additive, then BLACK finds one or more *unobservable* properties of the substances to explain non-additivity.

GLAUBER, named after the chemist Johann Glauber, divides substances into groups according to their observable properties. Similar to Glauber, GLAUBER uses a *sample* of acids and alkalis to infer correctly that every acid reacts with alkalis to form salt. STAHL, named after chemist Georg Stahl, is given a set of heuristics used by chemists and a list of experimental results on the nature of combustion in historical sequence. Similar to human chemists, STAHL’s hypotheses about combustion are sometimes incorrect, but, similar to human chemists, STAHL reviews previous experimental results and corrects its mistakes. The result is that STAHL correctly reproduced the approximately 80-year development of the oxygen theory of combustion from the phlogiston theory.

## 5. INTUITION: SIMON’S EARLY AND LATER VIEWS

In the second edition of *Administrative Behavior*,<sup>43</sup> Simon recognized the value of experience and habit in decision making. Experience becomes human capital; habit becomes internalized as unconscious and automatic reflex actions. Decision making that uses experience and habit relies on ‘clues’. Whether clues are recognized consciously or known only to the subconscious, they enhance our understanding of particular situations and improve decision making. Experience and habit become part of effective procedures in decision making. Simon comments that “human rationality relies heavily upon the psychological and artificial associational and indexing devices that make the store of memory accessible when it is needed for the making of decisions”.<sup>44</sup> In the fourth edition of *Administrative Behavior* (1997), with AI as his framework, Simon would refer to the associational and indexing devices of memory as intuition.<sup>45</sup>

Another value of experience and habit in performing purposive or rational behaviour is that it “permits conservation of mental effort by withdrawing from the area of conscious thought those aspects of the situation that are repetitive”.<sup>46</sup> And it permits similar stimuli or situations to be met with similar responses or reactions, without the need for a conscious rethinking of the decision to bring about the proper action.<sup>47</sup> In the fourth edition, Simon would also refer to this as intuition.<sup>48</sup>

In the earlier editions of *Administrative Behavior*, Simon did not discuss intuition because he was uncertain about the nature of subconscious thinking processes. In the fourth edition he introduced material about intuition because, he says, “...we have acquired a solid understanding of what the judgmental and intuitive processes are”.<sup>49</sup>

These processes are subconscious and/or rapid and are based on experience that bypasses a conscious “orderly sequential analysis” of a situation. Simon went so far as to say that intuition is actually analytical thinking “frozen into habit and into the capacity for rapid response through recognition of familiar kinds of situations”.<sup>50</sup> Intuition and analysis are complementary with each other and almost always present in all human decisions, including those of scientists. Thinking about the use of intuition among scientists in general and physicists in particular, Simon spoke about “physical intuition”,<sup>51</sup> that is, intuition used by physicists or scientists in general.

The combination of intuition and analysis is present in chess grandmasters, as chess “is usually believed to require a high level of intellect”<sup>52</sup> and grandmasters use the word intuition when describing how they do what they do in chess. Chess grandmasters take only a very few seconds to decide on their next move and then a longer period of time verifying that their ‘educated hunch’ is correct.

One test for the use of unobservable physical intuition was done with the use of protocol analysis, in which a novice and an expert were given a physics problem to solve and each person verbalized what they were thinking. The results showed that the more experienced person solved the problem in less time, required fewer steps to solve the problem, spent less time per step, did not write down as many relevant facts or equations to solve and expressed more confidence in themselves. In essence, the skilled person took a series of appropriate shortcuts and avoided conscious calculation of how to solve the problem. This is possible because an expert’s knowledge is similar to an encyclopedia with a large index in which entries are cross-referenced. That is, not only does the expert have more knowledge than the novice, but the expert can more rapidly elicit relevant facts from memory. The expert exhibits “the usual appearance of intuition”, while the novice uses more “conscious and explicit analysis”.<sup>53</sup> The conclusion Simon reaches is that experience allows people to make decisions intuitively, or judgements “without careful analysis and calculation”.<sup>54</sup>

Simon says that intuition “... is no deeper than the explanation of your ability, in a matter of seconds, to recognize one of your friends whom you meet on the path tomorrow as you are going to class”.<sup>55</sup> Experience and knowledge are the key to intuition because, paraphrasing Poincaré, “inspiration comes only to the prepared mind”.<sup>56</sup> In other words, while the expert’s approach is more “physical” or “primitive”,<sup>57</sup> the novice’s approach is more algebraic. This capacity, when observed among chess grandmasters and expert decision makers in general, is called intuition; when observed among physicists it is called physical intuition.

### 5.1. Intuitive rationality

Intuition is useful and is a subset of BR. IR and BR are consistent with each other and all ‘serious thinking’ uses both. Both use search-like processes, both lead to sudden recognition of underlying patterns, and the focus of one’s attention plays a major role in the choices one makes. Intuition is said to be what is responsible for people finding solutions to problems ‘suddenly’ and having the *eureka* moment. With AI as a framework,

Simon understood these to be genuine experiences that lead to judgements that “frequently are correct”.<sup>58</sup> Simon helped create computer programs that mimic expert human decision makers who use the word intuition as a label for how they make decisions. Creating machines that think led Simon to his ‘explanation’ for that very human phenomenon called intuition.<sup>59</sup>

## 6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Simon made significant overlapping contributions to various fields, including economics, psychology, cognitive science, decision theory and organization theory. Simon challenged economic theory by postulating that human rationality is bounded. He emphasized the limits in human computational abilities and memory relative to the information provided continuously by the environment. This concept of BR became relevant to his work on organizations, on human decision making, problem solving and scientific discovery. The concept of BR may be seen as the key interface between his work in economics and psychology.<sup>60</sup> BR also can be seen in his work on AI. After all, if human rationality and problem solving is limited by our computational capacities and memory, can computer programs with greater computational capacity and memory help extend our problem-solving abilities?

Simon’s challenge to economics and his work on AI led him to view human thinking as an example of information processing. It led him to view human and artificial intelligence as depending upon information processing leading to pattern recognition. And this led him to his understanding that human intuition is subconscious information processing leading to subconscious pattern recognition. John Stuart Mill held similar views about intuition as subconscious pattern recognition. Unfortunately for him, he lived before Simon helped develop the field of AI.

Simon makes it clear that intuition or subconscious pattern recognition is a positive externality of an extensive period of study and is part of the process of human information processing, albeit a subconscious part. With this in mind, intuition extends our ability to use our computational capacities and memory, extends the boundary of our ability for rational behaviour, and hence enhances our ability for procedural rationality. The question is, can we enhance our intuition?



Acknowledgements

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2. Simon had his own intuitive experiences. His preliminary exam in statistics for the University of Chicago in 1940 required that he produce a derivation of the chi-square statistic: he provided two derivations. He says, "While taking my shower on the morning of that exam, it came to me with blinding and unaccountable certainty that there would be a question on chi-square, and I boned up on it before setting out for the exam room. On no other occasion have I had such loving attention from my guardian angel" (Simon, H, *Models of my Life*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1996, p. 84). Simon had been contemplating programming computers to simulate chess playing since the early 1950s. In 1955, during a walk on the campus of Columbia University, he says, "Suddenly, I had a clear conviction that we could program a machine to solve such problems" (Simon, *Models of my Life*, p. 203). Speaking about government employees specializing in security, he said, "Intuitively, they know that intellectuals seek to be loyal to abstractions like 'truth', 'virtue', or 'freedom', rather than to a national state or its flag" (Simon, H, "Otto Selz and information-processing psychology", *Models of Thought: Volume 2*, H Simon ed., New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1989, pp. 30-39: p. 33.

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13. Simon, H, *Administrative Behavior*, 2nd edition, New York: Free Press, 1965, p. 25.

14. Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, 2nd edition, p. 60.

15. Simon, *Models of my Life*.

16. Simon, *Models of my Life*.

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Joachim Halse

## Between Design and Anthropology: Improvising Embodied Interaction

*“But is not every ethnographer something of a surrealist, a reinventor and reshuffler of realities?”<sup>1</sup>*

### WHAT IF THINGS WERE DIFFERENT?

Ethnographic accounts from all over the world have revealed how taken-for-granted practices often, if not always, rest on historical contingencies. Especially when the topic is controversial, the ethnographic stance has been to remind us that there is nothing natural or essentially right in the current state of affairs. Things could, in principle, always be different.<sup>2</sup> What I want to do with the ethnographic heritage is to commit more to the experiment; to continue a bit further with the idea that things could be different by asking the playful follow-up question that is usually not posed in traditional ethnography: what if things *were* different? What if airy ideas about more diverse practices and wishful thinking about more interesting technological experiences were given some sort of tangible form? How would they play out among the subjects of the study, if they were invited to partake in the experiment? What bodily resources could be drawn upon, if contingencies were explicitly staged and embodied as conditioning only one possible reality among others? How could the creative potential residing within the subjects' skill and practice be realized for purposes that reach beyond the individual?

With an understanding of design as “a process of invested inquiry and creation, where critical commentary is integral with the desire to improve, and which acquires direction from transactions and conversations among many actors in cooperation and competition”,<sup>3</sup> I wish to contribute to a design anthropology that takes the inescapable value-laden relations between ethnographer, informant and audience as an asset, rather than a necessary by-product, and thus put more emphasis on the ethnographic encounter as a moment of possibility. A design anthropological inquiry in this perspective centres on the possible and on that which can take new directions. Compared to the last 30 years of applying ethnographic techniques to design processes,<sup>4</sup> I propose instead to consider the design intervention as an occasion for ethnographic inquiry; not

into reality as such, but into things and practices that resist full articulation because they are in the making.

### INTERVENTIONS: PROPS AND MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT

Ethnographic encounters and the resulting accounts are sometimes conceived as co-produced realities, yet still in the general image of a descriptive research mode based largely on interview and observation.

In the empirical account below, as an ethnographer I explicitly bring a form of engagement to the encounter. The account is about a design intervention as much as it is an ethnographic encounter. I bring with me a set of props that resemble possible future technological devices, but they work like conversation pieces in the situation. They mark my interest in particular types of new technologies, but none of us are quite sure what that might mean, and their primary function is to facilitate an embodied exploration of possibilities. The props are the starting point for the encounter, but not the goal. Think of the design intervention not merely as a test or evaluation of a practical product suggestion, but rather as an intense manifestation of engagement both on the side of the informant and the ethnographer.

Ethnography is well equipped to observe bodily expressions, but when it comes to exploring how these might be different there is something to be learnt from performance studies.<sup>5</sup> The enactment recounted below draws on ideas and methods from performance studies, while still mimicking the exploratory and open-ended character of the ethnographic inquiry. Victor Turner's notion of liminality—of being betwixt and between categories—was perhaps most visible in extraordinary events like the carnival. But Turner also showed us how everyday life is full of social dramas that are staged, negotiated and resolved as if they were performances. As I will return to later, the attention to liminality and its transformative potential gain a renewed relevance in design interventions where practices are intentionally destabilized and in the making.

### REINVENTING MAINTENANCE WORK

In the project ‘Mobility in Maintenance’, my fellow PhD student Jens Pedersen<sup>6</sup> and I were commissioned by Microsoft Business Solutions (MBS) to explore possibilities for



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improving the daily planning and execution of service maintenance in manufacturing facilities by way of new mobile devices such as Pocket PCs, PDAs and Tablet PCs. Jens and I were concerned with combining ethnographic fieldwork with designerly exploration of new opportunities. For MBS, the concern was to probe the field of maintenance work for opportunities for developing new business models and IT systems.

During a workshop we shared our insights from brief field visits among practising service technicians with the present participants, approximately 12 software developers, interaction designers and the service technicians themselves. The goal of the workshop was to generate ideas for new solutions to improve maintenance work in this one particular manufacturing company by the name of 'KiM's'.

Among the system developers there was a general hope that a more efficient maintenance practice could be supported by IT systems if we were able to capture the data at source, and thus make available the right information at the right place. The two skilled service technicians Lasse and Palle, on the other hand, along with the video clips of their practice that we had prepared, showcased a complex professional work area with multiple parallel tasks, personal judgements and sudden shifts in priorities, leaving little hope for technological quick fixes.

On 18 May 2005, Jens and I travelled to 'KiM's' snack manufacturing facility in Sønderød to meet Lasse and Palle again. The goal of the day was to continue the exploration of the ideas from the previous workshop, but this time physically expressed as props made out of blue foam and in their intended context, i.e., in the hands of working service technicians on the actual factory shop floor. It was a work shift with regular maintenance tasks for Lasse and Palle. In the quiet tool area, where we met, I explained that we saw it also as an opportunity to explore what their work practice *could* be like.

In introducing the props to Palle, I paid much attention to their open-endedness and the invitation to appropriate them. The subsequent enactment was of course also framed by the suggested technological functionality, but that lies beyond the scope of the present discussion.

Leading us, thereafter, quickly in and out of the labyrinthine spaces between big industrial machines, Palle was in his element, pointing out one that needed special attention. It was currently not in operation and thus available for inspection and preventive maintenance care, Palle explained. He pushed a few buttons, starting up

the machine, listened to it and looked at it from different angles. While Palle mentioned a special tool for listening to the inner sounds of mechanical parts, he slipped out his screwdriver from his working pants using that instead to point at the motor gear, thus conveying the sounds from it to his ear, which he pressed against the other end of the screwdriver.

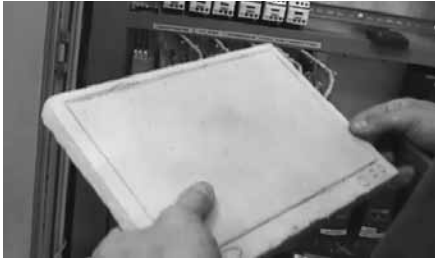
Though Palle had appeared somewhat taciturn and withholding during our last encounter in the design workshop, he now seemed energized or even rejuvenated as he engaged himself in the exploration of how he could put the imagined product concepts to use. Why had his reluctance or inability towards active participation in the analysis and idea generation at the workshop shifted to such an enthusiastic and voluble participation in the enactment? Probably because his knowledge of this place was grounded, embodied and at hand. Contrary to us, Palle knew exactly what he could do with these machines. This habitus was in his very body, as he moved confidently through the machine park, touching, looking and listening to the machines so familiar to him. Palle's easiness towards performing his regular work practices to the camera and us, did not, however, immediately apply to the way he handled the mock-ups.

### IMPROVISATIONAL PROPS

Palle had agreed to experiment with making use of a range of pieces of blue polystyrene foam, which were introduced to him as mock-ups of ideas for new mobile applications. In this sense, they were placeholders for a complex of extremely portable hardware platforms, software applications dedicated to specific maintenance tasks, technological infrastructure for wireless communication, network connections with the corporate information system and with external suppliers and service providers, and many more details that had not yet been specified or even thought of. Although the mock-ups could be taken to represent, for example, a Pocket PC running a Windows operating system and the enterprise resource planning system Axapta with special extensions, we sought to avoid closing down the scope of possible applications by adhering to the conventions connoted by these systems. In contrast to the complexity of their imaginative actualization, their immediate appearance was deliberately simplified, almost to the extent where *any* portable object could have been used.

Describing the role of theatrical props in performance activities, Richard Schechner argues that





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*during the performance these objects are of extreme importance, often the focus of the whole activity. Sometimes, as in theater and children's play, they are decisive in creating the symbolic reality. The 'otherworldiness' of play, sports, games, theater, and ritual is enhanced by the extreme disparity between the value of the objects outside the activity when compared to their value as foci of the activity.<sup>7</sup>*

As foci of the enactment, the mock-ups did stand out in their peculiar light-blue colour, and were thus distinctly not just any objects. Rather, they stood out as a collection of foreign objects, not part of the regular work environment, but introduced to prompt reflection and the possibility of change. The general openness for interpretation is indicative of the mock-ups' function as improvisational props; they are intended to be attributed new meanings in the course of the performance, meanings that cannot be predicted, but which emerge as the actor makes use of them in responding to the ad hoc challenges of situated maintenance practice.

### SOMETHING AT STAKE

While Palle was performing the listening-through-a-screwdriver act, I momentarily switched from ethnographic observer to a mode of 'stage management', asking suggestively if it would make sense for him to record the sound with the handheld mock-up, in order to provide a richer description of the worn parts of the machine for future reference. Palle clearly found this suggestion far-fetched, but he smilingly went on to carry out the suggested action. He pressed the handheld mock-up towards the tip of the screwdriver instead of pressing his ear against it, pretending to record the sound. Palle turned his head, looking at us over his shoulder, illustrating with a distancing grin how untenable the idea was to him. In more polite ways he then explained to us why this would not work in practice for him.

The situation demonstrates the tension between engaged participation and the use of a script for the performance. Looking back, I was eager to get the mock-ups activated on the stage. When, as 'stage manager' of the performance, I was trying too hard to get Palle to act out particular ideas for interaction, it remained his privilege to withdraw his engagement from the performance and 'just to do as I told him to', withdrawing his own stakes in the act.

While the design team as a whole had surely devised many preconceptions of how we thought the mock-ups could be meaningfully used by Palle and Lasse, the whole idea

of bringing them back to the shop floor at this early stage of design was not to add visual demonstrations of them, but rather to accelerate the open-ended exploration of their value and relevance in a bodily way. The challenge was to develop the concepts further by drawing on the rich knowledge of maintenance practice embodied in the shop-floor environment. The last thing we wanted was to end up with a performance that rendered Palle and Lasse awkward puppets in a pastiche of their own lives, because we had tried to direct them too strictly. Palle's role was not to present a fictional character whose life was separable from his own, but to show himself in a special and partially new way. In keeping too strictly to a preconceived script for enactment, there is an immediate risk of losing the users' engaged participation and, with that, both the effectiveness and legitimacy of the participatory approach.

### BETWEEN IMPROVISATION AND SCRIPT

On the other hand, working with no script at all, based on the false assumption that it would result in more 'free' thinking and acting, would leave the untrained performer with an unbearable responsibility to satisfy criteria for success that were unknown to him. The script and the physical mock-ups constitute a necessary initiative for the performer to respond to, while they also convey a sense of what, as design researchers, we are after. Instead of providing Lasse and Palle a detailed manuscript for the drama, they were given a sketch of the basic functions of each of the design concepts and a few simple ideas for their application. The goal was to provide just enough framing and scripting to move them and begin a dialogue, while leaving as much space for improvisation as possible.

With regard to the improvisational actor, Schechner pointed out that s/he "is freed from both director and drama, but s/he will therefore have to make fuller use of conventions (stock situations and characters, audience's expectations, etc.) and the physical space".<sup>8</sup> Our case is not a fully improvisational act, as ongoing interruptions to give directions and stage management necessarily occur, and the act is supported by pre-conceived dramatic situations for the actor to fall back upon, should the improvisation not occur as smoothly as intended. The demand to make fuller use of conventions and the physical space is still, however, precisely the ambition of the enactment; to mobilize the performer's memories of prior incidents, colleagues' past remarks and concerns, the constraints and possibilities embodied in the physical space of machines and their typical behaviour. The demand on the performer to make use of the audience's expectations deserves special attention here. The audience of this particular improvisational act

consisted of two design researchers immediately present—Jens and I—and an extended design team from MBS, whose attention was mediated by the video camera. Compared to the individuals making up audiences in traditional theatres, the expectations of this audience had a rather explicit collective direction towards the development of the performance, a direction towards the design of certain types of mobile applications.

During this project the ability to carry out preventive maintenance care, rather than repairing more urgent breakdowns, was an oft-mentioned goal for maintenance practice in general. As we walk from the workshop area, having introduced Palle to the design ideas and the session of enactment, he sets the scene by stating that when he has time to initiate preventive maintenance care “it will typically be an area like this, which is stopped, that I would go through”. With regard to using the mock-ups as props in the performance, however, Palle has no clear idea about his audience’s expectations. In the beginning, he is hesitant in handling them because he does not know what we are after. And while Palle tries to figure it out iteratively, through acting and reading the response, we on our side try to tell him through suggestions that are ambiguous enough to give him a chance to appropriate them and turn them around for his own purposes. The fact that the articulation of the audience’s expectations and the performer’s making use of them only gradually develop during the performance is no surprise, since we have few established protocols to base our interactions on: improvised future scenarios are far from an established genre; Palle is trained as a smith not as an actor, and Jens and I are but amateur stage managers. But, more importantly, it illustrates on a small scale the dialogical character of this design process.

Rather than stating too flatly what applications we want to design—and thus reducing Palle to an illustrative character—or have Palle too directly articulate his needs for new applications—and thus shaping new technologies in the image of very confined practices—this design process is more like a dialogue, where participants continuously shift action from one frame of reference out to another. Use practice and design ideas are reciprocally and emergently intertwined in this tentative process of performing possibilities. The imagined technologies embedded in the mock-ups prompt Palle to act in ways not otherwise possible; and the imaginative ways that Palle engages the mock-ups in response to his bodily work practices alter the potential for what they could become as functional products. The temporality of the partly-improvised performance is where the contours of both use practice and design ideas emerge; it is where the construction and interactive stabilization of new design possibilities for practice and technology are tried out.

## STEPPING IN AND OUT OF THE PERFORMANCE

With no clear demarcation of the suspension of ‘real life’ and the beginning of the enactment, Palle walks to the other end of the machine and begins to check the state of a bearing. As he tries to make use of the handheld prop to document the bearing’s state, he falls out of character and addresses us as stage managers rather than audience: “but it is not that easy to capture on video with the handheld”. To overcome this trouble, I suggest that he take a still picture of it instead (since that would require less extraneous bodily comportment). Palle accepts that a still picture would suffice for documenting the exact physical location of the bearing. Having taken the picture he returns to the main operating panel of the machine, where he has mounted the tablet mock-up. Again Palle hesitates, now in transferring the image from the little handheld to the display of the larger tablet mock-up.

This hesitant bodily dialogue, both on the part of the stage managers and the performer—or the design researchers and the user—gradually evolved into a smoother interaction in the scenarios performed later. It is important to note that the goal of the future scenario is the opposite of orthodox acting—it is not about skilfully imitating nature, representation. There are rough and unexpected turbulences, troubled interruptions and hesitance. Although characteristic of all the future scenarios I have been engaged with, these are not merely stylistic, but rather the genuine meeting between user and design problem. Around two hours after we arrived at the factory that day, Palle and Lasse had grown familiar enough with the design concepts, the mock-ups, our expectations and the ground rules of the performance that they began to draw more confidently on stock situations, improvise and add to the design concepts by bringing their own ideas into the performed situations. To provide but a little sign of this evolving appropriation of the mock-ups, Palle developed a little routine of silently slipping the handheld mock-up into the chest pocket of his working shirt, when not actively using it.

## NEGOTIATING WHAT TO PERFORM

One of the overarching issues in the project ‘Mobility in Maintenance’ was the idea and hope that mobile technology could help to capture the contextual circumstances for a machine that breaks down at the point in time of the breakdown. In the system-oriented lingo of MBS, this is referred to as “collecting the data at the source”, in order to make more accurate data available for the general information system, i.e., the enterprise



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resource planning (ERP) system. In the daily practice of Lasse and Palle, it was expressed as a need to know the specific details of breakdowns that often happen while they are not present at the particular machine. In addition, the operator who had been by the machine at the time of the breakdown was often no longer there when the service technicians arrive, sometimes hours later—either because he or she had shifted to another machine or gone home. It is in the interest of the operator to have the machine process as fast as possible, so it is not uncommon that when the service technicians arrive the machine has been restarted, sometimes processing a different product. One can imagine the difficulties of finding out what the exact settings of the machine had been, what sounds were heard, how the product was oriented on the conveyor belt or even what product was being processed at the time of the breakdown—information that is crucial from a maintenance perspective to prevent the breakdown from recurring.

When we first set out to produce a future scenario around this issue, Jens and I thought that we were about to enact a situation where the machine operator actively documents the circumstances of a breakdown for the future reference of service technicians. Lasse, however, had a different idea for the scenario. Some problems occur only periodically, which makes it difficult for the service technician to detect its cause. Despite our suggestions in the direction of cooperating with a machine operator, he insisted that it would be relevant and helpful to his repair practice to temporarily set up an unmanned video camera to monitor an error-prone machine. Upon returning to the machine he would then be able to play back exactly the sequence of the recording that matched the time of the breakdown. After a brief explanation to us about the rationale for this scenario, Lasse takes over the performance, almost completely improvising:

*Lasse: "I have seen on the big display over there (in the workshop) that they have had a problem with... with the last lid-mounting machine; but they have not figured out the cause. Now I have had the breakdown once, but I have not really... been able to conclude anything from it, because the machine operator has re-started it immediately after the fault. Then I arrive with my super camera and my stand... And the machine operator has stated loosely that the box stops there and there. And he can't really say anything more, he just re-starts it and it runs (goes to place a ladder in front of the lid-mounting machine). Then I put up my little camera (places the camera on a step of the ladder). Then it can sit here and record and I can leave it and continue with some of the tasks that I have. [...] Then the breakdown occurs again, and I can take my camera, go to the display and then see that it is so and so and so. It is this photocell that causes it (points*



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*towards a little flashing red light inside the machine). It is perhaps... a wire that is broken and it is vibrating and once in a while it short-circuits, and then that is where the problem is..." (Transcription from video of enactment, May 2005)*

This sequence is performed by Lasse based on no pre-given script for the action and with no explicit directions from us. Instead, he makes use of a stock situation from his own practice (troubleshooting periodic errors), a non-present prop (a mock-up suggestion for a large display hanging in the workshop area for overview of all current maintenance tasks), a new prop introduced on-the-spot by himself (the ladder used as a stand for the camera) and the given prop (the mock-up of a handheld media recording device). In his monologue to the audience that accompanies his bodily performance, he shifts between explanatory contextual information in the past participle—e.g., "I have seen on the big display over there..."—and direct descriptions of his immediate bodily actions in the present tense—e.g., "Then I put up my little camera".

The degree to which Lasse takes control of the enactment here is indicative of his acceptance of its rules: *a performative space has been created, where we can rearrange time, assign value to things and utilize prior incidents as resources, while realizing new ways of accomplishing goals*. Because Lasse accepts this temporary standing apart from ordinary work life at the shop floor, he is enabled in very concrete and bodily ways to articulate both the discrepancy between motivations for machine operators (to get the machine running here and now) and motivations for service technicians (to prevent the machine from stopping again), and his concern with accomplishing this maintenance goal through new media technologies.

## NEW OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH IMPROVISATION

In the video scenario "Diagnosing and Curing", Palle handles the tablet and the handheld mock-ups in similarly convincing ways as if they were familiar parts of his working environment. He shows no hesitation in acting as if he were actually video-recording the mechanical cycle of a faulty machine operation. In fact, after Palle has transferred the video recordings from the handheld to the tablet, while simultaneously explaining his interactions with the machine and the mock-ups to the audience, he introduces through improvisation a significant new application feature: by playing back the video of the faulty cycle in slow motion on the display of the tablet, the minute details of the mechanical fault is revealed to him—details that the fast operation of the machine had prevented his naked eye from registering.

The development from the first attempts at enactment with Lasse and Palle to the later ones illustrates the process of learning and the delicate negotiations that enabled us design researchers to suggest more relevant maintenance practices. It also led Lasse and Palle to take ownership of the design concepts to the extent where they not only handled them competently as if they were actually functioning, but allowed the props to activate their profound professional, embodied and otherwise unspoken knowledge of how to keep the machines running.

### THE ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTER—A MOMENT OF POSSIBILITY

This way of staging a possible future is consciously trying to create a state of limbo with regard to the ontological status of the performance. It is not in any strict empiricist sense an occasion for observing how maintenance work is regularly carried out; nor is it in any strict experimental sense an occasion for controlled evaluation of a product candidate. Yet it is both a continuation of the ethnographic field encounter, in that it yields new insights about maintenance practice, and a continuation of the generative design work, in that it evokes new ideas for the concept design. In Turner's words the state of the performance is betwixt and between.<sup>9</sup> The activity adheres neither to the ordinary order of everyday use, nor to the ordinary order of idea generation and evaluation. Yet it is both a continued inquiry into maintenance practice and an exploration of possibilities for changing it. The act of performance fosters identification between the dissimilar ontologies of the here-and-now and the there-and-then, without reducing them to sameness. The unsettled status of the performance works to create a space of grounded possibility, where the skilled practitioner is included in the effort to bring about design ideas that are rooted in his practice.

The range of opportunities that are enacted during this encounter with the service technicians Lasse and Palle is not merely interesting and valuable to Microsoft with respect to developing new systems and product concepts. Both the service technicians and the practice of maintenance work are becoming something new. When they take the lead, comment on insufficient tools and procedures and invent new practices by way of the foam props, new realities are being performed concretely here and now, and with Lasse and Palle as central actors.

There is a much broader potential for exploring the possible through ethnographic encounters than merely opening up product design to new user voices. Improvising embodied interaction, as laid out here, is a way to create a temporary overlap between an open ethnographic curiosity as to what is important for the Other, with designerly articulations of new possibilities. Sensitivity to how reality is sometimes confirmed, sometimes transformed through performances<sup>10</sup> is becoming foundational for a design anthropology that emphasizes the ethnographic encounter as a moment of possibility.

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Sophie Houdart

## Welcome to the “Small People-Texture Industry”! Human Figures in Architectural Perspective Drawings

*My name is Annlee! Annlee!  
You can spell it however you want!  
It doesn't matter! No it does not.*

*I was bought for 46 000 Yen.*

*46 000 Yen, paid to a design character company. “K” works!  
I ended up, I ended up, like some others, in a catalogue.  
Proposed to cartoon producers and comic book editors.  
Yeah! Like human, like Drop dead in a comic book!*

*Some other characters had the...  
Some other characters had the possibility of becoming a hero.  
They had a long psychological description, a personal history, material to produce a narration.*

*They were really expensive when I was cheap!  
Designed to join any kind of story,  
But with no chance to survive to any of them.*

*I / was never designed to survive...  
[...]  
I was bought, but strangely enough, I do not belong to anybody.  
I belong to whom is ever able to fill me with any kind of imaginary material,  
Anywhere out of the world.*

*I am an imaginary character.  
I am no ghost, just a shell.*

(Philippe Parreno & Pierre Huyghe, *Anywhere Out of the World*, 2000)

Annlee is a fictional character created by the French artists Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe on the basis of a manga character they acquired in Japan, which has been redesigned, repersonified, renamed. Since then, Annlee has appeared in a number of digital performances (“No Ghost, Just a Shell”, “One Million Kingdom”) that have continued to extract her from the anonymity of digital beings.

But the peculiarity of this situation (the way fictional beings can live their own lives and inhabit our imagination)<sup>1</sup> shouldn't mask the fact that such beings cohabit with us in more proximate ways. An essay in the *New York Times* from February 2011, “To sell the Future, Find the right ‘People Textures’...”,<sup>2</sup> couldn't but draw the attention of anyone interested in representation in architecture or more generally in the representation of humans at a time of progressive ontological complexity and innovation. Looking closely at the way in which “the little human figures who inhabit the rendered world” are produced, the article continues to note that “In general, they are a happy and healthy lot: they jog past environmentally responsible retail, stride in smart business attire toward gleaming office structures, hobnob in the former back alley magically converted to green space”. The writer, Rob Walker, then asks the question that I also have: “Where do these uncanny little citizens come from, and what are they really up to?”

Walker's article roughly argues that figuring people in perspective drawings (either on a real estate sign or in an article about a public works project) has become “its own subgenre”, supported by a whole design industry: from websites such as RealWorld Imagery, 1000Skies or CGarchitect to professional offices that offer services to architects, helping them produce convincing images for competitions. Among an amazing list of non-architectural objects (skies, plants and trees, vehicles, textures of any sort) that would easily echo those of Jorge Luis Borges, catalogues of small human figures offer the whole panoply of social diversity; with the limitation, however, that “you tend not to see people spraying graffiti or a homeless person sleeping in the alley... or rats”.<sup>3</sup>

In the architectural realm, the capacity of human figures in drawings to convince about the existence of a building finding its place in a physical and social environment has been relatively recent. When the architect Paul Bigot (1870-1942) worked at his reconstruction of Rome (a giant model of 50 square meters...), he added small figurines in order to “enhance the sense of reality”.<sup>4</sup> These ‘scalies’, as they are sometimes called today, are meant to give a sense of scale and to ‘subjectivize’ a project by conveying the impression that the building already exists *in a certain way*. The particular ontological nature of these figures becomes even more provocative when we note that the term



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[http://www.realworldimagery.com/people\\_images\\_clipart/young\\_people\\_specs.html](http://www.realworldimagery.com/people_images_clipart/young_people_specs.html)  
 >>  
[http://www.realworldimagery.com/plants/IM\\_PTS\\_specs.html](http://www.realworldimagery.com/plants/IM_PTS_specs.html)



'scalie' is also used in the world of role-playing games to name players who take on fictional anthropomorphic animal characters with human personalities and characteristics; specifically, those who role-play being a lizard-like human, sometimes a dragon or a snake-like human.<sup>5</sup> Far from being anecdotal, this connection points out that human figures in perspective drawings—though undoubtedly human in shape (let's just imagine an architectural project with lizards instead of humans...)—share properties with other beings and maintain, to say the least, a peculiar relationship with reality.

To get a clearer view of what is exactly at stake—in terms of ontology—in these perspective drawings, my aim is to review the purely commercial function of these images (the 'people marketing') and 'to go and see' what they are made of and the logic of their making.

## ARCHITECTURAL WORK AND ONTOLOGICAL FLATNESS

The history of architecture, and especially of its technical inscription devices,<sup>6</sup> shows that, far from being "a universal and transhistorical attribute of architectural practice", the act of drawing is a "relatively recent and historically situated" practice,<sup>7</sup> which progressively transformed the architect from craftsman or builder to artist. This historical statement is more than confirmed by contemporary observations. As soon as one enters an architect's office, images are obvious, everywhere, and are invasive to the point that "Like Magritte's pipe, the representation is almost more definitive than the thing itself".<sup>8</sup> And far from being confined to a merely artistic role, architectural representations have been described as part of the design process itself. Within this framework, perspective drawings, as demonstration tools, are based on specific visual devices aimed at boosting imagination and producing special visual effects. It is no coincidence that the computer techniques used to produce such effects, created in the early 1990s, have been borrowed from the Hollywood special effects industry (for instance Maya, the 3D graphic image-making software). The images produced by these techniques are multi-layer images, blending photographic elements, computer graphics and visual elements taken from databases. They are, therefore, composite, hybrid images, which are not photography *per se*, but seem to borrow some of its qualities and characteristics. The making of these perspective drawings involves interesting operations such as 'matching colours', 'mapping texture' or 'importing objects'. Transformation, combination or superimposition, alteration and also simulation, reproduction, enhancement and augmentation are but a few ways an architect can work on and experience these images.<sup>9</sup>

Tokyo, 2003. For weeks I have been following the work of architects and designers giving shape to the Japanese World Fair of 2005.<sup>10</sup> In *Land*, the design planning office, Ikebe, a young graphic designer, has to ensure graphic cohesion between several areas of the same site. Sitting at his desk, in front of his computer, Ikebe works with image files downloaded from the internet. The plans he receives from the architects working on the project contain captions stating the type of texture (wood, stone, and so on) they would like for each part of the building. Based on this synopsis, Ikebe "looks around for samples" and creates his own file to which he refers whenever alternatives are required. The catalogue he obtains in this way has no hierarchy or order of any kind, apart from the order of his virtual peregrinations, and includes people (bodily gestures/social postures), colours, motifs, textures (stone, wood) and all sorts of objects (flowers, skies, trees, cars, benches, etc.). The databases from which Ikebe takes his files show hundreds such items. Using the specific structure of digital technology, these databases (such as the well-known cgarchitect.com, 1000skies.com or realworldimagery.com) were originally created for local use in architects' offices some 15 years ago, and are now widely published and accessible on the web. More specifically, for this project Ikebe works with a whole set of Japanese-looking people, families and young couples, which are downloaded and then composed in such a way as purposely to avoid, according to the team, conceptual overflow or utopia: the family-oriented, intimate side of the event is given priority over its international character; its casual nature over its festive one...

As with any other digital objects used in such renderings, people are described by an image format (32-bit PSD or TIFF), an identification code (PEOPL903, 904, etc.) and the size, weight or resolution of the image (360 x 1027 pixels or 905 x 2270, etc.). These parameters would be the ones about which architects and designers are particularly cautious: the "compatibility between files generated by different programs" as much as the "import-export" logic being the basis of the actual "hybridity of modern visual aesthetics and the reappearance of the same design techniques across all output media".<sup>11</sup>

Beyond formalization as a consequence of digital media, it seems interesting here to note that, from an ontological perspective, every single picture element—a tree, sky, a person, etc.—has to be considered equally. In these nascent cosmologies, in the form of catalogues or lists of *things*, everything is treated alike and is basically of the same nature. There is no ontological difference between things, everything being submitted to the same encoding, copying, cutting-pasting and correcting processes. One can intervene indiscriminately in everything, and the very nature of being is suspended at this stage of the architectural work.

## DIGITALIZED PEOPLE: HOW TO GET THE RIGHT TEXTURE

Observation of the daily production of rendering shows, however, that it involves far more than 'testing' and trying out alternatives, reducing or increasing size until it actually *works*, and then merely 'pushing a button'. Rather, it involves compromises between elements that, after all, are not exactly of the same nature. The whole process is more about finding an appropriate way of making them cohabit.

The 'ready-made' people inhabiting Ikebe's files are part of 'People Collections' or 'Human Textures Collections': 'Business People', 'People on the Weekend', 'Young People' or 'People Walking', 'Urban Moods', 'Active People Collection', 'Cycling Collection', 'Medical People', even 'Crowds Textures'—all sub-categories available for consideration. Adding information to the digital characteristics mentioned above, people images are listed and depicted by "filename, gender, outdoor/indoor, ethnicity, age, action/posture, attire, view, and pixel width x pixel height". For instance, one can download "three males, Caucasian and Asian, walking, side-front view", coded PEOPL101, as part of the 'Business People' collection. By the same logic, one can find a "female, Asian, walking with dog and leash, side-rear view, summer attire" (code PEOPL218) among the 'People on the Weekend' collection.

Representative of a set of social behaviours defined at minima and devoid of context, these collections of people basically show bodies in various positions; generic bodies that are neither singular nor individuals. In other words, they are not real subjects; neither are they complete identities, in the way that, for instance, photographic portraits were used to figure legal representatives. They obtain meaning, however, in the relationships projected on their behalf with the virtual environment into which they are inserted, with other beings or objects surrounding them. In this matter, composing a rendering could technically resemble developing scenery for video games.

With a background in video games, Tom Marlin, quoted in Walker's *New York Times* article, explains that he found his way into the field by "learning how to incorporate photo-realistic surfaces and textures borrowed from real life". He describes how people textures are "created in long, single sessions in which scores of individuals in neutral day-to-day costumes (a blazer and tie; jeans and T-shirt) are photographed against a green screen and sign an all-purpose image waiver". He points out that "the most important factor is making sure any individual isn't so remarkable as to distract from the scene as a whole (or dressed in outfits that will quickly look dated). The idea is to sell the same scalies over and over". According to this idea, architects and designers won't

get any of the empty 'character'—as with Annlee—that has to be filled in with properties in order to look like an anime character able to live a decent life... There must be no ambiguity about the human nature of what one sees when looking at a perspective drawing designed to sell an architectural project.

However, the people figured in renderings are ambiguous in at least two aspects. First, although they share properties with trees, skies or vehicles, they very often express peculiarities that make them difficult to render. The transformation of human figures—often played by actors—into generic beings representing basic and average social behaviours, who could inhabit space without being noticed, doesn't seem enough to solve a problem that remains specific to human representations. According to Thomas Meyer and Alexander Ware of Archimation, a digital media company providing visual communication for architects and developers, "super-realistic looking images" exert a great fascination on architects and clients, as if realistic images—the ability to make elements of images cohabit realistically—were a better guarantee that the project were feasible. However, drawings that include people often lose the effect of reality: "we can do very realistic drawing, as long as we don't introduce people. You don't have these funny looking people..."<sup>12</sup> Introducing them into a landscape is said to be one of the most challenging areas of perspective drawings. Either people appear to float above the surface—as if *joints* in the composition were harder to dissimulate or the *fade* effect harder to produce—or drawings are victims of "over-definition of computer models"<sup>13</sup> and show over-standardized people. Therefore, despite being treated in the same way, some things or beings appear somehow to be resistant to *drawing*. Looking back on the history of architectural practices, the very *itemization* of things, proper to digital technologies, does not seem to be in question here. Mario Carpo, for example, shows how architecture during the Renaissance made much use of standardized and repeatable graphic components. Among the interchangeable graphics were landscapes, backgrounds and also body parts, which sometimes appeared repeatedly in different illustrations, prefiguring the "visionaries of visual standardization [...] no less numerous in the sixteenth century than in the twentieth",<sup>14</sup> as well as its counterpart, the creation of enormous and somehow non-manageable databases. Let's retain the lesson from history: the difficulty of importing human figures into perspective drawings while producing a convincing image cannot be due to digital formalization. People in a rendering, then, require a different method—at the time of Paul Bigot, too, those in charge of architectural representations solved the problem by allocating the representation of human figures to particular painters, while others were asked to concentrate on landscapes. Pushing the argument further, Mayer and Ware argue that people involve "a different level of being real".

The second aspect that makes human figures in renderings very ambiguous concerns the note on catalogues that specifies that “The images of persons depicted in this product are fictitious. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is purely coincidental.” The super-realistic look of renderings has to cope with the unreal nature of the humans that inhabit them. As in novels or movies, human figures are given the ontological status of fictional beings that *borrow* qualities from reality, but whose relationship with reality artificially stops there. People photographed assign the rights to their image to the website; the website becomes the owner of the image, then enabling its circulation on the web and its sale.

These preliminary thoughts should be deepened by a new investigation into one of those rendering companies, Artefactory or Archimation. Diagnosing what the post-information age would look like, Nicholas Negroponte, in his famous book *Being Digital*,<sup>15</sup> anticipated that humans and computers would, in the near future (where we are now), come closer—to the point where one would dissolve into the other. Depicting a world where bits would irrevocably substitute for atoms, the computer scientist argued that digital technologies would make humans go beyond themselves. Instead of asking what digital technologies do to humans, I have tried, on the contrary, to provide elements for thinking about the question of what humans do to digital technologies. How is it that human figures provide *resistance* to their extraction? How is it that, unlike Annlee, they cannot so easily go “anywhere out of the world”? Extraction—*because* it concerns human figures—receives new meanings here: to *extract* human qualities from reality, in order for images to take their place in a catalogue of images that can enter into endless compositions, is also to *extract*, in a legal sense, the identity of real subjects and individuals by having them sign a contract; to *extract* is also to accept that images are made in order to transform real people into fictional ones...

Rather than reading the case of human figures as an additional argument for the coming of a post-human age, it shows that digital media offer the opportunity for humans to express themselves along a wide spectrum of variability and complexity. Digital beings cannot be described purely as unreal or fictional, nor as real. During the process—of being photographed, of being un-shadowed, of becoming a generic being—they surely gain peculiarities, as much as they lose others.

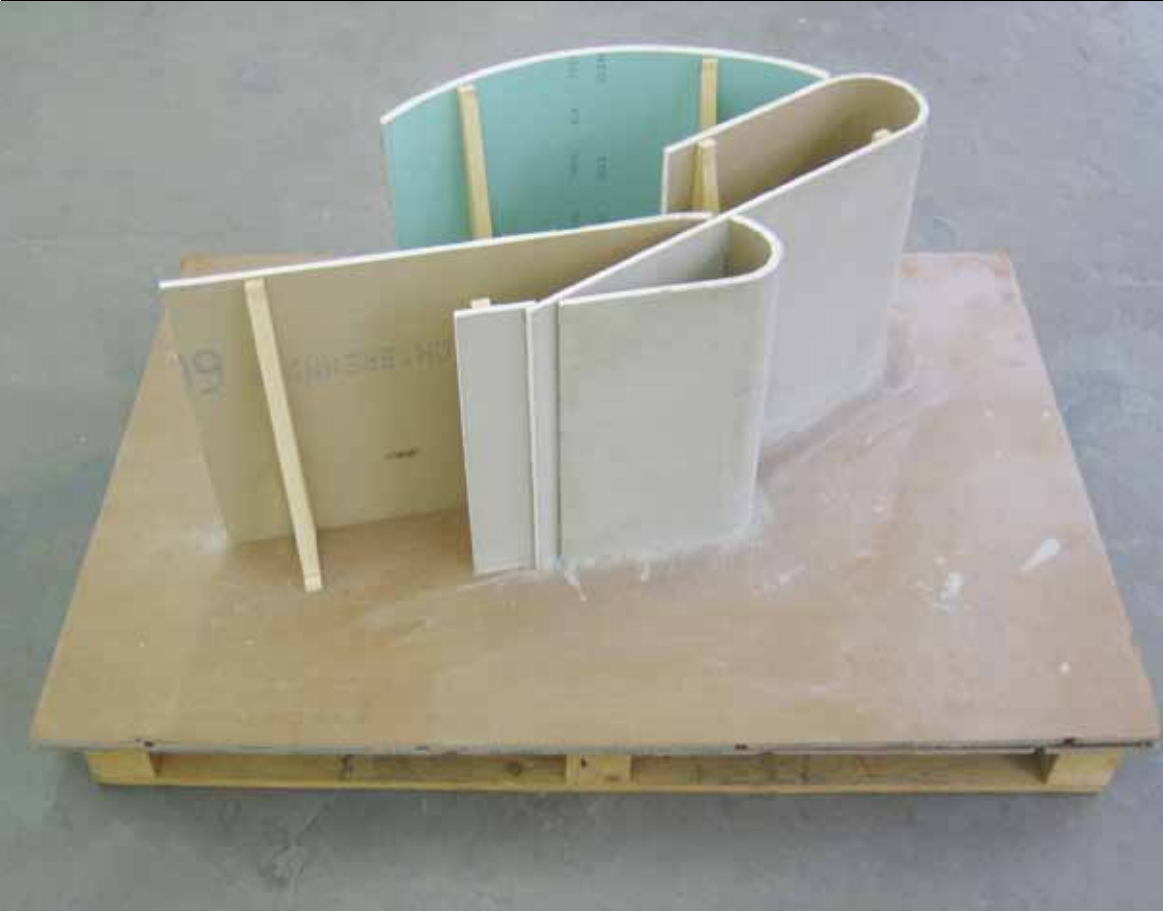
1. See the case studied by Jean-Paul Fourmentraux of a virtual theatre actor, in “Le comédien virtuel: Une redéfinition des frontières de l’activité artistique”, in S Houdart and O Thiery, *Humains, non humains: Comment repeupler les sciences sociales*, Paris: La Découverte, 2011.
2. Walker, Rob, “To sell the Future, Find the right ‘People Textures’ for the Sketch”, *The New York Times*,

Magazine, 4 February 2011, available online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/06/magazine/06fob-consumed-t.html>, accessed 26 November 2011. I would like to thank Tala Gharagozlou for bringing the article to my attention.

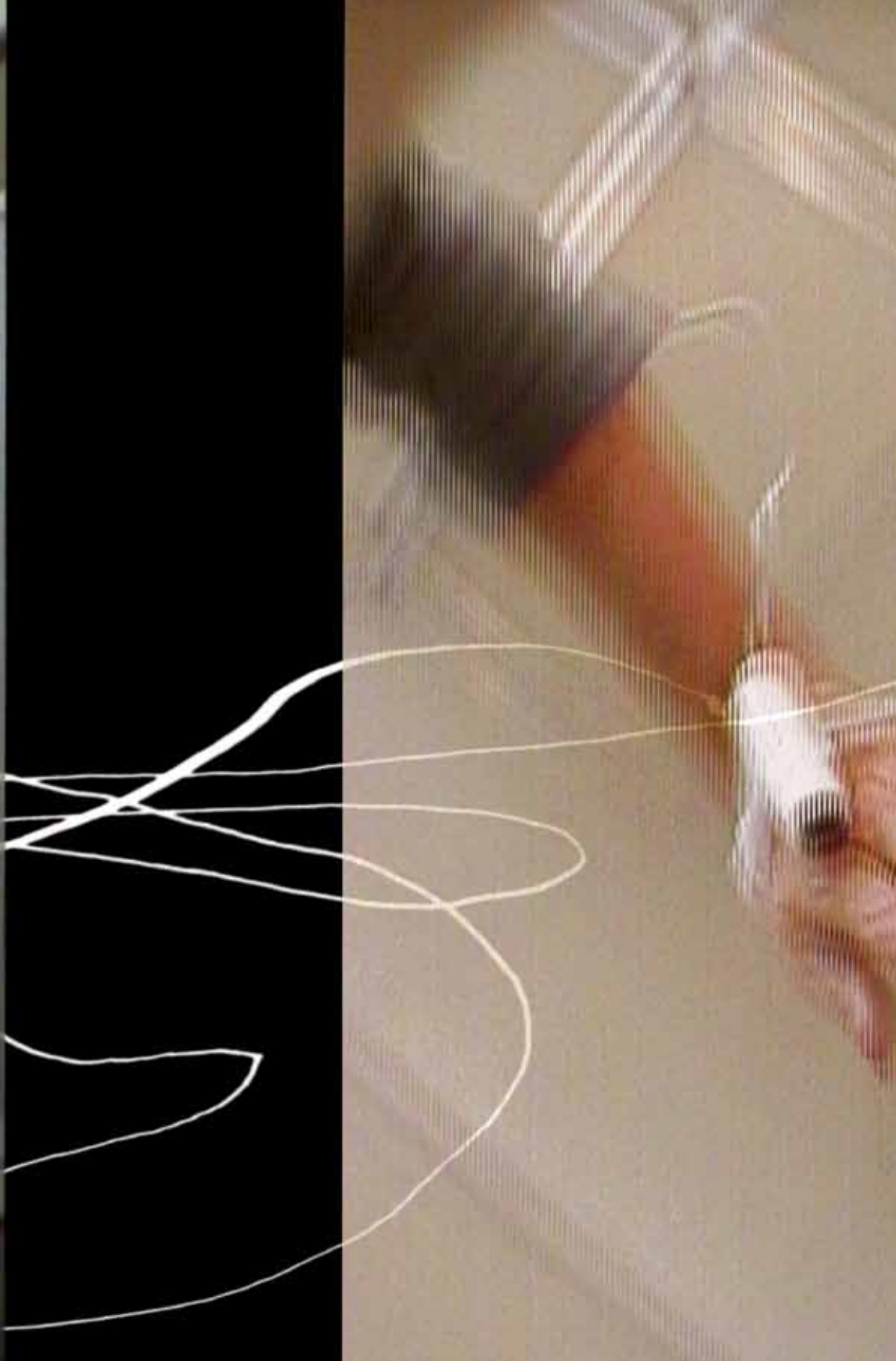
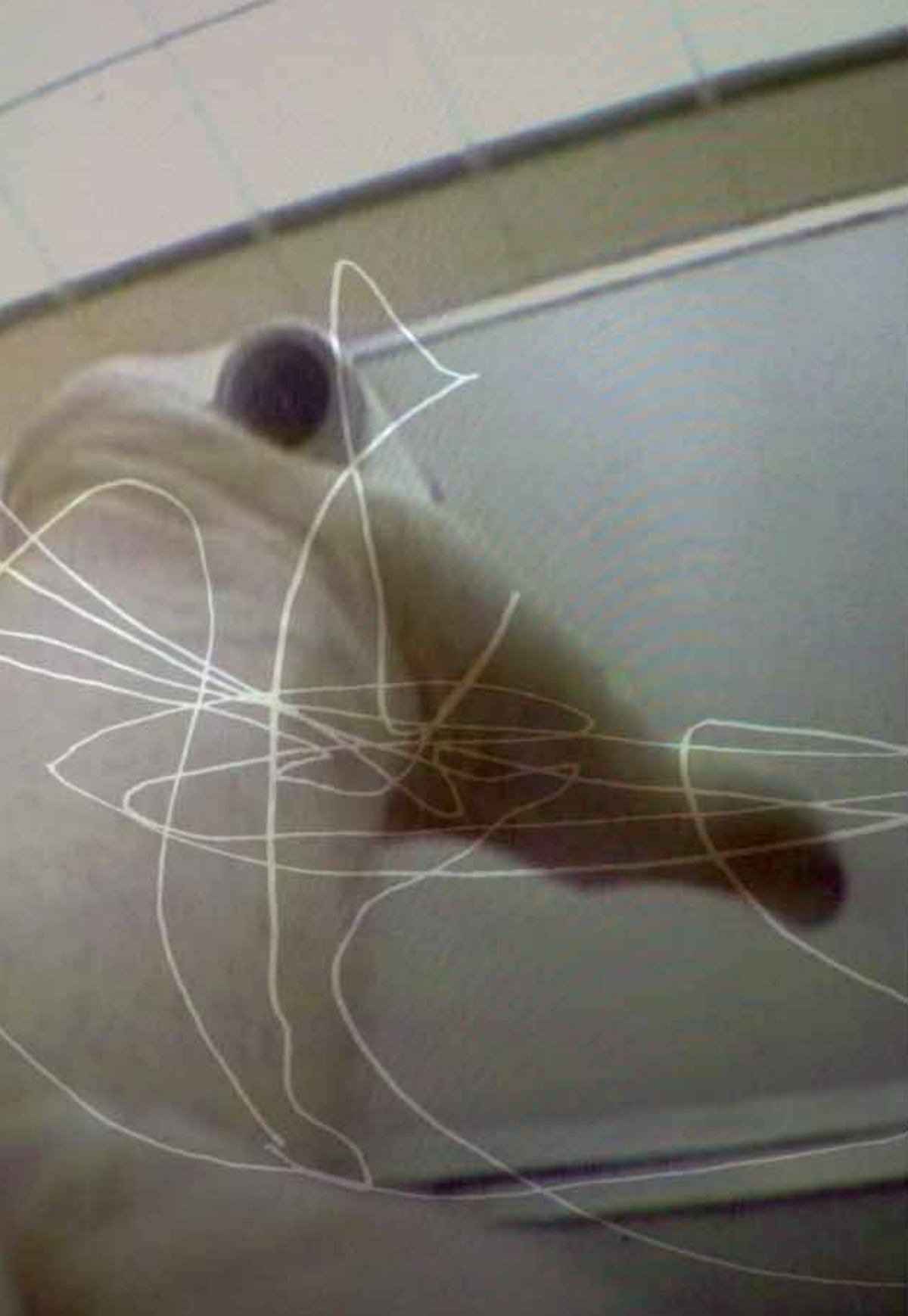
3. Walker, “To sell the Future”, quoting Geoff Manaugh.
4. See the excellent depiction by Manuel Royo, *Rome et l’architecte: Conception et esthétique du plan-relief de Paul Bigot*, Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2006.
5. For a definition, see <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=scalies>, accessed 26 November 2011.
6. See, for instance, Mario Carpo, *Architecture in the Age of Printing: Orality, Writing, Typography, and Printed Images in the History of Architectural Theory*, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2001; Alberto Perez-Gomez, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1992 [1983]; Alberto Perez-Gomez, “The Revelation of Order: Perspective and Architectural Representation”, *This is not Architecture*, Kester Rattenbury ed., London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 3-25; Edward Robbins, *Why Architects Draw*, Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1994.
7. Robbins, *Why Architects Draw*, p. 10.
8. Rattenbury, Kester ed., *This is not Architecture*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. xxi.
9. For more details on this aspect, see S Houdart, “Copying, Cutting and Pasting Social Spheres: Computer Designers’ Participation in Architectural Projects”, *Science Studies*, special issue on “Understanding Architecture, Accounting Society”, vol. 21, no. 1, 2008, pp. 47-63.
10. Over a period of six years, between 2000 and 2006, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Japan (one year in 2000, then eight months in 2003, and once a year for shorter stays). The first long stay was mainly devoted to meeting organizers from different committees, and planners who were responsible for conceptualizing the theme of the Expo. Much of the discourse was redundant, however, and convinced me to look for more concrete aspects, so I came back to Japan to do fieldwork in two of the main architectural and design studios involved in shaping the Expo site, namely Kengo Kuma & Associates and Land (Tokyo). There, I attended meetings and work sessions related to the Expo project and observed the daily making and unmaking of drafts, models and drawings. A manuscript is currently in preparation on the Japanese World Fair. See also S Houdart and C Minato, *Kuma Kengo: An unconventional Monograph*, Paris: Editions Donner Lieu, 2009.
11. Manovich, Lev, “Import/Export”, *Software Studies: A Lexicon*, Matthew Fuller ed., Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2008.
12. Unpublished communication, “Archimation: Image Production in Practice” Workshop “The Artistry of Thinking like an Architect”, organized by Jean-Baptiste Joly and Albená Yaneva, Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, 12-14 May 2005.
13. Moreau, D, “La petite fabrique d’effets spéciaux: Artefactory au générique”, *L’Architecture d’Aujourd’hui*, no. 354, 2004, pp. 72-79: 74.
14. Carpo, *Architecture in the Age of Printing*, p. 53.
15. Negroponte, Nicholas, *Being Digital*, New York: Vintage Books, 1995.



