

Arts, Politics and Social Movements

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In the Fields and in the Streets

Edited by

Elen Riot, Claudia Schnugg
and Elena Raviola

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INTRODUCTION

Preamble

The scene takes place near a lake and a river in a Greek place called Lycia, which, as Ovid specifies, is known for being ‘the country of the Chimera’. Imagine a woman with her two very small children, who has been wandering under the hot summer sun for hours, and who arrives at a large river with a pond, where peasants are cutting rushes and removing weeds in the shadow of a few trees. There, she comes to a halt, but peasants drive her away and prevent her and her children from drinking water and resting. You could be that woman.

In Ovid’s tale, the woman happens to be a Goddess, Latona, the daughter of two titans. We may read this tale in many different ways, and it can be enlightening to do so to understand the role of social movements in society. Like Latona, social movements point to the vices of society, and they may ridicule some groups or interests. In so doing, they hold a power of transformation. Yet, another reading may elicit a quite different analysis: if a social group attempts to shield its resources from powerful outsiders, whoever they are, they may soon come under attack. They cannot remain between themselves, with their local rules. They must find ways to somehow be open to outsiders in a civilised manner.

FABLE III.¹

There Latona, leaning against a palm, together with the tree of Pallas, brought forth twins, in spite of their stepmother *Juno*. Hence, too, the newly delivered *Goddess* is said to have fled from *Juno*, and in her bosom to have carried the two divinities, her children. And now the Goddess, wearied with her prolonged toil, being parched with the heat of the season, contracted thirst in the country of Lycia when the intense sun was scorching the fields; the craving children, too, had exhausted her suckling breasts. By chance she beheld a lake of fine water, in the bottom of a valley; some countrymen were there, gathering bushy osiers, together with bulrushes, and sedge natural to fenny spots. The Titaness approached, and bending her knee, she pressed the ground, that she might take up the cool water to drink; the company of rustics forbade it. The Goddess thus addressed them, as they forbade her: ‘Why do you deny me water? The use of water is common *to all*. Nature has made neither sun, nor air, nor the running stream, the property of any one. To her

public bounty have I come, which yet I humbly beg of you to grant me. I was not intending to bathe my limbs here, and my wearied joints, but to relieve my thirst. My mouth, as I speak, lacks moisture, and my jaws are parched, and scarce is there a passage for my voice therein; a draught of water will be nectar to me, and I shall own, that, together with it, I have received my life *at your hands*. In *that* water you will be giving me life. Let these, too, move you, who hold out their little arms from my bosom'; and by chance the children were holding out their arms.

“What person might not these kindly words of the Goddess have been able to influence? Still, they persist in hindering *the Goddess thus* entreating them; and moreover add threats and abusive language, if she does not retire to a distance. Nor is this enough. They likewise muddy the lake itself *with* their feet and hands; and they raise the soft mud from the very bottom of the water, by spitefully jumping to and fro. Resentment removes her thirst. For now no longer does the daughter of Cæus supplicate the unworthy *wretches*, nor does she any longer endure to utter words below *the majesty of a Goddess*; and raising her hands to heaven, she says, ‘For ever may you live in that pool.’ The wish of the Goddess comes to pass. They delight to go beneath the water, and sometimes to plunge the whole of their limbs in the deep pool; now to raise their heads, and now to swim on the top of the water; oft to sit on the bank of the pool, *and* often to leap back again into the cold stream. And even now do they exercise their offensive tongues in strife: and banishing *all* shame, although they are beneath the water, *still* beneath the water, do they try to keep up their abuse. Their voice, too, is now hoarse, and their bloated necks swell out; and their very abuse dilates their extended jaws. Their backs are united to their heads: their necks seem as though cut off; their backbone is green; their belly, the greatest part of their body, is white; and *as* new-made frogs, they leap about in the muddy stream.”ⁱⁱⁱ

This tale appears early in the *Metamorphoses* (Book 6 out of 15). One amongst more than 250, this story has proved inspirational for visual artists, as it very clearly reflects laws about civility: space and resources are to be shared. Pieter Brueghel the Eldest suggests a rendering of the scene, which takes place in a lush forest, where Latona and her baby twins look like simple mortals when faced with the peasants, three of them already have the faces of frogs. In Latona’s fountain, at the centre of Versailles’s gardens, six peasants are already hybrid human and frog, surrounding the Goddess at the heart of the fountain and gurgling water. Both pieces of art play on the moment of metamorphosis, when the bodies are transformed, finding harmony in a form of disharmony. Men tend to disrupt the world’s order by being disobedient or conceited, and when they behave as such, they are transformed into animals, as if being punished for not being worthy of their humanity.

