EMANCIPATING THE MANY

A practice led investigation into emergent paradigms of immediate political action

FIEL, W

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010
EMANCIPATING THE MANY

A practice led investigation into emergent paradigms of immediate political action

FIEL, W.

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010
This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognize that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior consent.
EMANCIPATING THE MANY

A practice led investigation into emergent paradigms of immediate political action

by

WOLFGANG FIEL

A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
In fulfilment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Computing, Communications & Electronics
Faculty of Technology

August 2010
Wolfgang Fiel

Emancipating the Many
A practice led investigation into emergent paradigms of immediate political action

Abstract
The immediate catalyst for having taken up this study was the violent outbreak of weeks of public unrest in the Paris banlieus in the wake of the shooting of young man on the run from the police on October 27 2005. The obvious inability of local municipalities and police forces to explain, let alone to anticipate the swelling discontent with a system which is generally assumed to work effectively and to benefit all has led me to the assumption that we have entered a stage where the concept of representational democracy is seriously compromised.

The sheer scale or projected growth rates of urban agglomerations worldwide is certainly a strong, if not the only indicator for the radical change of ‘lived experience’ in the wake of globalized economies, politics and communication networks. If once the lack of a ‘unitary theory’ was attributed to the field of urbanism (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]), from a contemporary point of view the range of issues and problems at stake far exceed the boundaries of any discipline in particular. Furthermore, to start the inquiry by reasserting the importance of the human condition will allow us to delve into the process of individuation, the diverse realities of individuals, their gathering in groups, their dialogue amongst each other and with their environment in its totality in order to account for the complex interrelations within a highly dynamic network of associations, since the emergence of a fully emancipated Many – as opposed to the One of the state – requires more than the flawed promise of representational democracy to act for the ‘common good,’ or ‘general will’ (Rousseau, 2009 [1762]) of all.

Clearly this task is ambitious, for we have to bridge the gap between the needs, aspirations, emotions, anxieties and dreams of individuals on the one hand, and the temporal emergence of collective co-operation on the other. ‘Official’ knowledge, incorporated by endless columns of statistical data, gathered and administered meticulously thanks to the firm grip of institutionalised observation, is of little help though, for we have become increasingly conscious that the representations thereof are a poor match for the complexity of networked realities ‘on the ground’. My artistic practice conducted together with Alexandra Berlinger under the name of Tat ort is precisely aimed at looking into “matters of concern” as opposed to “matters of fact” (Latour, 2005) in order to gain a genuine insight into the workings of existing settings, where we introduce ourselves as intermediaries for the initiation of a process of active participation by means of interventional apparatuses, conceived specifically for the context in question. Our respective experience has led me to the conclusion that instead of providing alternative representations based on presumed universal identity, the full-blown heterogeneity of the multitude thrives on the general intellect and the activity of the speaker. To speak is to act, and to act is the predominant trait of
political praxis. It is through our acts and deeds that we disclose ourselves in public in the presence of others (Arendt, 1998 [1958]). And it is through acting that we start anew and leave our mark in a situation the moment we intervene in the circulation of empty signifiers upon which we assign a name, the name of an event. It is through our interventional participation that we allow for novelty to emerge in time, as a process without representation and based on sustained fidelity. My research is centred around two questions: First of all, is it possible to devise an interventional apparatus (physical infrastructure) which would work independent of contextual factors, and secondly, is it possible to retain the site-specificity through a process of dynamically mapping the amalgamation of existing information and the data obtained by participants based on face to face communication in order to draw up the ‘portraits’ of existing communities beyond the scope of institutionalised representation. Emancipating the Many therefore is a statement about difference marked as intervention. This intervention requires the presence of others and the intention to act. It is the emergence of a ‘constitution of time’.
Table of Contents

1. Introduction 9
   1.1 Statement of Intent and Contribution to New Knowledge 12
   1.2 Identification of Field 14
   1.3 Methodological approach 15
   1.4 Setting the Scene: Main Characters 17

Part One: Investigation
2. Lived Experience 23
3. The Principle of Participation 27
4. The Principle of Encounter 35
5. Vita Activa 45
6. The Public and the Private Realm 47
7. The Multitude and the General Intellect 51
8. Beginning Anew: Evental Sites 62
9. Insular Territoriality: The Hidden Reality of the Many 69

Part Two: Praxis
10. What is a Problem? 74
11. Epigenetic Landscape 80
12. In Search of a Paradigm 83
13. Phantom Public 87
14. Tat ort: Interrogating the Real 90
    14.1 Inhabiting the ‘Spatial City’ 92
    14.2 St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial 103

Part Three: Mobilising the Many
15. Mobile Unit 110
    15.1 Conceptual Foundation 112
    15.2 Physical Infrastructure 114
    15.3 System Architecture 115
    15.4 Computational Paradigm 116
    15.5 Notational Proposition 118
    15.6 Hermeneutics 119
16. Conclusion 121
17. Epilogue 124
18. List of abbreviations 125
19. References 126
20. Bibliography 129

Appendix A: Achievements to Date
Appendix B: Visual Portfolio
List of Illustrations and Tables

Fig. 1: Fiel, Recombinant Playground.
Fig. 2: Fiel, Sketch Vice-diction.
Fig. 3: Waddington, Epigenetic Landscape, 1956.
Fig. 4: Fiel, Blackboard Series Wiener 01.
Fig. 5: Schulze-Fielitz, Housing Estate on the Ach: Model and site plan from building permit application, 1975.
Fig. 6: Schulze-Fielitz, Housing Estate on the Ach: Isometric view of an ‘Ach Block’ with different floor levels.
Fig. 7: Schulze-Fielitz, Housing Estate on the Ach: Concept floor plan of an eight-flat per interior stairwell typology (maximum construction).
Fig. 8: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City.
Fig. 9: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Scheme of Intervention.
Fig. 10: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Pavilions, Isometric drawing.
Fig. 11: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: One of the speakers distributed in our flat.
Fig. 12: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: From the left, a frequent visitor to our flat; Eckhard Schulze-Fielitz, one of the architects who conceived the compound; microphone wiring running through the kitchen window.
Fig. 13 & 14: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photographs taken during our workshop with kids of the neighbourhood.
Fig. 15: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photograph of a wooden pavilion.
Fig. 16, 17, 18: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photographs of the wooden pavilions.
Fig. 19, 20, 21: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photographs of the wooden pavilions.
Fig. 22: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Plaque for the commemoration of the known victims. (Photograph taken by Irene Rabl)
Fig. 23: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Inauguration ceremony on May 7, 2010. (Photograph taken by Irene Rabl)
Fig. 24, 25: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Photographs taken during the recording of names with the local community. (Photographs taken by Irene Rabl)
Fig. 26: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Alexandra Berlinger and Christian Rabl rehearsing the pronunciation of the names. (Photograph taken by Irene Rabl)
Fig. 27: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Photograph taken during the recordings at the local school. (Photograph taken by Irene Rabl)
Fig. 28: Fiel, World Map of Dissipative Resources, 2006.
Fig. 29: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Road transport.
Fig. 30: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Space Module, Perspective drawing 1.
Fig. 31: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Space Module, Perspective drawing 2.
Fig. 32: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Container Shell.
Fig. 33: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Unfolding stages.
Fig. 34: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Space Module in Parking Lock.
Fig. 35: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Space Module Deployed.
Fig. 36: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Floor Plan and Elevation.
Fig. 37: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: System Architecture, Flow chart.
Fig. 38: Tat ort mobile appliances, Mobile Unit: Database.
Fig. 39: Tat ort, FLUC SHOW OFF: Tat ort mobile appliances, MAN Tractor Unit.
Fig. 40: Tat ort: On Revolution, 2010.
Acknowledgements

1st Supervisor and Director of Studies: Mike Phillips
Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts, University of Plymouth, School of Art & Media, Faculty of Arts
2nd Supervisor: Antonio Caronia
Professor of Aesthetics of New Media, Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milan/Italy
3rd Supervisor: Roy Ascott
Professor of Technoetic Arts and Director of the Planetary Collegium, University of Plymouth
External Advisor: Dr. Oswald Wiener
Writer, Cognitive Scientist, Walstern/Austria

The main reason for my undertaking this study is twofold:
First of all, I have had a continued interest in the urban, as is evident in my education as well as my work as both a professional architect and a visual artist. My Master’s thesis at the Bartlett School of Architecture (University College London) is a specific example for the ‘staging’ of a series of small interventions around the London area of Swiss Cottage, which are based upon imagined trajectories of people walking in public. What I called ‘individual urban appropriation’ back then was soon to become a more general inquiry into the transformative powers of individuals and small groups, much in the spirit of what the Situationist International (Ohrt, 1997) termed ‘unitary urbanism’ (Wigley, 1998).

The second and decisive impulse arrived a few years later, precisely on October 27, 2005, when two young French men from Clichy-sous-Bois died in a power station on the run from the police. What was generally identified as the immediate trigger for the subsequent outbreak of weeks of public unrest was indicative of something that has gone terribly wrong in the Paris banlieues for decades. Much to the bewilderment of many who had deemed it unlikely that this could happen in one of the ‘great’ European cities the sudden eruption of collective rage had devastating effects on a community already subject to dire living conditions. How was it possible that the authorities did not take any notice of the swelling discontent with a system that is generally assumed to work effectively and to benefit all?

It was my conviction early on that the complexity and dynamic nature of the forces at work have been overlooked for too long simply because of the inability of local authorities to envisage something that isn’t supposed to happen in the first place. Sure, most commentators were quick to blame the events on the shortcomings of modernist urban planning and the poor level of construction. While it makes little sense to dispute these arguments on sociological grounds, at the time of their construction the buildings were unanimously hailed as great examples for providing the underprivileged the great comforts of modern living. Seen against that backdrop, a more fundamental problem emerges from the rubble of the burnt dwellings, namely the crisis of a system that lives off the conviction that it serves a homogenised
constituency or ‘the people’ under the banner of a ‘general will’ or ‘in the interest of all’.

Consequently the profession of the architect has to account for much more than the physicality of mass, the organisation of workflows or practised handling of design processes based on generally approved planning methodologies. This is the reason why my ambition with this thesis is to lay the theoretical and practical foundations for implementing an augmented vision for a profession which I believe should actively participate in the ‘emancipation of the many’.

I would like to thank a number of people and institutions, who have contributed greatly and in many ways to make this work possible.

I am highly grateful for the financial support received from the Arts & Humanities Research Council of England, the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research, and Zumtobel Group.

I’ve received a great deal of support from my supervisory team, Mike Phillips, Antonio Caronia, Roy Ascott, and Oswald Wiener, all of whom I owe greatly. I thank my fellow researchers at the NABA and the CAiiA-Hub in Plymouth for intense exchanges and many memorable moments shared in joint research and at conferences.


My deep respect goes out to Helmut Richter, one of the very few teachers to set the agenda for a whole generation of young architects who studied with him at the University of Technology in Vienna, a professional who has built little, but most significantly, and the person who embodies exemplary what it takes to create an ethical stance and to act accordingly.

And finally, I express my deepest gratitude to my collaborator and dearest friend Alexandra Berlinger, a woman who never stops to surprise me and with whom I hope to continue pulling off the most exciting range of works, projects and initiatives under the name of tat ort, and last but not least, my sister Birgit and my parents Marianne and Bert for their love and continued support.
Author’s Signed Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee. This study was financed with the aid of scholarships from the Arts & Humanities Research Council of England, Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research, and Zumtobel Group. Relevant scientific seminars and conferences were regularly attended at which work was often presented; external individuals, institutions, and corporate businesses were visited for consultation purposes; several papers prepared for publication; a number of exhibitions held; projects conceived and carried out; publications edited; and regular teaching conducted, all of which is listed comprehensively in Appendix A (Achievements to Date) and presented visually in Appendix B (Visual Portfolio).

External Contacts
Individuals:
Karl Schlögel, Yona Friedman, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Isabelle Stengers, Theodore Zeldin
Institutions:
Universität für angewandte Kunst, Vienna, Institute of Digital Art
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
Lapin Yliopisto (University of Lapland), Faculty of Art and Design
NABA, Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milan/Italy
Parsons, The New School for Design, New York, School of Design Strategies

Corporations:
MAN Nutzfahrzeuge Austria AG, Vienna/Austria
TransSystems, Kapfenberg/Austria

Word count of main body of thesis: 51,270

Signed

__________________________________________

Date

__________________________________________
Comparison of other people’s attempts to the undertaking of a sea voyage in which the ships are drawn off course by the magnetic North Pole. Discover this North Pole. What for others are deviations are, for me, the data which determine my course. – On the differentials of time (which, for others, disturb the main lines of the inquiry), I base my reckoning.

—Water Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

1. Introduction

Three figures may serve the purpose of illustrating paradigmatically why the twenty-first century is likely to become what is referred to as the ‘Urban Age’ (Burdett, 2006): Globally, the number of people living in cities was 10 percent in 1900, 50 percent in 2007 and is predicted to be around 75 percent in 2050. Now that already more than half of the global population inhabits urban settlements, the diversity and sheer number of issues related to these developments seem overwhelming. Referring to the title of the latest book published by the London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank’s Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007), the Endless City will concern almost every aspect of human activity within a dense network of globally connected urban hubs. This is of far reaching consequences for the potentially infinite scope of a profession, which is believed to reliably monitor, analyse, comprehend, and organise urban form, its infrastructure, the flow of goods, capital, energy, and people on a daily basis and to possess the necessary foresight for predicting and shaping its future trajectories. However, if we only were to opt for one specific name of the profession to begin with, we find ourselves exposed to the dilemma of having lost a clear definition of what it actually is that we expect to be covered by it. Especially over the last five years, the proliferation of respective literature alone undoubtedly reflects a sharp increase of interest in the topic. What the textbooks have hitherto failed to deliver though is a commonly accepted, i.e., generally applicable terminology. Besides urban planning we are now familiar with terms such as city or town planning, urban design, urban development, urban strategies, urban studies, urban theory, or simply urbanism, all of which seem to encompass more or less the same range of topics, with one or the other specific emphasis on issues such as ecology, geography, infrastructure, sustainability, networks, governance, economy, or communication. It can be argued that we have maintained at least a differentiation between practice and research. But this distinction is hardly sustainable any more, since even the implementation of the most modest intervention is increasingly dependent on a considerable amount of research which has to forego an actual planning process. Although far from conclusive, the above listings are intended to shed some light on what this thesis will not be able to deliver: a comprehensive ‘picture’ of all aspects pertaining to what we might call the contemporary urban experience.
However, it’s about time to take a fresh look at the work of those who stand for a more differentiated take on the human condition in general, ‘lived experience’, the epistemological and ontological implications of action, its eventual sites and the discipline of time, the importance of dialogue and concomitant re-emergence of public space, the full blown ‘reality’ of networks of associations and the political consequences thereof, and – most importantly – the provision of a firm ground for practice as a form of research, fully prepared to tackle the ills of our time and to intervene in the consequences thereof in order to deliver what institutions cannot: A name for something new to be set in motion.

The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 178)

1.1 Statement of Intent and Contribution to New Knowledge

After having used the acknowledgments to address my initial motivation, I will start the statement of intent with a more personal account of the intellectual path I’ve crafted for this thesis to unfold somewhat ‘naturally’ in accordance to my major concerns, convictions and aspirations. It will be immediately clear to the most demanding of readers that although the task is to capitalise on the most pertinent of notions, concepts and categories from a personal point of view as well as to show convincingly that one masters the body of work produced on the topic thus far, this undertaking is far from being complete. However obvious a statement like this may appear at first, my emphasis rests on the experience that the choices made are the result of a long process rather than short lived gains of the cherry picker acting under the seasonal influence of a specific taste in fashion. However demanding the process might be, the rewards are plentiful. This is why throughout this thesis I was closely ‘accompanied’ by a handful of titles, which are here to stay with me like good friends. Obviously by using the term ‘friend’ I am not referring to the physical object of the book itself, but rather the author who has written it. Notwithstanding its achievements, science has and still does strive to conform with the ill-conceived presumption that it can strictly separate matters of fact from the circumstances of its presumed emergence in the bright and clear light of an objective gaze, i.e., to separate the experiment from the observer. Of course, with the emerging field of cybernetics in the wake of the rise of quantum physics at the turn of the twentieth century, the disturbing influence of the observer as integral part of the experimental setting began to be noticed. This influence, however, has always been identified as being distinctly negative in nature. Therefore my first statement of intent is the following: This thesis aims at fully integrating what has been neglected far too long, namely the ‘intentional orientation’ of an actor to intervene in a given situation. The interventional character of an act is precisely what I will unpack in the second part of my thesis titled Praxis and
dedicated to the work of Tat ort, a collective co-founded and currently run by myself in collaboration with Alexandra Berlinger. I will show that an interventional act thus understood primarily rests on 5 pillars, all of which are covered successively in the investigations leading up to the practical work: lived experience, dialogue, the many, general intellect, and evental sites. To intervene in the context of contemporary urban settlements with highly fractured social fabrics and a multiplicity of individual lived experiences entails acting politically in the relational form of personal dialogues with the many rather than analysing the supposedly homogenised constituency of the people in order to thrive on the rich potentiality of general intellect within a ‘constitution of time’ that plays out retroactively in the historico-epochal opening of evental sites. This means that my intention is to define political awareness beyond the category of the self-assured identity of nation states as well as below the institutional threshold of representation, solely based on and expressed by huge chunks of quantitative data. This, however, is by no means an attempt to replace the ideology of representation with another concept of universal significance. Quite on the contrary, my intention is to show how the historicity of lived experiences can translate into the complex diversity of alternative narratives that have to be continually updated rather than forged into the narrow and static framework of a presumed self-identity. Time plays a crucial role in this process, since my undertaking is concerned with the novelty that arises out of processes. Since the emergence of events is always evanescent, the potential for novelty manifests itself precisely through an interventional act of retroactively assigning the empty signifiers of evental sites with a name, i.e., the constitutional act of enacting subsequent procedures of fidelity. That this process is by no means restricted to a limited number of interventional acts within a specific context but is conceivable within the operational framework of a specifically crafted interventional set-up will be exemplified in the third part of my thesis, where I will introduce the prototype of what I call the ‘mobile unit’. My contribution to new knowledge is to show that with this setup the age-old contradiction between individual and collective modes of explanation can be bridged once the notion of unifying representation has been replaced with the concept of multiplied participation, and the belief in durable solutions has been replaced by a sustained faith in processes, which once enacted require continuous nurturing. In addition the ‘mobile unit’ is conceived to provide for a friendly and stimulating physical environment to allow the staging of a potentially infinite number of renewed encounters in the sense of dialogues that stimulate participation. To participate is to contribute one’s very own lived experience against the backdrop of the official point of view, which serves as initial set of data, there to be transformed continually in the course of meaningful interaction with the system. The outcome in the form of physical maps however, is no more than a snapshot at a given point in time, which – in order to be called knowledge proper – requires the interpretation of – and alterations through – a suitable number of successive outcomes. The retrieval of knowledge is based on notational difference and thus depends on the increasingly comprehensive understanding of the specific interconnections between the system state at a given
point, its input, and subsequent feed back into the system. This process is the construction and continued nurturing of a peculiar alphabet (Dissipative Resources), or in other words, the building blocks for a novel language for the mapping of urban dynamics aimed at the emancipation of the Many.

1.2 Identification of field

To identify the field of research in a programme that explicitly outlines the need for cross-disciplinary inquiry is indeed an ambivalent undertaking. In my case – if we were to take urban design for example – this ambivalence is accompanied by an overwhelming amount of issues to be covered in this field alone, let alone all those topics that exceed its professional boundaries. Furthermore – to stick with the example of urban design – there is not even a clear definition of the field as such, as I have outlined in the introduction. Given my educational background, architecture and regional design make for the most obvious ‘candidates’, whereas most of my practical work is more likely to fall into the category of visual arts. Another possibility of framing it would have been identifying a desired audience for the reception of the work. This view, however would only have deferred the problem to the level of dissemination, which hardly qualifies for a primary concern within the framework of a thesis. There is yet another way to pose the question though. What is it that the existing theories, practices, and procedures in action fail to cover or fall short of being addressed in a comprehensive manner? All its shortcomings notwithstanding, in his book *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) came quite close to defining at least the necessary characteristics of a field that could make up for all the problems, gaps, misconceptions or lack of convergence that he accredited to the general state of affairs at a time when the field of urbanism was in its infancy.

The theory we need, which fails to come together because the necessary critical moment does not occur, and which therefore falls back into the state of mere bits and pieces of knowledge, might well be called, by analogy, a ‘unitary theory’: the aim is to discover or construct a theoretical unity between ‘fields’ which are apprehended separately, just as molecular, electromagnetic and gravitational forces are in physics. The fields we are concerned with are, first, the physical – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the social. In other words, we are concerned with logico-epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 11–12).

---

It seems reasonable to familiarise the reader with the programmatic context within which this research is situated: ‘Within a transcultural, transdisciplinary perspective, the Planetary Collegium is concerned with the advancement of emergent forms of art and architecture, in the context of telematic, interactive and technoetic media, and their integration with science, technology, sociology, and consciousness research’ (Source: Website of the University of Plymouth, accessed 11 July 2009, from [http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/273](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/273)).
Since Lefebvre talks about a theory, we seem to be thrown back to the same problem. But Lefebvre has got a point here, which, seen from a contemporary perspective, remains largely unresolved. What are the basic elements or seeds of the physical, mental, and social realm of the urban experience that have not yet been adequately voiced and framed within the bounds of a unitary theory? My answer to this question is surprisingly simple: The human condition. From here and in conformity with Hannah Arendt’s assertion that the most basic of human capacities is to start anew, I can proceed with ease, since to act is what connects the politician with the performing artist and the mind of the intellectual with the shared reality around him. Traditional philosophy, fundamental for the ontological grounding of a specific discourse, however, does not fully suffice any such theory, for its attitude is contemplation. After all urbanism, however vague its contemporary definition – and probably more than ever before – is the field that fuels my inspiration more than any other, for it requires a dialogue across the disciplines and our urgent attention for the human condition in order to explore its many realities.

1.3 Methodological approach

In my statement of intent the emphasis I’ve placed on the role of the observer in experimental scientific settings is characterised by acknowledging the ‘intentional orientation’ of an actor who intervenes in a given situation. Where science is expected to act upon matters of fact, we are usually less concerned about the sort of disturbance or noise, like Shannon and Weaver called it in their communication model (Shannon & Weaver, 1963) in the realm of practice. With my methodological approach I attempt to challenge the clear-cut distinction between facts and experience. Two of my works as visual artist serve as paradigmatic examples for singular cases which constitute a rule without aspiring to establish some universal truth. Its paradigmatic character notwithstanding the example is inseparable from the fact that it is one case among others. Thus understood, my method is to sustain a delicate balance between a theoretical a priori and practical necessity, the total abandonment of the particular-general couple, in order to constitute an ‘analogue third through the disidentification and neutralisation of the first two, which now become indiscernible’. (Agamben, 2009: 19) The practice offers all the ingredients to permeate the specific in order to become exemplary without being reproducible. The paradigmatic use of artistic judgements isn’t bound to an existing or yet to be established system of representation which subsequently would facilitate the explication of a set of rules as in orthodox scientific reasoning. Instead this methodological approach allows for the contingent (diachronic) oscillation between an either or in order to become a neither nor by abandoning a strictly synchronic conception of history in favour of shifting between a number of time layers, all of which are relevant simultaneously depending on the characteristics of the specific circumstances at hand, i.e. the specific setting of the artistic intervention. This is precisely the reason why later on, my investigation will lead me to
elaborate on the work of Duns Scotus, Baruch Spinoza, Gilbert Simondon, and Paolo Virno, who have attempted to deduce a theory of individuation which for that matter is precisely based on refuting the law of the excluded middle. The call for abandoning the particular-general couple on philosophical grounds is further elaborated in the realm of political theory where I come to argue to firmly distinguish between a universal common and the communality of a pre-individual One. Agamben holds that to participate individually in an unparticipated commonality which exists prior to the process of individuation marks a 'historico-epochal opening' (Agamben, 1999: 106), whereby in contrast to the universal self-reflective identity of an autonomous subject, the pre-individual communality does not conform to numerical unity. What we are dealing with here is exactly the peculiar situation of a neither nor, the inapplicability of the law of the excluded middle. If we further assume that from a political point of view, the process of individuation precludes the possibility to define the body politic through the presumed universal identity of a homogenous constituency, the multi-layered historicity of lived experience forcefully illustrates the need for a thorough rethink of prevailing forms of political representation. This is exactly what I am trying to illustrate with the project in the third part of my thesis called ‘mobile unit’.

With the mobile unit I am setting the theoretical and infrastructural premises for new models to engage with local communities in the form of face-to-face conversations for the purpose of collecting, transforming, and mapping their individual inputs. The striking similarity between the categories of multiplicity and event to be found in Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition (2004 [1968]) and Badiou’s Being and Event (2006) respectively, vividly exemplifies the specific relationship of this project with my philosophical enquiry and artistic practice at the same time. For a differential relation to be actualised in diverse spatio-temporal relationships, the signifying event of retroactively assigning a name to the empty terms of a multiplicity is exactly what requires the intention to actively intervene in a given context outside the representational regime of an existing institutional dispositif. In this sense, the process of tagging or mining already existing sets of data (much like in semantic web applications) based on initial dialogues (as executed in my artistic practice) yield the spatio-temporal relationships of an epistemological structure (outlined in Difference and Repetition), which has got the properties (computational paradigm) to be actualised instantaneously in the form of a three-dimensional map (notational proposition).

In addition to leading multiple dialogues the acquired information has yet to become knowledge proper. The intermediate outcomes of the mapping process provide for the raw material of sustained interpretation. With his emphasis on the individual-psychological and socio-historical hermeneutics of life, the work of Wilhelm Dilthey is of pivotal importance for highlighting the circular nature of comparatively interpreting what the lived experience of the Many has brought about: The declared fidelity to retroactively assigned events due to the human ability to act and start anew.
1.4 Setting the Scene: Main Characters

I will now attempt to briefly familiarise the reader with some of the issues evident either between the lines or against the personal background of specific authors. Inextricably linked with one another, these issues furnish my intellectual endeavour on the whole and provide for the ‘material’ of and upon which I’ve crafted the theoretical framework of a practice that takes on the most variegated forms and temporal ‘realities’ of shared experience.

In A Grammar of the Multitude, written in 2001 and published in English translation in 2004, Italian philosopher and semiologist Paolo Virno reflects in a dense and elucidating manner on emergent features of what he calls ‘post-Fordist capitalism’. His inquiry is based upon the assumption that ‘we, the multitude’ (a term he traces back to its putative father, Baruch Spinoza) constitute ‘publicly organised spaces’ for the general intellect to thrive on ‘idle talk and curiosity’. For him the co-operation of individuated subjects is about to become the primary ‘productive’ force, requiring the presence of others and thus displaying a marked linguistic-communicative quality. The pre-eminence of language ties in with the ontological focus of the second book, a remarkable collection of essays in philosophy written by another Italian thinker, Giorgio Agamben, entitled Potentialities and first published in an English translation in 1999,2 where he sheds some light on the historicity of language, its pre-suppositions and potentialities in action.

As far as a general investigation into the conditio humana is concerned, Hannah Arendt appears to be a safe bet. But especially with her work, the obvious has to undergo a process of close scrutiny in order to qualify for more than what is generally accessible on the level of the text. What I am alluding to, is the pointedly political dimension of her work, which lives off the quick mind of an activist and her persistent belief in the most human of capacities, namely to start anew, despite and in the face of the unspeakable cruelties of the twentieth century. Hardly anyone else in the history of political theory3 is able to match the convergence of a solid philosophical foundation and the capacity to reflect, comment and judge upon the happenings of daily politics beyond the need to hark back to the ‘secure’ grounds of ideology for the sake of individual opportunity.4

In 1923, Martin Buber published his seminal work Ich und Du (the English translation of which appeared in 1937 under the title I and Thou), with which he aspired to define the ontological foundation of being-here on the basis of a ‘world to be met’. Buber’s

---

2 It is important to know that his internationally acclaimed book Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life appeared in the preceding year despite the fact that it has been written on the basis of some of the issues that appeared already in Potentialities.

3 It was Hannah Arendt herself who insisted on using the term political theory in favour of political philosophy or sociology.

4 Here, ideology does not include her fidelity to the American Revolution, the republican model of federal democracy, the rejection of totalitarianism, which for her was the ‘natural’ pre-condition of freedom, and her engagement in the build-up of an independent Jewish army to be deployed along the Allied forces in World War II as an immediate response to an existential threat beyond the bounds of humanity.
hermeneutic of the self based on a sustained dialogue with the environment in its entirety is a text of remarkable epistemological breadth, resonating in many ways – albeit not all of them immediately obvious – with Gilbert Simondon’s ontogenesis or Bruno Latour’s (2005) ‘sociology of the social’.

Simondon’s case is in itself a telling example of a body of work, which continues to remain remarkably obscure despite the fact that his close friend Gilles Deleuze has never grown tired of promoting it. With Deleuze he shares an aptness for the concepts of scientific and technological discourse, without lapsing into solely metaphorical transfigurations thereof. It is thanks to his prevailing interest in the psychological and biological implications of a general theory of individuation that he was able to move with relative ease from the observation of natural processes to concrete scientific manifestations thereof.

Bruno Latour, on the other hand, rose to prominence in the wake of his book Reassembling the Social, challenging what he calls ‘sociology of the social’, namely the social sciences’ concept of the social being determined by structural necessity and the immobility of its actors. Consequently his ‘actor-network-theory’ advocates the necessity of looking into the uncertainties of groups, actions, objects and ‘matters-of-fact’ in order to gain the full-blown assemblage of highly mobile arrangements of networked associations, no longer rendered as stable elements of a ‘phantom public’.

It is precisely representational democracy’s presumption of the existence of a general will that the influential American journalist and philosopher Walter Lippmann grew increasingly critical of and has let him to summarise his views in the book titled The Phantom Public.

In a certain way, German historian and sociologist Karl Schlägel embodies a contemporary version of someone who critically reflects upon the ‘official’ point of view of politics. His methodological approach is not only one of the most comprehensive accounts of the contemporary human experience in its entirety but offers temporal imprints of ‘civilian’ activity, which in his view is about to fully emancipate itself from the normative grip of institutionalised mediation. If one is to fully appreciate Schlägel’s methodological approach, it is necessary to understand the emergence of events, their actors, consequences and the specific intervals between them.

It is thanks to the work of Alain Badiou, whose work is pre-eminently concerned with the emergence of novelty inside a situation that we embrace the new as the result of process within a discipline of time, watching over the consequences of the introduction of a name for an event, to which its signifier declares his or her fidelity. The temporal nature of the interventional act of signification is what I consequently call the ‘constitution of time’.

The notion or concept of time is at the very heart of the work of yet another important figure in my thinking, Ilya Prigogine.5 Without having to delve into his work at this

---

5 It is important to mention, however, that two of Prigogine’s more commonly known publications, Order out of Chaos and The End of Certainty, were co-authored by Isabelle Stengers.
point, the following quote from his autobiography marks the significance of time paradigmatically:

> Among all those perspectives opened by thermodynamcis, the one which was to keep my interest was the study of irreversible phenomena, which made so manifest the 'arrow of time'. From the very start, I always attributed to these processes a constructive role, in opposition to the standard approach, which only saw in these phenomena degradation and loss of useful work (Prigogine, 1977).

The ripples of this veritable revelation are not yet fully absorbed by the epistemological framework of scientific research. What appears to become its prevailing modus operandi though is the reliance upon the concept of process. Isabelle Stengers' work has shown that it is the scientific adoption of the principle of evolution that throws into doubt the primacy of contemplation over action and has engendered the rebellious upsurge of life philosophy against the enclosed and self-reflective ramifications of consciousness.

With my thesis I intend to highlight this development and to define the contemporary task of a practice led research endeavour as the bipolar movement between sustained observation and aimed intervention into the processes of daily life, both locally and on a global scale. On the basis of two projects conducted in collaboration with Alexandra Berlinger under the name of Tat ort, the second part of the thesis aims to illustrate exemplary how this movement is set into action and continues to unfold for years to come.

At this point, however, there is one fundamental question that remains to be addressed though: How is it possible to obtain a procedural dispositif for an adequate transfiguration of the narratives of daily life into a generally accessible ‘form’ that is not a mere representation, but the temporal imprint of its own processual nature and subject to an act of interpretation within a hermeneutical circle?

This question lies at the heart of the third part of the thesis, reflected theoretically on the basis of the work of Oswald Wiener, and embodied physically by the envisioned reality of the Mobile Unit. Oswald Wiener is probably the least known of all my references, primarily to be blamed on the fact that hardly any of his work has yet been translated into English. However, he is not only someone I actually do know in person but is somewhat of a role model in a specific sense. Although any attempt to describe his personality or scope of work – in his case not only closely intertwined but close to a unity – is doomed to failure, I’ll try to put him in perspective. Back in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Wiener was founding member of the ‘Wiener Gruppe’ (The Vienna

---

6 At its inception, Tat ort originally was the name of a group of young architects founded in 1998. It was joined by visual artist Alexandra Berlinger in 2002 in order to form its current structure as an open platform to work collaboratively and research driven in a wide range of fields, including visual arts, architecture, and urbanism. More detailed information will be provided in the second part of the thesis.

7 Take for example the biographical account of Ira G. Wool, included on an audio CD which was produced to mark Wiener’s 65th birthday, Hommage à Oswald Wiener: ‘Modern renaissance man extraordinaire, musician and musicologist, founding member of the Wiener Gruppe, artist of rare originality, writer of the greatest distinction, social and cultural critic, mathematical epistemologist, theoretical and experimental neurobiologist, pilot, innkeeper, and most importantly, in the journey that is our life, Oswald leads his friends through the dark wood so that the straight way is not lost.’ (Oswald Wiener zum 65. Geburtstag, Audio CD, Köln 2000, Supposé.)
Group), a collective of young writers, artists, and activists, who – besides the Situationists – emerged as one the most radical avant-garde movements of post war Europe and re-united in 1997 for the preparation of their honorary exhibition at the Venice Biennale (Weibel, 1997). After studying musicology, law, computer science and mathematics, Wiener soon developed a deepening ‘obsession’ with the philosophy, psychology, and development of the mind, based on his preoccupation with linguistics and his active involvement in the early stages of software development. What reached the breadth of a full-blown theory of cognition was published in 1998 as a collection of essays titled Schriften zur Erkenntnistheorie (Essays on Cognitive Science (Wiener, 1996)). Wiener’s didactic rigour, his persistence on terminological clarity, and his ability to trace the conceptual roots of his epistemology with the ‘encyclopaedic’ capacity of a polymath caught my imagination early on, long before beginning this research. His conceptual foundation owes to some extent to the thought psychology of the Würzburg school, which is based on the categories of problem solving, logical reasoning, and conceptualisation. Wiener combines this body of work with the developmental constructivism of Jean Piaget’s (1975, 2003) ‘genetic epistemology’ in order to apply the concepts of scheme, assimilation, and accommodation to his own operational paradigm for the ‘simulation’ of cognitive processes. Wiener’s methodology is somewhat reminiscent of Simondon’s, for what he does is to transform the yields of his observation of natural processes and introspection into the concrete paradigm of an existing ‘technology’. The fact that Wiener applies the Turing machine has caused frequent misunderstandings, culminating in the accusation that his methodology conflates one with the other. The sophistication and complexity of his epistemological theory was possible on the basis of the paradigm as a ‘tool’ rather than being an expression of it, the clearest indication of which – as Wiener rightfully holds – might be the arrival at the concept of the Turing machine itself. This example, however, points beyond the concrete manifestation of Wiener’s theory. It exemplifies the attempt to bridge the gap between the realm of ideas and its actualisation in reality, between the realm of a problem and its solutions. It exemplifies what Deleuze has termed ‘vice-diction’.

The Mobile Unit – as physical embodiment of the question formulated above – is a mobile toolkit envisaged to set in motion what I call ‘dissipative resources’. These resources potentially comprise the full range of generally accessible information at any given point of its deployment through and on top of which participants are encouraged

---

8 Between 1958 and 1966 Wiener held a senior position in data processing at Olivetti.
9 The Würzburg school was founded in 1896 by Oswald Külpe, a former assistant of Wilhelm Wundt and soon was accompanied by a number of hopeful young psychologists, among them most notably, Narziß Ach, Karl Bühler, Ernst Dürr, Karl Marbe, and Otto Selz. In outright contradiction to Wundt’s work, they developed a new approach to psychological experimentation based on the self-observation of cognitive processes in the course of a given task (e.g. interpreting the aphorism or solving a problem). They claimed to have discovered a number of new elements of consciousness such as Bewußtseinslagen (conscious sets), Bewußtheiten (awarenesses), and Gedanken (thoughts). In the English literature, these are often collectively termed ‘imageless thoughts’, and the debate between Wundt and the Würzburgers as the ‘imageless thought controversy’.
10 Ernst von Glasersfeld has declared on more than one occasion his fidelity to the work of Piaget.
to add what has gone unnoticed in the gaze of institutional monitoring. Without delving into further details at this point, the Mobile Unit seeks to address the foregoing question and – though currently in its prototypic infancy and dependent on funding – to go fully into operation any time soon. Here, I will set out the conceptual foundation, the design of the physical infrastructure, the system architecture and its components, the computational paradigm and user interaction, the notational proposition for the actual mapping of momentary states of the system, and the hermeneutic framework for subsequent evaluation and feedback.