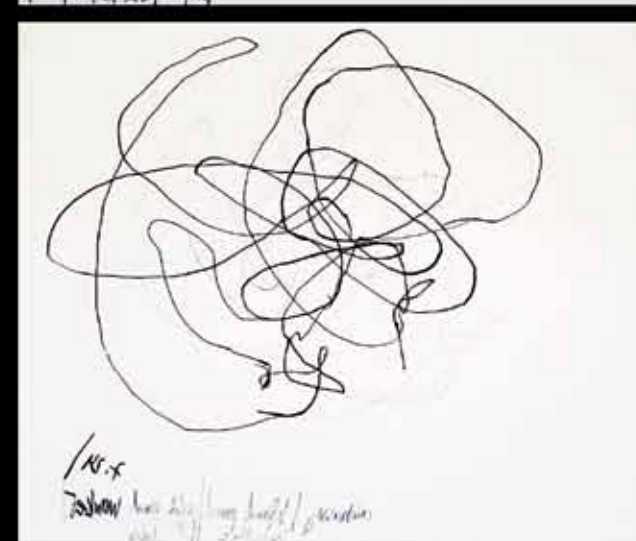
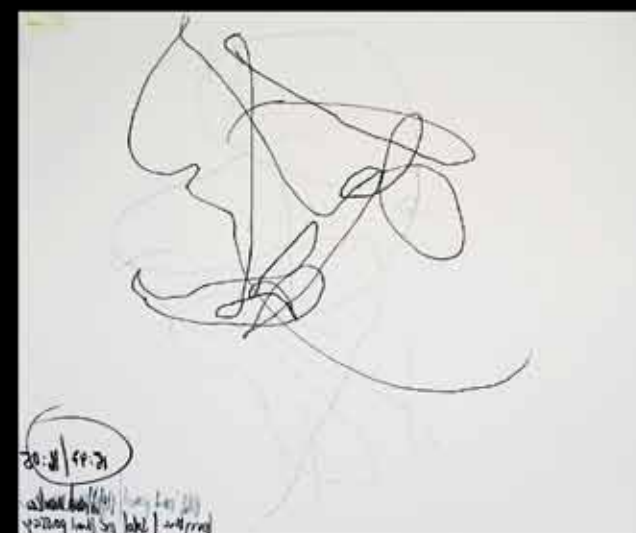
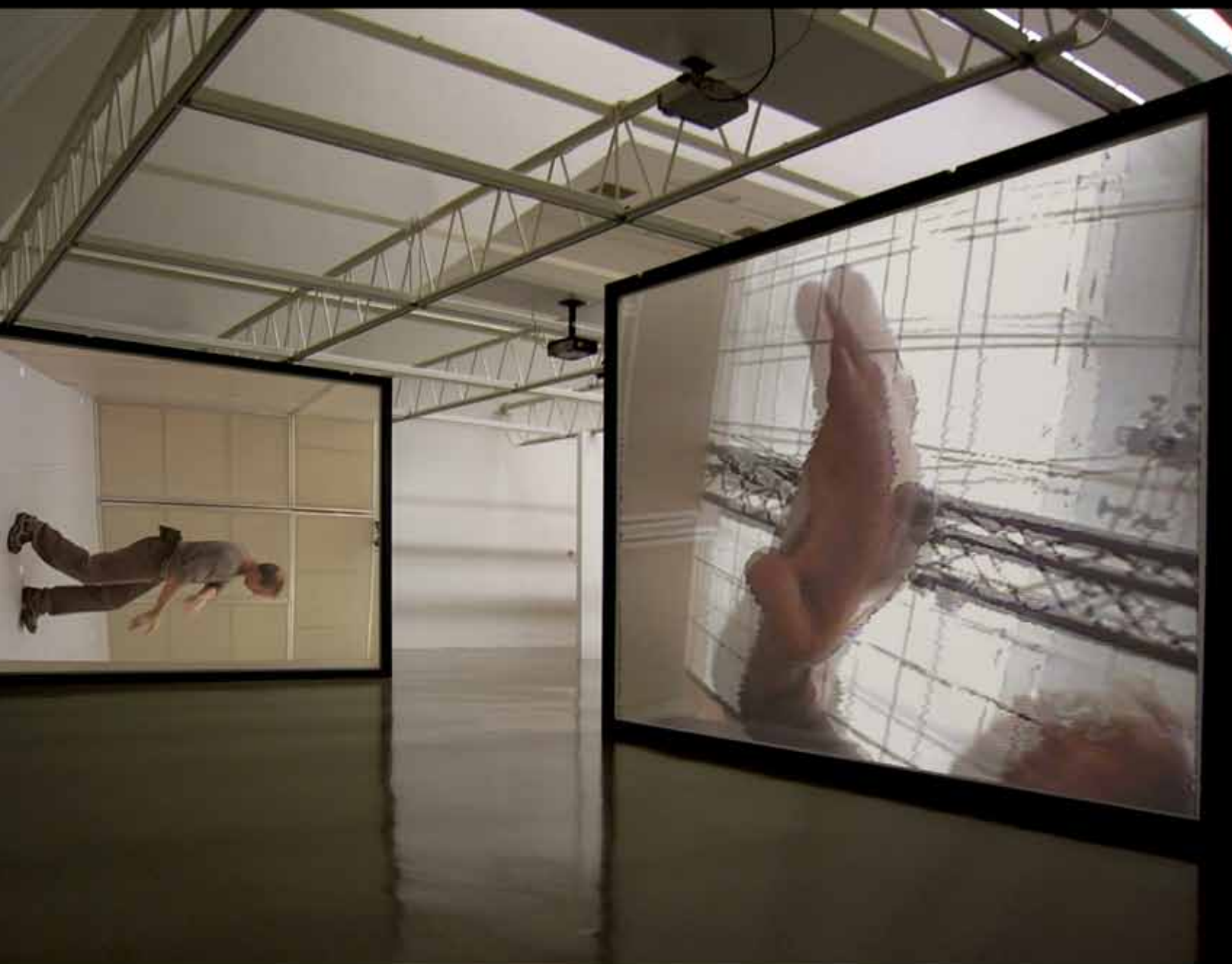
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Yana Milev

## Kinaesthetic Embodiment in William Forsythe's Airdrawings: A Project by Peter Welz

In the 1980s, science fiction discovered a new kind of outer space: cyberspace. Its accompanying terms, such as virtual surroundings and telepresence, are now on everyone's lips and belong to everyday communication. People are surfing and chatting, and email is almost more standard than walking to the post office. The economy has discovered e-commerce, and the best way to play the stock market is to sit at your PC in the comfort of your home. On the internet, people pair up and break up, and the subsequent psychological counselling takes place online as well.

The internet offers enormous possibilities for scientific research as well as for criminal activity to operate worldwide without too much effort. Cyber-anarchists and hackers are mixing things up a bit. For some, cyberspace seems to have become a completely everyday place in which to act and communicate. For others, at least in respect to the relevant terms, it is nothing new. Even the original euphoria has dissipated in the midst of a culture that constantly needs new things to remain interesting to itself.

In this context, a *cybernetic* turn has been proclaimed within the liberal arts and social sciences to focus on the subjects of perception and reality; fundamental changes are expected here. New media and computer technology are the cause for these changes in our daily lives and in theoretical reflection. At their centre is a technology that makes clear and tangible why the concepts of perception and reality are being discussed anew: *virtual reality*. As one of the most advanced technologies in the field of information and media, these subjects focus on the *sensory* experience of digital spaces. The sensory experience should not be limited to seeing. Other senses are involved, even those that have avoided technological manipulation. The term *embodiment* stands for this form of *sensualization*.

*Embodiment* is a theory that stems from recent developments in the cognitive sciences in which intelligence requires the existence of a body or a physical interaction. This approach is diametrically opposed to the classical interpretation of intelligence as computation; it is seen as a fundamental shift in the cognitive sciences. The object of the cognitive sciences are the conscious or unconscious processes that occur between the

senses and motor function. Among them are thinking, memory, learning or language, for example. Its field of application is not limited to cognition, but also includes emotion, motivation and volition. Embodiment is increasingly used in psychology (especially in social psychology and clinical psychology) in order to emphasize the interaction between the body and the mind. It is not just the case that psychological conditions are expressed in the body (nonverbally as gestures, mimicry, prosody, posture); there are also effects that move in the opposite direction. Physical conditions also influence psychological conditions. For example, body postures that are maintained for one reason or another also have an effect on cognition (i.e., on judgements and attitudes) and emotionality.

Since tracking systems from man-machine interactions and interaction design in general have begun to take over the world, *embodiment* in the form of motion capture or performance capture—programs to capture movement—is expanding with them. On the one hand, *embodiment* plays a role in the sense of prosthetic expansion or extension of physiological and sensory body functions into technological functions; for instance, by equipping the body with glasses, gloves, cameras or RFID chips. On the other hand, *embodiment* also plays a role in the sense of analysis, transformation of recorded data and its transmission with the use of plug-ins into 3D models. In the computer field, plug-ins are necessary interfaces to activate digital image processing programs. Such plug-ins are extensions, often termed Xtensions in the software field. The Xtension has its place between tracking technology and image processing technology, which includes 3D screening.

When Peter Welz developed the work “whenever on on on nohow on” with the choreographer and dancer William Forsythe in 2004, he created a poetic version of motion tracking and cyber *embodiment*. The typical basic disposition of motion tracking, namely movement capturing, was combined in this project with movement evaluation. The plug-in, as an interface between the processes, was—surprise!—not a computer, but rather the illustrator Peter Welz. The project was conceived in such a way that the dancer and choreographer Forsythe was equipped with two handheld cameras; while the camera in his left hand was directed into the space around him, the camera in his right was directed onto his body. Three additional cameras also surrounded him. These were static and filmed Forsythe from the front, the side and above. In this way, a 3D approach to the airdrawings, the performance Forsythe was doing, was possible. At the same time as Forsythe's airdrawings, Welz was drawing the movement sequences that were recorded by the cameras and projected onto a glass surface that covered

the screen. Movement sequences, recording and evaluation thus melded into a typical performance capture event—and entirely unlike one. Peter Welz's project is not just *cyber embodiment*, but also an attempt at grasping and visualizing the expanded and space-making gestures of the dancer in the medium of sketching by hand. Even if the camera and screen plug-ins were placed in between, the special nature of this action is and remains the realization of a *kinaesthetic embodiment* that is created exclusively from the senses and sensibility of a dancing and drawing body.

What occurs here is the living *embodiment* of a physiological interaction, a body dwelling, that transfers a character of change to spatial entities and personal identities on the basis of its semiotic trigonometry. The illustrator is a dancer and a camera. The dancer is an illustrator and an architect. The illustrator is an observer and rewriting program. The plug-ins in between are transformers. The illustrator is a transmission function and a choreographer. What is developed here is an enlivening of the semiotic triangle of observer, observation and object of observation, completed in a *body dwelling*, in a new dimension of embodiment and sensory transformation.

The airdrawings are condensed into *body dwellings*, as cyber-poetry, as the point of departure and, at the same time, the product of spatial construction (sensory function, motor function) and body intelligence, as a simultaneous procedure of airdrawings, recording and elimination of history, memory and narration—as *cyber-poetry*.

Bruce D. Larkin

## Denuclearization Design: Political De-Design After Fukushima

Design, negotiation and performance define the methods and content of politics. Political life enacts social purpose, focused on the future. There is need to *decide*, to have *common expectations* and to *act in concert*. There must be shared plans. In society these plans are *political designs*. As people conceive and discuss options, choose goals and commit to means, they also negotiate their ongoing collaboration.

### POLITICS 'PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD'

Understood in this way, 'politics' is negotiation of 'complementary projects of action', projects a party cannot accomplish alone or on as favourable terms (such as ease and cost). Political negotiation occurs throughout society (in relationships, households, firms, neighbourhoods, schools, markets, cities, states, etc.), not only in 'government'. I term collaborative politics defined by design and negotiation 'politics properly understood' (to distinguish it from partisan struggle for office and power).<sup>1</sup>

Some caveats. Parties almost certainly have different notions of the sought-for results. In any but the most trivial cases the outcome will not be just as they originally expected. Disputes—negotiable—may arise. Parties improvise. Partners may be unable or unwilling to perform, or the field for enactment of the design prove inhospitable: for example, anticipate material surprises, salient ignorance, unfocused actions of others or focused strategic opposition.

The design question that most concerns me is how to abolish and prohibit nuclear weapons. To be concise, I'll call that 'zero'. It is a difficult but not intractable problem. In the remainder of this paper I will use the nuclear case to illustrate some issues in political design.

### 'ZERO' PROPOSALS

On 24 January 1946 the UN General Assembly adopted its first resolution, establishing an Atomic Energy Commission to draft proposals for "elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons" and "effective safeguards by way of inspection and other means to protect complying States against the hazards of violations and evasions". The Commission's work came to little, as US and Soviet differences could not be reconciled.

Zero has remained a declaratory aim. The McCloy-Zorin statement of 20 September 1961 pledged Moscow and Washington to seek "early agreement on general and complete disarmament...".<sup>2</sup> On 15 January 1986 Mikhail Gorbachev proposed abolishing all nuclear weapons by the year 2000.<sup>3</sup> Speaking in Prague on 5 April 2009 Barack Obama called for "a world without nuclear weapons".<sup>4</sup> With that impetus, in 2010 Washington convened a Nuclear Security Summit promoting its plan to secure fissile material by 2013, issued a revised Nuclear Posture Review and won agreement to UNSC Resolution 1887.<sup>5</sup>

Among current designs are 'Four Horsemen' proposals, the timetable urged by the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), calls for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, measures proposed by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and steps endorsed by the NPT Review Conferences in 2000 and 2010.<sup>6</sup>

Despite such declarations and proposals, despite solemn NPT treaty commitments by all but three or four states to "pursue negotiations in good faith..." on nuclear disarmament and "a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control",<sup>7</sup> no such negotiations have even been begun. Why is this so?

### RELUCTANCE TO NEGOTIATE

No government possessing nuclear weapons has said it is ready to negotiate zero. There seem to be six main reasons:

- (i) *Advantage*. Some anticipate advantage in having nuclear weapons.
- (ii) *Manageability*. Belief that the status quo is sustainable, at acceptable risk.
- (iii) *Stability*. Governments may judge present circumstances 'stable' or at least 'familiar', and wonder whether departing from what is known would risk unacceptable 'instability'.

(iv) *Distrust*. They fear that others' attempts to 'break out' of the prohibition could not be detected and countered 'in time'; 'sneak attack', or 'nuclear blackmail'.

(v) *Weapon X or Circumstances Y*. Some, while admitting they don't know what novel threats may arise in the future, argue that nuclear weapons should be retained to meet such a threat.

(vi) *Domestic opposition*. Governments, subject to electoral defeat or being overthrown, see no reason to open themselves to the charge of 'weakness' or 'incompetence' in security and national defence.

Advocates of denuclearization within governments of nuclear states face a dual design task. Professing 'deterrence' *pro tempore* they must describe the present *context*—the political and strategic situation—and fit their nuclear forces to it,<sup>8</sup> while simultaneously making a convincing case that zero would be better. Then they must turn to other nuclear-armed states and plan how to get to zero. They must acknowledge the fears of sceptics—domestic opponents, doubting governments—and incorporate readiness to address them.

## DEFINING THE GROUP, SEQUENCING THE ISSUES

Who will negotiate? On what agendas? In what order?

These simple choices—which (a) parties and (b) sequence of subjects—are intimately related to substance; and hence to the reasons for which an actual government may be reluctant to negotiate. For example, China has repeatedly said that Russia and the United States should 'go first', as they have inventories far larger than those of any other country. When China, France and Britain would enter the negotiations is itself negotiable, but of course cannot be compelled. There is guesswork, but no agreement, as to how and when Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea could be brought in.

There are four extant UN and UN-assisted forums in which zero could be negotiated: the General Assembly, Security Council, Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the NPT Review Conferences. Each has limitations, such as the veto in the Security Council, and decision by consensus in the CD and the NPT Review Conferences.

The presumption that zero, to be achieved, must be agreed by *governments* does not preclude individuals, groups, firms, laboratories and sub-national political units (cities,

provinces) from injecting their views and understanding into the conversation around designing nuclear zero. Showing broad public and 'elite' support may be a necessary condition of government agreement. This is the assumption of 'Four Horsemen' statements, in which traditional political competitors jointly urge steps toward zero, and activist initiatives in civil society such as Global Zero.

What should designers conclude from declining interest in 'nuclear war', as indicated by a Google Trends query topic from 2004 to April 2011?<sup>9</sup> That there would be more support for zero, as nuclear confrontation is judged less likely? Or that achieving zero is less salient, because fear of 'nuclear war' is smaller? Both?

## DEFINING COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

Governments caucus with others, collaborating strategically and tactically. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), for example, works actively in forums such as the NPT Review Conferences to press the rights of member states to develop civil nuclear sectors, as assured in the NPT.

Does caucusing among the N5 (United States, Russia, Britain, France and China) make for concerted *resistance* to negotiating zero? The N5 met September 2009 in London and June 2011 in Paris, where the subject was nuclear 'verification and transparency'. Ostensibly these conversations are to move toward meeting the prerequisites of a 'world free of nuclear weapons'. One of the N5, France, is known to be sceptical of the project altogether, while another, Britain, has made much of the 'conditions' to be met before concrete steps toward zero can be taken. But since agreement of *all* nuclear states is necessary if zero is to be effective, it is certainly desirable that there be conversations among the N5 and N9 (N5 plus Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea), in which each can explain to the others whatever reservations or requirements they may have, and how they imagine their concerns could be met.

## DESIGN OF AN ALTERNATIVE SECURITY REGIME

It is not enough to destroy existing nuclear weapons. Zero implies two questions: can a post-zero future be at least as secure as the nuclearist status quo? and will it be reliably sustained? To answer these questions is to design (i) an ongoing prohibition regime



and (ii) a fabric of institutions and political practices that promises to be—and then in practice proves to be—at least as ‘safe’ as the world of nuclear weapons.

Moreover, these designs must be *persuasive* in themselves; although elements may be practised and simulated, the whole *cannot be tested or tried* before being relied upon.

## NUCLEAR ILLUSIONS

As nuclear weapons defy defence, planners adapted the old practice of a countervailing threat: hence ‘nuclear deterrence’. One seeming problem in designing nuclear zero is that good-will abolitionists give up the capacity for *nuclear* deterrence, exposing themselves to others’ retained or newly-built weapons. Is this a stopper or an illusory objection?

It is an illusion that the evident destructive power of nuclear weapons readily translates to ‘nuclear blackmail’ and political or economic gain. ‘Compellence’—winning by threat—rarely works. Of course, states must practise transparency and surveillance against defection to an exceptional degree. They must be prepared to use *non-nuclear* means to sustain the regime. A ‘breakout’ state must be refused gains.

## RISK

Nuclear weapons, operational plans and plans for nuclear disarmament all embody risks that pose issues for design. Some are technical: risk of unwanted detonation or unauthorized use. Others are strategic: does having nuclear weapons expose a country to attack? does giving them up render the state less secure?

Civil nuclear power requires fissile material as fuel... and produces plutonium and ‘unburnt’ uranium in spent fuel. How can reactor fuel and ‘spent fuel’ be managed to prevent diversion to a military programme?

Will Fukushima Daiichi, reminding the public of radiation hazards, impel design of paths to zero nuclear weapons? Will the public call for zero, convinced that neither weapons nor power reactors can be safe? What should the public—and governments—believe?

## NATURE AND THE STRATEGIC OPPONENT

We understand that the Fukushima Daiichi plant’s failure was initially due to an ‘act of nature’, the 11 March 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Precautions against a tsunami had been taken, but did not protect the plant from a tsunami of the extraordinary height and force actually experienced. Other effects complicated the response: the plant’s electric power was compromised by the tsunami and, in any case, the region’s electric grid suffered widespread outage. Analyses will conclude, first, that the plant’s designers failed to anticipate an earthquake and tsunami of this size and, second, that there were technical features of the plant’s design that proved to be ‘vulnerabilities’ that a more vivid or imaginative sense of possible precautions could have anticipated. In any case, complex systems are inherently vulnerable to the unexpected. Already there are innumerable citations to ‘design faults’ and to ‘normal accident theory’.<sup>10</sup>

Nuclear weapons, like nuclear reactors, remain subject to nature and the laws of physics, but policy design confronts the further complexity that defence policy must anticipate *strategic opponents*, enemies who insist their only aim is their own security, but who deploy armed force and the capacity to deceive and who may harbour malevolent intent.

## TECHNOLOGY, CAUSE AND PREFERENCE

Choice among political designs often occurs at the intersection of claims that are not readily established or reconciled: as rough approximations, call these technical assertions, causal expectations, and social preferences.

All things nuclear hinge on appropriation of the natural world, hitherto unknown forces, ingenuity of technical elites, unproven improvisations, the consequential scale of promises and risks, and military and commercial secrecy. Assessments fall into two baskets: that risks are ‘manageable and worth running’ and that risks are ‘beyond knowing and too dangerous to run’. Your choice between these two orientations depends heavily on whether you judge that governments—reliant on technical elites—will prove to be *efficacious managers* of nuclear weapons. Will their methods and interventions be *appropriate and sufficient* to avert bad outcomes?

Key to the problem of design in public policy is that outcomes can only be judged in retrospect. Circumstance may seem like the past, but it remains perplexing, in planning technical and managerial precautions, to define a set of adequately similar episodes against which to measure. When social preferences are brought in, what constitutes a 'sound' or 'prudent' design or one consistent with the 'precautionary principle' becomes still more open to dispute. It is not that designers and managers can do nothing, but that both perform under irresolvable uncertainty.

Of weapons, the two orientations hold that 'retaining nuclear weapons is necessary for security until the world changes in fundamental ways' or, on the contrary, that 'retaining nuclear weapons endangers security itself, to an extent so great that retention is reckless'. A similar division of judgments attends civil nuclear power, as the Fukushima Daiichi affair illustrates: some conclude 'despite technical problems requiring yet more clever solutions, nuclear power is necessary', while others draw the very different lesson that 'nuclear power, no matter what precautions are taken, risks unacceptable harm'.

### OPPORTUNITY COSTS AND CHOICES AMONG EVILS

In general, political design is unlike many design practices because of the types of choices that the designer must make. Of course, choice is simple when it is between doing something 'good' and refusing something 'bad', but choices that matter are rarely that simple and usually require weighing 'pluses' against 'minuses', and choosing among competing 'goods' and alternative 'harms'. Going to zero will save the costs of fabricating and deploying nuclear weapons, but will impose costs of dismantlement and ongoing assurance against violation. This tension is not resolved by slogans such as 'most efficient' and 'value for money', since there is no formal way to reduce public desiderata to euro or yen.

Even more vexing is the problem of *opportunity costs*. The goods, personnel and skills required to implement one design will—at a crude approximation—pre-empt their availability to undertake other proposed programmes. Would it be wiser to 'freeze' nuclear weapons under a prohibition, or must weapons also be dismantled and fissile material controlled at a cost that steals from, for example, medical research or musical performances?

Government may be forced to choose among evils. Administering nuclear zero, should it opt for intrusive surveillance to reduce the risk of undetected cheating, or should it accept greater risk of cheating to avoid the evil of intrusive surveillance?

### PROPOSITIONS TO GROUND A CONSENSUS ON NUCLEAR ZERO

I've come to the conclusion that the path to zero lies along these guidelines:<sup>11</sup>

1. only complete prohibition draws a clear, enforceable line against nuclear use;
2. the risks inherent in status quo nuclearism are not tolerable;
3. the risks and uncertainties under denuclearization are significantly less and more tractable than the risks under nuclearism;
4. maintaining nuclear zero will be a demanding, ongoing political task, success of which cannot be guaranteed in advance;
5. a plan requiring *transparence*, *armed restraint*, instruments for *collective security*, and *mutual assurance* practices will best equip governments to negotiate and sustain zero;
6. since the main problem for a nuclear abolition regime is *fear of deceit*, its solution lies in asking the doubter, "what would you need to see, with whom would you need to talk, to satisfy yourself that your fears are groundless?" and granting the access desired; the design should incorporate commitment to this '*satisfaction rule*'.

### GENERALIZATION TO OTHER POLITICAL PROJECTS

Most political projects, unlike nuclear designs, do not turn on fear of deceit, the irreversibility of massive destruction or the illusions of 'deterrence'. But in other respects the design problems presented by the project of nuclear zero illustrate the difficulties that public policy design must address.

Universal issues, such as maintaining routine markets, organizing health care, addressing climate change and environmental degradation, and providing the food, fuel and materials required for personal and social life, all turn on contested descriptions of circumstance, material conditions, technical capacities, desires, interests and projected outcomes of orchestrated designs. Social preference weighs throughout.

If 'security' and 'acceptable risks' are the elusive desiderata of defence policy, impos-

sible to define objectively, so 'adequately just allocation' given 'scarcity' and 'opportunity costs'—one way to describe the aim of public policy—is similarly elusive. In neither sphere, that of defence policy and that of allocating scarce factors among public and private goods, is there any formal way to calculate among alternatives. Instead, the grand design reveals itself in authoritative choices and, necessarily, in how those choices are brought to fruition in actual deeds.

1. The notions of 'complementary projects' and 'politics properly understood' are developed in my work *War Stories*, Bern and New York: Peter Lang, 2001.
2. US Department of State, "The McCloy-Zorin Statement of Principles", *American Foreign Policy: Current Documents*, 1961, Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, pp. 1091-1094.
3. Gorbachev, Mikhail, *For a Nuclear-Free World*, Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1987, pp. 9-22.
4. Text available online at [http://www.whitehouse.gov/the\\_press\\_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered/), accessed 11 August 2011.
5. The Nuclear Security Summit, Washington DC, 12-13 April 2010; *US Nuclear Posture Review Report*, 6 April 2010, available at [http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010 Nuclear Posture Review Report.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20Nuclear%20Posture%20Review%20Report.pdf), accessed 11 August 2011; *UN Security Council Resolution 1887* (2009), 24 September 2009.
6. 2010 NPT Review Conference documents available online at <http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010/docs.shtml>, accessed 11 August 2011. Links to 'Four Horsemen' proposals and other statements are available online at <http://www.gcdd.net/JOURNAL/pointerTO.JA0B.html>, accessed 11 August 2011.
7. Article VI, Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).
8. For example, the *US Nuclear Posture Review Report* cited above.
9. Google Trends, available at [www.google.com/trends](http://www.google.com/trends), accessed 24 April 2011. Note that a small burst in 2011 appears to coincide with the Fukushima Daiichi plant failure. Testing other phrases, such as 'nuclear disarmament', 'global zero' and 'nuclear abolition', produced no results, as the numbers were too small.
10. See coverage of the Fukushima Daiichi affair in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, available online at <http://bit.ly/h9bipS> or at <http://www.thebulletin.org>, accessed 11 August 2011; see especially articles by Hugh Gusterson, Charles Perrow and MV Ramana. On 'normal accidents', see Charles Perrow, *Normal Accidents: Living with High Risk Technologies*, New York: Basic Books, 1984.
11. See my *Designing Denuclearization: An Interpretive Encyclopedia*, New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2008.

Wolfgang Fach

## Worlds After

Because life as such is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”, consisting of no more than violence and misery, Thomas Hobbes recommended that his fellow man reach an accommodation with the established sovereign authority—come what may. For this would always be better than the only alternative available, the “war of every man against every man”.<sup>1</sup>

This advice did not prove convincing enough to put an end to the quest for a better *world after* the Leviathan—a quest which has been exercising the mind of man ever since Hobbes. Immanuel Kant and Herbert Spencer were among those aspiring to bring our life on earth nearer to that in heaven. Although miles apart in their thinking, they both shared the same idealism: we may hope for a life without *violence* (Kant) and without *misery* (Spencer). Yet both visions are beset by paradoxes. Hence, it is with reason that one can still conclude today that “the world is a disaster”.<sup>2</sup> How did it come to this?

### 1. AFTER VIOLENCE

No end is in sight for wars originating from *interstate* conflicts in the traditional fashion—at least without an end that could logically derive from the sequence of historical events; on this point the classical theorists on war, ranging from Hobbes and Hegel to Carl Schmitt, were unanimous. Consequently, hopes of ever achieving a lasting—‘perpetual’—peace rest either in taming the monster ‘state’ or, perhaps better still, in simply abolishing it (providing that man can be turned into a pleasant enough fellow).

Immanuel Kant opted for the first variant, and substantiated his firm hope for the—albeit remote—possibility of “perpetual peace” by contending that wars would cease once and for all as soon as republican states had become established, since people everywhere would balk at the prospect of engaging in military conflicts for which they would have to bear the costs.

*Now the Republican constitution, apart from the soundness of its origin, since it arose from the pure source of the concept of right, has also the prospect of attaining the*

*desired result, namely, perpetual peace. And the reason is this. If, as must be so under this constitution, the consent of the subjects is required to determine whether there shall be war or not, nothing is more natural than that they should weigh the matter well, before undertaking such a bad business. For in decreeing war, they would of necessity be resolving to bring down the miseries of war upon their country. This implies: they must fight themselves; they must hand over the costs of the war out of their own property; they must do their poor best to make good the devastation which it leaves behind; and finally, as a crowning ill, they have to accept a burden of debt which will embitter even peace itself, and which they can never pay off on account of the new wars which are always impending.*<sup>3</sup>

From this perspective, even victorious wars are anything but an unmitigated blessing.

As Kant was at pains to point out, ‘republican’ means ‘public’, not ‘democratic’. That is, wars must be removed from the arcane realm of closed cabinet meetings and be decided, or at least discussed, publicly. As long as sovereigns are able to do as they please, wars will be prosecuted for any number of reasons, since the “owner of the state... does not lose a whit by the war, while he goes on enjoying the delights of his table or sport, or of his pleasure palaces and gala days”. He can therefore “decide on war for the most trifling reasons, as if it were a kind of pleasure party. Any justification of it that is necessary for the sake of decency he can leave without concern to the diplomatic corps.”<sup>4</sup> This is Hobbes’ world of belligerent Leviathans perpetually at risk of degenerating into unscrupulous warmongers, since the horrors of war, and thus *fear* and *awe*, always stop before the gates of their palaces.

However, the possibility of achieving lasting, peaceful post-war eras is contingent upon the fulfilment of one further condition.

*Standing armies (miles perpetuus) shall be abolished in course of time. For they are always threatening other states with war by appearing to be in constant readiness to fight. They incite the various states to outrival one another in the number of their soldiers, and to this number no limit can be set. Now, since owing to the sums devoted to this purpose, peace at last becomes even more oppressive than a short war, these standing armies are themselves the cause of wars of aggression, undertaken in order to get rid of this burden.*<sup>5</sup>



This would then eliminate the very factor that Hegel later blamed for instigating conflicts between states: the military profession. Almost as a riposte, he demystifies Kant's vision:

*If, however, it is supposed that monarchs and cabinets are more subject to passion than parliaments are, and if for this reason an attempt is made to juggle the decision on war and peace into the hands of the latter, then we must point out that whole peoples may often be a prey to excitement or be carried away by passion to a greater extent than their leaders.*<sup>6</sup>

Against the backdrop of the First World War, Emil Lederer described (and, for once, did not glorify) this process of "social transformation" as a grand act of collectivization. "We can state", he wrote in 1915, "that on the day of mobilization, the existing state of 'society' changed into a 'community'".<sup>7</sup> This happened everywhere and was in no way confined to Germany. Yet where is, we must ask ourselves, the Kantian common sense of the common man? The mechanism with which to bypass it is *total mobilization*.

*The military complex turns out to be an independent social form, a universal social form, existing alongside the Gesellschaft. Yet in its power to mobilize the people, it imitates the form of Gemeinschaft, for when everyone's existence appears threatened, it can summon and assign every social force to the cause of national defence, and thereby make every social group's incorporation into a unitary army appear to individuals not as an act of coercion by the state, indeed not even as the consequence of state action of any kind, but as a transcendental fate.*<sup>8</sup>

To reach this stage, *organization* and *imagination* must be tightly enmeshed. Lederer explains the organizational imperative of total war as follows:

*When the military complex functions as a bearer of the state's sovereign power, a new strengthening of military action becomes apparent in the immanent dynamic of its development. State and army interact with one another in such a way that with increasing state power comes a growing army, and with a growing army comes increasing state power, and so on. A self-reinforcing development cuts free from all social embedding: only a well-organized modern state gives the military the constancy and inner stability it requires and once lacked, and only a modern military complex completes this ascent of the state to all-encompassing power, enabling it to draw the people entirely into its own orbit as material for the constant increase of its outward advance of power.*<sup>9</sup>

The military-state complex "completely draws the population into it"—which is the decisive point.

Lederer's analysis of this social transformation adumbrates Hegel's key conclusion. "Republics", in particular, can be mobilized—that is, organized—and "enthused" (Hegel). Community is a mental condition that can be generated by efficient organization (in the form of a highly sophisticated military apparatus) and collective imagination (which can be kindled on a case-by-case basis). Expressed succinctly: *Kant's paradox lies in the fact that peaceful conditions, as he conceives them, are only possible in a political environment that would actually prevent them.*

In spite of this there is hope, thanks to another trend that comes into play, i.e., the shift towards domestic politics. 'Mature' civilizations (as Benjamin Constant has convincingly argued) are less taken to military adventures because life in peace has become pretty adventurous itself. Why kill if one can compete? Why get killed if one can go bankrupt? Today, public opinion is influenced more by bulletins from the stock exchange than by despatches from the front line: "It's the economy, stupid". Wars, to be sure, are still being waged, but they have increasingly turned into a matter for professionals and specialists, that is, career soldiers, SEALS, mercenaries, warlords, etc., whose constituency is in no way "enthused". Wherever this civilizational shift has taken root, 'private' suffering within (peaceful) society is the focus of public interest.

## 2. AFTER MISERY

If one follows Hegel, the modern zeitgeist expresses this shift towards privatism by seeking to interpret the political system as a *social contract*.

*It has recently become very fashionable to regard the state as a contract of all with all. Everyone makes a contract with the monarch, so the argument runs, and he again with his subjects. This point of view arises from thinking superficially of a mere unity of different wills. In contract, however, there are two identical wills who are both persons and wish to remain property-owners. Thus contract springs from a person's arbitrary will.*<sup>10</sup>

This premise privatizes the public interest or rather "commercialises"<sup>11</sup> the state. Hence it is no longer treated like a mortal god, but mutates into a service provider, whose

'products' can either be demanded or ignored, depending on the attractiveness or affordability of its offerings.

No one has extended the theoretical concept of the private 'state consumer' to the same degree as Herbert Spencer.

*As a corollary to the proposition that all institutions must be subordinated to the law of equal freedom, we cannot choose but admit the right of the citizen to adopt a condition of voluntary outlawry. If every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man, then he is free to drop connection with the state—to relinquish its protection, and to refuse paying towards its support... Government being simply an agent employed in common by a number of individuals to secure to them certain advantages, the very nature of the connection implies that it is for each to say whether he will employ such an agent or not.*<sup>12</sup>

Hence there is a right to "ignore the state". A crazy proposition? Wouldn't this attitude inevitably lead to chaos, to that horrible "war of all against all" as discussed by Thomas Hobbes? Back in the mists of time, as Spencer concedes, living a carefree existence beyond state-controlled zones would have been inconceivable.

*Considering society as a corporate body, we may say that man, when he first enters into it, has the repulsive force in excess, whilst in the cohesive force he is deficient. His passions are strong; his sympathies weak. Those propensities which fitted him for savage life necessarily tend to breed war between himself and his neighbours. His condition has been that of perpetual antagonism; and his antagonistic habits must of course accompany him into the social state. Aggression, dispute, anger, hatred, revenge—these are the several stages of the process by which the members of a primitive community are continually being sundered.*<sup>13</sup>

Thus, a society which in its infancy dispensed with any form of centralized repression, would have—to paraphrase Spencer—collapsed. Hence Hobbes' thought experiment is temporalized and translated into an evolutionary perspective—which explains why Spencer is able to think beyond Hobbes: much time has passed since then, people have become more socially amenable and state authorities have been forced to adapt.

*With the advance of civilization this awe of power diminishes. Instead of looking up to the monarch as a God, it begins to view him as a man reigning by divine authority—*

*as 'the Lord's anointed'. Submission becomes less abject. Subjects no longer prostrate themselves before their rulers, nor do serfs kiss their master's feet. Obedience ceases to be unlimited.*<sup>14</sup>

Rulers no longer commanded such "awe"—a situation made possible by the diminishing fear of one's neighbours. As ordinary citizens become more civilized, the call for a 'strong leader' is rendered superfluous. Thomas Hobbes' cardinal error would then have been to seek to convince his fellow men that they were beasts and would remain so until the end of time, consequently condemned to live as in the beginning: "What a cage is to the wild beast, law is to the selfish man".<sup>15</sup> Of course, one cannot fully dispense with government and it remains a necessary evil for the time being. But the more this necessity diminishes, the more strongly this evil rears its ugly head, which for Spencer means that law and order can be maintained without installing an overpowering monster, i.e., the intrusive and inquisitive state as we know it. A completely *demystified* governance, in the form of the dispassionate application of laws, comes inexorably closer. Anyone appearing to be at odds with public sentiment is liable to suffer mockery: "the holders of power are daily caricatured, and men begin to listen to the National Anthem with their hats on".<sup>16</sup>

Far-off in the distant horizon, Herbert Spencer also sees the dawning of an age in which misery and suffering no longer exist: states gradually become extinct, societies continue to expand ever further and are able to regulate themselves in a civilized manner once the warmongering Leviathans stop trying to interfere.

Although the *peaceful* struggle for survival between civilized peoples spares its victims from being devoured, the peace dividend consists of nothing more than the privilege of being allowed to die a *non-violent* death.

*The development of the higher creation is a progress towards a form of being capable of a happiness undiminished by these drawbacks. It is in the human race that the consummation is to be accomplished. Civilization is the last stage of its accomplishment. And the ideal man is the man in whom all the conditions of that accomplishment are fulfilled. Meanwhile the well-being of existing humanity, and the unfolding of it into this ultimate perfection, are both secured by that same beneficent, though severe discipline, to which the animate creation at large is subject: a discipline which is pitiless in the working out of good: a felicity-pursuing law which never swerves for the avoidance of partial and temporary suffering. The poverty of the incapable, the distresses that come upon the*

*imprudent, the starvation of the idle, and those shoulderings aside of the weak by the strong, which leave so many 'in shallows and in miseries', are the decrees of a large, far-seeing benevolence.*<sup>17</sup>

Viewed from the vantage point of Spencer's Olympian heights, (bloodless) suffering and death must continue for the sake of universal humanity, until only those remain alive who are able to do so by virtue of their own fortitude. A victorious peace, as it were, should it ever come to that, of course. But will it? Even at an early stage, it was apparent that Man was a special species and would not confront the "exterministic" imperative naturally, but sentimentally and thus *counter-productively* (as intended by the author)—something Cesare Beccaria, the Italian legal philosopher, had noted before.<sup>18</sup> A century later, Spencer was again lamenting the fact that our degenerated nervous system would hardly be robust enough to cope with the social costs of progress (starving children, anguished mothers, destitute old people). Civilization blocks natural selection. "There are many very amiable people—people over whom in so far as their feelings are concerned we may fitly rejoice—who have not the nerve to look this matter fairly in the face."<sup>19</sup> The (empirically insurmountable) paradox is that the very people who wish to prevent misery must stand by dispassionately, or at least idly, and allow it to take place—*since civilization reached its sentimental stage, it is now its own worst enemy.*

### 3. AFTER PEACE

On the other hand, the reverse idea—that the struggle for survival would *interfere* with the progress of civilization—was not long in coming. Although poor fellows seeking to improve their lot through industry, discipline and perseverance did exist, all too many others (*the undeserving poor*) were to become accustomed to the indolent life of the lumpenproletariat. They acquiesced apathetically to what fate held in store for them—only at the next moment, partly through violence, partly through deception, to take what Nature had deprived them of: "the attacks of lawless depredators" shook the very foundations of the bastions of ownership. Lifestyle and habitat corresponded with each other:

*The state of the streets powerfully affects the health of their inhabitants. Sporadic cases of typhus chiefly appear in those which are narrow, ill ventilated, unpaved, or which contain heaps of refuse, or stagnant pools... The houses, in such situations, are uncleanly, ill provided with furniture; an air of discomfort if not of squalid and loathsome*

*wretchedness pervades them, they are often dilapidated, badly drained, damp: and the habits of their tenants are gross—they are ill fed, ill clothed, and uneconomical—at the same time spendthrifts and destitute—denying themselves of the comforts of life, in order that they may wallow in the unrestrained license of animal appetite. An intimate connection subsists, among the poor, between the cleanliness of the street and that of the house and person.*<sup>20</sup>

Such was the situation of the (non-)working class at the time in Manchester, observed and reported by James-Kay Shuttleworth, a distinguished social reformer. What he encountered in this city could have been observed elsewhere many times over; England was an *island of slums*. Not that Spencer would have been confronted with different conditions in subsequent times. But whenever he chanced to discuss them, his analyses were informed inevitably by the logic of futility: well-meant reforms either achieve nothing or the very opposite of what was intended; whereby the resistance to reform evidently reaches its apogee when filth and profit, animalism and capitalism cooperate in concert, with some living in the very dirt from which others profit.<sup>21</sup>

Depictions of this kind, which Kay-Shuttleworth unveiled to his contemporaries, were regarded until recently as reminiscent of early civilizations, an epoch in which sentiment initially enforced its dominance incompletely (among the elites), before becoming institutionalized (in the welfare state). Today we know better. Violent struggles for survival—some waged with more, some with less bloodletting and conducted according to the latent rules of a survivalism beyond the control of the state—are in no way yesterday's news. That one can label the world a *planet of slums*<sup>22</sup> implies that the situation has since deteriorated rather than improved. Nowadays, animalism and capitalism have joined in a coalition on a global level; their stranglehold has brought about a 'bad' peace, which, if not yet established, is becoming more noticeable everywhere.

"With market fundamentalism", Spencer's vision and mission, "has come a gradual erasure of received lines between the informal and the illegal, regulation and irregularity, order and organized lawlessness." "Vastly lucrative returns", as has been shown, "inhere in actively sustaining zones of ambiguity between the presence and absence of the law: returns made from controlling uncertainty, terror, even life itself; from privatizing public contracts and resources; from 'discretionary' policing and 'laundering' of various kinds."<sup>23</sup> Even this blurring and transgression of boundaries is nothing new. Some 200 years ago the *Bristol Society for the Suppression of Vice* was informed by letter of the following "ambiguity":

"I took my horse and rode to Stapleton prison... Enclosed are some of the drawings which I purchased in what they call their market, without the least privacy on their part or mine. They wished to intrude on me a variety of devices in bone and wood of the most obscene kind."

Such transactions, according to the outraged report, were concluded some ten to 12 times per day, under the eyes of the prison warders.<sup>24</sup> A market within the state, criminals transforming themselves into merchants, their commodities being obscenities, with the eye of the law watching over the violation of the law—more hybridity does not prevail today, even though it flourishes on a different scale and has assumed a different guise.

In short, Spencer's 'perpetual peace' transforms the Great War into a patchwork of minor wars. To paraphrase John Locke, the 'world hereafter' has dispatched the few lions—and must in turn suffer from its many foxes.<sup>25</sup>

*Translated from the German by John Rayner*

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/ VISUAL ESSAY #27  
/ Knowbotic Research - be prepared! tiger stealth!



A complex black and white collage featuring geometric shapes, black dots, and lines. Text elements include "STYLE", "AS NOT INVINCIBILITY", "BS", and "BES". A central image shows a car with "STEALTH" branding. The collage is composed of various geometric shapes, including triangles and polygons, some of which contain images of cars and buildings. Black dots of varying sizes are scattered throughout the composition, connected by thin black lines. The overall effect is a dense, abstract, and somewhat chaotic visual arrangement.

A complex black and white collage. The composition is dominated by sharp, angular geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, which overlap and intersect. These shapes are filled with various images: military aircraft, including a prominent F-117 Stealth Fighter, and other aerial views. The text 'STYLE' is positioned in the upper left corner. In the upper right, the words 'AS NOT INVINCIBILITY' are arranged in a slightly curved, spaced-out font. At the bottom center, the letters 'BS' are visible. The entire collage is overlaid with a network of thin black lines connecting numerous solid black circular dots, creating a web-like structure that spans the entire image.

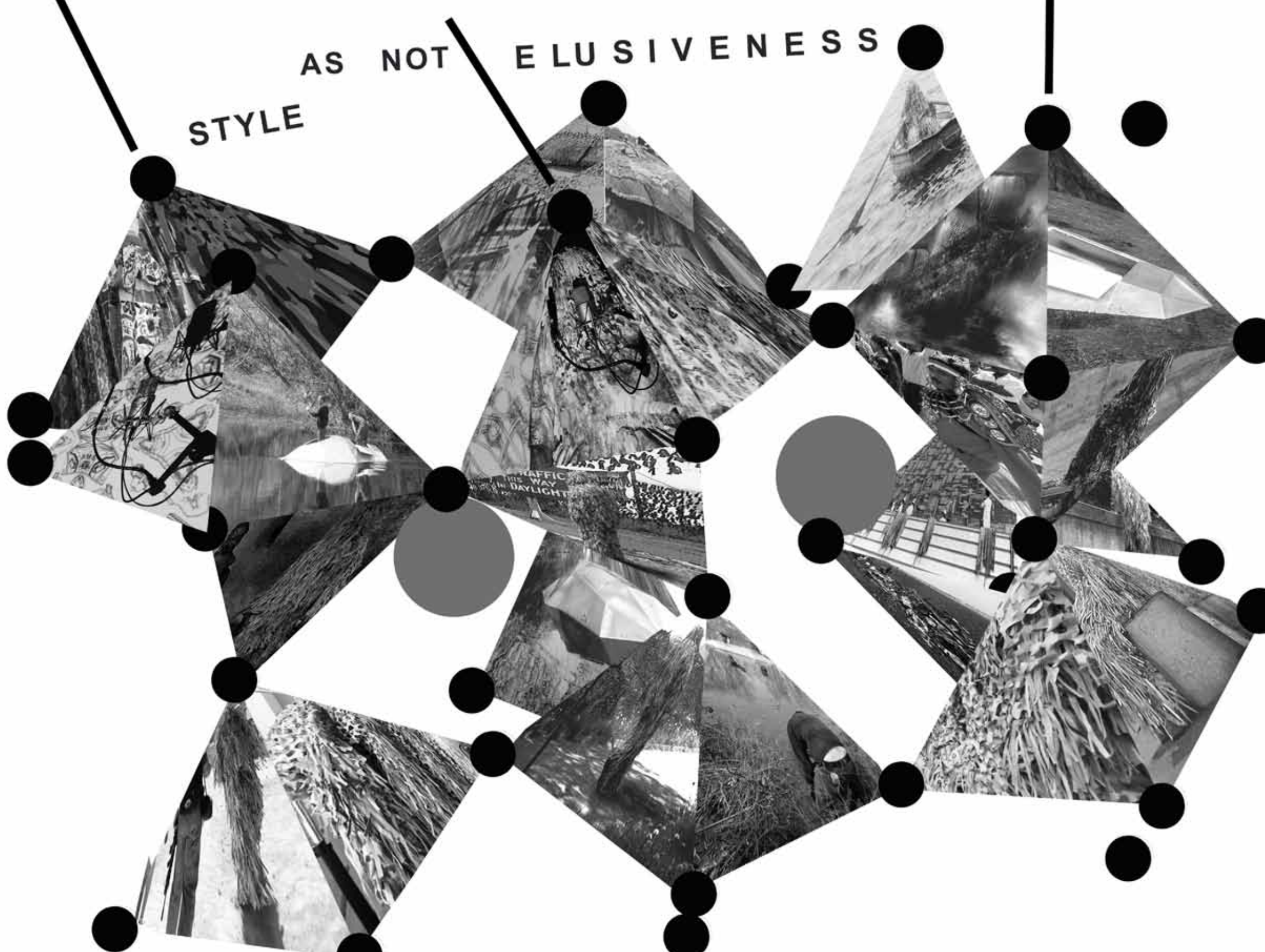
A complex black and white collage featuring geometric shapes, black dots, and lines. Text elements include 'STYLE', 'AS NOT INVINCIBILITY', 'BS', and 'BES'. A central image shows a car with 'STEALTH' and '82-400' text.

A complex black and white collage featuring geometric shapes, black circles, and lines. Text elements include "STYLE" at the top left, "AS NOT INVINCIBILITY" at the top right, and "BS" at the bottom center. The collage includes images of a car, a building, and a person.

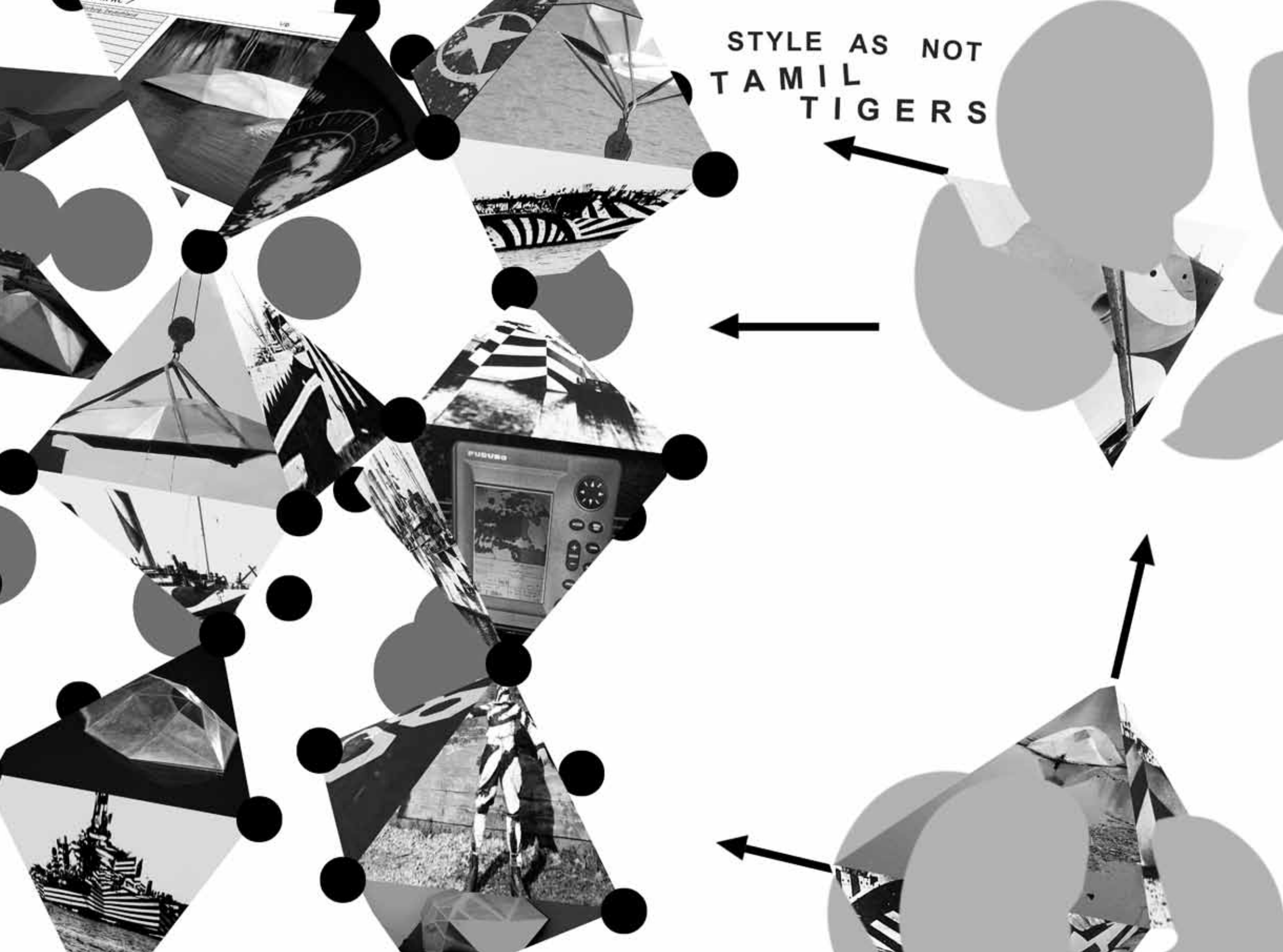


STYLE

AS NOT ELUSIVENESS



STYLE AS NOT  
TAMIL  
TIGERS





Matthew Fuller

## The Cat Seemed to Think There was Enough of it Now in Sight

The interplay of disappearance and the coming into sight of the occluded or unknown against the regime of the all too visible provides one of the hidden patternings of history. This motif, of finding moments, apertures, screens by which things resolve into objects, chances or techniques, or fade into blurs, provides a means of bringing a thread of recent works by knowbotic research into view in a certain way.

The hope for escape, avoidance, to be unnoticed, is possibly a more widespread sentiment than the hunger for sudden fame that supposedly gnaws at the innards of all the denizens of this planet, and it is one that is necessarily less easy to portray. But the moment of transition towards it, the shifting and shuddering between back and foreground, the bleeds between subject and object, the generation of rumour and of ruses that may accompany such shifts constitute some of the most charged and demanding of those moments when aesthetics spring into life.

### INTERFERENCE CODES / CAMOUFLAGE

Disruptive pattern camouflage is used by armies, hunters and evaders of many kinds. Using asymmetric and irregular patches of colour as a cloak, it makes the exterior form of the figure crack up against its background. Sometimes such patterns may allude to the form of leaves, rocks, strips of shadow and light. Throughout the many kinds of disruptive pattern there is only one consistency, and that is that outlines are smeared, bodies, ships, buildings, vehicles, bases, become bearers of colour particles which merge with others to form new particles and blobs of light. They 'dazzle' the viewer. Dazzle is a technique used to break up surface coherence into different blocks, bending the features of an object against perspectival interrogation and generating the appearance of detached elements.<sup>1</sup> What if they kept going, loosening themselves from the figure they protect from view or from targeting? The cause of the thing, the carrier of the camouflage, the hidden thing, warrior, nightjar, escapee, becomes its effect, symptoms that gain their own motility.

The other main strategy of camouflage is to blend, to merge into the background enough to be indistinguishable from it. This may be done through use of cloaking materials of an appropriate colour or texture, or by the use of paints, soil, vegetation or dungs. A problem with blending arises if the colour is too finely judged, a figure can be owned rather than freed by the background: it must stay within the territory of the appropriate tonal range. To blend is not to conform, but to attain the hue of a water droplet against a background of mist, to be able to shift, but also to shift light.

Deployed as a means of dropping out of sight, the Ghillie suit, worn in *MacGhillie – Just a Void*, is nicely described as a "portable hideout"<sup>2</sup> that both blends and dazzles. Because it is three-dimensional rather than flat camouflage, it makes multiple surfaces available to light at a multitude of angles, and as it does so it throws hundreds of patches of shade, each of which has its own shape given by the fall and fibrousness of the cloth strips. It allows for disappearance into the background. Normally used by snipers or spotters to blend into foliage in order better to carry out their seeing unseen, the suit provides a means of blurring the figure of the wearer. Brought into urban space, what are its effects? To gain the response of a shrug would be to elicit an overreaction.

### FIGURE – GROUND FLICKERING

A key point of articulation, a border crossing, in aesthetics is the relationship between figure and ground. This is a point of distinction, how something is drawn out of or pushed into its milieu, amassed or singularized, gains escape velocity or dissolves, stands transfixed or builds a plot between watcher and watched.

Famously, the Cheshire Cat of *Alice in Wonderland*, its smile, the place it appears, the air it hangs in, what it disappears into, sets up the face and the body as the background to the smiling mouth, the environment as its recursive framing, which then discom-bobulatingly rearranges, with the one part not necessarily preceding the other. The air thickens and there is a tail. A head may appear, a smile. And as is discovered, a head that appears unconnected to a body is unpunishable by means of the guillotine.<sup>3</sup>

This relationship is taken a few steps further by a section of a text by Daniil Kharmis, who describes a character, a red-headed man, who turns out to have no hair, nor many body parts that can actually be listed. His parts and characteristics are listed one by one, until "We don't even know what we're talking about" and "...we don't talk about

him any more".<sup>4</sup> The string of words builds something up to reveal that there is nothing described except what is generated by the words, foreground and background, figure and ground, are not simply entangled, but an effect of words, their arrangement in lines and in their conjunction with the minds who read into them. The properly ordered predicates of a person loop, become a Moebius strip, not in their strict order of disappearance, but in that the mechanism by which they appear, that of language, manages to bootstrap itself into being, as nothing in the first place.

The end of *Macbeth* arrives when the Burnham Wood arrives at Dunsinane, fulfilling the hags' prophesy, a thing rooted into the background, impossibly starts to walk, becomes a figure, replete with arms. When things, people, creatures, processes that are assumed to be a functional subsystem, a background routine attended to by minions, cleaners, sous-chefs, porters, subroutines, assistants start to take foreground, systems of composition begin to change. What is attended to becomes blurry or, from some perspectives, such as those of insubordination, starts to make sense.

## ARTWORK FOR SCANNING SYSTEMS

To draw attention to the process of becoming invisible invites a paradox, however, there are various kinds of viewers, various kinds of screens upon which things appear. A boat that does not appear in a harbour's scanning system, as in *be prepared, tiger!* cannot be said to be there by any reasonable means. Are the bare eyes of the watchers sufficient proof compared to the radar of the Harbour Master's control screens? Documenting such work with a camera is done as a matter of flat recognition. The pictures do not indulge in the potential sleek glamour of stealth, the thing is just there, looking geometric, like something out of a 1980s video game exulting in wireframe 3D, but oddly metal and solid.

Scanning systems in media, which had their advent in the previous century, bring about new means of generating an image, but also of sensing the world. In display terms they start with the phylogeny of the cathode tube brought to life by the electron beam that sweeps across and enlivens the dots of phosphor on the screen. As means of sensing, scanning systems operate by transmitting shorter or longer frequency waves of sound or electromagnetic waves through a medium such as air. By matching the signals that return, scattered against their expected degree of regularity, the size, possible material, direction and velocity of such an object can be inferred.

Such systems are in contrast to the saccades characteristic of animal eyes, moving around a screen or scene according to what is apparent as being of interest. The eyes of animals, humans amongst them, are thought to be too easy to distract by movement, colour, things that seem like faces, food or predators, or by that thing that is just outside of the foveal cone, that which keeps the eyes roving. Something methodical is better, relentless. The periodicity of a scanning system has such characteristics.

To make something disappear, a magician will distract attention from it, make something else appear to be happening. A technician, by contrast, will cover it in non-conductive surface materials, such as paints or tiles designed to absorb rather than deflect radio waves. Additionally, a thing can be shaped in such a way that it does not offer surfaces at angles producing the easiest to spot reflections. The boat's absence of edges presenting themselves for radar to bounce off in an orderly perpendicular manner leaves it less likely to be picked up, even by systems arrayed to detect objects low over the surface. The boat, therefore, is shaped by the "politics of frequency",<sup>5</sup> as Steve Goodman puts it in his discussions of sound. Here, however, occurring primarily in terms of which frequencies throw up fog, make themselves difficult to apprehend.

## AESTHETICS OF INSENSIBLE THINGS

Becoming imperceptible<sup>6</sup> implies the generation of an inverse structural coupling between what exists as unseen and what is yet blind to it, a mutual unfolding of non-sensibility in which each edges away, making sure not to overlap or to touch the other, not simply by navigating away on the basis of minuscule accidental encounters, by the observation of established borders and terrains, but by a blithe constitutional innocence.

Can a process of co-evolution occur in which the interaction of movements of reciprocal avoidance and blurring generates its own capacities of perception? Such impercepts may count in the fine grain of time characteristic of the millisecond scale of target acquisition and evasion or at a larger scale in the complex interplay of mutual failings and miscomprehensions of disciplines, politics and translations, or be epitomized in the predator-prey relations incapable of being established between wild creatures inhabiting the poles and the tropics.

## ALLOCATION WARS

Computing is partially defined by competition for resources: memory, processor time, space, bandwidth. The shift between foreground and background of processes can occur as an intricate dance of checking, cleaning, starting and swapping. This is part of what gives the sense of responsiveness to users or of lag and delay when that occurs. But forms of coordination that establish monolithic blocks of allocation also exist, swallowing resources whole. In either case, anything that is computed comes into view, by being allocated resources.

A problem of security therefore is how to dazzle the possibility of differentiation between figure and ground. This problem is one of shielding the apparent use of resources. Attention to security ineluctably means that we ask how may a process be run at the same time that a system is left looking to all intents and purposes as if only that which is expected is occurring? And in turn, how may something be watched without such watching intervening in the process by, in turn, requiring the allocation of resources?<sup>7</sup> The problem of power is to enfold such recursions into hierarchies, always to maintain the decisive position of the last twist.

## RUMOURS

The traces left by an event, a process, or that come before it tantalizing attention or that dull it out, come to move on its behalf. Words cluttered together with ostensibly simple semantics, the series of acts, nods and winks that go into the generation of an event, carry their own forms of layering and propensities for occlusion. Each may be arrayed to bring a thing, a sensation or an object and the means it tangles together to the fore, subsuming others. A rumour is not inherently a form of camouflage, though it may dazzle, but a thing itself that moves.

A further project of knowbotic research, *Black Benz Race* builds on these qualities of rumour, one that invents itself and becomes its own precursor. Such a state of life finds routes between the blockades of prohibition and that which is unnamable because it is unknown or deemed undesirable to make known. Actions seen out of register sliding from the corner of the eye to centre stage pass best by whisper, without advertising. Nocturnal things done by Albanians, the well-tended roads of Switzerland become a funfair ride, the clean sliproads of Schiphol yield to wheels cycling in contrary directions. Dreamers clad as taxi drivers start to move in unrequested ways. Who knows what happens?

The rumour of unprecedented events, secret cavalcades add magic to life, the idea that something moves somewhere in a way that doesn't map across to the furrows worn into the surface of experience by repetition. Spreading a rumour of improper behaviour, the re-sorting of social patterns in a way that allows the ideas of freedom to be inhabited by those without the proper papers, loosens reality up to the generation of more than one kind of fabulation. The decades of rule by border and by bank balance have depleted the pockets of space available to dream, to make things up, to take things slowly or at the right speed. At the same time as creative milieus are turned into factories, bring them from back to front in a way that disembowels them, spreading rumours, building up the material traces of their possible verification re-populates reality, even if only tentatively with the possibility that things might move in ways other than they are supposed to.

## PROLIFERATION OF LOGICS

Just as rumours slip out of their proper confines, become news, become old, become mutterings, so do logics or the formalisms that bear them. Underlying techniques rise to the surface, hidden ordering mechanisms sink into the depths. Art finds itself at the edge of disappearance into life. Art proliferates at the edge of disappearance into circuits.