If we reflect upon the lessons of metamorphoses, they present actors with a mirror of their actions, and they present direct consequences for such choices. Metamorphoses are unusual events, as they act as pivot points. They make what is hidden appear forever in plain sight; as actors mutate, they change skin, and their roles become different as well. In terms of representations, the Gods and their magic powers of transformation are used as the factor that equates representations with the real world. In the book we now present, all chapters tell a story of metamorphosis, the key difference with stories and tales being that the collective that tends to transform the real world remains of the supra-lunar realm. What prompted the collective to act, and others to join them and participate, may remain a sort of mystery, or it can be traced back in time to other such prior actions. But the actual consequences of collective actions remain to this day and in the future, opening the potential for possible worlds to gain reality and the actual world to be transformed; herein lies what this book means to explore.

The Key Ideas We Aim to Develop in the Book

This book is about arts and politics, and its object is the representations that social movements are made of. We believe that it brings about deliberate ‘patterns of intention’ (Baxandall, 1985) reflecting collective artistic visions as they create works of art in direct relation to a contentious political field.

In all chapters, the aesthetic dimensions of social movements play a key role, and all contributions contrast different perspectives – from the centre, from the periphery and from the panoramic view of dedicated art places – questioning those very boundaries associated with social movements and resistance to dominant power institutions.

By the expression ‘patterns of intention’, Baxandall characterises a type of study that approached art creation as a specific process in relation to the spirit of the time. His focus is on tracing back the skills and knowledge involved in inventing a representation, addressing and receiving it. This approach involves breaking away from both monographies (where individual or national talent is overvalued) and aesthetic theory (viewed from the perspective of aesthetics as de-correlated from material reality). To solve this dilemma, Baxandall balances an individual dimension (the painter’s invention, his ‘patterns of intention’) and a collective dimension (the common knowledge of the era), making it possible to assess problems and solutions in representations. We notice that this approach is very similar to that of social movement analysts (Den Hond and de Bakker 2007; Fligstein and McAdam 2012; Snow et al. 2008), as they study the role of insurgencies in strategic action fields. They examine the role of individual

action within the frame of pre-existing institutions, where incumbent actors tend to define the rules of the game. So, a question that arises is how skilled actors manage to change these rules despite their having ‘skin in the game’. This appears to make them both more capable, as they have direct access to the rules, and more vulnerable, because they have to deal with them in direct coexistence with the dominant players.

One manner to change the rules of the game is to simultaneously appropriate and critique them. As part of this strategy, the ability to master the modes of representation is quite efficient in broadening the scope of the debate to include non-expert and non-partisan parties beyond the initial boundaries of the field. It also can reach deeper levels of individual awareness regarding what is at stake in terms of the power balance. This book is anchored in this multilevel field approach to documenting arts and politics and the role of artists in relation to activism and social movements.

Our common goal, collectively defined at the 2017 Manchester Ethnography Symposium, is to better understand and to challenge existing ideas of the roles and relations of art and activism. We focus on possible worlds, joint commitments and representations to analyse social movements and alternative organisations.

About Reality and Representations

In this book, we focus on the role of representations – meaning the political representation of one’s choices by others (officially elected representatives) and aesthetic representation (in relation to one’s intention to make sense by creating meaningful forms for an audience). Both dimensions were often associated in the analysis of what are now well known as ‘new social movements’ (Goodwin et al. 2009). However, this new-social-movements approach primarily focuses on the emergence of ‘new forms’ of such social movements and representations in a so-called post-industrial world. In the end, the originality of each movement and the specific inter-relations between organisation and forms of expression are rather downplayed, as they are either limited to one case study or included in typologies about social movements in general.