I would like to end this chapter with a remark on meaning – and will come back to it in part two – since it is the delicate tissue of language that somewhat loosely connects the theoretical mainstays of my argument without being addressed at any one point explicitly. I maintain a twofold attitude towards it: In this thesis it is presented affirmatively as the primary capacity or faculty, but on the other hand we find ourselves trapped in the web of semantic infelicities and ideological preoccupations once applied in order to create a supposed meaning. It is therefore the very boundary between the transmission of language in itself and the meaning of the terms transmitted, i.e., its predicative quality, that reminds us to be aware of our very openness for both aspects of communication.
Fig. 1: Fiel, Recombinant Playground.
Part One: Investigation

2. Lived Experience

In the beginning was Merz. This bold and forceful statement marks the beginning of the career of Kurt Schwitters (Elger, 1999), who was one of the Dadaists (Dickerman, 2006) but introduced a somewhat different approach in defining what art is or should be as early as 1919, when he showed his first Merz-Bild in the Berlin gallery Der Sturm. One could certainly argue at length to what extent his art differed from that of the Dadaists (I will come back to this point later) but in more than one sense it was precisely what Dada was all about: To explore the richness, diversity, cruelty, ambiguity, and novelty of the urban metropolis in order to use the resources at hand for the creation of something new, to radically break with the past and to enounce an era in which art would not be relegated to a mere epiphenomenal side-effect of contemporary culture – as hitherto has been the case according to the view of their proponents – but to take a leading and defining role right at the heart of urban life. Despite their break with history, the Dadaists did not seek to create ex nihilo. The material was already there in order to be appropriated for the purpose of establishing a visual world order on the foundations of hitherto neglected potentialities, a never ending maelstrom of stuff, arranged and re-arranged through the techniques of montage, assemblage, bricolage, and tableaux vivant. The ingredients of their new world order lost their structural coherence. Certainly the terms retained their value as ‘material’ but for the price of having lost their meaning within a web of newly created syntactical relations. The terms were relegated to the rank of empty placeholders, surrounded by floating predicates and suspended in the horror vacui caused by the traumatic experiences of the First World War, which – for the first time in the Modern Era – dramatically displayed the downsides of technological advancement. In that sense Dadaism displayed its propensity to take a more critical stance towards the technologically friendly role of bureaucratic apparatuses, an attitude which was in marked contrast to the early work of Duchamp, who affirmatively embraced the findings and advancements of modern science and technology as a hotbed of artistic inspiration and metaphorical transfiguration (Dalrymple, 1998 and Schwarz, 1997 [1969]). What some have identified as the beginning of ‘a secret history of the twentieth century’ (Marcus, 2001 [1989]), was to be continued with a more radical and distinctly political approach in coming to terms with the prevailing attitudes of a bourgeois society when the Situationist International movement took centre-stage of the artistic avant-garde in the 1960s. Of course, in many ways the Situationists might be seen as a natural continuation of Dada and Surrealism, but they nevertheless show some decisive differences with respect to their attitude towards the society as a whole.

11 With the term investigation I deliberately allude to the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, or to be more precise to his Philosophische Untersuchungen (Philosophical Investigations) with respect to the only terminus technicus to appear therein, which is ‘language game’ (Sprachspiel) in paragraph 48, Part I (2001 [1953]). It is with respect to this term that I hope my investigation will cast some light.
and the leading political paradigms of the time. Their strategic mainstay still was to appropriate what the urban environment on the whole had to offer, this time round though not without lacking concrete alternatives for the society to overcome an oppressive political system and to rid themselves of the somewhat passive attitude towards the possibility of partaking and actively forming one’s own environment for the purpose of emancipating themselves from the political establishment. First of all, the city was now seen not only as the fundamental depository of resources to be appropriated but also as the test bed for the public staging of new ideas in the course of applying their methodology of ‘psychogeography’ for the pro-active ‘production’ of urban space. Secondly, what inevitably came to centre stage in the course of continuously exploring the urban arena was the human body and its immediate capacity of subjectively experiencing what hitherto was subdued by the influence of a prescriptive or at best contemplative attitude towards the use of public space, where everything else was confined to the privacy of bourgeois households.

It is not very surprising that Guy Debord’s teacher, the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre, himself strongly linked to the Situationists, was the first to address this issue theoretically within the realm of urbanism or the ‘production of space’ for that matter, when he talked about the ‘revolt of the body’.

Indeed the fleshly (spatio-temporal) body is already in revolt. This revolt, however, must not be understood as a harking-back to the origins, to some archaic or anthropological past: it is firmly anchored in the here and now, and the body in question is ‘ours’ — our body, which is disdained, absorbed, and broken into pieces by images. Worse than disdained – ignored. This is not a political rebellion, a substitute for social revolution, nor is it a revolt of thought, a revolt of the individual, or a revolt for freedom: it is an elemental and worldwide revolt which does not seek a theoretical foundation, but rather seeks by theoretical means to rediscover – and recognize – its own foundations (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 210).

However, Lefebvre’s ‘revolt of the body’ remains somewhat enigmatic, for he denies the necessity of a theoretical foundation for re-discovering the place of our bodies by means of his own theory. For him the most immediate source for an ‘epistemology of life’ is based on ‘lived experience’. He continues:

Above all it asks theory to stop barring its way in this, to stop helping conceal the underpinnings that it is at pains to uncover. Its exploratory activity is not directed towards some kind of ‘return to nature’, nor is it conducted under the banner of an imagined ‘spontaneity’. Its object is ‘lived experience’ — an experience that has been drained of all content by the mechanisms of diversion, reduction/extrapolation, figure of speech, analogy, tautology, and so on. There can be no question but that social space is the locus of prohibition, for it is shot through with both prohibitions and their counterparts, prescriptions. This fact, however, can most definitely not be made into the basis of an overall definition, for space is not only the space of ‘no’, it is also the space of the body, and hence the space of ‘yes’, of the affirmation of life. It is not simply a matter, therefore, of a theoretical critique, but also of a ‘turning of the world upon its head’ (Marx), of an inversion of meaning, and of a subversion which ‘breaks the tablet of the Law’ (Nietzsche) (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 210).

With what Lefebvre calls ‘affirmation of life’ he introduced a notion into the discourse on contemporary urban life that hitherto has been neglected for the sake of abstract
prescriptions or the normative regulation of space and its modes of production. Despite the fact that from my point of view Lefebvre’s insistence on approving the affirmative spirit of ‘lived experience’12 to enter the domain of urban studies is one of the most important elements in the process of taping and unlocking what later will be defined the ‘general intellect’, it is crucial to highlight the fundamental shortcomings of Lefebvre’s argument regarding (a) the historical dimension, (b) the political dimension, and (c) the cognitive dimension.

First of all, Lefebvre failed to account for the fact that historically spoken, the rupture between the so-called external reality with its absolute measures for the truthful representation of the world and the ‘discovery’ of the human body as the centre for individually experiencing this external reality has already happened a long time ago when Descartes’ ‘universal doubt’, started to permanently change at least our scientific attitude towards the importance of accounting for the constrained reliability of measures taken relative to rather than independent of our body and its concomitant modes of creation (labour, work, action).13

The Cartesian solution of universal doubt or its salvation from the two interconnected nightmares – that everything is a dream and there is no reality and that not God but an evil spirit rules the world and mocks man – was similar in method and content to the turning away from truth to truthfulness and from reality to reliability. Descartes’ conviction that ‘though our mind is not the measure of things or of truth, it must assuredly be the measure of things that we affirm or deny’ echoes what scientists in general and without explicit articulation had discovered: that even if there is no truth, man can be truthful, and even if there is no reliable certainty, man can be reliable. If there was salvation, it had to lie in man himself, and if there was a solution to the questions raised by doubting, it had to come from doubting. If everything has become doubtful, then doubting at least is certain and real. Whatever may be the state of reality and of truth as they are given to the senses and to reason, ‘nobody can doubt of this doubt and remain uncertain whether he doubts or does not doubt’. . . In other words, from the mere logical certainty that in doubting something I remain aware of a process of doubting in my consciousness, Descartes concluded that those processes which go on in the mind of man himself have a certainty of their own, that they can become the object of investigation in introspection (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 279–280).

Secondly, when Lefebvre holds that the revolt of the body does not resemble a political rebellion, he was rather modest – to say the least, but when it comes to assessing the current state of affairs simply ill-conceived, for it is at least since Foucault in his history of ‘governmentality’ has delineated the increasing importance of the pure and simple bios of the population that we understand the political importance of the body as such within the general framework of governmental practice itself. This is to

---

12 This clearly resonates with Bergson’s *élan vital*, which was concerned with the body as the place of passage in an extended continuum of life: ‘But this special image which persists in the midst of the other, and which I call my body, constitutes at every moment, as we have said, a section of the universal becoming. It is then the place of passage of the movements received and thrown back, a hyphen, a connecting link between the things which act upon me the things upon which I act – the seat, in a word, of the sensori-motor phenomena’ (Bergson, 1991 [1896]: 1151-152). I shall come back to Bergson later in my argument.

13 I draw upon Hannah Arendt’s basic distinction between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*, with the latter being further distinguished by labour, work, and action. (Arendt, 1998 [1958])
say, that based on the genealogy of ‘political economy’ and enforced by the technical means of apparatuses of state security the focus of governmental practice is specifically concerned with the provision of an adequate framework to maintain the pure biological potential of the population to enter the productive exchange between capitalist and worker.

Labor-power incarnates (literally) a fundamental category of philosophical thought: specifically, the potential, the dynamis. And ‘potential,’ as I have just said, signifies that which is not current, that which is not present. Well then, something which is not present (or real) becomes, with capitalism, an exceptionally important commodity. This potential, dynamis, non-presence, instead of remaining an abstract concept, takes on a pragmatic, empirical, socioeconomic dimension. The potential as such, when it still has not been applied, is at the core of the exchange between capitalist and worker. The object of the sale is not a real entity (labor service actually executed) but something which, in and of itself, does not have an autonomous spatial-temporal existence (the generic ability to work) (Virno, 2004: 82).

This is why, as Virno continues, ‘Life, pure and simple bios, acquires a specific importance in as much as it is the tabernacle of dynamis, of mere potential’ (Virno, 2004: 82). My point here is not to say that for every aspect of life or ‘lived experience’ as such a respective institutional provision of care is in place already, but that the task at hand is firstly, to identify precisely those areas where a specific discourse and coherent knowledge is lacking and secondly, to safeguard the formation of any such discourse and the concomitant accumulation of knowledge from the grip of governmental policies, in order to prevent it from being analysed and transformed into a set of concrete measures for executing and reasserting the prevailing state of security. This task, however, is self-evidently of intrinsically political nature, and thus requires the fundamental questioning of our current system of representational democracy.

Finally, there is yet another problem with Lefebvre’s notion of ‘lived experience’, since he is not only vague in describing what these experiences are, but moreover – or rather as a consequence of this – fails to endow the bearer of these experiences with a proper interface to voice, transform, and share them with others. In other words, Lefebvre lacks an operative dimension to his theory and therefore remains trapped in the circular movement of explaining the reason for the importance of individual experience for the production of space with the phenomenon of revolting bodies in order to refer this very phenomenon back to bodily sensations yet to be fully recovered from contemporary oblivion.

I believe that the operation of bridging the gap between the intimate sensations of ‘lived experience’ and its public expression being subject to a process of collective deliberation has to be instilled on the basis of a two-fold movement: Firstly: The principle of participation. Secondly: The principle of encounter.
3. The Principle of Participation

The principle of participation has to be grasped on the fundamental level of being, either based on a supposition that precedes the existence of a self-reflective I or as an absolute being, attainable only through the existence of being itself in a process of retroactively determining the absolute closure of historic becoming on the basis of absolute knowledge. At first, this fundamental way of framing the principle of participation does seem to offer little for the discourse on individuals actively participating in processes of political deliberation. If we turn to the latter though, which is the ‘option’ formulated by Hegel, we soon will recognise its immediate consequences for the relationship between democracy and autonomy, for this relationship is precisely located at the boundary between individual freedom and the *raison d’État* of the démos. For one of the most eminent contemporary political philosophers, Ernesto Laclau, the most radical incarnation of autonomy is the result of self-determination.

An entity is autonomous as far as it does not have to go outside itself in order to be determined in its being. It is in these terms that self-determination, freedom and infinitude formed, for Hegel, an in-dissociable whole: true infinitude, as different from a spurious one, involves finding within itself, the principle of its own determination. And this is the very definition of freedom conceived as autonomy. But this triple equation – freedom, self-determination and autonomy – involves also the notion that the truly autonomous subject can only be a universal one. As a result, freedom and necessity become, for this universal subject, strictly synonymous . . . It is only as far as my true self is the universal that nothing is external to myself and that I am really autonomous; anything less than this universal self will be limited by something essentialy alien which will be the source of an irreducible heteronomy (Laclau, In: Basualo et al., 2002: 377–378).

Laclau continues that concerning democracy the question arises whether the existence of freedom in the realm of ultimate heteronomy is at all possible or conversely, whether absolute self-determination is the necessary prerequisite for establishing freedom in order to arrive at the following conclusion:

Freedom would involve an un-decidable tension between autonomy and heteronomy and would thus become the name of that very un-decidability. The referent of that name, however, would have been displaced: it would no longer be the closure of the gap between universality and particularity, but the very impossibility of that closure. So, we will have to explore the different uses to which heteronomy can be put in relation to democracy (Laclau In: Basualo et al., 2002: 377–378).

This relation between heteronomy and democracy is what concerns us here, since within the Hegelian premises of the ultimate self-identity of the subject of political discourse, the tension of everything that finds itself excluded from the internal mechanism of self-determination and the closed community of self-identical entities has to be resolved on the basis of a dialectical process, which aims at conciliating what has been generated out of the very same closure that lies at the heart of their respective constituting processes. In other words, the subjects of Laclau’s heteronomy are obliged to confer their particularities to a somewhat enigmatic process of universal identification (Laclau calls this process building a ‘chain of equivalences’) in order to
assume a certain degree of autonomy and power and to install what finally constitutes the sovereignty of the nation state. The price to pay for subjects-turned-emancipated-citizens is twofold: First, they have to conform to the ‘common good’ and secondly, the ‘common good’ is represented by ‘the people’ within the rule of representational democracy. The fundamental problem with this conception of democracy is that the subject is trapped in a bipolar movement between particular needs, demands, etc. and the ultimate identification with a universal ideal, without anything in-between and deprived of any possibility to include the Other on either side of the equation. In order to participate, the subject of political activity is forced to be either particular or universal with anything that would allow for a dynamic conception of political deliberation being deferred to the antagonistic battlegrounds of class struggles or the simple representational apparatuses of state bureaucracy.

Let us now turn our attention to a conception of being based on the supposition that precedes the existence of a self-reflective I.

All that is unparticipated constitutes the participated out of itself. All hypostases are linked by an upward tension to existences not participated. The unparticipated, having the logos of unity (being, that is, its own and not another’s, and being separated from the participated) generates what can be participated. For either it must remain fixed in sterility and isolation, and so must lack a place of honour; or else it will give something of itself, such that the receiver becomes a participant and the given subsists by participation. Everything that is participated, becoming a property of that by which it is participated, is secondary to that which in all is equally present and has filled them all out of its own being. That which is in one is not in the others; that which is present to all alike, that it may illuminate all, is not in any one, but is prior to them. For either it is in all, or in one out of all, or prior to all. But a principle which was in all would be divided amongst all, and would itself require a further principle to unify the divided; and further, all the particulars would no longer participate in the same principle, but this in one and that in another, through the diremption of its unity. And if it be in one out of all, it will be a property no longer of all but of one. If, then, it is both common to all that can participate and identical for all, it must be prior to all: such is the Unparticipated (Proclus In: Agamben, 1999, 111–112).

This quote paradigmatically exemplifies the major difference between the conception of a universal common and the communality of a pre-individual One as the unparticipated unity of which a specific being is a separated participant and thus secondary to what is equally present in all. Here to participate does not involve the universal closure of a potentiality at the end of a historical process of identification but is its exact opposite. To participate individually in an unparticipated commonality that exists prior to the process of individuation marks a ‘historico-epochal opening’ (Agamben, 1999: 106), a process without a definite end and without the existence of the excluded middle. Furthermore, the postulated common is external to the intellect, whereas the universal self-reflective identity of the I is a product of verbal thought and is inside the intellect. It is exactly this problem of ontogenesis which was the starting point for Gilbert Simondon, to develop a theory of individuation that has its roots in some of the neo-Platonic writings from the 5th century AD (such as Proclus), reappeared in Scholasticism, most prominently in the work of Duns Scotus, and have been taken up most recently by Italian philosopher Paolo Virno in the context of his
seminal work *A Grammar of the Multitude*. I shall turn my attention to the role of individuation in Virno’s theory later in my argument, but for now I would like to focus more profoundly on Simondon for two reasons: First of all, although trained as a philosopher, Simondon held a professorship in psychology at the Sorbonne for good reason. His prevailing interest in the psychological implications of a general theory of individuation, which he has based on biology and information theory, enabled him to conceive of a process seamlessly oscillating between internal and external aspects of individuation with respect to the environment or other individuals and their affective and emotive resonances to one another.

Secondly, very early on in his work, Simondon discovered the importance of scientific discourse and technological advancement for the development of his philosophy (Simondon, 2009b), a fact that pays off greatly especially with respect to his theory of individuation, where he moves with ease between technological metaphor and the axiomatic explication of the process.

Simondon begins his discussion of the problem of ontogenesis with the question whether a principle exists that is anterior to the process of individuation, a principle that is as such endowed with the universal quiddity and can turn itself into multiple haecceities. Obviously this would amount to serve as a basis for a relation, which already pertains to the same mode of being as anything that derives from it. This is exactly the Hegelian double of foundation (*Grund*) and condition (*Bedingung*). Rejecting both, atomist substantialism and the bipolar schema of hylomorphism, Simondon denies the existence of a principle of individuation, for the individual does not mark the end of a process but should be grasped as relative entity, marking a specific stage in on ongoing process of individuation never to be fully exhausted with respect to the potentialities of pre-individual reality.

We would like to show that the search for the principle of individuation must be reversed, by considering as primordial the operation of individuation from which the individual comes to exist and of which its characteristics reflect the development, the regime and finally the modalities. The individual would then be grasped as a relative reality, a certain phase of being that supposes a preindividual reality, and that, even after individuation, does not exist on its own, because individuation does not exhaust with one stroke the potentials of preindividual reality. Moreover, that which the individuation makes appear is not only the individual, but also the pair individual-environment. The individual is thus relative in two senses, both because it is not all of the being, and because it is the result of a stage of the being in which it exited neither as individual, nor as principle of individuation (Simondon, 2009a: 5).

Simondon continues with a definition of pre-individual reality and the very modality of becoming in opposition to Being, both of which are attempts of marking the dynamics of a process rather than being grasppable as a result that appears at the edge of becoming. Each stage of becoming has to be seen as a dimension of being itself, momentary and unstable resolution, prone to further refinement in a continued and primordial process of individuation.

Pre-individual being is being in which there is no phase; the being in which individuation occurs is that in which a resolution appears through the division of
being into phases. This division of being into phases is becoming. Becoming is not a framework in which being exists, it is a dimension of being, a mode of resolution of an initial incompatibility that is rich in potentials. Individuation corresponds to the appearance of phases in being that are the phase of being. It is not a consequence placed at the edge of becoming and isolated; it is this operation itself in the process of accomplishing itself (Simondon, 2009a: 6).

What is explained in a next step corresponds with what I’ve mentioned above with regards to the law of the excluded middle. Any phase of being in the ongoing process of individuation in not endowed with unity, is not the self-contained entity of an autonomous subject, but a ‘metastable equilibrium’ sustaining ongoing operational exchanges between different system states of preliminary equilibria.

In a certain sense, it could be said that the only guiding principle is that of the conservation of being through becoming; this conservation exists through the exchanges between structure and operation, proceeding by quantum leaps through successive equilibriums. In order to think individuation, being must be considered neither as a substance, nor matter, nor form, but as a system that is charged and supersaturated, above the level of unity, not consisting only of itself, and that cannot be adequately thought using the law of the excluded middle. (Simondon, 2009a: 6)

At this point, Simondon touches upon a very pertinent concept in scientific discourse, namely research connected to the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Classical thermodynamics deals with equilibrium structures, i.e., the entropy of a system is defined by its thermodynamic equilibrium. Let us leave aside divergent definitions of entropy, for example from the context of information theory, where it is predominantly translated as disorder; this should not be confused with its meaning within the realm of thermodynamics. I would like to draw my attention towards those developments in the field of chemical reactions that fall into the category of dissipative structures, a term coined by Ilya Prigogine and published in English for the first time in 1969 (Prigogine). What Prigogine and his fellow researchers at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Prigogine, 1977) discovered was that besides the classical equilibrium structures there exist dissipative coherent structures for sufficient, far-from-equilibrium conditions in the so-called non-linear branch of thermodynamics. ‘The interaction of a system with the outside world, its embedding in nonequilibrium conditions, may become in this way the starting point for the formation of new dynamic states of matter – dissipative structures’ (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984: 143).

It was Prigogine himself who empathically emphasized the kinship of his findings with molecular biology, although dealing with complementary developments.

Indeed, from the point of view of physics, we now investigate ‘complex’ situations far removed from the ideal situations that can be described in terms of equilibrium thermodynamics. On the other hand, molecular biology succeeded in relating living structures to a relatively small number of basic biomolecules. Investigating the diversity of chemical mechanisms, it discovered the intricacy of the metabolic reaction chain, the subtle, complex logic of the control, inhibition, and activation of the catalytic function of the enzymes associated with the critical step of each of the metabolic chains. In this way molecular biology provides the microscopic basics for the instabilities that may occur in far-from-equilibrium conditions (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984: 154).
It also might be worth mentioning that in the autobiography Prigogine provided on the occasion of his being presented with the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977, he explicitly pays tribute to the pioneering work of the late Alan Turing: ‘Since 1952, [Turing] had made interesting comments about structure formation as related to chemical instabilities in the field of biological morphogenesis’14 (Prigogine, 1977).

I shall come back to dissipative structures and the catalytic function of attractor lines in part three of my thesis. At this point, however, it was important to introduce the concept in the context of molecular biology.

As indicated above, one of the intriguing features of Simondon’s conceptual dispositif25 is that he maintains a threefold attitude with regards to the relationships that determine the nature of individuating individuals: Firstly, the relation between the individual and the pre-individual One is in a continuous state of flux, since the process of individuation never ceases to evolve. Secondly, the relation between the individual and its environment necessitates permanent modification of external but also internal structures according to the needs identified, and thirdly, the relation of individuals to themselves, which Simondon calls ‘resonance’. Internal resonance basically designates the self-reflective capacity of individuals with respect to information about its own system accumulated in the course of individuation, including subsequent adjustments to environmental impacts.

There is, in the living, an individuation by the individual and not only a functioning that would be the result of an individuation completed once and for all, as if it had been manufactured; the living resolves problems, not only by adapting itself, that is to say by modifying its relation to the environment (which a machine can do), but by modifying itself, by inventing new internal structures and by completely introducing itself into the axiomatic of a vital problem. The living individual is a system of individuation, an individuating system and a system individuating itself; internal resonance and the translation of the relation to itself into information are in this system of the living. In the physical domain, internal resonance characterizes the limit of the individual that is in the process of individuating itself, in the living domain, this resonance becomes the criterion for the individual in its entirety insofar as it is an individual; it exists in the system of the individual and not only in that which the individual forms with its environment (Simondon, 2009a: 7).

---

14 This is an abstract of the paper Prigogine is referring to:
‘It is suggested that a system of chemical substances, called morphogens, reacting together and diffusing through a tissue, is adequate to account for the main phenomena of morphogenesis. Such a system, although it may originally be quite homogeneous, may later develop a pattern or structure due to an instability of the homogeneous equilibrium, which is triggered off by random disturbances. Such reaction-diffusion systems are considered in some detail in the case of an isolated ring of cells, a mathematically convenient, though biologically unusual system. The investigation is chiefly concerned with the onset of instability. It is found that there are six essentially different forms which this may take. In the most interesting form stationary waves appear on the ring. The purpose of this paper is to discuss a possible mechanism by which the genes of a zygote may determine the anatomical structure of the resulting organism. The theory does not make any new hypotheses; it merely suggests that certain well-known physical laws are sufficient to account for many of the facts’ (Turing, 1992 [1952]). Abstract retrieved from the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society, see: http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/237/641/37.abstract.

25 Henceforth I use the French term dispositif as a reference to Michel Foucault’s definition of various institutional, administrative, and corporate settings or knowledge structures, which maintain or enhance their exercise of power within a particular social body.
When Simondon turns his attention to the category of participation, he reveals his philosophical roots in Proclus, as quoted above:

> Participation, for the individual, is the fact of being an element in a greater individuation (the participated), via the intermediary of the charge of preindividual reality (the unparticipated) that the individual contains, that is, via the potentials (that which is participated) that the individual contains (Simondon, 2009a: 8).

My own principle of participation is further explained by introducing the category of the ‘transindividual’, understood to be brought about and sustained by the interplay of at least two of the above mentioned relations of the living individual: Each individual of a group is connected with the others on the grounds of their respective relation to the pre-individual reality, whereas the psychic reality of each individual, established reciprocally to the process of collective individuation, signifies the interior relation in order to sustain the systematic unity of each individual. The third relation, which is that between the individual and its environment, pertains to the mental domain and therefore does not contribute to immediate processes of social formation in a strict sense.

Individuation in the form of the collective turns the individual into a group individual, linked to the group by the preindividual reality that it carries inside itself and that, when united with the preindividual realities of other individuals, individuates itself into a collective unity. Both individuations, the psychic and the collective, are reciprocal to one another, they allow for the definition of a category of the transindividual, which can be used to explain the systematic unity of the interior (psychic) individuation and the exterior (collective individuation) (Simondon, 2009a: 8).

But what can be said about the operational aspects of Simondon’s theory? What could it be precisely that links not only the different domains of individuation as such – physical, biological, mental, and social – but moreover the successive steps of structuring the saturated (metastable) state of the pre-individual One? The vital operation, which endows the process of organic individuation with a distinct direction is – according to Simondon – the procedure of transduction.

By transduction we mean an operation – physical, biological, mental, social – by which an activity propagates itself from one element to the next, within a given domain, and founds this propagation on a structuration of the domain that is realized from place to place: each area of the constituted structure serves as the principle and the model for the next area, as a primer for its constitution, to the extent that the modification expands progressively and at the same time as the structuring operation. . . Transduction is the correlative appearance of dimensions and structures in a being of preindividual tension, that is to say in a being that is more than unity and more that identity, and that has not yet dephased itself into multiple dimensions. The extreme terms reached by the transductive operation do not exit prior to this operation; its dynamis comes from the primitive tension of the system of the heterogeneous being that dephases and develops dimensions according to which it structures itself (Simondon, 2009a: 11).

Now we’ve unraveled both terms that appeared earlier on in my analysis on autonomy within the context of Simondon’s ontogenesis: The first term was the universal nature of the subject of self-determination, operating on the basis of the law of the excluded
middle\textsuperscript{16} – which I’ve replaced with the pre-suppositional One of the process of individuation – and the second term was the homogenous consistency of communality – which I replaced by the heterogeneous being of the process of individuation. In addition the procedure of transduction offers precisely what Laclau’s category of hegemony lacks, namely a lucid path to bridge the gap between the level of particular and seemingly unconnected subjectivity on the one hand, and the generalized needs of a homogenised \textit{dēmos}, without the need of resorting to self-assumed universal identity. It could be objected that what Simondon offers at best is an operational paradigm, elaborated from a rather technological point of view and hardly applicable to the social realm of political opinion building. Even if I grant this objection to meet a point, it does little harm to my quest of dealing with the matter within the general framework of a thorough epistemological investigation into the processes at work. From a hermeneutical point of view, what Dilthey called the analytic and descriptive aspects of hermeneutics (1952) make it possible to reconcile the seemingly contradictory movements I considered earlier. The dynamic vitality of the process as such and its translation into suitable equivalents of formal capacity is itself a twofold operation of descriptive and analytic dimension, a model that is able to retain the basic ‘kinetics’ of the procedure in order to provide for the necessary operational quality of general applications across the borders of specific disciplines. Before I will turn my attention to the second part of my argument regarding the principle of participation, which, after all is intended to focus on the social aspects of it, it is important though to consider yet another dimension of Simondon’s theory. Since my claim to map a path for a formal analysis of the principle of participation should not be confused with a method to endow its terms with a distinct identity nor to grant them any form of stable representation, my task is to design a process rather than search for the ‘good form’. To add these notes on the notion of representation at this point happens for sake of consistency with respect to Simondon’s theory of individuation thought, and will be subject to further investigation later in my argument.

The notion of form must be replaced by that of information, which presupposes the existence of a system in a state of metastable equilibrium that can individuate itself; information, unlike form, is never a unique term, but the signification that springs from a disparation. The ancient notion of form, such as provided by the hylomorphic schema, is too independent of any notion of system and metastability. That which Gestalt theory provided contains, on the contrary, the notion of a system and is defined as the state towards which the system tends when it finds its equilibrium: it is the resolution of a tension. Unfortunately, an all too summary physical paradigmatism caused Gestalt theory to only consider the state of stable equilibrium as a system state of equilibrium capable of resolving tension: Gestalt theory was unaware of metastability. We would like to take up Gestalt theory and, through the introduction of a quantum condition, show that the problem posed by Gestalt theory cannot be directly resolved using the notion of stable equilibrium,

\textsuperscript{16}The law of the excluded middle goes back to Aristotle and can be expressed in logic as well as semantics. It says that any proposition it \textit{either} (as in logics) hold to be \textit{true} (as in semantics) or \textit{false} (as in semantics) to express its \textit{negative} (semantics) exclusively. The proposition can be expressed through the following formula: $P \lor \neg P$ (logics); $P$ or not $P$ (semantics).
but only by making use of the notion of metastable equilibrium. The ‘Good Form’ is no longer simple form, the pregnant geometric form, but the signifying form, that is, that which establishes a transductive order within a system of reality that contains potential. This good form is that which maintains the energy level of the system, that which conserves its potential by rendering them compatible: good form is structure of compatibility and viability, it is the dimensionality that is invented and according to which there is compatibility without degradation (Simondon, 2009a: 12).

Simondon clearly indicates how the procedure of transduction serves as methodological framework for investigating the potentiality of ‘reality’ and to render visible the compatibility and viability of a system whose intrinsic ‘form’ is sensible only as preliminary structuration of metastable dimensionality.

Simondon focused his attention additionally on the individuation of knowledge, an issue of chief importance in the third part of my thesis. To understand is to participate in an ongoing process. Knowledge, based on individuals understanding their environments (including other individuals, nature, and things) and parallel process of individuation, is the result of sustained participation in the realm of encounter.

The individuation of the reality that is exterior to the subject is grasped by the subject using the analogical individuation of knowledge within the subject; but it is through the individuation of knowledge, and not through knowledge alone, that the individuation of non-subject beings is grasped. Beings may be known by the subject’s knowledge, but the individuation of beings can only be grasped by the individuation of the subject’s knowledge (Simondon, 2009a: 13).
4. The Principle of Encounter

Before delving into the elaboration on the principle of encounter, which is primarily based on Martin Buber’s seminal book *I and Thou* (2004 [1937]), I would like to emphasize some biographical aspects that can help elucidate his formative path, philosophical, sociological, and theological background. Of course, I can only touch upon very few aspects of the life and work of a man, with a remarkable history and tremendous intellectual breath, much of which was related to his efforts in securing the rich body of Hasidic folk tradition or, more generally, his Zionist activities. However, there is a somewhat more ‘subversive’ side to Buber primarily due to his close friendship with Gustav Landauer, a German writer and communitarian anarchist. Landauer, related on his mother’s side to Albert Einstein, was a prominent representative of the counterculture during the *Kaiserreich*, and in 1918 was an active participant in the establishment of the Bavarian Soviet Republic in Munich, and was murdered after it was deposed in 1919 by counterrevolutionary militias. In 1914, together with Landauer, Buber initiated a circle of intellectuals called the Forte Kreis, which first met in 1914. The group formulated what might be called a utopian vision for an anarchistic and peaceful future society, without a concrete plan though for its political instantiation. Born in Vienna in 1878, Buber studied philosophy, art history, and psychology primarily in Vienna and Berlin. His main philosophical influence at the time was the work of Schopenhauer, who elevated hitherto peripheral issues to the rank of primary topics for his philosophical reasoning, such as Indian religious traditions or the Hindu formula of *tat tvam asi* (‘That you are’) reminiscent of the Delphic principle, *gnothi sauton* (‘Know yourself’). The work of Kant and Nietzsche was also to exert a significant influence. In his autobiographical account of his formative years, Buber explicitly counts Georg Simmel and Wilhelm Dilthey among those teachers who bore the strongest influence on his thought in the years between 1898 and 1904. Especially the notion of *Erfahrung* (experience; see ‘lived experience’ above), which was to play a most eminent role in the thinking of the young Buber, is at the heart of Dilthey’s philosophy and aims at grasping the notion of shared experience (*miterlebende Erfahrung*) as the actual reality of the human nature (*menschliches Wesen*).\(^\text{17}\)

The important observation from the point of view of this thesis is that because of the predominant influence Wilhelm Dilthey’s individual-psychological and socio-historical hermeneutics exerted on Buber’s formative period, could he build his prevailing interest in philosophical anthropology upon a world to be met, a methodology which subsequently was termed ‘dialogical principle’. In addition, and as a most remarkable convergence with Simondon’s *Problem of Ontogenesis*, in 1904 Buber published his thesis on the history of the problem of individuation with a specific focus on the work of Jakob Böhme and Nikolaus Cusanus under the title *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Individuationsproblems*. However, before I begin looking into what can be seen as

---

\( ^{17} \) The first volume of Buber’s *Werkausgabe* published by the Gütersloher Verlagshaus in 2001 has served as the main reference for this paragraph.
Buber’s main work, there is yet another issue brought to bear on the general philosophical category of hermeneutics, namely to draw a distinguishing line between Heidegger’s monological being and Buber’s dialogical being, a difference especially pertinent from an anthropological perspective and touched upon by Buber himself in his book *Das Problem des Menschen* (Buber, 2007 [1948]). From this perspective the problem of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology is twofold. First of all, although being in its verbal form, that is, being there or the very modality of being or the event of being unfolds on the basis of presupposing the unifying horizon of time – which is the underlying concept of my ‘constitution of time’ – *Da-sein* is exclusively assured in and through itself, a movement that sought to fix the temporality of being through the self-reflective (monological) knowledge about the quiddity (*Washeit*) of the event. The question arises though, whether it would make much of a difference to replace the quiddity of Heidegger’s self-identical existence with the self-assuring authenticity of haecceitas (*Diesheit*), for the Heideggerian I eventually marks the non-interchangeable, the unique. And indeed, does not Heidegger’s sense of being (*Sinn des Seins*), which allegedly precedes any particular being essentially negate the *Da-sein* of a self-identical I (A=A or I am I)?

To clarify the existentiality of the self, we take as our ‘natural’ point of departure the everyday self-interpretation of Da-sein that expresses ‘itself’ in saying I. Utterance is not necessary. With the ‘I’, this being means itself. The content of this expression is taken to be absolutely simple. It always means only me, and nothing further. As this simple thing, the ‘I’ is not a definition of other things: it is itself not a predicate, but the absolute ‘subject’ (Heidegger, 1996 [1927]: 293).

Is not the fundamental distinction of Being and beings meant to secure the place for a originary division (*Urteilung*) outside the I of being there? The second problem of Heidegger’s ontology therefore arises out of the question to whom I would be able to refer to as the Other, if not to my own mirror image of a self-conscious I, a possibility Heidegger’s logic has singled out from the beginning? Sure, in this sense Heidegger’s structure of care was given an existential formula: being-ahead-of-oneself-already-being-in (a world) as being-together-with (inner-worldly beings encountered). But – and here we touch again upon the second problem of Heidegger’s ontology – wasn’t this notion of care, although implying a coupling together with the Other, not meant to reassure the structural integrity of the totality of the primordial interpretation of Da-sein? Isn’t the sole ontological opening of being there exhausted in a primordial strive to escape the inevitable *Angst* (falling prey) caused by the facticity of the already-being-in (a world) through a desperate process of being-ahead-of-oneself? Heidegger’s monolog is destined to reveal itself forever as the chimera of an artificial dialog, for there is no one to reply upon his call.

To man the world is twofold, in accordance with his twofold attitude. The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks. The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words. The one primary word is the combination I-Thou, the other primary word is the combination I-It; wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words He and She can replace it. Hence the I of man is also twofold. For the I of the primary word I-Thou is a different I from that of the primary word I-It.
Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relation. Primary words do not describe something that might exit independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence. Primary words are spoken from the being (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 11).

How powerful are Buber’s primary words, what a relief it is to pay witness to the twofold nature of the primary words uttered without any primordial anticipation of one’s own mortality, an event without the obstacle of an end to be achieved, an end external to the intimate relation of I and Thou.

The relation to the Thou is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between I and Thou. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of its isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between I and Thou. Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dream into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 17).

Buber clearly indicates that with the event of being thrown into the world, with the natality of being in its verbal form the process of individuation has just been initiated, the consciousness of the I has not yet been connected with the knowledge of an objectifying split between the primary existence of the I and the objects of the participle of the primary words. What has yet to be separated appears in the fundamental form of cognosco, an act of plain perception, the instantiation of primal experience.

Consciousness of the ‘I’ is not connected with the primitive sway of the instinct for self-preservation any more than with that of the other instincts. It is not the ‘I’ that wishes to propagate itself, but the body, that knows as yet of no ‘I’. It is not the ‘I’ but the body that wishes to make things, a tool or a toy, that wishes to be a ‘creator.’ Further, a cognosco ergo sum, in however naïve a form and however childlike a conception of an experiencing subject, cannot be found in the primitive function of knowledge. The ‘I’ emerges as a single element out of the primal experiences, out of the vital primal words I-affecting-Thou and Thou-affecting-I, only after they have been split asunder and the participle has been given eminence as an object (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 24).