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Yana Milev

## Cluster X: Designing the In/Visible

While Book 2 introduces the cornerstones of an expanded concept of design and Book 3 presents the four branches of a Design Anthropology based on this expanded concept of design, Book 4 is devoted to the various manufacturing programmes that, from a design-anthropological perspective, are understood to be complex anthropotechnical programmes of ‘designing’. The titles of Clusters IX and X indicate—in contrast to the previous cluster titles—that design is the situational result of shaping processes that are constantly at work (*Prozessgestalt*). As in Book 1, reference is made to an infinite list. In *Designing Technologies* and *Designing the In/Visible*, examples are introduced that belong to the (auto)poietic processes of ‘designing’, such as ‘programming’, ‘recognizing’, ‘deconstructing’, ‘masking’, ‘communicating’, ‘spacing’, etc.

Visual representations and surfaces simultaneously assume the absence of an author and the invisibility and concealment of any blueprint. Cluster X discusses aisthesis, the perception of an *Imago Dei* and the emanation of what cannot be represented, for which representations of simulacra and symbols stand. The strong mystical character of invisibility and absence, and the conveyance of invisibility and absence as negative representations onto political, social and economic systems are examined under the title *Designing the In/Visible*. The contributors to this chapter give an impressive demonstration of how the power of the imaginary is staged as the power of numinosity and can be deployed as violence in political contexts. The unseen, invisible and appearance (delusion) are all media of transmission for the blueprints of an invisible spirit: *sovereignty* in politics, *numinosity* in mysticism and God in religion. Two of these emanations of numinosity should be mentioned here, namely ‘wonders’ and ‘chimeras’. Both are concepts of illusion, of the *simulo* historically understood. Illusions take on the role of cloaking and covering up, as well as the role of hiding in the most general sense—which includes hiding nothing—and thus qualify as surfaces, covers or fakes for invisible powers as understood by Rancière or Groy.

Such invisible powers are, among other things, sovereign powers. In his *Political Theology*, Carl Schmitt writes that the problem of sovereignty is a problem of the legal form and of the decision. I would add that it is also a problem of representation, as all concepts of political philosophy are not just theological concepts, but also strategic forms of camouflage, deception and glorification.

The emanations of numinosity thus occur in three forms of matter: in the matter of the *divine* (or, from a clinical perspective, in the *pathological*), in the matter of the *power of law*, and in the matter of the *sinister*, the hidden. In this triple encryption (encoding), sovereignty’s so-called processes of decision-making are moved to the exterior and thus create the problem of representation or, in other words, of the in/visibility of their force.

More or less the entire cluster of *Designing the In/Visible* deals with the emanations of sovereign power(s), their surfaces and backgrounds. Thus the contributions in Block A by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, the British theologian Graham Ward and the German media artist Gregor Schneider should be seen in a certain context. The question of design surfaces posed by Rancière is also related to corporate empires. After Foucault’s arguments on the subject of governmentality, we can assume that market principles stand at the centre of (sovereign) rule. Thus corporate empires of the state, religion or economy can be compared with each other in terms of their design strategies of camouflage and cover. Rancière, Ward and Schneider examine the surfaces of invisible powers.

The contributions by Giorgio Agamben and Armin Linke take up this discourse again in Block C. In the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s contribution, this volume not only has a summary of a sovereign paradox that selects the state of emergency in order to reproduce sovereign power in (pathogenic) decisions, but also a summary of its presentation. Numerous excerpts from *The Kingdom and the Glory* have been selected for this volume. The Italian photographer and media artist Armin Linke—in direct reference to Agamben’s text—attempts to use photography to represent the emanations of sovereign power.

The German cultural and media scientist Peter Berz’s contribution has a certain metaphoric relationship to the invisibility of the divine. Berz describes the morphology of biological blueprints in their visibility and aesthetics as well as in their invisibility and concealment. Berz makes reference to Ernst Haeckel and Adolf Portmann in his arguments.

The contributions in Block B focus on the aspect of showing, in contrast to the discourse of the invisible in Blocks A and C. The British cultural theorist Irit Rogoff has been a pioneer in her research on visual culture since the beginning of the 2000s. In her approach to visual representations, completed for this volume, she makes reference to the relationship between affiliation and singularity and the inherent contradiction of showing



both at the same time. The German photographer Gundula Schulze Eldowy shows the face of a shamanistic culture in Peru and Bolivia that is thousands of years old. Her portraits of mummies, animals and masks convey the ‘ungraspability’ of what is beyond the personal, that which is reproduced in stories and arts and crafts; the spirit of the culture continues to survive in rituals.

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**A: Designing Sur/Faces**

*Jacques Rancière*

*Graham Ward*

*Gregor Schneider (VE)*

*(commentary: Yana Milev)*

**B: Designing Visual Representations**

*Irit Rogoff*

*Gundula Schulze Eldowy (VE)*

*(commentary: Gundula Schulze Eldowy)*

**C: Designing the In/Visible**

*Peter Berz*

*Philipp Beckert (VE)*

*Giorgio Agamben*

*Armin Linke (VE)*

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Jacques Rancière

## The Surface of Design

If I speak here of design, it is not as an art historian or a philosopher of technique. I am neither. What interests me is the way in which, by drawing lines, arranging words or distributing surfaces, one also designs divisions of communal space. It is the way in which, by assembling words or forms, people define not merely various forms of art, but certain configurations of what can be seen and what can be thought, certain forms of inhabiting the material world. These configurations, which are at once symbolic and material, cross the boundaries between arts, genres and epochs. They cut across the categories of an autonomous history of technique, art or politics. This is the standpoint from which I shall broach the question: how do the practice and idea of design, as they develop at the beginning of the twentieth century, redefine the place of artistic activities in the set of practices that configure the shared material world—the practices of creators of commodities, of those who arrange them in shop windows or put their images in catalogues; the practices of constructors of buildings or posters, who construct ‘street furniture’, but also of politicians who propose new forms of community around certain exemplary institutions, practices or facilities—for example, *electricity and soviets*? Such is the perspective that will guide my inquiry. As to my method, it will be that of children’s guessing games, where the question is how two things resemble or differ from one another.

In the event, the question might be formulated as follows: what resemblance is there between Stéphane Mallarmé, a French poet writing *Un coup de dés jamais n’abolira le hasard* in 1897, and Peter Behrens, German architect, engineer and designer who, ten years later, was in charge of designing the products, adverts and even buildings of the electricity company AEG (*Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft*)? On the face of it, this is a stupid question. Mallarmé is known as the author of poems that became increasingly rare, short and quintessential as his poetic art developed. The latter is generally epitomized by a contrast between two states of language: a crude state that serves for communication, description, instruction, and hence for a use of speech analogous to the circulation of commodities and currency; and an essential state that “transposes a fact of nature into its virtual vibratory disappearance” so as to reveal the “pure notion”.

What relationship is there between a poet thus defined and Peter Behrens, an engineer in the service of a major brand producing bulbs, kettles or heaters? Unlike the poet, Behrens is involved in the mass production of utilitarian equipment. And he is also the supporter of a unified, functionalist vision. He wants everything submitted to the same principle of unity, from the construction of workshops to the brand’s logogram and advertising. He wants to reduce the objects produced to a certain number of “typical” forms. What he calls “imparting style” to his firm’s output assumes the application of a single principle to objects and to the icons that offer them to the public: stripping the objects and their images of any decorative prettiness, of anything that answers to the routines of buyers or sellers and their rather silly dreams of luxury and sensual pleasure. Behrens wants to reduce objects and icons to essential forms, geometrical motifs, streamlined curves. According to this principle, he wants the design of objects to approximate as closely as possible to their function, and the design of the icons that represent them to approximate as closely as possible to the information they are supposed to provide about those objects.

So what is there in common between the prince of Symbolist aesthetes and the engineer of large-scale utilitarian production? Two main things. First of all, a common denominator that serves to conceptualize what both of them are doing. Peter Behrens counterposes his streamlined, functional forms to the overly ornate forms or Gothic typographies in favour in Germany at the time. He calls these streamlined forms ‘types’. The term seems far removed from the Symbolist poem. At first sight it evokes the standardization of products, as if the engineer-artist was anticipating the assembly line. The cult of the pure, functional *line* in effect combines three meanings of the word. It resumes the old classical privilege of drawing over colour, while diverting it to other purposes. In fact, it places the ‘classical’ cult of the line in the service of a different *line*—the product line distributed by the unit of the AEG brand for which he works. It thus effects a displacement of the great classical canons. The principle of unity in diversity becomes that of the brand image, which is carried by the whole set of that brand’s products. Finally, this *line*, which is at once the graphic design and the product line put at the disposal of the public, ultimately destines both to a third *line*—i.e., the assembly line.

Yet Peter Behrens has something in common with Stéphane Mallarmé—namely, precisely the word but also the idea of a ‘type’. For Mallarmé too proposes ‘types’. The object of his poetics is not the assemblage of precious words and rare pearls, but the layout of a design. For him, every poem is a layout that abstracts a basic scheme from the spectacles of nature or of the accessories of life, thereby transforming them into essential

forms. It is no longer spectacles that are seen or stories that are told, but world-events, world-schemes. In Mallarmé every poem thus assumes a typical analogical form: the fan that is flicked open and flicked closed, the foam that is fringed, the hair that is displayed, the smoke that clears. It is always schemes of appearance and disappearance, presence and absence, unfolding and refolding. Mallarmé calls these schemes, these abridged or streamlined forms, 'types'. And he will search for their principle in a graphic poetry: a poetry identical with the composition of motion in space, whose model is provided for him by choreography, a certain idea of ballet. For Mallarmé, the latter is a form of theatre where what is produced is not psychological characters, but graphic types. Together with story and character disappears the operation of resemblance in which spectators assemble to enjoy the spectacle of their own embellished image on the stage. To it Mallarmé opposes dance conceived as a writing of types, a writing of gestures, which is more essential than any writing traced by a pen.

The definition of it provided by Mallarmé enables us to identify the relationship between the aims of the poet and the engineer:

*...the judgement or axiom to affirm as regards ballet—namely, that the dancer is not a woman who dances, for the following juxtaposed reasons: she is not a woman but a metaphor epitomizing one of the elementary aspects of our form—sword, bowl, flower, etc.—and she does not dance, suggesting by means of the marvel of foreshortening or momentum, through a corporeal writing, what it would require paragraphs of dialogic as well as descriptive prose to express in written form. A poem freed of any scribal apparatus.*

This poem freed of any scribal apparatus can be compared with those industrial products and symbols of industrial products that are abstract and separated from the consumption of resemblance and prettiness—the 'aesthetic' consumption which complements the ordinary course of circulation of commodities, words and currencies. The poet, like the engineer, wants to oppose to it a language of streamlined form, a graphic language.

If these types must be substituted for the decorum of objects or stories, it is because the forms of the poem, like those of the object, are also forms of life. This is the second feature that brings together the poet of the virtually nothing and the artist-engineer manufacturing *en masse*. For both of them, types outline the image of a certain physical community. Behrens's work as a designer applies the principles of *Werkbund*, which

dictate restoring 'style' in the singular, as opposed to the proliferation of styles plural bound up with capitalist, commodity anarchy.<sup>1</sup> The *Werkbund* aspires to a correspondence between form and content. It wants the form of the object to correspond to its body and to the function it is to perform. It wants a society's forms of existence to convey the internal principle that makes it exist. This correspondence between the form of objects and their function, and between their icons and their nature, is at the heart of the idea of 'type'. Types are the formative principles of a new communal life, where the material forms of existence are informed by a shared spiritual principle. In the type, industrial form and artistic form are conjoined. The form of objects is then a formative principle of life forms.

Mallarmé's types involve similar concerns. The text on Villiers de l'Isle Adam, where Mallarmé speaks of the "meaningless gesture of writing", is often quoted. It is used to illustrate the theme of the nocturnal poet of silence and impossibility. But the phrase should be read in context. What does this "meaningless gesture of writing" consist in? Mallarmé replies: "recreating everything with reminiscences so as to prove that one is indeed where one should be". "Recreating everything with reminiscences" is the principle of the quintessential poem, but it is also that of graphics and the schematism of advertising. Poetic labour for Mallarmé is a labour of simplification. Like engineers, he dreams of an alphabet of essential forms, taken from the ordinary forms of nature and the social world. These reminiscences, these creations of abridged forms answer to the need to construct an abode where man is at home. This concern resonates with the unity of form and content of an existence aimed at by the concept of style in Behrens. Mallarmé's world is a world of artefacts that represent such types, such essential forms. This world of artefacts must consecrate the human abode, prove that one is where one should be. For, at the time when Mallarmé was writing, such certainty was in doubt. Together with the old pomp of religion and monarchy, the traditional forms of symbolization of a shared grandeur were vanishing. And the problem was to replace them so as to give the community its 'seal'.

A famous text by Mallarmé speaks of replacing "the shadow of yesteryear"—religion and especially Christianity—by "some splendour": a human grandeur that would be constituted by anything whatsoever, by assembling objects and elements taken at random in order to confer on them an essential form, the form of a type. Mallarmé's types are thus a substitute for the sacraments of religion, the difference being that with them one does not consume the flesh and blood of any redeemer. Counterposed to the eucharistic sacrifice is the pure gesture of the elevation, the consecration of human artifice and human imagining as such.

Between Mallarmé and Behrens, between the pure poet and the functionalist engineer, there therefore exists this singular link: the same idea of streamlined forms and the same function attributed to these forms—to define a new texture of communal existence. No doubt these shared concerns are expressed in very different ways. The designer engineer intends to revert to a state prior to the difference between art and production, utility and culture; to return to the identity of a primordial form. He seeks this alphabet of types in the geometrical line and the productive act, in the primacy of production over consumption and exchange. For his part, Mallarmé doubles the natural world and the social world with a universe of specific artefacts that can be the fireworks of 14 July, the vanishing lines of the poem, or the knick-knacks with which private life is imbued. And doubtless the designer engineer would situate Mallarmé's project in Symbolist iconography—that of the *Jugendstil*, which he regards as the mere decoration of the commodity world, but whose concern for styling life by styling its furnishings he nevertheless shares.

An intermediate figure might help us to think through this proximity in distance, or distance in proximity, between the poet Mallarmé and the engineer Behrens: a figure on the border between choreographic poem and advertising image. From among the choreographic spectacles in which Mallarmé seeks a new model for the poem, he selects that of Loïe Fuller. Loïe Fuller is an almost completely forgotten character today.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, she played an emblematic role in the development of a new paradigm of art. Her dancing is of a quite particular kind. Loïe Fuller does not trace figures with her feet. She remains static. She dances with her dress, which she unfolds and refolds, making herself a fountain, a flame or a butterfly. The play of spotlights sets this folding and unfolding ablaze, transforms it into fireworks and makes Loïe Fuller a luminous statue, combining dance, sculpture and the art of light into a hypermediatic type of work. She is thus an exemplary graphic emblem of the age of electricity. But her icon is not restricted to that. In her day, Loïe Fuller was endlessly reproduced in every form. She appears to us as a butterfly-woman, exemplifying Secession style, in Koloman Moser's pen drawings. She is made into an anthropomorphic vase or lamp in Art Deco creations. She also becomes an advertising icon; and it is as such that we find her on the posters of the Odol brand according to a simple principle: the letters 'Odol' are projected onto the folds of her dress in the manner of the light projections on the stage.

Obviously, I have not selected this example at random. This figure enables us to think through the proximity and the distance between the poet's types and the engineer's. Like AEG, Odol, a brand of German mouthwash, was a pioneering firm in research into advertising graphics, through the development of its own brand image. It thereby offers us an interesting parallel with the principles of design à la Behrens. On the one hand, its design approximates to them: the bottle is of a simple, functional design, which remained untouched for decades. But on the other hand, it contrasts with them: on the posters, the bottle is often associated with romantic landscapes. One poster puts a Böcklin landscape on the little bottle. On another, the letters 'Odol' outline a Greek amphitheatre in a landscape evoking the ruins at Delphi. Contrasting with the functionalist unity of message and form are these extrinsic forms of sensitization that associate utilitarian gargling with dreamlike scenes. But perhaps there is a third level where the antagonists meet. For forms that are 'extrinsic' in one sense are not so extrinsic in another. Odol's graphic designer in fact utilizes the quasi-geometrical character of the brand's letters, treating them as visual elements. The latter take the form of three-dimensional objects that wander in space, are distributed in the Greek landscape and outline the ruins of the amphitheatre. This transformation of the graphic signifier into visual volume anticipates certain uses of painting; and Magritte did indeed draw inspiration from the Odol amphitheatre for his *Art de la conversation*, where an architecture of ruins is likewise constructed with letters.

This equivalence of the graphic and the visual creates the link between the poet's types and the engineer's. It visualizes the idea that haunts both of them—that of a common physical surface where signs, forms and acts become equal. On Odol posters, alphabetical signs are playfully transformed into three-dimensional objects subject to a perspectivist principle of illusion. But this three-dimensionalization of signs precisely yields a reversal of pictorial illusionism: the world of forms and the world of objects make do with the same flat surface—the surface of alphabetical signs. But this surface of equivalence between words and forms proposes something altogether different from a formal game: an equivalence between the forms of art and the forms of objects of everyday living. This ideal equivalence is rendered literal in the letters, which are also forms. It unifies art, object and image at a level beyond the things that oppose the ornaments of the Symbolist poem or graphic design, governed by the idea of 'mystery', to the geometrical and functional rigour of the engineer's design.

Here we perhaps have the solution to a frequently posed problem. Commentators who study the birth of design and its relationship with industry and advertising ponder the



ambivalence of its forms and the dual personality of its inventors. Thus, someone like Behrens first of all appears in the functional role of artistic advisor to the electricity company; and his art consists in designing objects that sell well and constructing catalogues and posters that stimulate sales. In addition, he becomes a pioneer of the standardization and rationalization of work. At the same time, however, he places everything he does under the sign of a spiritual mission: providing society, through a rational form of labour process, manufactured products and design, with its spiritual unity. The simplicity of the product, its style corresponding to its function, is much more than a 'brand image': it is the mark of a spiritual unity that is to unify the community. Behrens often refers to the nineteenth-century English writers and theoreticians associated with the Arts and Crafts movement. The latter wished to reconcile art and industry by means of the decorative arts and the restoration of craft industry. To explain his work as an engineer-rationalizer, Behrens invokes the major figures in this movement, John Ruskin and William Morris. Yet in the middle of the nineteenth century, did not these two elaborate a neo-Gothic reverie, counterposing to the world of industry, the ugliness of its products and the slavery of its workers a backward-looking vision of artisans combined in guilds, engaged in fine craftsmanship and making, with the joy and devotion of artists, objects that were to become both the artistic decor of the modest life and the means of its education?

How, it is then asked, was this backward-looking, neo-Gothic, spiritualist ideology able to nurture in William Morris an idea of socialism and a socialist commitment that was not some mere fad of an aesthete, but the practice of an activist involved on the ground in social struggles? How, passing from England to Germany, was this idea able to become the modernist-functional ideology of the *Werkbund* and *Bauhaus* and, in the case of Behrens, the ideology of functional engineering, in the service of the specific ends of an industrial combine?

An initial response consists in saying that the one ideology is a convenient cover for the other. The reveries of artisans reconciled with the fine craftsmanship and collective faith of times past is a spiritualist mystification concealing a quite different reality: submission to the principles of capitalist rationality. When Peter Behrens becomes artistic advisor to AEG and uses Ruskin's principles to design the firm's logos and adverts, the neo-Gothic idyll reveals its prosaic truth: the production line.

That is one way of explaining things. But it is not the most interesting. Rather than contrasting reality and illusion, mystification and its truth, it is better to look for what

the 'neo-Gothic reverie' and the modernist/productivist principle have in common. It consists in the idea of the reconfiguration of a shared material world by working on its basic elements, on the form of the objects of everyday life. This shared idea can be translated into a return to craft industry and socialism, a Symbolist aesthetic, and industrial functionalism. Neo-Gothicism and functionalism, Symbolism and industrialism, have the same enemy. They all denounce the relationship that obtains between the soulless production of the world of commodities and the ersatz soul imparted to objects by their pseudo-artistic prettification.

It must be remembered that the 'neo-Gothics' of Arts and Crafts were the first to state certain principles that were subsequently adopted by the *Bauhaus*: an armchair is primarily beautiful if it answers to its function and, consequently, if its forms are streamlined and purified, doing away with the tapestries containing foliage, little children and animals that constituted the 'aesthetic' decor of English petit-bourgeois existence. Something of this passes into the shared idea of the symbol: the symbol in the strict—even advertising—sense à la Behrens and the symbol à la Mallarmé or Ruskin.

A symbol is primarily an abbreviating sign. It can be imbued with spirituality and given a soul. Alternatively, it can be reduced to its function of simplifying form. But both have a common conceptual core that authorises all such moves. I refer to it elsewhere in connection with the text by Albert Aurier that makes Gauguin's *La Vision du sermon* a manifesto for symbolism in painting. The mystical peasant women iconized in abbreviated forms, which Aurier makes into neo-Platonic symbols, are also the Breton women in headaddresses and collars who featured as advertising icons on the boxes of Pont-Aven biscuits for almost a century. The same idea of the abbreviating symbol, the same idea of the type, unites the ideal form and the advertising icon.

There is thus a shared conceptual core that authorizes the shifts between the Symbolist arabesque and functional advertising symbolization. In similar fashion, poets or painters, Symbolists and industrial designers, make the symbol the abstract element shared by the thing, the form and its idea. The same idea of a descriptive composition of forms involves a multiplicity of practices and interpretations. Between 1900 and 1914, the graphic designers of Secession pass from the curves of poisonous flowers to rigorous geometrical constructs, as if one and the same idea of the abbreviating symbol informed both practices. The same principles and the same thinkers of artistic form make it possible to theorize pictorial abstraction and functional design. Through a series of misunderstandings, these masters, like Alois Riegl with his theory of the

organic ornament and Wilhelm Worringer with his theory of the abstract line, became theoretical guarantors of painting's evolution into abstractionism: an art that expresses only the volition—the idea—of the artist, by means of symbols that are signs translating an internal necessity. But their texts also served as the basis for developing an abbreviated language of design, where it was a question of constructing not a visual alphabet of pure signs, but on the contrary a motivated alphabet for the forms of everyday objects.

This community of principle between sign and form, between the form of art and the form of the everyday object, given concrete expression by the graphic design of the early twentieth century, might lead us to reassess the dominant paradigms of the modernist autonomy of art and of the relationship between art forms and life forms. We know how, since Clement Greenberg, the idea of the flat surface has been associated with an idea of artistic modernity, conceived as art's conquest of its own medium, breaking with its submission to external ends and the mimetic imperative. Each art is said to begin to exploit its own means, its own medium, its own material. Thus, the paradigm of the flat surface has served to construct an ideal history of modernity: painting abandoned the illusion of the third dimension, bound up with the mimetic constraint, to constitute the two-dimensional space of the canvas as its own space. And the pictorial plane thus conceived exemplifies the modern autonomy of art.

The problem with this view is that this ideal artistic modernity never stops being sabotaged by infernal troublemakers. Scarcely has Malevich or Kandinsky posited the principle than the army of Dadaists and Futurists emerges, transforming the purity of the pictorial plane into its opposite: a surface for a melange of words and forms, art forms and mundane things. People readily put this perversion down to the pressure exercised by the languages of advertising and propaganda. It was to be repeated in the 1960s, when Pop Art emerged to overturn the regime of two-dimensional painting, restored by lyrical abstraction, and initiated a new, enduring confusion between art forms and the manipulation of purposeful objects and the circulation of commercial messages.

Perhaps we would escape these scenarios of diabolical perversion if we understood that the lost paradise never in fact existed. Pictorial flatness was never synonymous with the autonomy of art. The flat surface was always a surface of communication where words and images slid into one another. And the anti-mimetic revolution never signified renunciation of resemblance. Mimesis was the principle not of resemblance,

but of a certain codification and distribution of resemblances. Thus, the pictorial third dimension had as its principle less the will to render the third dimension 'as such', than an attempt on the part of painting to be 'like poetry', to present itself as the theatre of a history and imitate the power of rhetorical and dramatic speech. The mimetic order was based on the separation of the arts *and* their connection. Painting and poetry imitated each other, while keeping their distance from one another. So the principle of the anti-mimetic aesthetic revolution is not some 'each to his own', confining each art to its own peculiar medium. On the contrary, it is a principle of 'each to everyone else's'. Poetry no longer imitates painting; painting no longer imitates poetry. This does not mean words on one side, forms on the other. It means quite the opposite: the abolition of the principle that allocated the place and means of each, separating the art of words from that of forms, temporal arts from spatial arts. It means the constitution of a shared surface in place of separate spheres of imitation.

Surface is to be understood in two senses. In the literal sense, first of all. The community between the Symbolist poet and the industrial designer is made possible by the melanges of letters and forms effected by the Romantic renewal of typography, new techniques of engraving or the development of poster art. But this surface of communication between the arts is as ideal as it is material. That is why the silent dancer, who unquestionably moves in the third dimension, can furnish Mallarmé with the paradigm of a graphic ideal, ensuring the exchange between the arrangement of words and the layout of forms, between the phenomenon of speaking and that of outlining a space. From it will derive, in particular, the typographical/choreographic arrangement of *Un coup de dés*, the manifesto of a poetry that has become a spatial art.

The same thing is evident in painting. Between Maurice Denis and Kandinsky, there is no autonomous purity that has been wrested, only immediately to be lost by melanges—Simultaneist, Dadaist, Futurist—of words and forms, inspired by the frenzy of advertising or an industrial aesthetics. 'Pure' painting and 'impure' painting alike are based on the same principles. I previously alluded to the reference by promoters of design to the same authors—Riegl or Worringer—who legitimate the abstract purity of painting. More generally, the same idea of surface grounds the painting that puts expressive signs of 'internal necessity' on the 'abstract' canvas and the painting that mixes pure forms, newspaper extracts, metro tickets or clock cog-wheels. Pure painting and 'corrupted' painting are two configurations of an identical surface composed of shifts and melanges.

This also means that there is not an autonomous art on the one hand and a heteronomous art on the other. Here, too, a certain idea of modernity translates into a scenario of diabolical perversion: the autonomy wrested from the mimetic constraint was immediately corrupted by revolutionary activism, enrolling art in the service of politics. This hypothesis of a lost purity is best set aside. The shared surface on which forms of painting simultaneously become autonomous and blend with words and things is also a surface common to art and non-art. The anti-mimetic, modern aesthetic break is not a break with art that is a slave to resemblance. It is a break with a regime of art in which imitations were simultaneously autonomous and heteronomous: autonomous in that they constituted a sphere of verbal or visual creations not subject to the criteria of utility or truth operative elsewhere; heteronomous in so far as they imitated in their particular order—in particular, through the separation and hierarchy of genres—the social distribution of position and worth. The modern aesthetic revolution effected a break with this dual principle: it is the abolition of the parallelism that aligned artistic hierarchies with social hierarchies; the assertion that there are no noble or base subjects and that everything is a subject for art. But it is also the abolition of the principle that separated the practices of imitation from the forms and objects of ordinary existence.

Accordingly, the surface of graphic design is three things: first, the equal footing on which everything lends itself to art; second, the surface of conversion where words, forms and things exchange roles; and third, the surface of equivalence where the symbolic writing of forms equally lends itself to expressions of pure art and the schematization of instrumental art. This ambivalence does not mark some capture of the artistic by the political. 'Abbreviated forms' are, in their very principle, an aesthetic and political division of a shared world: they outline the shape of a world without hierarchy where functions slide into one another. The finest illustration of this might be the posters designed by Rodchenko for the aircraft company Dobrolet. The stylized forms of the plane and the letters of the brand are combined in homogeneous geometrical forms. But this graphic homogeneity is also a homogeneity between the forms that serve to construct Suprematist paintings and those that serve to symbolize both the élan of Dobrolet planes and the dynamism of a new society. The same artist does abstract paintings and makes instrumental posters; in both cases, he is working in identical fashion to construct new forms of life. This is also the artist who uses the same principle of homogenization by flatness for collages illustrating Mayakovsky's texts and for off-centre photographs of starts in a gymnastic display. In all these instances, the purity of art and the combination of its forms with forms of life go together. This is the visual response to the theoretical question I posed. In it the Symbolist poet and the functionalist engineer confirm the shared character of their principle on one and the same surface.

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1. The bases of the thinking of the *Werkbund* and Behrens are analyzed in Frederic J Schwartz's book *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Graham Ward

## Postsecularity? The New Public Faces of Religion

Since the early 1980s, sociologists in the West have begun to observe that one of the foundational principles of their science—a theory of the secularization of society—was being challenged. There are various forms of this theory, such as the critiques of religion of Marx or Freud, Weber or Durkheim, but the main thrust of the theory is that religion will disappear as human beings become more enlightened, more self-reflective. Modernity, this epoch that opened with Enlightenment thinkers, would carry through what Weber termed the disenchantment of the world and sweep away all mythological and superstitious thinking in its overwhelming rationalism. But in 1979 the sociologist Bryan Wilson raised the question of the “Return of the Sacred”, a question taken up by another leading sociologist, Dan Bell, the following year. The question has never gone away since, because, to quote a more recent thinker, “The ‘facts’ are not much disputed: New Religious Movements continue to arise; older movements like Pentecostalism and Mormonism are expanding; religious fundamentalism thrives throughout the world”.<sup>1</sup> A number of well-known thinkers like Jürgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida and Charles Taylor—leaders in the field of social theory—are now speaking about a ‘post-secular’ condition. What characterizes this ‘postsecular’ condition is not simply the refusal of religion to go away but, more significantly, the new public visibility of religion. And it is at this point, the point where religion has a public voice, that religion becomes political again.

Let’s go back to the seventeenth century. England was being torn apart by the Civil War, but more widely from 1618 to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Europe experienced what it now calls its ‘Wars of Religion’. ‘Religion’ here was actually Christianity, for the wars were being fought between Catholics and Protestants, ostensibly concerning the right to practise one’s particular Christian faith. What emerged in the wake of these wars was the development of nation states and the promulgation of various acts of toleration. The Act of Toleration was passed in England in 1689. Rather strangely, this act allowed for tolerance towards nonconformist Protestant traditions and tolerance also towards Jewish people, but there was to be no tolerance of the Catholic faith in England until the nineteenth century. This new religious tolerance fostered a split that had previously been unthinkable—that is, religion was to play no part in public life. Instead, it was consigned to the private sphere. The newly developing public sphere

was then a secular space; and religion played no part in politics. In the United Kingdom, because of church-state relations, there has continued to be a tradition of critical intervention by the church in the public sphere—one thinks of the Christian socialism of William Temple, for example.

But at some point in the mid- to late 1970s the public visibility of religion more generally began to change. Two events from our own recent history make manifest this change. The first came in 1975 following the release of the film *The Exorcist*. In the wake of evangelical groups in North America, evangelical Christians in Britain took to the streets to try to force local governments and cinema owners to ban screenings of the film. Though unsuccessful, public demonstrations continued to be held outside cinemas throughout the country. Religion was coming out of the private domain and challenging the secular space in which freedom of choice was paramount as long as it lay within the parameters of the law and injured no one else’s right to choose. The second event occurred in the late 1980s and is far more significant. This event took place on a gloomy Saturday afternoon in Bradford city centre, 14 January 1989, and centred around the public burning of Salman Rushdie’s novel, *The Satanic Verses*. The burning was ritualized, the protest was organized. Several prominent city people had been invited, including a number of Labour councillors and MPs. It was not, then, prime facie an act of civil disobedience. A wider public attention was sought, since the event took place twenty minutes earlier than scheduled because the photographer-journalist from the local newspaper, the *Telegraph and Argus*, had to be elsewhere in Bradford later that afternoon. What is important is the way this local event among Muslims in Yorkshire took on significance first nationally and then internationally. For there had been a similar event staged in Bolton earlier that month that did not receive any attention at all. Later, in July of the same year, the firebombing of a London bookstore—thought at the time to have been by Muslims protesting against the publication of Rushdie’s book—did not engender the same mythologizing. On 17 January, Rushdie himself went public on the event, calling for the condemnation by the Labour Party of those official members who had witnessed the book burning. But the response in Bradford was muted. Only the Labour MP for Bradford South publicly condemned the event, the rest appear to have been dumbfounded by the publicity the book burning had received. But the Bradford book burning touched a raw national nerve. The posters proclaiming ‘Rushdie Must Be Destroyed’ introduced a violent and seemingly personal hatred into a public space. The liberal boundary between private and public opinion had been transgressed. There were leader comments in the country’s newspapers, televised interviews, debates and discussions, radio phone-ins. By the end of January 1989 the book burning had



become a symbol of a culture war that the British had, until then, been oblivious to. In the months that followed, a term new to British public discourse was officially sanctioned: Islamic fundamentalism. It was a term that gained gravitas when, exactly one month after the event in Bradford, on 14 February 1989, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued his fatwa: “I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of *The Satanic Verses* book which is against Islam, the Prophet and the Koran, and all involved in its publication who were aware of its content, are sentenced to death”. It was a term given more credence in the West with the opening of the Gulf War two years later. There was a new visibility of religion in the public sphere.

To make matters more complex, it appears that, alongside this change in the visibility of religion in the public sphere, the public sphere itself was changing. Spin-doctoring is perhaps one of the key characteristics of this change. Politics was becoming increasingly caught up with the media. That is, public opinion was not being sought, so much as being produced through the various public communications systems. The public sphere initially arose in the eighteenth century from critical debate among an informed public, whose voices were represented in an elected parliament. But from the Thatcher years onwards, any number of social and political theorists began to talk about the erosion of the public sphere and the formation of public opinion. With respect to the United Kingdom, the United States and Italy, it has even been suggested that we have become ‘postdemocratic’. The changes, then, relating to religion occur at a time when democracy itself seems to be changing. Now, at the moment the connection between the two forms of cultural change awaits investigation. In fact, the University of Manchester is at the forefront of bids for funding to begin the investigation. Is democracy in crisis and, in this crisis, coming to recognize that democracy has always had religious, specifically Christian roots? I’m talking about modern democracy here, of course, not its classical forms. Is religion being politicized, the inspiration for resistance to a larger depoliticization brought about by the postdemocratic condition? Are the symbolic imaginaries of religion being used for political means? There are any number of questions. But, for the moment, all we can do is clarify what we see before us by distinguishing the various forms of this religious visibility in the public realm.

In what remains I will sketch a typology, suggesting that there are three forms of this new visibility. The first form has been the most widely discussed and examined. That is, religious fundamentalism. There have been a number of studies in English of Christian fundamentalism as it grew out of American evangelical movements in the early part of the twentieth century and the present-day impact of, say, charismatic Christianity

in Latin America, Biblicalism in South Korea, the work of Opus Dei, Alpha courses in Britain, etc. It mainly arises, though not exclusively, from the Protestant and non-conformist traditions. But though the word ‘fundamentalism’ is most particularly forged within this Christian heritage, it has been applied as a term to describe the various types of militant proselytizing found in some strands of both Judaism and Islam. Attention has been drawn to the missionizing—and colonizing—impulses in both Christianity and Islam, and their global implications. But this religious ‘fundamentalism’ is not confined to monotheistic faiths. It is a description also of certain forms of Hindu aggressiveness—such as surfaced with the massacre of almost 1,500 Muslims in Gujarat. At this point I don’t wish to enter into whether there are structural similarities between these forms of fundamentalism and/or structural similarities between these forms of militarism and other forms of believing that constitute communal, even tribal identity; the various nationalist parties, for example. At this point, all I am doing is sketching out some major difference in the new visibility of religion.

The second form of visibility can be defined in terms of the return of religion to the public sphere. The story of the rise of secularism has been told in terms of the development of a public sphere that aimed to be religiously and ideologically neutral in order to operate most effectively, that is, inclusively. Institutions forged as means of administering, safeguarding and producing this public sphere—the judiciary, schools and universities, hospitals, the media and forms of local and national government—all explicitly espoused this notion of neutrality. Religious beliefs were a matter of private devotion. Of course, the neutrality of the state differs in those places where there are traditions of civic religion (as in the USA) or where there are national churches (as in England). But this second visibility concerns the way private beliefs are once again entering the public arena. This may take the form of an appeal to prayer by American presidents before the opening of Congress or of statements such as those found in George W. Bush’s last State of the Union address: “I believe that God has planted in every human heart the desire to live in freedom”. Tony Blair similarly made his own religious beliefs public in the UK, and the media made much of the fact that Michael Howard, one-time leader of the UK’s Conservative party, is Jewish, his son a Jewish Christian training for the priesthood in the Church of England. A further form of this new visibility of religion in the public sphere can be witnessed in the struggles between state systems and particular religious traditions—the attention given to the wearing of the veil by Muslim girls in French schools or the recent reactions in Spain to the wish to impose stricter Catholic observance into schooling. Religious groupings have also become effective lobbying forces in political debates, such as those around the legalization of abortion, the introduction

of the death penalty and legislation on recent advances in biotechnology. On a more academic level, international voices like those of Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray are all now informing us of their religious allegiances or of the importance for their work of their Catholic heritage. In 2001, at the University of Manchester, MacIntyre announced that he wished to be thought of as a Thomist.

I have called the third form of this visibility the 'commodification of religion', drawing upon specific analyses by Marx of the processes of reification and fetishism associated with the cultural dominance of capitalism. This involves the commercialization of religion; religion as a special effect. It is a cultural fact that while the French political scientist Marcel Gauchet, following the Weberian thesis of the disenchantment of the modern world, could write in 1985 about "the disappearance of enchanters and powerful supernatural beings",<sup>2</sup> the cultural scene since has been overpopulated with enchanters, from Gandalf to Harry Potter, and whole armies of angels and demons, vampires, ghosts and superheroes. Zygmunt Bauman is not the first to have written about the "reenchantment" of the postmodern world. Others have written about the reawakening of the Gothic imagination, a neo-Romanticism, a postsecularity. From *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to *Lara Croft: The Cradle of Life*, from advertisements for vodka to the names of bars and shops in Manchester—the Font, Gaia, the Eighth Day, the Parting of the Waves—religion does not live in and of itself anymore. It lives in commercial business, gothic and sci-fi fantasy, in health clubs, themed bars and architectural design, among happy-hour drinkers, tattooists, ecologists and cyberpunks. Religion has become a special effect, inseparably bound to an entertainment value. It plays two mutually implicated roles in contemporary Western and North American culture. On the one hand, as symbolic capital with a certain charismatic past, it can give a mystic charge to places, goods, even people. Those allured by this charge are not buying religion, they are not consuming the religious or being consumed by it; they are consuming the illusions or simulations of religion. On the other hand, these simulations of religion, religion as symbolic capital, are used as an aesthetic diversion from the profound uncertainties, insecurities and indeterminacies of postmodern living. The religious is used rhetorically in the creation of the illusions of transcendence, to help simulate euphoria in transporting events. Both cultural roles are different aspects of religion as fetish—that is, caught up in the complex economies of displaced desire (sexual and consumerist); desire without a proper object.

As I said, there may be forms of this new visibility I haven't accounted for, differences we need to determine more accurately. I have said nothing, for example, about New Age movements, the frank espousal by some of what was once called paganism, and

its links to eco or green parties. The schema is simply offered heuristically. But it does seem to me that each of these forms of visibility operates politically. Let me explain this, as I'm going to employ a broad understanding of the political, which I will then relate to a more organized concept of the political, democracy. We have to recognize, when examining the new visibility of religion, that there are various forms of democratic culture in Europe. It would be wrong to assume that because each of us lives in a state that is democratically governed—at least we are still meant to believe that—that democracy functions in the same way in Belgium or Austria, say, as it does in Britain. We need to speak, then, of forms of democratic culture. The ways in which democracy is practised, the values it fosters, the resistances it generates, the institutions it establishes and invests in, will produce forms of culture or *Lebensform* in one nation state that will not be the same in another nation state. The histories of the way we have been governed and come to understand ourselves as British or German or French, etc., will articulate the grammar of modern democracy in different ways, with different emphases. As such, the new visibility of religion will impact differently in each of the democratic lifestyles represented across Europe. And it does seem to me that distinguishing the forms of the new visibility will enable us to discern more clearly the kinds of impact, the similarities and differences across European nation states.

Let me return to my employment of the word 'politics' and define how I am using it more precisely. Any society is composed of thousands of relations—not only between people, but between institutions and the exchange of objects. Each of these relations is informed by power. This power can take many forms—a biological form (energy levels, for example), a psychological form (stronger or weaker understandings of self), an economic form, a class form, a racial form, a gender form, etc. There is no relation where there is no power to act and to bring into relation. It does not follow from this correlation between the political and relations as such that I deny reciprocity and affirm an ineradicable antagonism along the lines of Thomas Hobbes. I do not. But I conceive reciprocity as implicated in a world-view that is fundamentally religious. That is, reciprocity is inseparable from a cosmology and an ontology that are implicated in a vision of perfect justice. Reciprocity is the *telos* of a religious desire. It is not a given, though it may be something that two or more people strive towards. The given is a complex coming-together and negotiation of desires in which power is operative. With every relation we might ask a series of questions. Who seeks it? For what means? Who or what legitimates it? What is excluded that this relation rather than that is established? There are many other questions we could ask, but what the questions articulate is the manner in which relating is implicated in the deployment of and negotiations concerning power.

Now, to return to my three putative forms of the new visibility of religion. It is evident that forms of religious fundamentalism affect not only the older liberal values and practices in any democratic culture; indeed, they affect political government itself within any nation state. For example, in a well-documented case in the United Kingdom, evangelical Christians threatened to bankrupt the Church of England in 2009 unless the election of a gay priest to the ecclesiastical office of bishop was overturned; they celebrated their victory widely when the Archbishop of Canterbury intervened to ask the man to step down. I say nothing about the rights or wrongs of ordaining gay men or lesbian women to ecclesial posts, my point is simply that the liberal values of tolerance and individual autonomy—the liberal distinction also between the private and the public—were put aside. Financial power became a coercive force that overturned older forms of ecclesial governance. As we know, the Queen is head of the Church of England, and all appointments to high office in the Church are made through the Prime Minister's office. Throughout, the Queen remained silent on the matter in public and the Prime Minister refused to intervene directly, despite the obvious disregard for equal opportunity and access, enshrined in our employment laws, and the blatant sexual discrimination. The refusal to act is also a political action. Religious fundamentalism, then, can affect both democratic government and the values and practices of democratic culture.

We should perhaps take this further in a reflection upon the relationship between the religious and political in the return of religious discourse to the public sphere. What is involved in this new social acceptance of someone's personal religious convictions? Again, in an example from the recent history of the UK, Tony Blair announced he would answer "before his Maker" for the decision he made to send British forces to Iraq. This, it seems to me, is not simply a new distribution of power across the private and the public domains, although we have to acknowledge that the relation between the private and the public is increasingly eroded, as the use of surveillance increases, the tracking of all mobile phone and online communications becomes possible and *habeas corpus* is suspended in certain emergency measures taken against suspected persons. Furthermore, this erosion is yet another nail in the coffin for democratic living according to liberal values—a trend we will return to in a moment. Nevertheless, while Blair's public confessionalism testifies to the new relations between private and public, it cannot be reduced to them. Neither, it seems to me, can it be reduced to the idea that religion is being appealed to in order to legitimate a political decision. Certainly Blair puts the whole matter of rational enquiry into why Britain went to war with Iraq on a

different footing. While not preventing enquiry, the limits of such enquiry are evident when the origins of the decision lie in the nebulous realms of Blair's relationship to God, between, that is, his conviction of what is true and God's knowledge of what is true. While this may legitimate his action to himself (in a way that remarkably parallels the way suicide bombers etc. legitimate their own actions to themselves), it would not legitimate the action in a public realm in which the majority are either indifferent to God or interpret God's will in radically different ways. So what lies behind the ability to speak freely about one's religious convictions and to allow them to affect social and political action (with enormous economic consequences) in the public realm at state level? What I find interesting—and I might say even progressive—is the way in which, for the first time, the play of ideologies is not only being made visible (that is, exposed), but publicly produced. Ideology is declaring itself to be such. And by ideology I mean sets of beliefs that, if they are ever critical of themselves, continue that critique internally. According to the French political philosopher, Louis Althusser, the effectiveness of an ideology corresponded at one time to the extent to which it remained culturally invisible. But I am beginning to wonder if the cultural changes we are noting—not only concerning religion, but also concerning liberal democracy—are not witness to how ideology is now conceived as all the stronger for declaring itself as such. Blair's confession exposes liberal neutrality (and its concomitant beliefs in tolerance, freedom of private conscience, humanism and what the French call *laïcité*) as a political ideological force. By explicitly producing ideology in such a manner, is the public sphere not emerging as a clash of ideologies, a war of beliefs? Perhaps with the demise of real parliamentary opposition (the difference between Labour, Conservative and Liberal politics seems very slight indeed) new oppositions have to be found for contemporary 'democracy' to be seen to operate. As such, public forms of religious confession are something similar to picking a fight. Blair announces he does not stand in public as a Labour prime minister (what does Labour mean, anyway, in the days of New Labour?). Blair announces he stands in public as a man of God.

What is at stake here, as with the first form of religious visibility, is that the phenomenon I am representing may have less to do with the advent of what Karl Jaspers, referring to the global shift in advanced civilizations from pantheistic polytheism to transcendent monotheism, called a new "axial age", and more to do with the advent of a major transformation in the nature of government, statecraft and the democratic social order. It was liberal democracy that forged the notions, theories and practices of secularism. But as Marcel Gauchet has recently reminded us,

*this 'secular' understanding of reality and of the social bond is essentially constituted from within the religious field, whether it was nurtured by religion's substance or deployed as an expression of one of its fundamental potentialities. The secular mind is a concrete expression of a changing transcendence and used religious truth to form itself.*<sup>3</sup>

Gauchet, whether consciously or not, echoes theses by thinkers as different as Carl Schmitt, Johann Baptist Metz and Harvey Cox. In fact, within Christianity, Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy have both refused the autonomy of the secular. Modernity does not seek to erase the sacred (Weber's 'disenchantment', Marx's 'opiate', Feuerbach's 'projection', Freud's pathological 'illusion'), it simply displaces it. And, as with all displacement, the object being displaced then takes on the density of a certain denied concentration.

Allow me to complicate matters further by examining briefly the politics implicated in my third form of religious visibility: its commodification. The enormous success of films like *The Matrix* or *Lord of the Rings*, the success of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* novels or Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, the return of vampires, devils, ghosts, ghouls, zombies, witches, fairies and angels to billboards, pop lyrics, cybergames, etc., attest to a remythologizing of the contemporary Western imagination. As we have learnt from the work of the Frankfurt School, these cultural artefacts are not simply products (mirror reflections)—they are producers (they transform the cultural or social imagination). They are 'technologies' implicated in social processes that change the nature of our perception, our senses of space and time, our appreciation of the visible and the invisible, our understandings of what the world is and what it is to be human in such a world. In this way they must be treated as political apparatuses that govern not just our bodies (certain physical shapes are desired and others not), but also our minds. These technologies structure our dreaming and desiring. It is in this way that they are implicitly political. The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in defining various types of capital—economic, social, symbolic, cultural—that constitute markets, production, consumption, cultural success and cultural obscurity, might describe religion as 'symbolic' capital. The value of this capital depends, like all stock, on what the market demands. But at the moment it seems religious capital is riding high, and as some of the above cultural products make evident, can be turned into economic capital. We need to examine this further, as the falling numbers associating themselves with traditional faith communities—which, in any case, do little trade these days in witches, zombies or even life-after-death—do not correlate with the new upward mobility of mythological

thinking. The massive numbers of new converts to Christian fellowships are grouped around Durkheim's charismatic leader. Like certain radical trends in Judaism and Islam, they emphasize notions of evil, even the satanic. These new negative ontologies, and the spectres of Gnosticism they invoke, do bear some correlation to the neo-gothic. In fact, the language of evil—although rather more vaguely associated with a negative ontology as such—is common parlance among world leaders such as Bush and Blair with respect to terrorism. A moral Gnosticism between good and evil people is being generated. The 'terror' in terrorism directly associates with the re-emergence of the gothic imagination. Gothic fiction traded on horror and terrorizing, and God and the Gothic are certainly correlated. But further work still needs to be done to reveal the extent of this correlation.

At the moment, I think we can only make some rather general hypotheses. I suggest that what we are witnessing today, both in the new visibility of religion and in the transformations in democratic governing, is a shift in the structures of believing itself, coupled with a penchant for experiencing extremes. The empiricisms and the positivisms, even the critical realisms, vouchsafed by the paradigm of scientific enquiry—'isms' that have been gaining cultural ascendancy since the Second World War and which provided structures for believing according to criteria for data collection and methods for validation and verification—no longer convince.

It interests me that all three forms of the new visibility of religion in the public sphere are allied to and harness the latest telecommunications technology: the physics of light is once again being translated into a metaphysics and mystics of light. A number of researchers into the nature and effects of virtual reality and digital technology have made appeal to the language of spirituality, and links have also been made to New Age movements: neo-paganism, Wicca, Scientology, etc. Science is at the forefront of this new mythologizing. Perhaps, then, one of the most pertinent questions in this cultural situation is "What makes a belief believable?" In other words, what is needed is an investigation into the processes of believing themselves, their structures, their economies, their relations to desire, power and the trading in various forms of capital. As I said earlier, the shift in the nature of believing emerges at a time when there is a demand for extreme experiences—experiences of the limit. This demand finds expression in the astonishing popularity of an attempt by David Blaine to live in a glass box above the Thames for 44 days, living only on water. Most of Blaine's stunts, like this one, involve an explicit religious reference. It finds expression in the proliferation of synthetic drugs, like ecstasy, in extreme sports and consumer excess. Where the two cultural trends



come together is in the film industry's obsession with special effects. I have suggested elsewhere that the commodification of religion is in fact a form of special effects—techno-transcendence. This in turn is related to what the French social theorist, Guy Debord, termed the society of the spectacle. The English Romantic poet Samuel Coleridge once spoke about the need to suspend disbelief when one entered the world of fiction. Today, it seems to me, there is a craving to believe the unbelievable; to transcend all human limitations and encounter the impossible. Perhaps we are no longer capable of unequivocal disbelief, of atheism. And I must say I find that dangerous.

I have conjectured nothing with respect to how these cultural shifts have come about. This may indeed be symptomatic of a more pervasive scepticism about causality in the natural and the social sciences. I have merely wanted to open our discussion with some observations, hypotheses and questions from my own limited perspective. As Aristotle most famously wrote, as the concluding line of his *Nicomachean Ethics*, “let us now begin the conversation”.

*This essay is based on a lecture originally delivered at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 2009.*

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1. Berger, Peter L ed., *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1999, p. 1.
  2. Gauchet, Marcel, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, Oscar Burge trans., Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 3.
  3. Gauchet, *Disenchantment*, p. 60.

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fig. 1

3D Cube model, Kaaba 2005

fig. 2

Cube Berlin, draft 2006

fig. 3

Cube Hamburg, realization 2007

fig. 4

Cube Venice, draft 2004

fig. 6

Cube Jerusalem, draft 2008



fig. 1

fig. 2

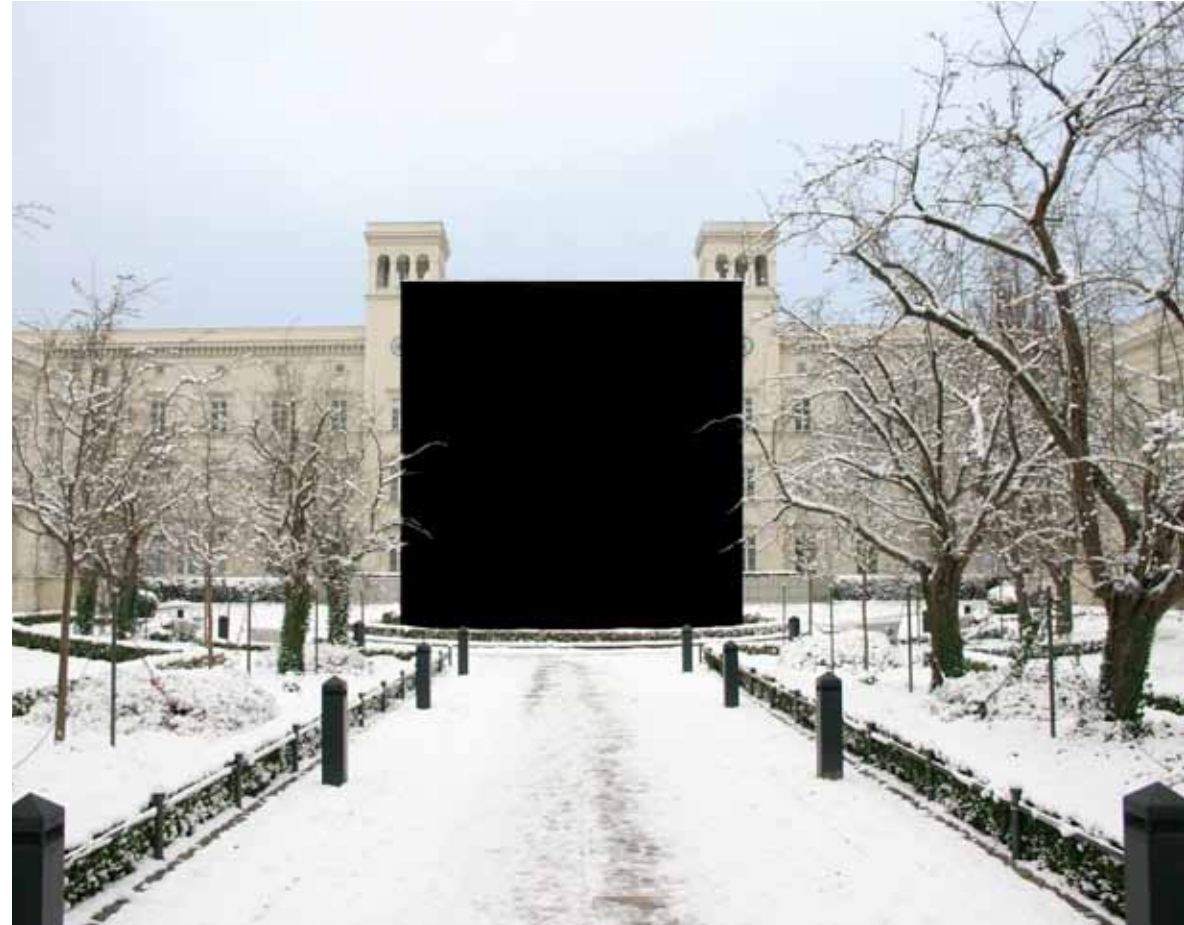


fig. 3





fig. 4

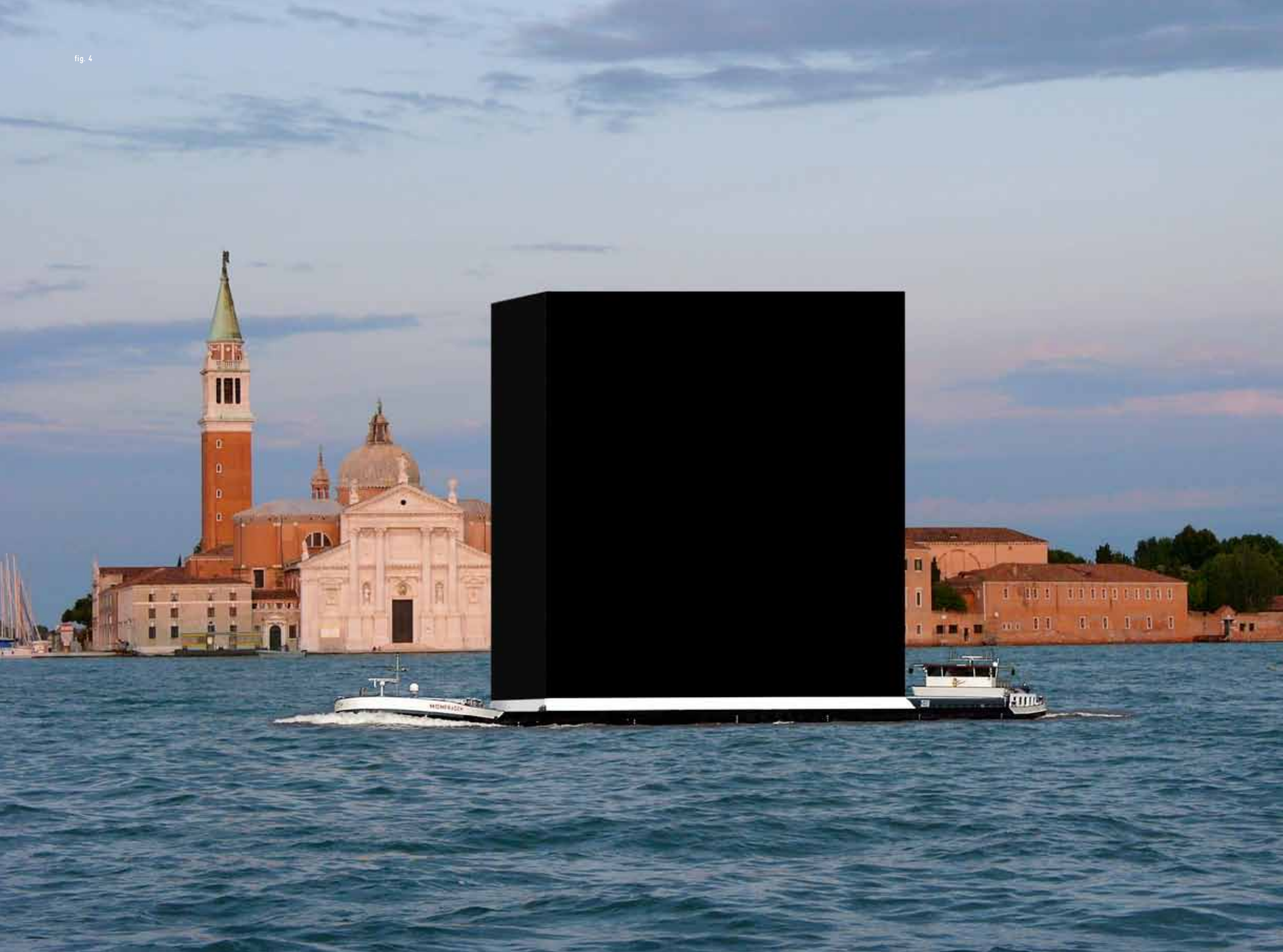




fig. 5





Yana Milev

## The (Non)Face of the (Un)Seen: A Suprematist Antithesis

*About G.S.'s Cube Project*

Much has been written about Gregor Schneider's cube project and how its realization was repeatedly obstructed. In this short presentation of his project, the focus is less on perpetuating a mediatized political issue that is often shifted onto the war between religions (and political orientations), but rather on the mystical foundations of his cube hypothesis and its architectural consequence.

The three monotheisms agree that the numinous cannot be represented, but the emanations of the godly strive for the prerogative over global representation and representability. The *imago dei*—the image of God—is supposed to exist, even if it does so in designs that are incompatible for other religions and their adherents, who communicate the battle about holy images in holy wars. The three monotheisms agree that the emanation of the numinous becomes evident in miracles and in chimeras (delusions, appearances). Both can be understood as simulacra, above all if we want to turn our gaze to the political religious staging.

So let us make an exception and leave the path of accusations of Islamism staged by democratic media against Gregor Schneider. Let us leave this discourse in our elaboration—it is too simple, too tailored, suited at best to the consumption psychology of demonizing and euphemizing.