We believe that a third method is open for investigation, that of the apprehension of social movements as collectives creating possible worlds together. We identify social movements and collectives as a form of modal reality that includes possible worlds, collective bodies and representations. To document possible worlds and collectives, two philosophers’ works, David Lewis’s (2001) *On the Plurality of Worlds* and Margaret Gilbert’s (1992) *On Social Facts, A Theory of Political Obligation and Joint*

Commitment (2013), may provide alternative views to constructionist accounts of social movements and their representations.

David Lewis defends a plurality of worlds as a non-commonsense ontology (the notion that one world exists and that it is tangible via perceptions) that contradicts the principles of Occam's razor but better describes the social world, as it is composed as an actualised spatiotemporal reality in complement to a series of possible (non-actualised) worlds. The notions that help define a world for Lewis are the modalities of existence that correspond to the content and properties of the worlds. He insists on four properties that help differentiate the worlds: 'isolation, concreteness, plenitude and actuality':

Nothing is so far away from us in space, or so far in the past or the future, as not to be part of the same world as ourselves. The point seems uncontroversial, and it seems open to generalisation; whenever two possible individuals are spatiotemporally related, they are worldmates. If there is any distance between them) be it great or small, spatial or temporal – they are part of the same world. (Lewis 2001, 69-79)

Accordingly, Lewis defines possible worlds as independent from each other and defined by isolated spatiotemporal relations. His worldmates are 'compossible in the strongest sense of the word, which means more than just containing similar counterparts or intrinsic duplicates' (Lewis 2001, 69, note 50). He refers to them as a mereological sum, 'or fusion', of several things and argues, 'It is composed (of things and their parts). It is composed of them and nothing more; any part of it overlaps one or more of them; it is a proper part of anything else that has all of them as parts' (Lewis 2001, 70, note 51). Margaret Gilbert further analyses the nature of such mereological sums as collective bodies carrying through political actions and engaging in long-term, inter-related, parallel or conflicting joint commitments.

Collective Bodies, Collective Action, and Joint Commitments

The term 'mereology' defines a 'plural subject capable of rational choice and norms', as 'a social group is founded on one or more joint commitments of the parties. That gives a social group a substantial kind of unity, a unity perceived by its members, without whose appropriate understandings it cannot be' (Gilbert 2006, 91). In fact, it creates 'an individual's identification with a group including a sense of pride, a sense of guilt, over the group's actions' so that 'the parties to a given joint commitment constitute a plural subject. [...] those who are jointly committed have obligations towards one another. [...] Plural subject phenomena include

collective goals, beliefs, and values and social rules or norms. Attempts to characterize societies in general and political societies, in particular, often appeal to one another of these' (Ibidem). Therefore, the commitments may be of a different nature, as Simmel states that 'societation', understood as 'roughly the process of forming a social group', can range between 'the temporary aggregation of hotel guests to the intimate bonds of a medieval guild' (Simmel in Gilbert 2006, 97).

One simple example is when you walk with a friend, you walk following a path that no one really sets, and a tacit agreement creates the walk as a processual choice. Other examples range from 'conversing (with one another)' to 'hunting for food together, preparing dinner together, holidaying together, investigating the murder together, living together, building a bridge together, organizing a strike together, advancing towards an enemy outpost together, working out the details of a treaty together, founding a nation together' (Gilbert 2006, 101).

To Gilbert, to rebuke and make demands involves a special standing. One has to commit, faced with the presence of obligations, the need for concurrence, namely rights, obligations and entitlements. Social movements correspond to mereological sums that have an even higher level of binding commitments, since the stakes are higher, as they involve making political choices together and implementing them. Gilbert (2006, 62) suggests intentionality, unity and the consciousness of this unity as three conditions necessary for membership in paradigmatic social groups.

Accordingly, each of the parts of this book insists on one form of tension that may trigger a social movement, driving people to wish for an alternative to the existing, a 'possible world'. Four key ideas, primarily inspired by Balibar's 2004 analysis of European politics, are presented, which we further develop in the preambles to each chapter: first, the existence of a blackhole on the social stage and the need to expose 'the hidden scene', events that people must be aware of to act in an informed, reasonable manner in society; second, the identification of what we call 'quilting points', namely signs and symbols that reveal a symptom; third, the 'point of heresy', the near-schismatic moment occurring when a social group may be split in two by divergent interpretations; and finally, the notion of 'cosmic irony' (Booth 2004), namely the awareness, in social actors, that some sort of fate, facts independent from their will and somehow changing the course of their intended strategy, is determining their choices, and their acceptance of this lack of control over the direction of both individual and collective affairs.