Obviously the relation is about to proceed from the primary perception to the recognition of a world round about the subject of cognition. The relation between the subject and the object has been set up in order to arrange the objects of observation in isolation to each other.

But when the I of the relation has stepped forth and taken on separate existence, it also moves, strangely tenuous and reduced to merely functional activity, into the natural, actual event of the separation of the body from the world round about it, and awakens there the state in which I is properly active. Only now can the conscious act of the I take place. This act is the first form of the primary word I-It, of the experience in its relation to I. The I which stepped forth declares itself to be the bearer, and the world round about to be the object of the perceptions. Of course, this happens in a ‘primitive’ form and not in the form of a ‘theory of knowledge’. But whenever the sentence ‘I see the tree’ is so uttered that it no longer tells of a relation between the man – I – and the tree – Thou -, but establishes the perception of the tree as object by the human consciousness, the
barrier between subject und object has been set up. The primary word I-it, the word of separation, has been spoken (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 25).

The word of separation is to introduce the very difference between the relational exclusivity of the primary words as opposed to the objectifying arrangement of objects with their specific set of qualities, sunk into the memory of the observer. In the latter case, the scheme of observation lacks the exclusive character of the immediate act of a temporal relation between I and Thou.

The Thou appears, to be sure, in space, but in the exclusive situation of what is over against it, where everything else can be only the background out of which it emerges, not its boundary and measured limit. It appears, too, in time, but in that of the event which is fulfilled in itself: it is not lived as part of a continuous and organised sequence, but is lived in a ‘duration’ whose purely intensive dimension is definable only in terms of itself. It appears, lastly, simultaneously as acting and as being acted upon – not, however, linked to a chain of causes, but, in its relation of mutual action with the I, as the beginning and the end of the event. This is part of the basic truth of the human world, that only It can be arranged in order. Only when things, from being our Thou, become our It, can they be co-ordinated. The Thou knows no system of co-ordination (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 29–30).

In this passage Buber does not only clarify the exclusive modality of the primary relation, but also elucidates the function of time in it, namely – and here we’ve got a strong resonance of Bergson’s la durée – the duration of acting and being acted upon as experienced in a purely intensive dimension and as such distinctly set apart from the continuous and organised sequence of perceptions, which discloses itself retrospectively outside the actual event and therefore lacks the specific relational quality of the appearance of the Thou. The strictly mutual act of encounter is what Buber defines as the basic truth of the human world of co-ordination prior to it becoming an It. However, Buber recognises that the eventual quality of the primary encounter alone – a quality about which I talk more specifically in the context of Badiou’s Being and Event – would not qualify for comprehending the immediate world of experiences and the accumulated memories thereof. What is necessary for surpassing evental reality is the creative depth consciousness.

But now that we have come so far, it is necessary to set down the other part of the basic truth, without which this would be a useless fragment – namely, a world that is ordered is not the world-order. There are moments of depth in which you look on the world-order fully present. Then in its very flight the note will be heard; but the ordered world is its indistinguishable score. These moments are immortal and most transitory of all, no content may be secured from them, but their power invades creation and the knowledge of man, beams of their power stream into the ordered world and dissolve it again and again. This happens in the history both of the individual and of the race (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 29–30).

Buber provides a lucid testimonial of his formative occupation with the problem of individuation, when he outlines the preconditions of ontogenesis as well as its development in time. Without having to give it a name yet – and I will be returning to this issue later – Buber clearly indicates that the Common or One, i.e. that which precedes every act of separation as subjectivity (resulting from the primary world I-Thou or I-It) or individuation of individuals – to use the words of Simondon – is
deprived of numeric unity, a pre-individual reality that is outside and common to every I. What emerges out of this presumption — and here we have one of the three relations between the individuated being and the pre-individual reality in Simondon’s ontogenesis — is that the relation I-Thou is conceived itself as a being in its own right, the very encounter from which arises reality. Reality constitutes and reaffirms itself in the process of sharing or conversely: ‘Where there is no sharing there is no reality.’ Buber’s definition of sharing is strictly consigned to the being in relation, barring any exclusive ability to appropriate for oneself what is shared. However, the I’s ‘degree of reality’ is measured gradually depending on the ‘fullness’ of what it shares in relation with the Other without disappearing once the supreme and exclusive relation ceases to exist. It is important to add that in comparison with Heidegger’s focus on the finitude of all Da-sein, Buber’s Thou is imbued with the eternal breath of life.

The aim of relation is relation’s own being, that is, contact with the Thou. For through contact with every Thou we are stirred with a breath of the Thou, that is, of eternal life. He who takes his stand in relation shares in a reality, that is, in a being that neither merely belongs to him nor merely lies outside him. All reality is an activity in which I share without being able to appropriate for myself. Where there is no sharing there is no reality. Where there is self-appropriation there is no reality. The more direct the contact with the Thou, the fuller is the sharing. The I is real in virtue of its sharing in reality. The fuller its sharing the more real it becomes. But the I that steps out of the relational event into separations and consciousness of separation, does not lose its reality. Its sharing is preserved in it in a living way. In other words, as is said of the supreme relation and may be used of all, ‘the seed remains in it’. This is the province of subjectivity in which the I is aware with a single awareness of its solidarity of connexion and of its separation (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 51–52).

The remarkable movement of Buber’s ontology lies precisely within the twofold awareness of the individual’s solitude and connection with the eternal Thou/It, without having to resort to the ‘crippled’ dialectic of being and Da-sein. The Other’s embodiment on either side of the spectrum – utmost individuality and eternal fullness of relation – is matter of degree rather than of kind. What Buber presents us with here, is the dialogical principle of a synchronic concatenation of retreat and renewed relation, an irreversible process of individuation striving towards an ever-increasing relational intensity. In this context, ‘personal’ consciousness is possible only by asserting itself through coexistence and sharing, with the Delphic ‘Know thyself’18 tied to the individual’s dependence upon the primary word I-Thou and the above mentioned haecceity tied to the particularity of it being different from others and expressed through the primary world I-It.

Genuine subjectivity can only be dynamically understood, as the swinging of the I in its lonely truth. Here, too, is the place where the desire is formed and heightened for ever higher, more unconditioned relation, for the full sharing in being. In subjectivity the spiritual substance of the person matures. The person becomes

---

18 On this note, I would like to mention Foucault’s instructive genealogy of what he calls ‘technologies of the self’, where he elaborates that ‘in Greek and Roman texts, the injunction of having to know yourself was always associated with the other principle of having to take care of yourself, and it was that need to care for oneself that brought the Delphic maxim into operation’. (Foucault In: Gutman et al., 1988: 20)
conscious of himself as sharing in being, as coexisting, and thus as being. Individuality becomes conscious of itself as being such-and-such and nothing else. The person says, ‘I am’, the individual says, I am such-and-such’. ‘Know thyself’ means for the person ‘know thyself to have being’, for the individual it means ‘know thy particular kind of being’. Individuality in differentiating itself from others is rendered remote from true being (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 51–52).

I am now able to present the full-blown ontological consequences of Buber’s primary relation through the words of an Upanishad, 19 namely the fundamental difference between the numerical one of universality and the dialogical two of encounter.

This will, however, be opposed by the claim of the other doctrine of absorption that universal being and self-being are the same and that therefore no saying of the Thou is able to yield final reality. This claim is answered by the doctrine itself. One of the Upanishads tells how Indra, the prince of the gods, comes to Prajapati, the creative spirit, in order to learn how the Self is found and recognized. For a hundred years he is a pupil, is twice dismissed with insufficient information, till finally the right information is given him: ‘If a man, sunk in deep sleep, rests dreamlessly, this is the Self, the Immortal, the Assured, the Universal Being’. Indra departs, but soon a thought surprises him. He turns back and asks: ‘In such a condition, O Exalted One, a man does not know of his Self that “This is I”, and that “these are beings.” He is gone to annihilation. “I see nothing propitious here.” – “That,” replies Prajapati, “is indeed so” (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 69).

With Buber explicitly stating ‘in lived reality there is no unity of being’ any probability of Hegel’s “Absolute One” has vanished altogether. With it the fundamental horizon for Heidegger’s self-asserting Da-sein has been compromised to the extent of its limitation to the individual’s capacity for self-reflection in contrast to the existence of Buber’s ‘inner’ reality being based on the mutuality of sharing only. ‘The most powerful and the deepest reality exists where everything enters into the effective action, without reserve the whole man and God the all embracing – the united I and the boundless Thou’ (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 70). Buber holds that the immediacy of a relation is by no means a minor aspect of his principle, since it emphasises his focus on the ‘lived experience’ of the here and now, as well as the delicate difference between the ‘reality’ of a product and sheer actuality of an idea. We have seen above, that Buber endowed memory itself with the unity of the whole, so that no aim and no anticipation would intervene between the I and Thou, and every end would be an obstacle. The similarities between the immediacy of Buber’s primary relation and Aristotle’s ‘to live well’ (eμί ζήν) are striking, for it clearly is a human achievement that lies altogether outside the category of means and ends; or as Hannah Arendt has put it:

The ‘work of man’ is no end because the means to achieve it – the virtues, or aretai – are not qualities which may or may not be actualized, but are themselves ‘actualities’. In other words, the means to achieve the end would already be the end; and this ‘end’, conversely, cannot be considered a means in some other

---

19 The Upanishads are a collection of more than 200 philosophical texts of the Hindu religion. They were composed in Indian the pre-Buddhist era and have been passed down the generations in oral tradition. As I have mentioned in my biographical outline, Buber has got in touch with Indian religious tradition upon the influence of Schopenhauer and makes frequent use of the Upanishads throughout his work.
respect, because there is nothing higher to attain that this actuality itself (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 207).

To compare with Buber:

But when one that is alive rises out of things, and becomes a being in relation to me, joined to me by its nearness and its speech, for how inevitably short a time is it nothing to me but Thou! It is not the relation that necessarily grows feeble, but the actuality of its immediacy. Love itself cannot persist in the immediacy of relation; love endures, but in the interchange of actual and potential being. Every Thou in the world is enjoined by its nature to become a thing for us, or at all events to re-enter continually the condition of things (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 76).

Also – and I’ve emphasised this already – the resemblances between Simondon’s ontogenesis and Buber’s dialogical principle are certainly not restricted to acts of aimed interpretations. Although avoiding the use of any biological terminology, Buber discloses his own previous work on individuation on more than one occasion in the text, especially with respect to the epistemological dimension of becoming (memory and knowledge acquisition), and the psychological dimension of immediate experience. And yet, there are major differences with respect to Simondon. Where Simondon’s emphasis is tainted by a personal kinship for technological discourse or scientific epistemology, there is nothing like this in Buber, with the latter’s overarching (and given his biographical background hardly surprising) inclination to immanently embed the primary relation within the pre-suppositional plane of divine existence. Since the Common of pre-individual existence or ‘primal Source’ in Buber’s terminology does not yet have a name, has not yet been spoken, exceeds the very possibility of being uttered altogether, escaping the act of signification, this empty signifier, immanent to the presentation but without a space and time of its own might just forever escape the grip of hermeneutical reasoning. I believe that here we are able to detect the very boundary, the very edge of Buber’s principle with infinitude. It is here where we might be able to start speculating about the question of whether we can think of a language without presupposing its destined partition. Or as Agamben has put it: ‘To think the groundlessness and emptiness of language and its representations without any negativity?’ Agamben continues: ‘The fulfilment of the form of presupposition and the decline of the power of representation imply a poetic task and an ethical decision’ (Agamben, 1999: 115). Both elements, the poetic task and the ethical decision, are fully present in Buber’s work, and I will return to them in due course. For the moment I would like to summarise my observations with the words of Buber himself:

Every real relation in the world rests on individuation, this is its joy – for only in this way is mutual knowledge of different beings won – and its limitation – for in this way perfect knowledge and being known are forgone. But in the perfect relation my Thou comprehends but is not my Self, my limited knowledge opens out into a state in which I am boundlessly known (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 77–78).

What is the difference between the Thou and It of the primary words? Why is it that Buber distinguishes between a Thou or an It to be met despite their structural equality? The Thou pertaining to human beings and the It to the realm of non-humans, i.e. animals, plants, technical artefacts, or the natural and artificial environment in
general has been ruled out *ab initio* with the option of replacing the it by He or She respectively. Buber’s answer is based on epistemological grounds, for the Thou representing basically anything that is actualized in the immediate presence of the primary relation. The presence of the word It on the other hand is bound up with its specific position in space and time, outlasting the immediate presence of the primary relation.

Every real relation in the world is consummated in the interchange of actual and potential being; every isolated Thou is bound to enter the chrysalis state of the It in order to take wings anew. But in pure relation potential being is simply actual being as it draws breath, and in it the Thou remains present. By its nature the eternal Thou is eternally Thou; only our nature compels us to draw it into the world and the talk of it.

The world of It is set in the context of space and time. The world of Thou is not set in the context of either of these. Its context is in the Centre, where the extended lines of relations meet – in the eternal Thou. In the great privilege of pure relation the privileges of the world of It are abolished. By virtue of this privilege there exists the unbroken world of Thou: the isolated moments of relations are bound up in a life of world solidarity. By virtue of this privilege we are not given up to alienation from the world and the loss of reality by the I – to domination by the ghostly. Turning is the recognition of the Centre and the act of turning again to it. In this act of the being the buried relational power of man rises again, the wave that carries all the spheres of relation swells in living streams to give new life to our world (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 77–78).

Now that we’ve come thus far, one question grows increasingly eminent, namely what is the medium of communication that’s being used for the relations addressed by the primary words? This question will become most pertinent in the context of Virno’s performative aspects of the contemporary Multitude – and above all has been alluded to at the very beginning of my thesis, when I drew a reference between Wittgenstein’s ‘language game’ and the overall title of the first part of my argument. I will frame Buber’s definition for the time being within the context of my previous analysis on Simondon’s ontogenesis, where he talks about spheres of relation, for it strikes me as another remarkable resemblance between the two, when Buber uses exactly the same threefold structure in order to arrive at the threshold of speech as the distinct quality of inter-human communication.

The spheres in which the world of relation is built are three. First, our life with nature, in which the relation clings to the threshold of speech. Second, our life with men, in which the relation takes on the form of speech. Third, our life with spiritual beings, where the relation, being without speech, yet begets it. In every sphere in its own way, through each process of becoming that is present to us, we look out toward the fringe of the eternal Thou; in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal Thou; in each Thou we address the eternal Thou. Every sphere is compassed in the eternal Thou, but it is not compassed in them (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 77–78).

If we are to sing out the sphere of our life with men, the aforementioned question about the medium of the primary relation, the faculty of language is what commands a supreme position. Buber’s ‘two side-gate’ connecting those who relate with one
another in the give and take of speech and counter-speech is a beautiful emblem for the coming together and the sharing of a common reality through the signifying acts of speech. At the same time, this emblematic image for the primary mode of relation is a viable proposition for an epistemological reflection on the dichotomy of immediate experience and the whole of memory or repository of cognitive resources – as Oswald Wiener would put it – the phasing in and out of consciousness in the face of the ‘world-event’, the movement between the apex and the base of Bergson’s memory cone. The totality of shared consciousness converges in the very moment of lived reality, where there is ‘gazing and being gazed upon, knowing and being known, loving and being loved’ (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 79). It is with this ‘image’ that we obtain a more lucid understanding of the function of language with respect to the boundary between the temporal relations of the primary words and the infinite reality of the ‘world-event’ that is the ‘profound belonging to the world before the Face of God’ (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 83). Now that the ‘eternal Source’ has entered our shared reality at face value the boundary is about to crumble. The moment of meeting is thus a revelation, a happening distinct from ordinary experience, the receptive soul being touched by something new, something more that has grown in it. The aforementioned synchonic concatenation of retreat and renewed relation in Buber’s dialogical principle refutes the identification of the source with the scientific paradigm of unbroken causality, since what ‘man receives is not specific “content” but a Presence, a Presence as power’(Buber, 2004 [1937]: 83). Furthermore, real mutual action is the inexpressible confirmation of meaning. Meaning is assured. Nothing can be meaningless any longer. It is this meaning, Buber concludes, that can be received but not experienced:

The meaning itself does not permit itself to be transmitted and made into knowledge generally current and admissible, so confirmation of it cannot be transmitted as valid Ought; it is not prescribed, it is not specified on any tablet, to be raised above all men’s heads. The meaning that has been received can be proved true by each man only in the singleness of his being and the singleness of his life (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 83–84).

With unparalleled clarity, Buber provides us with a firm foundation for a definition of truth as being comprised by individual meaning and its confirmation in the non-prescriptive realm of the primary relation. In other words, the moral judgment of a general ‘ought to’ has been replaced by a particular ethical agreement on ‘how to’. One peculiar question remains yet to be addressed, namely Buber’s own understanding of the dialogical principle. But what is it that provides clarification, since both of its terms – dialogue as signifying the relational aspect of the primary words and principle signifying a law, rule or inevitable consequence of something – seem to meet the intention of his work?

I mentioned at the very beginning of my investigation into Simondon’s ontogenesis that individuation has no principle, i.e., a certain characteristic of the One that prefigures individuality with the properties it will possess once it is constituted. In order to resolve this seeming contradiction there is a decisive distinction to be made with regards to a quality of something as opposed to something about which something is said. Both categories can be subject to a principle, whereby the first is
addressed by Simondon and the latter is evoked by Buber. What precisely is expressed by a principle in relation to the dialogue about which something is said? Buber’s principle says nothing about the quality of individuality as such but he indicates (a), the very existence of a modality of becoming and, (b), that this modality is a dialogue to take place. ‘That which reveals is that which reveals. That which is, and nothing more. The eternal source of strength streams, the eternal contact persist, the eternal voice sounds forth, and nothing more’ (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 85).

Buber’s quest is to endow the very modality of becoming with the eternal breath of the most immediate form of being, the dialogue. I have mentioned earlier on that the predominant medium of a dialogue among human beings is the generic faculty of language, the very capacity to dwell upon the potentiality of language in a process of speech and counter-speech to occur in a worldly in-between. However, the peculiar circumstances of an act (of speech) to take place in a worldly in-between are not yet properly framed within the epistemological tradition of discerning the vita contemplativa (from Aristotle’s bios theorētikos) and the vita activa (from his bios politicos). There is a specific reason though for my introducing this distinction, since Buber’s dialogue covers both aspects within a unifying theory.

My aim is to locate the dialogue in a specific spatio-temporal context. This context is by no means to be mistaken for a geographical mark on the map but supposed first of all to indicate a general belonging to either of the categories private or public, and secondly to convey its specificity within the peculiar circumstances of envental sites, a category I will be focusing upon in chapter 8.

I start my investigation by delineating the historic formation of these categories in order to arrive at Paolo Virno’s observation that contemporary culture has caused them to collapse altogether, a process vividly expressed in his seminal book A Grammar of the Multitude. This view, however, is not conclusively covered on the grounds of Virno’s analysis for there is yet another aspect closely linked with the historic development of the public and private realm, expressed by the Aristotelian distinction of labour (poiēsis) on one side and political action (praxis) and speech (lexis) on the other side of the spectrum of human activities.
5. *Vita Activa*

To start with, it is important to dwell upon the notion of labour, for it is this seemingly innocuous term that has caused and continues to cause the most peculiar confusions in nearly any political theory of the Modern Age. It has to be accredited to the illuminating terminological vigour of Hannah Arendt’s book *The Human Condition* that with her work we have before us the most elaborate definition of the *vita activa* proper, namely its being divided into the categories of labour, work, and action. The fact that Hannah Arendt was the first to provide this definition is all the more remarkable since the terms as such are as old as the history of Western philosophy itself, but – and this is the decisive problem – have often been used synonymously and with shifting emphasis. Before trying to summarise how Arendt defined the categories as such, it is important to disclose her criterion of selection. In order to distinguish between labour and work, she applies the criterion of durability with respect to the product in question, which is either fully consummated, i.e. disappears with its use as in the case of labour or is used over and over again for a certain amount of time, i.e. endures its singular use as in the case of work. Due to the fact that Arendt’s labouring also denotes the necessity to sustain the biological processes of the living organism, the ‘product’ of this particular kind of labour is not a tangible object of physical reality outside of our body but the effort invested in maintaining the constant and cyclical movements into which all living beings are forced. Besides this specific characteristic related to the subsistence of human life itself, the realm of labour designates the least durable of tangible things, ‘those needed for the life process itself. Their consumption barely survives the act of their production’ (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 96).

The work of our hands, as distinguished from the labour of our bodies – *homo faber* who makes and literally ‘works upon’ as distinguished from the *animal laborans* which labours and ‘mixes with’ – fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice. They are mostly, but not exclusively, objects for use and they possess the durability Locke needed for the establishment of property, the ‘value’ Adam Smith needed for the exchange market, and they bear testimony to productivity, which Marx believed to be the test of human nature. Their proper use does not cause them to disappear and they give the human artifice the stability and solidity without which it could not be relied upon to house the unstable and mortal creature which is man (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 136).

Thirdly, the realm of action constitutes the fabric of human relationships and affairs through the public disclosure of words and deeds and therefore transcending any measure in terms of durability or use-value.

To have a definite beginning and a definite, predictable end is the mark of fabrication, which through this characteristic alone distinguishes itself from all other human activities. Labour, caught in the cyclical movement of the body’s life process, has neither a beginning nor an end. Action, though it may have a definite beginning, never, as we shall see, has a predictable end (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 144).

For Arendt it is the third category of speech and action, which reveals the unique distinctness of human beings.
Through them, men distinguish themselves instead of being merely distinct; they 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 the initiative, but it is an initiative from which no human being can refrain and still be human. This is true of no other activity in the *vita activa* (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 176).

Now that I’ve reiterated the firm foundation of Arendt’s argument, let’s return for a moment to the statement at the onset of this paragraph about the confusions over the term labour in the political theories of the Modern Age, before we start to delineate the peculiar connection of the dissolving boundary between the public and the private realm and the fate of political action in contemporary society.

The most pertinent and perplexing example for the shortcomings of political theory in the Modern Age is to be found right at the heart of the work of Marx, a man who has after all devoted all his scholarly integrity to the study of labour. This problem has not gone unnoticed by his followers, but appears to have been of preeminent importance for Arendt’s threefold categorisation of active life in order to be expressed with such disarming intellectual vividness:

While it was an ‘eternal necessity imposed by nature’ and the most human and productive of man’s activities, the revolution, according to Marx, has not the task of emancipating the labouring classes but of emancipating man from labour; only when labour is abolished can the ‘realm of freedom’ supplant the ‘realm of necessity’. For ‘the realm of freedom begins only where labour determined through want and external utility ceases’, where ‘the rule of immediate physical needs’ ends . . . The fact remains that in all stages of his work he defines man as an *animal laborans* and then leads him into a society in which this greatest and most human power is no longer necessary. We are left with the rather distressing alternative between productive slavery and unproductive freedom (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 104–105).

Seen from this perspective I am inclined to conclude that an unfortunate twist of fate caused ‘productive slavery’ to prevail, and that it was possible to apply its concomitant governmental *dispositif* with the full force of ‘bio-political’ logic, which capitalises precisely upon the continued provision and maintenance of the populations potentiality to work, that is, the political dimension of ‘life’ or pure and simple *bios* as outlined above with respect to Lefebvre’s lived experience. These observations notwithstanding, my aim is to forge concrete alternatives in the realm of contemporary political action based on further investigations into the processes of its historical formation.

---

20 With regards to the notion of ‘bio-politics’, I totally agree with Virno that this term, introduced by Foucault for the first time during his Collège de France lectures from 1978–79, has recently become all too fashionable in a variety of different contexts at the cost of dropping necessary precision in accounting for its complexity and historical implications. On the other hand, I do not agree with Virno’s solution to this problem that the notion of bio-politics should be confined to the philosophical concept of labour-power, namely to the aggregate of the most diverse human faculties (potentialities) only, which in my opinion falls short to account for the far reaching implications to the whole of society - present and past - under the influence of a governmental *dispositif*, which – and this is the merit of Foucault’s work – is most effective in quickly adapting to the changing requirements of current social and economic circumstances.
6. Public and Private

What has happened in the course of the transition from the Greek *polis* to the prevailing political form of the nation state is that the domestic sphere of family or household – in the ancient world self-evidently and axiomatically separated from the sphere of the *polis* – has become conflated with the realm of political activity in order to yield a form of nationwide housekeeping. The political economy of one ‘super-human family’ as Arendt has put it, is what we generally call ‘society’, with the nation-state as its concomitant form of political organization. From the perspective of the characteristic traits of the ancient household the full-blown consequences of the emergence of the aforementioned paradigm of bio-politics takes on distinctive features.

That individual maintenance [within the realm of the household, author’s note] should be the task of the man and species survival the task of the woman was obvious, and both of these natural functions, the labor of man to provide nourishment and the labor of the woman in giving birth, were subject to the same urgency of life. Natural community in the household therefore was born of necessity, and necessity ruled over all activities performed in it. The realm of the *polis*, on the contrary, was the sphere of freedom, and if there was a relationship between these two spheres, it was a matter of course that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the *polis*.

From the point of view of the Greek *polis* and with respect to the various transformations society has undergone in the course of its historic development Arendt continues:

> Under no circumstance could politics be only a means to protect society – a society of the faithful, as in the Middle Ages, or a society of property-owners, as in Locke, or a society relentlessly engaged in a process of acquisition, as in Hobbes, or a society of producers, as in Marx, or a society of jobholders, as in our own society, or a society of laborers, as in socialist and communist countries (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 30–31).

This marks a crucial point in my investigation, since we are at the crossroad of partly contradictory interpretations concerning the extinction of the very difference between the public and the private realm, especially when we compare Arendt’s account with the view held by Virno in his *Grammar*. If I go about Arendt’s position from yet another angle, the problem might be elevated to a more abstract level, namely subsuming the private realm within the more general category of the ‘social’.

> The obvious contradiction in this modern concept of government, where the only thing people have in common is their private interest, need no longer bother us as it still bothered Marx, since we know that the contradiction between private and public, typical of the initial stages of the modern age, has been a temporary phenomenon which introduced the utter extinction of the very difference between the private and the public realms, the submersion of both in the sphere of the social. By the same token, we are in a far better position to realize the consequences for human existence when both the public and the private spheres of life are gone, the public because it has become a function of the private and the private because it has become the only common concern left (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 69).
Arendt maintains that the public has become a function of the private. What she is alluding to is precisely the aforementioned equation of the private household with the ‘bookkeeping’ of the nation state, which took place throughout the Middle Ages and up through the early modern period, i.e., the nation state being viewed as a function of the private in terms of its attitude towards the self-imposed limitation of governmental practice being primarily concerned with ‘political economy’ rather than its relation with the law of the sovereign. Consequently Arendt’s second argument is that the private is the only common concern left. These abstractions allow us to understand the double movement that has taken place historically. The convergence of the politics on the whole with ‘political economy’ is the sole concern remaining for the ‘art of government’ (Michel Foucault, 2008), a self-imposed limitation of governmental conduct. At the same time – and this is the second movement herein contained – the private as the only common governmental concern left, is taken care of with unprecedented force and urgency.\(^{21}\) The common concern is society as a whole, the forceful integration of the population under the all-encompassing umbrella of the *raison d’état*. This is indeed what Foucault did hint upon, when he established the clear cut distinction of the limiting capacity of the law outside the realm of political sovereignty on one side and ‘political economy’\(^{22}\) as intrinsic operation of governmental reason inside the nation state on the other.

First, unlike sixteenth and seventeenth century juridical thought, political economy was not developed outside *raison d’état*. It was not developed against *raison d’état* and in order to limit it, at least not in the first place. Rather, it was formed within the very framework of the objectives set for the art of government by *raison d’état*, for what objectives did political economy set itself? Well, it set itself the objective of the state’s enrichment. Its objective was the simultaneous, correlative, and suitably adjusted growth of population on the one hand, and means of subsistence on the other (Foucault, 2008: 13).

If we further take into account that Foucault identified one of the semantic poles of the term ‘political economy’ as the ‘organization, distribution, and limitation of powers in a society’ it becomes immediately clear, that Virno’s shorthand of the term biopolitics is in no way sufficient to fully account for the full-blown consequences of the

\(^{21}\) Arendt does hint upon yet another reason why the pure and simple bios has asserted itself as the primary concern for the governmental practice of the Modern Age: ‘The reason why life asserted itself as the ultimate point of reference in the modern age and has remained the highest good of modern society is that the modern reversal [being the reversal from family to nation state, author’s note] operated within the fabric of a Christian society whose fundamental belief in the sacredness of life has survived, and has even remained completely unshaken by secularization and the general decline of the Christian faith’ (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 313–314).

\(^{22}\) It is important to note that Foucault has outlined the very ambiguities of the term ‘political economy’ and of its meaning at this time: ‘Between 1750 and 1810–1820 the expression “political economy” oscillates between two semantic poles. Sometimes this expression aims at a particular strict and limited analysis of the production and circulation of wealth. But, in a broader and more practical sense, “political economy” also refers to any method of government that can procure the nation’s prosperity. And finally, political economy – the term employed by Rousseau in his famous article in the Encyclopedia - a sort of general reflection on the organization, distribution, and limitation of powers in a society. I think that fundamentally it was political economy that made it possible to ensure the self-limitation of governmental reason’ (Foucault, 2008: 13).
fundamental transformations of governmental practice, which mark the triumphal inception of modernity.

Let’s turn to Virno’s argument regarding the dissolution of the public and private realm in his analysis of liberal and democratic-socialist thought. In order to do this, we first have to touch upon the very heart of Virno’s argument, namely the emergence of the term multitude in the middle of the seventeenth century, when introduced into the domain of political theory by the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677). The term stands in sharp contrast to another model of political theory put forth by Spinoza’s adversary, the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Hobbes’ model is based on what he called the ‘social contract’ and pitted his conception of a strong and centralized reign over the ‘people’ against Spinoza’s *multitude*.

For Spinoza, the multitude indicates a plurality which persists as such in the public scene, in collective action, in the handling of communal affairs, without converging into a One, without evaporating in a centripetal form of motion. Multitude is the form of social and political existence of the many, seen as being many: a permanent form, not an episodic or interstitial form (Virno, 2004: 21).

For Hobbes, on the other hand, the concept of people ‘is strictly correlated to the existence of the State; furthermore, it is a reverberation, a reflection of the State: if there is a State, there are people. In the absence of the State, there are no people’ (Virno, 2004: 22). According to Hobbes, the multitude

shuns political unity, resists authority, does not enter into lasting agreements,

never attains the status of juridical person because it never transfers its own natural rights to the sovereign. The multitude inhibits this ‘transfer’ by its very mode of being (through its plural character) and by its mode of behaving (Virno, 2004: 23).

Before expanding in more detail on Virno’s conclusions out of this fundamental opposition, for the moment I would like to stick with the question of its consequences with respect to the distinction between public and private. Besides the fact that the dispute between Spinoza and Hobbes took place precisely around the time associated with the emergence of ‘political economy’, which itself was an echo of the prevalent Hobbesian concept of the inseparable unity of the nation-state and its people, Virno’s explanation for the disappearing boundary between the public and the private realm is not that the private has become a mere function of the state, but that that the multitude itself, ‘which is the polar opposite of the people, takes on the slightly ghostly and mortifying features of the so-called private’ (Virno, 2004 23). Virno maintains that notwithstanding the fact that the state became the central concept of political theory in modernity, the multitude managed to survive somehow in the pairing of the terms collective-individual in democratic-socialist thought, and therefore ‘occupies a middle region between “individual and collective”, for the multitude, then, the distinction between “public” and “private” is in no way validated’ (Virno, 2004: 25).

What can be witnessed here is the emergence of a curious manoeuvre. By ascribing the reason for the dissolution of the boundary between private and public to the specific features of the multitude, Virno delivers an alternative take on Arendt’s argument, where the state takes the blame. Obviously this is by no means a minor
shift of emphasis, since it leads to Virno’s subsequent observation that in the twentieth century ‘it is not that politics has conformed to labor; it is rather that labor has acquired the traditional features of political action’ (Virno, 2004: 51). Furthermore, Virno holds that at the beginning of the twenty-first century we witness the re-emergence of the multitude as the reigning form of political action, and that the existence of the multitude occupies a middle ground somewhere between the individual and the collective. In so doing, he sets out the epistemological foundation for the ontogenetical process of individuation, an issue I will return to presently. But first, allow me to briefly reiterate the arguments thus far:

First of all, I’ve set out the assertion of dissolving boundaries between the private and public realm. Secondly I’ve shown that the emergence of ‘political economy’ is accompanied by an increasing awareness for the pure and simple bios. And thirdly, the notion of the multitude has been imbued with a breath of fresh air. Given these three observations and the aforementioned background of diverging accounts for their historical formation, I propose a hybrid of the following two arguments with respect to a contemporary definition of public: First, Arendt’s conception:

*With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 177).*

And Virno’s take on the matter:

*We could say that the ‘life of the mind’ becomes, in itself, public. We turn to the most general categories in order to equip ourselves for the most varied specific situations, no longer having at our disposal any ‘special’ or sectorial ethical-communicative codes. The feeling of not-feeling-at-home and the preeminence of the ‘common places’ go hand in hand. The intellect as such, the pure intellect, becomes the concrete compass wherever the substantial communities fail, and we are always exposed to the world in its totality. The intellect, even in its most rarefied functions, is presented as something common and conspicuous. The ‘common places’ are no longer an unnoticed background; they are no longer concealed by the springing forth of ‘special places’. The ‘life of the mind’ is the One which lies beneath the mode of being of the multitude (Virno, 2004: 37).*

Contemporary public space therefore is the unique and temporal setting for a new beginning, an unconditional force to insert itself into the human world, where the boundless Thou of public minds settles and having emerged from the One conveys its common nature, that is a place for the being of the many.
7. Multitude and General Intellect

I proceed by investigating the two concepts which appeared already in the previous chapter on the public and the private realm. The first concept was the very subject of Virno’s Grammar, while the other appeared first in Marx’s Grundrisse (1973 [1939-1941]), where he deliberately used the English term:

Perhaps as a polemical response to the ‘general will’ of Rousseau (the intellect, not the will, according to Marx, is that which joins together those who bring about production); or perhaps the ‘general intellect’ is the materialistic renewal of the Aristotelian concept of nous poietikos (the productive, poietic intellect) (Virno, 2004: 37–38).

The two concepts are closely linked, for the ‘existence’ of the multitude is a pre-condition for the general intellect to thrive on idle talk and curiosity. The title of Virno’s book sets a clear agenda. The aim is to craft an axiomatic framework for the various modalities of the multitude to appear next to each other with strategic dexterity and the force of constitutional gravity. Pertaining to the above mentioned speculation whether Marx’s terminological choice was a polemical response to Hobbes and Aristotle, I can’t refrain from my assumption that the title of Virno’s book was just that with respect to Chomsky’s universal grammar (Cook, 1996), a theory that – as we shall see – flatly contradicts his undertaking. Virno’s book is the result of 4-days seminar for students at the University of Calabria, which is evident in terms of its style, at times prone to the aphoristic insistence of a manifesto, but never at the expense of its overall clarity and solid rooting in the history of philosophy, political theory, and economy. Contrary to the structure of the book, it seems more reasonable to start the discussion on the term multitude with the question of how it comes into being, i.e., with the process of individuation. As mentioned above, Virno applies Simondon’s theory to the subject of his Grammar, which is the multitude. But far from being an intellectual language game, this conception shows a remarkable resemblance with many of the emerging characteristics or tendencies in contemporary culture and politics, some of which I will be highlighting in the course of my argument. What could have been indicated in the chapter on the principle of participation only will now be elaborated comprehensively, since the concept of the multitude allows me to cast a critical view on the state of representational democracy from the point of

---

23 Far from being conclusive I feel obliged to say a few words about Antonio Negri, a contemporary of and acquainted with Virno, who wrote extensively on the notion of the multitude himself. To be sure, what he shares with Virno is the reference of Spinoza’s political and political theological treaties. However that may be, the ‘problem’ with Negri is his stern fidelity to the Marxian class struggle, which made him place the root of Spinoza’s democratic constitutionalism at the heart of the constitution-production relationship and to see the Spinozian construction of politics as presupposition for the antagonistic function of the class struggle, a view that – as we shall see – flatly contradicts the position of Virno. ‘In Spinozian immanentism, in the Spinozian specificity of politics, democracy is the politics of the “multitude” organized in production, and religion is the religion of the “ignorant” organized in democracy. This Spinozian construction of politics constitutes a fundamental moment in Modern thought. Even if this formulation does not successfully bring the antagonistic function of class struggle as the foundation of reality to its maturity, it does succeed in grasping all the presuppositions of such a conception, presenting the activity of the masses as the foundation of both social and political transformation’ (Negri, 1991: xvii).
view of the general intellect rather than the homogenised constituency. Whereas the prevailing contemporary form of the nation state is constituted on the basis of a unifying principle – the people — the multitude is constituted on the basis of the many, the individuation of the One.

I will now continue with the aforementioned ontogenetic aspects of the multitude, which Virno himself traces back to Simondon’s theory of individuation in order to produce what Virno calls the ‘amphibian subject’ (Virno, 2009).

Simondon’s reflection on the principle of individuation presents other conceptual ‘predicates’ to apply to the grammatical subject at hand, the multitude. Two of Simondon’s theses are particularly suitable for the discussion of subjectivity in the era of the multitude. The first thesis states that individuation is never concluded, that the pre-individual is never fully translated into singularity. Consequently, according to Simondon, the subject consists of the permanent interweaving of pre-individual elements and individuated characteristics; moreover, the subject is this interweaving. It would be a serious mistake, according to Simondon, to identify the subject with one of its components, the one which is singularized. The subject is, rather, a composite: ‘I’, but also ‘one’, unrepeatable uniqueness, but also anonymous universality (Virno, 2004: 78).