It is almost impossible to comprehend the media propaganda that joined forces against Gregor Schneider's cube. A political strategy must lie in the assertion that Schneider's cube is the blueprint of the Kaaba, the Islamic holy shrine in Mecca. What interests can be found in the media arguments that obstruct the supposed copy? What objections are raised? Perhaps that believers will make a pilgrimage to the locations of Schneider's cube in order then to circle it in masses seven times counter-clockwise? It is incomprehensible that Schneider's artwork is intended to divert pilgrims and believers from their actual destination in Saudi Arabia in a kind of diversionary manoeuvre, with city mayors and communities then having to deal with them on European soil. It may be possible that suicide bombers would be among them; but who has ever heard that

Kaaba visitors in the courtyard of the al-Haram Mosque in Mecca blow themselves and their fellow believers up? What should the European (media) public be afraid of in the case of a black cube—the artist Gregor Schneider's self-declared artwork—if not suicide attacks? Attacks on the cube by the radical Right? Or even an explosion in tourism due to all the people who can't afford a flight to Saudi Arabia? Does the media really think that believers in the diaspora take the artwork so seriously that they would start to circle it—in front of Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof, on St Mark's Square in Venice, in front of the Kunsthalle in Hamburg and at other locations? Or is it the media's political opinion that believers in the diaspora see this artwork as a provocation and will thus seek their revenge against city mayors, communities, cultural grandees and the art audience?

The phenomenon is obvious. A black cube is staged as a simulacrum by media designs! Gregor Schneider's black cube is no longer what it is—a black box—but rather an illusion, loaded with meaning by the media, used to kick off public opinion-making.

But why? Let's look into a short history of the black box.

The black container has numerous meanings in modernity. There is, for example, the black box principle in behaviourism, which confirms the invisibility of internal psychological processes. There is the black box system in cybernetics and systems theory, a concept that only allows for observing and considering external behaviour. Similar black box theories exist in theatre and film theory for the role of the stage, camera and auditorium. A black cube was Kazimir Malevich's symbol for rejecting image representation and turning towards the iconic. The physicist Erwin Schrödinger tormented his cat in a magic box. This thought experiment, which has entered history simply as "Schrödinger's cat", was meant to provide proof of complementarity of reality (including God), and does just that—the cat is dead the moment the box is opened, which was supposed to be proven. Everything that happens in a black box is speculation. With regards to a clinical judgement, a sovereign's decision that enters the public realm as an emanation of a miracle—namely as war or state of emergency—is coagulated in the black box's vacuum and is thus pathological. To prefer a black box as an architectural or political object can be a good idea, since, from a purely architectural viewpoint, Europe is a victory march of glass and light over darkness, and thus the black square or the black cube is its antagonism.

We would like to propose a different theory than the endless accusations of Islamism—namely the triumph of governmental rule and splendour. This triumph is reflected in

urban architecture—political and ideological glass architecture, the architecture of biopolitical control or the architecture of democracy. This is where the *other* history of Gregor Schneider's cube begins; it is a history of the *suprematist antithesis* to the ideological verdict of rule and splendour in the image of glass architecture.

In all historical examples of the architecture of light and glass since antiquity, it is above all the staging of the sublime (that is, light through the means of architecture), that stands at the architectonic centre—first in open domes, later in glass domes, through to the stained glass windows of sacred façades. In the politicization of cupolar, central-plan and sacred architecture, it is the sovereign power that attains prestige from the architecture. The sovereign, the person who stands closest to God and who has all means of situational decision-making with regard to power available to him, has stood at the centre of politics and architecture since the early modern period. Architectures of light have taken on a multitude of shapes since then—from the Renaissance to Baroque to Biedermeier, from historicism to Bauhaus to functionalism, from Futurist Italian architecture to Hitler's dome of light, up to the German Bundestag's glass dome.

Even before the transition from political modernism to political postmodernism around the turn of the second millennium—and the subsequent revolution in the political and ideological architecture of glass—commercial and industrial architecture not only took up a prominent position alongside sacred architecture, but experienced a so-called democratization alongside political glass architecture. Crystal Palace did not just enter the history books as representative of a new kind of light-frame and inexpensive architecture (with greenhouse architecture becoming a model for mobile and transparent constructions for trade fairs, arcades and towers, as with the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the arcades in Milan, Paris and Leipzig), but rather as a new type of representation. It is no longer the clergy who are closest to God and thus light, nor the sovereign between monarchy and dictatorship, but simply money.

The staging of urban spaces and architectures that centres attention on the technological, the industrial and the bureaucratic, as well as on biopolitical progress, banks on the future. Twentieth-century Futurist architecture from Italy, Germany and Russia through to New York simultaneously stages an epidemic growth of temples of light at dizzying heights—vertical explosions of glass and light accumulators. We remember Tatlin's tower, steel high-rise constructions such as the WTC in New York and Fritz Lang's stage sets for *Metropolis*. Financial power as well as technical and industrial progress go hand in hand with progress in the aesthetics of consumer goods and films.

Projection is then added to the functions of light's powers of translucency and the reflection of refracted light. Architectures are cinematographies, light projections through glass and lenses, of narratives of progress; Paul Virilio subsumes this idea under the notion of cinematographic manoeuvres of deception in his book *War and Cinema*.

Crystal Palace was not the staging of a light-frame construction method made possible by technological progress, but rather also a temporary architecture that matched the tempo of the staging of consumer goods and illuminated advertising on a global scale. In the series of nineteenth-century world fairs in Paris, London and New York, the headquarters of global companies were created. The illumination of tempo, industry, progress and luxury, through electricity and through glass, flowed into the illumination of new forms of sovereignty—global governance—which, flanked by illuminated car showrooms, shopping malls and recreation parks, came to dominate the metropolis. Glass, in combination with light, has never served an aesthetic purpose in representative architecture, but rather the role of power! In this context, the performance of illumination and projection corresponds to the staging of power.

What we have experienced since the transition of political modernism to political postmodernism is, however, another quantum leap in glass and light architecture: its deconstruction. The Twin Towers' collapse was not just an architectural collapse, but rather a collapse in the paradigm of progress and power: a symbolic collapse. If light and glass entered into a longstanding alliance to mirror and reflect the sublime, and to stage it purposefully in the vertical axis, then the 9/11 scenario symbolically suspended the dialogue between power and deception, violence and delusion, God and the sovereign in a horizontal counterforce. What remains is a visual shock for our directed gaze, a *shifting image complex*.

Gregor Schneider's cube, when compared to different urban political scenarios, is also a symbol of a counterforce that extinguishes the accidental, the moment of the most intense light and illumination, as the impact of the detonation, the shock and the light of war. A blind spot of silence, a black hole of osmosis and the virtual—and precisely not the reflection of power and victory. The cube is no locus of scorched earth, but rather a site of regeneration. Or, as Malevich would say: a place of victory over the sun, a place of night—a place of suprematism (superiority) for the non-inspective, the invisible and the unseen.

What we experienced in Tokyo after the catastrophes in Fukushima was how the permanent flow of electricity for advertising, skyscrapers and city lights was stopped. An urban shadow era began in the metropolis; many people felt this was salutary. Numerous bloggers reported this unique experience. And another quantum leap in glass architecture occurred: they went dark, like the moon, and finally allowed individuals to reach for a lantern. The liberated gesture to decide between light and darkness was once again central.

Gregor Schneider's cube is anarchy in the midst of an urban political triumph of glass and light, of demonstrations and undercover cops, a victory over technocracy and progress, over electricity and money, over inclusion and exclusion, over transparency and biopolitics, over war and film.

The black cube is an interruption of sovereign and post-sovereign rule! An interruption in the violence of the global (Baudrillard) and, finally, the romantic and theological disposition of a Schmittian rhetoric of personalized decision. It is the end of the solar cult that technocracies still feel bound to. And an end to the endless acclamation of the *creatio ex nihilo*. Gregor Schneider physically opposes this, intervenes, and lets his cube declaim the theory of *creatio in nihilo*. This is a different 'God'. An unrepresentable, a devouring, an absorbing and destructive 'God', to whom more truthfulness adheres than all the speculative stagings of visibility, financial monopolies, war and prosperity. *The cube itself is a declaration of war.*

So who's surprised that nobody really wants the cube? Living with the black osmosis requires competence in dealing with crises and the willingness to be able to confront the interruption, the contemplation and the departure from historic and mental theatre. If the core of the postmodern political is still made up of what Schmitt calls the "differentiation between friends and enemies", then Gregor Schneider's cube theory includes animosity in the midst of lobbyist and liberal friendships, and the *corps de cube's* radical antagonism to the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*.

If we want to cite the fundamentals of the monotheistic religions, namely "God's fervour", as Peter Sloterdijk calls it, then Gregor Schneider's cube project is definitely its henotheistic renewal.



Irit Rogoff

## We—Collectivities, Mutualities, Participations

Collectivity is something that takes place as we arbitrarily gather to take part in different forms of cultural activity such as looking at art. If we countenance that beyond all the roles that are allotted to us in culture—roles such as those of being viewers, listeners or audience members in one capacity or another—there are other emergent possibilities for the exchange of shared perspectives or insights or subjectivities, we allow for some form of emergent collectivity. Furthermore, that performative collectivity, one that is produced in the very act of being together in the same space and compelled by similar edicts, might just alert us to a form of mutuality that cannot be recognized in the normative modes of shared beliefs, interests or kinship.

To speak of collectivities is to de-nativize community, to argue it away from the numerous essential roots of place and race and kinship structures that have for so long been the glue that has held it together.

Equally, to speak of mutualities is to think against the grain of ideological mobilizations that are grounded in the pursuit of an end, of a conclusion, of a resolution. To replace that ideological imperative with the ongoing processes of low-key participations that ebb and flow at a barely conscious level.

To think of the experience of the exhibition viewer as inscribed in any of the dynamics of collectivity and mutuality is to theorize it away from the realm of individual edification, curiosity and the pursuit of cultural capital. Away from the isolating imperatives of lost identification and absolute attention demanded of us by the traditional edicts of artistic engagement.

Despite the prevailing mythologies that continue to link the experience of art to individual reflection, we do look at art, inhabit the spaces of art in various forms of collectivity, and in the process we produce new forms of mutuality, of relations between viewers and spaces, rather than relations between viewers and objects. Beyond the shared categories of class, or taste or political or sexual orientations, another form of 'WE' is produced in these processes of viewing, and it, in turn, shifts the very nature of meaning and its relation to the notion of displayed visual culture. It is the notion of the

'WE' that is produced on these occasions and of its own subsequent production that I am trying to get at here. To that end I need to evacuate an array of other notions of art world collectivities, the ones I do not want to pay attention to, the ones I would like to dispense with so that some other notion might just come into being and become clearer. The following WEs are the ones I do not have in mind:

WE the visitors to the museums and exhibitions

WE the lovers of art

WE charter citizens of the art world

WE critical theorists who pursue the hidden meanings and the covert agendas of both artworks and of exhibiting institutions.

WE who believe that contemporary art has a stake in cultural citizenship.

None of the above are in any way lamentable or invalid modes of inhabiting the spaces of contemporary art, but they do limit us to a kind of frontal relation that continues to posit the work of art at the centre of all processes of producing meaning. By introducing the notion of WE as central to the experience of art, I am insisting on several elements:

On the fact that meaning is never produced in isolation or through isolating processes, but rather through intricate webs of connectedness.

On the fact that audiences produce meaning not simply through the subjectivities they project on artworks whose circuits of meanings they complete, but that they produce meaning through relations with one another and through the temporality of the event of the exhibition or the display.

On the fact that artworks and thematic exhibitions that continue to re-produce them into view do not have immanent meanings but function as fields of possibilities for different audiences in different cultural circumstances and wildly divergent moods to produce significances.

On the fact that, in a reflective shift from the analytical to the performative function of observation and of participation, we can agree that meaning, is not excavated for, but that it 'Takes Place' in the present.

The latter exemplifies not just the dynamics of looking at and interacting with works of art in exhibitions and in public spaces, but echoes also the modes by which we have inhabited the critical and the theoretical in the recent past. It seems to me that within the space of a relatively short period we have been able to move from criticism to critique to what I am calling at present criticality. That is, that we have moved from criticism, which is a form of finding fault and of exercising judgement according to a consensus of values, to critique, which is examining the underlying assumptions that might allow something to appear as a convincing logic, to criticality, which is operating from an uncertain ground of actual embeddedness. By this I mean that criticality, while building on critique, wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis, other than one of illuminating flaws, locating elisions, allocating blame. One is, after all, always operating out of a contingent position, always seemingly at fault—this is a permanent and ongoing condition, since every year we become aware of a new and hitherto unrealized perspective that illuminates further internal cultural injustices. Criticality is therefore connected in my mind with risk, with a cultural inhabitation that acknowledges what it is risking without yet fully being able to articulate it. ‘Criticality’ as I perceive it is precisely in the operations of recognizing the limitations of one’s thought, for one does not learn something new until one unlearns something old, otherwise one is simply adding information, rather than rethinking a structure. In this mode of criticality I perceive some possibility of narrowing the gap between some beings out there who have been called the ‘general audience’ of culture and those of us who have been more critically informed and therefore inhabit some notion of ‘critical distance’. If we take seriously the potential of performative audiences to allow meaning to take place in the present, we also allow that criticism does not have to be enacted at a distance but can take place and shape in the realm of the participatory.

I make these claims and these observations in the footsteps of Jean-Luc Nancy’s recent and exciting work in *Being Singular Plural*, a body of thought that has done much to enable us to detach ‘singularity’ from individuality and the politics of autonomous selves. Although Nancy’s starting point is quite different from the one being rehearsed here—he is not concerned with rewriting the role of the audience and of its performative potential to participate in culture, but rather taking up a twentieth-century philosophical discussion of ‘being’, a modern interpretative process of what Plato had called the ‘dialogue of the soul with itself’. In his argument, his contribution to this ongoing debate, Nancy breaks down the ‘with’ of ‘with itself’ to another, less inward, more plural set of links. He is doing so in the names of a complex and very contemporary politics of what he calls

*the places, groups, or authorities [Bosnian Serbs, Tutsis, Hutus, Tamil Tigers, Casamance, ETA militia, Roma of Slovenia] that constitute the theater of bloody conflicts among identities, as well as what is at stake in these conflicts. These days it is not always possible to say with any assurance whether these identities are intranational, infranational, or transnational; whether they are ‘cultural’, ‘religious’, ‘ethnic’, or ‘historical’; whether they are legitimate or not—not to mention the question about which law would provide such legitimation; whether they are real, mythical, or imaginary; whether they are independent or ‘instrumentalized’ by other groups who wield political, economic, and ideological power....*

*This is the ‘earth’ we are supposed to ‘inhabit’ today, the earth for which the name Sarajevo will become the martyr-name, the testimonial-name: this is us, we who are supposed to say we as if we know what we are saying and who we are talking about. This earth is anything but a sharing of humanity. [...] What I am talking about here is compassion, but not compassion as pity that feels sorry for itself and feeds on itself. Com-compassion is the contagion, the contact of being with one another in this turmoil.<sup>1</sup>*

Nancy proceeds to take on the proper names of collectivity, ‘we’ and ‘us’, and their relation to meaning, and he does so obviously against the grain of the claims of identity and their ability to separate and to segregate. He takes up the notion of meaning precisely because of this proliferation, which has no other meaning than the indeterminate multiplication of centripetal meanings, meanings closed in on themselves and supersaturated with significance, that are no longer meaningful because they refer to their own closure, to their horizon of appropriation, and have to spread nothing but destruction, hatred and the denial of existence.<sup>2</sup> To these ends he has to go back to both ‘we’ and ‘meaning’ as the building blocks of another form of relatedness that is not founded on the articulation of identity.

*We do not ‘have’ meaning any more, because we ourselves are meaning—entirely, without reserve, infinitely, with no more meaning other than ‘us’.<sup>3</sup>*

*Being itself is given to us as meaning, being does not have meaning. ‘Being itself’, the phenomenon of ‘being’ is meaning that is in turn its own circulation—and we are this circulation.<sup>4</sup>*

*There is no meaning then if meaning is not shared, and not because there would be an ultimate or first signification that all beings have in common, but because meaning is itself the sharing of being.<sup>5</sup>*

In what way, then, does it enable us to think of 'audience' when we think of being as meaning and of ourselves as the circulation of meaning. Surely this enables us to somewhat diminish the object/viewer dichotomy we have been labouring with and to begin to think of the ways in which meaning circulates. After all, "there is no meaning if meaning is not shared".

In Nancy's assertion that "everything, then, passes between us", do we not also have the conditions of the exhibition? And in these conditions do we not have the possibilities to shift the gaze away from artworks that might critically alert us to certain untenable states of the world, away from exhibitions that make those states of hegemonic breach and unease the subject and focal point of saturated vision, and towards everything that passes between us in the process of those confrontations? Therefore we do not necessarily undergo an experience of being informed, of being cautioned, of being forced to look at that which we might so comfortably avert our gaze from, but perhaps we recognise how deeply embedded we are in the problematic, of how mutual our disturbance and fear, and that, in Nancy's words, we "share this turmoil" as the very production of its meanings. I am not arguing for the centrality of the art exhibition as a political space on the basis of what it exhibits, of the kind of work that the objects on display might do in the world, of the kind of issues that the thematic exhibition might alert us to. I am arguing instead for the art exhibition as what Nancy has termed "The Spectacle of Society".

*If being-with is the sharing of a simultaneous space-time, then it involves a presentation of this space-time as such. In order to say 'we', one must present the 'here and now' of this 'we'. Or rather, saying 'we' brings about the presentation of the 'here and now', however it is determined: as a room, a region, a group of friends, an association, a 'people'. We can never simply be 'the we' understood as a unique subject [...] 'We' always expresses a plurality, expresses 'our' being divided and entangled: 'one' is not 'with' in some general sort of way, but each time according to determined modes that are themselves multiple and simultaneous (people, culture, language, lineage, network, group, couple, band, and so on). What is presented in this way, each time, is a stage [scène] on which several [people] can say 'I', each on his own account, each in turn.<sup>6</sup>*

On this stage, as part of this spectacle, we can begin to perceive the possibilities for some form of action that is not the planned demonstrations of political activism, with their binaries of the blamed and the blaming. This stage functions as the 'space of appearance' that Hannah Arendt invoked in attempting to enlarge the understanding of how and where political action takes place. The peculiarity of this 'space of appearance', says Arendt,

*is that unlike the spaces which are the work of our hands, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men [...] but with the disappearance or the arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever.<sup>7</sup>*

In partial—only very partial—reply, I might say that it is because Arendt's thought links speech and action to the very constitution of power, not power as a mode of representation, nor power as the concrete articulations of ideological belief and their consequent translation into various structures of speech and of government. "What keeps people together after the fleeting moment of actions has passed (what we today call 'organization'), and what, at the same time, they keep alive through remaining together, is power".<sup>8</sup> Neither force, strength nor violence, nor the apparatuses of the state or the law, this power conceptualized by Arendt is the fleeting coming together in momentary gestures of speech and action by communities whose only mutuality lies in their ability to both stage these actions and to read them for what they are. The space of appearance in which these momentary actions take place is the staging ground of protests, refusals, affirmations or celebrations, and like Lefebvre's "space in the process of production" they do not bear the markings of traditional political spaces, but rather galvanize the spaces of everyday life and temporarily transform them by throwing flitting mantles of power over them.

*Action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly.<sup>9</sup>*

The reason I would wish to think of 'art' in relation to such a 'space of appearance' is recognition that when something called 'art' becomes an open interconnective field, then the potential to engage with it as a form of cultural participation, rather than as a form of either reification, of representation or of contemplative edification, comes into being. The engagement with 'art' can provide a similar space of appearance to that described by Arendt, not by following the required set of interpellated, pensive gestures, but rather by seeking out, staging and perceiving an alternative set of responses. What is it that we do when we look away from art by producing such a 'space of appearance', by attending to the circulation of meaning that passes between us and constitutes a 'we'?

Rather than claim that we are staging a politics which has direct resonance in the world and a direct corollary in the regimes of policies and directives, I would want to say that we are staging the possibility of a 'politics without a plan'. By this I mean that the staging of our knowledge concerning everything that is consciously wrong can and must be divorced from an illusion of its instant translatability into a method and a course for action. This desire for a form of instant translation from the 'space of appearance' to state action is already somewhat halted by the earlier articulation of compassion as a form of entanglement, a clear-sighted position of mutual imbrication. It is further halted when Nancy states that "Contemporary political plural existence is one of intersection—an incessant process of acting without a model". If we can claim a politics for the space of the exhibition, it is one in which the 'model' for action, for resolution, for consequences, is kept at bay in favour of that incessant process, constantly shifting and renewing itself as the audience changes, its mutualities shifting and remaking themselves. The very fact that the space of the exhibition has never been taken very seriously as a political space is what guarantees that it be the most serious space for the enactment, in full sight, of what Giorgio Agamben has termed "Means without End". This in the context of cinema, which Agamben claims

*has its center in the gesture and not in the image, [and thus] it belongs essentially to the realm of ethics and politics (and not simply to that of aesthetics). [...] What characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported. The gesture, in other words, opens the sphere of ethos as the more proper sphere of that which is human. But in what way is an action endured and supported? [...] in what way does a simple fact become an event? [In the distinction between production and action.] [...] if producing is a means in view of an end and praxis is an end without means, the gesture then breaks with the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality and presents instead means that, as such, evade the orbit of mediality without becoming, for this reason, ends.<sup>10</sup>*

In one of those illuminating bursts of insight, Agamben articulates for us the mistaken conception at the heart of art masquerading as politics through the assumption of political subject matter and/or the investment with the clear navigational principles between right and wrong and how to achieve these.

*Nothing is more misleading for an understanding of gesture, therefore, than representing, on the one hand, a sphere of means as addressing a goal (for example, marching seen as a means of moving the body from point A to point B) and, on the other hand, a separate and superior sphere of gesture as a movement that has its end in itself (for example, dance seen as an aesthetic dimension). [...] The gesture is the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process of making a means visible as such.<sup>11</sup>*

What I am proposing, then, is that the space of the exhibition is Arendt's "Space of Appearance", in which a form of political action takes place that is not just ephemeral and based in speech as action, but that is also founded on "acting without a model" and on making "its means as visible as possible". If we can accept the space of the exhibition as the arena for such enactments, in which it is we the audience who produce the meanings through our 'being' and our acknowledgement of mutualities and imbrications—then what we have is the possibility of another political space. Instead of an occasion for the translation of various sets of politics into the realm of aesthetics and language, instead of a series of exercises in moral navigations that take place in and through the art exhibition, we have the possibility of an actual political space *tout court*.

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Gundula Schulze Eldowy

## The Gaze is Answered by the Gazed-Upon

*I roam the night with my eyes  
a lake full of dreams / embraces me*

*Looks / can be flames / in the stream of solar wind*

30 November 2000 will remain in my memory forever. It was on that day that I arrived in Peru. I didn't know a single soul, couldn't speak a word of Spanish and had merely followed an intuition that told me something of myself lay hidden there. I stood at Lima airport and asked myself, "What am I doing here?" I had finished with my past. I wanted to plunge into something new. The photographer I had hitherto been appeared frozen in the gaze of a sixtieth of a second. Bit by bit I had removed myself from life, had become distant and impatient and only considered goals to be valid. Even physical contact was no more. I had become increasingly forced into the role of observer. I was continually exploring the reality of other people, who, in a certain sense, were unconscious projections of my own self. What had happened? For over 25 years photography had been a source of inspiration and joy; now it only meant stress. I was caught up in the wake of pictures in which seeing was the only thing that counted. Photographers are blind. They fail to grasp that something else exists beneath the surface. They comfort themselves with an illusion of vision, convey the impression that what they photograph actually exists. However, it is already gone the instant they release the shutter. Life is a river that incessantly moves and changes everything. The transitory is the permanent.

Tellingly, it was a blind person who made the first photograph: Nicéphore Niépce. It shows a view from a window with a shadow on the wall. In Peru I immediately saw that I had entered a country of large eyes. Never before have I seen eyes with such magnetic power. But nowhere else have I also encountered so many blind people. The woman inside me with the frozen gaze... I had to rid myself of her.

If one observes a human eye at close quarters, one is confronted with a black tunnel, there where the iris is. The interior is lost in darkness. When I look inside myself I sometimes have the feeling that I am an enormous cosmic eye. The eyes are the only spherical parts of the body. In the all-round projection of a sphere, gazes cross one

another in a multitude of ways; gazes, each of which can go in different directions—upwards, downwards, inwards, outwards—as well as on different temporal levels. Seeing eyes are rotating galaxies. I once saw a bin full of cattle eyes in a slaughterhouse. They looked like marbles. The body forms the eyes at the very end; after entering the world they open. Eyes are aids to orientation. However, the actual seeing takes place in the brain. The forebrain thinks in pictures, the hindbrain in tones. We can also see with closed eyes. However, seeing in the dark takes on a different quality. It reveals our own world. Without limits. Without judging. Without differentiating. When gazing inwards, I sometimes encounter the most peculiar forms, quite unexpectedly. As if they were a part of me, their voices, rising from uncharted depths, provide me with advice. A whispering in the sea of memory. Conversely, looking within can also be followed outwards. From the inner darkness out into the light. The gaze is answered by a gazed-upon. While I look at a face, from inside to outside, my face is also perceived by someone else in the same way. But what do we really see? I would like to know.

Only the dead have no face. In Peru my face disintegrated into a thousand pieces. I rediscovered myself in the legacy of the ancient Peruvians, who, like myself, had recorded faces. Not on photographs, but on textiles and clay pots, in stone and sand... In Paracas, for example, I discovered faces on cloths that had been used for the burial of mummies. In Tiwanaku I entered an ancient temple gallery with 175 stone faces. Faces of all human types were depicted there. To my astonishment, they mirrored my idea of *Das unfassbare Gesicht* ("The Ungraspable Face"). Thousands of years ago, someone else had had the same idea. I had never seen pictures of this gallery before. How could such a synchronization come about? For my part I had selected a serial technique in which I photographed the same section of face, with only the eyes, nose and mouth visible. In the temple gallery in Tiwanaku the same section of the face was chiselled into the stone. This strict choice of frame generated a strange effect. Regardless of which material the faces were formed from—whether it be stone, flesh, bark or clay—they were all identical in one respect: they were composed of seven holes, the brain's entrances and exits. The whole of perception proceeds through these seven openings in the head. The world enters us through the ears. We go out into the world with the eyes. However, in distinction to hearing, seeing is influenced by the self. What I see is in reality not that which I believe I am seeing. The spatial perspective is deceptive. It only exists in the eyes. Not in the ears. Not in the nose. The forms and boundaries that the eye perceives do not exist in reality. The world reflected in the eyes is how we want to see it, not how it is. That is why 100 people can experience the same thing and still see something different.

Everything that exists, exists now. Only experience in the now is real. Everything else is illusory. Either not yet there or already passed. I am in the now. Not tomorrow. Not in yesterday either. The psychological phenomenon of perception is especially interesting. It leads me to doubt whether the world out there exists at all. Isn't the creation something that takes place at every instant? The majority of people believe that God created the world in the distant past; they fail to grasp that they themselves are the creation. It takes place in all of us every day. From experience I know that there is an energetic seeing that is not dependent on the eyes. The inner eye sees by other means, precisely in an energetic sense. It is not a perception of objects, but far more of colours, energy and light. I became aware of this even as I was making the social photos. I could never have made them if I had only paid attention to what I had seen physically. Instead, I photographed what I felt, what revealed itself to me intuitively. All my pictures were created like this. They came from the innermost part of me; I couldn't say where. All I know is that reflections and images have something magical about them. Their source is unknown. At some point I noticed that they became reality, which means they found their counterpart on the outside, that they realized themselves. Imagination and dream are sisters of reality. Ultimately, all I was interested in was creating images of energy. I used the external world in order to create inner pictures. On my travels around the world I made use of certain places because they contained aspects that were also contained in me. I was in harmony with them. In my photos, it is not about New York, Cairo or Lima; it is about the spirit. For me, being an artist means being close to the spirit. Tremendous forces are at work that can scorch one. I see the spirit in music, in poetry and painting. It is only photography that appears captive to the traditional idea of generating a truthful reproduction of reality.

Before I travelled to the north of Peru, I didn't know that the region was famous for its seers. There are many shamans there. I soon got to know the son of a famous Moche shaman, who later became my husband. I immediately felt on the same wavelength as his family. We were like-minded people. Through their influence, my life received a new facet. Through them I came into contact with a school of seeing passed down through time immemorial. According to this teaching there is no difference between vision, dream and reality—all these levels seamlessly merge into one another. One cannot separate them. They are simply different levels of perception of one and the same spirit. One cannot see, smell or taste energy. It is intangible. It is precisely here that the problems begin, as the invisible is just as real as the visible, as I live according to it. Feelings, for example, are invisible; as are thoughts, although they are real. In Germany I could not live out this particular quality of life. They were in my pictures, but not in my life. Now I wanted to have the spiritual in my everyday life.

The Moche culture, whose greatest empire was in the north of the country, is part of Peru's ancient heritage. Impressive adobe pyramids and goldsmith work are preserved to this day. On countless ceramics the Moche left a symbol writing that is still understood by today's descendants. It is through this that their ancient philosophy was revealed to me.

According to Moche lore the spirit of the earth is represented as a snake. America is the head. Peru is the eyes. Europe is the neck with the tonal centre; Egypt represents the heart; Africa the stomach; China the internal sexual organs. The tail unites with the head creating a perfect circuit... This lore confirmed what I had suspected for a long time; I was amongst people of my own kind, people who like me are guided by seeing. However, their eyes were those of dreamers. As before, I lived and worked with the people and things that I photographed. So it was that I was one day confronted with the 'stone test', in which the village shaman asks someone who has come to see him to read from a stone. What he reveals comes from the depths of his unconscious, without premeditation. He has projected himself onto the stone without being aware of it. Wasn't I doing a similar thing? I sharpened my perception and noticed that as soon as I projected my inner being onto a counterpart, confusing situations arose. Until I understood: I cannot see myself. It is only in the mirror of the other that I recognise myself. The shaman's family, in which I live to this day, reflected me without design, precisely because they were the same as me. Their mistake was mine. They reflected me at every turn. One only needed to imitate me to see the effect. It is astonishing. Ultimately it was these reflections of everyday life that fundamentally changed my perception. Everything I perceive, in a mysterious fashion, has to do with me. On a psychological level everything that one encounters in the world has a counterpart in oneself. The visionary power of the shamans also extends from the fact that what they perceive in others they know from themselves. The path to the other passes through oneself. Every judgement is a judgement of oneself. When I ceased projecting, life revealed itself to me in all its magnificence. At last, things could be the way they are. Myself included.

The ancient Moche were obsessed with faces. They have left behind an incredibly comprehensive gallery of faces, predominantly in the form of ceramic portraits. The faces are vivid and realistic and have an almost photographic look. They had the same obsession as we do today: the desire to preserve everything in pictures. As if they foresaw their demise. The Moche culture inexplicably disappeared in the eighth century, just as that of the Maya. By all appearances they left their cities of their own free will. Since I began studying their history this one question has continued to haunt

me: what caused a whole people to bury their possessions in the ground, cover temples, pyramids and images of their gods with clay and move on?

The ceramic portraits were discovered by accident 1,500 years later. Italian immigrants, cultivating sugar cane in the north of Peru, discovered them on their fields by chance. They had also left their homeland. Just like me. When I ask today's descendants of the Moche for the reason, they reply that they left their cities to start afresh somewhere else. According to their beliefs the normal development of humanity proceeds from an original state of purity to decline. The end is marked by corruption and war. Leaving their home cities appeared to be the only solution to avoid this fate and to start afresh in a new place...

I stood at the edge of the sea and listened to the breaking of the waves. My head was empty. All of a sudden I was seized by the idea of throwing the negatives to *Das unfassbare Gesicht* into the sea.

*Translated from the German by John Rayner*

Peter Berz

## Biological Aesthetics: (A)Symmetry and (In)Visibility in the Appearance of a Blueprint

All marine researchers working in Villefranche-sur-Mer, Naples or in the Gulf of Messina were fascinated by a group of organisms that belong to the phylum of the so-called coelenterata. These creatures do not have an opaque surface, such as skin, feathers, patterned scales or colours, but are transparent; as transparent or 'crystal clear' as the medium in which they swim and float, water.

On his first voyage to the Gulf of Messina in 1859, Ernst Haeckel did not only discover the joys of using a microscope. Still toying with the idea of becoming a landscape painter, the young medical student became intensely fascinated, above all, by the local deep-sea fauna, commenting that they "rival the surrounding water in terms of clarity, colourlessness and transparency".<sup>1</sup> The water in the gulf basin is washed in and out twice daily by tidal currents, already known to Homer as Scylla and Charybdis. It is for this very reason, Haeckel surmised, that the water has a "clarity beyond all imagination". When fishing in the early morning with the finest nets, without a rudder disturbing the surface of the water too much, one catches a vast quantity of marine life, a "cornucopia of creatures", a "living broth of organisms", comprising salps, radiolaria and medusae. According to Haeckel, "the lack of clear contours often makes it difficult to distinguish the individual creatures from their surroundings".<sup>2</sup> Consequently, many of the creatures simply went unnoticed previously. Not until the eighteenth century did fishing boats take on board round-bodied vessels made of clear glass sufficiently free of streaks to enable something of the pelagic booty to be seen at all.

### VISIBLE, INVISIBLE. SYMMETRICAL, ASYMMETRICAL

In recent years, serious consideration has often been given in sociocultural circles to the issue of transparency, inspired not least by Walter Seitter's meticulous study of a passage from Aristotle's *De Anima (Peri Psyches)*, in which he initially explores the phenomena of *phos* and *diaphanes*, light and transparency. Subsequently, Seitter discusses the grammatically plausible nominalization Aristotle himself introduced, namely to *metaxy*, the intermediate, or *medium* in Latin.<sup>3</sup>

The discoveries made and described by the biologist Ernst Haeckel in the Gulf of Messina reveal a historical classification of no less than three different types of media. First, the medium of water—a key term—referred to as *les milieux* or 'environs' in Lamarck's *Philosophie zoologique*, and consistently translated as "die Medien" ('the media') in its German edition.<sup>4</sup> Freighted with far-reaching implications, the word *medium* has generally been neglected throughout history, yet covers a range of connotations: from complete media and semi-media to the growth media used in modern biological laboratories. In the first third of the previous century, this still marked the dividing line between Lamarckian and Darwinian biology. The second medium is glass, with its long cultural and technological history, which ultimately includes the lenses of microscopes and the fluid immersions used under a microscope, such as the mountant Canada balsam. This transparent medium generates knowledge of the visible. Finally, the third, ostensibly most alien medium: the transparent creature itself. However, to join Fritz Haider and Helmuth Plessner, it is in fact difficult to determine whether this creature qualifies as a "living thing"<sup>5</sup> or as a medium. For some medusae consist to 98 per cent of water. Even biologists are astonished at "how the living tissue overcomes the mass of water" and transforms it into a virtually "invisible chemical construct".<sup>6</sup>

Below we investigate the latter medium, this intermediate hybrid, or, to be more exact, a specific species of the medusae, the *Leuckartiara octona* (originally succinctly named 'tiara', based on its appearance, it was given its current name by the zoologist Rudolf Leuckart). The illustrations of the medusae, prepared by Haeckel's lithographer Adolph Giltch<sup>7</sup> or by Sabine Baur, draw on the techniques used throughout art history to depict transparency. The nineteenth century saw the emergence of a new technical medium: the camera lucida, the 'light room', which Haeckel lauds in his first work on radiolaria. Yet what do Giltch's and Baur's illustrations actually show? Which discourse, which body of knowledge, which aesthetic are they alluding to?

First, it is striking that while Haeckel's radiolaria are soft—in contrast to the calcium shells of these coelenterata—they also have highly characteristic forms, and, as a rule, adhere to a certain regularity. Consequently, a subspecies of the coelenterata is also classified as belonging to a group of the radiata, since the forms of the medusae display radial symmetries. Four, eight or six usually even-numbered vertical symmetrical axes run through the creature. In his *Allgemeine Morphologie*, Haeckel codified such operations into a fundamental law of living creatures, and, in so doing, founded the biological discipline of 'promorphology'. Whereas Linnaeus meticulously indexed, differentiated and classified plants through the alphabet from A to Z, based on the design of



their reproductive organs, Haeckel classified the animals, from single-celled organisms to mammals, according to their symmetry. Consequently, the medusae belong to the “heteropolar organisms with cross-axes”. ‘Cross-axes’ are planes of symmetry, whereas ‘heteropolar’ refers to the fact that the medusae display one polarity along these axes, i.e., the upper and bottom sides are different. Basic geometric forms of the medusae are, according to Haeckel, pyramids with a variety of regular basic surfaces. Occasionally, as for example with the cubomedusae, edges and cubic forms also appear. Thus in an overall epistemological and historical context, the issue of symmetry is introduced primarily by transparent creatures—medusae, jellyfish and radiolaria.

Second, however, it is evident that not all the parts of the animals are colourless and transparent. For example, as with many other medusae, the rim of the Leuckartiara's umbrella is coloured blue, the tentacles yellow. The almost fully transparent umbrellas of the ctenophora or comb jellies carry fine hairs or cilia used for locomotion. At certain angles of light, these generate across their surface an iridescent interplay of the colours of the rainbow, due to the interference patterns of the light waves. Above all, however, many medusae bear bright, luminescent, opaque organs within the transparent umbrella: the stomach and intestines of the medusae are bright red and brown, as are the reproductive organs, the gonads. These are, therefore, clearly visible organs, and analogies have been drawn in this context to the modern-day vision of the “transparent citizen”. But here it is our thirst for knowledge that fuels our fascination with such transparencies.<sup>8</sup>

The biologist's thirst for knowledge, however, also steers him in another direction. He sees what he sees; initially a systematic difference between the so-called lower and the higher animal forms. This distinction is predicated on the strange fact that the luminescent, coloured organs of the medusae lie at the symmetrical centre of these transparent organisms and, furthermore, are almost invariably symmetrical. They appear to conform to the exact same ‘principles of design’ or ‘blueprint’ as the transparent umbrella and its appendages. And this is anything but normal. For the internal organs, also known as intestines or ‘operating organs’, are not arranged with any regular symmetry: they are wound, coiled, compressed and lie asymmetrically on one side.

In his studies of animal forms and patterns undertaken during the 1940s and 1950s, the Basel-based biologist Adolf Portmann also explored this anomaly in a profound, even bizarre series of reflections. These focused on the interior and exterior of animals, specifically on the border between the organism and its environment, which throughout

the history of Lamarckism has always remained inconclusive and the subject of scientific inquiry. In his first essay on mimicry, in 1935, Roger Caillois referred to this border as the sharpest of all possible differences, sharper than that between a waking state and a dream, reality and imagination, knowledge and ignorance.<sup>9</sup>

The starting point of Portmann's deliberations is straightforward: “Instead of ‘exterior’ we must say the fully visible, and instead of ‘interior’, the invisible”.<sup>10</sup> It soon becomes apparent that in higher life forms, the principles of design governing the invisible are quite different from those of the visible. In the invisible interior the law of optimal space usage applies, along with the principle of maximizing “packing density” and the simultaneous “expansion of all the interior surfaces of the metabolic organs”. The digestive tract is long and winding, and in order to extend the surface area involved in digestion the liver and the stomach “must be accommodated within the available space”. The design principle is technical: intensive management of a scarce resource, namely space. The packing of kilometre-long paths across the three square metres of medieval floor labyrinths, for example, furnishes an epistemological background to this, which today finds its counterpart in the packing density of our invisible computer chip architecture.

When, however, biological principles are applied, the technical economy becomes closely interlocked with another economy. The expansion of all the internal surfaces, according to Portmann, corresponds to an “enhanced life intensity”.<sup>11</sup> The word ‘intensity’ surfaces in the study of living creatures and their history; not only as a measure of their efficiency and evolutionary exploitation of “every shade of constitutional difference” extending through to the internal organs,<sup>12</sup> but also to denote a logic adhered to by a technical or Darwinian, i.e. modern, biology. In 1860, a year after the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*, Karl Ernst von Baer compiled a study of the intensity of animals during their lifespan: whereas, for example, the heart of a ladybird beats a thousand times faster than ours, the ladybird also experiences in one second a thousand-fold more than we do.

When, therefore, economy as a measure of efficiency or intensity constitutes the design principle of the invisible parts of higher animals, where then do the design principles of the visible part of living creatures lie?

Initially, as described above, the visible parts appear to follow a symmetrical regularity—in contrast to the invisible ones. This symmetry within the visible is also prominent in areas where anything but symmetrical principles prevail. For example, the extravagantly detailed asymmetrical patterns on one of the two wings of the butterfly are

repeated with absolute symmetry on the other (note that this in itself poses a number of mysteries when comparing abstract painting with the patterns of lepidoptera<sup>13</sup>). Furthermore, the medality of the visible, exterior side of the higher life forms is fundamentally different. In contrast to the medusae, its appearance materializes on and in opaque, non-transparent surfaces. “The surface of the opaque life forms is the hub of events.”<sup>14</sup>

The *opaque form of life* operates at the boundary that Plassner referred to in 1928 as the “cutaneous correlation of [living] things to their form, of matter to its form”.<sup>15</sup> Where this border is construed not in the perceptual or physical sense, nor as a chemical or photochemical reaction, but as the interface to the visible, it becomes “a surface of self-presentation, of broadcast through its appearance in light”.<sup>16</sup> As it is opaque, it is seen, and this visibility appears in itself to be a factor in the evolutionary process.

However, a sharp distinction must be drawn between evolution in the visible and evolution through visibility. For the question is, namely, whether what is visible to us, can also be seen by *other* creatures of the same species or genus, or by distant species, genera or orders. This boundary even runs through the group of molluscs, for example snails, mussels and squid. With their spectacular forms, colours and patterns, the mussels and snails are animals whose eyes can only discern vague impressions of light. Mussels and snails are “creatures, which do not look at each other”<sup>17</sup> or, in the case of the species of mussels living beneath the sand, cannot be seen at all. Due to the development of optical organs, squid can, on the other hand, see each other. Consequently, Portmann distinguishes between those forms of animals that can see each other and those “which are never able to look at each other”, and, in turn, assigns them two “steps of life intensity”.<sup>18</sup> The one is the stage of the “non-addressed phenomenon”, the other—in which the creatures can see each other—that of the “addressed phenomenon”.

In the 1920s, the theory of the *non-addressed phenomenon*—as developed by Scheler, Plessner and the Dutch behavioural researcher Frederik Jacobus Johannes Buytendijk—had prompted far-reaching speculation within the discipline of phenomenology. Portmann formulated his theory from his study of a specific group of slime fungus, the mycetozoa. The stem and the often bulb-shaped fruit-body of these fungi display different colouration, and the colour of the stem varies individually from specimen to specimen. However, the bulb also has a specific colouration for each type of species.<sup>19</sup> But rather than appearing to assume a physiological function, these colours permit a categorical differentiation of the various species. However, as Portmann points out

laconically, it is difficult to conclude that the “distinguishing colorations are there to enable man (i.e. biologists) to identify each species”. From this he postulates—following Buytendijk—a theory of the “non-addressed visible phenomenon”, as pure self-presentation of the species in its essential state.

In contrast, the *addressed visible phenomenon* is intended to be seen, often in a highly complex way. Using the example of the bird feather, Portmann demonstrates that the colour and form of the concealed base of its shaft are fundamentally different from its exposed section. Here the individual feather often forms part of an overarching pattern. Feathers on the genetically distant head and tail lend their appearance a uniform and planned “pictorial effect”<sup>20</sup> (in common with the fore and hind wings of many lepidoptera). The visible part of the creature seems to be based on a blueprint that applies to both the individual and the entire species, which is as complex in its design as a so-called ‘vital’ internal organ. Consequently, Portmann described the visible and the addressed exterior of a living creature in its totality as an “organ of self-presentation” or display. The pattern, colouration and forms of bird feathers; the contours, patterns, and colours of butterfly wings; iridescent chitin structures or patterned fur—these are all awarded the status of an organ. This ‘addressing’ is most strongly pronounced in the phenomenon of mimicry. For whatever Darwinian or Lamarckian reason, they are there in order to be seen, particularly when they ought *not* be seen. Here a *theory of animal expression*, in so far as it impacts upon optical impression and expression, could ultimately be found in the fundamental conditions of biological appearance and display, as a kind of underlying foundation.

## EPISTEMOLOGY AND BLUEPRINT

The *organs of self-presentation* should be just as important for a general theory of the organ and the organic as *images* are in semiotics. In the study of the transparent and the opaque, addressed and non-addressed phenomena, the biologist Portmann identified the first steps towards the new scientific discipline of “biological aesthetics”.<sup>21</sup> Ultimately, this would not be far removed from the aesthetic theories expounded in Roger Caillois’ “Diagonal Science”.<sup>22</sup>

And yet the status of such an aesthetic continues to remain precarious. For it operates, to use Heidegger’s word, at a chasm: at the “chasm between animal and man”, between animal and history. When applied, for example, by the zoologist and human-ethologist

Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt to verify aesthetic judgements experimentally and psychologically, in order ultimately to advance a general biological theory favouring ordered, i.e. symmetrical, structures, modern biologies simply occlude this chasm (notwithstanding the aesthetic naivety of conflating symmetry and beauty). Biological aesthetics—in accordance with Portmann or Caillois—operates directly in and with this chasm.

Where it engages in an examination of scientific knowledge and defines itself as a kind of artistic research, art in our modern era seems to be interrogating this chasm. Louis Bec's epistemologically-based *zoosemiotics*, which, for example, incorporates biosemiotics to describe a new virtual being, perceives itself as a "transversal communication of the species". Bec's work has branched out rhizomatically to inform speeches and images, discourses, institutional mirages and ephemeral productions on digital machines, i.e., communication across the chasm. Could it experimentally also be perceived as an epistemology of biological aesthetics? Or is biological aesthetics a form of transversal communication between the species? This would cast the spotlight on the subject of aesthetic knowledge itself and render its constitution of reality as both scientific and objectivized.

Lacan's approach, as outlined in "The Mirror Stage" from 1936, is to introduce symmetry into this constitution<sup>23</sup> as a distinguishing characteristic of those biological species, which, in contrast to all others, had broken the "circle of *Innenwelt* (inner world) and *Umwelt* (environment)"—here Lacan uses the German terms coined by the biologist Jakob von Uexküll—and which now transcend the "vital struggle for survival", the "direct adaptation" of the instinct.<sup>24</sup> In the early instability of its movements and its objects, the human child, constitutionally born premature, begins with the "heteromorphous identification", i.e. mimicry, of its mirror image, including the symmetrical reversal of sides, which the psychoanalyst called the "quadrature of the ego's verification". "One would have to know what the ego would be in a world in which no one knew of the symmetry in relation to the plane."<sup>25</sup> This had already been envisioned by the mathematician and phenomenologist Oskar Becker in his biological fable of 1923. A ball-shaped creature without limbs, which was only "tactilely organized" and possessed merely a *Hautbewegungsfeld* ("skin motion field"), would, according to Becker, probably be capable of "constituting an oriented space" with the self at the centre; that is, be capable of forging a reality, scientific or otherwise.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the conditions for the formation of a subject of knowledge oriented in space would be determined along an as yet unknown path by evolution, attributable not only to the biological fact of the prematurity of birth that distinguishes human beings, but also to the evolution of

a specific blueprint. And this envisages limbs and the symmetry of these limbs, instead of spheres or round, radially symmetrical umbrellas with tentacles.

For, in contrast to the medusae and other coelenterata, man belongs to the so-called bilateria, the "two-sided symmetrical animals", i.e., to a highly diverse sub-species of the eumetazoa, which can be bisected longitudinally into exactly two halves. The cross-section divides the bilateria into an unlike front and back. "The ventral side bears the mouth opening, and in many bilateria is hugely significant for locomotion." Furthermore, there is a 'polarity' of the building plan in the phylogenetic development of the bilateria (and invariably in their ontogenetic development). The mouth is separated from the anus and, together with the central parts of the nervous system, the sensory cells and sensory organs are gathered and concentrated "at one pole", "which, in many groups, has led to the formation of a head".<sup>27</sup>

Mediated through cultural devices, such as the mirror and historical institutions such as the family, this body plan and its topology, replete with head and feet and limbs (in Latin, *artacula*), have always *articulated* the subject in its speech and in its space. It is only against this background that the theory of the 'transversal communication of the species', posited in Flusser/Bec's book on the deep-sea squid *Vampyroteuthis infernalis*, is able to gauge the distances, relations, differences and chasms in the communication between two species: encephalopathy and philosophers.<sup>28</sup> Biological aestheticians would conceive of their body of knowledge itself, its subject and object, as one defined by fundamental differences that stem from deep evolutionary time.

*Although we observe inland newts and fish, insects and spiders, they are always symmetrical like us; they have a head with eyes, and usually also limbs—enabling us to recognize something familiar, regardless of how different the creature may be overall. For we can relate to an animal if it has a head—as many life forms inhabiting the oceans are headless and yet lead a well-ordered life [...] Medusae do not have a head, or a leading body part [...], the sensory organs lie at the edge of the bell and the mouth arm inside the bell. Although headless animals are regarded as simple creatures, the medusae are far removed from us and alien. In particular it is their simplicity which keeps the problem of life well concealed.*<sup>29</sup>

The early part of this century seems to have spawned a rapid biologization of all discourses. There are, therefore, good reasons to reappraise the actual and possible positions of aesthetic reflection in the face of the powerful, bioscientific body of knowledge

—indeed, far more fundamentally than biology and art theory wish or are able to do. Without the rich history of an alternative body of knowledge of plants, animals, protista and bacteria that was ultimately rejected by biological science, the biological concepts cannot take reference to the cultural and vice versa. Especially those forms of knowledge, which—as with Portmann, Caillois, Bec/Flusser, et al.—conceive of biological knowledge as lying at the interface with aesthetics, could come to assume a key role.

On the other hand, the philosophical history and scientific practice of 'biological aesthetics' could serve as a model for an epistemologically-oriented aesthetic. It could forge an aesthetic from a multitude of local aesthetics. Only from such an aesthetic of the transparent—for example, embracing Aristotle, the physics of crystals to the biology of the medusae, the dragonfly and the clearwing moth—can art and epistemology be considered both in combination and in isolation.

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*Translated from the German by John Rayner.*

1. Here and subsequently, Ernst Haeckel, *Die Radiolarien (Rhizopoda radiata): Eine Monographie*, vol. 1, Berlin: G Reimer, 1862, p. 171. For biographical details, see Erika Krauß, *Ernst Haeckel*, Leipzig: Teubner, 1987.
2. Haeckel, *Radiolarien*, p. 25.
3. See Walter Seitter, "Vom Licht zum Äther: Der Einfluß einer Medienphysik auf die Elementenlehre", *Archiv für Mediengeschichte: Licht und Leitung*, Weimar: Universitätsverlag, 2002; Ana Ofak, "'Meinst Du Glas?' Das Durchscheinende und die Geometrie des Durchscheinens", *Medien vor den Medien*, Friedrich Kittler and Ana Ofak eds, Munich: Fink, 2007.
4. In 1876 Haeckel commissioned Arnold Lang with the translation of Lamarck's work, which is still the only German translation.
5. Plessner, Helmut, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch: Einleitung in die philosophische Anthropologie* [1928], Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975, p. 123.
6. Portmann, Adolf, *Meerestiere und ihre Geheimnisse (mit 23 Kunstdrucktafeln und vielen Zeichnungen von Sabine Baur)*, Basel: Reinhardt, 1958, p. 49.
7. Haeckel named a species of the medusae after him in his honour, *Pilema gilschii*, family of the Pilema (Krauß, *Haeckel*, p. 101).

8. Portmann, Adolf, "Transparente und opake Gestaltung", *Recontre/Encounter/Begegnung: Contributions à une psychologie humaine, dédiées au professeur F.J.J. Buytendik*, Utrecht & Antwerp: Het Spectrum, 1957, p. 355.
9. See Roger Caillois, *Méduse & Cie*, Peter Geble trans., Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 2007, p. 27.
10. Portmann, Adolf, "Selbstdarstellung als Motiv der lebendigen Formbildung", *Geist und Werk: Aus der Werkstatt unserer Autoren. Zum 75. Geburtstag von Dr. Daniel Brody*, Zurich: Rhein Verlag, 1958, p. 149.
11. Portmann, Adolf, *Animal Forms and Patterns: A Study of the Appearance of Animals*, Hella Czech trans., New York: Schocken Books, 1967, p. 27.
12. Darwin, Charles, *The Origin of Species*, 6th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 84.
13. See Roger Caillois, "Die Flügel der Schmetterlinge", *Méduse & Cie.*, Peter Geble trans., Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 2007, pp. 60-72.
14. Portmann, "Transparente und opake Gestaltung", p. 369. Adolf Portmann dedicated a substantial part of his life's work to the study of these events.
15. Plessner, *Stufen des Organischen*, p. 123.
16. Portmann, Adolf, "Die Erscheinung der lebendigen Gestalten im Lichtfelde", *Wesen und Wirklichkeit des Menschen: Festschrift für Helmut Plessner*, Klaus Ziegler ed., Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957, p. 39.
17. Portmann, *Animal Forms and Patterns*, p. 117.
18. Portmann, *Animal Forms and Patterns*, p. 117.
19. Portmann, "Transparente und opake Gestaltung", p. 363.
20. Portmann, *Animal Forms and Patterns*, p. 118.
21. Portmann, *Meerestiere*.
22. See Caillois, *Méduse & Cie.*, pp. 47-52.
23. See Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I" [1936/1949], *Écrits I*, Alan Sheridan trans., New York: Norton, 1977, pp. 61-70.
24. See Jacques Lacan, "The Family Complexes" [1938], *Schriften III*, Weinheim & Berlin: Quadriga, 1994, pp. 40-100.
25. Lacan in 1963 reflecting upon "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I" (Jacques Lacan, "Von dem, was uns vorausging", *Schriften III*, Weinheim & Berlin: Quadriga, p. 13).
26. Becker, Oskar, "Beiträge zur phänomenologischen Begründung der Geometrie und ihrer physikalischen Anwendungen", *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung*, vol. 6, 1923, Halle: Niemeyer, p. 457.
27. All quotes are from *Urania Tierreich: Wirbellose Tiere 1 (Protozoa bis Echiurida)*, Leipzig, Jena & Berlin: Urania Verlag, 1967, p. 183.
28. Flusser, Vilém and Louis Bec, *Vampyroteuthis Infernalis: Eine Abhandlung samt Befund des Institut Scientifique de Recherche Paranaturaliste*, Göttingen: European Photography, 1987.
29. Portmann, *Meerestiere*, p. 48 and Portmann, "Selbstdarstellung", p. 151.



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fig. 1–3

Cabane de Tracuit, Les Diablons

Alpes Valaisannes, Suisse

For my part, I sometimes have the feeling that I can draw on these big walls, these three or four thousand meter high walls. Just like a teacher draws and writes on the blackboard with chalk, I write on these big walls—and not just lines, conceived lines, but I live these lines. I always have the feeling that these lines are there afterwards, even if I am the only one who can feel and see (read) them, because I lived and experienced them and others will never be able to see them. They are there and will remain. They remain for all time.<sup>1</sup>

1. Werner Herzog in an interview with Reinhold Messner in Gasherbrum: Der leuchtende Berg, a film by Werner Herzog, commissioned by Südfunk Stuttgart, ©1984.











Giorgio Agamben

## The Kingdom and the Glory

### THE TWO PARADIGMS

In 1922, Carl Schmitt encapsulated the theological-political paradigm in a lapidary thesis: “All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts”.<sup>1</sup> If our hypothesis about the existence of a double paradigm is correct, this statement should be supplemented in a way that would extend its validity well beyond the boundaries of public law, extending up to the fundamental concepts of the economy and the very idea of the reproductive life of human societies. However, the thesis according to which the economy could be a secularized theological paradigm acts retroactively on theology itself, since it implies that from the beginning theology conceives divine life and the history of humanity as an *oikonomia*, that is, that theology is itself ‘economic’ and did not simply become so at a later time through secularization. From this perspective, the fact that the living being who was created in the image of God in the end reveals himself to be capable only of economy, not politics, or, in other words, that history is ultimately not a political but an ‘administrative’ and ‘governmental’ problem, is nothing but a logical consequence of economic theology. Similarly, it is certainly more than a simple lexical fact that, with a peculiar reversal of the classical hierarchy, a *zoē aiōnios* and not a *bios* lies at the centre of the evangelical message. The eternal life to which Christians lay claim ultimately lies in the paradigm of the *oikos*, not in that of the *polis*. According to Taubes’s ironic *boutade*, the *theologia vitae* is always in the course of converting itself into a “theozoology”.<sup>2</sup>

*A preliminary clarification of the meaning and implications of the term ‘secularization’ becomes all the more urgent. It is perfectly well known that this concept has performed a strategic function in modern culture—that it is, in this sense, a concept of the ‘politics of ideas’, something that “in the realm of ideas has always already found an enemy with whom to fight for dominance”.<sup>3</sup> This is equally valid for secularization in a strictly juridical sense—which, recovering the term (saecularisatio) that designated the return of the religious man into the world, became in nineteenth-century Europe the rallying cry of the conflict between the State and the Church over the expropriation of ecclesiastic goods—and its metaphoric use in the history of ideas. When Max Weber formulates his famous thesis about the secularization of Puritan asceticism in the capitalist ethics of*

*work, the apparent neutrality of his diagnosis cannot hide its function in the battle he was fighting against fanatics and false prophets for the disenchantment of the world. Similar considerations could be made for Troeltsch. What is the meaning of the Schmittian thesis in this context?*

*Schmitt’s strategy is, in a certain sense, the opposite of Weber’s. While, for Weber, secularization was an aspect of the growing process of disenchantment and detheologization of the modern world, for Schmitt it shows on the contrary that, in modernity, theology continues to be present and active in an eminent way. This does not necessarily imply an identity of substance between theology and modernity or a perfect identity of meaning between theological and political concepts; rather, it concerns a particular strategic relation that marks political concepts and refers them back to their theological origin.*

*In other words, secularization is not a concept but a signature [segnatura] in the sense of Foucault and Melandri,<sup>4</sup> that is, something that in a sign or concept marks and exceeds such a sign or concept referring it back to a determinate interpretation or field, without for this reason leaving the semiotic to constitute a new meaning or a new concept. Signatures move and displace concepts and signs from one field to another (in this case, from sacred to profane, and vice versa) without redefining them semantically. Many pseudoconcepts belonging to the philosophical tradition are, in this sense, signatures that, like the “secret indexes” of which Benjamin speaks, carry out a vital and determinate strategic function, giving a lasting orientation to the interpretation of signs. Insofar as they connect different times and fields, signatures operate, as it were, as pure historical elements. Foucault’s archeology and Nietzsche’s genealogy (and, in a different sense, even Derrida’s deconstruction and Benjamin’s theory of dialectical images) are sciences of signatures, which run parallel to the history of ideas and concepts, and should not be confused with them. If we are not able to perceive signatures and follow the displacements and movements they operate in the tradition of ideas, the mere history of concepts can, at times, end up being entirely insufficient.*

*In this sense, secularization operates in the conceptual system of modernity as a signature that refers it back to theology. Just as, according to canon law, the secularized priest had to wear a sign of the religious order he had once belonged to, so does the secularized concept exhibit like a signature its past belonging to the theological sphere. The way in which the reference operated by the theological signature is understood is decisive at every turn. Thus, secularization can also be understood (as in the case with*

Gogarten) as a specific performance of Christian faith that, for the first time, opens the world to man in its worldliness and historicity. The theological signature operates here as a sort of *trompe l'oeil* in which the very secularization of the world becomes the mark that identifies it as belonging to a divine oikonomia.

## THE POWER AND THE GLORY

What is at stake in Kantorowicz's interpretation of the *laudes regiae* is political theology. It unites the 1946 book with the following one, *The King's Two Bodies* (1957), whose subtitle is *A Study in Medieval Political Theology*.<sup>5</sup> The latter attempted to reconstruct, through a history of the idea of the mystical body of the king, the formation of a veritable "myth of the state", just as the former reconstructed imperial ideology through the history of acclamations where liturgical elements and profane ones were indissolubly interwoven.

