Emancipating
the Many
Emancipating the Many:

A Practice Led Investigation into Emergent Paradigms of Immediate Political Action

By

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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.¹

—Walter Benjamin

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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 a 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 the human condition in the wake of globalized economies, politics and communication networks. If once the lack of a “unitary theory” was attributed to the field of urbanism¹, 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”² 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. The so-called 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 collaborative artistic practice under the name of *tat ort* is precisely aimed at looking into “matters of concern” as opposed to “matters of fact”\(^3\) 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 the constructed self-identity of the body politic, 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\(^4\). 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 but based on the fidelity for the designated event.

My research is centred around two questions: First of all, is it possible to devise an interventional apparatus (physical infrastructure) which would encourage meaningful participation, and secondly, is it possible to thereby initiating 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 what I call “constitution of time.”

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I would like to outline a number of individuals and institutions, without whom, this work would have not been possible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

P     Logical Proposition
X     Evental site
S     Situation
e₈    Event
x     Element of e₈
α, β  Sites or mathematical sets
Ø     Void
TM    Turning Machine
OS    Operating System
M     Model
S     String
MU    Mobile Unit
MU01  First prototype of the Mobile Unit
iD    initial Database
lE    lived Experience
Tₙ    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’s¹ 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.

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”: 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, *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

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implementation of the 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”\(^3\), the epistemological and ontological implications of action, its evental 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.\(^4\)

Statement of Intent and Contribution to New Knowledge

After having addressed 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\(^5\) 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.

\(^3\) Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*
\(^5\) See footnote (1) in the List of Abbreviations.
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, following in the wake of quantum physics, the emergent field of cybernetics has started to account for the disturbing influence of the observer as integral part of the experimental setting. 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, which is 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 part: 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 covertly observing 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, which is increasingly based on and expressed by huge chunks of quantitative data. This, however, is by no means an attempt to replace the ideology of political 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 confines of a model that exhaust itself on the day of election. 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 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 feedback 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 what I call the “emancipation of the many.”

Identification of field

To identify the field of research in a programme[6] 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 —

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[6] 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, http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/273). See also: Edward A. Shanken, “From Cybernetics to Telematics,” in Roy Ascott: Telematic Embrace, ed. Edward A. Shanken (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 73-74.
this ambivalence is accompanied by an overwhelming amount of issues to be covered in this field alone, not to mention 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 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.\(^7\)

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

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\(^7\) Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 11-12.
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.

**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, one usually acknowledges the sort of disturbance or “noise”, like Shannon and Weaver called it in their communication model⁸ 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 “analogical third through the disidentification and neutralisation of the first two, which now become indiscernible”.⁹ 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

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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”\(^{10}\) (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 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*\(^{11}\) and Badiou’s *Being and Event*\(^{12}\) 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 settings, the signifying event of retro-actively assigning a name to the empty terms of a multiplicity is exactly what requires the intention to actively intervene in a given context

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\(^{11}\) Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York and London: Continuum, 2004 [1968])

\(^{12}\) Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006)
outside the representational regime of an existing institutional dispositif.\textsuperscript{13} 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 characteristics of an epistemological structure (outlined in \textit{Difference and Repetition}), which has got the capability (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 retro-actively assigned events due to the human ability to act and start anew.

\textbf{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 \textit{A Grammar of the Multitude},\textsuperscript{14} written in 2001 and published in an 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 condition. 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-

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{13} 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. (Michel Foucault, \textit{Dits et Ecrits: Schriften in vier Bänden} (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), Bd. III, 392-395. Giorgio Agamben, \textit{Was ist ein Dispositiv?} (Zürich und Berlin: diaphanes, 2008))

\textsuperscript{14} Paolo Virno, \textit{A Grammar Of The Multitude} (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004)
\end{footnotesize}
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, 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 theory 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.

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 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 –

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15 Agamben, Potentialities
16 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.
17 It was Hannah Arendt herself who insisted on using the term political theory in favour of political philosophy or sociology.
18 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 precondition 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 a threat that has long gone beyond the bounds of humanity.
19 Martin Buber, Ich und Du (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1995 [1923])
albeit not all of them immediately obvious – with Gilbert Simondon’s ontogenesis or Bruno Latour’s “sociology of the social”.21

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, which are no longer rendered as inevitably linked by a general will.

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 led him to summarise his views in the book titled *The Phantom Public*.22

With respect to the question in what way the “disenchanted man” – as Lippmann had it - is able to participate in contemporary politics, German historian and sociologist Karl Schlögel, observes and describes a number of actual or potential civilian activities, which in his view deserves its full emancipation from the normative grip of institutionalised mediation. If one is to fully appreciate Schlögel’s methodological approach, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of first-hand observation and experience in order to account for the intricate and at times peculiar entanglement of location and event as well as mood and temper of actors involved.

It is thanks to the work of Alain Badiou, which 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

21 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social*

event, to which its signifier declares her or his 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 research, Ilya Prigogine. Without having to delve into his work at this point, the following quote from his autobiography marks the significance of time paradigmatically:

Among all those perspectives opened by thermodynamics, 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.

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 philosophy of life against the categorical imperative of what ought to be.

With my thesis I intend to highlight this development and to define the contemporary task of practice led research 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

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23 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.


25 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.
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 key references, primarily to be blamed on the fact that hardly any of his work has yet been translated into English. However, he was not only on of my supervisors but is somewhat of a role model in a specific way. 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 Group), a collective of young writers, artists, and activists, who – besides the Situationists – emerged as one of 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

26 “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.” (Ira G. Wool, “Hommage à Oswald Wiener,” 2:3 - Oswald Wiener zum 65. Geburtstag, Supposed Köln, 2000, CD)
29 Between 1958 and 1966 Wiener held a senior position in data processing at Olivetti.
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 long before taking up 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 “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 technological application. The fact that Wiener applies the Turing machine to analyse the workings of the mind 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.

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31 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 an 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.

32 The putative father of Radical Constructivism Ernst von Glasersfeld has declared on more than one occasion his fidelity to the work of Piaget.


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 comprises any kind of publicly available information at any given moment in time through and on top of which participants are encouraged to add what has gone unnoticed by 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 framework, 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: On one hand it is presented affirmatively as the primary capacity for political practice, but on the other being trapped in the web of semantic infelicities and ideological preoccupations once applied for invoking 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.
PART ONE:

INVESTIGATION

With the term investigation I deliberately allude to the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, or to be more precise to his *Philosophical Investigations* (Philosophische Untersuchungen) with respect to the only terminus technicus to appear in paragraph 48, Part I (Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2001 [1953])), which is “language game” (Sprachspiel). It is with respect to this term that I hope my investigation will cast some light.
In the beginning was Merz. This bold and forceful statement marks the beginning of the career of Kurt Schwitters, who was one of the Dadaists 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

1 Dietmar Elger, Der Merzbau von Kurt Schwitters (Köln: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 1999)
2 Leah Dickerman, Dada (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2006)