The element of universality in this case has been attributed to the Source or the One from which the individuated individual does come from rather than the One towards which the process of individuation converges. In the latter case, universality marks the end of a distinct process, in the case of the One of the multitude, universality is the pre-individual ‘incipit’ for a never-ending process of individual becoming.

When we speak of a process, or a principle, of individuation, we should keep clearly in mind what precedes individuation itself. This has to do, first of all, with a pre-individual reality, that is to say, something common, universal and undifferentiated. The process which produces singularity has a non-individual, pre-individual incipit (Virno, 2004: 76).

It is important to note that in Buber’s dialogue, the progressive states of individuation are brought about by a permanent swinging in and out of the being that is the dialogue, in a process of mediating between the most personal (singular) traits and the shared communality of acting and being acted upon.

By participating in a collective, the subject, far from surrendering the most unique individual traits, has the opportunity to individuate, at least in part, the share of pre-individual reality which all individuals carry within themselves. According to Simondon, within the collective we endeavour to refine our singularity, to bring it to its climax. Only within the collective, certainty not within the isolated subject, can perception, language, and productive forces take on the shape of an individuated experience (Virno, 2004: 79).

What we see emerging in Virno’s account of collective individuation is – intrinsic to the working of this logic – the focus on capacities, rather than the fully-fledged dynamics of epistemological discourse in action. The objects of knowledge and science are therefore precisely the result of individuation once the primary I-Thou has been spoken and the immediate individuality retreats once the initial Thou has been replaced by the It in order to form the mental objects of individual reasoning. Since this very differentiation between the sheer capacity or faculty on one hand and the formation of objective qualities on the other hand is the key to understand the
collective dimension of the multitude, it seems appropriate to recall the corresponding passage of Buber’s *I and Thou*.

The I which stepped forth declares itself to be the bearer, and the world round about to be the object of the perceptions. Of course, this happens in a ‘primitive’ form and not in the form of a ‘theory of knowledge’. But whenever the sentence ‘I see the tree’ is so uttered that it no longer tells of a relation between the man – I – and the tree – Thou -, but establishes the perception of the tree as object by the human consciousness, the barrier between subject and object has been set up. The primary word I-It, the word of separation, has been spoken (Buber, 2004 [1937]: 25).

Virno’s focus in this respect is to single out one capacity in particular, namely the human faculty of language. But this is not to say that language wasn’t already of chief importance in Buber, who coined the expression of the ‘two-sided-gate’ with respect to those who relate to one another in the give and take of speech and counter-speech. In fact, the resemblance is remarkable where Virno reads:

> The progressive clarification of the relation between the faculty (or capacity) for speaking and the particular act of parole: this is what enables us to surpass the pre-individual character of historical-natural language, pressing for the individuation of the speaker. In fact, while language belongs to everybody and to nobody, the passage from the pure and simple ability to say something to a particular and contingent utterance determines the space of an individual’s notion of ‘my own’ (Virno, 2004: 77).

Notwithstanding the striking similarities between the two, Virno’s attitude is of a somewhat more ‘worldly’ nature, for his aim is no less than to forge the theoretical foundation for the reformation of representational democracy based on the collective of the multitude.²⁴

The collective of the multitude, seen as ulterior or second-degree individuation, establishes the feasibility of a non-representational democracy. Conversely, we can define a ‘non-representational democracy’ as an individuation of the historical-social pre-individual: science, knowledge, productive cooperation, and general intellect. The ‘many’ persevere as ‘many’ without aspiring to the unity of the state because:

1) as individuated singularities they have already left behind the unity/universality intrinsic to the diverse species of the pre-individual;
2) through their collective action they underscore and further the process of individuation (Virno, 2004: 79–80).

Virno swiftly places the historical-social ingredients of the pre-individual One next to the general intellect, which for him indisputably belong to the same category. Unlike science though, knowledge is still endowed with the virginity of pure capacity rather than being historically tainted with the burdening weight of ideological discourse. Most importantly the general intellect is shared in public, i.e. becomes what Virno calls a ‘public intellect’ and thus can potentially form the new ‘constitutional principle’ for a ‘non-state public sphere’:

---

²⁴ It almost goes without saying that Virno falls short of delivering a full-blow theoretical alternative for the current state of affairs. However, the critical reader is warned to be quick with a dismissive judgment, since it takes at least a speculative and potentially bold first step to be taken in order to hope for matters to change any time soon.
The One of the multitude, then, is not the One of the people. The multitude does not converge into a volonté générale for one simple reason: because it already has access to a general intellect. The public intellect, however, which appears in the post-Ford [sic.] world as a mere resource of production, can constitute a different ‘constitutional principle’; it can overshadow a non-state public sphere. The many, in as much as they are many, use the publicness of the intellect as their base or pedestal: for better or for worse (Virno, 2004: 42).

Harking back to the very difference between the People and the Many, the universal unity of the body politic as against the shared communality of the multitude, Virno reinforces his call for the general intellect to gather ‘outside’ the ‘unity which has congealed within the administrative modern machine of the States’ (Virno, 2004: 43). This ‘outside’ however is in no way marginal or residual, but endowed with the capacity to re-instantiate the coupling of knowledge and power on its own terms in order to catalyse the liberalising experience of a non-governmental dispositif beyond the repressive force of the universal sovereign.

The people are the result of a centripetal movement: from atomized individuals, to the unity of the ‘body politic,’ to sovereignty. The extreme outcome of this centripetal movement is the One. The multitude, on the other hand, is the outcome of a centrifugal movement: from the One to the many. But which One is it that serves as the starting point from which the many differentiate themselves and remain so? Certainly it cannot be the State; it must have to do with some completely different form of unity/universality (Virno, 2004: 42).

Here, we start to anticipate the full potentiality of the post-Fordist multitude. I’ve deliberately chosen the verb ‘to anticipate’, for one of the chief problems with emergent forms of non-representational politics is the lack of suitable terminology, a register of full-blown concepts (as in scientific discourse) or categories (as in philosophy), a ‘suitable lexicon’ as Virno calls it. Given this lack of terminology, concepts and categories for the multitude, I try to paint a more lucid picture of the Grammar based on some of its most significant characteristics. To start with, I will take a closer look on what has already been identified as the preeminent feature shared among the members of a community, namely, the linguistic and cognitive capacities of human beings.

The sharing of linguistic and cognitive habits is the constituent element of the post-Fordist process of labour. All the workers enter into production in as much as they are speaking-thinking. This has nothing to do, mind you, with ‘professionality’ or with the ancient concepts of ‘skill’ or ‘craftsmanship’: to speak/think are generic habits of the human animal, the opposite of any sort of specialization. This preliminary sharing in one way characterizes the ‘many,’ seen as being ‘many,’ the multitude; in another way, it is itself the base of today’s production. Sharing, so far as it is a technical requirement, is opposed to the division of labour; it contradicts that division and causes it to crumble (Virno, 41).

Why is it so important for Virno to stress the linguistic and cognitive capacities of post-Fordist production? This question indeed pertains to some of the issues raised in the context of Buber’s dialogical principle as well as in Arendt’s minute categorisation of the vita activa. Arendt persistently stressed the importance of tracing her terminological diversification along the entire chain of its historic formation in order to arrive at the conclusion that with the onset of the Modern Age, we ended up having a
society of labourers (forming the constitutional basis for the Marxian class struggle) and the realm of political action, which is primarily concerned with the nurturing of the pure and simple bios in the ‘household’ of the state. Buber on the other hand has defined the dialogue as the vital precondition for the emergence of an ethical How to as opposed to the moral Ought to. I have also indicated that precisely because of the recent recovery of generic human faculties within the silent rise of the multitude was it possible for the labour class to re-assert its political clout. The praxis of the multitudes ‘mode of production’ is independent of any specific economic configuration and fully incorporates the very existence of its subjects, their forms of life.

As you will recall, ‘multitude’ is a central category of political thought: it is called into question here in order to explain some of the salient features of the post-Ford mode of production. We do so on the condition that we understand ‘mode of production’ to mean not only one particular economic configuration, but also a composite unity of forms of life, a social, anthropological and ethical cluster: ‘ethical’, let us note, and not ‘moral’; in question here are common practices, usages and customs, not the dimension of the must-be. So then, I would like to maintain that the contemporary multitude has as its background the crisis of the subdivision of human experience into Labor, (political) Action and Intellect. The multitude affirms itself, in high relief, as a mode of being in which there is the juxtaposition, or at least the hybridization, between spheres which, until very recently, even during the Ford era, seemed clearly distinct and separated (Virno, 2004: 49).

The full political dimension of this movement lies in the fact that the labouring society has fully ‘absorbed into itself many of the typical characteristics of political action; and that this fusion between Politics and Labor constitutes a decisive physiognomic trait of the contemporary multitude’ (Virno, 2004: 50).

Virno’s derives the justification for his claim that the faculty to speak, the generic skill of language is the necessary presupposition for political action from the Aristotelian category of virtuosity in his Nicomachean Ethics.

Aristotle distinguishes labor (or poiësis) from political action (or praxis), utilizing precisely the notion of virtuosity: we have labor when an object is produced, an opus which can be separated from action; we have praxis when the purpose of action is found in action itself. Aristotle writes: ‘For while making has an end other than itself, action cannot; for good action [understood both as ethical conduct and as political action, Virno adds] itself is its end’ (Nicomachean Ethics, VI, 1140b). (Virno, 2004: 52).

The virtuosity of the speaker is thus defined as means without an end, as the boundless liberation from sheer necessity or a cause which brings about the desired effect. Virtuosity thus understood is not a measure for the quality of action but rather the fundamental model for an activity to unfold in the first place without having to know where its ramifications will lead.

This is not the activity of a knowledgeable and erudite locutor, but of any locutor. Human verbal language, not being a pure tool or a complex of instrumental signals (these are characteristics which are inherent, if anything, in the languages of non-human animals: one need only think of bees and of the signals which they use for coordinating the procurement of food), has its fulfilment in itself and does not
produce (at least not as a rule, not necessarily) an ‘object’ independent of the very act of having been uttered (Virno, 204: 55).

In Virno’s definition of political praxis and the accompanying virtuosity of the speaker one important feature of the historic model and its etymological implications has gone missing however. This feature goes right down to the heart of a historic fissure, which was to determine one if not the most important aspect of governance, namely the Greek and Latin distinction of the verb ‘to act’ into the Greek verbs archein (‘to begin’) and prattein (‘to achieve’) corresponding with the Latin verbs agere (‘to set in motion’) and gerere (‘to bear’). Hannah Arendt pointed out that

It seems as though each action were divided into two parts, the beginning made by a single person and the achievement in which many join by ‘bearing’ and ‘finishing’ the enterprise, by seeing it through. Not only are the words interrelated in a similar manner, the history of their usage is very similar too. In both cases the word that originally designated only the second part of action, its achievement – prattein and gerere – became the accepted word for action in general, whereas the words designating the beginning of action became specialized in meaning, at least in political language. Archein came to mean chiefly ‘to rule’ and ‘to lead’ when it was specifically used, and agere came to mean ‘to lead’ rather than ‘to set into motion’ (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 189).

The politico historic significance of the twofold nature of the verb ‘to act’ has led to the subsequent isolation of a master who solely sets something into being and someone else (possibly a collective) who simply executes orders. In this sense, the beginner is the ruler over those who are capable of execution. Obviously this split of ‘occupation’ is not only the antecedent of the democratic separation of power in a legislative, an executive, and a judiciary as we know it ever since the ancient polis, but also introduced the idea of ‘specialisation’ with its subsequent division of labour (Phelps, 1985).

The point I am trying to make here is that complementary to Virno’s emphasis on the performative means of political praxis, it is important to stress the actor’s ability to combine in himself both aspects of the act, the beginning and the actual achievement, i.e. to combine the master and executor in one and the same person. It is nevertheless hugely important not to mistake the unity of master and executor with a call for the mute solitude of the animal laborans, since we have identified the presence of others as the constitutive principle of the general intellect to thrive on the linguistic-communicative qualities entailed by it.

When ‘subjective’ cooperation becomes the primary productive force, labor activities display a marked linguistic-communicative quality they entail the presence of others. The monological feature of labor dies away: the relationship with others is a driving, basic element, not something accessory. Where labor moves to the side of the immediate productive process, instead of being one of its components, productive cooperation is a ‘publicly organized space.’ This ‘publicly organized space’ – interjected into the labor process – mobilizes attitudes which are traditionally political. Politics (in the broad sense) becomes productive force, task, ‘tool box.’ One could say that the heraldic motto of post-Fordism is, rightfully, ‘politics above all.’ After all, what else could the discourse of ‘total quality’ mean if not a request to surrender to production a taste for action, the capacity to face the
possible and the unforeseen, the capacity to communicate something new (Virno, 2004: 62–63)?

It is important to emphasise the peculiar function of language with respect to the performance of the speaker. As mentioned above, Virno endows the speaker with the virtuosoic capacity of a performer in the sense of someone who acts in public and in concert with others. This peculiar link however goes back to John Langshaw Austin, whose work on speech acts was published in 1962 under the title How to Do Things with Words, a book that today is widely regarded as the theoretical cornerstone of speech act theory. It was Austin’s achievement to do away with the view predominantly held by philosophy that the sole purpose of a ‘statement’ is to express a ‘state of affairs’ or ‘to state some fact’ and therefore is either true or false according to law of the excluded middle. Austin established the simple but illuminating proposition that besides constative sentences that can be either true or false there are speech acts of performative character, i.e., by saying something I do something. These speech acts are such that

(A) they do not ‘describe’ or ‘report’ or constate anything at all, are not ‘true or false’; and (B) the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or as ‘just’, saying something (Austin, 1962: 5).

These performative utterances or simply ‘performatives’ are further distinguished by locutionary acts (which are roughly equivalent with the traditional sense of ‘meaning’), illocutionary acts (which involve conventions), and perlocutionary (which involve some consequences). In order to account for the fact, that the speech act can either succeed or go wrong as opposed to a constative utterance being either true or false, Austin introduced the notion of happy or unhappy performatives, with the latter being subject to the doctrine of Infelicities. The reason for a performative utterance to be qualified as happy or unhappy is tied to a list of rules that define the specific circumstances or say the context in which an utterance has taken place, which are in short: (A.1) accepted conventional procedures, (A.2) particular persons or circumstances, (B.1) procedural correctness and (B.2) completeness, (F.1) authenticity of thoughts and feelings and their (F.2) subsequent conduct on behalf of the actor himself. Without having to go into much further detail I am now in the position to earmark the consequences of Austin’s speech acts for the speaker qua performer acting in public:

1. To speak is to act, and that holds regardless of the speech act being accompanied by the physical appearance of a deed.

The action he [the speaker, author’s note] begins is humanly disclosed by the word, and though his deed can be perceived in its brute physical appearance without verbal accompaniment, it becomes relevant only through the spoken word in

---

25 The date of publication is slightly misleading since the contents of this book are based on the William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955.

26 The subsequent development of speech act research to the status of a full blown theory can be foremost accredited to the work of John R. Searle, who published his book Speech Acts in 1962, based on the pioneering work of Austin.

27 Enumeration according to Austin (Austin, 1962: 14–15)
which he identifies himself as the actor, announcing what he does, has done, and intends to do (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 179).

2. For the speech act to be called happy, a variety of circumstantial factors have to be met. But the speech act as such is independent of material factors.

   While strength is the natural quality of an individual seen in isolation, power springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse. Because of this peculiarity, which power shares with all potentialities that can only be actualized but never fully materialized, power is to an astonishing degree independent of material factors, either of numbers or mean (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 200).

   It is precisely due to the performative quality of speech acts that the general intellect can be defined as the linguistic co-operation of individuals who act in concert without being concealed in the Marxian means of production, i.e. the machine system.

   Consequently, Virno arrives at the following statement:

   The concept of cooperation comprises in itself, fully, the communicative capacity of human being. That is true, above all, where cooperation is truly a specific ‘product’ of the activity of labor, something which is promoted, elaborated, refined by those who cooperate. The general intellect demands virtuosoic action (that is, in the broad sense, political action), precisely because a consistent portion of this intellect is not channeled in the machine system, but manifests itself in the direct activity of human labor, in its linguistic cooperation (Virno, 2004: 65).

   Now that I’ve come thus far in describing what it means to act in public on the basis of the linguistic and cognitive capacities of the multitude, I am able to provide a timely version of what it is that can be called non-state run public space. The respective definition is twofold in the sense of addressing (a) its operational capacity, which manifests itself as constitutional principle, and (b) its physical appearance in space and time which manifests itself as the site of an event.

   Ad (a):

   It is a ‘publicness’ – as we have already observed during the first day of our seminar – totally heterogeneous with respect to that which is instituted by state sovereignty, or to quote Hobbes, ‘by the unity of the body politic’. This ‘publicness’, which manifests itself today as an eminent productive resource, can become a constitutional principle, a public sphere, in fact (Virno, 2004: 69).

   Ad (b):

   The space of appearance comes into being wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action, and therefore predate and precede all formal constitution of the public realm and the various forms of government, that is, the various forms in which the public realm can be organized. Its peculiarity is that, unlike the spaces which are the work of our hand, it does not survive the actuality of the movement which brought it into being, but disappears not only with the dispersal of men – as in the case of great catastrophes when the body politic of a people is destroyed – but with the disappearance or arrest of the activities themselves. Wherever people gather together, it is potentially there, but only potentially, not necessarily and not forever (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 199).

The latter manifestation of the public space as evental site is subject to further investigation in the second part of my thesis, when I turn my attention to the notion of the event and its concomitant definitions of time and fidelity. For now I would like to continue with another characteristic of the multitude which touches upon one of the
key notions deployed by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, namely fear (Angst), a term however, I won’t be able to deal with in all its implications and discursive contexts in which it has surfaced throughout the history of modern philosophy and psychology. There are two aspects of significant importance though, one being the legitimacy of governmental practice and the other the very difference between fear and anguish. Although both are closely related with one another, it makes sense to start with the aspect of governmental legitimacy. As exemplified above, at the beginning of modernity, which took place around the end of the sixteenth century, the task of governmental administration increasingly took on the form of ‘political economy’ with its self-restricted dictum of defining its sole purpose in protecting the productivity (wealth-accumulation) and social ties of the population and subsequently regarded ‘everything beyond the enforcement of law and order as “idle talk” and “vain-glory”’ (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 159). But yet at the same time it was at the dawn of the Cartesian doubt when men for the first time in history have been thrown into a process of fundamental self-alienation based on the assumption that everything outside the individual capacities of the mind, soul, and the body has fallen prey to the subjective fallacy of human perception. Now – and here I turn to the second aspect of my argument – it was precisely because of the governmental promise to watch over the wellbeing of its citizens in order to prevent the individual from the fear of being exposed to the downsides of social interaction that the state failed to prevent its people from being alienated from the world as such, from being exposed to the permanent mistrust in ones very own capacity to position oneself in a world of mundane activity and thus turned from occasional fear to the permanence of anguish.

So, the dividing line between fear and anguish, between relative dread and absolute dread, is precisely what has failed. The concept of ‘people’, even with its many historical variations is closely bound to the clear separation between a habitual ‘inside’ and an unknown and hostile ‘outside’. The concept of ‘multitude’, instead, hinges upon the ending of such a separation. The distinction between fear and anguish, just like the one between relative shelter and absolute shelter, is groundless (Virno, 2004: 33).

For this reason, the withering away of the dividing line between fear and anguish requires the introduction of a new term, capable of subsuming both into the ferment of a contemporary psychological concern of the many. In doing so Virno resorts to Heidegger’s equation of ‘not feeling at home’ with the origin of anguish, an experience vividly described in the work of Freud, who has called it ‘the uncanny’.

Thus, there is nothing more shared and more common, and in a certain sense more public, than the feeling of “not feeling at home.” No one is less isolated than the person who feels the fearful pressure of the indefinite world. In other words, that feeling in which fear and anguish converge is immediately the concern of many. One could say, perhaps, that ‘not feeling at home’ is in fact a distinctive trait of the concept of the multitude while the separation between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, between fear and anguish, is what earmarked the Hobbesian (and not only Hobbesian) idea of people. The people are one, because the substantial community collaborates in order to sedate the fears which spring from circumscribed dangers. The multitude, instead, is united by the risk which derives
from ‘not feeling at home’, from being exposed omnilaterally to the world (Virno, 2004: 34).

What lurks behind the corner of technological advancement, therefore, is – as Nietzsche rightfully indicated – the destructive force of nihilism, the permanent erasure of any horizon or, in the words of Buber, a ‘centre, where the extended lines of relations meet’ (Buber, 2004 [1937]). Indeed, here one has to be extremely careful if the eternal recurrence of the modern spectacle or the constructed situation with the same spider and the moonlight between the same trees is the price to be paid. It wouldn’t be sufficient to be the supreme and removed observer of this spectacle, as Nietzsche claimed to be, in order to withstand the forceful gravity of a movement without a focal point, an existence without the redeeming emergence of someone or something to relate with. The relational aspect of Buber’s dialogue is precisely what could prevent the multitude from another poisonous trait, which has rightly been identified by Virno as one of its distinctive signs, namely the convergence of opportunism and cynicism.

Cynics recognize, in the particular context in which they operate, both the preeminent role played by certain cognitive premises as well as the simultaneous absence of real equivalences. As a precaution, they repress the aspiration for a dialogue on equal terms. From the outset they renounce any search for an intersubjective foundation for their praxis, as well as any claim to a standard of judgment which shares the nature of a moral evaluation. The fall of the principle of equivalency, so intimately related to the exchange of commodities, can be seen in the behavior of the cynic, in the impatient abandonment of the appeal for equality (Virno, 2004: 88).

What a dialogue on equal terms is meant to bring about is not a normative standard of judgments based on prevailing moral conventions, but an ethic of shared resources in a hermeneutical process of mutually disclosing ‘who’ speaks. It is one of the most outstanding features of Arendt’s work that, despite the unspeakable cruelties of the twentieth century or any kind of legal arrangement for peaceful human co-existence, she embedded the faculties of forgiving and to make and keep promises right at the heart of her political theory, without the usual recourse to established moral principles.

Since these faculties [the faculty of forgiving and the faculty to make and keep promises, author’s note] correspond so closely to the human condition of plurality, their role in politics establishes a diametrically different set of guiding principles from the ‘moral’ standards inherent in the Platonic notion of rule. For Platonic rulership, whose legitimacy rested upon the domination of the self, draws its guiding principles – those which at the same time justify and limit power over others – from a relationship established between me and myself, so that the right and wrong of relationships with others are determined by attitudes toward one’s self, until the whole of the public realm is seen in the image of ‘man writ large’, of the right order between man’s individual capacities of mind, soul, and body (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 237–238).

---

28 Here, I refer loosely to a passage in Nietzsche’s The Gay Science where he elaborates for the first time his idea of the eternal recurrence (Nietzsche, 1974 [1882]: 273–74).
However elucidating and helpful Virno’s elaborations on the contemporary aspects of the multitude may be, they remain remarkably vague with respect to the specific circumstances, ontological characteristics and temporal dimensions of the very moment when something new is about to emerge, which is why I will now turn to this matter on the basis of Alain Badiou’s matheme of the event, which is the predominant concern throughout many of his works but covered most comprehensively in his seminal book *Being and Event*. 
8. Beginning Anew: Evental Sites

Before diving into the concrete workings of Badiou’s matheme, it seems necessary to place a few introductory notes on his work in general and the respective book in specific, since the general accessibility is somewhat compromised by his recourse to mathematics, or more specifically, to set theory. Badiou’s own understanding of his peculiar methodology is in no way meant to replace philosophical discourse with the axiomatic vigour of mathematical ontology. For him both operate on equal terms, but it is his intention, however, to support the conceptual development of his philosophical argument with the ‘power of mathematics’. In this context it is helpful to introduce Badiou’s definition of a matheme, which he derives from Lacan:

The making functional of a formal inscription like ‘global’ mathemes, where epistemological concepts can be transmitted through the calculus of signs . . . In this sense, formalization is not, in my text, what Lacan pretended it was for psychoanalysis: an ‘ideal.’ It is a source of inspiration and a support, it being understood that, ultimately, the effects of a philosophical text owe their force and duration to the mere arrangement of concepts (Badiou, 2007: lx-lxii).

To be sure, from the beginning Badiou is fully aware of the ideological fallacies of science, a preoccupation he was to inherit from his teacher Althusser, who sought to understand how to separate science from ideology through what he called epistemological break. ‘The break, for Althusser, as for his student, Badiou, is understood as a break with ideology, or, to be more precise and more Bachelardian, with the ideological immanent to science itself’ (Fraser in: Badiou, 2007: xviii).

The most prominent candidate to qualify for embodying ideology in scientific discourse is representation, for representation, after all, is producing and re-producing immediate givens (empirical facts) in a coherent system of representation (scientific language) in order to transcend this system to a level of universal validity (production of truth). What is necessary then for an epistemological break to occur is to disentangle the semantic link between the system of representation and the object of empirical investigation, namely between sign and content of the designational notion. This is exactly what is called mathematical formalization, a paradigmatic procedure exemplified by Hilbert’s axiomatic foundation of Euclidean geometry, on the basis of which Hilbert could show that a semantic definition of any of the terms at work not only wouldn’t be necessary but even obstructs the full elaboration of the axiomatic complex. Hilbert writes: Because

only the whole structure of axioms yields a complete definition. Every axiom contributes something to the definition, and hence every new axiom changes the concept. A ‘point’ in Euclidean, non-Euclidean, Archimedean and non-Archimedean geometry is something different in each case (Fraser In: Badiou, 2007: xxvii-xxviii).

However, it is important to note that

the indifference that a formalized axiomatic bears toward its representational birthplace should not be mistaken for an incompatibility between the formal and

---

29 Bechelard appears in this context because it was him who introduced the notion of the epistemological break or ‘epistemological rupture’ as he called it to his student Althusser (Fraser In: Badiou, 2007).
the representational . . . Nor does formalization separate mathematical domains from all semantic considerations . . . The point is that formalization allows mathematical practice to achieve an indifference to representation, and it is for this reason that Badiou takes formalization to be the essence of mathematics’ break with ideology (Fraser In: Badiou, 2007: xxx-xxvi).

What we have in the case of Badiou’s matheme of the event is therefore the axiomatic structure of a system of signs, deployed for the successive procedural elaboration of an epistemological paradigm that – although linked with the terms of the operation – does at no point interfere with the workings of the mathematical operation, which is there to support the philosophical argument.

Take, in a historical situation, an evental site \( X \).

I term event of the site \( X \) a multiple such that it is composed of, on the one hand, elements of the site, and on the other hand, itself.

The inscription of a matheme of the event is not a luxury here. Say that \( S \) is the situation, and \( X \in S \) (\( X \) belongs to \( S \), \( X \) is presented by \( S \)) the eventual site. The event will be written \( e_x \) (to be read ‘event of the site \( X' \)). My definition is then written as follows:

\[
e_x = \{x \in X, e_x\}
\]

That is, the event is a one-multiple made up of, on the one hand, all the multiples which belong to its site, and on the other hand, the event itself (Badiou, 2006: 179).

The peculiar move that can be registered here is that Badiou supposes that the event is part of the situation by which it is presented without being at the edge of the void. This, however, is only possible because the event belongs to itself in the form of its signifier (an empty name); the signifier to the multiple that it is. This is what Badiou calls being ‘ultra-one’, being counted as one (from the position of the situation) and containing within its own presentation the term that is the event as such.

From the standpoint of the situation, if the event belongs to it, as I have supposed, the event is separated from the void by itself. This is what we will call being ‘ultra-one’. Why ‘ultra-one’? Because the sole and unique term of the event which guarantees that it is not – unlike its site – on the edge of the void, is the one-that-it-is. And it is one, because we are supposing that the situation present it; thus that if falls under the count-as-one.

To declare that an event belongs to the situation comes down to saying that it is conceptually distinguished from its site by the interposition of itself between the void and itself. This interposition, tied to self-belonging, is the ultra-one, because it counts the same thing as one twice: once as a presented multiple, and once as a multiple presented in its own presentation (Badiou, 2006: 182).

In terms of its mathematical foundation this is a relation of (total) disjunction, meaning that no element of the evental site \( X \) belongs to the situation \( S \), which is the reason for this non-relation to be thought of as the signifier of being, that is the name of the event \( e_x \).

This relation of total disjunction is a concept of alterity. The axiom of extension announces that a set is other than another set if at least one element of one is not an element of the other. The relation of disjunction is stronger, because it says that no element belonging to one belongs to the other. As multiple, they have nothing to do with one another, they are two absolutely heterogeneous presentations, and this is why this relation – of non-relation – can only be thought under the signifier
of being (of the void), which indicates that the multiples in question have nothing in common apart from being multiples. In short, the axiom of extensionality is the idea of the other and total disjunction is the idea of the Other. It is evident that an element $\beta$ which is a site in $\alpha$ is an element of $\alpha$ which is Other than $\alpha$. Certainly $\beta$ belongs to $\alpha$, but the multiples auf of which $\beta$ forms-one are heterogeneous to those whose one is $\alpha$ (Badiou, 2006: 186).

Before I proceed with the matheme of the event, one term that appeared in the foregoing passage requires special attention, namely the void. This is all the more necessary since here the very foundation of ontology is concerned, something that has been expressed throughout the history of philosophy in various ways. In a previous chapter I’ve mentioned Hegel’s Absolute One, Heidegger’s Being of beings, Buber’s eternal Thou, and Simondon’s pre-individual One, all of which intended to mark the ultimate ontological horizon of Da-sein, or to speak in terms of Badiou’s mathematical ontology, the counting as one of a presentation of a multiple of multiples. The question Badiou raises in this respect is the following:

If it is a multiple-counted-as-one, thus a multiple of multiples, how could it be the absolutely first multiple, already being the result of a composition, [since we have seen that the existential index of a legislative system of Ideas, author’s note] ensures that nothing affects the purity of the multiple [and, author’s note] proposes itself as the inscribed deployment of being-qua-being (Badiou, 2006: 66).

Badiou proposes the following solution to the problem: ‘Maintain the position that nothing is delivered by the law of the Ideas, but make this nothing be through the assumption of a proper name’ (Badiou, 2006: 66–67). This move thus produces an empty set – the void-set – which presents nothing but its proper name, and brings to existence that which is unpresentable, an inscription possible only on the basis of the presentation of a multiple which is subtracted from the basic Idea of the multiple proper.

In its metaontological formulation the axiom says: the unpresentable is presented, as a subtractive term of the presentation of presentation . . . or being lets itself be named, within the ontological situation, as that from which existence does not exist (Badiou, 2006: 67–68).

The consequence of Badiou’s solution is that the uniqueness of the void is marked by a proper name, which is – in the realm of mathematics – $\emptyset$, zero ‘affected by the barring of sense’. The problem of the void is most eminently featured in the following passage with respect to our discussion of the name of the event being right in-between the void and the site, the presentation of which it is.

For the first time, a gap is noticeable between ontology and the thought of other presentations, or beings, or non-ontological presentations, a gap which is due to the position of the void. In general, what is natural is stable or normal; what is historical contains some multiples on-the-edge-of-the-void. In ontology, however, what is natural is what is founded solely by the void; all the rest schematizes the historical. Recourse to the void is what institutes, in the thought of the nature/history couple, an ontico-ontological difference. It unfolds in the following manner:

(a) A situation-being is natural if it does not present any singular term (if all of its terms are normal), and if none of its terms, considered in turn as situations, present singular terms either (if normality is recurrent downwards). It is a stability of stabilities.
• In the ontological situation, a pure multiple is natural (is an ordinal) if equally founded by the void alone (since everything which belongs to an ordinal is an ordinal). It is a void-foundation of void-foundations.

(b) A situation-being is historical if it contains at least one evental, foundational, on-the-edge-of-the-void site.

• In the ontological situation, according to the axiom of foundation, to every pure multiple there always belongs at least one Other-multiple, or site. However, we will say that a set formalizes a historical situation if at least one Other multiple belongs to it which is not the name of the void. This time it is thus a simple foundation by the other-than-void.

Since ontology uniquely admits founded multiples, which contain schemas of event-sites (though they may be void), one could come to the hasty conclusion that it is entirely orientated towards the thought of a being of the event. We shall see that it is quite the contrary which is the case (Badiou, 2006: 188–189).

Here comes the peculiar move by which Badiou in effect is forced to leave the territory of ontology because of its own axiomatic in order to save the existence of the event. ‘Ontology does not allow the existence, or the counting as one as sets in its axiomatic of multiples which belong to themselves. There is no acceptable ontological matrix of the event’ (Badiou, 2006: 190). As a consequence of this very impossibility to allow an event to occur within the ontological matrix of the void foundation, Badiou has to introduce an operation which would allow for the existence of a name of a presentation whose term it is, without being a term of the presentation proper, that is belonging to its site $X$. The name of this operation is an intervention, and this intervention has to draw the name of the event from the empty set that is the void.

The initial operation of an intervention is to make a name out of an unpresented element of the site to qualify the event whose site is the site. From this point onwards, the $x$ which indexes the event $e$, will no longer be $X$, which names the site, existing term of the situation, but an $x \in X$ that $x$, which is on the edge of the void, counts as one in the situation without that $x$ being itself presented — or existent, or one — in the situation. The name of the event is drawn from the void at the edge of which stand the intra-situational presentation of its site (Badiou, 2006: 204).

Once a name has been assigned to the event through the interventional operation, the event is an ‘ultra-one’, that is the counting as-one of the presentation that it is and the interventional act of signification, the excess of the legislation, which does not tolerate the existence of a term that is not itself part of the presentation. Badiou also refers to the ‘ultra-one’ as ‘multiple-being’ in order to shift attention from the natural form of ontological foundation towards the historicity of the event. If there exists the being of an event which is not yet ‘officially registered’, but nevertheless part of the presentation that is the evental site with the situation and the being of an intervention, which retroactively assigns a proper name to the empty signifier of the event, we have what Badiou calls ‘an interval’, the temporality of the event.

The excess of one is also beneath the one. The event, pinned to multiple-being by the interventional capacity, remains sutured to the unpresentable. This is because the essence of the ultra-one is the Two. Considered, not in its multiple-being, but in its position, or its situation, an event is an interval rather than a term: it establishes itself, in the interventional retroaction, between the empty anomynity bordered on
by the site, and the addition of a name. Moreover, the matheme inscribes this 
originary split, since it only determines the one-composition of the event $e_i$
inasmuch as it distinguishes therein between itself and the represented elements 
of the site – from which, besides, the name originates (Badiou, 2006: 206).

However, there is yet another problem to be addressed, which has to do with the 
‘nature’ of the intervention itself. Since we have seen that the referent of the 
intervention draws the name from the void which it is, the referent is qua definition 
not identifiable as a one-effect of a presentation for the void being the unpresentable 
as such. Therefore, the intervention can only be another event in its own right, which –
as Badiou rightly holds – produces a circle. Consequently Badiou proposes the 
following solution:

In order to avoid this curious mirroring of the event and the intervention – of the 
fact and the interpretation – the possibility of the intervention must be assigned to 
the consequences of another event. It is evental recurrence which founds 
intervention (Badiou, 2006: 209).

The remarkable characteristic of the interventional operation lies in the twofold nature 
of temporality: First there is the interval between the natural presentation of an event 
within the historical setting of a situation and the intervention of its retroactive 
signification. ‘This is to say that the theory of intervention forms the kernel of any 
theory of time. Time – if not coextensive with structure, if not the sensible form of the 
Law – is intervention itself, thought as the gap between two events’ (Badiou, 2006: 
210).

Secondly, there is – as we have seen above – the necessity to assign the intervention 
to the consequences of another event, which in effect is the doubling of the very same 
procedure within another situation.

Time is here, again, the requirement of the Two: for there to be an event, one must 
be able to situate oneself within the consequences of another. The intervention is a 
line drawn from one paradoxical multiple, which is already in circulation, to the 
circulation of another, a line which scratches out. It is a diagonal of the situation 
(Badiou, 210).

Badiou dissolves this twofold nature of temporality through the figure of a discipline of 
time, which holds sway over the consequences of the circulation of the names of the 
events, a ‘disposition’ Badiou calls ‘fidelity’.

The real difficulty is to be found in the following: the consequences of an event, 
being submitted to structure, cannot be discerned as such. I have underlined this 
undecidability according to which the event is only possible if special procedures 
conserve the evental nature of its consequences. This is why its sole foundation lies 
in a discipline of time, which controls from beginning to end the consequences of 
the introduction into circulation of the paradoxical multiple, and which at any 
moment knows how to discern its connection to change. I will call this organized 
control of time fidelity. To intervene is to enact, on the border of the void, being-
faithful to its previous border (Badiou, 2006: 211).

At this point it becomes clear what I maintained at the onset of this paragraph, namely 
Virno’s vagueness about the temporal characteristic of the multitude in action, since 
he defined the feasibility of non-representational democracy as an individuation of the 
historical-social pre-individual without actually clarifying the procedure of mobilising
the circulation of names of events for which the multitude could declare its fidelity. This mobilizing procedure can be nothing else but a discipline of time – as I have shown with Badiou, the retroactive historicity of an intervention. Coming back to the above mentioned ‘problem of the void’ or the emptiness of being itself, Badiou circumvents this very nullity of the ontological foundation exactly by introducing the operation of intervention as the figure of evental recurrence. Here as well, just as in the case of Virno, my emphasis rests on the potential novelty of each situation in order to avoid the nihilistic recurrence of the same. What might appear to be the introduction of a Hegelian historic closure is in fact – though depending on historic retro-action – its very opposite: a ‘historico-epochal opening’ that reveals the very structure of truth. Obviously this is a fundamental statement, since truth persistently circulates on the level of ideological discourse. If we are willing, however, to investigate the double structure of language in terms of its historic dimension as memory and oblivion, truth isn’t something that is stowed away or concealed in memory, but the very openness of its own un-concealment.