Thus, the analysis of the theological-political meaning of the *laudes* predominates over the analysis of their strictly juridical value. This is evident in the concluding chapter of the book dedicated to "the *laudes* in modern times". Between the thirteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the use of the *laudes* in liturgy and in coronation ceremonies began to fall away everywhere. But they arise again unexpectedly in the course of the 1920s, revived by theologians and musicologists at precisely the moment in which, "with the irony of which History is so fond",<sup>6</sup> the European political scene was dominated by the emergence of totalitarian regimes. They play an important role in the convergent itineraries of Pius XI, elected pontiff in February 1922, and Benito Mussolini, who takes power in October of that same year. "Fascist challenges were answered, without closing the door completely, by the papal counterchallenges when Pius XI, at the end of the Holy Year 1925, instituted the new feast of 'Christ the King'".<sup>7</sup> In the solemn mass for this festival, the song *Christus vincit [...] regnat [...] imperat* was revived in a new rendering that immediately became popular. From this moment onward, according to the constant oscillation between the sacred and the profane that characterizes the history of acclamations, the *laudes* shifted from the faithful to fascist militants, who—among other things—used them in the course of the Spanish Civil War. Even earlier, in 1929, the fascist minister for education included the *laudes regiae* in an official collection of 'patriotic songs', in which the acclamation *vita* of the original text assumed the form *Regi nostro Victorio Dei gratia feliciter regnante pax, vita et salus perpetua; Duci Benito Mussolini italicae gentis gloriae pax, vita et salus perpetua*.

Recounting this new and extreme version of the *laudes* at the end of his book, Kantorowicz observes that acclamations are "indispensable to the emotionalism of a Fascist regime".<sup>8</sup> And in a footnote on Nazi acclamations he launches a final, ironic attack on Peterson, writing that the acclamation *Ein Reich, ein Volk, ein Führer*, declared in Vienna in 1938 on the occasion of the annexation of Austria, "leads via Barbarossa [...] to the *Heis theos* so brilliantly discussed by Peterson".<sup>9</sup> The attempt to exclude the very possibility of a Christian 'political theology', so as to found in glory the only legitimate political dimension of Christianity, comes dangerously close to the totalitarian liturgy.

The works of Kantorowicz, as well as those by Alföldi and Schramm, show that the relation between the theological and the political is not univocal, but always runs in both directions. Jan Assmann, an Egyptologist who, after having worked on Egyptian doxologies, investigated—on Jacob Taubes's suggestion—political theology in Egypt and in Judaism, reformulated the Schmittian theorem according to which all "significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts",<sup>10</sup> by turning it into the axiom "the significant concepts of theology are theologized political concepts".<sup>11</sup> Every inversion of a thesis remains, however, in some sense implicitly in agreement with the original. More interesting than taking sides with one thesis or the other is, however, to try to understand the functional relationship that links the two principles. Glory is precisely the place at which this bilateral (or bi-univocal) character of the relation between theology and politics clearly emerges into the light. Louis Bréhier, one of the first scholars to become interested in the interrelations between imperial cult and ecclesiastical liturgy, observed, not without irony, that "when the pope goes to Constantinople, in the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, the emperor adores him, but at the same time he adores the emperor. In the same way, in the tenth century, the emperor and the patriarch adore one another when they meet at Saint Sophia".<sup>12</sup>

More original—or better, more decisive—than the opposition between theology and politics, spiritual power and profane power, is the glory within which they coincide. What, from the perspective of Schmitt's political theology (or of its reversal in Assmann), appeared as a clear distinction between two principles that find their point of contact in secularization (or sacralization), from the perspective of glory—and of the economic theology of which it forms a part—crosses a threshold of indetermination where it is not always easy to distinguish between the two elements. The theology of glory constitutes, in this sense, the secret point of contact through which theology and politics continuously communicate and exchange parts with one another.

In a passage from *Joseph and His Brothers*, a novel that caused such labour among scholars of myth, Thomas Mann observes that—in a phrase that is Assmann's starting point—religion and politics are not two fundamentally distinct things but that, on the contrary, they “exchange clothes”. It is possible, however, that this exchange can take place only because underneath the garments there are no body and no substance. Theology and politics are, in this sense, what results from the exchange and from the movement of something like an absolute garment that, as such, has decisive juridical-political implications. Like many of the concepts we have encountered in our investigation, this garment of glory is a signature [*segnatura*] that marks bodies and substances politically and theologically, and orientates and displaces them according to an economy that we are only now beginning to glimpse.

In two exemplary studies, Albrecht Dieterich (*Eine Mithrasliturgie*, 1903) and Eduard Norden (*Agnostos theos*, 1913) developed a doctrine of the forms of doxology and prayer.<sup>13</sup> Norden's work shows how literary elements and forms deriving from diverse traditions, profane as well as religious (Stoic, Judaic, mystic-hermetic, etc.), converge in Christian doxological formulations. This is formally consistent with the concrete examples detailed in Alföldi, Schramm, and Kantorowicz's investigations. The doxologies, both profane and religious, have the same morphological structure; but this still does not say anything about the strategies they pursue or the function they have to perform.

## THE ARCHEOLOGY OF GLORY

The syntagma ‘glory of God’ (*kabod* YHWH) is a fundamental concept of Judaism. Immediately after the treatment of the names of God in the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides defines its meaning and, at the same time, its contextual problematic, through a tripartite structure:

Similarly *kabod* is sometimes intended to signify the created light that God causes to descend in a place in order to confer honor upon it in a miraculous way: And the glory of Y.H.V.H. abode upon mount Sinai, and [the cloud] covered it, and so on [*Exodus 24:16*]; And the glory of Y.H.V.H. filled the tabernacle [*Exodus 40:34*]. The expression is sometimes intended to signify his true essence and true reality [...] as when he says, Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory [*Exodus 33:18*], and was answered: For man shall not see Me and live [*Exodus 33:20*]. This answer indicates that the glory that is spoken of here is

His essence [...] *kabod* is sometimes intended to signify the glorification of Him [...] by all men. In fact all that is other than God [...] glorifies Him. For the true way of glorifying Him consists, in apprehending His greatness. Thus everybody who apprehends His greatness and His perfection, honors Him according to the extent of his apprehension [...] It is in view of this notion being named glory that it is said, The whole earth is full of His glory [*Isaiah 6:3*], this being equivalent to the dictum, And the earth is full of His praise [*Habakkuk 3:3*] for praise is called glory. Thus it is said: Give glory to the Lord your God [*Jeremiah 13:16*]; and it is said: And in His temple all say: Glory [*Psalms 29:9*] [...] Understand that the equivocality with reference to glory and interpret the latter in every passage in accordance with the context.<sup>14</sup>

Of the three points at which Maimonides articulates the meaning of *kabod*, the first refers to the episode in Exodus 40:34, in which “the glory of Y.H.V.H.” appears to the Jews as consuming fire, surrounded by a cloud that only Moses can penetrate. The second, in which the term would designate the essence of God, is actually derived from the same context. While speaking to Moses, YHWH covers him with his hand so as to prevent him from seeing his blinding *kabod*, but the skin and face of Moses nevertheless receive such a splendour that the Jews are unable to look at him, and he must place a veil over his face. With a characteristic gesture, Maimonides derives the second meaning of the term—which the biblical passage in no way suggests—from the fact that the *kabod*, in its first sense as “created light”, does not simply reveal YHWH but hides him to the same degree. This impossibility of seeing forms the basis of the second meaning, that of *kabod* as God's ‘true reality’ hidden behind the *kabod* understood as “created light”.

The third meaning—that of praise by creatures—insofar as it designates a certain human praxis (even though Maimonides extends glorification to include inanimate creatures who “bespeak” the *kabod* of God in their own way), is the only concrete meaning. But this time as well Maimonides uses it to derive the second meaning inasmuch as praise presupposes the greatness and perfection of the divine being. In some way then, the glorification stems from the glory that, in truth, it founds.

It is interesting to note how Maimonides' strategy can be found repeated without significant variations in modern studies of this question, both Jewish and Christian. Works of lexicography and monographs both end up distinguishing the same three meanings, more or less, as Maimonides, at times specifying more precisely the second meaning in terms of ‘power’ [*Potenza*], ‘greatness’, ‘weight’ (this last being the etymological meaning of the Semitic root *kbd*). The relation, established by Maimonides, between the

*kabhod* as “created light” and *kabhod* as the being of God, is developed by modern theologians, Christian and Jewish, in the sense of binding glory to the ‘manifestation’ of God, to the divine essence insofar as it is made visible and perceptible.

This meaning of *kabhod*, which in the final instance is identified with YHWH himself, is then opposed to the “objective” meaning of “glorification”: “There is also a *kabhod* that creatures offer to God. It can be described as the ‘objective’ *kabhod* of YHWH”<sup>15</sup> (the medieval theologians, more correctly named this glory “subjective”). This *kabhod*, which is expressed in acclamations and hymns of praise, is at times presented as the natural and joyous reply of men to the manifest glory of God. At other times it resembles the honour that is bestowed upon the profane powers and cannot easily be related to the *kabhod*-being of God, as it was for Maimonides. In this case, modern scholars aim precisely at leaving out this objective meaning.<sup>16</sup>

However, for the ancients as well as for the moderns, the problem is precisely to justify—or at times to conceal—the double meaning, the homonymy and ambiguity of *kabhod*: at once glory and glorification, objective and subjective *kabhod*, divine reality and human praxis.

*In the rabbinical tradition, the kabhod YHWH is related to the Shekinah (literally, ‘habitation’, ‘residence’) that express the presence of God among men. Hence, where the biblical passage states, “The Lord is in this place” (Genesis 28:16) the Targum translates this as “Truly the Glory of the Shekinah dwells in this place”. And in the Alphabet of Rabbi Akiba one can read: “[At that hour God looked and saw his throne and his Kabhod and his Shekinah]”.<sup>17</sup> Even Maimonides relates glory to the verb shakan (to reside) and with Shekinah, which for him does not mean manifestation, but only “[God’s] abode in a place”.<sup>18</sup>*

*In the same way, Sa’adiah Ga’on—and along with him Yehudah Halevi and the other medieval philosophers—identify Shekinah with kabhod: “[The bright apparition that proves to the prophet the authenticity of the revelation God made to him is a light that was created: it is called kabhod in the Bible and Shekinah in the rabbinic tradition]”.<sup>19</sup> The Shekinah is not identical with God but, as with the kabhod in its first meaning of the term according to Maimonides, it is one of his free creations, which precedes the creation of the world.*

*In the Old Testament and in rabbinical Judaism, the kabhod assumes a particular meaning in eschatology. This will coincide with the full revelation of the glory of God,*

*which will appear in Zion as a cloud and a canopy (Isaiah 4:5). In the Deutero-Isaiah, it will appear not only to the Jews but to “all flesh” (“And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together”: Isaiah 40:5). According to Habakkuk 2:14: “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD [YHWH], as the waters cover the sea.” Ezekiel’s terrible vision, which with its winged “living creatures” and its throne of sapphire would so profoundly influence Christian apocalypticism, is presented by the prophet as a vision of glory: “This was the appearance of the likeness of the kabhod of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke” (Ezekiel 1:28).*

The Septuagint translates *kabhod* with *doxa*, and this Greek term (which the Vulgate will translate as “glory”) thereby becomes the technical term for glory in the New Testament. But as occurs with any translation, in this passage the biblical *kabhod* undergoes a profound transformation. What was originally an element external to God, one that signified his presence, became—in conformity with the new theological context—an expression of the internal relations of the Trinitarian economy. This means that between *oikonomia* and *doxa* there is a constitutive nexus, and that it is not possible to understand economic theology if one does not at the same time give an account of this connection. In the same way that Christian theology had dynamically transformed biblical monotheism by dialectically opposing within it the unity of substance and of ontology (the *theologia*) to the plurality of persons and practices (the *oikonomia*), so the *doxa theou* defines the operation of reciprocal glorification between the Father and the Son (and, more generally, between the three persons). The Trinitarian economy is constitutively an economy of glory.

We can perhaps say that this glorious economy appears nowhere with the same clarity as in the Gospel of John. It melodically resonates from one end of the text to the other—in the same way that it does, with a different tone, in the Letters of Saint Paul—and achieves its most vibrant expression in Jesus’s prayer before his arrest: “Father, the hour is come; glorify [doxason] thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify [doxasēi] thee [...] I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was” (John 17:1-5). A little earlier, when the betrayal was predicted, the same theme was announced in the words of Jesus to his disciples, who sat around him at the table: “Now is the Son of man glorified [edoxasthē], and God is glorified [edoxasthē] in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightaway glorify him” (John 13:31-32).



One is struck in these passages by the perfect circularity of the economy that they describe. The work—the economy of salvation—that Jesus has accomplished upon earth is, in truth, the glorification of the father—that is, an economy of glory. But it is, to the same extent, the glorification of the son through the work of the father. And this doxological circle is marked not only by the insistent repetition of forms of the same verb, but seems to be perfectly completed in the idea that glory precedes the very creation of the world and thus defines the Trinitarian relationship from the beginning (“glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was”). In Jewish messianism, the name (*‘chem’* is a concept intimately linked to that of glory) is part of the five (or seven) things created before the world; but John, who takes up this Jewish motif, turns it into the doxological nucleus of the intradivine relation. And while the economy of salvation that was entrusted to the son is accomplished in time, the economy of glory has neither beginning nor end.

However, the economy of glory in John’s Gospel includes men as well. Referring to those to whom he revealed the name of the father (that is, the glory), Jesus adds: “And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified [*dedoxasmai*] in them” (John 17:10). And immediately afterward he expands upon this: “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them” (John 17:22). Thus to the glorious economy of the Trinity corresponds the reciprocal glorification of men and God.

*The term that in Homeric Greek corresponds to the semantic sphere of glory is not doxa but kleos. Kleos, which is a term etymologically connected with the sphere of words and of ‘that which is heard’ (klyō), is not a property of the gods, and indeed it results from the activity of a special category of men: the poets. They of course need the cooperation of divine beings, the Muses, who push them to “sing about the kleos of men” (Homer, The Odyssey, Book 8, 73); but the glory that they confer and that can get “through heaven” (ibid., 74) is their jealously guarded and exclusive competence. For this very reason, it is not a case of knowledge, so much as of something that exhausts itself entirely within the sphere of the word. “We poets,” says Homer, “hear the kleos and we know nothing”.<sup>20</sup>*

Gregory Nagy has shown how the Iliad and the Odyssey are first of all poems of the kleos of Achilles and Odysseus and that it is precisely the theme of glory that unites the two poems. If Achilles, the best of the Achaeans, is the one who exchanges return and life for glory (“there is no nostos for me, but there will be eternal kleos”),<sup>21</sup> Odysseus had both return and glory.<sup>22</sup> But it is once again the poets who bestow glory. Both the

*Phaecian singer in the Odyssey<sup>23</sup> and the poet of the Theogony present themselves as masters of glory, who look as much to the past as to the future (“that I might spread the fame [kleioimi] of past and future”).<sup>24</sup>*

*The Homeric world has therefore a figure of glory that is entirely the work of man, mere glorification. For this reason, many centuries later, a Roman poet was able to push this ‘glorifying’ strain of poetry to the limit, writing that not just heroes, but “the gods too (if I may be allowed to say so) exist through poetry; even the majesty of one so great has need of the voice of someone to celebrate it” (Di quoque carminibus, si fas est dicere, fiunt / tantaque maiestas ore canentis eget”).<sup>25</sup>*

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul takes up again the *kabhod* of Exodus 29ff., in order to found, by meticulously building up a series of optical images, his theory of glory. The—provisional—glory that illuminates Moses’ face after he received the tablets of the law from God (which were defined, following Paul’s implacable critique of the law, as a “ministration of death”, *diakonia tou thanatou*: 2 Corinthians 3:7) is incomparably less than that which results from the “ministration of redemption” that the Messiah brought to mankind. Nevertheless the members of the messianic community (the term ‘Christian’ is unknown to Paul) have no need to place a veil (*kalymma*) over their faces, as Moses does—a veil that “even unto this day, when Moses is read [...] is upon their heart” (2 Corinthians 3:15). In fact, the Messiah involves the deactivation of the veil (*hoti en Christōi katargeitai*: 2 Corinthians 3:14). When the Jews are converted, the veil will be removed from them as well. “But we all, with open face [*anakekalymmenōi prosōpōi*] beholding as in a glass [*katoptrizomenoi*] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory [*apo doxēs eis doxan*], even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The economy of glory is expressed here in solely optical terms. And it is the same image that Hebrews 1:3 specifies further. The son is *apaugasma*, that is, at once reflection and radiation of God’s glory (the verb *apaugazein* in fact means as much ‘to irradiate, to emit luminous rays’ as much as it means ‘to reflect irradiating rays’). This is why in 2 Corinthians 4:6, God shines the light on Christ’s face (*en prosōpōi Christou*), “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God”.

The optical phenomenology of glory unfolds in the following way: God, “the Father of glory” (Ephesians 1:17), radiates his glory onto the face of Christ who reflects it and radiates in turn like a mirror onto the members of the messianic community. The

celebrated eschatological verse 1 Corinthians 13:12 should be read in this light: the glory that we now see enigmatically in a mirror (*di' esoptrou en ainigmati*), we will go on to see face-to-face (*prosōpon pros prosōpon*). In the present, we await the “glorious appearing” (Titus 2:13), in the same way as all that which is created impatiently waits to be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:13).

In contrast to John, here the stress lies not on the reciprocal glorification of Father and Son, but on the radiation of glory by the Father onto the Son and to the members of the messianic community. At the heart of Paul's gospel lies not the Trinitarian economy but messianic redemption.

#### THE ARCHEOLOGY OF GLORY: THRESHOLD

Here, the investigation that has led us from the *oikonomia* to glory may come to a halt, at least provisionally. It has brought us into proximity with the centre of the machine that glory envelops with its splendour and songs.

The essential political function of glory, of acclamations and doxologies appears to have declined. Ceremonies, protocols and liturgies still exist everywhere, and not only where monarchical institutions persist. In receptions and solemn ceremonies, the president of the republic continues to follow protocol rules the observance of which is ensured by special functionaries, and the Roman pontiff continues to sit on the *cathedra Petri* or on the *sedia gestatoria* and wears paraments and tiaras, whose meaning is largely lost to the memory of the faithful.

Generally speaking, however, ceremonies and liturgies tend today to be simplified; the insignia of power reduced to a minimum; crowns, thrones and sceptres kept in glass cases in museums or treasuries; and the acclamations that had such great importance for the glorious function of power appear everywhere to have almost disappeared. It is certainly true that it was not so long ago that, in the field of what Kantorowicz called the “emotionalism” of fascist regimes, acclamations played a decisive function in the political life of certain great European states; perhaps never has an acclamation, in the technical sense of the word, been expressed with so much force and efficacy as was “Heil Hitler” in Nazi Germany or “Duce duce” in fascist Italy. And yet these uproarious and unanimous cries that resounded yesterday in the piazzas of our cities appear today to be part of a distant and irrevocable past.

But is it really so? Taking up again in 1928, in his *Constitutional Theory*, the theme of his article, written a year earlier, “Referendum and Petition for a Referendum”, Schmitt specifies the constitutive function of acclamation in public law and does so precisely in the chapter dedicated to the analysis of the “theory of democracy”.

*‘People’ is a concept that becomes present only in the public sphere [Öffentlichkeit]. The people appear only in the public, and they first produce the public generally. People and public exist together; no people without public and no public without the people. By its presence, specifically, the people initiate the public. Only the present, truly assembled people are the people and produce the public. The correct idea that supports Rousseau's famous thesis that the people cannot be represented rests on this truth. They cannot be represented, because they must be present, and only something absent, not something present, may be represented. As a present, genuinely assembled people, they exist in the pure democracy with the greatest possible degree of identity: as [ekklēsia] in the market of Greek democracy; in the Roman forum; as assembled team or army; as a local government of a Swiss Land [...] The genuinely assembled people are first a people, and only the genuinely assembled people can do that which pertains distinctly to the activity of this people. They can acclaim in that they express their consent or disapproval simply by calling out, calling higher or lower, celebrating a leader or a suggestion, honouring the king or some other person, or denying the acclamation by silence or complaining [...] When indeed only the people are actually assembled for whatever purpose, to the extent that it does not only appear as an organized interest group, for example, during street demonstrations and public festivals, in theaters, on the running track or in the stadium, this people engaged in acclamation is present, and it is, at least potentially, a political entity.*<sup>26</sup>

Schmitt's contribution here is not only to have established an indissoluble link between acclamations and democracy as well as between acclamations and the public sphere but also that of identifying the forms in which it can subsist in contemporary democracies, in which “genuine popular assemblies and acclamations are entirely unknown”.<sup>27</sup> In contemporary democracies, acclamations survive, according to Schmitt, in the sphere of public opinion and only by setting out from the constitutive nexus of people—acclamation—public opinion is it possible to reintegrate into its rights the notion of publicity, which is today “rather obscure, [but] is essential for all political life, especially for modern democracy”.<sup>28</sup>

Public opinion is the modern type of acclamation. *It is perhaps a diffuse type, and its problem is resolved neither sociologically nor in terms of public law. However, its*

*essence and political significance lie in the fact that it can be understood as an acclamation. There is no democracy and no state without public opinion, as there is no state without acclamation.*<sup>29</sup>

Of course, Schmitt is conscious of the essential risks that democracy is exposed to, from such a perspective, with the manipulation of public opinion; but, in accordance with the principle that the ultimate criterion of the political existence of a people is its capacity to distinguish friend from enemy, he maintains that, while that capacity exists, such risks are not decisive:

*In every democracy, there are parties, speakers and demagogues, from the [prostatai] of the Athenians up to the bosses in American democracy. Moreover, there are the press, films and other methods of psycho-technical handling of great masses of people. All that escapes a comprehensive set of norms. The danger always exists that invisible and irresponsible social powers direct public opinion and the will of the people.*<sup>30</sup>

More than the singular linking (which is already present in the 1927 article) of acclamations to the genuine democratic tradition—they appear to belong rather to the tradition of authoritarianism—what we wish to focus on is the suggestion that the sphere of glory—of which we have attempted to reconstitute the meaning and archeology—does not disappear in modern democracies, but simply shifts to another area, that of public opinion. If this is true, the problem of the political function of the media in contemporary society that is so widely debated today acquires a new meaning and a new urgency.

In 1967, Guy Debord—in what appears to us a truism today—diagnosed the planetary transformation of capitalist politics and economy as an “immense accumulation of spectacles”<sup>31</sup> in which the commodity and capital itself assume the mediatic form of the image. If we link Debord’s analysis with Schmitt’s thesis according to which public opinion is the modern form of acclamation, the entire problem of the contemporary spectacle of media domination over all areas of social life assumes a new guise. What is in question is nothing less than a new and unheard of concentration, multiplication and dissemination of the function of glory as the centre of the political system. What was confined to the spheres of liturgy and ceremonials has become concentrated in the media and, at the same time, through them it spreads and penetrates at each moment into every area of society, both public and private. Contemporary democracy is a democracy that is entirely founded upon glory, that is, on the efficacy of acclamation, multiplied and disseminated by the media beyond all imagination. (That the Greek term for glory—*doxa*—is the same term that today designates public opinion is, from this

standpoint, something more than a coincidence.) As had always been the case in profane and ecclesiastical liturgies, this supposedly “originary democratic phenomenon” is once again caught, orientated and manipulated in the forms and according to the strategies of spectacular power.

We are now beginning to better understand the sense of the contemporary definitions of democracy as ‘government by consent’ or ‘consensus democracy’ and the decisive transformation of the democratic institutions that is at stake in these terms. In 1994, following the verdict of the German Federal Court that rejected the appeal to the unconstitutional nature of the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, a debate took place in Germany between an illustrious scholar of constitutional law, Dieter Grimm, and Jürgen Habermas. In a brief article (significantly entitled in the interrogative, “Braucht Europa eine Verfassung?”, “Does Europe Need a Constitution?”), the German constitutional theorist intervened in the discussion, which was particularly animated in Germany, between those who believed the treaties that had led to European integration had formal constitutional value and those who instead believed that an actual constitutional document would be required. He underlined the irresolvable difference between international treaties, whose juridical foundation lies in the agreement between states, and constitutions that presuppose the constitutive act of the people.

*[...] It is inherent in a constitution in the full sense of the term that it goes back to an act taken by or at least attributed to the people, in which they attribute political capacity to themselves. There is no such source for primary Community law. It goes back not to a European people but to the individual member states, and remains dependent on them even after its entry into force.*<sup>32</sup>

Grimm had no nostalgia for the nation-state model or for that of the national community whose unity is in some sense presupposed in a substantial form or “rooted in ethnic origin”,<sup>33</sup> but he could not but register that the lack of a European public opinion and of a common language makes the formation even of something like a common political culture impossible, at least for now.

This thesis, which lucidly reflected the principles of modern public law, substantially coincided with the position of those sociologists, such as Lepsius, who, in more or less the same years, while distinguishing between *ethnos* (national collectivity based upon descent and homogeneity) and *demos* (the people as “nation of citizens”), had affirmed that Europe did not yet possess a common *demos* and cannot therefore constitute a politically legitimate European power.

To this conception of the necessary relationship between people and constitution, Habermas opposes the thesis of a popular sovereignty that is entirely emancipated from a substantial subject-people (constituted by “members of a collectivity who are physically present, participating and involved”) and fully resolved in the communicative forms without subject that, according to his idea of publicity, “regulate the flows of the political formation of public opinion and will”.<sup>34</sup> Once popular sovereignty dissolves itself and is liquefied in such communicative procedures, not only can the symbolic place of power no longer be occupied by new symbols of identity, but the objections of constitutionalists to the possibility that something like a ‘European people’—correctly, that is communicatively, understood—can exist, also fall away.

It is well known that in subsequent years a ‘European constitution’ was drafted, with the unexpected consequence—which should have been anticipated—that it was rejected by the ‘citizens as people’ [*popolo dei cittadini*] who were asked to ratify what was certainly not an expression of their constituent power. The fact is that, if to Grimm and the theorists of the people-constitution nexus one could object that they still harked back to the common presuppositions of language and public opinion, to Habermas and the theorists of the people-communication one could easily object that they ended up passing political power into the hands of experts and the media.

What our investigation has shown is that the holistic state, founded on the immediate presence of the acclaiming people, and the neutralized state that resolves itself in the communicative forms without subject, are opposed only in appearance. They are nothing but two sides of the same glorious apparatus in its two forms: the immediate and subjective glory of the acclaiming people and the mediatic and objective glory of social communication. As should be evident today, people-nation and people-communication, despite the differences in behaviour and figure, are the two faces of the *doxa* that, as such, ceaselessly interweave and separate themselves side by side with conservative thinkers of acclamation such as Schmitt and Peterson; but this is precisely the price that must be paid each time by theoretical elaborations that think they can do without archeological precautions.

That ‘government by consent’ and the social communication on which, in the last instance, consensus rests, in reality hark back to acclamations is what can be shown even through a summary genealogical inquest. The first time that the concept of ‘consensus’ appears in the technical context of public law is in a crucial passage from Augustus’s *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, where he briefly summarizes the concentration of constitutional powers in his person: “In consulatu sexto et septimo, postquam bella

civilia extinxeram, per consensum universorum potitus rerum omnium” (“In my sixth and seventh consulates, after putting out the civil war, [having obtained everybody’s consent, I assumed all powers]”: *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, § 34). The historians of Roman law questioned the foundation of this extraordinary concentration of powers in public law. Mommsen and Kornemann, for example, maintain that it was no longer based on the function of the triumvirate, but upon a state of exception of a certain kind (*Notsstandkommando*).<sup>35</sup> It is peculiar, however, that Augustus unequivocally founds it upon consent (“per consensum universorum”), and also that immediately beforehand he specifies the ways in which that consent manifested itself: “Twice I triumphed with an ovation, and three times I enjoyed a *curule* triumph and twenty-one times I was named emperor [*Bis ovans triumphavi, tris egi curulis triumphos et appellatus sum viciens et semel imperator*]” (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, § 4). For a historian such as Mommsen, who had never heard of ‘communicative action’, it was certainly not easy to relate the notion of consensus back to a foundation in public law; but if one understands the essential link that ties it to acclamation, consensus can be defined without difficulty, paraphrasing Schmitt’s thesis on public opinion, as the “modern form of acclamation” (it matters little that the acclamation is expressed by a physically present multitude, as in Schmitt, or by the flow of communicative procedures, as in Habermas). In any case, consensual democracy, which Debord called “the society of the spectacle” and which is so dear to the theorists of communicative action, is a glorious democracy, in which the *oikonomia* is fully resolved into glory and the doxological function, freeing itself of liturgy and ceremonies, absolutizes itself to an unheard of extent and penetrates every area of social life.

Philosophy and the science of politics have omitted to pose the questions that appear decisive in every way, whenever the techniques and strategies of government and power are analyzed, from a genealogical and functional perspective: where does our culture draw the criterion of politicality—mythologically and in fact? What is the substance—or the procedure or threshold—that allows one to confer on something a properly political character? The answer that our investigation suggests is: glory, in its dual aspect, divine and human, ontological and economic, of the Father and the Son, of the people-substance and the people-communication. The people—whether real or communicational—to which in some sense the ‘government by consent’ and the *oikonomia* of contemporary democracies must hark back, is, in essence, acclamation and *doxa*. Establishing whether, as we have tried to show liminally, glory covers and captures in the guise of ‘eternal life’ that particular praxis of man as living being [*vivente uomo*] that we have defined as inoperativity, and whether it is possible, as was announced at the end of *Homo Sacer I*, to think politics—beyond the economy and beyond glory—beginning from the inoperative disarticulation of both *bios* and *zōē*, is the task for a future investigation.



## APPENDIX

In the course of the 1977-1978 lectures *Securité, Territoire, Population*, Foucault defined in a few, extremely dense lines, the fundamental structure of Rousseau's political project.<sup>36</sup> He seeks here to demonstrate that the problem of sovereignty did not leave the stage at the moment the art of government came to the fore in European politics. On the contrary, never is it posted with such urgency as it is at this time: although up until the seventeenth century one limited oneself to deducing a paradigm of government from the theory of sovereignty, it then became an inverse process; given the growing primacy of the arts of government, it became a case of discovering the juridical form and theory of sovereignty that were able to sustain and found this primacy. It is at this stage that he illustrates his thesis via a reading of Rousseau and, in particular, of the relationship between the 1775 article on "Political Economy" in the *Encyclopedia* and the *Social Contract*. The problem with the article lies, according to Foucault, in the definition of an "economy" or an art of government that is no longer modeled on the family, but that has the common aim of governing in the best possible way and with maximum efficacy in order to make men happy. When Rousseau writes the *Social Contract*, the problem will instead be precisely that of

*how, with notions like those of 'nature', 'contract', and 'general will', one can give a general principle of government that will allow for both the juridical principle of sovereignty and the elements through which an art of government can be defined and described [...] The problem of sovereignty is not eliminated; on the contrary, it is made more acute than ever.*<sup>37</sup>

Let us attempt to advance Foucault's analysis in light of the results of our investigation. To begin with, he has come as close as he possibly can to the intuition of the bipolar character of the governmental machine, although the methodological decision to set aside the analysis of the juridical universals prevents him from articulating it fully. Rousseau's theory of sovereignty is certainly a function of a theory of government (or of "public economy", as he sometimes defines it); but the correlation between the two elements is, in Rousseau, still more intimate and right than it appears in Foucault's brief analysis and is entirely founded upon the theological model that he adopts from Malebranche and the French theorists of providence.

What is decisive from this point of view is the distinction and articulation of sovereignty and government, which is at the basis of Rousseau's political thought. "I urge my readers

also", he writes in his article on the *Economie Politique*, "to distinguish carefully *public economy*, about which I am to speak, and which I call *government*, from the supreme authority, which I call *sovereignty*—a distinction that consists in the one having the legislative right and in certain cases obligating the body of the nation itself, while the other has only the executive power and can obligate only private individuals".<sup>38</sup> In the *Social Contract* the distinction is restated as the articulation between general will and legislative power on the one hand, and government and executive power on the other. That for Rousseau the distinction has a strategic relevance is proved by the fact that he forcefully denies that it is a case of division and presents it instead as an internal articulation of one indivisible supreme power:

*For the same reason that sovereignty is inalienable it is indivisible; for the will is either general, or it is not; it is either that of the body of the people, or that of only a part of it. In the first case, this declared will is an act of sovereignty and constitutes law; in the second case, it is only a particular will, or an act of magistracy—it is at most a decree. But our politicians, being unable to divide sovereignty in its principle, divide it in its object. They divide it into force and will, into legislative power and executive power; into rights of taxation, of justice, and of war; into internal administration and foreign relations—sometimes conflating all of these branches, and sometimes separating them. They make the sovereign into a fantastic being, formed of disparate parts; it is as if they created a man from several different bodies, one with eyes, another with arms, another with feet, and nothing else. The Japanese conjurors, it is said, cut up a child before the eyes of the spectators; then throwing all its limbs into the air, they make the child come down again alive and whole. Such almost are the jugglers' tricks of our politicians; after dismembering the social body, by magic worthy of the circus, they recombine its parts, in any unlikely way. This error arises from their not having formed clear ideas about the sovereign authority, and from their regarding as elements of this authority what are only emanations from it.*<sup>39</sup>

In the same way as in the paradigm of providence, general providence and special providence do not stand in contrast with each other nor do they represent a division within the one divine will; and, as in Malebranche, the occasional causes are nothing but the particular actualization of God's general will, so in Rousseau, the government, or executive power, claims to coincide with the sovereignty of law from which it nevertheless distinguishes itself as its particular emanation and actualization. The concept of emanation, utilized by Rousseau, has not failed to surprise his commentators; but the choice of term is all the more significant if one returns it to its original context, which is that

of the emanative causes of Neoplatonism, which were incorporated into the theory of creation and providence through the work of Boethius, Johannes Scotus Eriugena, the *Liber de Causis* and Jewish theology. Precisely because of this origin, in Rousseau's time the term did not have a good press. In the article by Diderot, "Kabbalah", in the *Encyclopaedia*, the emanative paradigm was defined as the "axis around which the entire philosophical Kabbalah and system of emanations turn, according to which it is necessary that all things emanate from the divine essence". And even more crucial judgements could be found in the entry "Emanation", which, having restated the link with the Kabbalah, warned that "this theory leads straight to pantheism". Introducing the term at a delicate point in his system, Rousseau must have calculated the implications of his choice. This did not hark back to the Kabbalah but to Christian theology, in which the term referred first to the procession of persons in the Trinitarian economy (until the seventeenth century this was, in fact, the only meaning of the French term *émanation*) and to the theory of causes in the creationist and providential paradigm. In this context, the term implied that the divine principle has not been diminished nor is it divided by its Trinitarian articulation and by its activity of creation and conservation of the world. It is in this sense that Rousseau uses the term; in order to exclude, in contrast to those thinkers whom he ironically calls *les politiques*, that sovereignty is in some way divisible. And yet, just as in the case of the Trinitarian economy and in the theory of providence, what cannot be divided is articulated through the distinctions *sovereign power / government, general will / particular will, legislative power / executive power*, which mark within it a series of caesurae that Rousseau tries carefully to minimize.

Through these distinctions the entire economic-providential apparatus (with its polarities *ordination / execution, providence / fate, Kingdom / Government*) is passed on as an unquestioned inheritance to modern politics. What was needed to assure the unity of being and divine action, reconciling the unity of substance with the trinity of persons and the government of particulars with the universality of providence, has here the strategic function of reconciling the sovereignty and generality of the law with the public economy and the effective government of individuals. The most nefarious consequence of this theological apparatus dressed up as a political legitimation is that it has rendered the democratic tradition incapable of thinking government and its economy (today one would instead write: economy and its government, but the two terms are substantially synonymous). On the one hand, Rousseau conceives of government as the essential political problem; on the other hand, he minimizes the problem of its nature and its foundation, reducing it to the activity of the execution of sovereign authority. The ambiguity that seems to settle the problem of government by presenting it as the

mere execution of a general will and law has weighed negatively not only upon the theory, but also upon the history of modern democracy. For this history is nothing but the progressive coming to light of the substantial untruth of the primacy of legislative power and the consequent irreducibility of government to mere execution. And if today we are witnessing the government and the economy's overwhelming domination of a popular sovereignty emptied of all meaning, this perhaps signifies that Occidental democracies are paying the political price of a theological inheritance that they had unwittingly assumed through Rousseau.

The ambiguity that consists in conceiving government as executive power is an error with some of the most far-reaching consequences in the history of Western political thought. It has meant that modern political thought becomes lost in abstractions and vacuous mythologems such as the Law, the general will and popular sovereignty, and has failed to confront the decisive political problem. *What our investigation has shown is that the real problem, the central mystery of politics is not sovereignty, but government; it is not God, but the angel; it is not the king, but ministry; it is not the law, but the police—that is to say, the governmental machine that they form and support.*

*The two sovereignties, the dynastic and the popular-democratic, refer to two completely different genealogies. The dynastic sovereignty of divine right is derived from the theological-political paradigm; the popular-democratic is derived from the theological-economic-providential paradigm.*

*Rousseau does not hide the fact that the fundamental articulations of his political system derive from a theological paradigm. In the article on Political Economy, he affirms that the principal difficulty of the system that he proposes is that of reconciling "public freedom and the government's authority".<sup>40</sup> This difficulty has been removed, writes Rousseau, by the "most sublime of all human institutions, or rather by a divine inspiration, which teaches mankind to imitate here below the unchangeable decrees of the Deity".<sup>41</sup> In other words, the sovereignty of the law, to which Rousseau refers, imitates and reproduces the structure of the providential government of the world. Just as in Malebranche, for Rousseau the general will, the law, subjugates men only in order to make them freer, and in immutably governing their actions does nothing but express their nature. And just as in letting oneself be governed by God they do nothing but let their own nature take its course, so the indivisible sovereignty of the Law guarantees the coincidence of the governing and the governed.*

*The agreement with Malebranche's thought also appears forcefully in the third Letter from the Mountain in relation to the critique of miracles. Rousseau closely connects the miracle with the exception (it is "a real and visible exception to [God's] Laws")<sup>42</sup> and firmly criticizes the necessity of miracles to faith and revelation. In question is not so much whether God 'can' carry out miracles, so much as—through a perhaps conscious return to the distinction between absolute power and ordering power—whether God 'wants' to do so<sup>42</sup>. It is interesting to observe that Rousseau, despite denying the necessity of miracles, does not exclude them entirely, but conceives them as exceptions. Schmitt's theory, which sees in miracles the theological paradigm of the state of exception,<sup>43</sup> finds its confirmation here.*

The above texts are excerpts from the book *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, by Giorgio Agamben, translated by Lorenzo Chiesa, © 2011 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University. All rights reserved. Used with the permission of Stanford University Press, www.sup.org.

The excerpts are taken from the chapters:

- "The Two Paradigms" 1.2 (pp. 2-4)
- "The Power and the Glory" 7.12, 7.13 (pp. 192-194)
- "The Archeology of Glory" 8.2-8.4 (pp. 198-204)
- "The Archeology of Glory", Threshold (pp. 253-259)
- "Appendix" 1.6, 1.7 (pp. 273-277)

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Yana Milev

## Cluster XI: Critical Design In(ter)vention/ Design Critique

The potential for resistance in cultural practices can be inferred from the aesthetic dimension of resistance and its radically semiological quality. Here the *new*—in the sense of the other—is the not-yet-occupied, creative freedom.

The imperative “Do/ing culture!”—conceived of by Karl H. Hörning and Julia Reuter—holds out the promise of a ‘practice turn’. It is here we also find the starting point for a thesis of anthropological design research that constitutes a critique of our times: the politics of the cultural connects the cultural with social behaviour and the semiological. Urban social frameworks are urban design frameworks and cause a new redistribution of cultural capital in public spaces. The new imperative of critical design or design practices could be “*Do/ing radical design!*”, making reference to a ‘design turn’ that includes the radical critique of the cultural technologies of sovereignty, violence, disaster, markets, war, cinema, acceleration, etc.

Critical design practices are, above all, in(ter)ventionist practices and, in the broadest sense, practices of cultural hacking. In *Cultural Hacking: Kunst des strategischen Handelns*<sup>1</sup> (2005), Thomas Düllo and Franz Liebl elaborate a thesis on in(ter)ventions in technological and ideological systems with reference to Michel de Certeau’s “Art of Practice”.<sup>2</sup> Since, as has already been established, ideological systems can hardly—or, more precisely, can never—do without design rhetoric, cultural hacking applies in the first instance to a system’s surfaces and, furthermore, to its internal mechanisms. The central question posed by critical design is one that deals with the capability to deconstruct.

While numerous successful hacker attacks brought the vulnerability of the internet’s economic and political structures and its influence on society to the fore in the 1990s, an increasingly prevalent discourse is currently forming around strategies of visibility and invisibility, advocacy and non-cooperation. As we have already conveyed, such a discourse is one of design anthropology.

Critical design practices and design interventions by leading designers are presented in Cluster XI. Design disciplines that are the focus of the design sciences—namely industrial design, urban design, IT design, application design or emotional design—are part of a lifestyle and marketing world that cannot be sustained without advertising design, media design, trend design and ergonomic design. If practising designers, i.e. experts in these fields, wish to take up a critical view of the one-dimensionality of design science and the ideologization of the concept of design in industry and IT, they must switch sides and thus switch perspective on their own ‘making, crafting and designing’. The designers (and their projects) presented in this cluster have understood this and practically convey design criticism via critical design in(ter)ventions.

The discursive provenance of critical design is diverse and spans cultures and generations, with origins in post-war Germany and post-war America. The critical observers of the façade of an economic miracle—the result of economic shock doctrine in post-war Germany—were on the side of the revolts and revolutions of the generation of 1968.

In “anti-design”, Estonian activist and producer Kalle Lasn, founder of the Adbusters movement in the USA, wrote an enduring anti-consumerist manifesto that went global. In the 1970s, the German philosopher Wolfgang Fritz Haug wrote a paper against the liberalized façade of post-war Germany’s economic miracle that was critical of consumption; it remains a groundbreaking work for critical designers and design critics.

Practical examples of participatory design in the Slovenian architect and artist Marjetica Potrč’s work, socially responsible design in the American designer and curator Cynthia E. Smith’s project, examples of ‘destroy design’, poverty design, but also cynical and critical statements in the American artist Lisa Kirk’s ‘design revolution’ project, as well as examples of participatory critique in the German architect and curator Markus Miessen’s contribution or in those by the American cultural critic, activist and blogger Brian Holmes...these all set limits to what Mateo Kries calls “total design”.

Solutions, models for the future and visions are being called for, but without a belief in progress, conscious instead of the complex damage to the environment and society that accompany neoliberal design trends. The projects by the Berlin-based artist collective Mindpirates—under the auspices of Ralf Schmerberg—are representative here. The same is true of the United\_Bottle Group. This international cooperation of architects, led by the German architects Jörg Stollmann and Dirk Hebel, arrestingly and with humour delineates a recycling model that has become an example for others.

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1. Literally, “Cultural Hacking: The Art of Strategic Practice”.
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#### **A: Participatory Design / Socially Responsible Design**

*Cynthia E. Smith*  
*Marjetica Potrč*  
*United\_Bottle Group (VE)*  
*(commentary: Dirk Hebel, Jörg Stollman)*

#### **B: Design In(ter)vention**

*Lisa Kirk (VE)*  
*(commentaries: Lia Gangitano + Thorsten Schmitz)*  
*Christina Hemauer, Roman Keller (VE)*

#### **C: Crossbench Design**

*Markus Miessen*  
*Brian Holmes*  
*Mindpirates (VE)*  
*(commentary: Mindpirates)*

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Cynthia E. Smith

## World Designs to End Poverty

My world changed focus from the moment I watched the planes bring down the Twin Towers. Like so many others, I realized that our lives had changed. For the next two weeks, I roamed the streets of Lower Manhattan looking for a way I could help in the aftermath; although I was trained as an industrial designer, I found nowhere my skills would be useful. As a result, I began questioning, *“In what ways could I, as a designer, make a difference?”*

### TOWARD A MORE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE DESIGN

While a number of us from my architecture office volunteered with Imagine New York, a regional effort to get public input into the rebuilding of lower Manhattan, I knew there was more I could do. A political activist my whole adult life, I decided to run for office to try to make an impact locally. As my backup, I applied to school. I lost the race, but was accepted to the Kennedy School of Government. As a mid-career student at Harvard University, I was studying with people from around the world with a wide range of professions, from diplomacy, law and human rights, to economic development, housing and architecture. We all endeavoured to help make the world a better place. After graduating, I felt I was armed with additional skills and ideas to make that happen. Arriving back in New York, I met Cooper-Hewitt’s Curatorial Director at the time, Barbara Bloemink, who asked me to organize an exhibition about affordable designs to help people out of poverty. What I found as I began my research was a groundswell of work being done by a dedicated group of designers, engineers, architects and entrepreneurs around the world to create sustainable solutions for improving people’s lives. The exhibition, *Design for the Other 90%*, highlights the many ways individuals and organizations are working to eliminate poverty and to give people around the globe a better standard of life.

### A GROWING DESIGN MOVEMENT

A movement is growing both within the professional design community and the design, engineering and architecture schools to direct our practices toward socially responsible, sustainable, humanitarian design. This represents a sea change, as the focus has shifted to underserved populations. In this paradigm, by working directly with the end users to determine what their needs are, designers are developing low-cost technologies that promote local economic growth and a way out of poverty.

Imagine you have only \$2 to live on for a day and have to choose among food, shelter, clean water, health or pursuing an education. An instructor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Amy Smith, asks her students to live on \$2 per day for a full week to help them better understand the choices faced by almost half the world’s population, 2.8 billion people, who can barely meet their own basic needs. One in six people around the world, or 1.1 billion, barely exist on less than \$1 a day, which is considered the level at which even basic needs cannot be met, and live with “poverty that kills”.<sup>1</sup> Amy Smith’s MIT students supplement their \$2-a-day immersion with living in communities in developing countries to better formulate designs that meet the criteria for “appropriate technologies”, which are simple, cheap, easy to produce and distribute, and meet a direct need.<sup>2</sup> Smith, a MacArthur Foundation fellow, develops her simple and efficient designs through D-Lab, a group that incubates in her classroom, develops in the field and reports the high-impact results on a website.

In 2003, the United Nations designated Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, an official non-governmental organization (NGO)—the first design school to attain this status—to further Art Center’s DesignMatters programme for solving social challenges through design.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Design that Matters, a nonprofit collaborative group out of MIT started in 2001, engages in the ‘virtual design’ of products and services for problems posed by international NGOs. Prototypes are researched and developed by volunteer engineers, designers, semi-retired professionals in collaboration with business, and engineering students. CITYbuild Consortium is bringing together over a dozen architecture schools with Tulane University to work directly with local community groups in New Orleans, Louisiana, for the reconstruction of that city’s culture and buildings after Hurricane Katrina.<sup>4</sup> Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government and Business School joined together to find ways to work across sectors to solve social problems through social enterprise, beginning in the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> Stanford University now offers a class in entrepreneurial design for extreme affordability.<sup>6</sup> Other

universities around the world, such as the University of Salford in England, conduct research in socially responsible design.<sup>7</sup> These are only a few examples of the many programmes I came across in delving into this quickly emerging design area.

Dr Paul Polak, an engineer and founder of International Development Enterprises, calls it a “design revolution”, which is applying design thinking to a new set of “clients”. He is helping to teach a new generation of designers how to listen to rural farmers in the least developed countries to find low-cost products that will increase their agricultural output. IDE, an international non-profit organization with programmes in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Niger, Nepal, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe, employs market principles of income generation to help communities out of poverty. Design for the Majority, a new interest group of the Industrial Designers Society of America, was recently formed by design professor Leslie Spear to help the more than five billion people who live on \$10 or less a day. She believes we are in the middle of a “paradigm shift... in how design is currently being discussed and practised, both nationally and internationally”.<sup>8</sup> In 2005, the organization met to discuss emerging markets for the “Other Six Billion People”, those underserved by current design services. Basing its conference on the UN Millennium Development Goals, the 2006 Aspen Design Summit called for the design community to partner with business, civic and cultural sectors to end poverty in the developing world.

Several groups have emerged to serve as the connection and clearinghouse for different design disciplines to provide services to the underserved. The international group Engineers Without Borders links engineers with sustainable projects, from sanitation and energy to food production and water supply, to help people meet their most basic needs. Architecture for Humanity, which demands through its open competitions that architects “design like you give a damn”, is flooded with submissions for its projects that address international humanitarian crises. Bryan Bell formed Design Corps, which partners with AmeriCorps to train young designers interested in social issues. Its participants work on projects for those who could never afford them, such as low-income rural communities and migrant farm workers. Several of these organizations informed and supported the selection of works for *Design for the Other 90%*, and have worked directly with some of the exhibition and book’s contributors.

## UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- GOAL 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- GOAL 2: Achieve universal primary education
- GOAL 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- GOAL 4: Reduce child mortality
- GOAL 5: Improve maternal health
- GOAL 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- GOAL 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- GOAL 8: Develop a global partnership for development

For further information about the Millennium Development Goals, visit the UN’s website: [www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals).

In 2000, the United Nations announced the Millennium Development Goals, a compact among wealthy countries to commit resources and among poorer nations to improve policies and governance, with a goal to halve extreme poverty by 2015. Momentum has been building: celebrities have made headlines bringing attention to the immense problem, while *Time* magazine displayed Jeffrey Sachs’s influential book *The End of Poverty* on its cover. As Director of the UN Millennium Project, Sachs proposed investments and strategies in which high income countries substantially increase international aid for the least developed countries—to 70¢ for every \$100 of national income (0.7 per cent of GDP) by 2015. Set in stages, the strategies focus on “rural productivity, urban productivity, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, environmental sustainability, science, technology, and innovation”.<sup>9</sup> Others have disagreed with this top-down approach and taken an opposing stand. Former World Bank economist and author William Easterly thinks that “bottom-up searching—with lots of local involvement and feedback—will find the things that work to actually get results for poor people”.<sup>10</sup> Several objects selected for *Design for the Other 90%*, such as improved anti-malaria bed netting, were developed expressly for mass distribution by international aid agencies; while others, like the micro-irrigation pumps, resulted from local involvement.

Some of this thinking has been around for decades. In 1973, an influential book of essays by the British economist E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if People Mattered*, identified what he termed “Buddhist economics”. It called for production from local resources for local needs—the basic idea for appropriate technologies to which many of the designers in *Design for the Other 90%* adhere.<sup>11</sup> In 1971, Victor Papanek,



a product designer for UNESCO, was one of the first advocates for socially responsible design in *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, indicting not only Western consumerist society, but also designers, stating that “the genuine needs of man have often been neglected by the designer”.<sup>12</sup> Travelling and living in the developing world, Papanek designed numerous low-cost products, including a radio made from discarded metal cans and powered by a candle for local production. The projects featured in *Design for the Other 90%* were selected not just to highlight one philosophy or another, but also to open a discussion on the ways designers are looking for positive, sustainable results. Each of the selected objects opens a window onto a unique story: an engineer in Nigeria creates a low-cost way to bring vegetables to market with a portable ceramic cooler; a group in Switzerland works with international aid organizations to stop the transmission of waterborne disease with a personal mobile water-purification tool; a multi-sector collaboration provides low-cost laptops directly to governments in an effort to increase literacy rates in the developing world. These solutions emphasize the variety of means by which designers from around the world have attacked the ongoing bane of global poverty. Some find unique ways to provide basic needs, while others address the root causes. Each does not stand alone, but is linked, building small footholds in often remote parts of the world that have begun to help improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

## REVOLUTION CLOSER TO HOME

What initially started out as a project focussed on designs for the developing world eventually expanded, as this was only one part of the story. Whenever I explained to others the concept behind *Design for the Other 90%*, I was asked if we were including works from the United States. Poverty exists in America; the World Bank describes this level as relative poverty, where household income levels are a specific level below the national average.<sup>13</sup> One criterion for inclusion in the exhibition and book was that it needed to be a low-cost design intervention; it would also need to fit into our limited exhibition space. Such projects seemed hard to come by, but then we found the Mad Housers, an all-volunteer organization in Atlanta, Georgia, which builds ‘huts’ for homeless people from donated materials, providing a temporary shelter for those in need. Other projects came to our attention, including Public Architecture’s Day Labor Stations, low-cost mobile centres to be built by the labourers themselves to accommodate meetings, classes and sanitation facilities.

After Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana and Mississippi were the most visible signs in recent times of the income divide in this country. When I started to look for economic and cultural rebuilding projects along the Gulf Coast, I learned about two initiatives that grew out of the Aspen Design Summit, where Dr Bloemink first met designers working in this field. I joined Sergio Palleroni of Katrina Furniture Project, and met Nik Hafermaas and Paul Hauge of Art Center’s YouOrleans group in New Orleans to see the rebuilding effort at first hand. Students, alumni and professors from across the United States had gathered to explore how to help bring economic revival to the region through a branding campaign called YouOrleans, and to apply design skills to help a city still struggling to survive in the aftermath of a natural disaster. They were part of a larger story about other efforts along the coast. The Katrina Furniture Project, which is creating a cottage furniture-making industry from the debris left behind by the storm, was the brainchild of BaSiC Initiative’s Sergio Palleroni. Joining with Green Project, a local reclamation group, Sergio and his students are making plans to employ and teach local residents to craft church pews for the 90 churches that were destroyed, stools and tables from beautiful 200-year-old lumber found in the destroyed houses, and to help rebuild the local economy. While they differ from many other objects discussed in this book and exhibition, which directly relate to the meeting of basic survival needs, such as clean water, these projects nonetheless affect and transform people’s lives by providing an economic structure where they can learn skills, earn money and become self-supporting over time.

When I looked across New Orleans’s Lake Pontchartrain after seeing parish after parish filled with empty, boarded up buildings, I began to understand the immensity of the hurricane’s destruction. The lake was vast; standing on one side, you could not see the other shore, and all of that emptied into New Orleans. CITYBuild facilitates the connection between local community groups and architecture schools. This is not unlike the design taking place with the non-profits in Asia and Africa that work with rural farmers to determine what exactly they most need. I saw a number of design/build projects, ‘flagships’ in the cultural and building reconstruction efforts in the Seventh and Ninth Wards, to include in the exhibition. A backyard museum celebrating the Mardi Gras Indians was rebuilt for Ronald Lewis, founder of the House of Dance and Feathers, Mardi Gras Indian Council Chief and member of the Northside Skull and Bone Gang, with the help of Patrick Rhodes, Project Locus and architecture students from Kansas State University. Lewis’s house was the first on his street to be rebuilt and stands as an inspiration to others. An outdoor shade structure was installed in a community garden so that the local Porch Cultural Organization could meet to discuss rebuilding efforts by

another set of students, under the guidance of University of Kansas architecture professors Rob Corser and Nils Gore.

I travelled farther along the Gulf Coast to Biloxi, Mississippi, to meet with people who had come to help with the reconstruction and planning of this small city. Sharon Hanshaw started Coastal Women for Change to organize the women in her community to contribute a voice in what is being planned. While this was outside the scale of what we highlight in the exhibition, it does speak to how larger factors, such as economic development, help inform the design of a community. Many of the families who had small businesses hoped to return and rebuild, despite overwhelming pressure to tear down areas and build more land-based casinos. Architecture for Humanity, in partnership with the Biloxi Relief, Recovery and Revitalization Center, started a Model Home programme, which hosted a house fair for returning families and architects, who brought new house designs for selection. The designs present innovative solutions to the required higher elevations, some at twelve feet, and unique modified 'shotgun' layout.

All of the people I interviewed and spoke with clearly wanted to stay and rebuild in New Orleans and along the Mississippi coast. The message they asked me to convey is that they continue to need help, as there is so much more work to be done.

### GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY RESPONDS TO POVERTY LOCALLY

Technological advances are aiding the progress of a large range of work being done internationally to address developing countries' needs. The advent of the internet and the availability of satellites and telecommunication hardware are making information more accessible, work in remote areas possible and global collaboration feasible. Organizations like IDE are able to communicate with their various workshops and offices in India or Nepal, enabling them to work collaboratively and share information. Doctors in Boston can diagnose illnesses from remote rural clinics in Cambodia via 'store and forward' technology. Cambodian 'motomen' collect information via mobile access points for uploading and international transmission. Architects in Europe or Asia can find out about projects by looking at Architecture for Humanity's website or receiving notice via email. I have been corresponding via email with designers in India, Nigeria and South Africa about their development work and designs. Designers can now provide services to people who would not have received them before.

Web sites that use 'wiki' technology have emerged to offer collaborative authoring, whereby visitors to the websites can add and edit content. In response to the natural disaster, the New Orleans Wiki was created for community groups and civic organizations to aid in the planning process in New Orleans. The site contains volunteer-maintained articles about the city, which allow groups to write proposals and plans. The neighbourhood group has more input to the planning and design process, as more information is available to the general public.

There are more and more ways for people living in remote areas to engage in income-generating activities and, through education, to help the next generation out of poverty. Light-emitting diodes (LEDs), the bright lights found in our pedestrian walk signals, illuminate low-cost lamps in Mexico, so people can travel, study or work longer and more safely. LED technology also illuminates projectors, enabling the education of women in remote areas about healthcare and adding a lightweight microfilm library to improve literacy in Africa and Asia. For the more than 1.6 billion people who lack a connection to electricity, solar panels that store the energy of the sun for later use enable them to live 'off the grid', increasing their productivity and incomes.

Sometimes a design cannot be sustained because it is too expensive to make and the people who need it most cannot afford it. In South Africa, the Hendrikes brothers, one a civil engineer and the other an architect, devised an ingenious way to transport water by rolling it. Through trial and error, they developed a design that would last, but it cost too much for the end user. A great idea—but once they realized that the area's economic state could not support it, they ended its production. They continue to look for alternate means to produce the product at an affordable cost. I have included an essay about this process in the catalogue that accompanies the *Design for the Other 90%* exhibition, not to discourage those who might be considering how they can assist people living in poverty, but to show different approaches to problems and to encourage further exploration of sustainable solutions.

### DESIGN MAKES A DIFFERENCE

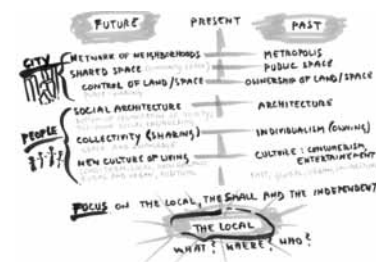
So where did I find the international designers who are working to design for the 90 per cent of the world who traditionally cannot afford 'designed' work? I found them at universities and in small non-profits, teaching people how to make inexpensive filters for clean water; designing bamboo treadle pumps for farmers to irrigate their crops in India;

creating temporary shelters for earthquake victims in Pakistan; restoring the culture of a city like New Orleans; and creating ingenious ways to transport goods to market in Kenya. Many were suggested to me by those working in the field, others via seminars and conferences on humanitarian design. Far beyond any of the work discussed here, there are more and more designers working around the globe to provide access to water, food, shelter, education, health, transportation and energy to people who would otherwise have difficulty living their lives and supporting themselves. The exhibition and catalogue are not about providing expensive solutions. Instead, they are about low-cost, open-source designs, which, in most cases, can be replicated and even sold by the users, thus providing them the means to become entrepreneurs in their own right. They provide an opportunity to tell the stories about a range of ways numerous groups and individuals are devising solutions to the causes of poverty.

Once an activist, always an activist. My hope is that the exhibition will open both designers' and the public's eyes to the numbers of people still living in deplorable conditions and to the multitude of ways any of us can take action. May these stories inspire young designers, established professionals, educators, journalists and each of us to make a difference and help bring an end to poverty. For those who are not themselves designers, but who want to help, the catalogue lists the websites of many of the organizations and designers discussed.