The amnesic structure of consciousness refers not to a chronological past or to ontic preeminence but, rather, to the very structure of truth. Being incapable of grasping itself and transmitting itself without becoming a remembered thing, this structure can preserve itself only by remaining immemorial in memory, by betraying itself, as Idea, in giving itself to sight – that is, in giving itself not as a teaching (didaskalia) but as a divine mission (theia moira) (Agamben, 1999: 105–106).

This is what I call the truth of beginning anew!

There is yet another striking resemblance between Virno’s multitude and Badiou’s event, which is to do with representation. I have shown that representation is not only the prerequisite for reinforcing ideological discourse but the very modality of the general will to be attributed to the people. But what comes to the fore in Badiou is that the term, which isn’t part of the counting-as-one of the situation, the term which is the name of the event to occur through an interventional act of signification, is precisely what is called non-representational proper, the element which the legislation is not able to detect.

Therefore I hold that if the truth of beginning anew does not belong to the normative constitutional regime, i.e., is not part of the normal/natural ontological foundation, it can only convey its procedural awakening through a ‘historico-epochal opening’ in order to engender what I call a constitution of time.

This statement ties in with Buber’s claim that reality is a shared ‘commodity’ of encounter, an issue Oswald Wiener came to ascribe to the ‘consistency’ within the individual, and Deleuze to the actuality of the realm of ideas, a view in opposition to the commonly held shorthand that ideas are reality. If we admit reality to enter the operational calculus of the event, it is not possible anymore to think the ‘historico-epochal opening’ independent of the physical composition of the situation. To be sure, a situation is not bound to the geographic definition of locality or any predetermined resolution in scale. It is, however an attempt to endow the situation with the full-blown capacity of absorbing everything into its orbit, which is more than just the mere
representation of matters-of-fact. At this point I turn my attention to ‘matters-of-concern’ as Bruno Latour has called them (Latour, 2005). Once again, these ‘matters-of-concern’ unfold within a discipline of time rather than ‘under the common dome of “One Politics Size Fits All”’ (Latour, 2005) or through the unifying force of a general will.

Gatherings are, in the translation that Heidegger used, to talk about those sites able to assemble mortals and gods, humans and non-humans. There is more than a little irony in extending this meaning to what Heidegger and his followers loved to hate, namely science, technology, commerce, industry and popular culture. And yet this is just what we intend to do, [to gather, author’s note] the objects of science and technology, the aisles of supermarkets, financial institutions, medical establishments, computer networks – even the catwalks of fashion shows, [all of which, author’s note] offer paramount examples of hybrid forums and agoras, of the gatherings that have been eating away at the older realm of pure objects bathing in the clear light of the modernist gaze. Who could dream of a better example of hybrid forums than the scale models used by architects all over the world to assemble those able to build them at scale 1:1? (Latour, 2005: 23–24)
9. Insular Territoriality: The Hidden Reality of the Many

In 1975 the Russian philologist and philosopher Michail M. Bakhtin published his essay “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” in which he investigated the spatio-temporal matrix of Greek novels, the work of Apuleius and Petronius, biographies and autobiographies of antiquity, chivalric novels and the work of Rabelais based on his methodology of chronotope (Greek chronos = time; tópos = place). This methodology has been imbued with new life by the German historian and sociologist Karl Schlögel with the intention to draw an entirely new map of Europe after the end of the Cold War, which finally was published under the title *Marjampole oder Europas Wiederkehr aus dem Geist der Städte* (“Marjampole, or Europe’s Return from the Spirit of the Cities”) in 2005.  

With this book Schlögel exemplifies the extremely fecund fusion of a meticulously crafted spatial analysis based on extensive on site-research and observation with the temporal inscription of territorial traces beyond the traditional boundaries of nation states or any existing form of relational protocols applied as the ‘official language’ of transnational exchange. If this can roughly be regarded as complying with Bakhtin’s methodological approach, there is yet another element that Schlögel brought to bear in his analysis, namely the concept of the archipelago. In an interview he gave to Hans Ulrich Obrist and Rem Koolhaas, Schlögel defined his use of the concept in the following manner:

The notion of the archipelago is not subject to a specific historic reference or The Gulag Archipelago. It is the attempt to describe a reality structure rather than a formal structure. If we take Europe for example, one will soon discover that the reality is completely indifferent to the fiction of nation states represented by the plain colored territories on a map. There are for example the high-speed corridors of the train networks, but once you leave them for a distance of, say 60 kilometers, the place works at a different pace, almost as if one would enter another ‘time zone,’ a clash of cultures in close proximity. This is precisely why the archipelago describes the sharp boundaries of insular territoriality much more accurately than the fictitious demarcation of nation states on the map.

What is it exactly that distinguishes Schlögel’s work from the orthodox methodology of historians or sociologists? What is the specific fabric of his spatio-temporal matrix composed of? I maintain that Schlögel’s work is a paradigmatic example for the amalgamation of all the ingredients I’ve talked about thus far. Most importantly, there is a fundamental mistrust in the representational dispositif of the existing institutional framework of the nation state and its proliferation of standardised images painting the romantic image of a homogenised body politic under the illusionary guise of an

---

30 This book has not yet been translated into English with the exception of an essay that has appeared on www.eurozine.com under the title “Archipelago Europe” (Schlögel, 2007).
31 The interview took place at Documenta 12 (Koolhaas & Obrist, 2007)
32 The Gulag Archipelago was a term introduced by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as a name for the forced labour camps in the former Soviet Union.
33 My own translation.
integrating force (or ‘invisible hand’ as in the case of economics)\(^{34}\), which persistently operates on the assumption of the existence of a common good, notwithstanding that this ‘image’ goes back to Rousseau (2009 [1762]). Secondly, there is an irresistible belief in ‘matters-of-concern,’ which like its scientific counterpart of ‘matters-of-fact’ is the ontogenesis of ‘lived reality’, a mix of face to face experience and the sudden but temporal ‘solidification’ of ‘fleshy matter-energy’ conglomerations (De Landa, 1997), or as Simondon has put it, the ‘crystallization’ of a specific ‘resolution of a metastable system’. The first conforms to Buber’s dialogue and the latter to Wiener’s ‘consistency’ within the individual and obviously based on regularities perceived outside the organism. And thirdly, one has to track down the multitude at work, to do precisely what Badiou described in his matheme of the event: to detect what is part of a situation but without being presented by it; to watch out for the empty signifiers that are the empty names of all the events, which have not yet been signified; to cut across these evental sites in order to connect what has not yet been connected; to establish the concatenation of all the consequences that come in the wake of any of these events. This is precisely what Latour has termed ‘networks of associations,’ and we have yet to fully understand all the implications that come with it. The archipelago, however, is an instrument for describing the structure of ‘this reality,’ for it is necessary to depart from the attitude of politics and sociology, which have hitherto abandoned what they could not incorporate in the formal structure of their legislative and executive apparatuses, namely the particular but complex reality of the many. To be clear here, I do not talk about the post-modernist romanticism of the patch-worked composite which goes by the name of ‘multiculturalism’ or the radicalised version of individualism offered by the likes of Max Stirner.\(^{35}\) The particular is as much the concern of the individual as it is the concern of the collective. The difference with respect to the aforementioned extremes on either side of the spectrum is that the individuated individual of the multitude already congeals within it the germ of the pre-individual One and appears in the form of a collective through the temporal co-operation of shared capacities only. Thus, it can be said that these forms of communality or attention for the micro-scale are local without being localized and global without being universal. The only thing that matters from this perspective is the temporal dimension of the circulation of empty signifiers and ‘illegal’ referents in order to solidify and re-liquify the magma of the ‘fleshy matter-energy’ composite that is commonly referred to as reality.

It is through this double movement of temporally assigning names to the infinite circulation of empty signifiers that Schlögel arrives at the following momentary map of Europe: From – the port of Rotterdam, ‘Europort,’ the mouth of Europe; Heathrow airport; the swimmers in the thermal baths of Hotel Gellert in Budapest; Edward

\(^{34}\) ‘Classical economics assumed that man, in so far as he is an active being, acts exclusively from self-interest and is driven by only one desire, the desire for acquisition. Adam Smith’s introduction of an “invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of [anybody’s] intention” proves that even this minimum of action with its uniform motivation still contains too much unpredictable initiative for the establishment of science’ (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 42).

\(^{35}\) Max Stirner (1806–1856), a German philosopher and journalist
Hopper’s gas station; Ikea on Leningradskoe Shosse; high-speed routes; Kiev: A geographical shift; Europe at the beach; the arts pages; Europe on wheels; Budget airlines: Easyjet, Ryanair; The mobile phone in the open-plan carriage; Hinges: Bridge over the Belt; ZVAB: Abebooks, Amazon; Security; Cash machines at the University of Sofia; Kanaksprak; Drifting dunes of plastic rubbish; Third language: Lingua franca; Codes, sound; Eurolille, the new city connected to the tunnel; Brussels’s anthropology; St. Petersburg/Baden-Baden; Love Parade; Planet Moscow; new landmarks; The skyline of Tallinn/Reval; Weather map; Berlin: Europe’s Pleasure Ground; Ambulances: Moscow, Istanbul, Madrid; Anniversaries: Synchronisation; The disappearance of the post, the disappearance of the letter; First names: Top-level family gatherings; There is no substitute for Geneva; Black hole Belarus; Peregrinatio academica; Piazza Garibaldi, Naples – to Central Station Kiev.36

Based on the same considerations, Schlögel proposes that the prestigious Aachener Friedenspreis37 should be awarded to Eurolines,38 an organization that ‘groups over 35 independent coach companies operating together Europe’s largest regular coach network, connecting over 500 destinations, covering the whole continent.39

37 http://www.aachener-friedenspreis.de/
39 Schlögel has disclosed this suggestion on the occasion of the interview mentioned before. (See: Koolhaas & Obrist, 2007)
Part Two: Praxis

As elaborated in the previous chapters of my investigation, the term praxis refers to the Aristotelian definition of political action, coinciding with Arendt’s category of action as part of the *vita activa*, and has come to be introduced as the defining feature of the contemporary multitude by Virno, the derivation of which I have not passed without some criticism, but do confirm with his conclusions thereof as far as my own practical work is concerned. This comment already leads right to the heart of our *positioning* within the vast territory of contemporary architectural and artistic production on the whole, which is to take a markedly political stance and is thus expressed by the equation: practice = praxis. Since I have also shown in the preceding chapters how far-reaching the ontological and epistemological ramifications of a full-blown critical analysis of the contemporary human condition are, there is no way of appropriately identifying a single field or category to be lending its name as a shorthand for the kind of praxis Tat ort is all about. Remaining faithful though to the course of investigation already taken will lead my way here, for it was to define the general epistemological framework within which the immediate every day experiences merge with the realm of Ideas, whereby touching upon its ontological foundation, in order to set going what crystallises out of ‘necessity’ as a consequence thereof. To be sure, the term ‘necessity’ thus understood is in no way meant to designate any form of causality as such, but rather expresses the irrevocable belief that to intervene actively is to hold sway over events unfolding under a discipline of time, and for us is the primary signifier for the marking of a new beginning. We at Tat ort share the conviction that the irreversible force of becoming is tied to the recurrent emergence of ‘true problems’, that is, problems which are not itself part of the engendered solutions and are therefore not simply susceptible to an existing protocol in any realm of assured knowledge. Furthermore, we share a fundamental mistrust of representational schemes and the workings of institutional *dispositifs* in general and of governmental practice in particular. We are certainly not as naïve to claim though that we wish or even could do away with it. Quite on the contrary: What I’ve maintained in my introduction to this thesis with respect to the characteristic most pertinently featured in the work of Hannah Arendt is the highest aim to strive for personally, namely not having to subscribe to any form of ideology for the sake of individual opportunism. On more than one occasion, Hannah Arendt declared her fidelity to the American Revolution, the republican model of federal democracy. What she was referring to was obviously not the United States’ degeneration into its present conservative revolution, but – as Bruno Latour rightfully asserts,

> It had a much more sturdy and contemporary tradition. Those American philosophers call their tradition pragmatism, meaning by this word not the cheap realism often associated with being ‘pragmatic’ but the costly realism requested by making politics turn toward pragmata – the Greek name for things. Now that’s realism (Latour, 2005: 38)!

---

40 Here I refer to the work of the collective tat ort, which I will come to introduce in due course.
This pertains to an insight Karl Schögel has given when he was asked to define the subject matter of his research, upon which he replied: ‘Everything that is the case’ (*Alles was der Fall ist*). Without having to unpack the specific implications of his alluding to the first paragraph of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* (Wittgenstein, 1999 [1922]), this statement does by no means simply coincide with the realm of the given or generally accessible physical reality and the scientific or ideological representations thereof in the form of so-called facts. It includes also – and Schögel’s work is the best of evidence – the ‘subjective world of ideas’ with all its emotional implications, but – and here comes the pragmatic element – without exhausting itself in pure contemplation, which is the attitude of philosophers. To turn to things (*pragmata*) that are the case is to include into the methodological framework the intention to intervene, an attitude of coming to terms with the full-blown potentiality of a situation at both ends of the spectrum: Contemplation and active engagement. This is the reason why I will first turn my attention to the notion of the problem followed by one of the most eminent figures of American pragmatism before I delve into the praxis of Tat ort.
10. What is a Problem?

Fig. 2: Fiel, Sketch Vice-diction.

Usually associated with the realm of science or experiences of everyday life, problems seem to exclude themselves from any category of philosophical discourse. As mentioned above, by posing the question what a problem is, I intend to frame our praxis through the reconciliation of epistemological genesis and the structural arrangements of inter-subjective realities. At this point a number of elements I’ve mentioned thus far converge with the procedure of ‘vice-diction,’ elaborated by Gilles Deleuze in his seminal book Difference and Repetition (2004 [1968]). Before I can unpack the concept as such, I need to start with his definition of multiplicities, ideas and events. The Deleuzian category of multiplicity clearly resonates with Badiou’s concept of the multiple, is equally related to the notion of sudden signification, and the nature of intervention, which is to link two successive events. First of all Deleuze identifies three conditions for an Idea to emerge within a multiplicity:

1. The elements of the multiplicity must have neither sensible form nor conceptual signification, nor, therefore, any assignable function. They are not even actually existent, but inseparable from a potential or a virtuality. In this sense they imply no prior identity, no positing of a something that could be called one or the same. On the contrary, their indetermination renders possible the manifestation of difference freed from all subordination.
This condition is the expression of an empty signifier, of a multiple which is part of a presentation without being identifiable on the basis of a name or operational quality, thus remaining potential or virtual.

(2) These elements must in effect be determined, but reciprocally, by reciprocal relations which allow no independence whatsoever to subsist. Such relations are precisely non-localisable ideal connections, whether they characterize the multiplicity globally or proceed by the juxtaposition of neighbouring regions. In all cases the multiplicity is intrinsically defined, without external reference or recourse to a uniform space in which it would be submerged. Spatio-temporal relations no doubt retain multiplicity, but lose interiority; concepts of the understanding retain interiority, but lose multiplicity, which they replace by the identity of an ‘I think’ or something thought. Internal multiplicity, by contrast, is characteristic of the Idea alone.

The second condition introduces the distinction between interior determination as intrinsically defined structural reciprocity and internal identification of a self-reflective I as spatio-temporal definition of sameness.

(3) A multiple ideal connection, a differential relation, must be actualized in diverse spatio-temporal relationships, at the same time as its elements are actually incarnated in a variety of terms and forms. The Idea is thus defined as a structure. A structure or an Idea is a ‘complex theme,’ an internal multiplicity – in other words, a system of multiple, non-localisable connections between differential elements which is incarnated in real relations and actual terms. In this sense, we see no difficulty in reconciling genesis and structure. (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 231)

The third condition describes the ontogenesis of Ideas based on the interior determination of floating and empty signifiers; a diverse set of spatio-temporal relationships between differential elements, or in other words, the reality of the virtual is structure. From here, Deleuze is able to link problems with the order of events in a twofold movement. First of all, he indentifies cases of solutions with the sudden emergence of events, surprising outbursts of novelty, singular points hitherto concealed in the ‘nameless’ interiority of evental sites; fully determined but virtual forms of non-identity. And secondly, events are implied in the conditions of the problem themselves. Deleuze calls this second plane of events ‘sections, ablations, adjunctions’ and continues to elaborate on this twofold movement of problems:

In this sense, it is correct to represent a double series of events which develop on two planes, echoing without resembling each other: real events on the level of the engendered solutions, and ideal events embedded in the conditions of the problem, like the acts – or, rather, the dreams – of the gods who double our history. The ideal series enjoys the double property of transcendance and immanence in relation to the real. In effect, we have seen how the existence and distribution of singular points belongs entirely to the Idea, even though their specification was immanent in the solution-curves of their neighbouring regions – or, in other words, in the real relations in which the Idea is incarnated (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 238).

Through the introduction of transcendance and immanence the procedure of ‘vice-diction’ is imbued with the life it asserts with respect to another category that persistently has plagued philosophical discourse from its inception, namely the distinction between the thing as such and its very essence, for the whole intention of
the Deleuzian conception is to move the question of importance from the general level of commonly accepted essences to the interiority of a multiplicity, which belongs entirely to the realm of the inessential.

For this reason, the procedure capable of following and describing multiplicities and themes, the procedure of vice-diction, is more important than that of contradiction, which purports to determine essences and preserve their simplicity. . . . The problem of thought is tied not to essences but to the evaluation of what is important and what is not, to the distribution of singular and regular, distinctive and ordinary points, which takes place entirely within the inessential or within the description of a multiplicity, in relation to the ideal events which constitute the conditions of a ‘problem’ (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 238).

Returning to the aforementioned second plane of events, I am able to frame the procedure of ‘vice-diction’. What is it Deleuze called ‘sections’, ‘ablations,’ and ‘adjunctions’? Belonging to the conditions of the problem as such, the second plane necessarily remains somewhat vague with respect to the determination of its multiplicities, given that we talk about the emergence of ‘true’ problems as opposed to those which already carry in themselves exhaustive cases of engendered solutions. The vagueness, however, is not a lack of determination per se but the characteristic feature of a structure whose relational qualities are yet to be established through the interventional act of a referent. The solution on the other hand requires an act of condensation, the identification of one specific element that is about to reveal itself and henceforth carries the name of the event. At this point, however, emerges the

---

41 Here I refer the illuminating discussion on this topic in the book Bergsonism, where Deleuze analyses the nature of ‘true’ and ‘false’ problems by means of a recourse to Bergson’s own distinction, yielding the following ‘rule’: ‘False problems are of two sorts, “nonexistent problems,” defined as problems whose very terms contain a confusion of the “more” and the “less”; and “badly stated” questions, so defined because their terms represent badly analyzed composites’ (Deleuze, 1991: 17).

42 Hardly any other term in the history of late modernism has been used more frequently and with almost as many different interpretations. The term ‘structure’ therefore would suffice to furnish a full-blown investigation of its own. More often than not it has quickly been dismissed due to the prevailing confusion of its relational functionality and the semantic dimension of its terms. This view, however, has to be rejected vigorously, for it fails to account for the fundamental difference between an operational set of pre-signified elements and concrete manifestation thereof in the form of a model as one possible paradigm of the structure. With his procedure of ‘vice-diction’, Deleuze offers a striking example for the rich potentiality of a structure conceived of as nothing more but the temporal arrangement of a presented multiplicity of empty signifiers. Here I would like to refer to a similar definition offered by Michel Serres in his voluminous treatise on Hermes, which – with the exception of an introductory essay titled “Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy” (1982) - unfortunately has not yet been fully translated into English but is available in a German translation (Serres, 1991 [1968]) and reads as follows: ‘Der Begriff der Struktur ist also ein formaler Begriff. Und hier ist seine Definition, bei der wir all die Punkte hervorheben, die gewöhnlich falsch verstanden werden: Eine Struktur ist eine operationale Menge mit undefinierter Bedeutung (während ein Archetyp eine konkrete Menge mit überdefinierter Bedeutung ist), die beliebig viele, inhaltlich nicht spezifizierte Elemente und eine endliche Zahl von Relationen zusammenfaßt, deren Natur nicht weiter spezifiziert ist, für die jedoch die Funktion und gewisse Auswirkungen auf die Elemente definiert sind. Wenn man nun die Elemente inhaltlich bestimmt und die Art der Relationen festlegt, erhält man ein Modell (ein Paradigma) dieser Struktur. Diese Struktur ist dann das formale Analogon sämtlicher konkreten Modelle, die sie organisiert. Modelle symbolisieren keinen Inhalt, sie “realisieren” eine Struktur. So und nicht anders lautet die klare und eindeutige Definition des Ausdrucks “Struktur”’ (Serres, 1991 [1968]: 39-40). I will return to the theme of structure in the third part of the thesis, where through Oswald Wiener I expand on the concepts of structure and model with respect to Frege’s famous paper on the distinction between denotation and meaning (Wiener in Herken (ed.) 1994 and 1995; Frege, 2002 [1892]).
same contradiction I’ve detected at the outset of Virno’s multitude und Simondon’s individuation, namely between universality and particularity. If, as stated above, the identification of a specific term of the multiplicity is the condensation of a singularity, one has to insist on the inferiority of this individual with respect to numerical unity, i.e. self-similarity or identity. Consequently Deleuze himself has expressed this consequence in the following manner: ‘There is no abstract universal beyond the individual or beyond the particular and the general: it is singularity itself which is “pre-individual”’ (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 223). What is more to the singularity of emergent solutions – and this ties in with Badiou’s definition of an event being an interval rather than a term – is their dependence on the specific temporality of ‘interventional retroaction’, the specific occasion or kairos.

Vice-diction has two procedures which intervene both in the determination of the conditions of the problem and in the correlative genesis of cases of solution: these are, in the first case, the specification of adjunct fields and, in the second, the condensation of singularities. On the one hand, in the progressive determination of the conditions, we must in effect discover the adjunctions which complete the initial field of the problem as such – in other words, the varieties of the multiplicity in all its dimension, the fragments of ideal future or past events which, by the same token, render the problem solvable; and we must establish the modality in which these enclose or are connected with the initial field. On the other hand, we must condense all the singularities, precipitate all the circumstances, points of fusion, congelation or condensation in a sublime occasion, kairos, which makes the solution explode like something abrupt, brutal and revolutionary. (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 239)

Furthermore – and in continuation with the events and singularities of the idea – the category of the essence of things has to be related with the notion of representation. Having identified our programme as that of rejecting the act of representation due to its rootedness in the ideological notion of identity already, my definition of the word ideology is not primarily used in a political but rather within a scientific context. If – as Badiou holds in his essay ‘Le (re)commencement du matérialisme dialectique’ (Badiou, 2007: xviii) – one of the three ideological features of scientific discourse is to institute “the repetition of immediate givens in a “system of representations” . . . thereby produc[ing] an effect of recognition rather than cognition’, one starts to understand the importance of insisting on the sudden emergence of novelty through a genuine act of creation rather than the reliance on prescribed potentialities of concepts in the form of generally approved bodies of knowledge.

With representation, concepts are like possibilities, but the subject of representation still determines the object as really conforming to the concept, as an essence. That is why representation as a whole is the element of knowledge which is realised by the recollection of the thought object and its recognition by a thing subject. The Idea makes a virtue of quite different characteristics. The virtuality of the Idea has nothing to do with possibility. Multiplicity tolerates no dependence on the identical in the subject or in the object. The events and

---

43 With the term ‘pre-individual’, Deleuze even uses the same expression we have found in Simondon’s ontogenesis.
singularities of the idea do not allow any positing of an essence as ‘what the thing is’ (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 240–241).

It is little surprising that both Badiou and Deleuze predominantly refer to theatre as a paradigmatic example for the coupling of two essential categories embodied therein: the operational aspect of its composition (structure) and the ‘liberating’ aspect of its non-identity with existing forms of representation (learning or production of knowledge).

It is not surprising that, among many of the authors who promote it, structuralism is so often accompanied by calls for a new theatre or a new (non-Aristotelian) interpretation of the theatre: a theatre of multiplicities opposed in every respect to the theatre of representation, which leaves intact neither the identity of the thing represented, nor author, nor spectator, nor character, nor representation which, through the vicissitudes of the play, can become the object of a production of knowledge or final recognition. Instead, a theatre of problems and always open questions which draw spectator, setting and characters into the real movement of an apprenticeship of the entire unconscious, the final elements of which remain the problems themselves (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 241).  

Turning to the category of the virtual ceaselessly invoked throughout the Deleuzian theory of difference and repetition, it is important to note that the virtual thus understood is not based on its opposition to the real, but on the contrary, on granting the virtual a reality of its own. The opposition to be maintained though is that between the virtual and the actual. Seen from this point of view, the virtual is part of the real object. To put it with the words of Badiou’s set theoretical derivation of the nature of the event, the virtual is that which is not counted-as-one by the representational regime of the state but is marked by the empty signifier of its own existence in the set of the elements that is its evental site. This, however, is not to defer the virtual in the realm of irrationality, since – as I have argued above – the virtual is fully determined by the structure of its differential elements.

What the complete determination lacks is the whole set of relations belonging to actual existence. An object may be ens, or rather (non-)ens omni modo determinatum, without being entirely determined or actually existing (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 260–261).

What are the conditions then for the virtual to be actualized? For the singular points of the structure to be fully actualized they have to be differentiated, that is to undergo ‘a local integration or a local solution which then connects with others in the overall solution or the global integration’ (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 263).

What is being addressed here is another important element to the procedure of vice-diction, namely the relationship between the local and the global. The differential determination of the singular points is possible only within the ‘global’ constitution of an internal milieu of the many, i.e., integrated elements of the evental set. And again, what the procedure of vice-diction does establish is not the negativity of forms of opposition or contradiction as it were, but the relational power of events, which unfold

---

44 Subsequently in the third part of my thesis, I will unpack the significance of the Mobile Unit with equal emphasis on its physicality as ‘stage’ and the procedural aspect of data acquisition and the retrieval of knowledge through a process of shared evaluation and feedback (hermeneutic circle).
simultaneously and fully integrated. The virtual on the other hand is not to be confused with the possible, for the possible – as opposed to the virtual – lacks a reality of its own and has to undergo a process of realisation in order to become real. This important distinction pertains to the question whether the non-existent is to be distinguished from the existent solely on the basis of an existence yet to be realised or necessarily has to be conceived of as the non-existent as something that has not yet undergone a process of ontogenesis, and therefore belongs to the realm of ideas. In the case of the former,

Difference can no longer be anything but the negative determined by the concept: either the limitation imposed by possibles upon each other in order to be realised, or the opposition of the possible to the reality of the real. The virtual, by contrast is the characteristic state of ideas: it is on the basis of its reality that existence is produced, in accordance with a time and a space immanent in the Idea (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 263).

What Deleuze touches upon with ‘a time’ and ‘a space’ being immanent to the idea is the *kairos* of the event of a solution, a ‘discipline of time’ in the words of Badiou, intrinsically necessitating a specific place of appearance and tied to the intervention of a referent as the kernel of a constitution of time. Deleuze continues with two additional characteristics of the virtual, which are once again to do with the self-identity of the already known, and representation of the possible through the retroactive fabrication of an image of the real. In this sense, novelty or genuine creation is the double movement of differentiation and actualisation as a break with resemblance and identity. Deleuze’s affinity to the concepts of individuation comes to the fore, when he stresses the limitation of a view held by ‘certain biologists’ according to whom ontogenesis is the realisation of potentialities rather than the temporal actualisation of pre-individual capacities, a position I’ve examined already in the paragraph on Simondon. It is in Deleuze though that the peculiar link of a generative procedure with the emergence of the solution for a problem can be found, which does not at the same time resemble the conditions of its pertinence.

It is contradictory to speak of ‘potential’, as certain biologists do, and to define differentiation by the simple limitation of a global power, as though this potential were indistinguishable from a logical possibility. For a potential or virtual object, to be actualised is to create divergent lines which correspond to – without resembling – a virtual multiplicity. It is the problem which orientates, conditions, and engenders solutions, but these do not resemble the conditions of the problem (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 264).
In anticipation of the third part of the thesis, I would like to cast a brief glance on a concept, developed by C.H. Waddington under the term “epigenetic landscape” and first published in 1956 in his book *Principles of Embryology*. Without going into the full-blown theoretical background of his theory, I will attempt to focus primarily on a diagram, which is the symbolic representation of the developmental potentialities of a genotype with respect to a geological structure (epigenetic landscape) that consists of hills and valleys, where the plane – in Waddington’s depiction – is inclined towards the
observer. The basic idea behind the diagram is to exemplify the branching developmental paths within a competent cell on its ‘journey’ from an immature to adult condition. The valleys or channels, as it were, are dependent on the interaction of genes, some of them affecting the width of the ridges while others affect the depth of a valley. For Waddington the analogy between the geological structure and the developmental path of the cells was to liken the main effect of genes at certain bifurcation points with ‘intrusive masses, which can divert the course of the developmental stream down a side valley’ (Gilbert, 1991: 148). The more canalized the reaction is, the steeper are the valley walls, which is to indicate the changing states of equilibrium along the path of the developmental process. If, on the other hand, the hill separating two neighbouring valleys is small, the likelihood for a cell to fall from one into another developmental path is relatively high. The iconic image of Figure 3 depicts the whole process in its totality as the observer does look at the underside of the genetic landscape in order to identify the following elements:

The pegs in the ground represent genes; the strings leading from them the chemical tendencies which the genes produce. The modeling of the epigenetic landscape, which slopes down from above one’s head towards the distance, is controlled by the pull of these numerous guy-ropes, which are ultimately anchored to the genes (Waddington, 1956: 36).

Waddington’s own caption for his model allows me to bridge the gap between his developmental biology and the Deleuzian procedure of vice-diction. Despite his persistent recourse to biology, at no point in Difference and Repetition does Deleuze place a hint or reference that would elucidate the question of whether the following passage might have been inspired by Waddington’s work or is simply a matter of sheer coincidence:

The ‘type hill’ is no more than a stream along parallel lines, the ‘type slope’ an outcrop of hard layers along which the rocks are buried in a direction perpendicular to that of the hills; but on the scale of millions of years which constitutes the time of their actualization, the hardest rocks in turn are fluid matters which flow under the weak constraints exercised on their singularities. Every typology is dramatic, every dynamism a catastrophe. There is necessarily something cruel in this birth of a world which is a chaosmos, in this world of movements without subjects, roles without actors (Deleuze, 2004 [1968]: 271).

Be that as it may, allow me to scrutinise this remarkable nexus in more detail. The shaping of the landscape for the developmental process of becoming is – expressed by the imaginative diagrammatic imagery of Waddington – the fully determined structural complex of interactions, incessantly moulding the conditions of engendered solutions for the problems that are posed from within as well as from the outside of the entity in question. It is here where the philosophical category of a problem is employed most convincingly as the driving force for catalysing and informing a process of genuine creation, a process that feeds off the pre-individual capacities of singularities within a dense network of associations, all of which preceding the act of signification and

45 I refer to the term developmental biology rather than genetics, evolution or embryology since it was one of Waddington’s chief concern to advocate the fusion of these fields under a unifying conceptual framework.
resemblance with existing paradigms and their simple appropriation within the context of a given environmental arrangement. The environment as such is as fleeting as the conditions of individuation as such, which is why we need to emphasise the operational quality of ‘lived experience’ from within as much as from the outside of the living entity in question. This is exactly what was called the double series of events, embodying the emergence of cases of solutions and the conditions of a problem themselves. The Deleuzian ‘sections’, ‘ablations’, and ‘adjunctions’ are precisely what we find depicted in the intricate, dense, and highly complex network of Waddington’s guy-ropes underneath the undulating landscape of epigenetic becoming. In recalling what Deleuze has ascribed to the ‘dreams or gods, who double our history’, I am now able to paint a more lucid picture about the corresponding double properties of immanence and transcendence in relation to the real. The idea is actualised in so far as it is the temporal result of a historic formation, which is transcendent in so far as it belongs to a realm of the a-priori of knowledge, far from being the Kantian category of an a-priori as a first principle. Once we understand that the assertion of a principle is what grants any process of becoming the universality of a preexisting identity from its inception, to move beyond this conception is to identify the a-priori of creation in the realm pre-individual historicity. This, however, is not to say that the temporal embodiments of the process are to be placed outside or – with Hegel – at the end of history, but to understand the history as a process of retro-active signification through an accompanying discipline of time. At this point we may invoke Badiou’s dictum of the discipline of time,

which controls from beginning to end the consequences of the introduction into circulation of the paradoxical multiple [which is the event, author’s note], and which at any moment knows how to discern its connection to change. I will call this organized control of time fidelity. To intervene is to enact, on the border of the void, being-faithful to its previous border (Badiou, 2006: 211).

Waddington’s landscape is the temporal form of an ongoing process of historic becoming, the condition rather than the representation of the complex formations that lay at the bottom of its pre-individual reality, i.e., pure virtuality.

Let us suppose that we have to do a piece of intellectual work, to form a conception, to extract a more or less general idea from the multiplicity of our recollections. A wide margin is left to fancy, on the one hand, to logical discernment on the other hand; but, if the idea is to live, it must touch present reality on some side; that is to say, it must be able, from step to step, and by progressive diminutions or contractions of itself, to be more or less acted by the body at the same time as it is thought by the mind. Our body, with the sensations which it receives on the one hand and the movements which it is capable of executing on the other hand, is then, that which fixes our mind, and gives it ballast and poise. The activity of the mind goes far beyond the mass of accumulated memories, as this mass of memories itself is infinitely more than the sensations and movements of the present hour; but these sensations and these movements condition what we may term our attention to life, and that is why everything depends on their cohesion in the normal work of the mind, as in a pyramid which should stand upon its apex. (Bergson, 1991 [1896]: 172–173)
I ended the previous chapter with a quote by Bergson in order to highlight that notwithstanding the achievements of the philosophy of life, a crucial step still needs to be taken for the operational quality of the structural arrangement, that is, the virtual realm of ideas, to become manifest in the form of a concrete paradigm. First of all, I need to justify the necessity for this step to be taken, since it is not immediately obvious that ‘the normal work of the mind’ – as Bergson has called it – requires any particular ‘systematization’ beyond its immediate attention to the ‘present reality’ at all. Certainly, epistemological discourse in general and the field of Artificial Intelligence in particular do have a vested interest in establishing a general theory of cognition enabling us to understand and to simulate the operations of mind on the firm basis of a computational or molecular paradigm, but there is yet another and somewhat neglected reason for the pursuit of such a paradigm. This motif is connected with what was mentioned above with respect to the dialogical principle in general or the philosophical category of hermeneutics in specific. What may appear obvious at first, namely that all mental phenomena are tied to the internal perspective of ‘lived experience’, is all but adequately expressed within an appropriate methodological framework in the realm of social sciences, the lack of which is indicative for the natural sciences claim of being built upon abstract data, i.e., facts as opposed to the ‘biased’ stance of the human sciences, relying on the interpretation of socio-historical occurrences. Wilhelm Dilthey\(^\text{46}\) has sought to overcome this opposition when he

\(^{46}\) Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911) is at the intersection of a number of intellectual paths traversing my argument. He was a German historian, psychologist, and philosopher, who held Hegel’s chair in
conceived a threefold system of experience, expression, and understanding (*Erlebnis-Ausdruck-Verstehen*) as the subject of the human sciences. Out of these, it is the element of expression that furnishes the trans-individual process of shared experience. This form of mutual understanding is based on what Dilthey called the objective mind. It’s certainly not a matter of coincidence that this term resonates with Marx’s general intellect, for it was Hegel’s early writings upon which Dilthey built his own conception of socio-historic reality under the aspect of its structural saturation with meaning. It is here, where the investigation of the operational quality of understanding ties in with the concept of participation as connecting the minds of individuals, providing the methodological key for the generalised explication of knowledge. As a paradigmatic example for this attempt to render the process of understanding accessible to epistemological definitions, I would like to familiarise the reader with the work of Oswald Wiener, whose prevailing interest – as mentioned in the introduction – is the application of a specific paradigm, namely the Turing Machine (henceforth TM), for the general description of a process which is not only extremely complex but also highly dynamic.

The choice of TMs as building blocks for definitions (with or without quotation marks) in epistemology is justified by the concepts’ elementarity and generality, by its natural embodiment of elementary kinetics, by the fact that it is used in research areas such as learning theory or complexity theory, by its conceptual nearness to parts of organic chemistry, and not least by the persistent, ever helpful presence of the results of the theory of computation (Wiener In: Herken, 1994 and 1995: 585).

Besides the above listed fields of possible application, one of the most important features of the TM paradigm is its affinity if not to say identity with structure – the implications of which will be presented in due course – and its operational capacity of denoting regularity with regards to the quality of incoming information. As noted above, regularity depends either on the communicability or ‘consistency’ of certain qualities within the individual. Consistency, however, does not amount to equate its sheer existence with conscious thought processes of the human mind, but – and with recourse to the Deleuzian realm of ideas – to identify these processes as of predominantly ‘invisible’ nature and therefore only to a very limited degree present to the organisms current orientation.

With further regard to epistemology it is encouraging to notice that the TM not only furnishes an elementary description of the behavior of a human computer, but also an elementary description of the facts of human observation: with natural processes we always observe some changes that impinge upon our sense organs (strings of ‘signs’ in a time/space series), but most often we have to actively...
account for some ‘invisible’ part of the process (strings of signs of some ‘internal 

In order to understand Wiener’s listing of the preconditions of a structure to be called 
model proper, i.e. a concrete paradigm of the general proposition, it is necessary to 
provide a few basic definitions of his conception to start with.