*Essay by Cynthia E. Smith, Curator of Socially Responsible Design, Smithsonian Institution's Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum in New York, NY. © 2007 Smithsonian Institution. Essay previously published in conjunction with the first catalogue in the Design for the Other 90% exhibition series. For more information about the exhibition, visit <http://other90.cooperhewitt.org/>.*

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Marjetica Potrč, "Notes on Participatory Design 1", 2011, ink on paper, 21 x 29.7cm, courtesy the artist

Marjetica Potrč

## Participatory Design

In 2003, I worked on my first on-site project: the Dry Toilet in La Vega barrio, part of the informal city in Caracas, Venezuela. It was there that I discovered my method for working on community-focused on-site projects, a method characterized by participatory design and a concern for sustainability. While the local communities I work with see participatory design as a natural way of doing things, it remains a controversial practice for the art public and art institutions, which as a rule can take a long time to change.

In the present essay, I would like to discuss some of the issues at the heart of participatory design, which I think are important for today's world: collectivity, community-building, sharing, shared space, and ritual, among others. They are all variously interconnected, sometimes in a way that forces us to question how we live together. Shared knowledge, for instance, may first benefit a particular community before it benefits others, and may be located in a shared space but not in a public space. Is this a good thing or a bad thing? If we can expect to see more community-based spaces and less public space—and this is what the communities I work with seem to want—what will our cities look like in the near future? And a perhaps less important question: what is the role of artists and art in the world today? Should they be part of this process?

Personally, I find it uplifting that the practice of participatory design brings about a different culture of living in which the very concepts of culture and art are redefined.

### IN A TIME OF COLLABORATION, THE ARTIST IS A MEDIATOR AND THE ROLE OF ART IS TO MEDIATE.

Today when I give talks about my on-site projects, I describe myself as an artist-mediator and art as "a medium of expression where the individual and culture come together".<sup>1</sup> In other words, in my on-site projects art's role is to mediate. Speaking generally, art mediates our relationship with the world. In more specific terms, as for example in the on-site project *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor* (2009),<sup>2</sup> it can mediate the relationship between the residents of a neighbourhood and the city in which they live. In this project, a community garden became a relational object used by residents as a tool for changing their culture of living. By reaching out to the community

in a shared endeavour, the artist and art become engaged in social processes that aspire to transform society from below. Along the way, the artist loses the aura of individual authorship and art loses its 'objectness'.<sup>3</sup>

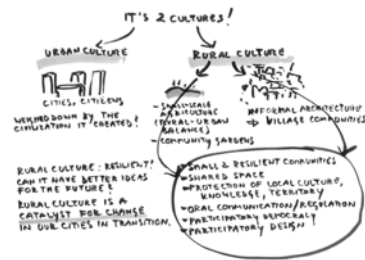
The notion of art as mediation is disturbing to some in the contemporary art public. They are uncomfortable with two things in particular. The first concerns the role of artists in today's society: should artists be social workers? Or, even worse, activists? The second is about the nature of art: can something as utilitarian as a community garden or a dry toilet really be 'art'? Is it not better to think of them as social projects, infrastructure or just gardening? But this is exactly the point. Contemporary society, in search of new knowledge—perhaps for the simple reason that today's complex challenges demand complex, outside-the-box solutions—needs the kind of collaborative approach that is nurtured in the sharing of knowledge across disciplines. Creative people have the ability to do this, whether they are artists, architects, social workers or horticulturalists. And, what is more, outside the art world, nobody really cares very much about the definition of contemporary art.

The controversy is more about the degree to which art and artists should be directly involved in society. While the art public has become accustomed to institutional critiques, community-based projects feel too up-close and messy. They lack the safe distance of the institutional critique. What is interesting, however, is that both strategies have the same goal—to bring about social change. My personal strategy has been to work on community-based collaborative projects that can have an impact on government policy. I like to work with governments, not against them. From *Dry Toilet* in 2003 to today, this has been an intuitive and simple decision. For me it makes sense to do something 'real', to work with others to create something that affects how people live their day-to-day lives.

### IN A TIME OF COLLABORATION, SHARING IS ESSENTIAL.

If there is an obsession at the heart of my on-site projects, it is the notion of sharing. Let's all exchange our ideas, knowledge and experiences; let's learn from each other so we can make something together. Let's share. This 'something' to which everyone contributes is the fruit of our common endeavour. By sharing the process of its becoming—an organic process—we who contribute to it become, through the project, an organism. This 'something' I call a 'relational object'. For those of us who are directly involved,





Marjetica Potrč, "Notes on Participatory Design 3", 2011, ink on paper, 21 x 29.7cm, courtesy the artist

it is a physical, bodily experience: we carry heavy bricks up the hill of a barrio or get our hands dirty planting vegetables in a community garden. We know that if you want to bring change to society, it is not enough just to talk. The relational object is what matters.

Why is it so important to do field research, to learn from the people who live in the location? When I begin working on a new on-site project, I try to absorb as much knowledge as possible. I try to be a container of knowledge, about the place, the landscape and the people who live there. I dwell in their culture. It takes time before I can become a mediator for envisioning and realizing a project that will be a catalyst of change for the local community. But this is nothing unusual. It is a natural process: it is people learning from each other. Today, the sharing of knowledge is necessary for many reasons, but perhaps the most important is that we are haunted by the lost promises of modernism and feel that the world needs to be reconstructed.

### IN A TIME OF COLLABORATION, COMMUNITY-BUILDING THRIVES.

Since I began working on my on-site projects, I have discovered efforts along similar lines all around the world, most of them outside the art discourse, such as Barefoot College in the Indian state of Rajasthan or the Universidade da Floresta in the Brazilian state of Acre. A crucial aspect of all these initiatives is the use of 'redirective practice': a collective action that demonstrates the process of cultural remaking. The sheer number of these bottom-up initiatives makes me ask whether, taken together, they are building a critical mass. Instead of viewing them as the ebb of a wave, temporary and fragile, in humanity's consideration of collectivity, I would suggest that today the idea of collective action is taking root—building a critical mass and proving its relevance. Could this become a global movement?

If that is true—and this is the beauty of the idea—then it is possible to transform society from below, in an organic way. Think of the world as an organism. When something does not work anymore, people develop new practices. New practices matter. It is easier to build a new object (such as a dry toilet in a Caracas barrio) than to change human behaviour (the way we use a toilet). It must be a strong impulse that triggers the desire to change one's behaviour—to do the more difficult thing. If people change their behaviour, change their culture of living, doesn't this tell us that these communities are intuitively working through a crisis and that this is what enables them to change in the first place?

### COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS ARE LABORATORIES FOR THE WORLD.

Crisis as a positive experience? I certainly believe this. In my work, I have received many invitations to do projects in places in distress—from the informal city in Caracas and the threatened forest communities of Acre to post-Katrina New Orleans and a modernist Amsterdam neighbourhood facing redevelopment. The interesting thing is that, for one reason or the other, the communities in all these places have been forced to live outside the illusion of stable modernity. For example, they have had to live outside the municipal water-supply grid in a Caracas barrio, or cope with rising waters in New Orleans, or survive in Amazonia without overexploiting the forest. For me, these are places of hope. I believe that these communities are pioneers in the way they envision new practices in a place of crisis. They have forged new knowledge, and others learn from them. Sharing knowledge, after all, is a basic and important aspect of the human condition: we tell each other what we have learned.

To persuade the world to see hope in places in crisis is a hard sell. It is easy to label the practices of these communities 'survival strategies', a negative interpretation applied by people who live in a place of stability, people for whom the problems and solutions of these communities are not an immediate concern. The ideas I find inspiring—such as community building, small-scale projects and bottom-up initiatives—are easily tainted by negative associations. What is more, speaking about communities based on participatory democracy or even consensus can raise fears about social segregation, no doubt because of our attitudes about wealthy 'gated communities', a phenomenon that is rooted in the neoliberal model, unlike these other communities.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, however, both models of shared living involve a certain degree of isolation from the rest of society. From my work on places in crisis, I have learned that, for communities based on participatory democracy, relative isolation can be beneficial. Once they reassert their difference, they have to protect their territory and their knowledge. They become a nucleus that can resist shocks from the outside world (this is not true of gated communities), but they also reach out to others—as is only natural. Only now, the connections they make with the outside world are on different terms, on a more equal basis than before. They are reconstructing the world. Moreover, their local solutions become a social laboratory for different ways of living together. This is exactly what we need. Today we must think differently, not the same. 'Survival strategies' do matter after all.

Another consideration: can we simply dismiss these communities as 'utopias'? Recently, in a discussion with a friend, I was reminded that, during the twentieth century,



Marjetica Potrč, "Notes on Participatory Design 4", 2011, ink on paper, 21 x 29.7cm, courtesy the artist

ideologies created an interest in the future and therefore in utopian societies. Now that these ideologies have fallen, it becomes natural to focus on the present day. Community-building is not a utopian project; it is a much-needed laboratory of human coexistence.

### THE IDEA OF THE COLLECTIVE: WHERE DOES IT COME FROM AND WHERE IS IT GOING?

My practice is hopelessly relational. Among other things, it merges art and architecture, anthropology and the social sciences. For me, this comes naturally. I understand human knowledge as an ongoing construction in which different disciplines feed the process. There is no final knowledge. No doubt, my upbringing has played a role in making my work the way it is. I was raised in a family of writers, and I know that storytelling—the construction of meaning through language—is an important part of what I do. The merging of disciplines by learning from people with different backgrounds is another way of constructing meaning through language, only now we do it together. Collaborations make sense to me not only because you achieve more by sharing knowledge as a team, but also because the society I was raised in helped shape this attitude. Having grown up in a socialist country—and Slovenia, in Yugoslavia, was the 'Westernmost' part of the Communist world, not only geographically but also politically—I understand subjectivity as something that includes social awareness: the individual always stands in a relationship with others, never alone. My sense of the importance of sharing almost certainly derives from this. Where I come from, art was always an idea, a concept; it was not about objects.

Although community-building used to be viewed as something negative, in which a collectivist ideology tried to impose a top-down organization on society, today the notion is gaining momentum as something positive. It is even acknowledged by politicians who want governments to devolve power. I find it amusing that the current right-of-centre British government talks about "a ground-breaking shift in power to councils and communities,"<sup>5</sup> a phrase one might sooner expect to hear from Hugo Chavez, the populist leftist president of Venezuela. But beyond making strange bedfellows, this enthusiasm for the local pushes us to redefine what 'social innovation' and 'sustainability' mean today. Both terms have been clouded by neoliberal discourse and hijacked by neoliberal practices in order to accommodate the middle class.

The focus on the local, the small and the independent comes into play most strongly when that which is missing—the lost promises of modernism, the hopeful equalizer—becomes important, such as with the decline of the social state and the decentralization of the state in the European Union. It is at this point that we seek to understand the potential of small-scale territories (the local) and social architecture (people). What does sustainable living mean after the disintegration of twentieth-century modernism? What do self-sustainability and living 'off the grid' mean? How much can the individual contribute to the world? The construction of the world from below, from the bottom up, must be viewed as a viable, important paradigm, one that makes an essential contribution to our knowledge. After all, this is what we already live with. The world needs community-based projects, so it can learn from them and be inspired by their creativity.

### LEARNING FROM CASE STUDIES: DRY TOILET (CARACAS, 2003) AND THE COOK, THE FARMER, HIS WIFE AND THEIR NEIGHBOR (AMSTERDAM, 2009)

When I was researching the issue of territorialization in the state of Acre in Brazil in 2006, I found small-scale territories that were cultivated and managed by local communities. Both beautiful and educational, Acre's extraction reserves (as these territories are called) unite sustainable communities with sustainable territories. As Marcos Vinicius Neves, a historian who is also a member of the Acre state government, has said, "If people can survive in the forest, then the forest will also survive."<sup>6</sup> This simple statement made a deep impression on me. Today, I ask myself if the same is true of cities. Can I say, "If people can survive in the cities, the cities will survive as well"? To make the transformation to a sustainable environment and sustainable communities, the Acre government put an end to the overexploitation of the forest and began to think and act locally, on a smaller scale, building and supporting local communities and small-scale economies.

But can a metropolis do something similar? Can it transform itself into a network of small, strong neighbourhoods? This is what was desired by the Amsterdam community that formed around the vegetable garden in *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor*, and it is what the communities of the Caracas barrios insisted on.

Here is a 'wish list' compiled by the residents of these two seemingly disparate places, both in a state of transition: the informal city of Caracas and a modernist neighbourhood in Amsterdam under redevelopment.



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"Dry Toilet", 2003, building materials and sanitation infrastructure, La Fila, La Vega barrio, Caracas, project by Liyat Esakov and Marjetica Potrč, supported by La Vega community, Caracas; Caracas Case Project and Federal Cultural Foundation of Germany; Ministry of Environment, Venezuela; photo by Andre Cypriano, courtesy of Liyat Esakov and Marjetica Potrč

### People and Their Culture of Living

- sustainable communities: strong, small-scale neighbourhoods
- the preservation of local culture
- the preservation of local knowledge
- the protection of territories and knowledge
- connectivity: the creation of new alliances
- a combination of urban and rural culture: a redefinition of the balance between the rural and the urban

There are two distinct ways of life, two cultures: urban and rural. Rural culture includes not only food cultivation; in the case of the Caracas informal city, it consists of small-scale, self-built neighbourhoods, which in turn form village-like communities. While the residents of the barrios are the same people who built the formal city of Caracas and so are familiar with urban culture, they insisted on constructing their neighbourhoods in their own way. Their culture is resilient. Rural culture was pushed to the side in the twentieth century's emphasis on urban culture and the city. Is it possible that today the rural condition is becoming a catalyst for change for societies in transition? The interest in, and success of, community gardens in both the European Union and North America would indicate this.

### Territorialization

- a new form of territorialization: sustainable territories organized according to regions and localities instead of the current political divisions
- small-scale neighbourhoods instead of the metropolis

### Collectivity

- based on the socially-aware individual
- shared space, i.e., community space instead of public space
- the building of community, the collective management of territory
- the sharing of knowledge: participatory democracy, the oral exchange of knowledge
- collaborations: shared authorship
- the relational object
- ritual

One of the most striking things I learned from *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor* was the importance of ritual for the community that cultivated the garden.

For them, community was an organism: they worked on the land together. Working together was an act of empowerment through which they were intuitively reclaiming their community, their neighbourhood and their city. They worked on the land not only to grow food for themselves, but also to 'ground' themselves, for they had been living in a state of constant migration: first, migrating from their native countries (for this is a neighbourhood of immigrants) and then being forced to move again by redevelopment. The community garden was a relational object, a catalyst for change for their community as well as for the city. It was the frank acknowledgment that today we live in cities in transition, where the culture of living is being redefined.

By focusing on small-scale territories and local knowledge, we reaffirm the local culture at a time when the world is experiencing a backlash against globalization. Contracted territories become a laboratory for asserting local knowledge, for exchanging knowledge with others and for making connections based on the values of a new culture of living. They are places where differences between communities are rediscovered and reassessed. Their existence and the practices that sustain them offer hope for the world.

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### A Case Study in Participatory Design: The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor<sup>7</sup>

The on-site project *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor* consists of a community garden and a community kitchen in the Nieuw West district of Amsterdam. It was initiated as a collaborative project by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, which lacked a permanent exhibition space in 2009 and so pursued activities in other locations throughout the city. Soon after the Stedelijk Museum invited me to do a project in Nieuw West, I discovered that Wilde Westen, a collective made up of a cultural producer, a sociologist, two architects, two designers and an artist, had already carried out research there the previous year, so we joined forces as the core group behind the project. Over the year in which *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor* developed, however, the neighbourhood residents themselves became the most important people involved, and after Harvest Festival, on 27 September 2009, they took over its management. They formed a committee of eight residents, responsible for the two spaces. During the six months that the project was taking shape, Wilde Westen and I had the role of mediators between the neighbourhood residents, the municipality and Amsterdam's Far West Housing Corporation. Today we serve on an advisory board that also includes representatives from the Stedelijk, Far West, Koers Nieuw West and the



Geuzenveld-Slotermeer district authorities; we meet as needed with the residents' committee to discuss the life of the project.

The interest this project has generated is not surprising. With its focus on local food production and neighbourhood development, it redefines the state of urban-rural co-existence and contributes to the city's network of green and garden areas, which serve a similar purpose. I am very proud that the community garden and community kitchen have generated new connections between neighbours and between the neighbourhood and the municipality. Right from the start, the project has attracted the involvement of many individuals, local initiatives and institutions. It offers a good example of participatory design and redirective practice—a collective form of action that demonstrates a process of cultural remaking. Community develops from working together in ways that transcend the limits of any one discipline.

The community garden and community kitchen are located on Lodewijk van Deyssel Street in the Geuzenveld district, which is part of the post-war modernist development of West Amsterdam. Today, however, it faces widespread unemployment and difficulties in integrating new arrivals. At the same time, Nieuw West is one of the largest residential redevelopment areas in the European Union. What happens here has the potential to inform the redevelopment of modernist neighbourhoods elsewhere.

As a local case study in Nieuw West, our project articulates practices designed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. The existing policy for redesigning the modernist district foresees an increase in the density of built areas at the expense of open public space; it would also mean the relocation of low-income families. Our project, in contrast, views the current low-income population, which consists mostly of immigrant families, as an 'added value' in a sustainable neighbourhood. It rejects the twentieth-century modernist ideal of the metropolis and opts instead for a city composed of strong, smaller-sized neighbourhoods; in other words, it shrinks the city into smaller parts. Here the green area is preserved and its potential is activated as agricultural land, which in fact revives the memory of an area that was farmland as recently as 50 years ago. Public space is transformed from an open, undefined space into a community space. The project shows us that it is not only desirable for residents to participate in designing 'their' city, it is also possible. The project introduces a bottom-up process in an overregulated Dutch society where residents have become passive and frustrated, while the housing corporations, which have been given carte blanche in the redevelopment of the district, simply reproduce unimaginative formal designs.

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"The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbour", 2009, building materials, energy infrastructure, vegetable garden, Stedelijk Goes West, Nieuw West, Amsterdam, project by Marjetica Potrč and Wilde Westen (Lucia Babina, Reinder Bakker, Hester van Dijk, Sylvain Hartenberg, Merijn Oudenampsen, Eva Pfannes, Henriette Waal); supported by the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Far West, Amsterdam; The Netherlands Architectural Fund, Rotterdam; photo by Henriette Waal and Lucia Babina, courtesy of Marjetica Potrč and Wilde Westen

A previously unused house at Lodewijk van Deyssel Street 61 is now a community kitchen and a meeting place for the community that has formed around the project. It provides a centre around which the community can engage in the process of 'building a place'—a much-needed ritual in a climate where families experience continual resettlement. Beyond the core group of residents, the community kitchen attracts other residents, too, who take part in the activities there. With its open-door policy, which has now been in effect for more than a year, the community kitchen has also brought security to the street, another added value for the neighbourhood.

The community vegetable garden is located behind the kitchen on land that used to be fenced off. Today, 22 families from seven ethnic groups take care of the garden. Opening up the fenced-off lot can be understood as a form of land reappropriation by the residents and as a symbolic act that articulates their need to be involved in redesigning their neighbourhood.

As I noted, Nieuw West Amsterdam was agricultural land only half a century ago. In 1934, the architect Cornelis van Eesteren drafted a master plan for the area. Construction began soon after World War II, and a garden city, a Dutch version of modernism, was laid across the fields. As with many modernist developments, there was money for the buildings, but not for developing the public space, which van Eesteren understood as playing an important role in social integration. So the public space remained largely open and undefined. This turned out to be a happy accident, since in the 1970s open space represented the open democratic society. During the 1980s, however, this space turned into a no-man's land, while in the 1990s many of the lots were fenced off and became 'look-only gardens' (*kijkgroen*). Residents paid for their maintenance but could not enter them. In 2004, facing bankruptcy, the city handed the space over to housing corporations, an act that sealed the fate of public space in the district. Today, the link between residents and the government is broken, while the housing corporations see no reason to maintain the open public space, which holds next to no value for them; in their view, it is only a source of continual maintenance costs and potentially dangerous. By engaging the residents of the neighbourhood, the project *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor* overturns this perspective. The public space is personalized as community space, maintenance costs are reduced and the area becomes more liveable and more stable. Both residents and the city gain. The space is not only reclaimed, it is also redefined. But beyond issues of space and place, the project visualizes the potential of social architecture. Simply put, the community garden and community kitchen serve as catalysts of change for the community that takes shape around them, and Lodewijk van Deyssel Street as a whole is transformed.

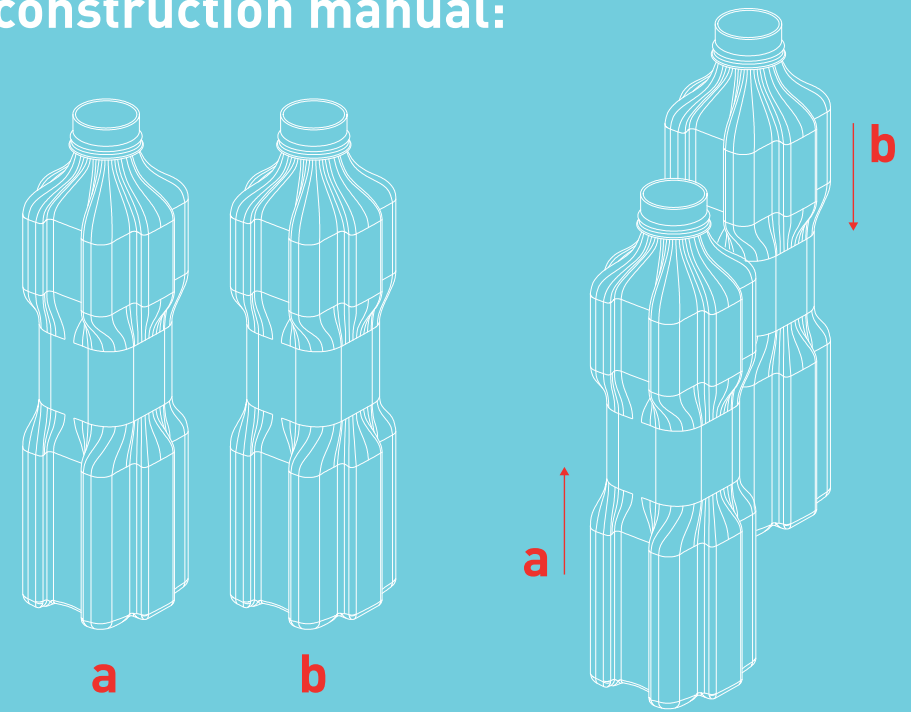


I recently heard [in the spring of 2010] from Lucia Babina and Henriette Waal, members of Wilde Westen, that the project has secured funding for at least another year. Residents have built a greenhouse in the community garden in anticipation of the new growing season, and several communities from the neighbourhood and beyond are planning to follow the example set by the project.

- 
1. Potrč, Marjetica, "Is This Art? The Relational Object in a Shared Space", *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbour/De Kok, de Kweker, zijn Vrouw en hun Buurman*, Marjetica Potrč and Wilde Westen (Lucia Babina, Reinder Bakker, Hester van Dijk, Sylvain Hartenberg, Merijn Oudenampsen, Eva Pfannes and Henriette Waal), Amsterdam/Rotterdam: Wilde Westen, 2011, pp. 32-33.
  2. Described in more detail below.
  3. Potrč, "Is This Art?"
  4. See Marjetica Potrč, "Survival Strategies and Community Building in Post-Capitalism", *Volume* (Amsterdam), "After Zero", no. 18, 2008, pp. 100-111.
  5. Eric Pickles, the British Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, quoted in "Careful What You Wish For", *The Economist*, 16 December 2010.
  6. Quoted in Potrč, "Survival Strategies and Community Building in Post-Capitalism".
  7. The following discussion of *The Cook, the Farmer, His Wife and Their Neighbor* was originally published in Angela Heide and Elke Krasny eds, *Aufbruch in die Nähe: Wien Lerchenfelder Strasse/Other Places: Vienna Lerchenfelder Street*, Vienna: Verlag Turia + Kant, 2010, pp. 170-179.

© United\_Bottle Group, Dirk Hebel, Jörg Stollmann

## construction manual:



The continued spread of the glass and steel high-rise as a means of broadcasting global economic success is often at odds with the locations to which it is imported. One particularly baffling example is that of Dubai, in which the skyscrapers of 'Fridge Alley' along Sheikh-Zayed Road stubbornly refuse to acknowledge that their climatic conditions are brutally at odds with their designs. The sheer glass facades receive an enormous amount of solar heat gain, which requires the use of resource intensive air-conditioning systems.

**UNITED\_BOTTLE: CHRYSALIS** proposes to retrofit Dubai's skyscrapers with a modular system of brise-soleil panels made of a matrix of bottles. These would be mounted to the existing exteriors using simple fastening devices and would form a 'buffer' around the building that would reduce exposure to the sun and lower the overall conditioning needs of the buildings. The system would operate on four levels:

#### ADDITIVE

The panel can be built up in different levels to accommodate the local needs of the building.

#### ADAPTIVE

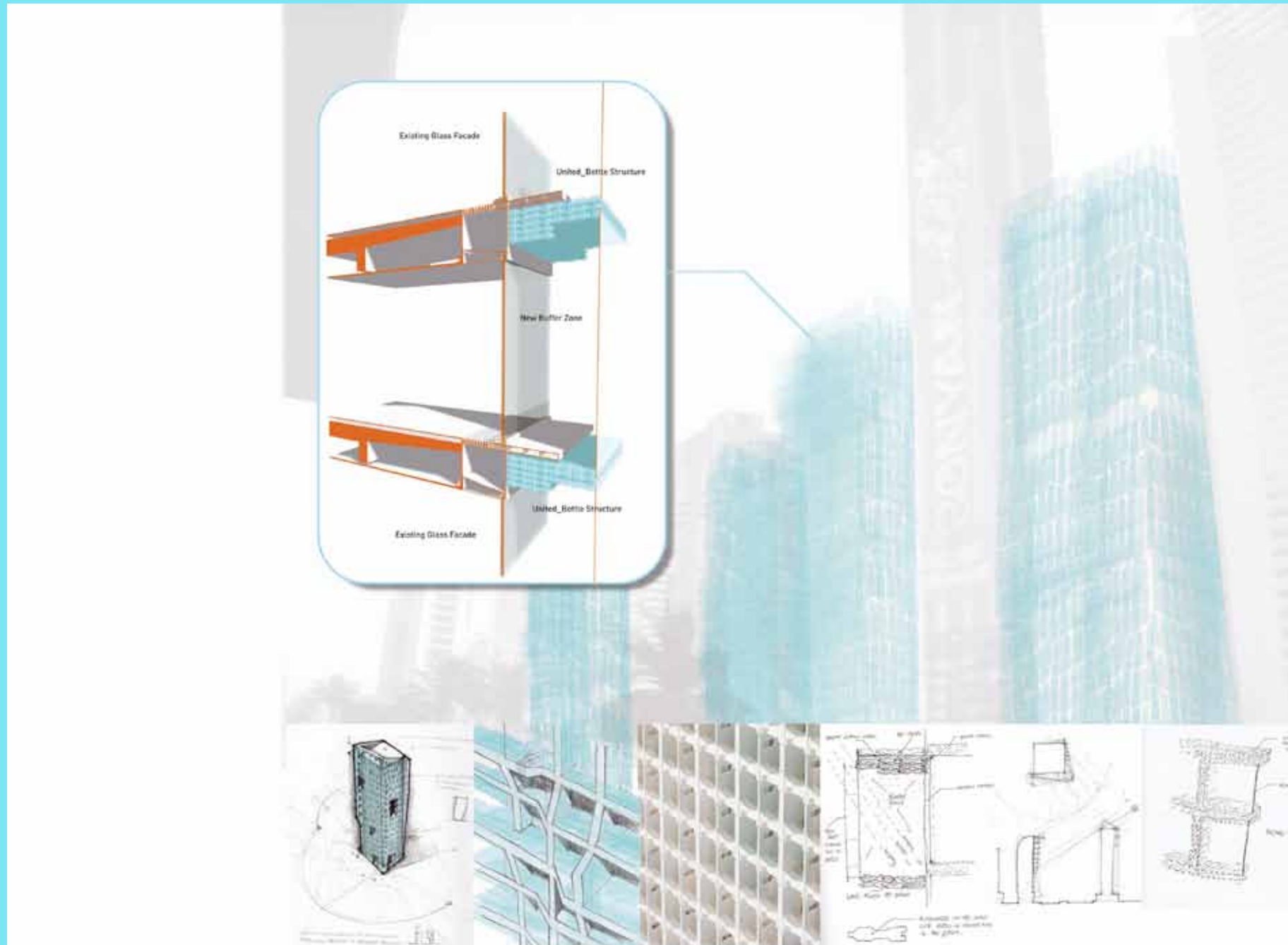
The system would be flexible, allowing further accumulation and adjustment.

#### COMMUNICATIVE

Through the use of high-efficiency LEDs inside the bottles, the skin itself could become a generator of different urban ambiances.

#### TRANSFORMATIVE

The system would transform the skyline of Dubai into a series of mirage-like shells, glowing as the sun filters through them and as they protect the buildings within.

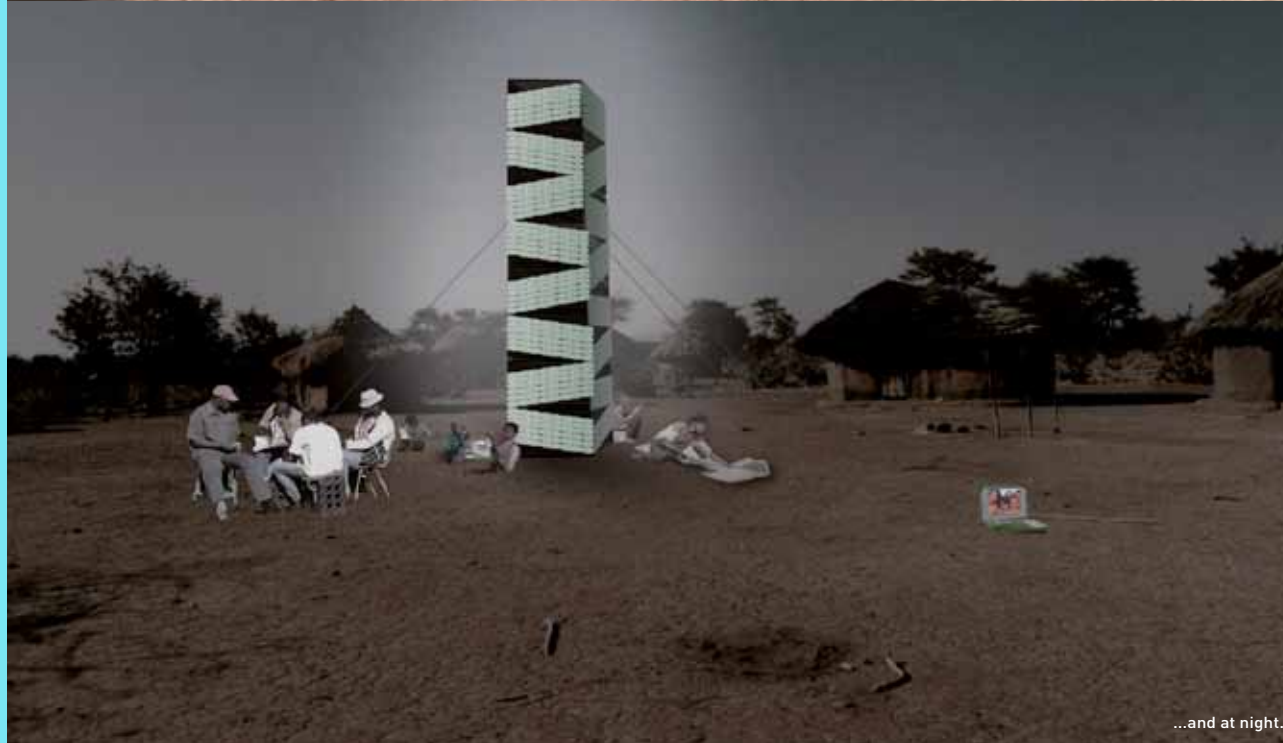


# UNITED\_BOTTLE PARTICIPATE!

AlgaePET is a bioreactor. It is built of interconnected United\_Bottles containing algae that produce energy (or hydrogen) through photosynthesis. As a side effect the algae also produce a phosphorous glowing light which is used to intensify the experience of the public space in which the reactor is placed. The AlgaePET is built from affordable and locally available materials and can be adapted to individual needs. It can, for example, be built as a look-out tower, a walkable public structure or any imaginable form of spatial intervention. The AlgaePET can work as a platform for the laptop.org project, providing the infrastructure needed (energy / antenna) for the educational programs.

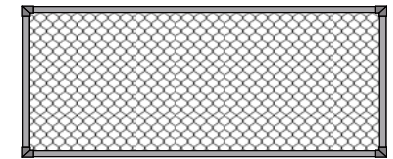
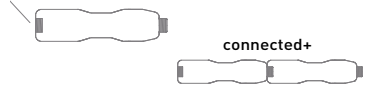


The algae bioreactor during day...

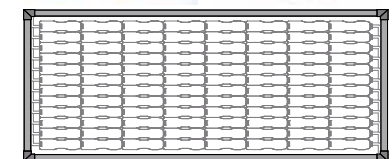


...and at night.

A second perforatable hinge allows connection of several bottles to create a tubing system.



The primary structure can be built of regular scaffolding steel tubes, which are then braced with chain-link fencing.



The algae bottle tubes are mounted to the primary structure using cable straps and units are interconnected with flexible tubes.



NILS HAVELKA



# UNITED\_BOTTLE PARTICIPATE!

GRAFT - Matthew Johnson's project builds on the fact that 14 per cent of Manhattan is constructed on landfill. By 2016, 8.2 million New Yorkers, drinking as little as an average of 69 United\_Bottles of water per year, could unite Manhattan and Brooklyn with a floating landscape consisting of five billion re-purposed United\_Bottles. A play-scape hosting cultural projects contributed to by various real estate deprived institutions from both boroughs, temporarily embedded in a neutral drifting territory.



MATTHEW JOHNSON



Dirk Hebel and Jörg Stollmann

## See Garbage, Think Resource!

As early as 1975, Martin Pawley was discussing secondary use strategies for consumer goods in *Garbage Housing*.<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid waste and unnecessary material consumption, he postulated that future re-uses should already be inscribed in the formal logic of the original product design. *Garbage Housing* prominently featured John Habraken's "World Bottle" (WoBo) project for the beer brewer Alfred Heineken, in which the glass bottle was shaped to double as a brick. Especially those regions lacking industrial recycling and suffering from a shortage in construction supplies would have profited from this secondary use design. The Heineken marketing department stopped the project as it considered the bottles' shape too unconventional and feared a cutback in sales. Only prototypes and minor test structures were realized.

In 2007, we designed United\_Bottle according to the principle of secondary use: a PET/PP bottle<sup>2</sup> that can double as a brick and building material. Dovetailed and interlocked, the bottles are efficient to transport and need little by way of additional joints or construction material. The bottle was developed for natural disaster scenarios, in which water cleaning facilities and water containers are imported by relief organizations. After the drinking water is distributed, the bottles can be filled with sand and onsite material in order to repair damaged structures. Our question remains whether United\_Bottle should be produced and distributed by relief organizations or by big, commercial enterprises. The latter would ensure bottles sold on the market would be available in large numbers.

In 2008, we were fellows at the Van Alen Institute in New York and thought we should learn the lesson from the WoBo project. We wanted to convince the beverage producers' marketing departments of secondary use strategies, both for crisis scenarios and for fun uses in everyday situations. While the primary use is defined by the production, distribution and marketing logistics of the industry, the parameters that allow for secondary use and appropriation often follow a different logic. Thus, full-scale testing and the involvement of and cooperation with prospective users are crucial factors in design development. We called colleagues and friends to contribute their vision for a future implementation: "United\_Bottle Participate!"

CHRYSLIS - Jesse LeCavalier proposes a second skin for Dubai's glass high-rises in order to reduce their thermal load. The modular system of brise-soleil panels is constructed out of a matrix of bottles. These would be mounted to the existing exteriors with simple fastening devices and form a 'buffer' zone specific to the buildings' solar orientation and surroundings, reducing exposure to the sun and lowering overall energy consumption.

AlgaePET - is a bioreactor designed by Nils Havelka. It is built of interconnected United\_Bottles containing algae that produce energy (or hydrogen) through photosynthesis. As a side effect the algae also produce phosphorous, which emits a glowing light that can be used to intensify the experience of the public space in which the reactor is placed. The AlgaePET is built from affordable and locally available materials and can be adapted to individual needs.

GRAFT - Matthew Johnson's project builds on the fact that 14 per cent of Manhattan is constructed on landfill. By 2016, 8.2 million New Yorkers, drinking as little as an average of 69 United\_Bottles of water per year, could unite Manhattan and Brooklyn with a floating landscape consisting of five billion re-purposed United\_Bottles. A play-scape hosting cultural projects contributed to by various real estate deprived institutions from both boroughs, temporarily embedded in a neutral drifting territory.

Starting out as an open-source project, today United\_Bottle is a registered brand in order to attract beverage producers to carry on product development and continue our work. We have been able to produce three United\_Bottle prototypes in small editions. While the arts and design disciplines have embraced the project avidly and it has been widely exhibited and publicized, reactions from industry have been reserved. There is suspicion that the project might require too much inconvenient cooperation with welfare and relief institutions and that it could be copied too easily in the regions where its secondary use is primarily needed.

Still, the project has been very influential in directing our work: the founding of a design platform<sup>3</sup> that features resource-efficient and just urban and architecture projects, as well as scientific research projects in alternative material and construction technologies.<sup>4</sup> Until recently, waste was simply another word for unwanted or useless material, the final product of a linear utilization process. Today we recognize the endless stocks of material and resources of our cities waiting to be re-used. Future material cycles will have to include what, for the most part, we have considered waste in the past.

Waste and locally available materials that have not yet been used in the construction sector will, in future, become our major source. Their use, re-use and potential for replacing other materials are key factors for creating identity, resource efficiency and new added values for our urban environments. These waste resources must be analyzed and quantified in similar terms and standards as natural resources. On the basis of this knowledge, alternative design strategies will have an impact. We have already started to recognize the afterlife of many of our products. Incorporated further life cycles and secondary uses have already become a reality. Maybe United\_Bottle was too late, too early or, who knows, just at the right time—as a critical project towards an alternative attitude to design and the way we live.

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1. Pawley, Martin, *Garbage Housing*, London: Architectural Press, 1975.
  2. United\_Bottle can be produced from PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) and PP (Polypropylene), depending on the material characteristics that are needed.
  3. See the website at [www.urbaninform.net](http://www.urbaninform.net).
  4. See the website at [www.hebel.arch.ethz.ch](http://www.hebel.arch.ethz.ch).

All images © Lisa Kirk.

fig. 1

Lisa Kirk's REVOLUTION!

Commercially available fragrance; courtesy of the artist

fig. 2

Lisa Kirk, still from REVOLUTION! commercial, 2009

Single-channel video, 1:38 minutes; courtesy of the artist and  
INVISIBLE-EXPORTS

fig. 3

Lisa Kirk and Jelena Behrend, REVOLUTION! pipebombs, 2008

Bronze, sterling silver, gold, glass vial, fragrance; courtesy of the  
artist, INVISIBLE-EXPORTS and Participant, Inc.

fig. 4

Revolution Pipe Bomb Blue Print (exploded view), 2009, blue print,  
dimensions variable.

fig. 5 + fig. 6

Revolution!, 2010

Storefront installation by Lisa Kirk in the windows of 1133

Broadway, 2010; courtesy of the artist, INVISIBLE-EXPORTS and  
SmartSpaces

fig. 7

Lisa Kirk, "Still No. 3" from Backyard Adversaries, 2010

Archival inkjet print, 8 x 12 inches on 11.75 x 15.75 inch paper,  
edition: 3+2APs (AP1), courtesy of the artist and INVISIBLE-  
EXPORTS

fig. 8

Lisa Kirk, Time Suspended, 2007

Mixed media installation of terrorist perfume cell at P.S.1 Contem-  
porary Art Center, New York; courtesy of the artist and P.S.1



fig. 1





fig. 2



fig. 3



fig. 5

fig. 4

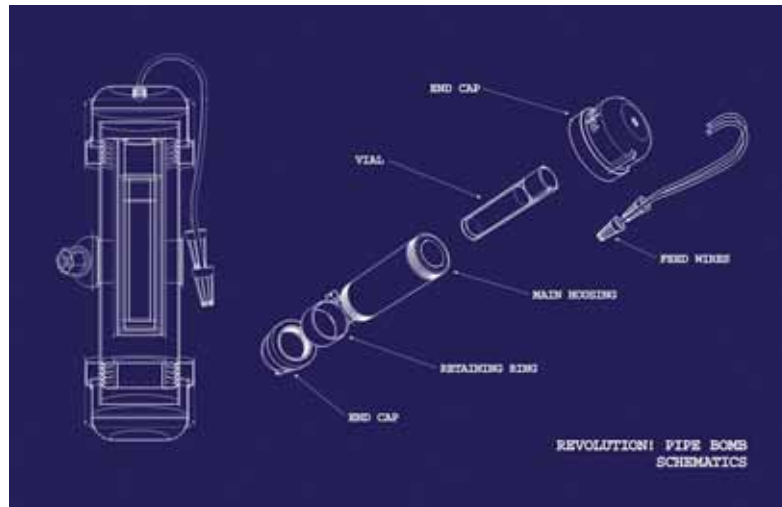


fig. 6





fig. 7

fig. 8



*Lia Gangitano*

## Lisa Kirk: Revolution Fragrance

Lisa Kirk's project as artist, activist and curator, has consistently and immodestly questioned the 'art world' about some of its more retrograde proclivities. From her mother's Chelsea loft to bookstore bathrooms, Kirk has staged projects that challenge white box aesthetics and institutional elitism with democratic verve. Relying heavily on the theatricality of street and media activism, early paintings and drawings depict the gloved, gesturing hands of puppeteers and ringleaders, insinuating calls to action or mischief—as if directing her own associative tactics. Merging activist tendencies with a studio practice that was formerly academic and noticeably maternally obsessed (Kirk made countless charcoal drawings of her mother), her inclinations are unabashedly benevolent. A working artist since 1987, her work has evolved as a series of social occasions from which a variety of drawings, props, costumes and miscellaneous ephemera are generated. Influenced by Bourriaud's 'relational aesthetics', Kirk's hosting or scripting of events in which nuanced social behaviour can be observed has dovetailed with her curatorial enterprise, an endeavour likewise spawned by her interest in others. Various projects involving surveillance technology have served to dramatize her eagerness to shift focus or project the significance implied by certain social rituals or events.

If Kirk's project divulges the problematics of self/other reciprocity as a kind of illusion, perhaps she just feels others are more discernible than selves. In an effort to reach a "heightened sense of awareness", Kirk grounds her enquiry in the work of others through a curatorial gesture that instigates a levelling of categories—asking viewers to look beyond groupings of gender, career status, generation, etc. Her assemblies of artists, friends and colleagues in projects that deflect expected positions—of the artist, the curator and the art itself—have characteristically served to destabilize authorship to foreground other possibilities.

Two decades into a career devoted to the staging of politically charged site-specific projects, Kirk addresses that political imperative itself, presenting her own bold, assertive work in deconstructed form and examining her own project of political spectacle alongside the many other learned impulses she so rigorously anatomizes.

Kirk employs her signature approach to her audience and installations by turning rooms on their heads, inverting spaces by transforming them into a theatre of artifice. The results are exhibitions that challenge the spectacle of the gallery by perfectly subverting it, transforming the space instead into a fantastical staging ground for an uncanny performance of media narrative as childlike theatre.

Throughout her career, Lisa Kirk's practice has dealt with the contemporary American cultural infrastructure, the political history it must contend with and an investigation into our deep and undeniable need to engage with these social phenomena. The work seeks to expose contemporary human nature as that of consumers and combatants of objects and ideas. She has culled a vocabulary of references from war, popular entertainment, middle-class America and the sentiment of nostalgia for revolt.



Thorsten Schmitz

## A New Fragrance: The Stink of Revolution

Boadicea was a courageous woman. In 60 AD the British queen led a revolt against the Romans. More than 50,000 warriors plundered and torched Roman settlements. The smell must have been awful. Boadicea instigated the revolt because the Romans refused to accept a woman as leader of the Celtic Iceni tribe.

Boadicea was a revolutionary, if you will.

Almost 2,000 years later, a silver bottle bearing the name of the warrior queen stands in the perfumery of the department store Quartier 206. If you open the 100-millilitre bottle it smells of agarwood and jasmine. The scent is called “Intricate”, which can also mean tricky. In this case it is the price that is tricky.

The little bottle costs €520.

A few steps away from the extortionately priced Boadicea, a two-minute film is being shown. It is the advertising video for a new perfume called “Revolution”. The film does not show a battle scene but an attack in New York. Whoever wants to smell like revolution must come to Berlin. Quartier 206 in the Friedrichstrasse is the only place in Germany where the scent can be bought.

Is this the right word: ‘scent’?

### A BOTTLE IN THE FORM OF A PIPE BOMB

The video shows a (pretty) woman and a (handsome) man, two snipers on the run. They are wearing black skinny jeans, black designer boots and tight black leather jackets. Have they just left a shooting with Karl Lagerfeld? Have they just fled the Grill Royal in Berlin-Mitte without paying their bill? OK, it is two activists on the run. They have just attempted to kill someone (revolution!). As they pause for breath and pull the masks from their faces their comrades hand them a pipe bomb. A suicide bomber! But no, the pipe bomb is in fact a perfume bottle that only has the form of a pipe bomb, including fuse. “A fragrance for men & women” flashes up just before the clip ends.

Fragrance also means ‘odour’. A flexible term, as the scent of revolution stinks to the heavens. The 12-millilitre bottle costs €55. It is selling like hot cakes, especially amongst men. The shop assistant says she likes the smell. It has something “animalistic” about it. And it is “really very sexy”. Who is the scent for? “Obviously not for you, you have to like the smell yourself.”

### “LET IT SETTLE FOR A WHILE”

The perfume in a pipe bomb is the brainchild of the New York conceptual artist Lisa Kirk. In a New York plagued with the fear of terrorism, Kirk’s irony has already been misunderstood. In May, a building in Manhattan had to be evacuated because pedestrians mistook the bottles in the window of a gallery for the real thing and called the anti-terror squad. Lisa Kirk says she was irritated by the Bush years from 2001 to 2009, so all she could think of was rebellion, protest and revolution. Bush had whipped up the fear of terrorism, while simultaneously restricting freedom of opinion; revolutions (that is, demonstrations, anti-Bush T-shirts) were impossible. “So I decided to create a perfume. If it is not possible to instigate a revolution, then at least one should be able to smell it.”

What does revolution smell like? Kirk posed this question to former revolutionaries, anti-globalization activists and squatters. The research concluded: it smells of blood, rotting corpses, burning tyres, tear gas, urine, ash and above all sweat.

The perfume, which anti-globalization activists are unlikely to afford, can be bought in its original bottles in New York. The platinum model costs €36,000, the gold bottle €21,000 and the silver version €2,700. No one has purchased a platinum bomb as yet, although the silver version has found a number of buyers. In principle, one can also order the original in Quartier 206. However, Lisa Kirk laughs and says, “We still haven’t found out how to send the pipe bomb bottles without being arrested”. The 12-millilitre bottle is the camouflaged version of the actual pipe bomb; so you know what you are dabbing yourself with, the label includes a sketch of a pipe bomb.

### IT SMELLS LIKE A SKUNK

I hesitantly pick up the bottle, open the lid, take a deep breath and then breathe out again. And then in again, my nose at the neck of the bottle.

It has a pungent metallic bite and I imagine myself surrounded by burning tyres, while all around sled dogs are pulling a Father Christmas and nodding with their heads. A marketing assistant from the department store suggests spraying "Revolution" onto the skin. I don't want to appear a coward and spray. And grimace. Do skunks smell like this when they feel under attack? The employee says, "Don't take any notice of it, simply let it settle".

Back in the office a colleague remarks, "You are not telling me that is meant to be perfume?" Five minutes later she opens all the windows.

And Lisa Kirk? Does she wear "Revolution"?

"To be honest, no. Although I did spray it on once when I was summoned as a juror in a court case. After an hour I smelt so strongly of urine I was worried they might think I'd wet my pants."

© Thorsten Schmitz, "Der Gestank der Revolution", Süddeutsche Zeitung, 1 January 2010, translated from the German by Colin Shepherd.

© Christina Hemauer, Roman Keller

fig. 1

"White House Will Not Replace Solar Water-Heating System",  
*New York Times*, Sunday 24 August 1986, p. L24 [Courtesy of  
 Jimmy Carter Library & Museum]

fig. 2

"Solar model of West Wing", 7 October 1978 [Courtesy of Jimmy  
 Carter Library & Museum].

fig. 3

Dedication of the White House Solar Heater, 20 June 1979, Bill  
 Fitz-Patrick, one of the official White House photographers  
 [Courtesy of Jimmy Carter Library & Museum].

fig. 4 + fig. 5

Picture from the article "Solar Energy Panels Installed on the  
 White House during Jimmy Carter's Term Gather Dust in a Wash-  
 ington Warehouse. Reagan Ordered Them Removed and Bush has  
 no Plans to Use Them". *Utne Reader*, March-April 1991.

fig. 6

White House solar panels as they were found by the artists at  
 Unity College in October 2006.

## White House Will Not Replace Solar Water-Heating System

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23 (AP) — The Reagan Administration says it will not replace a solar water-heating system that was installed in the White House in the Carter Administration.

The panels of the system had been dismantled to fix the roof underneath. Dale A. Petroskey, a White House spokesman, said Friday, "Putting them back up would be very unwise, based on cost."

Joseph M. Slye, a spokesman for the General Services Administration, said a decision on replacement would be made after the roof repairs were done.

7-1986

fig. 1

You may not remember this, but in 1979 President Jimmy Carter installed solar panels on the roof of the White House West Wing.

The panels, which were used to heat water for the staff eating area, were a symbol of a new solar strategy that Carter had said was going to "move our Nation toward true energy security and abundant, readily available, energy supplies".

But in 1986 President Ronald Reagan removed the solar panels while the White House roof was being repaired. They were never reinstalled.

In 1991 the panels were retrieved from government storage and brought to the environmentally minded Unity College about an hour southeast of Bangor, Maine. There, with help of Academy Award winning actress Glenn Close, some of the panels were refurbished and used to heat water in the cafeteria up until 2005. They are still there, although they no longer function.

We followed the route the panels took, using them as a backdrop to explore American oil dependency and the lack of political will to pursue alternative energy sources.

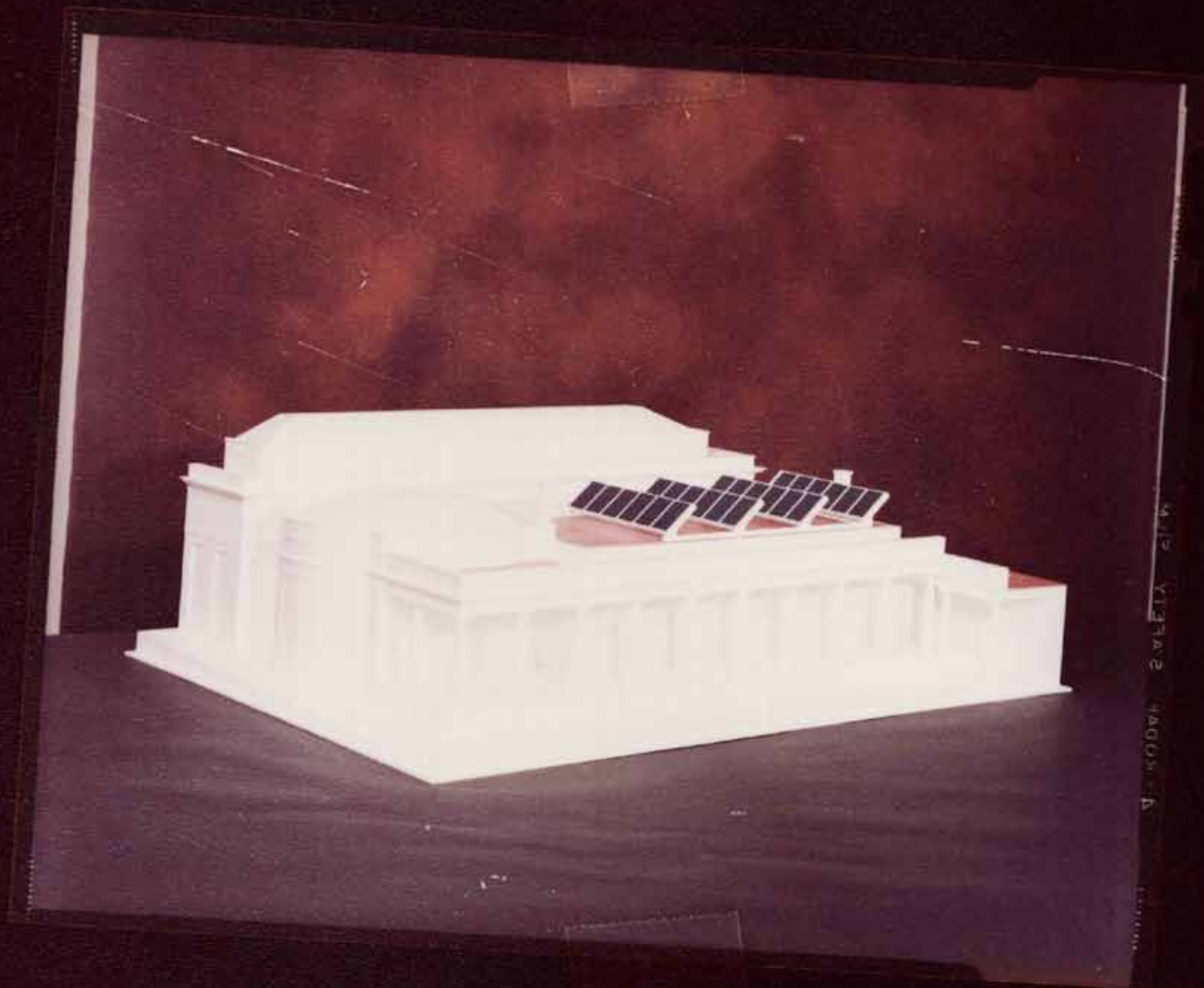
In the movie *A Road Not Taken*, we took two solar panels from Unity, placed them in the back of two students' 1990 Dodge Ram pick-up truck (which had been retrofitted to run on vegetable oil) and delivered one of them to the Jimmy Carter Library & Museum in Atlanta and the other to the National Museum of American History in Washington.

In 1979 Carter warned, "a generation from now, this solar heater can either be a curiosity, a museum piece, an example of a road not taken, or it can be just a small part of one of the greatest and most exciting adventures ever undertaken by the American people—harnessing the power of the sun to enrich our lives as we move away from our crippling dependence on foreign oil".

It turns out Carter's warning was at least partially correct: two of his solar panels are museum pieces now.

Christina Hemauer, Roman Keller, 2 October 2012

*post scriptum* On 5 October 2010 Energy Secretary Steven Chu announced that a new photovoltaic and thermal solar system would be installed on the White House in spring 2011. Two years later, there is still nothing new on the White House.



Solar model of West Wing



fig. 3

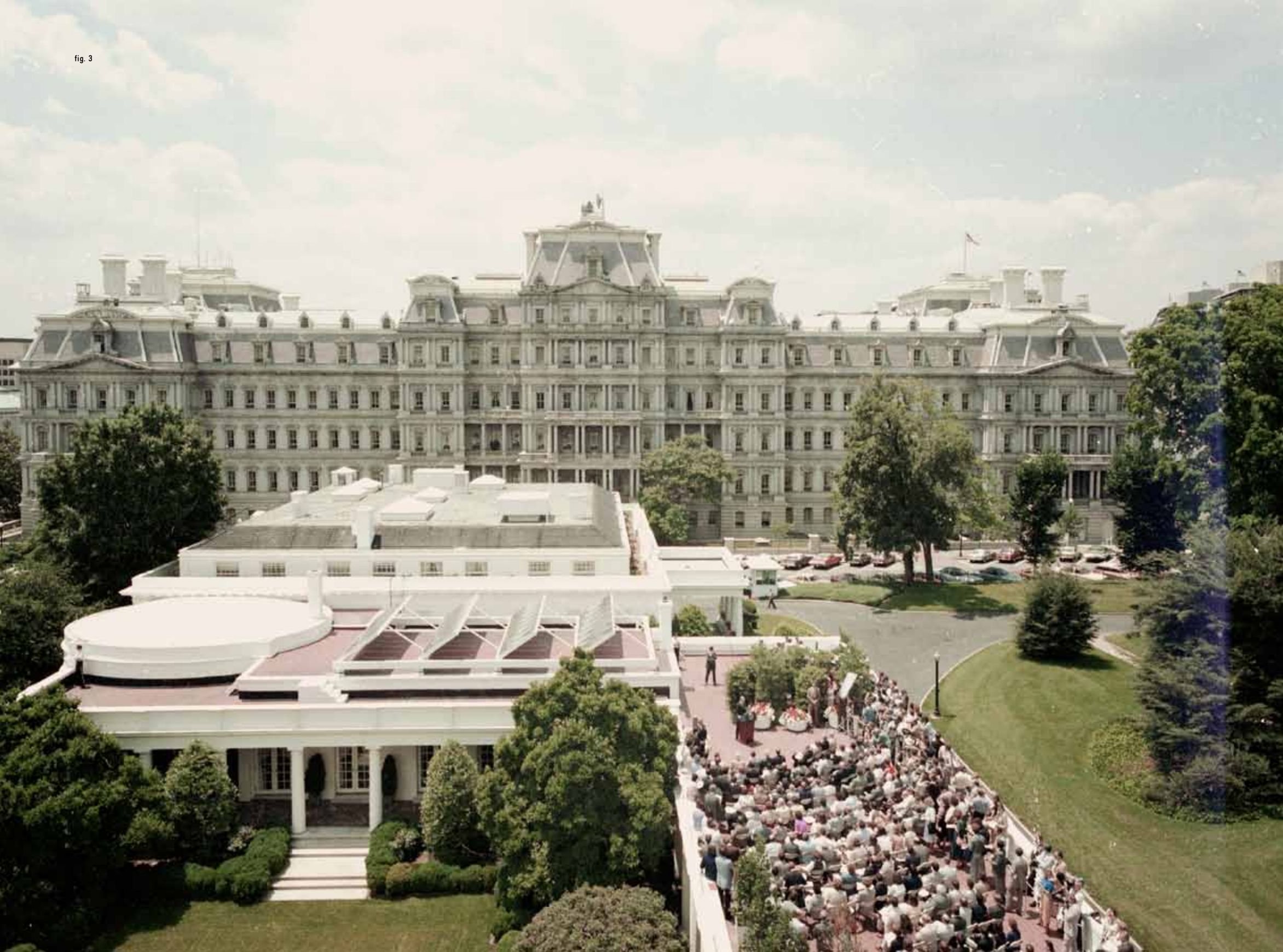




fig. 4

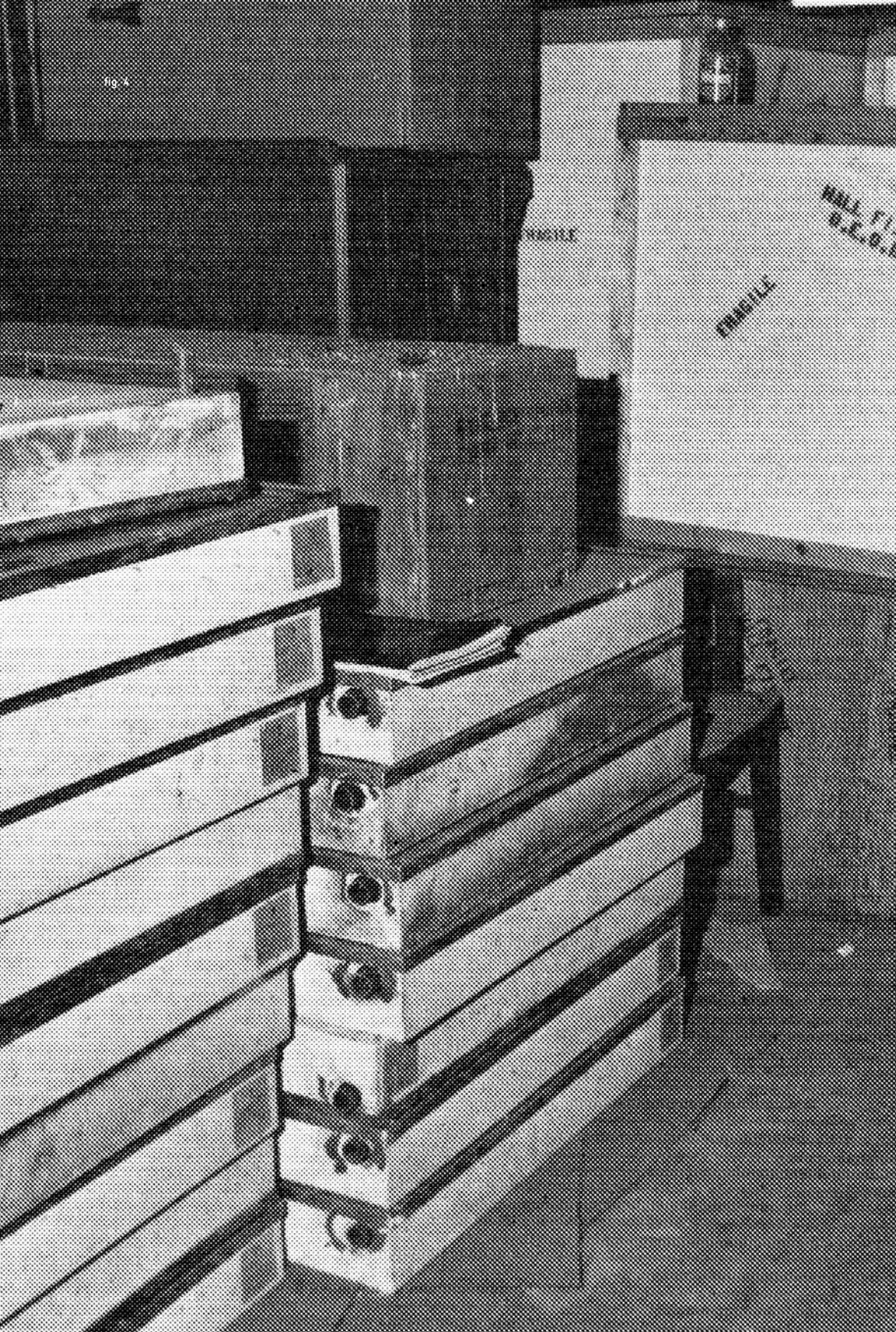


fig. 5





fig. 6



Markus Miessen

## Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality

*“The disappearance of class identities and the end of the bipolar system of confrontation have rendered conventional politics obsolete. Consensus finally reigns with respect to the basic institutions of society, and the lack of any legitimate alternative means that this consensus will not be challenged.”<sup>1</sup>*

(Chantal Mouffe)

*“In contrast to cooperation, collaboration is driven by complex realities rather than romantic notions of a common ground or commonality. It is an ambivalent process constituted by a set of paradoxical relationships between co-producers who affect each other.”<sup>2</sup>*

(Florian Schneider)

*“There is always a confused soul that thinks that one man can make a difference. And you have to kill him to convince him otherwise. That's the hassle with democracy.”<sup>3</sup>*

(Senator Charles F. Meachum)

*“I relate my approach to homeopathy, which puts poison in the system in order to generate energy to defeat the weakness.”<sup>4</sup>*

(Gustav Metzger)

Any form of participation is already a form of conflict. In order to participate in a given environment or situation, one needs to understand the forces of conflict that act upon that environment. Just as in physics, a field of forces is defined by the individual spatial vectors that together participate in its becoming; if one wants to participate in any given political force field, it is crucial to identify the conflicting forces at play.

Participation is often understood as a means of becoming part of something through proactive contribution and the occupation of a particular role. However, this role is rarely understood as a critical platform of engagement, but rather is typically based on romantic conceptions of harmony and solidarity. In this context, it seems urgent and necessary to promote an understanding of ‘conflictual participation’, one that acts as an uninvited irritant, a forced entry into fields of knowledge that could arguably benefit from spatial thinking.

In the politics of participation, it is crucial to differentiate between cooperation and collaboration, as pointed out by Florian Schneider.<sup>5</sup> Political theorist Chantal Mouffe distinguishes between two scenarios in which the dimension of antagonism can be expressed in society: antagonism proper—the classic friend-enemy relation—and the concept of ‘agonism’ as an alternative way in which oppositional positions can be played out. In the latter, we are faced not with the friend-enemy relation, but with a relation of what Mouffe calls “adversaries”. This reading is based on the notion that adversaries are “friendly enemies”: they have something in common and they share a symbolic space. What is important in this concept is the potential to undo the innocence of participation, to point out the realities of responsibility and expose the “violence of participation”. In this context, it is useful to think through a concept of ‘conflictual participation’ as a productive form of interventional practice.

Conflict refers to a condition of antagonism or state of opposition between two or more groups of people. It can also be described as a clash of interests, aims or targets. When we look at conflict as opposed to innocent forms of participation, conflict is not to be understood as a form of protest or contrary provocation, but rather as a micro-political practice through which the participant becomes an active agent insisting on being an actor in the force field they are facing. Thus, participation becomes a form of critical engagement.

When participation becomes conflict, conflict becomes space. Reinserting friction and differences into both the scale of the institution and the city bears the potential of micro-political forces that render conflict as practice. In this context, participation becomes a form of non-physical, productive violence. Micro-political action can be as effective as traditional state political action. Such micro-political fragmentation strengthens what Hardt and Negri call the ‘multitude’, a composite of multiple differences that carries with it the power of different positions.<sup>6</sup> They argue that the accelerating integration of economic, political and cultural forces on a global scale has enabled the growth of a powerful network. *Multitude* is defined by its diversity rather than its commonalities. According to Hardt and Negri, this multitude is the key for future change and might strike just where it is least expected, and with maximum efficiency where the antagonism is at its peak. However, as illustrated in the conversation with Chantal Mouffe in my book *The Nightmare of Participation*, Hardt and Negri’s theory of the multitude appears oversimplified when it comes to the global versus the local scale.



In the context of spatial practices and participation, probably the most interesting aspect of the notion of the multitude is its overlap with Italian writer and political theorist Antonio Gramsci, who proposed a “long march through the institutions”, by which he meant the appropriation of cultural institutions at large: the media, the academies and the theatres. With Gramsci, Hardt and Negri share the rejection of the understanding that ‘changes in culture’ come after ‘the revolution’. All three of them recognize the importance of culture. Their ‘revolution’ is therefore understood as the establishment of counter-institutions rather than as the overthrow of the economic base; a slow transformation in which conflict is understood as a constructive model of antagonistic encounter, a means of intervention that the democratic process should be able to afford. It is through the expression of disagreements that the unexpected will be able to rise, while appreciating culture as a living system.

In July 2006, Rem Koolhaas and Hans-Ulrich Obrist interviewed more than 50 people over the course of 24 hours. Their so-called “Interview Marathon” at the Serpentine Gallery in London was set up as a model to provide a cross-section of practitioners who, in one way or another, define what London is today. Although the event was interesting and in many ways successful, one could also sense a certain frustration amongst the more critically-oriented audience. Surely, one would think, if one sets out to trace some kind of cross-section, one would include a multitude of dissimilar voices. Now, in order for this not to be misunderstood, it needs to be mentioned that I am not trying to argue for a more inclusive model or one based on political correctness. On the contrary: what was missing was precisely the conflict that ‘is’ the city. The “Marathon” was set up as a “stimulating set of discussions”. However, all participants were either part of an existing network of cultural practitioners, thinkers or commentators, or at least originated from the same cultural milieu.

Regarding collaboration as a post-consensus form of practice, I would like to argue that, in order to include the complexity of the city, one also needs to include the conflicting forces of that city. Consensus is only achieved through relationality of powers. One could argue that if such relationality had been broken, another kind of knowledge would have been produced; one that helps us to understand the composite realities of the contemporary city and the forces at play. Interestingly, one of the interviewees at the “Marathon” was Chantal Mouffe, who—usually—suffers from a severe angst of the middle-class consensus swarm. Although her interview session was more of a monologue than a conversation, it revealed probably the most important point of the event: because today’s networking culture is based on consensus rather than conflict, it merely produces multiplications, rarely new knowledge. As Mouffe argues,



The interior of the House of Lords 1933, by Harry Bedford Lemere. Photo by SSPL/Getty Images © SSPL/NMeM/Royal Photographic Society

*to recognize the constitutive role of power relations implies abandoning the misconceived ideal of a reconciled democratic society. Democratic consensus can be envisaged only as a ‘conflictual consensus’. Democratic debate is not a deliberation aimed at reaching ‘the one’ rational solution to be accepted by all, but a confrontation among adversaries.<sup>7</sup>*

In this context, it could be useful to rethink the concept of conflict as an enabler, a producer of a productive environment, rather than understanding conflict as direct, physical violence. Conflict does not have to register as a physical force. A more diverse set of conflicting voices could have potentially been a risk for the outcome of the “Marathon”. However, it would have allowed for multiple agencies and discourses, which, through the recalibration of vectoral forces by means of critical conversations, could have produced alternative and unexpected knowledge:

*[I]n any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize, and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated, nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation, and functioning of a discourse.<sup>8</sup>*

In order for any kind of participation to reach a political dimension, the engagement needs to be based on a distant critical voice. Through this kind of ‘conflictual participation’, the exchange of knowledge in a post-disciplinary field of forces starts to produce new forms of knowledge. As a starting point for such a model of ‘conflictual participation’, one could make use of the concept of collaboration as opposed to cooperation, as distinguished by Florian Schneider in “The Dark Site of the Multitude”:<sup>9</sup>

*as a pejorative term, collaboration stands for willingly assisting an enemy of one’s country and especially an occupying force or a malevolent power. It means to work together with an agency or instrumentality with which one is not immediately connected.<sup>10</sup>*

Since such a notion of collaboration is also based on an idea of the inside and the outside (if you are inside you are part of an existing discourse that is to be agreed with and fostered), it will increasingly be ‘the outsider’ who will manage to add critically to pre-established power relations of expertise. Although the outsider will be understood as someone who does not threaten the internal system due to a lack of knowledge of its structure, it is precisely this condition that allows one to be fully immersed in its depth in a dilettante manner. What we need today are more dilettantes who neither

worry about making the wrong shift nor prevent friction between certain agents in the existing force field if necessary, a means to “circumnavigate predictability”,<sup>11</sup> as Claire Doherty calls it. It is this dilettantism that might enable us to enter more productive modes of collaborative engagement. In this sense, the critical production beyond disciplines could be interpreted as the temporary abandoning of one’s own specialized knowledge for the benefit of entering an existing discourse through the access point of curiosity. Through specialist non-knowledge, but with highly specific targeting in terms of a will to participate in a given environment, system or discourse, such curiosity engenders exploration, investigation and learning, and allows for a forceful injection of external knowledge that is alien to the system with which one is engaging.

Schneider describes the notion of teamwork as something that often fails because of—frequently banal—internalized modes of cooperation that are characterized by the opposite of sharing knowledge:

*in order to pursue a career, one has to hide the relevant information from others. On the other hand it also refers to the fact that joining forces in a group or team increases the likelihood of failure much more than the likelihood of success. Awkward group dynamics, harmful externalities, bad management practices are responsible for the rest.*<sup>12</sup>

Interestingly, he stresses the fact that there is increasing evidence that working together may also happen in unexpected ways. In such a regime of practice, the individual members of, for example, a working group—where, usually, members are conditioned to pursue solidarity and generosity—are exposed to a more brusque method of working together, a mode where “individuals are relying on each other the more they go after their own interests, mutually dependent through following their own agendas”.<sup>13</sup> Cooperation should be understood as the process of working side by side, in agreement rather than in competition. Collaboration is a process in which individuals or organizations work together at the intersection of common goals. This can be adversarial, joining forces to generate a surplus, although the stakeholders’ goals might be in opposition. In order to distinguish clearly between modes of cooperation versus modes of collaboration, Schneider introduces cooperation as a method applied between identifiable individuals within and between organizations, whereas collaboration articulates a more disparate relationship that is generated by and based on heterogeneous parts, defined as unpredictable singularities. In contrast to an organic model of cooperation, collaboration is being put forward as a rigorously immanent and illegitimate praxis.

Of course, this notion connects to the concept of the outsider, as well as to the need for a more conflictual mode of participation from the point of view of self-initiated practice versus the more established model of the service provider: “cooperation necessarily takes place in a client-server architecture. [...] Collaboration on the contrary presumes rhizomatic structures where knowledge grows exuberantly and proliferates in a rather unforeseeable fashion.”<sup>14</sup> It is this collaborative structure that presents, according to Schneider, the most fertile site of revolutionary potential. This is where change can occur, frameworks of difference can flourish and the creativity of the multiplicity generates productive practices.

Collaboration often produces actors who work on projects for something other than a purely monetary exchange or the accumulation of cultural capital; it can also be described as a productive learning process. In *In Search of New Public Domain*, Maarten Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp characterize what they call a true public domain as an experience in which there is an interplay of friction and freedom, as we temporarily but frequently come into contact and enter the parochial domain of others.<sup>15</sup> It highlights the fact that if you set up a situation in which people can produce what they believe in, this condition can produce a set of relationships and productivities that take the situation further than the conventional understanding of disciplinary or interdisciplinary practice. The logic of change is always based on the notion of exception, while unpredictable acting is the enabler for something ‘new’ to emerge. One could argue that the autonomy of the art world produces an infrastructure for just that. In such a context, opposition can be read as affirmation, and regardless of whether boundaries retract or expand, they set up the limits of potentialities.

The concept of using conflicts to generate critical and productive collaboration was first introduced in conflict theory. There are very formalized state-political, transnational and non-governmental structures and procedures in place that use conflict as a strategic tool, essentially utilizing conflict in order both to reveal realities and to generate a crisis that allows for change to occur more rapidly. The United Nations practises a number of conflict strategies, in which micro-conflicts are superimposed onto existing situations of conflict in order to deal with the source issue. This concept of introducing other conflicts falls within what is known as ‘conflict transformation theory’, strongly influenced by Johan Galtung.<sup>16</sup>

Returning to the notion of collaboration, it would hence not be farfetched to argue that conflict could be understood as a productive variable within collaboration. It points

towards the larger question of how we think of challenges and change. Conflict is not necessarily a given. It needs to emerge and needs to be fostered as a generative friction, a force of critical production. However, as noted earlier, such a conflict should be understood as one that is neither physical nor violent, but a friction that emerges on a content- and production-level, a conflict played out within the remit of the democratic arena. 'Doing' and acting within this arena produces reality. In this context, those who do not act, but stand by as spectators, do not participate, simply confirming existing paradigms of practice. The culture of antagonistic collaboration could also be described as an urban rather than a rural practice. Density allows for antagonisms to emerge more naturally. The space of performativity is a space of reaction and encounter, in which there is an intrinsic relation of what Chantal Mouffe calls the adversarial—of 'friendly enemies'. What they have in common is that they share a symbolic space. They agree on the ethico-political principles that inform the political association, but they disagree about the interpretation of those principles, a struggle between different interpretations of shared principles. In a similar manner—excavating the dynamics between friend and enemy—Jacques Derrida, in *Politics of Friendship*,<sup>17</sup> applies the use of difference to the concept of friendship. Haunted by the provocative address attributed to Aristotle—"my friends, there is no friend"—Derrida illustrates that there is a play of difference associated with the concept of friendship. He does not have to problematize the concept of friendship, as it is already problematized by its very own history: in its essence, friendship is marked by difference. Between friend and enemy as well as friend and friend, there is the potential for a conflictual consensus, one that produces the fertile ground for conflictual participation to emerge.

This allows for the politics of participation to be redefined by a productive difference, inserted as friction. Critical practice is supposed to challenge the expectation of what and how things should be done. Knowledge is necessarily shareable and occurs after there is a common ground, even if that shared ground is conflictual. If art is political by defining ways of being together and by reshaping how we have things in common, then—as Tom Keenan remarks—"art clearly can be and in fact is a mode of research in the political",<sup>18</sup> and is 'doing' politics not through modes of representation, but through practice. The moment of the political is the moment in which agency is assumed, in which one becomes visible. Almost by default, this raises a problematic: someone on the outside needs to recognize it as political. Therefore, the relationship between practice and distribution, the question of how to address and present, becomes imperative. It is important to understand that architecture can never deliver solutions. However, what it can possibly do is to visualize and spatialize the conflicts that are the reality of

the very nature of its context. Even if—and especially because of—the reality that those conflicts are increasingly disappearing from our visual registers. Consequently, architecture becomes a mode of witness testimony.

Hence, one should argue that, instead of breeding the next generation of facilitators and mediators, we should aim for the encouragement of the 'uninterested outsider', the 'uncalled participator' who is unaware of prerequisites and existing protocols, who enters the arena with nothing but creative intellect and the will to provoke change. Running down the corridor with no fear of causing friction or of destabilizing existing power relations, s/he opens up a space for change, one that enables 'political politics'. Given the increasing fragmentation of identities and the complexities of the contemporary city, we now face a situation in which it is crucial to think about a form of commonality that allows for conflict as a form of productive engagement: a model of bohemian participation in the sense of an outsider's point of entry, accessing existing debates and discourses untroubled by their disapproval.

As Simon Critchley argues, philosophy always begins with disappointment.<sup>19</sup> Nihilism is the breakdown of the order of meaning, in which everything that we have previously imagined as a sound basis for moral judgment becomes meaningless. According to Critchley, philosophical activity, by which he means the free movement of thought and the possibility for critical reflection, "is defined by militant resistance to nihilism".<sup>20</sup> In order to remain at least borderline optimistic within the current sociopolitical climate of practice, one needs to generate a space in which it seems possible to overcome the constant lamenting, pessimism and negative writing about and toward the contemporary condition. The individual designer, Peter Sloterdijk contends, needs to attempt to mount a certain universe of competency, a territory in which one can exist as a sovereign individual, not in the sense of relative specialization, but rather the reverse: the contemporary 'expert' needs to become not a more specialized master of a singular terrain, but an incompetent master navigating the ocean of practices. For Sloterdijk, design is the skilful mastering of incompetence.<sup>21</sup> Skilful incompetence enables a type of neutral gear, a parallel reality, in which practice, even in the presence of those who attempt to render themselves unconscious, can be sustained in an optimistic mode of production.

Free movement of thought necessarily implies not always clinging to what is known and perceived as functional and 'right', what has been practised or experienced previously. Working from the outside, like a non-institutionalized free agent—who is, to a

certain extent, comparable to an external consultant<sup>22</sup>—also means actively performing a certain marginality. The isolation of such marginality can only be overcome by a relentless will for collaboration, a commitment and willingness to change things; beyond intellectual aspirations, but through significant distance that produces a mode of criticality, a distance that an insider cannot offer and does not possess. In this model of practice, which strives for change through commitment, complicity connotes the death of a project. Such a model needs to be driven by a result-oriented praxis whose potential for modalities can only ever be tested in reality. These results can then be critiqued, altered, tweaked, edited or even dismissed, rather than simply regurgitating its theoretical potential repeatedly. The key phrase here is 'constructive critical productivity'. One should rather attempt to produce ten critical realities in a year and repeatedly learn from the potential mistakes, and then develop a singular practice after a considerable amount of time spent learning from the failures. Testing allows for agility. Such testing needs to be carried out in the relevant context, in collaboration with others and across cultural milieus in order to avoid self-stimulation, vanity and the comfortable and passive nestling behind walls of egocentric practice, which are all highly uncritical and vastly unproductive.

*There is the danger that theatre is turning solely into a simulation of itself. Like a cleaning lady who swabs the floor of the stage and, while observing her own reflection in the window, realizes how she likes the movement of her ass while scrubbing the floor. It no longer seems to matter whether the floor is actually being cleaned, because the movement of her ass is the only result of scrubbing it. This is how I perceive theatre right now: a cleaning lady who has nothing else on her mind but the salacious movement of her own ass.*<sup>23</sup>

To use Martin Wuttke's analogy, it seems crucial to find a way to position oneself, in an agile manner, within the context of current practices and the contemporary condition, without falling into the trap of deadlock. Today's critical practitioner should opt to become a receptor of political processes, rather than a remote player who navigates through the cultural-political terrain in a manner that is deaf, dumb and blind, something that Diedrich Diederichsen calls "surrogate-democratic participation"<sup>24</sup> and which presents nothing more than a depoliticization of the individual beyond serious modes of engagement. In the current climate, it is necessary to separate oneself from magic buzzwords—sustainability, participation, democracy or the multitude—which were propagated at the tail-end of the 1990s. Instead of using them as simple billpostings for political one-liners, one must tackle their underlying motives through contextualized

practice. These buzzwords were only a few of the terminologies used to move attention from the micro- to the macro-scale. This was happening across the board, beyond political alliances, whether on the Left or the Right.<sup>25</sup> At some point, it became sexy to subscribe to one of these terminologies; whether one was convinced by its content or possible future potential was a secondary question. It was a mainstream trend, across disciplines and across political beliefs. The whole point about cultural praxis is that it presupposes and assumes possible futures, that it speculates on what might be possible through a series of critical theories and practices that are still too abstract for society at large.<sup>26</sup>

One could claim, however, that the real value lies hidden in an approach for the result of which there is no evidence of either fully rational decision-making or consensus. One could argue that the crossbench politician in the British House of Lords is an interesting reference to consider, not as a *gesamt*-political structure of the House and its conservative alignment, but as a structural component designed to leave space for those who want to remain disassociated in order to provoke, motivate and eventually foment change. The crossbench politician is essentially an independent practitioner, who neither belongs to a specific party nor regularly fosters alliances with the same political camps. Although this also makes him or her a less reliable or dependable player—potentially even without a clear stance—it offers an alternative, disinterested and less biased perspective toward the internal, consensus-driven mechanisms of the other political parties in the House. Although these politicians have an undoubtedly political stance and opinion, they do not subscribe to the fixed membership books or party platforms of other, immobile politicians. This is also reflected in the crossbencher's spatial arrangement and positioning within the House, where Labour peers sit on one side and Conservatives on the other; the crossbenchers are in the middle, slightly toward the back of the chamber.

By now, participation is part of the neoliberal project and ultimately serves the preservation of the system. Real questions of power are no longer being negotiated. Within the remit of such 'directed participation' and highly controlled political engagement, one should promote a practice of the autonomous practitioner for mastering conflict as an enabling, rather than disabling force. It calls for a new interpretation both of the late-1990s romantic use of 'participation' as a mode or operation, as well as of the function and responsibility of the crossbencher: a mode of conflictual participation that no longer perpetuates and relies on a process by which others are invited in, but instead acts without consensual mandate as a disinterested productive irritant.



In participation, there are often too many potential decision-makers; but there aren't enough people who take on the responsibility, risk and courage to turn these decisions into reality, to move things forward. Any political practice must, of course, always opt to remain within the territory and be based on the basic rules of the democratic arena. Nevertheless, there is a potential danger in always using a majority as a way of generating democratic decision-making. Democracy's dilemma is that the moment you have a room full of idiots, they will vote for an idiotic government or, in the case of the recent Swiss referendum regarding the subsistence of the country's mosques, if one has sufficient financial resources to mobilize the idiots, it is possible to make the entire country look idiotic. The central difficulty with the romanticized notion of the participatory project is that it assumes that everyone should sit around the table in order to make decisions. Yet this might not necessarily be in everyone's interest. Should one seriously read the British *Sun*, the *New York Post* or the German *Bild* simply because they are the newspapers with the biggest readership and circulation? The question at hand and the development of the last decade's notion of the participatory project actually point to a far greater danger: the problem and helplessness of the Left. If all one can do in order to make decisions is to outsource decision-making and open up responsibility to the floor, then something in representative electoral democracy has gone severely wrong. This is also why, in the shadow of the last decade, one could witness the re-emergence of the Right, which now oddly appears to get things done. The Right developed irony to perfection, a move that has rendered it almost invulnerable.

*The Left may have won the curricular battle, but the Right won the public-relations war. The Right did this in the old-fashioned way, by mastering the ancient art of rhetoric and spinning a vocabulary that, once established in the public mind, performed the work of argument all by itself.*<sup>27</sup>

What can the architect's role be in all of this today? As a contemporary architect, one confronts the dilemma of a profession that no longer really exists. There is no such thing as a core competence, which, as we learned from Peter Sloterdijk earlier, may actually be an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Core competences—such as Sony's for miniaturization, Honda's for the combustion engine, 3M's for everything you stick together—also mean that you may be very good at doing one thing, but the demand can simply vanish. Everyone who joins one of these companies needs to understand that such competences are only valuable when they can be applied in different fields; they should have an understanding of how to design this transfer and why this is desirable. Until recently, most architects did not know how to do this. Over the decades, they

unlearned this skill, which was even part of architectural education for a long time. In the Renaissance, the polymath and generalist was the role model for such a practitioner; he was a reflexive, educated individual capable of lateral thinking. Different times have identified different primary dimensions, but it becomes interesting when one allows these dimensions to become transparent and understood as interdependent.

Rather than mourning the good old days, this can also be understood as a challenge and potential. Architects have at times been very prolific in exploiting the potential of existing in a parasitic relationship to the discipline that actually produces architecture, which is the discipline of building. The natural disillusionment with the way in which decisions that have already been made are often not carried out by those who should materialize them has equipped architects with a healthy amount of scepticism. Over the last decades, what used to be known as the profession of architecture has disintegrated in a plethora of practices. This change from a profession or clearly outlined discipline into a series of practices was fuelled and mobilized by a certain politicization, which emerged in the mid-1990s. These practices are trying to achieve many disparate aims, but might be united by a singular quality, the possibility and skill of the imagination, formulation and design of strategic frameworks that enable things to happen. The problem, however, is that this abstract quality is continuously applied in the same old field and space that failed architects in the first place. This raises the question of positioning and how one situates oneself within the larger territory of critical practices. It is easy to agree that there is a certain impotence that seems to govern the profession. However, within the cultural sphere, there are many niches to be explored and squatted. Exploring the potential space between stability and instability, critical spatial practice can be understood as a stage set of sorts, a strategic manual for choreographing futures. Cynics might argue that the architectural project per se is simply a baggier type of storytelling practice. And there may even be a certain accuracy in this. Nevertheless, one needs to be pretty good at telling the story.

Such polyphonic practice opens up a new role, not only for the architect, but for critical practices in general: to go beyond conventional physical construction and to venture into the construction of realities, not in order to follow existing protocols, but to generate them proactively. It embodies a plea for the non-academic intellectual, with a wide diffusion beyond the academy, although most of it may have been nurtured inside it. Even more so, the crossbench practitioners should not remain at the edge of the water. They should turn toward the political world precisely because it is animated by considerations of power and interest. Unlike the academy, its impact might affect an entire

practice or social body, rather than only a student body. This is not to sound megalomaniac, but rather to say that in times of crisis, one is responsible for an intellectual premise on a larger scale. In this sense, moving from relatively discrete questions of interpretation and reading to much more significant and proactive ones of social change and transformation, may introduce and articulate an outsider's perspective on a larger scale: "The intellectual who claims to write only for him or herself, or for the sake of pure learning, or abstract science is not to be, and must not be, believed".<sup>28</sup> In this regard, Edward Said proactively summarized the key problematic: "The hardest aspect of being an intellectual is to represent what you profess through your work and interventions, without hardening into an institution or a kind of automaton acting at the behest of a system or method".<sup>29</sup> In Said's opinion, the significance is never to forget that you have the choice. And choice is what inhabits strength and power, even from the point of view of the individual.

Political space entails the practice of decision-making and judging; judgement means introducing a system of hierarchies. Such curatorial practice includes at its core the act of strategizing and destruction: making choices about what to eliminate. In the given context of critical spatial practice, the architect as curator could be understood as an instigator, who—through the introduction of zones of conflict—transforms the cultural landscape, which is the result of an unstable society that consists of many distinct and often conflicting individuals, institutions and spaces.

The question remains whether this is all to be understood as an opportunistic endeavour, simply trying to describe one's own role within a plethora of differentiated practices, or whether it has some qualities or use-value beyond the individual. Crossbench praxis could be described precisely as acting without a clearly defined mandate, but proactively seeking engagement: a freelancer with a conscience. It calls for a hermeneutics and recalibration of the notion of participation. Such an understanding of practice seems vital in order to face the future optimistically. It assumes that one defines oneself through the notion of practice rather than discipline or profession. Here, skills and a core competence replace the traditional notion of discipline and professionalism. Here, participation produces an alternative and parallel reality, which is activated and driven by self-motivation, political agenda, collaborative willingness and the fearlessness to exclude, rather than to thrive in unquestioned inclusion. Such an agenda of critical manipulation must not take anything for granted and must never finally take sides; which is to say, not to shirk responsibility, but to stay flexible, agile and critical beyond the dogmatic. One should, on the other hand, be aware that crossbench tactics also have a

weak side, as they tend to be temporal and often local, hence may be in danger of missing the bigger picture or having trouble seeing over long timespans.

The coterie and clique of the art and architecture worlds as practice rather than pure critique have, in this regard, lost touch—apart from a relatively small circle of practitioners. Many practices in the art world rarely produce more than one-liners and postings, and nestle in the relative freedom and luxury of a superimposed happy-go-lucky bubble, in which participation has become nothing but an esoteric self-awareness programme. This has resulted in almost wholesale depoliticization. What is needed now is a reintroduction of critical interrogation with regard to the value, positions and temporal nature of political engagement, being raised in and against the institutional interior. Along this path, an alternative rendering of participation and the relational should be rendered, one that moves from performer to proactive enabler, beyond the event-driven realities of a certain artistic production around social situations, toward a direct and personal engagement and stimulation of specific future realities. This can only be achieved by avoiding the trap of getting stuck in one milieu, such as the art world, or a singular political project. Humans have feet in order to move and not to get stuck; otherwise, we would be trees. It needs to result in a content- and agenda-driven nomadic practice fuelled by critical inquiries, an extra-discursive position in which one exits a milieu in order to be able to re-enter it differently. It should allow for an ambiguity that assumes responsibility while moving from pedigree to bastard. This practitioner will be a co-author rather than a participant, as participants are usually confronted with superimposed structures. Although the 'free radical' does not exist and nothing is clean—rather, everything is ambivalent—such a practice needs to work toward an ambition that is immune to complicity. Such complicity can be overcome by assuming three positions with which modes of proactive participation can become meaningful: attitude, relevance and responsibility. Unfortunately, these are missing.

Space is the result of *Handlung*.<sup>30</sup> It is impossible to generate change through the passive mode of reaction. Practice always needs to go beyond absorption and become projective, inject itself into contextual realities and make itself visible in order to instrumentalize. In a time when participation has become nothing but a rendering of tokenistic political correctness, such a propositional, rather than purely reflective, notion of practice offers a hideout for agonistic commitment.

Most subcultural developments of the last 50 years obliged themselves more toward the military logic of the avant-gardes than to the ideas of democratic participation: first

on site, scouting unknown terrain, on-and-off transmission of information, but otherwise living the wild and dangerous life of small underground cells.<sup>31</sup> As Marcel Reich-Ranicki wrote about Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: “The loneliness appeared to him as the qualification for the autonomy of the critic, the autonomy as the prerequisite for his function”.<sup>32</sup>

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Brian Holmes

## Swar/m/achine

### ACTIVIST MEDIA TOMORROW

What happened at the turn of the millennium, when a myriad recording devices were hooked up to the internet and the World Wide Web became an electronic prism refracting all the colours of a single anti-capitalist struggle? What kind of movement takes to the barricades with samba bands and videocams, tracing an embodied map through a maze of virtual hyperlinks and actual city streets? The organizational aesthetics of the networked movements was called 'tactical media', a concept that mixed the quick-and-dirty appropriation of consumer electronics with the subtle counter-cultural anthropology of Michel de Certeau. The idea was to evoke a new kind of popular subjectivity, constitutionally 'under the radar', impossible to identify, constantly shifting with the inventions of digital storytelling and the ruses of open-source practice. Too bad so much of this subversive process was frozen into a single seductive phrase.

In the neutralizing languages of academia and in the showrooms of the electronic arts festivals, 'tactical media' has come to describe playful or satirical incursions into everyday consumer reality: the digital graffiti of the neoliberal city, the info-poetics of the postmodern multitudes. But in the early days there was something much more virulent at stake: grassroots impatience with old-left hierarchies, overflowing anger against governments and businesses, an urge to rethink the art of campaigning on the fly—all of which were at the centre of the Next 5 Minutes gatherings in Amsterdam in the 1990s, before pouring out into the streets at the century's turn. Only when the urgency subsided—or was repressed by the police—did the multiple inventions of daily media-life become aesthetics-as-usual, enjoyed by specialist consumers and supported by the state, for the benefit of the corporations. A decade after Seattle, we still don't understand the role of decentralized media intervention as a catalyst for grassroots action at the global scale. The concept of 'tactical media' should be abandoned for another one, closer to what really happened on the streets and on the screens, and richer with promises for the future.

### PULSATING NETWORKS

Let's look back at the early campaigns and demonstrations where the political potential of the internet first appeared in broad daylight. The mobilizing process for global resistance actions immediately became known as 'self-organization' because of the absence of hierarchical chains of command. At the same time, the starburst patterns of network graphs became emblems of a cooperative potential that seemed to define the 'movement of movements'. As Naomi Klein wrote in the year 2000, shortly after Seattle and the IMF protests in Washington:

*What emerged on the streets of Seattle and Washington was an activist model that mirrors the organic, decentralized, interlinked pathways of the Internet—the Internet come to life. The Washington-based research center TeleGeography has taken it upon itself to map out the architecture of the Internet as if it were the solar system. Recently, TeleGeography pronounced that the Internet is not one giant web but a network of "hubs and spokes." The hubs are the centers of activity, the spokes the links to other centers, which are autonomous but interconnected.*<sup>1</sup>

Condensed here are three key ideas. The first concerns the morphology of the internet as an all-channel meshwork, where each node is connected to others by several different pathways. Ultimately there are only a few degrees of separation between every element—a flattened hierarchy. The second concerns the property of emergence, associated with large populations of living organisms like ants and bees, where group behaviour is coordinated in real time and manifests a purposiveness beyond the capacities of any individual. Emergence describes a moment when the possible becomes actual—a phase change in a complex system. The third idea concerns the multiplicity of networked society: the poles that emerge from its interconnections are autonomous, endowed with intentions that distinguish each one from the others, creating a situation of irremediable complexity. These ideas came together in the early 1990s, in the image of the swarm promoted by technovisionary Kevin Kelly in the book *Out of Control*. It was a great insight. But now we can compare that visionary image to a few realities.

*What lends form and regularity to emergent action? How to grasp the consistency of self-organized groups and networks? The word 'swarming' describes a pattern of self-organization in real time, which seems to arise from nowhere, yet is immediately recognizable because it rhythmically repeats. It was understood by strategists as a pattern of attack, in the classic definition given by RAND Corporation theorists Arquilla and Ronfeldt:*



*Swarming occurs when the dispersed units of a network of small (and perhaps some large) forces converge on a target from multiple directions. The overall aim is sustainable pulsing—swarm networks must be able to coalesce rapidly and stealthily on a target, then disperse and redisperse, immediately ready to recombine for a new pulse.<sup>2</sup>*

Arquilla and Ronfeldt studied these pulsating tactics in the complex patterns of mediated and on-the-ground support for the Zapatistas, which prevented the Mexican state from isolating and destroying them. Interestingly, the ‘target’ of the swarm was the repressive activity of the state. But the swarm tactic only became reality for the world at large with the successful blockade of the November 1999 WTO meeting in Seattle, Washington, thanks largely to the Direct Action Network (DAN).

The DAN used swarming as part of a broader strategy to draw union protesters into a radical blockade of the meeting. Arquilla and Ronfeldt suddenly had palpable proof of their theories.<sup>3</sup> For a short but very intense two-year period, emergent collective intelligence seemed to promise an unexpected resurgence of civil society as a stunningly agile political actor in the postmodern public realm. After the events of September 11, the threat of swarming became a major concern of Western military establishments, while informal, criminal, revolutionary and terrorist networks proliferated around the world. A decade of so-called ‘military intelligence’ has poisoned the idea of the self-organized multitude, along with so many other aspects of our daily existence. But military analysis, focused uniquely on the destruction of its objects, can hardly tell us all there is to know. If the image of the swarm remains somehow appealing it is because it points to a process of cooperation where subjects merge into an intentional unity, before separating to re-evaluate the dynamics of their action. What we need to understand, then, is the ‘ecology’ of emergent behaviour, to use a word that suggests a dynamic, fractal unity: a oneness of the many and a multiplicity of the one. We need to understand what really works in the relation between the streets and the screens.

## TWICE-WOVEN WORLDS

Two factors can explain the consistency of self-organized actions. The first is the capacity for temporal coordination at a distance: the exchange among dispersed individuals of information, but also of affect, about unique events unfolding in specific locations. This exchange becomes a flow of constantly changing, constantly reinterpreted clues about how to act within a shared environment. But temporal coordination itself depends on

a second factor, which is the existence of a common horizon—aesthetic, ethical, philosophical and/or metaphysical—that is deliberately built up over longer periods of time and that allows the scattered members of a network to recognize each other as existing within a shared referential and imaginary universe. Media used in this way is more than just information: it is a mnemonic image that calls up a world of sensation. At best it opens up the possibility of a response, a dialogic exchange, a new creation. Think of activist media as the continuous process of ‘making worlds’ within an otherwise fragmented, inchoate market society.

For an example, take Indymedia, launched at the Seattle WTO protests in 1999 using an Active Software program that allows for the spontaneous uploading of various file formats onto a ‘newswire’. On the one hand, this is a strictly determined technical environment: Indymedia operates on precisely defined codes and server architectures that only allow for a limited range of inputs. In addition to those technical protocols, the content of the sites is shaped by clearly stated ethical principles which attempt to regulate and legitimate the kind of editing that may or may not take place. The existence of both protocols and principles is a necessary condition for the interaction of large numbers of anonymous persons at locations far distant from the surroundings of their daily existence.<sup>4</sup> The self-organization of the December 2008 protests in Greece is a fantastic example of the continuing importance of Indymedia, alongside many other forms of real-time networked communication. But the creation of possible worlds cannot stop with protest and riots. It also requires a cultural strategy of liberation, where media is ‘tactile’ first of all: where it touches you as a process of expression, open to creative reception and transformation by each person.

This tactile approach can be understood through the aesthetics of the Reclaim the Streets carnivals or the Pink Bloc campaigns, to name well-known activist projects that create entire participatory environments or ‘constructed situations’. At stake in such situations is the development of an existential frame for collective experience, what Prem Chandavarkar calls an “inhabitable metaphor”.<sup>5</sup> Only such metaphors make dispersed intervention possible. What needs to be understood—the media strategy of the global campaigns—is this tight imbrication of technological protocols and cultural horizons. Swarming is what happens when the aesthetic or metaphorical dimensions of radical social protest are enriched around the planet via electronic communications. A transnational activist movement is a swarmachine.

## THRESHOLDS OF INVENTION

The point is that the contemporary movements are original and should not be reduced to models from earlier periods. To illustrate this distance from the ideas of the 1960s and 1970s, we can look more closely at the strategy/tactics distinction, as developed by Michel de Certeau. He describes strategic actors as having a “proper” place from which they can analyze and manage exterior objects conceived as targets or threats. By contrast, he says, the dominated have no place to call their own and must operate by ruse and subterfuge within the grid of the opponent’s strategy. This is the condition of the working classes, the colonized and the excluded, but for de Certeau it also becomes the archetypal plight of the marginalized individual:

*Increasingly constrained, yet less and less concerned with these vast frameworks, the individual detaches himself from them without being able to escape them and can henceforth only try to outwit them, to pull tricks on them, to rediscover, within an electronicized and computerized megalopolis, the ‘art’ of the hunters and rural folk of earlier days. The fragmentation of the social fabric today lends a political dimension to the problem of the subject.<sup>6</sup>*

Here, it seems, lies the connection with tactical media.

*The Practice of Everyday Life* delves into premodern registers, in search of styles of sociability that are irreducible, invisible, untotalizable. The idea is to discover a wandering, unfocused consumer *usage* as the multiple, unquantifiable other of an instrumental, goal-oriented rationality. Subjective errancy becomes a politics of difference, which can be expressed even amid the standardized environments of consumption. But a kind of nightmare inhabits this dream: the fear that even tactics will become random, indifferent and indistinct, as they extend throughout a strategic system whose corrosive force has at once liberated them from their traditional limits, and colonized everything with its rational calculations:

*Because of this, the ‘strategic’ model is also transformed, as if defeated by its own success: it was based on the definition of a ‘proper’ distinct from everything else; but now that ‘proper’ has become the whole. It could be that, little by little, it will exhaust its capacity to transform itself and constitute only the space (just as totalitarian as the cosmos of ancient times) in which a cybernetic society will arise, the scene of the Brownian movements of invisible and innumerable tactics. One would thus have a proliferation of*

*aleatory and indeterminable manipulations within an immense framework of socioeconomic constraints and securities: myriads of almost invisible movements, playing on the more and more refined texture of a place that is even, continuous, and constitutes a proper place for all people.<sup>7</sup>*

Everyday tactics, in de Certeau’s sense, are a refuge of multiplicity amid a dominant technological rationality. Yet by his own account they are destined increasingly to lose their archaic depth and secret purpose, and to dance in agitated, aleatory spasms over the surfaces of a cybernetically programmed society. We are not far from the nihilistic abandon of the postmodern revolutionaries, influenced by disenchanted situationists like Baudrillard. But their apocalyptic aesthetics may not be the best way to describe the media production of the alterglobalization movements.

Ironically, the Brownian motion which de Certeau takes as the very signifier of aimlessness and unpredictability was in fact mathematicized as a probability function by Norbert Wiener, the father of cybernetics. Wiener was fascinated by the turbulence of water, the volatility of steam, the erratic, bifurcating course of a flying bee, or “the path of a drunken man walking across a large deserted playing field”.<sup>8</sup> He invented a formula that could describe the probable trajectories, not of individual particles, but of aggregate groups. In 1973, just a year before *The Practice of Everyday Life* was first published, Wiener’s equations were employed by the economist Robert C. Merton to predict the volatility and drift of equity values on the stock market, giving rise to the infamous Black-Scholes option pricing formula, which led in its turn to the hedge funds of the 1980s and 1990s and the subprime derivatives of our own era. The Brownian motion of the stock markets became predictable, even profitable. In the age of predatory mathematics the forms of expression are never just random, but always liable to be harnessed in their very randomness, for ends that transcend their seeming aimlessness. But all that just means that the thresholds of social invention are elsewhere.

## GLOBAL MICROSTRUCTURES

One way to approach the new formations of social activism is through the work of the sociologist Karin Knorr Cetina, whose studies of currency traders led her to the concept of “complex global microstructures”. By this she means geographically extended interactions that are not bound by the multi-layered organizations and expert systems that modern industrial states have developed to manage uncertainty. Thus she remarks that

currency-trading networks were able to precipitate the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, reorganizing the global economy; and, obviously, the unregulated actions of derivatives traders have done so yet again in the late 2000s, with a vengeance. The financial markets, Knorr Cetina observes, “are too fast, and change too quickly to be ‘contained’ by institutional orders”. At stake are the dynamics of chaos and complexity. Surprisingly, she explains financial innovations as an outcome of “play”, recalling the free-floating tactics of Michel de Certeau. Yet in the end her terms are quite different, because they describe a complex tension between order and chaos:

*Global systems based on microstructural principles do not exhibit institutional complexity but rather the asymmetries, unpredictabilities and playfulness of complex (and dispersed) interaction patterns; a complexity that results from a situation where order is not the outcome of purified social processes and is always intertwined with chaos.<sup>9</sup>*

Knorr Cetina stresses the importance of real-time coordination and the creation of shared horizons. She shows how networked ICTs allow distant participants to see and recognize each other, and to achieve cohesion by observing and commenting on the same events at the same time.<sup>10</sup> Yet the technology employed is used opportunistically, it can be “outsourced”. What matters is the system of goals or beliefs that binds the participants together. She reinterprets the usual view of networks as a system of pipes conveying informational contents, insisting instead on their visual function: there is a shift from “pipes” to “scopes”. It is the experience of the mediated image that maintains the shared horizon and insists on the urgency of acting within it, especially through what Barthes called the *punctum*: the affective register that leaps out from the general dull flatness of the image and touches you. Finally, the idea of “auto-affection” derives from Maturana and Varela’s concept of the living organism as a self-sustaining autopoietic machine, defined in classic circular fashion as “a network of processes of production” which “through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced them”.<sup>11</sup>

Standard social network theory found its dynamic principle in more-or-less random attractions between atomistic units bound only by the “weak ties” of contemporary liberal societies.<sup>12</sup> The notion of autopoietic social groups introduces a very different type of actor. To understand the implications, one has to realize that each autopoietic machine or ‘microstructure’ is unique, depending on the coordinates and horizons that configure it. For example, take the open-source software networks. There is a shared horizon constituted by texts and exemplary projects: Richard Stallman’s declarations

and the GNU project; Linus Torvald’s launch of Linux; essays like “The Hacker Ethic”; projects such as Creative Commons; the relation of all that to older ideals of public science; etc. There are formal principles: above all the General Public License, known as ‘copyleft’, with its legal requirements for both the indication of authorship (allowing recognition of everyone’s efforts) and the continued openness of any resulting code (allowing widespread cooperation and innovation). Finally, there are concrete modes of temporal coordination via the internet: Sourceforge as a general version tracker for continuously forking projects and the specific wiki forums devoted to each free software application. The whole thing has as little institutional complexity as possible, but instead is full of self-motivation and auto-affection between dispersed members of a highly coherent, swiftly moving and effective social group.

Tendencies favouring the emergence of global microstructures have been developing for decades, along the unravelling edges of national institutional environments weakened by neoliberalism. But a turning point was reached in September 2001. Knorr Cetina’s article is subtitled “The New Terrorist Societies”, extending the analysis of global financial microstructures to Al Qaeda. Where in the 1990s everyone saw networks, now everyone would see the threat of radical militants. The alterglobalization movement, long plagued by the difficulty of distinguishing its own mobile formation from the vanguards of financial globalization, began rapidly to fall apart when accusations conflating the protesters with the terrorists started rising on all sides. Almost four years after September 11, on the last day of the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, the explosion of terrorist bombs in London totally eclipsed any message that could have been brought by the protesters. Al Qaeda appeared on the nightly news as the exemplar of global activist movements—and the perfect excuse for eradicating all of them.

## SECOND CHANCES

Sociological parallels can be drawn between the alterglobalization movements and both financiers and terrorists. But the only thing that really brings these distant galaxies together is the force of historical change, which each of them expresses differently and for vastly different ends. Knorr Cetina claims that change in the contemporary world is driven by microprocesses, put into effect by light, agile formations that can risk innovation at geographical scales and degrees of complexity where traditional organizations are paralyzed. As she has written: “The texture of a global world becomes articulated through microstructural patterns that develop in the shadow of—but

liberated from—national and local institutional patterns”.<sup>13</sup> But in the last decade, the debate around microstructural processes was totally dominated by the police. The reactions of the national institutions to terrorism posed a major problem for all the movements seeking progressive and egalitarian social change.

Even as swarm theory became a strong paradigm for the militarized social sciences, attempts were launched around the planet to stabilize the dangerously mobile relational patterns unleashed by the neoliberal market society and its weak ties. But the overarching trends remain completely contradictory. On the one hand, there is a continuing effort to enforce the rules of free trade to the benefit of major banks and corporations, thus sustaining the project of liberal empire. On the other hand, the most common popular responses to this market enforcement are regressions to exacerbated forms of nationalism, often with a deep-seated fundamentalist component, as in the United States itself under George W. Bush. Neconservatism in all its forms is the ‘blowback’ of neoliberal economics, which could become even worse under the influence of the financial crisis. In this regard there’s something prophetic about Félix Guattari’s discussion in the late 1980s of the interplay between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Guattari describes the situation in these terms:

*As the deterritorializing revolutions, tied to the development of science, technology and the arts, sweep everything aside before them, a compulsion toward subjective reterritorialization also emerges. And this antagonism is heightened even more with the phenomenal growth of the communications and computer fields, to the extent that the latter concentrate their deterritorializing effects on such human faculties as memory, perception, understanding, imagination, etc. In this way, a certain formula of anthropological functioning, a certain ancestral model of humanity, is expropriated at its very heart. And I think that it is as a result of an incapacity to adequately confront this phenomenal mutation that collective subjectivity has abandoned itself to the absurd wave of conservatism that we are presently witnessing.*<sup>14</sup>

How to invent alternatives to the violence of capitalist deterritorialization, but also to the fundamentalist reterritorialization that follows it? The dilemma of the contemporary world is not just Christianity versus Islam. It’s at the very heart of the modern project that human potential is expropriated. Since September 11, the American corporate class and its allies have at once exacerbated the abstract, hyperindividualizing dynamics of capitalist globalization and, at the same time, reinvented the most archaic figures of power—Guantanamo, Fortress Europe, the Israeli wall around Palestine, the

dichotomy of sovereign majesty and bare life. Nothing can guarantee that this basic pattern will not be maintained in subtler forms, long after the departure of the neoconservatives from the political scene. Guattari speaks of a capitalist “drive” to deterritorialization and a “compulsion” to reterritorialize. What this means is that essential dimensions of human life are twisted into violent and oppressive caricatures. The effect is to render the promise of a borderless world repulsive and even murderous, while at the same time precipitating the crisis, decay and regression of national institutions, increasingly incapable of contributing to liberty, equality or the respect for each other’s difference.

So after all the definitions of tactical media, what we still need to know is whether one can consciously participate in the improvisational, asymmetrical play of microprocesses operating at a global scale, and whether one can use their relative autonomy from institutional norms as a way to influence a more positive reterritorialization, a dynamic equilibrium, a viable coexistence with technoscientific development and the trend toward the unification of world society. It should be clear by now that to do all this means ceasing to be ‘one’: it means taking on the trans-subjective risk of micropolitics, and extending it, whenever possible, from the intimate to the territorial, national, continental and global scales. This can only be achieved by drawing out mnemonic images from latent historical experience and from the intricate textures of everyday life, mixing them into electronic media interventions in order to help reweave the imaginary threads that give radical democratic movements their strong and paradoxical consistency. At stake is the refusal of arbitrary authority, of course, but also solidarity across differences and the desire to create consensus not on the basis of tradition, but rather on the basis of invention, experimentation and collective self-critique. If grassroots social movements can have an effect in the future, particularly in the face of integrated drives to surveillance, oppression and war, it will be by inventing both the principles and the transmissibility of a new ethical-political position: an intensely public resistance to the forces that claim power over intimate existence.

The ability to create the event is what gave the alterglobalization movements their surprising agility in the world space. But the character of the event is precisely what you can never be sure of. As Maurizio Lazzarato writes:

*The activist is not someone who becomes the brains of the movement, who sums up its force, anticipates its choices, draws his or her legitimacy from a capacity to read and interpret the evolution of power, but instead, the activist is simply someone who introduces a discontinuity in what exists. She creates a bifurcation in the flow of words, of*



*desires, of images, to put them at the service of the multiplicity's power of articulation; she links the singular situations together, without placing herself at a superior and totalizing point of view. She is an experimenter.*<sup>15</sup>

The shape of the present makes it clear, however, that what is to be sought is not a simple exit into chaos. Exodus or what I have called 'escape' has a very different meaning. The point is to find articulations of human effort that can oppose and even durably replace the death-dealing powers of the present society. The inexorability of historical forces seems to offer few chances for grassroots intervention into macropolitical realities. Still the outcomes of the processes at work before our eyes are totally uncertain; and we can prefer to believe that there will be important second chances for radical democracy movements and new roles for improvised global media. The future belongs to those who can make the experimental difference.

*This text emerged from a debate on the internet mailing list Nettime, 10-25 April 2006, and, to that extent, it was really written by the many-headed hydra of the list. Thanks everyone. The whole debate is accessible at [www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0604/maillist.html#00058](http://www.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0604/maillist.html#00058).*

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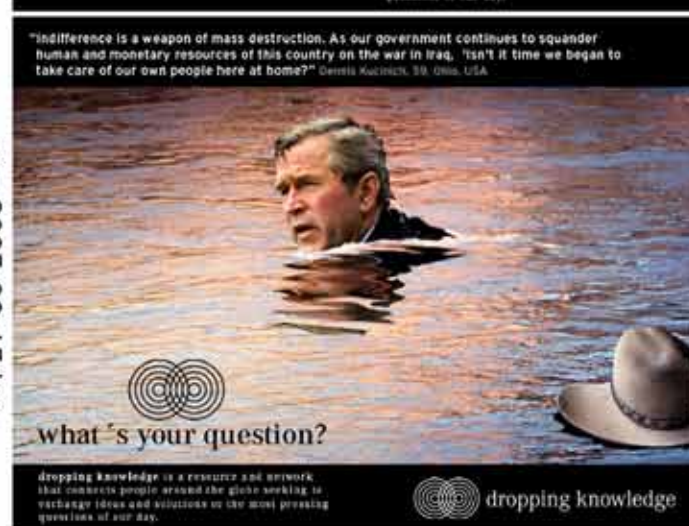
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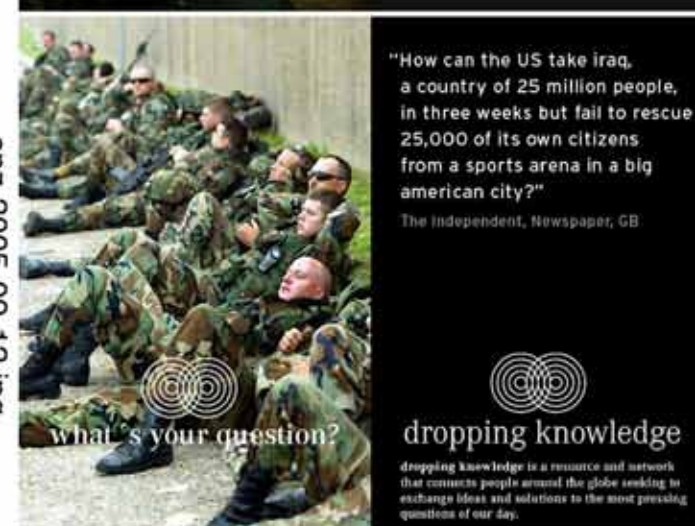
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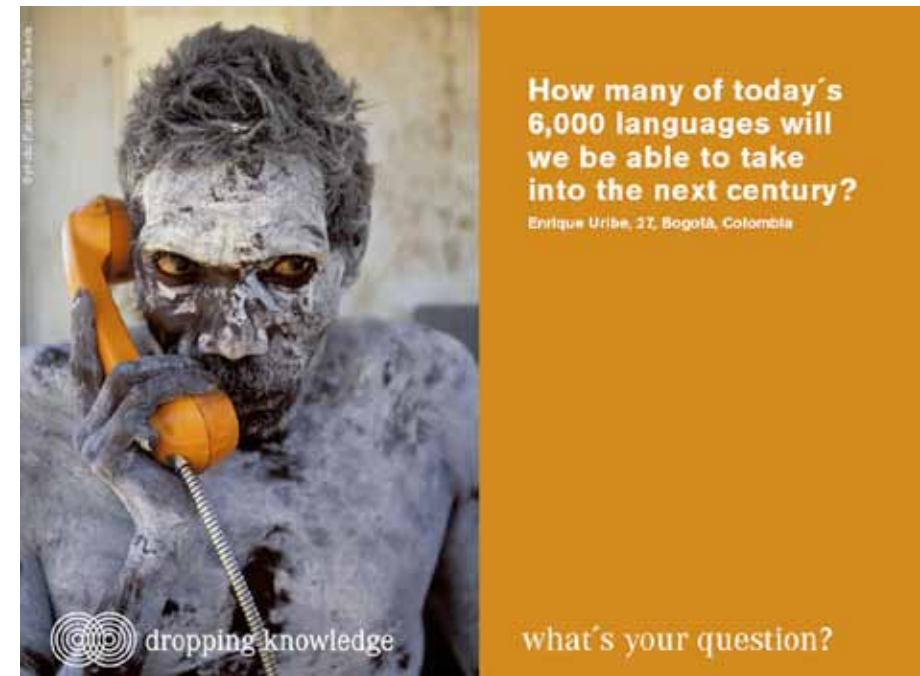
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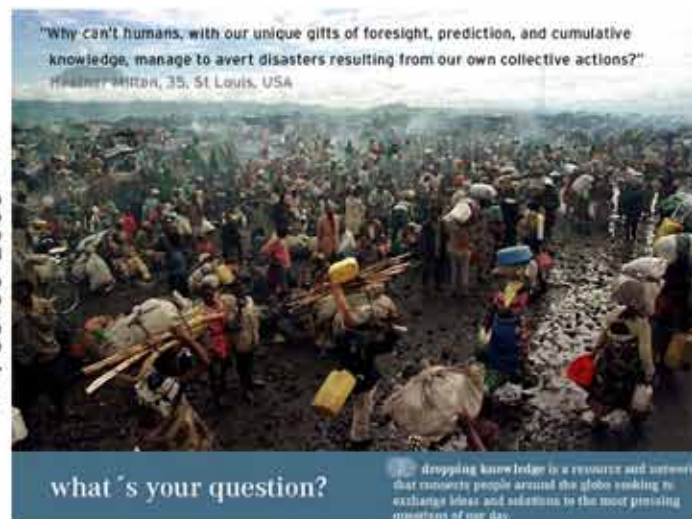




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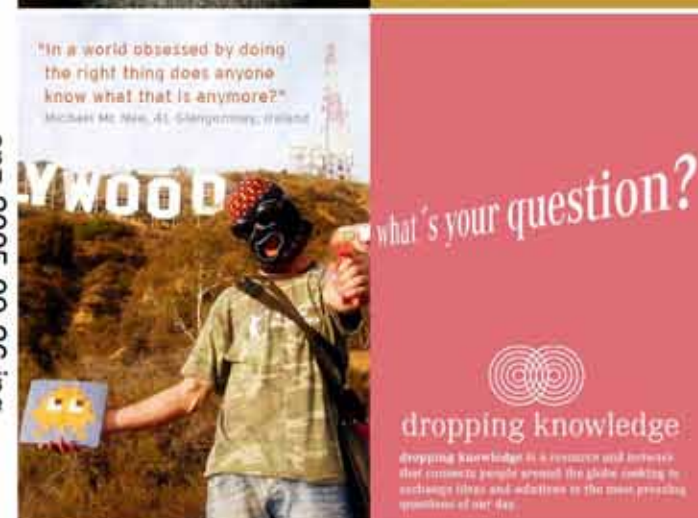
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*Mindpirates*

## We Ask Ourselves

If you understand human speech as a fundamental anthropological datum and a dynamic mechanism, you could—going back, for example, to Wilhelm von Humboldt—say that speech is a phenomenon that is bound to and emerges from interaction and communication. In this sense, speech implies sociability, depends on social interaction. Wilhelm von Humboldt says, “Im Menschen aber ist das Denken wesentlich an gesellschaftliches Dasein gebunden, und der Mensch bedarf [...] zum Denken eines dem Ich entsprechenden Du [...]”.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, speech in itself has a dialogical structure.