An organism is a set of TMs that are capable of construction, modifying and 
coupling (concatenating, fusing, inserting, composing, indexing) TMs as well as of 
avivating (‘calling’) one another and the newly constructed ones. The operating 
system (OS) of an organism contains the basic construction instruments; it is 
supposed to be unchangeable relative to those tools. The original set-up of the OS 
is supposed to contain some basic set of projectors.

Outside (a given organism) designates the rest of the universe (including the 
organism’s hardware) in the state of interacting with the organism.

A screen is a device functioning as a tape that is jointly used by some subset of an 
anism. The elements of the alphabet common to these TMs are the screen 
primitives, or ‘signs’ proper.

In saying that an organism matches two strings I shall imply that the strings are 
found to be ‘the same’ modulo of some projector.

An effector is an element of an organism that prints (parts of) its traces onto the 
outside.

An observer is a human observing the entire internal and external action of an 
organism embedded in its outside. (Wiener In: Herken, 1994 and 1995: 588)

On the basis of these definitions and with respect to the important indication that 
Wiener’s conception of the organism is not to be mistaken for the TM as such the 
following listing is a conclusive set of preconditions for the definition of his paradigm.

(a) If strings can be printed onto the screen of some organism also from the outside 
and be marked external, and if the organism or its OS is coupled to some effector 
capable of causing changes in the outside that will, at least partially, in their turn 
appear as string or changes of strings on the screen;

(b) and if the organism or its OS can store strings up to a certain length (for 
instance by converting them into trivial TMs to be incorporated into the organism);

(c) and if the organism is capable of construction, modifying, and coupling TMs so 
that they become folded structures of strings that appear on the screen;

(d) and if the organism is capable of using TMs resulting from (b) and (c), or their 
output, or parts thereof, in the control of the effector;

(e) and if it is capable of insulating these structures from the external strings as well 
as from the effector, and of ‘running’ them in this detached mode and of marking 
the strings hereby appearing on the screen as internal –

then I will call these structures models (of the strings) and say that this organism 
(or its OS) has such models. The organism’s acquisitions of new models will be 
called learning (or induction). I assume that the organism is capable of adding 
appropriate versions of its models to its stock of projectors. A model actually runs 
to print onto the screen will be called in focus (Wiener In: Herken, 1994 and 1995: 
588–589).

From here, I am able to compare Waddington’s system of interactions underlying the 
epigenetic landscape with Wiener’s construction environment, constructing, 
modifying, etc. a model M on the one hand, and Waddington’s developmental process 
with Wiener’s running environment, providing input for M or otherwise govern the 
momentary action of the system. ‘Those parts of an environment consisting of TMs
that in their turn can be made to print internal strings will collectively be called the traceable environment of M. M is understood to be a component of its running environment’ (Wiener In: Herken, 1994 and 1995: 589).

The traceable environment of M is what constitutes the conscious part of the process and furnishes what Bergson has called the extraction of ‘a more or less general idea from the multiplicity of our recollections’ in order to guarantee the ‘objectivity’ of objects in terms of its communicability with others.

When I turn my attention to the distinction of ‘denotation’ (Bedeutung) from ‘meaning’ (Sinn), established by Gottlob Frege in his seminal paper ‘Über Sinn und Bedeutung’ (Frege, 2002 [1892]) the question arises why the separation of these two terms – more often than not used synonymously – is important in this context? In Wiener’s epistemology this distinction enables us to decide whether we talk about the access to or the output of a specific model M called on the basis of a designation S, i.e. a string which is a name if the OS succeeds in directly localizing some M among the stock of its models. While the meaning of a designation S will call a specific model into an appropriate running environment, its denotation produces a respective string or number. Now, there comes the important conclusion with respect to the concept of structure: While the denotation remains invariably coupled to a specific model that produces it, the meaning is a structure thereof, and can therefore vary within a range of different structures the organism is able to provide for the production of the string or number that is its denotation. Wiener gives a specific example:

Thus, the denotation of the string $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} 1/2^n = 1$, while its meaning is the structure described by ‘$1/2 + \frac{1}{4} + \ldots$’, or a prototype thereof, as realized in the organism. The meaning of ‘1’ will vary with the different structures (all, possibly among other designations, bearing the name ‘1’) that the organism will have available for producing the string ‘1’ (Wiener In: Herken, 1994 and 1995: 592-593).

It will become immediately obvious that this distinction is of far reaching consequences for the quest of attaining a stable set of meaningful objectifications relative to their denotations, which – and this is the conclusion of the above elaborations – will have to be referred back to the ‘orientedness’ of the organism at the specific moment in question. It is here, where I would like to come back to my introductory comments at the onset of the second part, whereupon the turning to things (pragmata) that are the case does always already imply an intention to intervene, an intention of coming to terms with the full-blown potentiality of a situation.

In the TM metaphor one might think of constructing levels of sophistication in intentionality – of the capability to ‘step back’, to use models as a substrate to modeling, culminating in the modeling of the modeling mechanism. But since directedness basically is orientedness in the sense of the metaphor, the obvious candidate for the term intentionality is the capability of an organism to be oriented with respect to external and internal strings. Certainly higher levels will be necessary for the organism in order to achieve greater sophistication in model building, but this seems to be a matter of degrees (Wiener In: Herken, 1994 and 1995: 604).
13. Phantom Public

Having addressed the notion of the problem and the ontological and epistemological consequences thereof, I will now turn my attention to a figure, whose affinity to the great tradition of American pragmatism, sets a paradigmatic example for the contemporary framework within which the praxis of Tat ort is not only simply embedded, but on the basis of which emerges our conviction for the necessity to intervene and the personal responsibility entailed by it. Whether the urge to intervene in a condition with which we are dissatisfied actually leads to potential improvement of the situation is certainly debatable, in all these cases however the very definition of representational democracy is thrown into question. The Phantom Public is the title of a book written by Walter Lippmann, first published in 1927. The main idea of this work (and predominant topic of his work throughout his entire career as a writer and political commentator) is based upon the simple observation that the prevailing objective of a democratic society is the creation of a rational consensus reached through appropriate deliberative procedures whose aim is to produce decisions that represent an impartial standpoint equally in the interests of all. For Lippmann the chief problem of this view, however, is that ‘modern society is not visible to anybody, nor intelligible continuously and as a whole. One section is visible to another section, one series of acts is intelligible to this group and another to that’ (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 32–33). For him the degree of responsible understanding can be maintained only through the building and running of fact-finding agencies of great scope and subsequent complexity, all of which, however, ‘are being compelled by their own internal necessities of administration, and by compulsion of other corporate groups, to record their own acts, measure them, publish them and stand accountable for them’, (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 32–33) and therefore can hardly be held accountable for delivering their findings to the ‘casual reader,’ i.e. the ordinary citizen. As a consequence thereof, Lippmann has put to the test the very definition of the so-called ‘common interest’ or ‘society’ – which is what he calls ‘the phantom public’ – by asserting that only when specific actors manage to get organised into one, the anonymous, collective, virtual, and somewhat mysterious creature we call ‘public’ may come into being. Lippmann proposes that precisely those problems that in the modern view cannot be solved democratically, the strange and unfamiliar ones, are the most suitable candidates for a democratic solution.

Yet it is controversies of this kind, the hardest controversies to disentangle, that the public is called in to judge. Where the facts are most obscure, where precedents are lacking, where novelty and confusion pervade everything, the public in all its unfitness is compelled to make its most important decisions. The hardest problems are those which institutions cannot handle. They are the public’s problems (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 121).

From the above said it is obvious though that where Lippmann likened the emergence of problems that are complex and about which information is lacking with the opportunity for public involvement in politics, he was not alluding to the notion of the people or of society as a whole, but to the concrete formation of specific group – a
public – which would gather on the grounds of a problem that has not yet been detected, which no one feels obliged or capable of tackling.

The democratic ideal has never defined the function of the public. It has treated the public as an immature, shadowy executive of all things. The confusion is deep-seated in a mystical notion of society. ‘The people’ were regarded as a person; their wills as a will; their ideas as a mind; their mass as an organism with an organic unity of which the individual was a cell. Thus the voter identified himself with the officials. He tried to think that their thoughts were his thoughts, that their deeds were his deeds, and even that in some mysterious way they were a part of him. (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 137-138)

It is little surprising that Lippmann identified the chief problem of the modern state with the dichotomy of the One and the many. The peculiarity of his argument is that he blamed liberalism for its inability to accommodate the permanent need of representational adjustment to the reality of the individual experience, which – given the liberal political philosophy of the likes of Hayek, for example (2006 [1960]) – seems too general a statement, for it was Lippmann himself who maintained that to hold sway over the boundless number and sheer complexity of the issues at stake in modern civilization is an incomprehensible task for the centralized state. This, however, is in line with the liberalistic opposition to the totalitarian attitude towards planning. With respect to this objection against centralized planning Lippmann maintains:

If you examine the difficulties enumerated by the sponsors of great centralizing measures, such as national prohibition, the national child labor amendment, federal control of education or the nationalization of railroads, they are reducible, I think, to one dominating idea: that it is necessary to extend the area of control over all the factors in a problem or the problem will be insoluble anywhere (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 177).

Lippmann’s argument is that by the sudden and unprecedented rise of national states and the development of large-scale corporations we are increasingly confronted with an overwhelming number of problems for the solution of which we simply lack an established body of custom and law. Furthermore the immense powers of the nation state and its military force on the one hand, and its forceful economic compulsion are sources of great threats to personal security on the other hand.

The people as a whole supporting a centralized government cannot tame capitalism as a whole. For the powers which are summed up in the term capitalism are many. They bear separately upon different groups of people. The nation as a unit does not encounter them all, and cannot deal with them all. It is to the different groups of people concerned that we must look for the power which shall offset the arbitrary power that bears upon them. The reduction of capitalism to workable law is no matter of striking at it wholesale by general enactments. It is a matter of defeating its arbitrary power in detail, in every factory, in every office, in every market, and of turning the whole network of relations under which industry operates from the dominion of arbitrary forces into those of settled rules (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 184–185).

With regards to the confusion of the One and the many, Lippmann holds that these categories are not necessarily
insoluble once we cease to personify society. It is only when we are compelled to personify society that we are puzzled as to how many separate organic individuals can be united in one homogeneous organic individual. This logical underbrush is cleared away if we think of society not as the name of a thing but as the name of all the adjustments between individuals and their things. Then, we can say without theoretical qualms what common sense plainly tells us is so: it is the individuals who act, not society; it is the individuals who think, not the collective mind; it is the painter who paints, not the artistic spirit of the age; it is the soldiers who fight and are killed, not the nation; it is the merchant who exports, not the country. It is their relations with each other that constitute a society. And it is about the ordering of those relations that the individuals not exclusively concerned in a specific disorder may have public opinions and may intervene as a public (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 161–162).

As far as the work of Tat ort is concerned, I would like to end this chapter with two summary notes on Lippmann political theory:

1. Lippmann’s critique of liberalism is not primarily aimed at targeting the political monopoly of centralized planning as such, which – as I’ve noted above – would be in line with one of its key tenets, but his attack on liberalisms negative definition of liberty, understood as the refutation of political restrain, limiting individual liberty. His approach towards liberty is entirely affirmative, for it is the very nature of political praxis to obtain and maintain the liberty of individuals or groups (specific actors) on the basis of their capacity to act precisely on those problems, which existing political bodies have hitherto failed to solve democratically.48

2. Liberty thus understood leads to another decisive consequence of Lippmann’s political theory, namely to define the very nature of democratic politics as the guaranteed liberty for individuals to participate actively in matters of their concern as opposed to the cheap universalism of acting for the ‘general good’ or in the ‘interest of all’. For the prevailing attention towards ‘the society’ as a whole is extrinsically linked with the moral imperative of normative powers, we need to refrain from the fallacy of social critique on the whole, which – by definition – is built on the same assumption of enforcing a moral a-priori for the benefit of all. To critique, therefore, is to establish a space for negotiation, for the coming together of fully individuated individuals in order to collectively and permanently build anew what I call ‘an ethic of shared resources’.

---

48 This approach is close to Hannah Arendt’s definition of political liberty, which from her point of view was paradigmatically expressed by the foundational constitution of the American republic, and the concept of the elementary republic (Elementarrepublik) embodied in Jefferson’s town hall meetings and the ward-system. A fine study on this topic has been provided by Oliver Marchart, published under the title Neu beginnen. Hannah Arendt, die Revolution und die Globalisierung in 2005.
14. Tat ort: Interrogating the Real

Before discussing two specific projects conducted in collaboration with Alexandra Berlinger under the name of Tat ort, I would like to put our work in a more general perspective. I co-founded Tat ort in 1998, which back then was a group of young architects who met at the Vienna’s Technische Universität in the mid 1990s. As a result of its gradual transformation towards an experimental platform for inquiries in the realm of urban public space and the development of experimental settings for the production, display and editorial dissemination of nascent architectural and artistic practices, Tat ort was joined by visual artist Alexandra Berlinger in 2002 in order to form its current structure as an open platform to work collaboratively and research driven in a wide range of fields, including visual arts, architecture, and urbanism. Together we have become increasingly concerned with the epistemological and ontological implications of ‘lived experience’ viewed against the background of the dichotomy between the Particular and the Common in contemporary politics, economics and the social sciences. We look at human interaction and modes of participation in general and the nature of human conflict in particular, its historical formation, multi-layered dependence on existing contextual conditions such as ethnical tissue, spatial settings, local politics and economics as well as the relations with global processes. These issues are the main drivers for the articulation of an interventional scheme in order to tap the highly dynamic flow of informal knowledge. Often these interventions involve the participation of local inhabitants, groups, organisations or societies. To trace their inherited networks, social ties, antagonistic forces, existing or swelling conflicts, and to acknowledge the peculiarity of their expertise is the work, which all too often has been neglected by official bodies, governmental or other representational organisations. To get involved in and to understand the thick fabric of these networks of associations, however, is not solely the result of on-site presence or immediate face-to-face dialogue but requires a solid epistemological framework with respect to the ontogenetic aspects of becoming from an individual, trans-individual and socio-historic point of view. What Buber and Simondon share in this respect is that their concept of ontogenesis is embedded in a relational matrix of ‘transductive’ structuration. This matrix is more than unity and therefore allows for the particularities to unfold beyond the coherent identity of homogenised constituencies.

---

49 An example for such an initiative was the Institute for Cultural Policy. Co-founded in 2004 together with Patrick Ehrhardt and located in Hamburg/Germany, the iCP was set to promote the transformative potential of emerging architectural practices. Through a number of large scale exhibitions, public talks, screenings, and the publication of a book series titled Consequence, we aimed at presenting the work of individuals and groups with a fresh approach to research, practice, and education along with their ability to explore and augment the boundaries of the profession. These efforts have been honoured with an invitation to present the iCP at the 10th International Venice Biennale for Architecture in 2006. See also: Appendix A_Achievements to Date.

50 Her personal work has been exhibited and published widely, and – besides her involvement in Tat ort – she continues to work on her own or in collaboration with others.
In rendering these predominantly urban phenomena visible, we aim at revealing how the process of ‘transduction’ allows for a specific dispositif to emerge, to be described or addressed adequately, to be negotiated or re-invigorated if necessary with the catalysing spirit and playful dexterity of genuine artistic creation.

Often these projects are our own initiative and take place outside the confines of institutional settings or the limiting scope of prescribed programs or briefs as is so often the case with architectural or urban planning propositions. This, however, is not to claim that we can or even want to do away with any form of normative arrangement, but never at the expense of abandoning the distance necessary in order to remain independent from the pervasive grip of corporate, institutional or governmental control.\(^5\)

I will now delve into the first project, which began in 2008 and is currently about to be continued with a follow-up in 2011.

\(^5\) For a comprehensive and regularly updated overview on our activities, see: www.tat-ort.net.
Inhabiting the ‘Spatial City’

The project was the pilot to an open ended series of self-organised artist residencies, with the aim of looking into the immediate living conditions of segregated, dense, and highly conflict-laden social housing estates. For the time being, these residencies are geographically focused on Central and Eastern European countries.

In 2008 we decided to start our initiative by inhabiting a flat for a sustained period of two months in the Siedlung an der Ach (Estate on the Ach), located in the small city of Bregenz in Vorarlberg, Austria.

Fig. 5: Schulze-Fielitz, Siedlung an der Ach: Model and site plan from building permit application, 1975.

52 “Long before the term became official – and decisive in this housing development in Vorarlberg under the pressure of changing conditions – a series of projects on “affordable and space-saving building” (all results of open architectural competitions) planned and realised together with Albrecht and Wratzfeld since 1971 proved that a systematic planning approach can achieve cumulative savings with regard to land use, design, construction, installations and energy consumption with no loss, or even with enhancement, of living value. The Housing Estate on the Ach River was to consist of approximately one thousand publicly funded flats constructed in five phases, corresponding to a 10 percent extension of the city of Bregenz. Upon confirmation of the job, the formulated planning principles are put to the test. For the most part, the urban planning strategy was realised in its proposed form, whereas the concept of prefabricated construction with an open, light drywall construction, making use of the large scale production, could not be realised due to local contracting and was abandoned in favour of conventional construction methods. The mixture of dwellings with office and commercial functions as requested by the client and stated in the competition programme was not financially feasible in the framework of public funded housing and could only be realised to a limited extent. Due to the unexpectedly low building costs, which remained well under the funding rate, the residential rents were lowered from the original 37 ATS/m² to 27 ATS = 3.80 DM/m² (circa 2 Euro) after the second construction phase” (Fiel, 2009: 276).
Initiated with the best of intentions during a period when the SPÖ (the Austrian Socialist Party) governed the city, the compound was built from the early 1970s until the mid 1980s based on the result of an open architectural competition, which was won by a consortium of planners who gathered around the architect and urban planner Eckhard Schulze-Fielitz.

Fig. 6: Schulze-Fielitz, Siedlung an der Ach: Isometric view of an ‘Ach Block’ with different floor levels.
Schulze-Fielitz rose to prominence some 20 years earlier with his Spatial City (Raumstadt) concept (Richter et al., 2008), his subsequent collaborations with Yona Friedman and remained of enduring influence for the development of architecture.

Schulze-Fielitz rose to prominence some 20 years earlier with his Spatial City (Raumstadt) concept (Richter et al., 2008), his subsequent collaborations with Yona Friedman and remained of enduring influence for the development of architecture.

53 Born in Budapest in 1923, Yona Friedman is widely considered one of the most important utopian architects of the twentieth century. He studied in Budapest and at the Technion in Haifa, Israel. In 1956, at the 10th International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) in Dubrovnik, modernism was put to question by his universalist approach and his belief in progress. In December 1958 Friedman founded GEAM (Groupe d’Études d’Architecture Mobile), which focused on adapting architecture to the changes occurring in modern life. He rose to prominence with his manifesto L’Architecture mobile (1958) and his idea for La Ville Spatiale. As much a sociologist as a designer of buildings, he is more concerned with the way people interact with their environments than monumental statements by egocentric creators. He advocates a combined analytic and holistic approach. In 2002 he took part in Documenta 11. He has lived and worked in Paris since 1957.
and urban planning through his buildings, conceptual studies, publications, and lectures (Fiel, 2009). It was Schulze-Fielitz himself who likened the basic architectural features of the Siedlung an der Ach with those of his Spatial City, a reference we’ve adopted for the headline of our endeavour. The actual quality of the architectural proposition notwithstanding, this housing estate is a paradigmatic example for the dire living conditions in mono-functional suburban settings in terms of its dimension (3,000 inhabitants), its relationship to the size of the local population (30,000), its geographical location right on the perimeter of the city, and its peculiar social and ethnic tissue. What made us curious about this place from the beginning was not only its notorious reputation even beyond the provincial borders of Vorarlberg or the sheer impression of statistical evidence for that matter, but the observation of an ever increasing number of initiatives intended to contribute improvements that go by with hardly any enduring impact at all, much to the frustration of local politicians, sociologists, planners, etc. The facts are known and available to offer a point of departure for almost any investigation whatever its purpose. What soon became evident once we started our own investigation into the place is that the sole reliance on facts produces an empty and superficial view of detached observation based on generally approved methods of scientific research. We therefore decided to embark on the hands-on strategy of familiarising ourselves with the situation slowly and gradually without any preconceived idea, plan, or concrete project. We decided ourselves to rent a flat on the ground floor of Block 43 and to live there for a two month period beginning in February 2008. First of all, we had to find out how to connect with the local community to kick-start a communication process that would allow for the gradual build-up of mutual trust and understanding without arousing the suspicion of intruders with yet another premature promise of bettering their conditions, which – as noted above – has happened all too often on previous occasions. We secured the important support of the local youth centre Westend,54 a valuable and well-organised meeting point and escape from the problems of daily life, run by social workers. We soon realised that many of the most pressing issues in the neighbourhood are connected to the public presence of various youth groups – most of them locals – and the regular display of their propensity towards violence, vandalism, and drug abuse. Their behaviour is marked by a peculiar system of non-verbal exchange based on dress codes, gestures, noise, and distinct patterns of territorial flanerie, almost inevitably leading to sustained tensions especially between older generations and young residents. As a consequence thereof, we decided to tap the sonic atmosphere of the public areas around the block we inhabited using several microphones, each of which was wired to a speaker inside the various rooms of our flat and active for 24 hours during 10 days of our occupancy. This interventional scheme was based on three important considerations: First of all, to mark the position of the microphones with a physical structure of sorts so that they would be clearly visible from a distance, secondly, to keep the character of the audio

54 The name Westend alludes to the geographic location of the Housing Estate at the western periphery of Bregenz and bordering to the bank of the river Ach. See also: http://www.westend.at/.
set-up strictly limited to the live transmission of the sonic atmosphere without any recordings thereof throughout the entire duration of its active implementation, and thirdly, to inform the local community about our presence, intentions, and workings of our scheme (Fig. 9) in person.

Furthermore, it was clear from the beginning that if there wouldn’t be any active involvement of the local community in the run-up to the intervention, the likelihood of a lasting experience would have been very limited. What we did, besides informing the residents about our plans personally from door to door, was to specifically involve the youth of the neighbourhood in what was to become a two-day workshop for the collective construction and setting up of wooden pavilions as encasements for the microphones inside. Besides the provision of a range of construction material and the tools to work with, it was left to the ‘kids’ to decide what kind of material they wanted to use, to define the size and specific design of the pavilions, and to form the groups and distribution of tasks in order to arrive at the envisaged results, the drawings of which (Fig. 10) were made thereafter.

During the period of its actual implementation everybody was invited to visit our flat in order to share what was to be experienced in real time only. In this sense, the privacy of our flat turned into a generally accessible extension of the public realm inside the compound. In their function of visibly inflicting a disturbing element to the common semblance of the environment, the pavilions soon took the form of an active communication device as people started to use the microphones for delivering all sorts of messages and frequently took the opportunity to visit and chat with us in our flat. Especially the young developed a personal attachment to the project, started to speak openly about their personal experiences, lack of perspective, general misconceptions of their behaviour, and desired improvements to their immediate living conditions in the neighbourhood.

We managed to generate a lively and at times controversial debate about our project, which at one point has led to a communal gathering organised by the local estate management body, and an invitation from Kunsthau Bregenz,55 an internationally recognised exhibition space of contemporary art, to join their educational initiative of cross-cultural dialogues, which we used for addressing the widening socio-cultural gaps between different ethnicities.

The intensity of this experience and the richness of our findings encouraged us to develop a follow-up, with which we decided to focus on one of the most glaring problems of all, namely the lack of incentives for young people to explore what might capture their imagination, stir their creativity and sense of responsibility. In collaboration with local authorities and a number of regional companies operating in a variety of sectors we are currently developing a scheme of offering short-term apprenticeships, starting well before the end of compulsory school education and available to each child of school age at least once a year and free of charge. The plan is to negotiate and gradually implement our scheme as early as 2011, and we will

55 http://www.kunsthaus-bregenz.at/
continue to monitor its effects and extend its reach well beyond its tentative implementation.
For us this project exemplifies how intense on-site investigation of the complex nature of social ties and the material reality of lived experience has far-reaching consequences for an active understanding of the forces that shape contemporary urban experience and how the personal interference in such processes can bring about what we believe is to become the ‘performative’ accountability in artistic praxis and urbanism.

Fig. 8: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City
Fig. 11: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: one of the speakers in our flat

Fig. 12: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: From the left, a frequent visitor to our flat; Eckhard Schulze-Fielitz, one of the architects who conceived the compound; microphone wiring running through the kitchen window
Fig. 13&14: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photographs taken during our workshop with kids from the neighbourhood
Fig. 15: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photograph of a wooden pavilion
Fig. 16, 17, 18: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photographs of the wooden pavilions
Fig. 19, 20, 21: Tat ort, Inhabiting the Spatial City: Photographs of the wooden pavilions
14.2  St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial (Gedenkstätte St. Aegyd am Neuwalde)

In 2009, Tat ort was invited to work on a proposal for the extension to an existing Memorial in St. Aegyd am Neuwalde, a small village of about 3,000 inhabitants, and located in the southern periphery of the Austrian province of Lower Austria. The Memorial is to mark and to commemorate the existence of a satellite to the Mauthausen concentration camp\(^{56}\) during the last two years of the Second World War. Whereas the former main camp in Mauthausen has been a nationally and internationally recognised public memorial since 1947, the sites of the former satellite camps have largely sunk into oblivion. The Mauthausen commemoration service under the auspices of the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior has therefore established an initiative for the preservation and documentation, as well as for the provision of information about the sites of former Mauthausen satellite camps. It was not until 2008, when the young historian Christian Rabl, who was born and grew up in St. Aegyd published the first comprehensive study on the camp in the village (Rabl, 2008), that the sheer number, the names, and nativity of the victims was known and publically disclosed. In 1942, the concentration camp Mauthausen had five satellite camps.

---

\(^{56}\) This camp, close to the Upper Austrian town of Mauthausen was established by the SS in August 1938, five months after the annexation of Austria to the German Reich.
Another ten were founded in 1943 and 21 in 1944. In December 1944 there were 72,825 registered inmates in Mauthausen, more than 62,000 of whom were detained in satellite camps. The camp in St. Aegyd was officially established on November 2, 1944 for the purpose of camp construction work and the manufacture of gas turbine engines for tanks, and closed on April 4, 1945. It occupied by up to 303 inmates, primarily from Eastern Europe, mostly detained for their resistance against the Nazi occupation.  

At the time of our involvement, the existing Memorial in St. Aegyd, right at the edge of the Catholic burial ground of the village, consisted of a modest wooden rood, which was erected after the end of the War, and a memorial stone with a plaque to commemorate the unknown victims of the camp, erected in the mid 80s by the then newly established local commemoration initiative, which ever since has organized an annual silent protest in honour of the victims. The site as such is a hedged quadrangle with one central entrance and a tree to each side of it.  

For the time being, Christian Rabl was able to investigate the names and birthplace of 46 victims and presented us with the task of granting them a permanent presence at the place where they actually have been buried in a mass grave. Before describing the work we implemented, it is necessary to take a step back and to reflect upon some of the considerations that had led me to include this specific project into the framework of my thesis. Earlier on in connection with my reference on Hannah Arendt’s persistent warnings from the threat of totalitarianism I used the expression that what happened in the Second World War went beyond the bounds of humanity. It would be equally justified to say that it went beyond the bounds of language, for both denote the very boundary where the human condition is reduced to bare life or to the naked life of *homo sacer* as Giorgio Agamben (1998) expressed it. The only element of ‘individuality’ the camp has allowed for beyond the equality of sheer existence was a code for the bureaucratic distinction of bodies. Confronted with the overwhelming force and persistent immediacy of the consequences that arise out of this lethal legacy, it is a tremendous challenge to express what so easily escapes our ability to understand what has happened in the first place. Is it possible then, to conceive of a formal expression for the commemoration of people whose existence has been deprived of language and whose individuality has been reduced to a technical inscription? How is it possible to conceive of a memorial which exceeds the boundaries of its physical manifestation and the limited time span of commemoration acts, which hardly ever transcends the immediate presence of those visiting? How is it possible to capture the presence of a concerned and affected community for the commemoration to be called collective? And finally, is it possible to conceive of a memorial that does not rely on the sublime seduction of representation? It has been these questions we posed ourselves at the beginning, which continued to occupy us throughout the process. Implications thereof are embedded between the lines of this thesis, which is why I finally felt encouraged to include it. As a native Austrian, it is in

---

57 For the source of this information see: Rabl, 2008; Pajer, 2010, and the English version of the Mauthausen Memorial Website: http://en.mauthausen-memorial.at/.
this sense that our Memorial for St. Aegyd and these lines, however modest, are my personal contributions for coming to terms with a history that also was of our own making.

The Memorial in its existing form is as much a historic document of the changing attitude towards the events that have led to its erection in the first place, as it is an expression of the culture of commemoration as such, which – in the given case – is further accentuated by the late scientific recovery of the underlying facts. For this reason it has become clear early on in the process that we wanted to preserve the various layers of its historic formation and to keep the physical presence of our own manifestation very limited if not entirely invisible. Most importantly though, we wanted the commemoration to be a collective and lasting effort in that is should involve the local community over a sustained period of time. Furthermore – and certainly as a result of our previous experiences with the youth of the Housing Estate on the Ach – we strove for addressing the local school kids specifically, for it is theirs to preserve the memory of the camp for generations to come.

We decided to grant each of the known victims a voice in the form of their name, and to embark on a journey throughout the village together with Christian Rabl, which has led us from door to door, essentially covering every house in the village, and to ask the citizens of St. Aegyd to utter the name of one of the victims in order to imbue the act of commemoration with the personal identity of the speaker. Each name has been spoken many times over, the recordings of which we’ve assembled to form a continuous loop, and to be played diachronically of two speakers, hidden next to the trees inside the hedge, which surrounds the quadrangle of the Memorial. The sound installation is permanently active, but tuned at a volume that allows for the names to be heard only once the visitor has entered the Memorial. The only visible element is the plaque (Fig. 22) at its gate.

The days we spent in St. Aegyd were most intense, shaped by many discussions we had with the citizens, not all of which approving, but most encouraging with respect to the affirmative spirit we encountered at the local school, where Christian Rabl had spent a day of informing the kids about the history of the camp prior to our recordings. We have not yet covered every house in the village, but will continue our work in the years to come, further encouraged by Christian Rabl’s recent information, that by now he has received a number of phone calls from villagers who would like to contribute another name to what has already turned into an act of collective and sustained commemoration.

In the presence of Rajmund Pajer, the last surviving inmate of the Concentration Camp in St. Aegyd am Neuwalde, the Memorial was inaugurated with a silent march to the site on May 7, 2010.
The names of the known victims:


Fig. 23: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Inauguration ceremony on May 7, 2010 (photograph taken by Irene Rabl)
Fig. 24, 25: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Photographs taken during the recording of names with the local community (photographs taken by Irene Rabl)
Fig. 26: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Alexandra Berlinger and Christian Rabl rehearsing the pronunciation of the names (photograph taken by Irene Rabl).
Fig. 27: Tat ort, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde Memorial: Photographs taken during the recordings at the local school (photograph taken by Irene Rabl).
Part Three: Mobilising the Many

15. Mobile Unit

The prototypical scheme of what I term Mobile Unit continues in many ways the praxis of Tat ort. It does stand out though with respect to its physical specifications, being largely independent from contextual factors and proposes a compact and highly mobile setting for the sustained mapping of the manifold processes of urban life, based on the immediate engagement of participating individuals. The procedural proposition is aimed at the production of alternative narratives, which are distinctly different from the official version based on statistical information. Pitting the lived experience of the many against the unifying identity of a homogenised body politic, the underlying proposition exceeds the prevailing methodological opposition between individual and collective modes of explanation held by sociology and economics on either side of the discursive spectrum. The Mobile Unit can be operated independent of existing governmental dispositifs, barring any administrative access to the data thereby produced. The notion of operational independence, however, requires close
examination, for it is here where the political concept of the many converges with the ideological notion of empowerment. Consequently it is important to re-define empowerment as the mobilisation of multiplied capacities for active political engagement on behalf of the many but outside the regulative scope of civic participation, which does a) unfold on the basis of prescribed protocols (means) and is b) aimed at delivering concrete solutions for issues already identified (ends). My model of empowerment on the other hand seeks to stir a general debate on issues of particular concern through non-prescriptive procedures of deliberation based on dialogue. Naturally, the actual contribution is confined to the structural characteristics of the information system but non-restrictive with respect to the choice of topic, the valuation of content and comments to be added, not to mention the subsequent hermeneutical process of interpreting the morphological features of the map. Furthermore the whole process is the workings of pure means without any specific end other than the continued transformation, aggregation, and interpretation of the most diversified and intricate body of knowledge: the repository of the ‘lived experience’ of the many, which I call ‘dissipative resources’. 

At the outset of my thesis, I held that Hannah Arendt’s political theory is not undermined by any ideological pretense, for it was her conviction that the American model of republican democracy would enable the proliferation of individual freedom out of its very nature rather than on the basis of an inherent principle. This definition however, requires the formal provision of her concept within the legal framework of a constitutional arrangement. For Hannah Arendt, individual liberty has to be encapsulated in the constitutionally guaranteed right to participate in processes of political deliberation on the level of wards within the federal system of elementary republics. Once this right was established on constitutional grounds, not only was it possible for each individual to intervene in the workings of daily politics but moreover to continually reaffirm the spirit of its existence beyond the revolutionary moment of its inception. It is with these acts of beginning anew, where Hannah Arendt locates the liberating moment of empowerment: the ability to act is the expression of individual freedom. Viewed against the background of the constitutional preconditions for maintaining Arendt’s concept of liberty, two major questions arise with respect to my claim for institutional independence.

First of all, is Arendt’s concept of institution building applicable outside the constitutional framework of political mediation and secondly, is it possible for the nation state to address questions that pose themselves on a global scale without having to compromise its ability to define, orchestrate and evaluate many of the most pertinent issues we find ourselves increasingly confronted with? The answers to these questions are closely linked to one another. Assuming that the rapidly increasing speed of global urbanization alone serves as strong indication for the nation states inability of dealing with problems emerging as the result of global processes, there is simply no alternative for forging and developing novel institutional arrangements outside and beyond the confines of the historically constructed and geographically determined territories of nation states. This tendency is certainly reflected by the sharp increase of
internationally operating organizations and NGOs\textsuperscript{58} in recent years as well as the sheer number of them. It would be premature, however, to rely on a model that does away with the traditional role of nation states in terms of the juridical framework for the provision of contractual security, which after all still is one of the pillars for the constitutional anchoring of human rights, and any appeal against the violation thereof. It would be a huge step already though, if – and here I follow Hannah Arendt’s principle of inclusivity – the role of the nation-state would be balanced on equal terms by those entities, which lack the sovereign body politic of an accepted and coherent territory.

In the chapter on insular territoriality I outlined a striking example for an alternative methodology for mapping what Schlögel calls a ‘reality structure’ in favour of the ‘formal structure’ represented by the traditional boundaries of nation states. His spatial analysis based on extensive on-site research and observation considers the temporal inscription of territorial traces viewed in conjunction the historical aspects of its development. With the Mobile Unit I aim at doing just that, but with the main difference of initiating the process on the firm basis of ‘official numbers’ and by including the decisive element of participation in order to bring about what numbers alone fail to deliver, namely a dynamic notational matrix for the interpretation and subsequent feedback of information.

For the purpose of providing a suitable vehicle for developing, launching and deploying the Mobile Unit potentially on a worldwide scale, on 1 May 2009, Tat ort has put its mobile appliances subsidiary into operation. By pooling a wide range of expertise along the entire logistics chain, the idea is to build and launch a first prototype of the Mobile Unit, a preliminary version of which I developed in the course of the last three years, and now to be introduced with a focus on its conceptual foundation, physical infrastructure, system architecture, computational paradigm, notational proposition, and hermeneutics.

15.1 Conceptual Foundation

The mapping of urban dynamics requires – if it is to happen independent of any specific institutional body – not only the necessary infrastructure as such, but the ability to lure potential participants and to arouse their interest in participating in the process as such. This peculiar combination of infrastructural setting and public engagement resembles in principle what we developed and experienced in the course of our Bregenz project. There, the pavilions, microphones, speakers, and the wiring to connect them, were put in place not only for the purpose of transmitting the sonic atmosphere of the surrounding public spaces to the various rooms of the flat we

\textsuperscript{58} Currently the world biggest platform for the listing of internationally operating NGOs is The Union of International Associations (UIA), a research institute and documentation centre, based in Brussels. It was founded in 1907, by Henri La Fontaine (Nobel Peace Prize laureate of 1913), and Paul Otlet, one of the founding fathers of what is now called information science. For more, see: http://www.uia.be/
inhabited, but at the same time provided for the tangible ‘disturbance’ of the ordinary setting the inhabitants are familiar with. It is precisely the unexpected presence of a physical armature, which causes the necessary chain of events to unfold under a discipline of time: Disturbance – aroused curiosity or suspicion – presence among others – and active involvement in the proposition at hand. In case of the Mobile Unit, its relationship with the conditions of a specific context plays out on two distinctly different levels:

1. On the one hand, the physical infrastructure as such, conceived on the basis of an adapted shipping container, houses all the elements required to be operated largely independent of contextual factors.

2. The procedural arrangement of the actual mapping process on the other hand is exclusively based on the specific characteristics of the context with respect to the initial contents of the database as a ‘generic’ set of generally available statistical information about the specific place in focus and the presence and active participation of those who inhabit and experience the area.

The participants, once confronted with the ‘official’ and seemingly conclusive representation of their immediate environment are invited to bring in their individual attributions, valuations, thematic conjunctions, comments or additional data in order to ‘lace’ the official point of view with their lived experience and actual implications thereof with respect to existing problems, swelling conflicts or informal phenomena emerging under the radar of governmental protocols or technologies of observation. Given that the official set of data first of all has to be translated into a three-dimensional model of visual representation, its intermediate physiognomies have to be held visually accessible throughout the process. The initial database of my process is structured in accordance to the metrics of the source, for example the labour market and work place, public life and urban space, mobility and transport, housing and neighbourhoods, with each of these layers being further broken down into correlating clusters of subtopics in order to arrive at the datum of a specific string, which – besides its information – includes the coordinates of its position in space in the form of an arranged triplet \((x, y, z)\). The nominal spatial dimensions of the database are updated instantaneously (real time) on screen as well as transposed into numerical and physical representations or ‘snapshots’ thereof by means of rapid prototyping processes. The successive steps for generating/updating the specific morphogenetic occurrence of a ‘snapshot’ \(T_n\) are

(a) to identify the paths of relational concatenations of thematic conjunctions among specific information entities (strings) on different levels of the thematic structure,

---

59 This specific classification is taken from the Urban Age Project, undertaken by the London School of Economics and conceived for their investigation of “the basic human activities of living, working, playing and moving or what could be summarised as ‘life in the city’”, see: http://www.urban-age.net/introduction/investigation/, accessed on 24 September 2010. The results of these investigations focused on the cities of Johannesburg, Shanghai, Berlin, Istanbul, London, Mumbai, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, New York, and Chicago were published in 2008 under the title *The Endless City*.
(b) to create the circular sections of the path on each of the levels identified in accordance to the value of the item in its epicentre, and
(c) to generate the 3-dimensional forms determined by the width of each of the sections along the connecting paths.

For a specific morphogenetic occurrence to turn into physical reality, two additional steps remain to be taken. Once the 3-dimensional forms have been generated,

(d) an algorithm for the translation of the 3-dimensional representation into a code compatible with the compiler of a specific rapid prototyping machine,
(e) in order to finally produce its physical equivalent based on a set of parameters, providing for a range of additional properties to physical map.

All these steps taken together comprise what I called earlier the specific paradigm of a structural arrangement, or to put it differently, provide for a concrete model of a formal system for the continued translation of a database into instantaneous physical embodiments thereof. The intermediate results are not to be mistaken with stable representations of a situation proper, for each of these ‘snapshots’, regardless how many there are, is the intermediate result of an ongoing and irreversible process. Therefore, the subject of hermeneutic reasoning has to be established in-between the successive stages of the process \((n = 0, 1, 2, 3 \ldots )\) based on notational difference. It is extremely important to emphasise though, that the actual mapping process is exclusively built upon the presence of others, who meet and share their personal experience in a comforting atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Only when the common as opposed to the universal is understood as shared by the many as opposed to the One will the conviction that every contribution is valued and there to make a difference translate into the elevating mood of empowerment.

15.2 Physical Infrastructure

As mentioned above, the Mobile Unit is based on a 20-foot shipping container with the external dimensions of \(6.058 \text{ by } 2.438 \text{ by } 2.591\) centimetres and an interior gross volume of 33 cubic meters. The development, construction, fabrication, and certification of a first prototype allows for multiple modes (intermodal) of transportation (truck, rail, and ship) and a diverse range of manipulation, such as ship-to-rail or truck transfer using a fork lift, side lifter or even a helicopter. For on-site operation, the container can either be left on the trailer (Fig. 29) or stand up on height adjustable landing gear in its swap body version (Fig. 32). The chief principle for the design development of the prototype is to provide for a self-sustained and highly adjustable infrastructure, which – once dispatched to a specific site – can unfold according to the situation at hand and requirements of the process as depicted in Fig. 33 in the following successive order: Front doors open and staircase unfolded; space module deployed; sitting stairs and flightcase unfolded; mobile unit fully operational.
The architectural proposition of the Mobile Unit is conceived to split the load bearing outer shell of the container from the space module inside, gliding on two structure-bound tracks between its parking lock inside and its position as cantilevering box once it has been fully deployed. The interior of the space module provides a small kitchen (including a tank with potable water), a fridge, sitting cubes, a working surface, folding tables, shelving, and a chalkboard, which in addition can be used as room-divider. The module is equipped with two workstations for the interface between user and system. A small satellite dish secures permanent wireless Internet access. The module encapsulates a small sub unit for the toilet, operated with the grey water of the kitchen. Ideally, the Mobile Unit is conceived to work exclusively of photovoltaic energy (retrieved from photoactive umbrella membranes), stored in a battery array below a small gas generator, which would provide for additional energy supply in case of power shortage. Separated from the space module by a corridor and next to the power supply- and storage unit sits a 5-Axis milling machine, encased by an acrylic glass wrapper. Its numeric control unit is permanently hocked up to the system. The outer shell of the container has got 5 openings: The regular front doors, an additional side-door (accessible by a ladder), a foldable staircase at the opposite end of the corridor, tripartite foldable stands, and an openable side-panel for the storage of the portable umbrellas. In its fully operational stage (Fig. 35), a small patio between the deployed space module and the fixed position of the energy supply- and storage unit together with the milling machine, gives way for the flightcase to be unfolded in order to imbue the setting with a festive and relaxing atmosphere under the influence of some fine music tunes.

Besides providing the basic infrastructural needs for the mapping process to evolve once the box has been set up at a particular site for a sustained period of at least 5 days, the architectural proposition of the Mobile Unit is as much about offering an appealing environment for the coming together and peaceful exchange of people who inhabit the neighbourhood or just happen to be there by coincidence.

15.3 System Architecture

The draft outline of the building blocks for the computational procedure is illustrated by the flow chart in Fig. 37:

1. The items of the initial database, ID provide for the ‘official’ framework of participating in a non-linear process of contributing ones individual repository of lived experience, LE.
2. With each of these contributing events or disturbances, the henceforth shared set of items gradually transforms through each of these attributions, valuations, or commentaries being made as well as propositional clusters being formed along relations on various layers of the formal system.
3. In accordance with the concept of ‘randomly’ disturbing the semantic composition of the formal structure, the database has to remain receptive for
every change (event) to occur outside the system (environment/lived experience).

(4) Translation of the knowledge base into an algorithm, which can be interpreted and reasoned about by subsequent applications.

(5) Applications based on ISO-Code (operable machine code) effectively control a rapid prototyping process tuned along a set of specific parameters.

(6) This mechanism, i.e., a milling machine creates a sequence of control signals that eventually run the tools for the ‘production’ of physical ‘snapshots’ (set of arranged triplets (x, y, z)) of the system state at a given time (T_n).

(7) The resulting physical manifestation (topology, i.e. epigenetic landscape) is subject to interpretation (hermeneutics), information that is fed back into the system on the top end of the data matrix.

15.4 Computational paradigm

The computational paradigm is based on the following ‘platforms’ for its implementation within the overall framework of the system:

1. Creation of an initial database
2. Transfer of data into a formal system
3. Algorithmic data processing
4. Physical inscription of evolving landscapes
5. Hermeneutic framework for a subsequent evaluation process
6. Feedback

As indicated above, the specific challenge for the development of computational paradigms for the continued translation of a semantic database into instantaneous physical embodiments thereof lies in the double movement of having to maintain the signifying web of language on the level of (real time) representations on screen, whereby transferring the semantic database simultaneously into the axiomatic system of a strict formalisation in order to support its interface with subsequent rapid prototyping.

At this point I add some basic considerations with regards to formalisation as such. Formalisation is any process by which a relatively informal practice or body of thought is organized into an axiomatic system, whence the intuitive and definitional apparatus unfolds into an explicit axiomatic, prescribing the ruled manipulation of a determinate set of bare symbols. In a monograph on the topic, Robert Blanché (1962: 21–22) offers the following listing of the conditions for a deductive presentation to be fully rigorous:

- Explicit enumeration of the primitive terms for subsequent use in definitions
- Explicit enumeration of the primitive propositions for subsequent use in demonstrations
- The relations between the primitive terms shall be purely logical relations, independent of any concrete meaning given to the terms
• These relations alone shall occur in the demonstrations, and independently of the meaning of the terms so related.

From this list, it is immediately obvious that any meaningful interaction with the database is only possible when, first of all, the primitive terms, their propositions, and logical relations keep their semantic ‘surface’ at any one time throughout the process, secondly, the ruled manipulation of a determinate set of bare symbols does follow rather than prescribe the manipulating acts of the user, and thirdly – derived from the former – the determination of a set of bare symbols is temporally restricted to the interval between two consecutive steps of the ruled intervention.

It is only on the basis of these preconditions to formalisation that the database retains its utmost ‘plasticity’ and semantic clarity with respect to the possibility of a user to interact and contribute in a meaningful, albeit personal manner with the system. It is important to emphasise, however, that in contradiction to the formal ontologies or meta-data of semantic web technologies, the individual user’s contribution belongs to the same pool of semantic terms and propositions initially provided in the database. Furthermore, the formal system does not distinguish between the content initially provided and any interventional alteration thereof in the process of participative interaction. Each intervention is individual without being personified or traced back to a specific agent.

There is yet another important conceptual characteristic to the model, namely the spatial organization of terms, propositions, and relations. The two conceptual drawings of Fig. 38 offer a schematic illustration of how the dynamic (real time) representation of the process might look like on screen, one of which including the 3-dimensional shape for the subsequent morphological features of the map. The decision to present the knowledge base as a 3-dimensional matrix from the beginning is by no means a sine qua non for generating the 3-dimensional landscape to be sent to the milling machine, for this could happen easily by using any other content management system with a sufficient interface to external entities (as mentioned in Wiener’s TM paradigm the OS is coupled to some effector capable of causing changes in the outside that will, at least partially, in their turn appear as string or changes of strings on the screen, see page 82).

What justifies this decision, however, is the relative ease of manipulating date in space rather than ‘flat’ interface templates, and to observe morphological similarities between the shapes of the digital representation and its physical correlate in real space at any one time \((T_{n+1} \ (n = 0, 1, 2, 3, \ldots))\). The above mentioned anonymity of intervening agents is not to say that the overall dynamic of the interventional process would be without consequences for the physical inscription of evolving landscapes, for the machining as such requires a range of parameters to be set in addition to the 3-dimensional paths of the milling head in action. These parameters, for example type and dimension of milling head, drill chuck speed, feed velocity, increment of successive milling paths, etc. including the specific material to be worked upon, exert a decisive influence on the overall visual and tangible qualities of the resultant 3-dimensional
landscape. Whether the physical inscription is being applied on one and the same source material over and over again or happens by the use of a new source for each cycle of production depends primarily on the specific requirements for process recording and the favoured ‘depth’ of comparative evaluation and feedback. This qualitative description of the major characteristics for a computational model to be concrete without crystallising into a definite morphological state is closely intertwined with the accompanying notational proposition for the instantaneous physical manifestations of the process. It is here, where three lines of the previous investigation converge in order to bring about the novel landscapes for hermeneutical reasoning.

15.5 Notational proposition

1. If, as we have seen with the Deleuzian procedure of vice-diction, the continued actualisation of a fully determined structure, their ‘sections,’ ‘ablations,’ and ‘adjunctions’ is what causes the ‘folds’ of an n-dimensional topological space to trigger an indefinite number of morphogenetic occurrences in a space of the next higher dimension (n+1 space), the full-blown reality of ideas unfolds with unfettered freedom, transcending the reign of numbers into the real force of energy contained within the folds in order to become recognisable unexpectedly as a matter of coincidence and within an overarching notational proposition in order to guarantee comparability between the different states of the process.

2. One of the most important geometric terms coined to describe the relation between phenomenal forms (phenotypes) and morphogenetic fields in which they emerge, is Conrad Waddington’s epigenetic landscape. (1956) Being a descriptive model without explanation, an epigenetic landscape is an undulating topological surface with its distinctive points (primitive terms) correlating to the defining trajectories (relational ties) of the formal system that is the structure in which it is interpreted.

3. The epigenetic landscape is merely a mould or a virtual form that was constructed in a different dimension than the multiplicity produced by an extremely complex arrangement of sociological dynamics. The forms continually evolving in the course of the process are to be seen as the instantaneous results of a dissipative system. Far from equilibrium, these forms, based on the curves of a 3-dimensional diagram (statistical information of urban life) serve to generate formations that are subject to numerous modifications. Layering, local densities of coherent probabilities (attractors), and their relational ties are the structural determinations for each of these modifications. The term knowledge, applied to the formal arrangement at hand, designates the collective potentiality to modulate the temporal conditions through each singular effort of participation in order to trigger the
next morphogenetic occurrence to happen under a discipline of time. The
dissipative system responds dynamically to effective energies and then
progresses to the next stage of its ontogenetic development.

15.6 Hermeneutics

Having come thus far, one might pose the question why it was necessary to set up the
systemic apparatus in the first place just be thrown back to the level of hermeneutics?
Let me recall at this point what has been the cause for my criticisms of existing
methodologies in the field of urbanism in the first place. I maintained that the ‘official’
knowledge, incorporated by endless columns of statistical data is of little help for
understanding the complexity of networked realities ‘on the ground’. However
speculative or daring this initial statement may have appeared at first, it does contain
the terms my investigation has finally led to, namely ‘new knowledge’,
‘understanding’, and ‘complexity. Taken together, they make for a formidable
definition of hermeneutics being the continued attempt to understand the
complexities of the word in order to form a novel body of knowledge to be shared
among a group of people as long as this group remains faithful to the events that have
initiated the process. I have outlined that ideologically distorted knowledge, based on
the self-assuring identity of universal representation is what has to be rejected, and
that once the prevailing notion of the ‘people’ has been replaced by the multiplicity of
the many the numbers start to make sense from the perspective of actual experience
on the ground. Thus understood, the mapping process has been introduced precisely
because subsequent hermeneutical evaluation is built upon the tremendous
complexity a formal system allows for, the process of understanding is subject to the
general intellect, and the knowledge retrieved is dependent on deliberative
procedures rather than on normative forms for the representation of ideological
convention. The instantaneous maps of the process are by no means to be taken for
immediate representations of a status quo. They are the ‘mould’ for a body of
knowledge to emerge on the grounds of the overall proposition and therefore by far
exceeding the sheer quantity of the numbers that yield its outcome.
Fig. 39: Tat ort, FLUC SHOW OFF: Tat ort mobile appliances, MAN Tractor Unit.
16. Conclusion

With my conclusion I would like to run down briefly the key arguments of my investigation and their bearing on the praxis of Tat ort as well as on the development of what I call Mobile Unit.

Based on Hannah Arendt’s elaboration on the categories of the *vita activa* in her seminal book *The Human Condition*, the public disclosure of one’s personal knowledge, experience, and aspiration in the presence of others through the human faculty of language has been confirmed to provide for the firm foundation of political activity. According to Aristotle’s definition of politics as praxis, people who meet in public in order to share the general intellect for the co-operative exploitation of personal traits, deploy their means without specific ends. Paolo Virno maintains that this definition of politics, the virtuosic performance of the Many is precisely what appears to characterise the main tenet of capitalism in the post-Fordist era. He advocates the restoration of a notion, which appeared in *Tractatus Politicus*, where Spinoza introduced the *multitudo* as the architrave of civil liberties. What back then was played out against the background of the famous antagonism between Spinoza’s multitude and the Hobbesian concept of the people, is currently reemerging as a fundamental crisis of representational democracy with its frantic attempt to construct and maintain a presumed identity for the benefit of all. If a ‘Unitary Theory’ in the realm of urban development is as badly needed today as it was in the 1970s when Henri Levebvre (1991 [1974]) passionately called for it, the unitary ideology has to be replaced by a wealth of antagonistic forces in order to fully acknowledge the tremendous richness of the particularities of daily life and lived experience.

On the basis of two recently conducted and ongoing projects, I aimed at highlighting the gains of on-the-ground, first hand observation, immediate contact with those effected and concrete interventional propositions for coming to terms with the specific conditions of a context, which either is too insignificant to be taken care of or operates informally outside the framework of institutionalised modes of representation. Here in many ways, Martin Buber’s dialogical principle leads the way, for it is the basic proposition of someone or something to be met, which allows for the primary words to be spoken. The experience of encounter however, is multi-relational and incorporates the ontological foundation of being here as much as its epistemological consequences with respect to the ontogenesis of individuation. It is this profound insight into the nature *Da-sein*, which is the firm basis for the painstaking but rewarding process of unveiling the networks of association in terms of its present composure as well as with respect to its historical formation. To follow the spatial-historic consequences of evental conjectures is to apply the methodology of chronotope as exemplified in the work of Karl Schlägel or the procedure of *vice-diction* as elaborated by Gilles Deleuze, in order to trace the temporal ‘sections’, ‘ablations’, and ‘adjunctions’, which happen in close spatial proximity. A truthful consideration of the full potentiality of a situation is to act under a constitution of time, allowing the actors to control the consequences of having introduced the name of an event and to
discern at any moment its connection to change. Alain Badiou calls this organised control of time fidelity. With respect to the work of Tat ort to intervene under a discipline of time is to enact what has hitherto been marginalized or neglected altogether. I introduced the notion of the problem from a philosophical point of view to clarify that once a specific context for interventional action has been identified the situation at hand demands more than the numeric listing of a number of problems already resembling the conditions of its solution. It is due to the virtuality of the realm of ideas as opposed to the possible, which lacks a reality of its own that problems have to undergo a process of ontogenesis for engendered solutions to be actualised rather than realised. The process of ontogenesis is what allows the epistemological dimension of lived experience to converge with the operational aspect of a computational paradigm (for example Oswald Wiener’s TM paradigm). To crunch the tremendous complexity of a continuously evolving data matrix requires the ‘natural’ translation of descriptively accessible data at the front end of a system into an adequate notational proposition. In order to close the operational circle of the process the feedback is based on the hermeneutics of notational difference and therefore transcends any existing body of knowledge or adherence to a representational regime of presumed identities. By linking local densities of coherent probabilities (attractors) in a virtual but 3-dimensional database, the morphological features of the physical map are immeditate embodiments of temporal inscription. If Paolo Virno (2004) emphasised the ‘absolute lack of codification’ of a ‘conceptual vocabulary’ or ‘suitable lexicon’ with regard to the multitude, the Mobile Unit aims at delivering just that: An instrument or tool for the sustained evolution of a shared body of knowledge; the common lived experience of mobilised multiplicities.

In this sense Walter Lippmann’s amendment to the republican model of democracy is to devise a procedural arrangement for the tackling of those problems which cannot be solved democratically. The strange and unfamiliar ones are the most suitable candidates for a democratic solution.

Yet it is controversies of this kind, the hardest controversies to disentangle, that the public is called in to judge. Where the facts are most obscure, where precedents are lacking, where novelty and confusion pervade everything, the public in all its unfitness is compelled to make its most important decisions. The hardest problems are those which institutions cannot handle. They are the public’s problems (Lippmann, 2002 [1927]: 121).

Consequently, the eminently political task of emancipating the many is to provide a framework for the emergence of collective co-operation in order to translate the needs, aspirations, emotions, anxieties and dreams of individuals into novel forms of political representation. In terms of my claim for new knowledge, I was able to show that by instilling and nurturing a process of multiplied participation in a given context, my work as practicing artist offers some paradigmatic examples for immediate political action. Based on the experiences and findings on-the-ground, the conceptual transition from these singular cases to a proposition which applies independent of specific contextual factors without neglecting its sole foundation on the quality of face-to-face conversation has been drawn out in the third part of my thesis, where the
relationship between the theoretical enquiry and the project of a ‘mobile unit’ comes to fruition. With this project my claim that through the process of tagging or mining already existing sets of data based on initial dialogues (as executed in my artistic practice) yield the spatio-temporal relationships of an epistemological structure, which has got the properties (computational paradigm) to be actualised instantaneously in the form of a three-dimensional map. This project offers a unique alternative to prevailing modes of political representation, in so far as the notational proposition is based on the multilateral accumulation of lived experience as opposed to the presumed and stable identity of a homogenous constituency. What I intend to do next, is to further investigate the practical and theoretical implications of a circular process, at the beginning of which initial sets of data (matters of fact) are enhanced, supplemented, and altered by means of multiplied individual participation, are then being mapped, interpreted, and subsequently fed back into the loop in order to become knowledge proper (matters of concern). The anticipated ‘historico-epochal opening’ (Agamben, 1999: 106) is there to be seized. The philosophical category of the Many is what I will further expand on as being the emergent paradigm of immediate political action.
17. Epilogue

I conclude my thesis with the last sentence of Hannah Arendt’s book *Macht und Gewalt* (1993 [1973]), originally published in English under the title *On Violence* (1970), in order to pay tribute to the work of a political theorist, who continues to remind us how important it is to rethink the human condition.

"Immerhin—vielleicht doch im Zuge der nächsten Revolution".

Fig. 40: Tat ort: On Revolution, 2010.

60 Unlike the English version, the German translation includes an interview with Hannah Arendt, conducted by Adelbert Reif that ends with the sentence ‘Immerhin – vielleicht doch im Zuge der nächsten Revolution’, which I translate as: ‘All the same – perhaps in the course of the next revolution’. 
18. List of abbreviations

P  Logical Proposition
X  Evental site
S  Situation
\(e_x\)  Event
x  Element of \(e_x\)
\(\alpha, \beta\)  Sites or mathematical sets
\(\emptyset\)  Void
TM  Turning Machine
OS  Operating System
M  Model
S  String
MU  Mobile Unit
MU01  First prototype of the Mobile Unit
iD  initial Database
IE  lived Experience
\(T_n\)  Snapshot
n  Time increment
ISO  Numerical Standard Code
O  Numerical Control Mechanism, i.e. Milling Machine

For the sake of terminological consistence I follow Badiou’s (2007) useful convention that the units of ideological discourse will be called notions, the units of scientific discourse, concepts, and those of philosophical discourse, categories throughout my thesis.
19. References


20. Bibliography


AMO; Archis; C-Lab & Moutamarat (eds.) 2007. *Al Manakh*. Amsterdam, Archis Foundation.

AMO; Archis; C-Lab; NAi & Pink Tank (eds.) 2010. *Al Manakh 2*. Amsterdam, Archis Foundation.


Email-dialogue with Isabelle Stengers:
Stengers, I. *Notes introducing to an ecology of practices*. unpublished paper.
Appendix A: Achievements to Date
Wolfgang Fiel
Born 1973 in Alberschwende/Austria.

Educational Background

1993  Mechanical Engineering, Vienna University of Technology.
1994  Architecture and Regional Planning, Vienna University of Technology with Helmut Richter, MSc in Architecture and Regional Planning with Distinction.
2001/02 The Bartlett, University College of London with Sir Peter Cook, MArch in Architectural Design with Distinction.
2006-  MPhil/PhD- Candidate at the Planetary Collegium, University of Plymouth/UK.

Work Experience

2002-04 Coop Himmelb(l)au Vienna:
2000/01 Delugan Meissl Associated Architects Vienna:
Design Architect of various competition entries.

Co-Founder of tat ort

Founded in 1998, tat ort is a Vienna based collective for architectural and artistic practice and cross-disciplinary research on the topics of spatial appropriation, participation, and the nature of human conflict.

Co-Founder and Artistic Director of iCP, Institute for Cultural Policy

Co-founded in 2004 together with Patrick Ehrhardt and located in Hamburg/Germany, the iCP was set to promote the transformative potential of emerging architectural practices. Through a number of large scale exhibitions, public talks, screenings, and the publication of a book series titled “consequence,” we aimed at presenting the work of individuals and groups with a fresh approach to research, practice, and education along with their ability to explore and augment the boundaries of the profession. These efforts have been honoured with an invitation to present the iCP at the 10th International Venice Biennale for Architecture in 2006.

Teaching Appointments

2010-  Lecturer and Diploma Advisor at the Institute of Digital Art, University of Applied Arts Vienna.
2008/09 Visiting Professor at the Department for Experimental Design, Faculty of Architecture, Innsbruck University of Technology.
2006-  Lecturer at the Institute of Art and Design, Faculty of Architecture, Vienna University of Technology.
2005/06 Lecturer at the Institute of Design and Building Construction, Faculty of Architecture, Vienna University of Technology.

Single Exhibitions

2010  tat ort, Sansibar. Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum. Berlin
2009  tat ort with Berno Odo Polzer, The Beauty of Salix Babylonica. performIC. Waltherpark, Innsbruck/Austria
2008  tat ort, Zone1. Gallery Lisi Hämmerle, Viennafair. Vienna
      tat ort, in_passing 2. k/haus passagegalerie. Vienna
tat ort, Interkultureller Dialog: Wohnen in der Raumstadt. KUB - Kunsthaus Bregenz. Bregenz/Austria
tat ort, Ich hasse meine Nachbarn. Gallery Lisi Hämmerle. Bregenz/Austria
2006 tat ort, INWÄNDIG. iCP - Institute for Cultural Policy. Hamburg/Germany

Group Exhibitions

2010 tat ort, Public Art Proposals. hub.kunst.diskurs. Hannover/Germany
tat ort, The Self and The City. fluc. Vienna
tat ort, Art and Language. QuadrART. Dornbirn/Austria
tat ort, Wiener Tanznacht. brut Wien. Vienna
tat ort, DIS PLAY PRATERSTERN: Eine Idee von Gemeinschaft. fluc. Vienna
tat ort, The Great Public Sale of unrealized but brilliant ideas. ImPulsTanz International Dance Festival. Vienna
tat ort, “Locate me!” Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien. Berlin
tat ort, Kardinal König Kunstfonds. Salzburg/Austria
tat ort, Thessaloniki Biennale. State Museum of Modern Art. Thessaloniki/Greece
tat ort, Urban Hacking. paralows 09. Karlsplatz. Vienna
tat ort, e-mobilArt. Gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts. Katowice/Poland
tat ort, Fortsetzung folgt. Kunstraum Niederösterreich. Vienna
tat ort, The mysterious Life of Mr. P. brut Wien. Vienna
Wolfgang Fiel, A tribute to Franz Michael Felder. Kulturbahnhof Andelsbuch. Andelsbuch/Austria
2008 tat ort, tribühne (gleiche höhe). k/haus passagegalerie. Vienna
tat ort, parcours (gleiche höhe). Medienwerkstatt Wien. Vienna
tat ort, Architektur. Künstlerhaus Palais Thurn und Taxis. Bregenz/Austria
Wolfgang Fiel, zoomandscale. Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Vienna
2007 tat ort, North-West by South-East. National Gallery of Macedonia. Skopje/Macedonia
tat ort, Review 07. Gallery Lisi Hämmerle. Bregenz/Austria
tat ort, Ich hasse meine Nachbarn Teil 2. Tease Art Fair. Cologne/Germany
2006 tat ort, 10th International Venice Biennale for Architecture. New Italian Pavillion. Venice
Wolfgang Fiel, Zur Zeit II. Künstlerhaus Palais Thurn und Taxis. Bregenz/Austria
Tano Bojankin & Wolfgang Fiel, Die Donau. Medienkunstlabor Kunsthaus Graz. Graz/Austria
Tano Bojankin & Wolfgang Fiel, Blue - Inventing the River Danube. Technisches Museum Wien. Vienna

Monograph

Editorial Work

**Articles in Edited Books**


**Exhibition Catalogues**

*<transformer I>*. Vienna, 2005, fluc.

**Journal Articles**

Curational Practice


*Interfaces / Intrafaces.* Marjan Colletti & Marcos Cruz, iCP, Hamburg, 2005.


*Users & Abusers.* Didier Fiuza Faustino, iCP, Hamburg, 2005.

International Conferences


*The schizophrenia of the space between.* Researching the future: art and design in transmodal transition. Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti, Milan, 2006.

Conferences Organised


Projects (selection)

*Museum of Austrian Embroidery:* Commission to develop a concept for the display, education, exchange with other cultural institutions, and active involvement of the local population. Lustenau/Austria, 2010-2011.

*CO-OS:* Innovation in the arts through cultural brokerage, social networking, sharing and mass collaboration. The project is funded by British Council, Arts Council England, and i-DAT/University of Plymouth, 2009-

*Memorial St. Aegyd am Neuwalde.* Soundinstallation, St. Aegyd am Neuwalde/Austria, 2009-

*Achsiedlung: Inhabiting the ‘Spatial City’ (”Wohnen in der ‘Raumstadt’”).* Self-organised Artists in Residence, Bregenz/Austria, 2008-

Residencies and Workshops

*Pilotprojekt Gropiusstadt.* Artists in Residence, Berlin, 2009

*e-MobiLArt.* Participant in the European Mobile Lab for Interactive Media Artists, Universities of Athens/Greece, Lapland/Finland and University of Applied Arts Vienna/Austria, 2008-2009.


Awards

*tat ort* is the 2008 recipient of The Emerging Visual Artist Award of the Year presented by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture.
Editorial Work


Consequence Book Series:


With this publication a comprehensive overview of the work of the architect and urbanist Eckhard Schulze-Fielitz, born in 1929 in Stettin (today Szczecin, Poland), is presented to a broader audience for the first time.

The exhibition of his first Spatial City model in 1960 marked the beginning of Schulze-Fielitz’s search for a new spatial ordering system. In analogy to a hypothetical model in physics, it consisted of a macromaterial capable of modulations, made up of a small number of elementary particles, and could be extended in all desired directions according to a precise law of composition. The “geometric nucleus” of his Spatial City he called Metaeder.

In 1961 he joined GEAM, Groupe d’Études d’Architecture Mobile. A preoccupation with rapid urban growth and its effects on society, and investigations into the practical application of his urban systems led to concrete proposals for city and housing designs based on adaptable spatial infrastructures, ecological sustainability and the participation of the users.

In addition to his built works, projects, studies and texts, this book also contains contributions from Peter G. Auer, Wolfgang Fiel, Yona Friedman, Rem Koolhaas and Hans Ulrich Obrist.
Über die konkrete Utopie
einer Metasprache des Raums

On the Concrete Utopia
of a Metalanguage of Space

Wolfgang Fiel, Vienna, October 2009
I first met Eckhard Schulze-Fieltz – ESF in short – on the occasion of an exhibition about the Ach Estate in 2007. Aside from knowing him by the name as one of its authors, I was only otherwise aware of his Spatial City model in the "Le FRAC Centre" collection before the start of this book project. This was bound to change quickly thanks to his invitation to visit him personally in Bregenz, where he has maintained a second address since the construction of the Housing Estate on the Ach, as it was called originally. What I saw there motivated me to contribute to the dissemination of a body of work, which to date is widely unknown even in adept circles. Without speculating on the reasons why, this book has succeeded in creating a first comprehensive and systematic presentation of his oeuvre and will trigger, as we hope, further discourse in the future.

As he admits himself in one of the interviews in this book, ESF was an early bird: Immediately after completion of his studies, aged 26, he won his first competition together with Ulrich von Altenstadt and Ernst von Rudloff for the new Province House in Cologne, a building that has become an icon of German post-war modernism and is today, not without a certain irony, protected as a monument. The early renown that ESF received for this building opened doors, which would become important later on, but at the time raised doubts about his further professional development. These doubts, which he rather casually calls "boredom of Miesian block architecture", were the expression of a broader interest in spatial structures that do not necessarily follow the primacy of the "right" angle or architectural form and its longevity. What came to the surface, latest in 1960 with the presentation of his first Spatial City model in the Gallery Van de Loo, Essen, was the search for a spatial ordering system that – in analogy to a hypothetical model in physics – consisted of a macromaterial capable of modulations, which was made up of a small number of elementary particles, and followed a precise law of composition, yet was applicable in a flexible way and would enable a first spatial framework with those "degrees of freedom" ESF had already inscribed in this "original model". It could be rotated in four possible positions, α, β, γ and δ, and extended in all desired directions. ESF also exhibited the "geometric nucleus" of his 


ESF war, wie er selbst in einem der hier abgedruckten Interviews anmerkt, ein Frühlaufsteher, hat unmittelbar nach Beendigung seines Studiums im Alter von 25 Jahren gemeinsam mit Ulrich von Altenstadt und Ernst von Rudloff seinen ersten Wettbewerb zum Neubau des Landeshaus in Köln gewonnen, ein Gebäude, das eine Ikone der deutschen Nachkriegsmoderne geworden ist und heute nicht ganz ohne Ironie unter Denkmalschutz steht. Durch das frühe Renommee, das ihm dieses Bauwerk eingebracht hat, wurden ESF Türen geöffnet, die später wichtig werden sollten, zu diesem Zeitpunkt aber erste Zweifel an seiner weiteren beruflichen Entwicklung aufkommen ließen. Diese Zweifel, die er selbst etwas salopp als „Langeeweile an der Mies’schen Kastenarchitektur“ bezeichnet, waren Ausdruck eines allgemeinen Interesses an räumlichen Strukturen, die nicht notwendigerweise dem Primat des „rechten“ Winkels oder der architektonischen Form und ihrer Dauerhaftigkeit folgen. Was sich spätestens 1960 mit der Präsentation seines ersten Raumstadtmodells in der Essener Galerie Van de Loo abzeichnen begann, war die Suche nach einem räumlichen Ordnungssystem, das, in Anlehnung an ein Denkmodell aus der Physik, aus einer modulationsfähigen Makromaterie von einigen wenigen Elementarteilchen besteht, einem präzisen Bildungsgesetz folgend flexibel einsetzbar ist und eine erste räumliche Setzung...

ESFs Vorliebe für offene Systeme mag vom Wissenschaftsdiskurs der 50er und 60er Jahre geprägt sein, kommt aber seinen breit gefächerten Interessen und seiner Überzeugung entgegen, dass sich die Rolle des Architekten nicht auf Planung und Errichtung von Bauwerken beschränken lässt. Als Ausdruck seiner Auseinandersetzung mit der conditio humana, mit Fragen globaler Entwicklungen und ihren Konsequenzen, hat ESF in seinen Schriften wiederholt darauf hingewiesen, dass allzu oft versucht wird, vorhandenen Problemen mit einseitigen ideologischen Rezepturen oder der oberflächlichen Bekämpfung ihrer Symptome beizukommen. Vor diesem Hintergrund und ohne moralisierende Attitude sind seine Arbeiten vom pragmatischen Anspruch getragen, für erkannte Probleme und gestützt auf akribische und teils langwierige Untersuchungen eine angemessene architektonische Antwort zu finden, die im Sinne eines konkreten Spatial City at Van de Loo und so called it Metaeder. What then still appeared to be a rudimentary study on the combination of the 5 regular polyhedrons or Platonics solids, he would never abandon. When ESF sets the period of his Metaeder development between 1960 and 1998, then these years indicate the first public presentation, on the one hand, and the transition of this model to the phenomenon of self-similarity in fractal geometry, on the other – a path that led him from the non-packable Platonics solids to the implementation of the quasicrystals discovered by Dan Shechtman in 1984. Although ESF often delved deep into specific fields of mathematics or crystallography with these studies, with the comprehensive foundation of a purely geometric theory of spatial ordering he wanted to base architectural design per se on a system of harmonic relationships in order to transfer the “infill” process to the participation of the users. In his opinion, the liberalisation of spatial appropriation is not limited to the choice of colours or window sizes. Participation, for him, is the possibility to think of architecture as a collective production that requires free and permanent adaptability under everchanging conditions.

ESF’s preference for open systems might be partly due to the scientific discourse of the 50s and 60s, but it is definitely a result of his diverse interests and his belief that the role of the architect cannot be restricted to the planning and erection of buildings only. As an expression of his preoccupation with the conditio humana, with questions on global developments and their consequences, ESF has repeatedly pointed out in his writings that all too often existing problems are tackled with one-sided ideological recipes or the superficial combat of their symptoms. In this context, and without a sententious attitude, his works bear the pragmatic claim of finding an appropriate architectural answer to recognised problems, which is supported by meticulous and often lengthy research, and is suitable for immediate realisation in the sense of a concrete experiment. In the introduction for the first volume of Urban Systems he addresses the critics: “Proposals of this kind have for years been regarded as "utopian", a label which has placed in question their essential practicability...” In order to articulate precisely this facet of his working method, which is oriented on the practical viability of his proposals, in addition to Spatial City and Metaeder we have provided substantial space for three other theoretical treatises:
Experiments für eine unmittelbare Umsetzung geeignet ist. In seiner Einleitung zum ersten Band der Stadt Systeme geht er auf jene Kritiker ein, die, wie er schreibt, „... seines Vorschläge lange Jahre als Utopie bezeichnet haben, was den Blick für ihre praktische Bedeutung verstellte“. Um eben diesen an der praktischen Umsetzbarkeit seiner Vorschläge orientierten Aspekt seiner Arbeitseweise verständlich zu machen, haben wir in dieser Publikation neben der Raumstadt und dem Metaeler drei theoretischen Abhandlungen breiten Raum geschenkt.

Urban Systems

In the two-volume work Urban Systems I & II (1971) ESF delivers a thematically structured summary of principles that not only serve the immediate description and regulation of urban spaces, but also attempt to identify possible future scenarios and invite other disciplines in the shared development of an urban terminology. These books demonstrate his early preoccupation with questions of environmental control and climatisation, inner city and global communication systems, and the possibility of the efficient use of existing infrastructure through taking into account specific urban frequencies and their temporal organisation. An important impulse in this direction may have been ESF’s membership in the Groupe d’Études d’Architecture Mobile (GEAM), who already had pointed out the “catastrophic difficulties of modern urban planning” in their 1960 Programme for a Mobile Architecture. The influence of Yona Friedman should be especially emphasised in this context, as he has been a close friend of ESF since their first encounter in 1959, a friendship that also found an architectural expression in their collaborative project Bridge City over the English Channel.