If you combine this anthropological conclusion with a design theory that has a semi-otic approach (as the editor of this publication suggests), our work could be interpreted within this theoretical framework. Our projects are based on the idea of creating a substantial nexus between social communication (in other words, the communication of socially relevant themes and topics) and an aesthetic approach, between form and content in a way that the mode of presentation—the ‘design’—not only does not divert from the content, but rather backs and supports the content. So that it shows that the ‘design’ could be a catalyst for and an enrichment of the content. In excess of the editor’s fundamental conclusion in her preface “that we actually need to de-sign and that everything we say inevitably is a ‘product of design’”, in our work we also ask ourselves in a narrower sense, what kind of and how much design the contents we want to communicate tolerate or even deserve. Is it possible and conducive to combine associative material that focuses on climate change, on the culture of wastefulness or on other social, ecological or cultural topics with demanding, challenging aesthetics?

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1. von Humboldt, Wilhelm, *Wilhelm von Humboldts Werke*, volumes 1-17, Albert Leitzmann ed., Berlin: Königliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1904 onwards. Here, “Grundzüge des allgemeinen Sprachtypus”, vol. 5, 1824-26, p. 380. “However, for Man, thinking is essentially bound to social being, and in order to think a man requires [...] a ‘you’ that corresponds to his ‘I’ [...]” (trans. Anton Viesel).

## Editor

### Yana Milev

Yana Milev is a Berlin-based artist, cultural philosopher/anthropologist, curator and publisher. She studied stage design, visual arts and cultural theory in Dresden, martial arts in Kyōto and Berlin, cultural philosophy and anthropology of art in Vienna and Karlsruhe. After a successful career as an artist (e.g. *Documenta 10–dX* in 1997), in 2003 Yana Milev moved to the scientific sphere. In 2008, she received her PhD on a subject of political philosophy. Since 2009 she has been developing the research field “design anthropology” within her habilitation treatise (*venia legendi*) at the University of St. Gallen's Institute of Sociology. Besides her academic engagements as an author, theorist, researcher and lecturer, she works as a curator, project manager and publisher. Since 1987, Yana Milev has realized dozens of worldwide projects in the fields of art, curating, publishing, science, education, research and cultural production.

## Team

### EDITORIAL TEAM

**Martin Hager**, managing editor for the D.A. project, is co-founder of edition8, an agency specializing in editorial and public relations work for cultural institutions such as Goethe-Institut, Akademie der Künste, Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities, Essen. Books he has managed include *DisORIENTATION: Contemporary Artists from the Middle East* (2003), *Der Black Atlantic* (2004), *Manthia Diawara, African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics* (2010) and *Islamic Art and the Museum* (2012).

**Daniel Unger**, graphic designer for the D.A. project, studied graphic design in Germany, Switzerland and the UK. In 2004 he published *black/book – communication guerilla*, a compendium of all forms of subversive communication in the public sphere, and in 2011 his masters thesis *Status Corporate Design – about visual uniformity and graphical arbitrariness*. He works as designer under the label of DUDESIGN and is head design researcher of the Mobile Institute for Design Research (MIDER) in Stuttgart, Germany and Zurich, Switzerland.

**Anton Viesel**, language editor for the D.A. project, has held editorial positions in academic publishing at SAGE Publications (London) and at Wiley-Blackwell (Oxford). After graduating with a BA in English Language and Literature from Oxford University and an MA in Comparative Literature from University College London, he also worked as a freelance proofreader, copy editor and translator. He currently works as an editorial consultant at University College London.

### AOBBME TEAM

**Ines Wuttke**, assistant to Yana Milev, has studied media art and scenography at the HfG, Hochschule für Gestaltung (University of Arts and Design) in Karlsruhe since 2006 and at the ZHdK Zurich since 2007. She is a regular member of the collective “Guerilla Transit”. During the time of the D.A. editing process, Ines has taken over the AOBBME organization and web management.

**Johannes Tolk**, design assistant to Yana Milev, studied graphic design and media art at the HfG, Hochschule für Gestaltung (University of Arts and Design) in Karlsruhe and completed his studies with an MFA in Experience Design at Konstfack, Stockholm. He works in the field of social sculpture, book art and photography. For the D.A. project he completed some visual essays.

### TRANSLATION

Christopher Langer, Berlin – Translator of all texts by Yana Milev

John Rayner, Cologne / Colin Shepherd, Berlin / Maria Vlotides, London



## Contributors

**Giorgio Agamben**, Baruch Spinoza Chair at European Graduate School EGS, is a professor of aesthetics at the University of Verona, Italy and teaches philosophy at the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris and at the University of Macerata in Italy. Agamben's unique blending of literary theory, continental philosophy, political thought, religious studies, literature and art makes him one of the most challenging thinkers of our time. He was a visiting professor in Paris and has taught at American universities such as UC Berkeley, Los Angeles, Irvine, Santa Cruz and Northwestern.

**Manuel Arias-Maldonado** is lecturer in political science at the University of Malaga, Spain. He is currently a research associate at the Rachel Carson Center in Munich. He has been a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Berkeley and spent periods of research in Keele, Oxford and Siena. His research topics include environmental politics, political liberalism and the minimal state, deliberative democracy, as well as Wikipedia and the sociopolitical implications of information technologies. On this last topic he has published a comparative study of the German, Spanish and English Wikipedias. His most recent book is *Real Green: Sustainability after the End of Nature* (2011).

**Fareed Armaly** is an artist and curator, whose work introduces a research-driven methodology that draws its guidelines out from selected roles and fields of enquiry, setting these in new correspondences “coercing constellations” (Helmut Draxler). Armaly considers the open definition of artistic practice as the medium with which to render a contemporary syntax that implicates a politics of representation, culture and identity. Armaly has exhibited internationally at distinguished platforms such as *Documenta 11*. Parallel to this, he has occupied a range of positions within the art-institutional system, including cocurating museum exhibitions (Louisiana Museum, Denmark) and four years as artistic director at Künstlerhaus Stuttgart. Since 2008 he has been instructor on the Ecole du Magasin curatorial programme, Grenoble, and between 2011 and 2013 is visiting fellow at the Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths, University of London.

**Aleida Assmann** is a cultural anthropologist and Egyptologist. She is professor of English and comparative literature, University of Constance. Assmann's research is chiefly concerned with questions of cultural memory, remembering and forgetting. Notably, she has examined the tensions between personal experience and official remembrance in the history of memory in Germany after the Second World War. In a recent work, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit: Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (2006), Assmann points out a number of possible paths from an individual to a collective construction of the past. Assmann has been a visiting scholar at a number of universities and institutes, including the Getty Center in Santa Monica, California (1995), Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (1998–1999) and Princeton University (2001).

**Roger Ballen**, born in New York City, has lived and worked in Johannesburg, South Africa for almost 30 years. During this period from 1982 to 2008 he produced eight books and his style evolved from photojournalism to a unique artistic vision. The subject of animals has been an essential theme to Ballen's work since he started photography over 40 years ago. His next book (to be published in 2013) will be on birds photographed in a strange surrealistic place. Ballen's work has been shown in important institutions throughout the world and is represented in many museum collections, such as the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France, the Tate, London, England and Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA.

**Jean Baudrillard's** (1929–2007) work combines philosophy, social theory and an idiosyncratic cultural metaphysics that reflects on key events of phenomena of the epoch. A sharp critic of contemporary society, culture and thought, Baudrillard is often seen as a major guru of French postmodern theory, although he can also be read as a thinker who combines social theory and philosophy in original and provocative ways and as a writer who developed his own style and forms of writing. He was an extremely prolific author who published over 30 books, including *The System of Objects*, *Impossible Exchange*, *Screened Out* and *The Perfect Crime*.

**Alexander Becherer**, sculptor and painter, sees his roots in urban life and in the influences of street art, although he himself prefers to live in a rural area. Vast wall productions, classical paintings, right through to the creation of—and experimentation with—sculpture and collage are characteristic of his work, which is based on a play with ambiguity, status, waste, loss of identity, abnormality, deliberate or non-deliberate provocation and antagonisms. His main theme, though, is masquerade, the glance behind the curtain. Becherer's sculptures construct complex object layers of composite beings inbetween man and animal, carrying a subtle humour and excess armament at the same time.

**Philipp Beckert**, is a musician and photographer. From 1990–1992 he was the assistant concertmaster of the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra. He has been the first violin in the Rundfunksinfonie Orchester Berlin (RSB) since 1996. In addition to his orchestral work, Philipp Beckert is also active as a soloist and in chamber music ensembles, and was involved in many premieres of New Music and contemporary composers. Philipp Beckert has been a photographic autodidact for the last 25 years. He works in black-and-white analogue photography in a style of photo and travel journalism. Numerous trips overseas have brought him to Japan, China, Brazil, Canada, Korea and the USA where he has combined his concert appearances with photographic research. Philipp Beckert is a co-founder of NUXN – Platform for Photo-graphy and Visual Anthropology.



**Franco Berardi Bifo** is a writer, media theorist and media activist. He took part in the '68 movement as a student. Accused of participating in militant actions he was imprisoned in 1969 and in 1972. Like other intellectuals involved in the political movement of Autonomia in Italy during the 1970s, he fled to Paris, where he worked with Félix Guattari in the field of schizoanalysis. In 2002 he launched the experiment *Telestreet*, a network of activist media against the Italian media dictatorship. In 2009 he published *The Soul at Work* (Semiotext(e), Los Angeles). He has been a contributor to the magazines *Semiotext(e)* (New York), *Chimères* (Paris), *Metropoli* (Rome) and *Archipiélago* (Barcelona). He teaches social history of communication at the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan and works as coordinator of the European School for Social Imagination (SCÉPSI).

**Peter Berz** is a cultural and media scientist who works on the natural philosophy of Jacques Monod at the Center for Literary and Cultural Research (ZfL), Berlin and lectures at Berlin's Humboldt University. His fields of interest are Lamarckism in history and the present day, biological morphogenesis and topologies. Among his publications are *L'imaginaire animal* (2011), *Versuch über die Wölbung* (2010), *Die Lebewesen und ihre Medien* (2009), *Die Kommunikation der Täuschung: Eine Medientheorie der Mimikry* (2008), *Die vier Verschiebungen des Blicks* (2005) and *08/15: Ein Standard des 20. Jahrhunderts* (2001).

**Alain Bieber** studied rhetoric, sociology, literature and political science in Tübingen and Paris. He works as an art critic, blogger, project manager and curator in Strasbourg. In 2004 he founded REBEL:ART, a platform for art, culture and politics. Ongoing projects are *The International Stickeraward* and *PARASITES*, an illegal exhibition series. He cocurated the *Subversiv Messe* in Linz and the *Dockville Festival* in Hamburg, was a jury member at *DokFest Kassel*, *Viral Video Award* and *Backup Media Festival*, and has given lectures about street art, subversive strategies, fanzines and illegal interventions all over the world. For the last three years he has worked as a journalist for the German *ART* magazine in Hamburg and is now the project manager for ARTE Creative in Strasbourg.

**Marc Bijl**, a Dutch media artist, studied at the Royal Academy of Art and Design in s'Hertogenbosch and at the Rennie Mackintosh School of Art in Glasgow. He was part of *Manifesta 4* in Frankfurt with his fake *Flash Art* and legal and illegal interventions in public space. He has participated in various international group shows since then, such as *Nation* (2003) at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, *20/20 Vision* (2004) at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the touring exhibition *Populism* (2005), *Dark* (2006) at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam and *Restless Empathy* at Aspen Art Museum (USA). Among his latest solo shows are *never trust a rebel* at Galerie Reinhard Hauff, Stuttgart (2012) and *9/11 666 777* at Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam (2010). He is currently working on large abstract paintings and preparing his first museum solo show at Groninger Museum in October 2012.

**Elize Bisanz** is an art historian and semiotician. She was educated in Berlin and Paris and holds a master's degree in cultural science and a PhD in communication science. She is professor at the Institute for Studies in Art at the University of Lüneburg and a member of the Institute for Studies in Pragmaticism at Texas Tech University. Her recent book, an edition of Charles S. Peirce's *Monist Series*, is an essential contribution to a timely access to the Peircean universe of science. Her research fields include cultural communication, deconstruction, pragmaticism and interdisciplinary scientific methods. She is also the author of *Die Überwindung des Ikonischen* (2010), as well as the editor of various interdisciplinary books such as *Das Bild zwischen Kognition und Kreativität: Interdisziplinäre Zugänge zum bildhaften Denken* (2011).

**Elisabeth Blum**, architect, author and lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Zurich, has focused her research on architecture, urbanism and atmospheric perception in architectural spaces, art and urban environments. Her books include *Atmosphäre: Hypothesen zum Prozess der räumlichen Wahrnehmung* (2010); *Dubai: Stadt aus dem Nichts* (2009); *FavelaMetropolis: Berichte und Projekte aus Rio de Janeiro und São Paulo* (2004); *Schöne neue Stadt* (2003); *Boulevard Ecke Dschungel* (2002); *Ein Haus, ein Aufruhr: Anmerkungen zu Zaha Hadids Feuerwehrhaus* (1997); *Wem gehört die Stadt?* (1996); and *Le Corbusiers Wege* (3<sup>rd</sup> 2003).

**Michael Blum** is an artist and writer based in Montreal. His work aims at critically re-reading the production of culture, myths and history. Projects include *A Tribute to Safiye Behar*, 9th Istanbul Biennial (2005), *Lippmann, Rosenthal & Co.*, De Appel, Amsterdam (2006), *Cape Town – Stockholm (On Thembo Mjobo)*, Mobile Art Production, Stockholm (2007), *Exodus 2048*, Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven and New Museum, New York (2008–09), *Capri in Tangerang*, ruangrupa, Jakarta (2011) and *Faktories und Felder*, The Israeli Center for Digital Art (2012). He is a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal's School for Visual and Media Arts.

**Friedrich von Borries** is an architect and teacher of design theory and curatorial practice at HFBK Hamburg. He is also the curator of contemporary design at the Hamburg Museum of Art and Industry. From 2007 to 2008 von Borries was a guest researcher at ETH Zurich and at MIT Cambridge, while simultaneously acting as a guest professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Nuremberg. Between 2003 and 2009, he co-led the Berlin 'raumtaktik' office with Matthias Böttger. He is a research fellow at Goldsmiths, University of London and a fellow of the Junge Akademie of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and the National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. In 2008, Borries was the commissary-general for Germany's contribution to the Venice Architecture Biennale.

**Pierre Bourdieu** (1930–2002) was a French sociologist, anthropologist, philosopher and champion of the anti-globalization movement, whose work spanned a broad range of subjects from ethnography to art, literature, education, language, cultural tastes and television. Bourdieu's most famous book is *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1984). It was named one of the twentieth century's ten most important works of sociology by the International Sociological Association.

The French group **Bureau d'études** has been producing cartographies of contemporary political, social and economic systems for the past several years. The visual analysis of transnational capitalism is based on extensive research and is usually presented in the form of large-sized murals. For example, "Governing by Networks", a chart produced in 2003, visualizes the mutual involvements and dependencies within the global media conglomerates. Revealing what normally remains invisible and contextualizing apparently separate elements within a bigger whole, these visualizations of interests and cooperations re-symbolize the unseen and hidden.

**Angelique Chrisafis** is *The Guardian's* Paris correspondent. She was previously Ireland, then arts correspondent for the London daily.

**James Clifford** is a historian and anthropologist. He was trained in social and intellectual history at Harvard University. Since 1978 he has taught cultural theory, literature and anthropology in the History of Consciousness Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His books include *Writing Culture*, edited with George Marcus (1986), *The Predicament of Culture* (1988), *Routes* (1998) and *On the Edges of Anthropology* (2003). He is currently completing *Returns*, a book on indigenous cultural politics in postmodernity.

**Olivier Coulangue**, a French photographer, has been part of the renowned Agence VU in Paris since 1992. His photographs remain a reflection of a society where superficial appearances destroy human interactions. Coulangue's work has explored those considered outsiders: from the homeless, the Romani people or psychotic children to pornography. His work has been published and exhibited worldwide, including at prominent festivals such as *Les rencontres d'Arles* and *Visa pour l'image*.

**Branka Ćurčić** is an art critic and, since 2002, programme editor in the 'new media center\_kuda.org', Novi Sad, Serbia ([www.kuda.org](http://www.kuda.org)). She is also the editor of a publishing project (*kuda.read*) that focuses on critical approaches towards new media culture, political culture, contemporary artistic practice and the social realm. Within *kuda.org*, she participates in (co-)curating exhibitions and in organizing lectures, conferences and workshops.

**Mark Dery** is a cultural critic. He has been a professor of journalism at NYU, a Chancellor's Distinguished Fellow at UC Irvine and a visiting scholar at the American Academy in Rome. His books include *The Pyrotechnic Insanitarium: American Culture on the Brink* and *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*. His latest is the essay collection, *I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts*, forthcoming from University of Minnesota Press. Dery is at work on a biography of the artist and legendary eccentric Edward Gorey for Little, Brown.

**David d'Heilly** is principal of 2dk, a research and production company. He has been published in nine countries, in books or by periodicals such as *The Economist* and *Wired*. He has produced and/or directed award-winning documentaries and feature films, and has produced and curated exhibitions and cultural festivals in Europe, the USA and Japan. He is currently writing a book about Tokyo and global urbanization.

**Wolfgang Fach** is professor emeritus of political theory at the University of Leipzig, having been vice-president of the university until 2011. In 1998 he was visiting professor at Rutgers University, New Brunswick and in 1986/1987 visiting fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. His topics of interest are the history and genealogy of political ideas since the eighteenth century, with a focus on theories of governing. Among his publications are *Die Hüter der Vernunft* (1999), *Die Regierung der Freiheit* (2003) and *Politische Ethik* (2003).

**Hal Foster** is Townsend Martin Professor of Art & Architecture at Princeton University. His latest books are *The Art-Architecture Complex* (2011) and *The First Pop Age: Painting and Subjectivity in the Art of Hamilton, Lichtenstein, Warhol, Richter, and Ruscha* (2011).

**Georg Franck** studied philosophy, economics and architecture. Holding a doctorate in economics, he became a practising architect and town planner in 1974. In addition, he was active in software development and produced a planning information system, which has been marketed since 1991. Besides these main responsibilities, he has been engaged in writing widely on philosophy and economics. In the German-speaking world he is known for having been the first theorist to write on the economy of attention, with publications dating back to 1989. Since 1994 he has held the chair of digital methods in architecture and planning at the Vienna University of Technology.

**Roger Frantz** is professor of economics at the San Diego State University. Between 2005 and 2008 he held the interim chair, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, San Diego State University. Among his books are *Renaissance in Behavioral Economics: Essays in Honor of Harvey Leibenstein* (2007, as editor), *Two Minds: Intuition and Analysis in the History of Economic Thought* (2005) and *X-Efficiency: Theory, Evidence, and Applications* (1988).

**Matthew Fuller** is a writer and cultural critic. He is the author of various books including *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software* (2003), *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture* (2005) and *Elephant & Castle* (2011). With Usman Haque, he is coauthor of *Urban Versioning System v1.0* (2008) and with Andrew Goffey, coauthor of the forthcoming *Evil Media*. He is the editor of *Software Studies: A Lexicon* (2008) and coeditor of the journal *Computational Culture*. Matthew Fuller is involved in a number of projects in art, media and software and is a reader at the Centre for Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London.

**Lia Gangitano** is a curator and founder of PARTICIPANT INC, a not-for-profit art space on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. She is editor of *Dead Flowers* (2010) and the forthcoming anthology, *The Alternative to What? Thread Waxing Space and the '90s*. She has also served as a curatorial advisor for PS1 Contemporary Art Center, a MoMA affiliate, with exhibitions including Lutz Bacher, *My Secret Life* (2009).

**Saroj Giri** teaches politics at the University of Delhi. From the 'armed struggle' of the Maoists in India to WikiLeaks, he engages with 'social eruptions', including most recently the London riots and Tahrir Square demonstrations. He has written on ecological Marxism, social movements, the World Social Forum and secularism in India. He is primarily interested in radical social theory and, in particular, the Marxist notion of political subjectivity for revolutionary change. Recently he has contributed to the 'idea of communism' initiated by Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou.

**Boris Groys** is a philosopher, essayist, art critic, media theorist and internationally-acclaimed expert on late-Soviet postmodern art and literature, as well as on the Russian avant-garde. He is Global Distinguished Professor at the Faculty of Arts and Science, New York University. Among his recent publications are *Art Power* (2008) and *Going Public* (2010).

**Gabriele Hadl**'s research has focused on how alternative and community media are affected by policy and social movements. On this topic, she has edited a special double issue of the *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics* (vol. 5, nos 1 & 2) and acted as an editorial advisor and contributor to the *Encyclopedia of Social Movement Media* (John D.H. Downing ed., 2010). She is also interested in the effects of the media environment on the natural environment. She teaches media policy as an assistant professor at Kwansei Gakuin University, Japan. She is the head of the Community Communication Section of the International Association for Media and Communication Research, a founder of the Civil Society Media Policy Consortium (<http://web.mac.com/ellenycx/CSMPolicyPublic>) and a member of the NUESTROSMedios/OURMedia Network. Her civic engagement includes the Buy Nothing Day Japan Network (<http://bndjapan.org>), for which she designed the Zenta Claus icon.

**Joachim Halse** is assistant professor at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Design. With a combined background in anthropology and interaction design, Joachim Halse earned his PhD (IT University of Copenhagen) in the emerging discipline of design anthropology. In his research he explores the future-making aspects of mundane, everyday life through hybrid research practices that lie between ethnographic fieldwork and design-oriented articulations of new possibilities.

**Dirk Hebel** is assistant professor of architecture and construction at the ETH Future Cities Laboratory in Singapore and runs DRKH Architecture. He has taught at the ETH Zurich, Princeton University and Syracuse University and has been scientific director of the Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development (EiABC). Dirk Hebel and Jörg Stollmann were principals of INSTANT Architects from 2002 to 2008. With Hanspeter Logo and Tobias Klauser they run United\_Bottle Group. The project United\_Bottle received the Van Alen Institute Fellowship Award, the Red Dot Design Award for Best Conceptual Design and the LANXESS Award.

**Christina Hemauer**, born 1973 in Zurich, Switzerland, studied arts and art education at Zurich University of the Arts and liberal arts at the Academy of Arts, Ghent. **Roman Keller**, born 1969 in Liestal, Switzerland, graduated in environmental sciences at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, and studied to become a photographer in Zurich (Gaf), New York (SVA, ICP) and Karlsruhe (HGK). The two artists have been collaborating since 2003. In 2006 Hemauer | Keller proclaimed a new era in art history—Postpetrolism. [www.roadnottaken.info](http://www.roadnottaken.info), [postpetrolism.info](http://postpetrolism.info)

**Daniel Hermsdorf** studied art history, media and theatre studies in Bochum and Paderborn, receiving his PhD in 2010. Since 1995 he has been a freelancer in the domain of journalism, public relations, and cultural and lecturing activities in the humanities. Since 2004 he has published numerous articles on media studies and critique on [www.filmdenken.de](http://www.filmdenken.de), and has, since 2005, been making documentary and experimental videos for the FilmFundBüro.

**Tom Holert** is an art historian and critic who occasionally slips into the role of cultural producer. A former editor of *Texte zur Kunst* and *Spex*, he currently teaches and conducts research at the Centre for Art/Knowledge at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Among his books are *Imagineering: Visuelle Kultur und Politik der Sichtbarkeit* (as editor, 2000), *Entsichert: Krieg als Massenkultur im 21. Jahrhundert* (coauthored with Mark Terkessidis, 2002), *Fliehkraft: Gesellschaft in Bewegung – von Migranten und Touristen* (coauthored with Mark Terkessidis, 2006), *Marc Camille Chaimowicz: Celebration? Realife* (2007), *Regieren im Bildraum* (2008) and *Das Erziehungsbild: Zur visuellen Kultur des Pädagogischen* (coedited with Marion von Osten, 2010).

**Brian Holmes** is a cultural critic, living mostly in Paris and Chicago. He holds a doctorate in Romance languages and literatures from the University of California at Berkeley, was the English editor of publications for *Documenta X* in Kassel, Germany, in 1997, was a member of the editorial collective of the French journal *Multitudes* from 2003 to 2008, and has recently published a collection of texts on art and social movements entitled *Unleashing the Collective Phantoms: Essays in Reverse Imagineering* (2007). His new book, *Escape the Overcode: Activist Art in the Control Society*, is forthcoming from WHW/VanAbbemuseum and is available in full at <http://brianholmes.wordpress.com>. Holmes was awarded the Vilém Flusser Prize for Theory at Transmediale in Berlin in 2009.

**Sophie Houdart** is an anthropologist at France's National Centre for Scientific Research and a member of the Laboratory of Ethnology and Comparative Sociology, Paris Ouest. For 15 years she has been conducting fieldwork in Japan, focusing on creative and innovative processes. She published *La cour des miracles: Ethnologie d'un laboratoire japonais* (2008), *Kuma Kengo: An Unconventional Monograph* (coauthored with Minato Chihiro, 2009) and coedited *Humains, non humains: Comment repeupler les sciences sociales* (2011), as well as many papers on scientific and architectural practices.

**Mark Kammerbauer** is a German-American urbanist and architect. He has worked in the USA, the Netherlands and Germany, and is a research associate at the chair of Prof. Hannelore Deubzer, TU München. He has recently completed his dissertation, "Planning Urban Disaster Recovery", at the Bauhaus University Weimar under the supervision of Prof. Dr Dieter Hassenpflug.

**Janina Karolewski** holds an MA in Islamic Studies, Ottoman Studies and Political Studies from Heidelberg University. Between 2007 and 2011 she was a member of Heidelberg's Collaborative Research Centre SFB 619 "Ritual Dynamics", working on the ritual tradition of Alevi communities in Turkey and the Diaspora. Since 2011 she has been a member of the SFB 950 "Manuscript Cultures" at Hamburg University, studying Alevi manuscripts as a particular case of written knowledge transmission in communities dominated by oral tradition.

**Lisa Kirk**, a New York based artist, received her BFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York and her MFA from the University of California, Irvine. Her projects have exhibited at galleries, institutions and museums both domestically and internationally, including INVISIBLE-EXPORTS, MoMA PS1, PARTICIPANT INC and MOT International, among others. Kirk's work has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, *Art in America*, *The New Yorker*, *New York Magazine*, *ArtReview*, *The Guardian* and many more.

**Alexander Kluge** is a German filmmaker, political activist and theorist. Trained in law, he turned to film in the late 1950s at the suggestion of his friend Theodor Adorno, codirecting *Brutality in Stone* (1960) with Peter Schamoni, a reflection on the Nazi atrocities. In 1962 Kluge signed the "Oberhausen Manifesto", which declared a new freedom for cinema from convention and commercial concerns, and soon after cofounded Germany's first film school in Ulm. Kluge was awarded the Golden Lion for lifetime achievement at the Venice Film Festival in 1982. As a fiction writer and member of the legendary postwar literary circle Gruppe 47, he won Germany's highest literary award, the Georg Büchner Prize, in 2003 and the Theodor Adorno Prize in September 2009.

**knowbotic research** (Yvonne Wilhelm, Christian Huebler and Alexander Tuchacek) lives in Zurich. The art group has been experimenting with urbanity, the construction of knowledge and political representations in mediatized public spheres. They hold a professorship for art and media at Zurich University of the Arts. The art group has participated in the 48th Venice Biennale (1999), Seoul Biennale (2002), Hong Kong and Shenzhen Biennale (2007), Biennale Rotterdam (2009), Moscow Biennale (2011), exhibited in Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki (1994), Hamburger Kunstverein (1995), Henie Onstad Kunstsenter Oslo (1996), Museum Ludwig Köln (2000), New Museum New York (2002), Witte de With Rotterdam and MOCA Taipeh (2004), Kunsthalle St. Gallen (2005), Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum and Skuc Gallery Ljubljana (2006), NAMOC Beijing (2008) and Aarhus Kunstmuseum (2009), and has received major media art awards.

**Joachim Kreysler** is a German physician who has specialized in nutrition, public health and tropical medicine. After ten years researching nutrition at the Max Planck Institute in Tanzania in the 1960s, he joined the World Health Organization in 1974 for a period of seven years as regional advisor for nutrition emergencies and primary health care in southern Africa. During the 1980s Kreysler worked in the AIDS Department of WHO's Geneva headquarters, later joining WHO's policy unit for emergency relief operations. After the Rwanda crisis in 1994 he became senior medical officer and health policy advisor for the International Red Cross (IFRC). He was awarded the Red Cross Public Health Prize in 2009 for "outstanding visionary work in the elimination of measles". He is currently involved with People's Health Movement as an evaluator in the context of the current WHO reform process.

**Bruce D. Larkin** is professor emeritus of politics at the University of California at Santa Cruz and the convenor and director of studies of the Global Collaborative on Denuclearization Design. He is author of *Nuclear Designs: Great Britain, France and China in the Global Governance of Nuclear Arms* (1995), *War Stories* (2001) and *Designing Denuclearization: An Interpretive Encyclopedia* (2008), and posts to the web at gcdd.net, design.learnworld.com and blog.learnworld.com.

**Tim Lenoir** is professor of history and chair of the programme in history and philosophy of science at Stanford University. He is the author of *The Strategy of Life: Teleology and Mechanics in Nineteenth-Century German Biology* (1982), which examines the development of non-Darwinian theories of evolution, particularly in the German context during the nineteenth century. His other books include *Politik im Tempel der Wissenschaft: Forschung und Machtausübung im deutschen Kaiserreich* (1992), *Instituting Science: The Cultural Production of Scientific Disciplines* (1997), a volume that examines the formation of disciplines and the role of public institutions in the construction of scientific knowledge, and an edited volume, *Inscribing Science: Scientific Texts and the Materiality of Communication* (1998).

**Armin Linke** is an artist who works with film and photography, combining different media to blur the border between fiction and reality. He is working on an ongoing archive of human activity and of the most varied natural and manmade landscapes. His multimedia installation about the contemporary Alpine landscape was awarded a prize at the 9th Venice Architecture Biennale and at the Graz Biennial on Media and Architecture. He is professor at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, guest professor at the Iuav University of Venice, Arts and Design, and research affiliate on the MIT Visual Arts Program, Cambridge.

**Kai Löffelbein** is a freelance photographer from Germany. He studied political science in Berlin and "Photojournalism and Documentary Photography" at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Hanover. Since 2007 he has been working as a photographer for different NGOs and several publications. Kai Löffelbein's work has been exhibited internationally in numerous shows and festivals. In 2011 he was the first German photographer to win the "Unicef – photo of the year" award. In 2012 his series "Kids of Sodom" received the Henri Nannen Award.



**Martina Löw** is professor of sociology at the Darmstadt University of Technology, specializing in space-related social analysis, urban and regional sociology, women's and gender studies. Her publications include *Raumsoziologie* (2007), *Einführung in die Stadt- und Raumsoziologie* with Silke Steets and Sergej Stoetzer (2007) and "The Constitution of Space: The Structuration of Spaces Through the Simultaneity of Effects and Perception" in the *European Journal of Social Theory* (2008).

**Boyan Manchev**, philosopher, is professor at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) and at the New Bulgarian University, Sofia, and a former vice-president and programme director at the Collège International de Philosophie, Paris. Among his recent books are *Miracolo* (2011), *L'altération du monde: Pour une esthétique radicale* (2009) and *La métamorphose et l'instant – désorganisation de la vie* (2009).

**Oliver Marchart** is professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Lucerne. Among his recent books are *Die politische Differenz: Zum Denken des Politischen bei Nancy, Lefort, Badiou, Laclau und Agamben* (2010), *Hegemonie im Kunstfeld: Die documenta-Ausstellungen dX, D11, d12 und die Politik der Biennalisierung* (2008) and *Cultural Studies* (2008).

**Rudolf Maresch**, born 1954, lives near Regensburg, Germany, from where he is active as an author, publicist and critic. He has edited several books that deal with media and the public sphere, culture and politics, as well as the future of Western societies. Among his recent publications are *Cyberhypes* (2001), *Raum, Wissen, Macht* (2002) and *Renaissance der Utopie* (2004). Since the mid-1990s he has contributed to diverse internet media, at present particularly the online magazine *Telepolis*.

**Rémy Markowitsch**, born in Zurich in 1957, started out as a journalist and photographer. In all of his projects, he creates imaginary contextual spaces by drawing on an immense store of references, but these spaces can only be accessed through the sensuality and seductiveness of his objects and photographs, through his light, text and video installations. All of Rémy Markowitsch's deliberately conceived and yet sensually accessible works are the result of enthusiastic and extensive forays into literature and research, history and politics, voyages and discovery, colonialism and the appropriation of the other, addiction and a passion for collection.

**Jürgen Mayer H.** is the founder and principal of J. MAYER H Architects' studio focusing on works at the intersection of architecture, communication and new technology. Recent projects include among others the villa Dupli.Casa near Ludwigsburg, Germany and Metropol Parasol, the redevelopment of the Plaza de la Encarnacion in Sevilla, Spain, the residential building JOH3 in Berlin, Germany. From urban planning schemes and buildings to installation work and objects with new materials, the relationship between the human body, technology and nature form the background for a new production of space. Jürgen Mayer H.'s work has been published and exhibited worldwide and is part of numerous collections including MoMA New York and SF MoMA. National and international awards include the Mies-van-der-Rohe-Award-Emerging-Architect-Special-Mention-2003, Winner Holcim Award Bronze 2005 and Winner Audi Urban Future Award 2010.

**Thomas Metscher**, philologist and philosopher, studied at the universities of Berlin, Munich, Bristol and Heidelberg, received a PhD in English Literature in 1966, taught German literature at the University of Belfast from 1961 to 1971, English literature, comparative studies and aesthetics at Bremen University from 1971 to his retirement in 1998. Since then his field of interest has shifted to problems of philosophical anthropology, the theoretical foundation of Marxism, theory of social consciousness, aesthetic and cultural theory. His numerous publications include *Kunst und sozialer Prozeß* (1977), *Herausforderung unserer Zeit* (1989), *Pariser Meditationen* (1992), *Shakespeares Spiegel: Geschichte und literarische Idee*, in two volumes (1995/1998), *Welttheater und Geschichtsprozeß* (2003), *Imperialismus und Moderne* (2009), *Logos und Wirklichkeit* (2010) and *Kunst als ästhetischer Gegenstand* (2012). Books on Shakespeare and on aesthetic studies are forthcoming.

**Markus Miessen** is an architect and writer. The initiator of the *Participation* tetralogy, he has published on the question of critical spatial practice, institution building and spatial politics. Architectural projects include LU Arts Centre (UK), Gwangju Biennial Hub (Korea), Performa Hub (USA), Post Office Manifesta 8 (Spain) and others. In 2008, he founded the Winter School Middle East. He has held academic positions at the AA (2004–2008), Berlage Institute (2009–2010) and Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design (2010–2011). Miessen is now a professor for critical spatial practice at the Städelschule, Frankfurt and guest professor at Geneva University of Art and Design as well as University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

**Mikael Mikael** is an artist who has worked furtively since discovering a secret service project in New York related to Ground Zero. A report on this secret service project has been published by Suhrkamp Verlag under the title *1WTC*. Mikael Mikael has obtained a new identity and shuns the public eye. He resides everywhere and nowhere – currently probably in Berlin. He held a scholarship at the Akademie Schloss Solitude, Stuttgart, in 2011.

**Mindpirates** is an artist group that works on aspects and issues of contemporary culture, sociology and ecology. The group's approach is to work independently and in an interdisciplinary way. They combine challenging aesthetics, substantive examination and experiment with new forms of distribution, exhibition and cooperation.

**Ken'ichi Mishima** is professor for social philosophy at Tokyo Keizai University. From 1990 to 2004 he was professor for social philosophy and comparative cultural studies at the University of Osaka. From 1978 to 1980 he spent a research period in Germany with a fellowship of the Alexander von Humboldt-Foundation. In the academic year 1994/1995 he was a fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin. In February 2011 Ken'ichi Mishima received an honorary doctorate from The Free University of Berlin.

**Miki Mistrati** has been working as a journalist since 1994, among others for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR1 and DR2), TV2/Denmark, Nordic Film & TV and Bastard Film. He was the cofounder and owner of Bastard Film from 2000 to 2009 and has produced more than 40 documentaries and features. Among his journalistic awards are *The News Award* (Denmark, 2002), *The Documentary Award of the Year* (Denmark, 2009), *Gold World Medal NY Festival Award* (USA, 2011) and *Best Documentary* at the Tutti Nello Stesso Piatto international film festival (Italy, 2011).

**Stephan Moebius** is professor for sociological theory and the history of ideas at the University of Graz. He is president of the Cultural Sociology Section of the German Sociological Association and president of the Sociological Theory Section of the Austrian Sociological Association. His research fields are history of sociology, cultural sociology and sociological theory. His publications are *Kultur* (2010), *Kultur: Theorien der Gegenwart* (edited with Dirk Quadflieg, 2011), *Ästhetisierung des Sozialen: Reklame, Kunst und Politik im Zeitalter visueller Medien* (edited with Lutz Hieber, 2011), *Die Zauberlehrlinge: Soziologiegeschichte des Collège de Sociologie (1937–1939)* (2006) and *Marcel Mauss* (2006).

**Chantal Mouffe** is professor of political theory at the Centre for the Study of Democracy at the University of Westminster in London. She has taught and researched in many universities in Europe, North America and South America, and she is a corresponding member of the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris. She is the editor of *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (1979), *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community* (1992), *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (1996) and *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (1999); the coauthor with Ernesto Laclau of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985); and the author of *The Return of the Political* (1993), *The Democratic Paradox* (2000) and *On the Political* (2005).

**Molly Nesbit** is chair and professor in the Department of Art at Vassar College and a contributing editor of *Artforum*. Her books include *Atget's Seven Albums* (1992) and *Their Common Sense* (2000). *Midnight: the Tempest Essays*, a collection of her essays on contemporary art, is published by Periscope Press. Since 2002, together with Hans Ulrich Obrist and Rirkrit Tiravanija, she has curated *Utopia Station*, an ongoing book, exhibition, seminar, website and street project.

**Henk Oosterling** is associate professor of philosophy at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and director of Skillcity. His research programme Intermediality explores the crossovers between philosophy, arts and politics. Aside from his own books, he has (co)edited more than two dozen volumes of essays, the most recent of which is *Intermedialities: Philosophy, Arts, Politics* (2011). In 2004 he founded Rotterdam Skillcity, a strategic concept for social design that has been adopted by Rotterdam's city council as the blueprint for a ten-year renovation of Rotterdam South. His most recent publications on these projects are *Woorden als daden* (2009) and *Doendenken* (2012).

**Marjetica Potrč** is an artist and architect based in Ljubljana and Berlin. She is best known for her onsite projects using participatory design, her drawing series and her architectural case studies. Her work has been exhibited extensively throughout Europe and the Americas. In 2011 she was appointed professor at HFBK Hamburg. She has received numerous grants and awards, including the Hugo Boss Prize (2000) and the Vera List Center for Arts and Politics Fellowship at The New School in New York (2007).

**Princess Hijab** is an anonymous street artist working primarily in Paris, France. Her art centres on veiling the main characters on underground billboards using black paint.

**Sophia Prinz** is research associate at the chair for comparative sociology of culture at Viadrina European University (Frankfurt/Oder). Among her main fields of research are theories of visual culture, poststructuralist sociology and theories of perception and affect. Among her publications are *Das Design der Gesellschaft: Zur Kulturosoziologie des Designs* (edited with Stephan Moebius, 2012), *Visual Studies* (coauthored with Andreas Reckwitz and published in *Kulturstudien*, edited by Stephan Moebius, 2012) and *Pierre Bourdieu und die Kulturwissenschaften: Zur Aktualität eines undisziplinierten Denkens* (edited with Daniel Šuber and Hilmar Schäfer, 2011).

**RAMMSTEIN** are an (East)-German “*Gesamtkunstwerk*”, made up of six musicians and performers: Paul Landers, Christian Lorenz, Till Lindemann, Richard Kruspe, Oliver Riedel and Christoph Schneider. Rammstein was founded as a band in Berlin in 1994. Their world tours have been great success stories, especially in the USA. The band's specific performance rests on their stage, light and pyrotechnical shows, their song oeuvre (performed solely in German), as well as their music videos, made by internationally renowned directors. The stage shows and music videos display a distinct language of symbols, metaphors and emblems. Throughout their career they have avoided any marketing and journalism.

**Jacques Rancière** is professor of philosophy at European Graduate School EGS, Switzerland and emeritus professor of philosophy at the University of Paris-VIII. His books include *Aux bords du politique* (1990), *Courts voyages au pays du peuple* (1990), *Le destin des images* (2003) and *Politique de la littérature* (2007).

**REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT** (the implications of which in German range from ‘Cleaning Service’ to ‘Purification Society’) is an artists’ project group that works at the intersection between art and social reality. Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer first came together to create RG. The artists work with partners from different backgrounds, providing platforms for interdisciplinary activities. Their way of working is based on the positive potential of connecting different spheres of society. RG initiates projects that generate new relations and that interest groups of people. In their way of working they follow a cognitive concept of art. RG understands contemporary art as a catalyst of social and political processes.

**Birgit Richard** has been lecturing in theoretical and practical new media at the Goethe University Frankfurt since 1997. Her fields of research and teaching are image cultures (youth-art-gender), especially in web 2.0 social networks such as YouTube, flickr, MySpace and Facebook, material and visual cultures, media and net cultures, intersectional visual gender studies (the visual construction of gender), as well as the aesthetics of current youth cultures. Her publications include *inter-cool 3.0: Jugend Bild Medien* (coedited with Heinz-Hermann Krüger, 2010), *Flickernde Jugend—rauschende Bilder: Netzkulturen in Web 2.0* (2010), *Konsumguerilla: Widerstand gegen Massenkultur?* (coedited with Alexander Ruhl).

**Christian Ritter** studied theory of art and design at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). Since 2006 he has been research associate at the ZHdK Institute for Critical Theory. From 2008 to 2010 he was director of a research project entitled “Migration Design”, based jointly at ZHdK and the University of Zurich. Since 2012 he has been research associate at an artistic and ethnographic research project investigating the representation of everyday youth culture on mobile telephones (University of Zurich and ZHdK, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation). He is working on a doctoral dissertation at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne KHM. His current research interests and publications focus on visibility and identity in transcultural space, youth culture, design and branding, and visual culture in the internet and everyday life.

**Irit Rogoff** is a theorist, curator and organiser who writes at the intersections of the critical, the political and contemporary arts practices. She is professor of visual culture at Goldsmiths, University of London, having founded the Visual Culture Department there in 2002. Her work across a series of new ‘think tank’ PhD programmes at Goldsmiths (research architecture, curatorial/knowledge) focuses on the possibility of exchanging knowledges across professional practices, self-generated forums, academic institutions and individual enthusiasms. Publications include *Museum Culture* (1997), *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (2001), *Unbounded: Limits Possibilities* (2008) and *Looking Away: Participating Singularities, Ontological Communities* (2010). Her curatorial work includes *De-Regulation* (2005–2008), *A.C.A.D.E.M.Y.* (2006) and *Summit: Non Aligned Initiatives in Education Culture* (2007).

**Elisabeth von Samsonow**, artist and philosopher, is professor in ordinary for philosophy and historical anthropology of art at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and guest professor at Bauhaus University Weimar. Among other things, her academic work focuses on the relationship between art and religion in the past and present, the theory and history of female identification, sacral androgyny and the disintegration of the self in modernity. As an artist, she deals with the systematic and symbolic place of sculpture in the canon of the arts. Amongst her recent publication are *Anti Elektra: Totemismus und Schizogamie* (2007), *Unzipping Philosophy* (ed., 2009), *Egon Schiele: Ich bin die Vielen* (2010), and *Elektra: Die Geburt des Mädchens aus dem Geiste der Plastik. Auf Friedrich Nietzsche* (2011).

**Thorsten Schmitz** is a reporter for the German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Until 2010 he was the paper's correspondent for Israel. In 2000 he published *Abraham zwischen den Welten: Ansichten aus Israel*.

**Gregor Schneider** is a German artist, whose main area of work is constructed rooms. Since 1985 Schneider has been working elaborately on the house on *Unterheydener Straße* in Mönchengladbach-Rheydt. Gregor Schneider created replicas of the existing rooms by building complete rooms inside other rooms, each consisting of walls, ceilings and floors. To begin with, the original rooms had all been areas of a house: a bedroom, a coffee room, a lumber-room, a kitchen, a corridor, a cellar. In 2001, he was awarded the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale for his infamous work “Totes Haus u r” exhibited at the German Pavilion. Gregor Schneider was appointed professor of sculpture at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK) in 2009.

**Franz Schultheis** is professor for sociology at the University of St. Gallen. Prior to that he lectured at the universities of Geneva, Neuchâtel, Paris V and Constance. He is president of the Pierre Bourdieu Foundation and vice-president of the Swiss Science and Technology Council.

**Gundula Schulze Eldow** has worked as a freelance photographer since 1985. In 1988 she achieved an international breakthrough at the *Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie in Arles*. Since then her work has been exhibited internationally, for example in New York, Tokyo, Florence, London, Paris, Moscow, Lima and Los Angeles. Following German reunification she travelled and also stayed for longer periods in the USA, Italy, Russia, Egypt, Japan, Peru and Bolivia. She has received numerous awards and scholarships, including the Higashikawa Prize for photography. She lives and works in Berlin, Peru and on her travels.

**Christiane Schulzki-Haddouti** is a media expert and journalist. As a freelance journalist she writes primarily for *heise online*, the *VDI-Nachrichten*, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, *Futurezone* and *Berliner Gazette*. She specializes in issues such as civil rights, freedom of information, data protection and media ethics. She has been a jury member of the Initiative Nachrichtenaufklärung (INA) since 2000, for which she has conducted and coordinated research seminars at the universities of Dortmund and Bonn for many years. To accompany the study “Kooperative Technologien in Arbeit, Ausbildung und Zivilgesellschaft” (Cooperative Technologies in Work, Training and Civic Society) she founded the platform KoopTech together with Lorenz Lorenz-Meyer in the summer of 2007.

**Richard Sennett** has explored how individuals and groups make social and cultural sense of material facts — about the cities in which they live and about the labour they do. He focuses on how people can become competent interpreters of their own experience, despite the obstacles society may put in their way. His research entails ethnography, history and social theory. In the mid-1990s he began a project charting the personal consequences of work for workers, a project which has carried him up to the present day. The first of these studies, *The Corrosion of Character* (1998) is an ethnographic account of how mid-level employees make sense of the ‘new economy’. The second, *Respect in a World of Inequality* (2002), charts the effects of new ways of working on the welfare state. A third, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (2006), provides an overview of change. Most recently, he has explored more positive aspects of labour in *The Craftsman* (2008).

**Cynthia E. Smith** serves as Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum's curator of socially responsible design in New York. Trained as an industrial designer, she led multi-disciplinary design and planning projects for cultural institutions for over a decade. After earning a graduate degree at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, she joined Cooper-Hewitt, where she integrates her work experience with her advocacy on human rights and social justice issues. She coauthored "The Politics of Genocide: U.S. Rhetoric vs. Inaction in Darfur" for the *Kennedy School Review* (2005). She cocurated the *2010 Design Triennial: Why Design Now?* and curated the *Design with the Other 90%* exhibition series. Named a "20/20 New Pioneer" by *Icon* design magazine and one of *Metropolis* magazine's "next generation of young curators", she has served on several international design juries and lectured widely on socially responsible design.

**Jörg Stollmann** is professor for urban design and urbanization at the TU Berlin and runs his architecture practice based in Zurich. He is founding partner of the non-profit platform urbaninform.net. He has taught at the UdK Berlin and the ETH Zurich. Jörg Stollmann and Dirk Hebel were principals of INSTANT Architects from 2002 to 2008. With Hanspeter Logo and Tobias Klauser they run United\_Bottle Group. The project United\_Bottle received the Van Alen Institute Fellowship Award, the Red Dot Design Award for Best Conceptual Design and the LANXESS Award.

**Gabriel Tarde** (1843–1904), French sociologist and criminologist, was one of the most versatile social scientists of his time. His theory of social interaction ("intermental activity") emphasized the individual in an aggregate of persons and brought Tarde into conflict with Émile Durkheim, who viewed society as a collective unity. In *La Criminalité comparée* (1886) and other works, Tarde pointed out the importance of environment in criminal behaviour. His two-volume *Psychologie économique* (1902) stimulated the school of institutional economics.

**Magdalena Taube** studied modern German literature, English and American literature at Humboldt University Berlin. She first became active as a journalist at the age of 13. She has published in the *Märkische Allgemeine Zeitung*, *taz*, *fluter.de*, *jetzt.de* and *springerin*, to name but a few. From 2007 to 2009 she was director of culture and media at du-machst.de, the portal for an initiative promoting greater youth participation launched by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs. Until 2009 she was editor-in-chief of the cultural database of the *Kulturportal Deutschland*. Since 2002 she has worked in the editorial office of the *Berliner Gazette*, where she was appointed editor-in-chief in 2009. She is currently working on her doctoral thesis on online journalism.

**Mark Terkessidis** writes about youth- and pop-culture, migration and racism for *tageszeitung*, *Tagesspiegel*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Die Zeit*, *Freitag*, *Literaturen*, *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* and *DeutschlandFunk*. He is cofounder with Tom Holert of the Cologne-based Institute for Studies in Visual Culture (isvc.org). He is a member of the international jury for the BMW Group Award for Intercultural Commitment and on the jury of Berlin's Hauptstadtkulturfonds. His book publications include *Kulturkampf: Volk, Nation, der Westen und die Neue Rechte* (1995), *Psychologie des Rassismus* (1998), *Fliehkraft: Gesellschaft in Bewegung – Von Migranten und Touristen* (coauthored with Tom Holert, 2006) and *Interkultur* (2010).

**Michael Tomasello** is codirector of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, Leipzig, Germany. His research interests focus on processes of social cognition, social learning and communication/language in human children and great apes. His books include *First Verbs* (1992), *Primate Cognition* (1997), *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition* (1999), *Constructing a Language: A Usage-Based Theory of Language Acquisition* (2003), *Origins of Human Communication* (2008) and *Why We Cooperate* (2009).

**UBERMORGEN.COM** is an artist duo based in Vienna, Austria and St. Moritz, Switzerland, founded by lizvlx and Hans Bernhard. Their open circuit of conceptual art, software art, pixel painting, large-scale installations, legal art, net.art and media hacking transforms their brand into a hybrid *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The computer and the network are (ab)used and the permanent amalgamation of fact and fiction points toward an extremely expanded concept of one's working materials: i.e. international rights, piracy, e-commerce, torture, democracy and global communication. Their work is always inherently materialist, flexible and formal. Their thinking is deeply political, but unlike 'political art', UM.COM seek to capture the present and the future and to amplify them without preconceived opinion or vision.

**Philip Ursprung** is professor of the history of art and architecture at ETH Zurich. He studied art history, history and German literature in Geneva, Vienna and Berlin. He taught at the University of Geneva, Berlin University of the Arts, the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation of Columbia University New York and the University of Zurich. His most recent book is *Kunst der Gegenwart: 1960 bis heute* (2010).

**Bill Viola** is internationally recognized as one of today's leading artists. For 40 years he has created videotapes, architectural video installations, sound environments, electronic music performances, flat panel video pieces, and works for television broadcast. Viola's video installations are shown in museums and galleries worldwide and are found in many distinguished collections. His single channel videotapes have been widely broadcast and presented cinematically, while his writings have been extensively published, and translated for international readers. His works focus on universal human experiences – birth, death, the unfolding of consciousness – and have roots in both Eastern and Western art as well as spiritual traditions, including Zen Buddhism, Islamic Sufism, and Christian mysticism.

**Paul Virilio** is a world-renowned philosopher, urbanist and cultural theorist. His work focuses on urban spaces and the development of technology in relation to power and speed. He is known for coining the term 'dromology' to explain his theory of speed and technology. He is the author of many books, including *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (1977), *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (1989), *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (1991), *Bunker Archaeology* (1994), *The Vision Machine* (1994), *Politics of the Very Worst* (1999), *The Information Bomb* (2000), *A Landscape of Events* (2000), *The Accident of Art* (2005) and *Art as Far as the Eye Can See* (2007).



**Graham Ward** is currently the Fergusson Professor of Philosophical Theology and Ethics at the University of Manchester and Regius Professor of Divinity (Elect) at the University of Oxford. He is the author of numerous books including *Cities of God* (2000), *Cultural Transformation and Religious Practice* (2004), *Christ and Culture* (2005) and *The Politics of Discipleship* (2009). He is currently completing a two-volume work on the doctrine of God entitled *Ethical Life*.

**Peter Weibel** studied literature, medicine, logic, philosophy and film in Paris and Vienna. Since 1984 he has been professor at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. From 1984 to 1989 he was head of the digital arts laboratory at the Media Department of New York University in Buffalo. In 1989 he founded the Institute of New Media at the Städelschule, Frankfurt, which he directed until 1995. Between 1986 and 1995 he was in charge of Ars Electronica in Linz. He commissioned the Austrian pavilions at the Venice Biennale from 1993 to 1999. Between 1993 and 1998 he was chief curator at the Neue Galerie Graz, Austria, and has been chairman and CEO of Karlsruhe's Center for Art and Media (ZKM) since 1999.

**Andi Weiland** studied politics and communications science at the University of Münster. He has longstanding experience in the field of youth work and promoting young journalists. He is on the board of the Jugendpresse Deutschland e.V. and is responsible for the media projects 'politikorange' and Jugendmedien.de. He conducts research into the philosophy of technology and, together with ohrenflimmern.de, publishes his own blog. He is a guest editor at *Berliner Gazette*.

**Peter Welz** lives as an artist in Berlin. He studied at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin, the Cooper Union in New York and the Chelsea School of Art in London. Peter Welz is one of the most outstanding artists in the young German art scene. His works can be found in such collections as the Goetz Collection, the Falckenberg Collection and the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt. Peter Welz sees himself as a sculptor who examines issues related to sculptural design through the medium of video. He is primarily interested in the movement of the human figure in space, which he subjects to extensive artistic research in various test arrangements. Welz attracted international interest with his five-part video that was developed in close collaboration with the celebrated choreographer William Forsythe.

**Krystian Woznicki** read Islamic and Asian studies and Spanish at Humboldt University Berlin. He is experienced as a curator, author and lecturer. From 1995 to 1998 he was Tokyo correspondent for *Spex*. Between 2002 and 2005 he was copublisher of a reader-series in newspaper format at etc.publications and director of the digital archive '911.jpg'. He is an author of books on globalization. His most recent publications are *Abschalten* (2008) and *Wer hat Angst vor Gemeinschaft? Ein Dialog mit Jean-Luc Nancy* (2009). He served for ten years as editor-in-chief of the *Berliner Gazette* until 2009 and has been its managing editor since then.

**Ulf Wuggenig** studied sociology, philosophy and political science at the University of Vienna and received his postdoctoral qualification (Habilitation) at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg. He is director of Leuphana University Lüneburg's Kunstraum, an exhibition space for contemporary visual art, which he cofounded with Beatrice von Bismarck and Diethelm Stoller in 1993. He has taught at the art schools of Zurich and Vienna and was professor for sociology at the universities of Hannover and Osnabrück. His most recent book in English is *Critique of Creativity: Precarity, Subjectivity and Resistance in the 'Creative Industries'* (with Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray, 2011).

**Evert Ypma** is a design researcher, conceptual strategist and lecturer. He works as a consultant on design strategies, identity and positioning questions in the public and private sectors. Clients comprise global financial corporations, local, national and supranational governmental and cultural institutions. Between 2005 and 2010 he led an internationally oriented postgraduate research programme on identity, design and representation ('multiplicity and visual identities') at the Zurich University of the Arts. In 2011 he was research fellow and consultant at the University of Technology, Sydney. He is on the advisory panel of *Iridescent: Icograda Journal of Design Research* and ambassador of the Icograda, INDIGO initiative. He is also connected to the Cumulus VisCom working group. He is currently beginning work on his PhD research on design politics with VU University Amsterdam. His home base is Zurich, which he combines with Amsterdam and Asia.

**Christof Zotter** studied Indology and ethnology at the University of Leipzig. He has been a member of the Collaborative Research Centre SFB 619 "Ritual Dynamics" at Heidelberg University since 2006. Combining textual studies and fieldwork, his PhD thesis, completed in 2009, explores the initiation ritual of the Brahmins in the Kathmandu Valley. His current research focuses on Hindu lifecycle rituals in Nepal, especially that of marriage.

**Nils Zurawski** studied sociology, ethnology and geography in Münster, Germany. He obtained his PhD in 1999 with a thesis on "Virtual Ethnicity: Studies on Identity, Culture and Internet". From 2000 to 2001 he conducted fieldwork in Northern Ireland and afterwards undertook various research projects (on CCTV, loyalty cards and cultures of security). His research interests include surveillance (CCTV, consumption, theory, anthropology of surveillance), identity, urban studies, space, political anthropology, violence, the internet and media, and qualitative methods.

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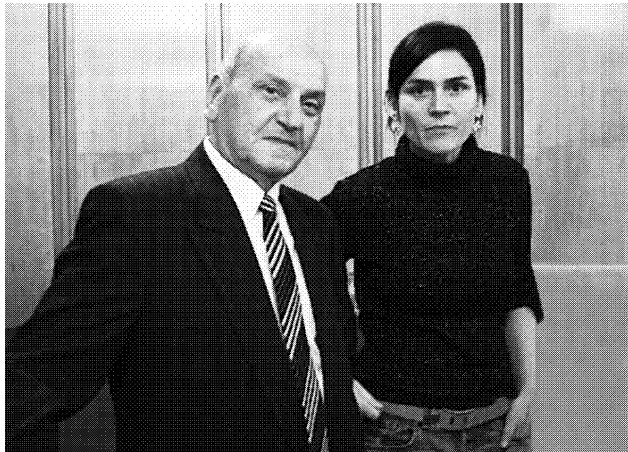
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Gancho 'Geo' Milev, Yana Milev – Foto © Gabriela Frančík, Leipzig

If drawing a bow, protecting, is the original form of architecture, then scratching graffiti is the original form of design. Script, trace, sign, insignia, demarcation. No matter if it's on paper, skin or in stone. The one invents and constructs space; the other occupies and defines the space. Both intertwine directly: the extension of space and the demarcation of space. Surviving means being recognizable and significant – on the surface or in hiding: as the author, successor and inhabitant.



## SYNOPSIS

“D.A.” represents a cultural science handbook of “Design Anthropology”, providing an epistemology, phenomenology and survey of the varieties of the extended concept of design. Here the design concept is placed at the centre of the nexus of meaning of cultural production that rests on the three pillars *Segno*, *Mythus* and *Techne*. Anthropological design research is trans-disciplinary, developing in the connexion between *Visual Culture* (signal, in/visibility, image/void, imagination, representation), *Doing Culture* (act, cooperation, relation, fabrication, exchange), *Material Culture* (object, artefact, thing, facing, texture), *Knowledge Culture* (techniques, practices, norms, beliefs, values), *Narrative Culture* (mythology, significance, meaning, memory, identity), *Critical Culture* (watching, criterion, antagonism, crisis, theory) and *Aesthetic Culture* (emotion, sentiment, taste, feel, sense). It is only against this background that the complex anthropological dimension of *Design Culture* can be understood, extending far beyond the horizon of a design science concept of design, industry-near design thinking and marketing, or a product-oriented concept of manufacture. “Design Anthropology” is the research field of the “Coming Community”, which has been founded here with a “D.A.” fraternity of more than 100 contributions, partners and friends.

Through “D.A.” Yana Milev has formulated the theoretical and curatorial foundation for an extended concept of design that she has been representing and practicing since the 1990th in the context of the arts, rendering it now as “Anthropo Design”.