Metrics Coordination

This work has an exceptional position in ESF’s oeuvre given the circumstances of its origin and his breathless investigation of all thematically relevant implications. For these reasons it is also visually distinct from the rest of the book. Commissioned by the German Federal Minister of Urban Planning and Housing, Metrics Coordination is a study from 1973 on the “Spatial Metrics Coordination of Uses, Building Components, Buildings and Building Clearances according to DIN 18000”. The extensive research that he conducted is exemplary of the claim to take into account each and every aspect of the architect’s practical work without losing sight of the “bigger picture”. Also in this case, ESF was eager to involve the pragmatic aspects of his work into a stringent, pre-stabilised system in order to enable the construction of a neutral structure with maximum flexibility that also complies with established juridical, constructive and economic parameters. The manuscript, which addresses the legal framework and the state of the discussion on standards at the time, reads like a documentation about an algorithm from electronic data processing, a realm ESF had already put forward in 1966 in his speech as the

Ökotektur


In dieser Publikation schließen wir die Werkübersicht mit einer ausführlichen und breit angelegten Abhandlung des Metaeder und spannen mit dem Versuch einer „Genealogie der strukturellen Architektur“ den Bogen zu jenen

first prize winner of the DEUBAU architectural award: “Hereby, we find ourselves within the terminology of cybernetics, it is close at hand to describe the city as a probabilistic system. Today, the computer enables us to collect, save and manage the myriad of data and processes, and with the technical requirement of an extensive changeability in organisation and arrangement also make it of practical use.”

Ecotecture

This chapter corresponds to a special edition of Bauwelt, Issue 13/1981, where ESF investigates the living conditions in suburban slums and extreme climate zones. His concept for an autarchic habitat is an attempt to embed on-site economic and constructive possibilities, the climatic and natural spatial conditions, and traditional building methods into a complete system of diverse cultural and natural cycles. The constructive aspect of this proposal essentially provides for the simple and quick erection of a cultivatable roof landscape, a “hall construction” of hanging rows of sheet steel (shells), which should satisfy the basic need for a protected, affordable and self-sufficient living space.

In this publication we conclude the overview of his work with the extensive and broad scope of the Metaeder essay, and with its “Genealogy of Structural Architecture” we complete a circle back to those projects, which ESF characterised as “apprentice pieces” of structural architecture. These works originated between 1960, with the design for an opera house in Essen, and 1970, the competition for the Olympic facilities in Munich. As a whole this forms a revealing documentation of an uninterrupted transition from a solitary object language in the beginning to the continuous space of a structural metalanguage. “The Spatial City is a development-responsive agglomeration of various spatial structures, the style of the structure steers unavoidable growth along ordered paths, freedom lies in the endless possibilities of combination.” (Spatial City Manifesto, 1960) In this time the City of Essen invited ESF to host the 1962 International Building Congress, which he used as an opportunity to bring together all those people who had been important in his personal development. Besides Yona Friedman, with whom ESF already had an animated exchange of thoughts with at this point in time, he got to know in person Felix Candela, Richard Buckminster Fuller, Frei Otto, Z. S. Makowski, Ernst May, Kenzo Tange and Konrad

Nachdem Eckhard bei gemeinsamer Durch- sicht des Manuskripts angemerkt hat, dass die 9 für ihn eine gute Zahl zu sein scheint, haben wir festgestellt, gleichzeitig mit dem Erscheinen dieses Buches den 50. Geburtstag seiner Raumstadt feiern zu können! Wenn Eckhard im Kasseler Interview auf die Frage, welchen Rat er heute jungen Architekten geben würde, gemeint hat, dass die Raumstadtidee noch immer einer „richtigen“ Umsetzung harrt, ist damit einmal mehr sein doppeltdeutiger Status als pragmatischer Problemlöser und utopischer Generalist deutlich geworden. Dass viele der in diesem Buch enthaltenen Ideen bis heute von größerer Aktua- lität sind, sollte für Eckhard Grund genug sein, die Rolle des Utopisten stärker in die Zukunft zu tragen.

Wachsmann on this occasion. As Friedman and ESF both state in the interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Konrad Wachsmann was an intellectual predecessor whose influence cannot be esti- mated highly enough. Later on, Buckminster Fuller would play an increasingly important role for ESF, in particular with regard to his studies on the Metaeder, even if his architectonic conclusions differ considerably with the enclosed concept of Fuller’s dome.

While reviewing the script of this book together, Eckhard mentioned to me that 9 seems to be a lucky number for him — we then realised that we can simultaneously celebrate the 50th birthday of his Spatial City with the release of this book! During the Kassel interview, when Eckhard replied to the question of what advice he would give a young architect today that the idea of the Spatial City still awaits “proper” realisation, once more his ambivalent status as a pragmatic problem-solver and utopian generalist became evident. Many of the ideas contained in this book are of the greatest topicality, and this should be reason enough for Eckhard to proudly carry the role of the utopian into the future.

On the project

With this book we do not provide a complete catalogue of works, a gapless bibliography or biographical aspects in the work of ESF. Likewise, it was not our aim to produce a model monogra- phy in the style of a categorical list of buildings, projects and texts. We chose rather to draw an evolutionary line of development through the available material that does justice to the diversity and breadth of his creations and lets each individual building block seemingly fall into its place in the chronological order of the content. This strategy, however, was not determined in the beginning, rather it crystallised step-by-step in the course of the now two-year project. The numerous bibliogra- phic sources of the material reflect not only an incomplete inventory of original documents and models, but also the importance these publica- tions of his work had as they provoked a considerable resonance at the time of their release. In the German speaking world the supportive influence of Ulrich Conrads played a decisive role: He had been the editor-in-chief of the Bauwelt magazine since 1957 and founded the book series Bauwelt Fundamente, which first appeared in 1964 with the title Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture. With reference to a contribu- tion in Bauwelt, No. 10/1961, the magazine.
Zum Projekt


AA, L'architecture d'aujourd'hui, No. 102/1962, took care of the first public dissemination of ESF's work beyond the borders of Germany. The motif that was selected for the cover then adorns our cover as well – it shows a "modulation of the spatial structure as the possibility to adapt to static, functional and formal requirements". As mentioned above, the books Urban Systems Vol. I & II and the Bauwelt special issue on Ecotecture represent important sources for these corner stones of his theoretical work. The original German texts contained in the book were written over an almost 60-year period, this led to our well-considered decision to convert all texts to the new German spelling rules, but their content and style were only changed where it seemed absolutely necessary for clear comprehensibility. Similarly, the English translations try to capture the authors' style and the contexts in which they originated. All texts are accompanied by corresponding source references, whereby those never published or especially written for the occasion of this publication carry the description "ESF Archive" or the initials of the author. When not otherwise credited in the appendix, all images are from the private archive of ESF.

Naturally, there are many individuals involved in the creation of such a work. With the following I hope to pay respect to all of those who contributed to not just another project but to the realisation of a very special book. First and foremost, to Eckhard Schulze-Fielitz who provided firsthand information in many conversations, from whom I have learned a lot and has become a good friend of mine. I thank the authors, Yona Friedman for his warm hospitality in Paris and his personal contribution to a friend, and Hans Ulrich Obrist for the attention he devoted to this project and his interviews in Kassel and London, which represent important building blocks in the book. Thanks to Rem Koolhaas for his curiosity and sincere respect for ESF's work, to Peter G. Auer for his contribution on the ontological foundations of the Spatial City and the Metaeader, his advice, suggestions and conversations over the course of the project. The translators and copy editors Christine Schöffler and Peter Blakeney, whose precise and investigative way of working contributed to the linguistic coherence of this work, whereby they delivered much more than a translation. Thanks to Katharina Idam and Verena Dür for the editorial support, to David Marold and Angela Fößl from Springer Wien/NewYork for their patience and support despite all temporary difficulties. Thanks
öffentlich worden oder speziell aus Anlass dieser Publikation entstanden sind, die Bezeichnung „Archiv ESF“ oder die Initialen des Autors tragen. Alle Abbildungen stammen, so im Anhang nicht eigens vermerkt, aus dem Privatarchiv von ESF.


to Sabrina van der Ley and Markus Richter for their courtesy and friendly accommodation at the Megastructure Reloaded Symposium in Berlin, the editorial team of the Arch+ magazine for the kind approval to print the Kassel interview, the consignors of the images, the "Archive for Architecture and Engineering NRW" and to Raphael Moser, who succeeded in giving the existing material a consistent, memorable, yet subtle visual form.
Articles in Edited Books


31 Dream but Conflict

Wolfgang Fiel

Vienna, Austria

Abstract

A shift from the restricted administration of a controlled and passive environment towards multiple bottom-sideaway processes through the dynamic empowerment of a wider public, aims at active use of electronic networks; a micro polity as affirmative topography of desire (Hardt & Negri 2000).

With this chapter I attempt to summarise the basic conceptual elements for what I call “World Maps of Dissipative Resources”. Much has been said and written about maps in general, its manifold political, socio-economic, ethical or moral implications. Maps have been drawn as tools of domination, deception or means for the interpretation of history. But yet even the most obvious objective doesn’t seem to prevent the habitual assertion for scientific objectivity. The enduring quest for unity and normative regulations falls short of addressing the complexity of processes that are assumed to be highly dynamic. Hidden momentum, invisible desire or secrecy, are sources for sudden eruption, prone to change a seemingly stable arrangement within an instant. Hence, rendering these ‘ghost-like’ and subjective entities visible is the quest I attempt to set forth.

31.1 Introduction

In his book entitled “What is life?” Schrödinger (1944) has speculated about the basic principle at work that keeps the entropy of a living organism relatively constant and would comply with the second law of thermodynamics. (The total entropy of any isolated thermodynamic system tends to increase over time, approaching a maximum value.) He coined the term “negative entropy” that each living organism would have to detract from the environment continually. Subsequently for him the key to life was: “Order by Order”.

Complementally to Schrödinger’s concept von Foerster (1960) proposed what he called “second key to life: Order by disturbance”. 
31.2 Form and Structure: The Operational Paradigm

If the concept of ‘random’ disturbance as genetic imperative is appropriate, the foundation for a better understanding of the evolutionary dynamics of cognitive processing might be provided. In how far this concept bears artistic relevance is inextricably linked with a proper understanding of the dialog between an organism and its environment and the implicit necessity for a strict definition of the term ‘form’ qua ‘structure’ with respect to the following assumptions:

If – using an analogy to the etymological roots of the term structure and contrary to a common understanding – form isn’t understood as the outer appearance of a physical entity (for which the term ‘Gestalt’ seems more appropriate), the main focus is shifted towards the regularities that determine the outer appearance. Subsequently we gain a comprehensive insight into the act of formalising a problem. Once a concrete problem is put on a level with one of the above mentioned random disturbances, creative (intuitive) problem analysis effectively is the modification and re-organisation of already existing ‘internal models’ in order to gain a sufficient (operable) but transitory arrangement. For a useful description of the processes at work the tools offered by Analytical Linguistics fall short, since the conjunction of signifier and signified offers no operational aspect for a process that is assumed to be on the whole dynamic (organism – environment interaction). Having specified the term form as the ‘tentative’ process of analysing the structure of a physical entity presented to the perceiving organism one will often experience, that different objects
can share the same aspects or a single object may be seen from different angles (association). It is exactly this process within the framework of the subject–object interaction that is of specific interest. A decisive quality of internal models is the nature of their hierarchical organisation (Wiener 1996). Accordingly the capacity of the entire system cannot be reduced to the mere sum of the information contained in each of the models. The elements are connected among one another by a large number of functional links and therefore are relational by nature. Relations between objects and/or events suddenly become manifest because of the unexpected emergence of structural congruence and bring about the important moment of surprise. The specific challenge is how to organise the discrete elements at hand in such a way, that within the manifold interplay of given context and actor (observer) a reference can be drawn to the already known, leaving room though for ‘interstitial spaces’, that necessitate individual structuring intervention. Through these interventions individual meaning is constituted. Already indicated by the term actor, her/his part is rendered active and is of integral bearing for the anticipated chain of events. Subsequently the process of affirmative appropriation affects the present condition of the ‘field of action’.

**Fig. 31.2.** Structural framework of objects, its ontologies, and relations

**Fig. 31.3.** Morphological features of the database
31.3 Database

The characteristics of this dynamic heterarchy of individually constituted internal models are transposable into the operational properties of web-communities, which embody a form of connectedness beyond the sheer multiplicity of their users.

1. The 'collective objects' of the Database provide the framework for a web-community to engage in a process that provides non-linear access to the individual items contained in a collaborative exchange, and forms of retrieval.

2. The collective (shared) set of objects, presented within a Semantic Content Management System, is undergoing a process of individual attribution, and valuation. These annotations can be based on formal ontologies of concepts and relationships that provide a formal – and hopefully widely accepted – vocabulary for the particular domain.

3. In accordance with the concept of 'random' disturbance as genetic imperative the structure of this database has to be receptive for sudden change (events) that occur outside the system \( T_{n=1} (n = 0, 1, 2, 3...) \).

4. Transformation of language based knowledge into a formal system that can be interpreted and reasoned about by applications.

5. Applications based on ISO-Code (an operable machine code), effectively can control a rapid prototyping process tuned along a set of parameters.

---

**Fig. 31.4.** Model for Dissipative Mapping
6. This Mechanism, i.e. a milling machine produces a sequence of control signals that eventually run the tools that produce a physical ‘snapshot’ (set of arranged triplets \((x, y, z)\) of the system state at a given time \((T_i)\).

7. The resulting model (Epigenetic Landscape) is subject to interpretation, information that is fed back into the system on the level of individual attribution. Looking at information systems, one recognizes the additional need for explicit operators that construct and update the model itself, as the subject evolves or more information is discovered about it.

### 31.4 Model, Epigenetic Landscape

Virtual forms are real (not symbolic, nor ideal) ‘folds’ in a real and \(n\)-dimensional space and they can trigger indefinite morphogenetic occurrences in \(n+1\) space (the space of the next higher dimension). In this \(n+1\) space, where forms become dynamic or unfold, unfettered freedom and indefiniteness reigns since numbers, quality, and combinations of real energy contained within the folds become recognisable unexpectedly – almost as a coincidence.

One of the most important geometric terms coined to describe the relation between phenomenal forms (phenotypes) and morphogenetic fields in which they emerge, is Conrad Waddington’s term “Epigenetic Landscape”. An Epigenetic Landscape is an undulating topological surface in a phase space (i.e., a descriptive model without explanation). Its many valleys correspond with possible trajectories (forms) of a body evolving (emerging) on it.

The epigenetic landscape is merely a template or a virtual form that was constructed in a different dimension as multiplicity produced by an extremely complex energy field. The forms that

![Image of an undulating surface representing an epigenetic landscape with text explaining the concept.](image-url)
were developed in the course of this exercise are to be seen as evolving forms within a dissipative physical system. This means that the curves represented on ‘flat planes’ by functional graphs or diagrams, (e.g., statistical information of urban development) serve to generate formations that are subject to numerous modifications. Layering, local density (as basis for spatiality) of a coherent probability (specific use) for these modifications is implicit. By the term intelligence, applied to one of these temporary conditions, is meant the potential for their virtual folds, which are modulated by singularity and serve to trigger morphogenetic occurrences. Such a dissipative system acts dynamically on effective energies (regulative energies) and then progresses to the next state of evolutive succession.

### 31.5 Phantom Public?

“This is what we wish to attempt: Where matters-of-fact have failed, let’s try what I have called matters-of-concern. What we are trying to register is a huge sea change in our conceptions of science, our grasps of facts, our understanding of objectivity. For too long, objects have been wrongly portrayed as matters-of-fact. This is unfair to them, unfair to science, unfair to objectivity, unfair to experience. They are much more interesting, variegated, uncertain, complicated, far reaching, heterogeneous, risky, historical, local, material and networked than the pathetic version offered for
too long by philosophers. Rocks are not simply there to be kicked at, desks to be thumped at. ‘Facts are facts are facts’? Yes, but they are also a lot of other things in addition.” (Latour 2005)

As indicated with the above quote by Bruno Latour, besides the technological implications to the concept there is yet another dimension to the mapping of hidden agencies in the process of urban and collective spatial appropriation. For too long the emphasis on participative processes has been obstructed by a sturdy definition of the social as determined by structural necessity, notions of assumed collective identities, and the prevailing attitude of constructing cohesive meaning for the social body as a whole, a “Phantom Public” (Lippmann 1927). The particularities have been neglected for the common good or the pursuit of an all-encompassing consensus in the process of dialectic reasoning. However, not only the contrast between the local and the global but also among the various constituencies on all levels of investigation sheds new light on the question that is at the heart of political determination: the very definition of what composes the social. It is crucial to emphasise the necessity of looking into the uncertainties of groups, actions, objects and matters of fact in order to shape the process of localising the global, and distributing the local.

References

Back in 2005, Roy Ascott introduced a term at the Consciousness Reframed Conference in Plymouth, which was soon to become pertinent to the discourse on transdisciplinary enquiry into art, science, technology and consciousness. Drawing upon the Greek συνκρητισμός (synkretismos), meaning “Synchronization with Crete,” syncretism denotes the attempt to reconcile contradictory beliefs, practices or schools of thought, and is the point of departure for the first comprehensive attempt to map the nascent territory of an emergent field.

Based on the IXth Consciousness Reframed Conference at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, “New Realities: Being Syncretic” convenes a remarkable compilation of contributions from more than 80 artists, researchers, and scientists, such as Roy Ascott, Gerald Bast, Antonio Caronia, Ernest Edmonds, James Gimzewski, Ryohei Nakatsu, Robert Pepperell, Mike Phillips, Michael Punt, Ruth Schnell, Christa Sommerer, Barbara Maria Stafford, Victoria Vesna and Peter Weibel. The publication contains a DVD with over 25 hours of video footage, featuring the talks, discussions and panels during the conference as well as short introductory notes.

With respect to their value as epistemological operands the notion of ever changing ‘building blocks’ allows for a link between action that is collective and networked, and the individual characteristics of a dynamic relationship between an organism and its environment.

2. Form and Structure

Following Schrödinger’s (1944) speculation that, subject to the basic principle for the preservation of a relatively constant entropy of a living organism, the key to life is “Order by order”, von Förster (1960) complementally proposed what he called “second key to life: Order by disturbance”.

Speculating along von Förster’s lines, the examination of the dialogue between an organism and its environment requires a firm definition of the term ‘form’ qua ‘structure’ with respect to the following assumptions: If – using an analogy to the etymological roots of the term structure and contrary to a common understanding – form isn’t understood as the outer appearance of a physical entity (for which the term ‘Gestalt’ seems more appropriate), the main focus shifts toward the regularities that determine the outer appearance. To identify the appearance of external signal strings with hitherto unknown or partially unknown properties as ‘random’ disturbance, allows for the conclusion that creative (‘intuitive’) problem analysis is the composition, modification and/or re-organisation of ‘internal models’ in order to gain a sufficient (operable) but transitory arrangement. Internal models are individual cognitive ‘building blocks’ that are under continual “tension” in the process of apprehending incoming information. The specific use of the term “tension” refers to a definition by Oswald Wiener, whereupon the act of problem solving is an attempt to “assimilate” (Piaget) external signal-strings through cognitive “schemes” (“form” of a structure), active at present. For a useful description of the processes at work, the tools offered by Analytical Linguistics fall short, since the conjunction of signifier and signified offers no operational aspect for the simulation of a
process that changes in space and time (organism-environment interaction). Having specified the term form as the "tentative" process of analysing the structure of an external entity presented to the perceiving organism, one will often experience, that different objects can share the same aspects or a single object may be seen from different angles (association).

A decisive quality of the entire system is its hierarchical organisation (Wiener, 1996). Accordingly, its capacity can not be reduced to the mere sum of the models (Vorstellungen) contained therein. The constituent elements of the system are malleable (modification) and can be coupled with one another by a potentially infinite number of functional links. Relations between objects and/or events suddenly become manifest because of the unexpected emergence of structural congruence (experience of surprise). The specific challenge is how to organise the discrete elements at hand in such a way, that within the manifold interplay of given context and actor (observer) a reference can be drawn to the already known, without the elimination of individual structuring intervention (intuitive imagination). These interventions constitute individual meaning. Already indicated by the term actor, her/his part is rendered active and is of integral bearing for the anticipated chain of events. Subsequently the process of affirmative appropriation affects the present condition of the 'field of action'.

3. Networks of associations

In his book Reassembling the Social, Latour (2005) introduced the "Actor-Network Theory," in its hyphenated form a composite of two basic elements. There would be much to say about their respective meaning, it seems more rewarding though to follow Latour's distinction between what he calls "Sociology of the Social" as opposed to "Sociology of Associations," with respect to the distribution of action through intermediaries or mediators. "As long as they [agents] are treated as causes simply transported through intermediaries, nothing will be added by the vehicles chosen to carry their effect forward. [...] But if vehicles are treated as mediators triggering other mediators, then a lot of new and unpredictable situations will ensue (they make things do other things than what was expected)." (Latour, 2005, p.59) In his emphasis on the network rather than the figuration of agency, two issues mark a notable departure from the prevailing attitude of orthodox sociology:

- Action is dislocated
- Insufficiency of strict causation

3.1. Action is dislocated

Once the focus of investigation shifts from social ties to networks, the restricted methodological framework of orthodox hermeneutics becomes evident, for their focus essentially unfolds in the domain of meaningful human exchange with its circular forms of immediate apprehension and feedback. That meaningful exchange, based on the primacy of language, has come to full blown prudence with the assertion that what we know about 'reality' is conditioned by language. Meaning is assumed to be on the whole a shared commodity and migrates free of temporal horizons or semantic distortions. Rather than championing analytical philosophy on language grounds, the idea of dislocated action delineates another source of disturbance, namely the potentially infinite concatenation of mediation in the course of action regardless of the distribution modalities. This intricate network of relations connects a pure multiplicity of singularities, all of which are distributed in the realm of pure virtuality. The virtual is not opposed to the real. It has a full reality of its own and thus resists identity. "The actualization of the virtual, on the contrary, always takes place by difference, divergence or differentiation. Actualization breaks with resemblance as a process no less than it does with identity as a principle. Actual terms never resemble the singularities they incarnate. In this sense, actualization or differentiation is always a genuine creation. It does not result from any limitation of a pre-existing possibility." (Deleuze, 2004, p.263) The virtual co-existence of memory in each section of Bergson's (1991) memory cone is a multiplicity of singularities, with each actualization being the result of a peculiar order of relations prior to a process of identification. The noise of the channel in Shannon and Weavers (1963) model of
communication therefore may account for the uncertainties of these ever changing relations, prone to a partial or complete loss of information, but potentially open to the dissemination of yet another chain of mediated action in the network of agents. Hence agency is rendered active because of the substitution of resemblance for the concept of genuine creation along divergent lines of temporal actualization.

Prigogine’s notion of creation is born out of uncertainties, disturbances or vortexes, the moments when lawful behaviour is not sufficient anymore to disclose disturbance, the moments when “dynamic monads” interrelate in parallel streams of existence. (Prigogine, Stengers, Fauquet and Serres, 1991)

3.2. Insufficiency of strict causation

Let us see whether the occasional indeterminacy of the network and its actions justifies a departure from the laws of strict causation, for the various sources of uncertainty are assumed to be unpredictable at times. “Action should remain a surprise, a mediation, an event. It is for this reason that we should begin, here again, not from the ‘determination of action by society’, the ‘calculative abilities of individuals’, or the ‘power of the unconscious’ as we would ordinarily do, but rather from the underdetermination of action, from the uncertainties and controversies about who and what is acting when ‘we’ act – and there is of course no way to decide whether this source of uncertainty resides in the analyst or in the actor.” (Latour, 2005, p.45)

However, if this is to mark a notable departure from the laws of strict causation, the continuous spatial and temporal distribution of differences, the subjective experience in the flow of everyday life may chart the terrain for individual incidents or accidents to occur on the aleatoric topography of events (Althusser, 1994), a stage for the ordinary, the expression of desire, magic, cruelty or hope. If we were to trace the eclectic reverberations of events, we need to devise a set of useful tactics and filters (Certeau, 1988), tools to provide for basic operational guidelines in the process of (re-)constructing situations anew. In doing so, we might have to revive the concept of the flâneur, stripped of its supercilious attitude toward generalised concepts of knowledge, applicable to any situation and regardless of the specificities of a given context. To account for the complexity of a concrete situation, is to carefully follow hidden signs, discrete hints, secret messages and the vibrations of the place.

“[The poet] is like a seismograph that vibrates from every quake, even if it is thousands of miles away. It’s not that he thinks incessantly of all things in the world. But they think of him. They are in him, and thus do they rule over him. Even his dull hours, his depressions, his confusions are impersonal states; they are like the spasms of the seismograph, and a deep enough gaze could read more mysterious things in the them than in his poems.” (Hofmannsthal, 2007, p.260)

4. Performance – Manipulating the situation

The construction and manipulation of ‘constellations’ as an epistemological process of generating individual meaning is a continuous re-appropriation of one’s environment, a prolonged cycle of seismographic sensing, grasping, and physically engaging, “[... ] a return to the self-evidence of experience and the discovery of invariants.” (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999, p.186) This process certainly goes way beyond or precedes language. However, my aim is not to substitute language for an alternative system of denotation, but to devise an ‘instrument’ allowing for the dynamic modeling and transformation of ‘invisible text’, for adequate forms of instantaneous representation and subsequent interpretive feedback. Both, the acquired data and its physical manifestations remain insolubly linked with the virtual domain qua idea. In refining ones intuitive and performative sensibilities, this ‘eclipse of the material’ is a process of extracting the project through an experimental practice of empirical and epistemological significance.

5. Relation of sensibility

If sensibility is by necessity a quality of a relation between the thing and its subjective apprehension, the Aristotelian concept of the intellect as being composed of two parts may offer a starting point to re-consider the problem of “absolute Being” (Sein schlechtthin), which can’t be the presupposition of a division. For Aristotle (1995) the intellect has something analogous to matter and something analogous to form. The first of these is the passive intellect; the second is active intellect, the “intelluclos agens” that comes from outside.

“As a mere living entity, the Ego is relegated to a state of isolation. The act of thought consists in abandoning and overcoming this isolation and fusing with the One Absolute intellect, the intellectus agens. The possibility of this fusion is necessary not only to mysticism, but to logic as well; for this fusion alone seems capable of really explaining the process of thought and of establishing its necessary validity. The true subject of thought is not the individual, the “self.” Rather, it is a non-personal, substantial being common to all thinking being; one whose connection with the individual Ego is external and accidental.” (Cassirer, 2007, p. 231) And here I may add that this holds regardless of how transcendent or ambiguous the self is.
6. Gesture

For Benjamin's version of historical materialism, the notion of “dialectics at a standstill” (“Dialektik im Stillstand”) identifies a historic moment in time, a unique chance for the revolutionary thinker to synchronise history with the presence. In this very moment, political action should—however disastrous—fully reveal it’s messianic identity. This heroic moment of sudden revelation owes a lot to his studies on Kafka’s theatre, a context for unbound and prevailing experimentation, a forum for the prolonged testimony of the relevance of each fragment: the microscopic gaze for every gesture, prone to bring about a significant constellation in time.

“One of the most significant functions of this theater [Oklahoma Nature Theater] is to dissolve happenings into their gestic components... Kafka’s entire work constitutes a code of gesture which surely had no definite symbolic meaning for the author from the outset; rather, the author tried to drive such a meaning from them in ever-changing context and experimental groupings. The theater is the logical place for such groupings.” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 80)

Is seems indispensable to conceive of Benjamin’s messianic flaneur, as an active agent in the quest for novelty in a process of shared participation. To explain the participated as being constituted by all that is unparticipated is what Proclus elaborates as follows.

7. Participation

“All that is unparticipated constitutes the participated out of itself. All hypostases are linked by an upward tension to existences not participated. The unparticipated, having the logos of unity (being, that is, its own and not another’s, and being separated from the participated) generates what can be participated. For either it must remain fixed in sterility and isolation, and so must lack a place of honour; or else it will give something of itself, such that the receiver becomes a participant and the given subsists by participation. Everything that is participated, becoming a property of that by which it is participated, is secondary to that which in all is equally present and has filled them all out of its own being. That which is in one is not in the others; that which is present to all alike, that it may illuminate all, is not in any one, but is prior to them. For either it is in all, or in one out of all, or prior to all. But a principle which was in all would be divided amongst all, and would itself require a further principle to unify the divided; and further, all the particulars would no longer participate in the same principle, but this in one and that in another, through the dihemption of its unity. And if it be in one out of all, it will be a property no longer of all but of one. If, then, it is both common to all that can participate and identical for all, it must be prior to all: such is the Unparticipated.” (Proclus, 1999, pp. 111-112)

References
Appendix B:
Visual Portfolio
In 2009 tat ort was invited to work on a proposal for the extension to an existing Memorial in St. Aegyd am Neuwalde, a small village of about 3,000 inhabitants, located in the southern periphery of the Austrian province of Lower Austria. The Memorial is to mark and to commemorate the existence of a satellite to the Concentration Camp of Mauthausen during the last two years of the Second World War.

At the time of our involvement, the existing Memorial in St. Aegyd, right at the edge of the Catholic burial ground of the village, consisted of a modest wooden rood, which was erected after the end of the War, and a memorial stone with a plaque to commemorate the unknown victims of the camp, erected in the mid 80s by the then newly established local commemoration initiative, which ever since has organized an annual silent protest in honour of the victims. The site as such is a hedged quadrangle with one central entrance and a tree to each side of it.

For the time being, the historian Christian Rabl was able to investigate the names and nativity of 46 victims and presented us with the task of granting them a permanent presence at the place where they actually have been buried in a mass grave.

The Memorial in its existing form is as much a historic document of the changing attitude towards the events that have led to its erection in the first place, as it is an expression of the culture of commemoration as such, which – in the given case - is further accentuated by the late scientific recovery of the underlying facts. For this reason it has become clear early on in the process that we wanted to preserve the various layers of its historic formation and to keep the physical presence of our own manifestation very limited if not entirely invisible.

Most importantly though, we wanted the commemoration to be a collective and lasting effort in that it should involve the local community over a sustained period of time.

We decided to grant each of the known victims a voice in the form of their name, and to embark on a journey throughout the village together with Christian Rabl, which has led us from door to door, essentially covering every house in the village, and to ask the citizens of St. Aegyd to utter the name of one of the victims in order to imbue the act of commemoration with the personal identity of the speaker. Each name has been spoken many times over, the recordings of which we’ve assembled to form a continuous loop, and to be played diachronically of two speakers, hidden next to the trees inside the hedge, which surrounds the quadrangle of the Memorial. The sound installation is permanently active, but tuned at a volume that allows for the names to be heard only once the visitor has entered the Memorial.

The only visible element is the plaque at its gate.

In the presence of Rajmund Pajer, the last surviving inmate of the Concentration Camp in St. Aegyd am Neuwalde, the Memorial was inaugurated with a silent protest to the site on May 7, 2010.
SANSIBAR

tat ort (Berlinger, Fiel)
Performance on the occasion of the exhibition Feld // Field
Skulpturenpark, Berlin
2010

On the grounds of Skulpturenpark Berlin_Zentrum, a part of the former death-strip between East and West, a mobile launch pad has been mounted. Specifically conceived for the occasion, the pedestal/platform was used to launch paper planes, which have been marked with a destination of fancy before. Continually moved along the perimeter of the plot, the platform serves as spatial indicator for the current size of its surface area. Traversed by the trajectories of the flying objects, this process transforms the open space into a projection surface for the wishes, dreams, and aspirations of passers-by, who were asked to set a paper plane in motion. Covered with flying objects, with its inscription indicative for the presence of places dreamed of, the historically charged terrain is imbued with novel attribution.
FLUC SHOW OFF

*tat ort* (Berlinger, Fiel)
Performance
fluc Vienna
November 18 2009

With the generous support of MAN Nutzfahrzeuge Group

Depending on speed and means of transportation, urban space is constituted through a continued stream of impressions along the corridor of movement or is scattered to the fragments of ever changing sceneries. Both aspects determine how the presence of a place is been remembered, fragment and unity, subject to permanent corrections and always fuzzy.

We aim to enrich the collective imprint of the fluc and the Praterstern, by changing the position, the frame of observation, and the repeated performance of a procedure. The position is 2,3m above street level, the frame is the windscreen of a truck and the procedure is to circumnavigate the place at the Praterstern roundabout. Visitors are invited to occupy the seat next to the driver for the length of one round as a wireless camera simultaneously transmits the images from inside the driver’s cabin to the fluc. Those who follow the imagery are given the possibility to re-construct the movement from the station point of the orbit. Get on board!
FLUC SHOW OFF
Tachograph card
Fine art print
40x50cm
2009

following pages
Photographs taken during the performance
_FLUC SHOW OFF
Für die Vögel // For the Birds

tat ort (Berlinger, Fiel)
Intervention / Artists in Residence, 24h live broadcast
on the occasion of Urban Hacking, paralows 09
Karlsplatz Vienna
2009

We’ve occupied one of the most prominent public spaces in the city of Vienna by setting-up a private cell, which we inhabited for the duration of the exhibition. Objects, floor, and the walls inside the living- and working unit have been equipped with special microphones. Auditory traces of domestic activity were transmitted live and around the clock via loudspeakers into the trees of the surrounding area. Due to its anonymous source, audible events from within the “Black Box” deprived of any reliable attribution (real or fake?). Even at the moment of its being made public, everything private remained a symbol of invisible activity and has become manifest through the specific sound qualities of the tapped objects only.

In addition to this, we did invited a number of people to make use of the infrastructure in what was to become a wide range of activities such as discussions, sound performances, readings, etc.

Throughout the whole period of our occupancy, the sound was available as a live stream on the internet.
Für die Vögel // For the Birds
Visitors listening to the voice of John Cage reading his diary, guest contributed by Berno Odo Polzer

Photograph showing our living unit, a speaker pylon and the wiring

_for die Vögel // For the Birds_
Für die Vögel // For the Birds

above
Photograph of the speaker
pylon taken through a window of our box.
Für die Vögel I
C-print
180x130cm

Für die Vögel II
C-print
100x70cm
2009
The Beauty of Salix Babylonica

tat ort (Berlinger, Fiel)
Performance in public space
Waltherpark Innsbruck
2009

In collaboration with Berno Odo Polzer and the chamber choir of Innsbruck’s secondary music school.

On invitation by columbusnext, we have been asked for a contribution to the annual performance festival Innsbruck Contemporary. For the action, which was to take place at the “Waltherpark”, an open public space in the city centre of Innsbruck, we asked the chamber choir of the local secondary music school to come up with their very own interpretation of “Manifest des Öffentlichen”, a text that expresses our take on the current shortcomings of urban public spaces in general. For the duration of the performance, members of the choir were sitting on a willow tree (Salix Babylonica) right in the centre of the park, where their phonetic interpretation of the text was amplified by the use of microphones and speakers, so that their voices could be heard far beyond the visibility of their bodies. That way, Salix Babylonica has turned into a ‘singing tree’.
The Beauty of Salix Babylonica
Wohnen in der Raumstadt // Inhabiting the Spatial City
With this project tat ort initiated a potentially open ended series of Artists in Residence programmes with the goal of looking into the immediate living conditions of dense, segregated and therefore highly conflict-laden social housing estates.

As a pilot we inhabited a flat in the so called Achsiedlung in Bregenz/Austria for a sustained period of two months. In terms of its size (3,000 inhabitants), its relationship with the total number of the local population (30,000), its geographical location right on the edge of the city as well as its social and ethnic tissue this council estate is a paradigmatic example for the complex conditions in areas of dense social housing, and mono-functional suburban settings. Similar problems exist in almost any part of the word, yet lacking convincing methods of researching and tackling the complex and diverse phenomena at work, which is why we aim at installing follow-ups all over Europe in the further process.

We engage the local community in personal conversation, workshops, and physical interventions in order to demonstrate the potentiality of the micro-political process of multiplied individual efforts in actively shaping public urban space. It is most important to achieve an affirmative and energizing public mood. Individual creativity is encouraged to initiate new forms of dynamic and ongoing urban renewal.

Support:
City Council of Bregenz, VOGEWOSI, Westend Jugendtreff, Department of Cultural Affairs of the Federal State of Vorarlberg/Austria, Kunsthaus Bregenz, and Fam. Lais
above
One of the speakers distributed in our flat
Wohnen in der Raumstadt // Inhabiting the Spatial City
previous page
photographs showing, from the left:
Eckhard Schulze-Feilice, a frequent visitor to our flat and one of
the architects who conceived the compound; microphone wiring
running through the kitchen window.

above
Photographs taken during our workshop with kids of the
neighbourhood.
above and following pages
Photographs of the wooden pavilions
Wohnen in der Raumstadt // Inhabiting the Spatial City
Cad drawing of the wooden pavilions after their making

Isometric view showing out flat, the pavilions, and the wire connection between microphones and speakers
Die Wiege der Demokratie Teil 1 //
The Origins of Democracy Part 1

tat ort (Berlinger, Fiel)
Mixed media installation/performance, sound
Bahnhofstraße 53, Bregenz/Austria
2006

General framework
The project was located in a vacant office building, previously used for corporate business in textile industries. Vorarlberg, a federal state of Austria traditionally used to be an international stronghold in the production, refinement and trading of embroidery. The ongoing decline of this industry since the mid-eighties left many people unemployed and caused an unprecedented social- and economical restructuring processes in the region.

Conceptual outline
The various rooms along the route through the building were left completely empty. Lacking any information about the content other than its title, visitors were left alone as only one person was allowed to enter the building at a time. Searching for components that could possibly be identified as part of the work, persistent buzzing of sewing machines was audible. In the back of the compound a single room was used for the actual intervention. In there an elevated platform concealed a small room with a ceiling height of 1.5 meter and around 10 square metre of floor space. This was the workspace for 9 seamstresses, accessible over a small staircase at the short end of the platform. Caught in an intimate moment of sudden confrontation visitors have been gazing at the workers back as they were focussed on their work. The space was open to the public for the 3 hour duration of a workshift only.
Die Wiege der Demokratie Teil 1 // The Origins of Democracy Part 1

Parcours through the derelict building

above
Installation views, workshift