About Representations, Ideas and Images

Baxandall (1985) insists on the material solutions artists use to deal with aesthetic problems, as they are also conceptual and material problems of their time. He assimilates them to a 'cosa mentale'. He (1988) also observes the reception of pioneering artists' works as they find a general acceptance in their contemporaries and retain this appreciation in later years, going past centuries and centuries of social transformations. Representations of political bodies and the material reality in images and pictures should be analysed as attempts to document the world by actors who aim to deal with the complex situation. Thereby, this can be regarded as resistance of the real against its simplification. Moreover, the critiques of a reification of ideas and values is present as one observes the trajectories of images and symbols. When they begin to appear in the streets and on walls and the media adopts them as representation, they become familiar and symbolic for a social movement. Finally, when the movement has passed, these signature symbols may become both remnants that do not speak to the next generation passing by the walls and erased palimpsests carrying mysterious messages for archaeologists to exhume.

Possible worlds – worldmates – are forms that must be enacted and embodied, as joint commitments involve the physical mobility that characterise, amongst many other forms of mobilisation, social movements. They may more or less fulfil actors' ambitions, but they require this transformation through space and time to partially or fully exist. As they materialise, they become part of reality, and they can be associated with specific actions, with causes and consequences, choices and preferences.

This process of material transformation might be the equivalent of what Chastel refers to as 'cosa mentale' in his analysis of Leonardo da Vinci's writings about painting. He writes, 'Painting is first in the mind of its inventor, and it cannot reach its perfection without the manual operation' (Chastel 2002, 69).¹ Castel explains why Leonardo defines painting, the art

¹ Our translation from the French: "La peinture est d'abord dans l'esprit de celui qui la conçoit et ne peut venir à sa perfection sans l'opération manuelle" écrit-il, ajoutant : " Les premiers principes vrais et scientifiques de la peinture établissent ce qu'est le corps opaque, l'ombre primitive et dérivée, l'éclairage, c'est à dire obscurité, lumière, couleur volume, figure, emplacement, distance, proximité, mouvement et repos. ... Tout cela se comprend mentalement, sans travail manuel ; Cela constitue la science de la peinture, résidant dans l'esprit du théoricien qui la conçoit, une 'cosa mentale' (une 'chose mentale')". Mais, ajoute Léonard, " La science de la peinture procède ensuite à l'exécution., beaucoup plus noble que ladite théorie ou science.» (Castel, 2002 : 69)

of the eye, as initially a mental process (a projection in space based on theory). He finds it imperfect without the manual realisation of the idea in space. ‘The science of painting then proceeds to the execution phase, which is much nobler than the science or theory itself’ (Vinci in Chastel 2002, 69).² Therefore, one image that may be emblematic in the book is that of ‘social sculpture’, as it reminds us of the materiality of social movements, as opposed to mere relational exchanges and networks.³

‘Social sculpture’ is a term promoted by the German artist Joseph Beuys through a series of very public lecture tours beginning in the early 1970s. The term named a kind of artwork that occurs in the social realm, an art that requires social engagement, the participation of its audience, for its completion. For Beuys, the concept was infused with both political intention and spiritual values. As spectators became participants, he believed, the catalysis of social sculpture would lead to a transformation of society through the release of popular creativity.

Just as a social sculpture is endowed with a physical existence, and so too do possible worlds and joint commitments not exist partially, as forms and places individuals decide to become part of – in the ‘society of organisations’ (Stern and Barley 1996), we must take organisations seriously and identify them in terms of ontological beings, particularly ‘social movements’, ‘going concerns’ (which have been identified with semi-organisations, as they were emergent, spontaneous and temporary – sometimes their existence was very short), as they reflect forms of social life as illustrated by the story of ideas and images in the media; let us just think of the tremendous influence of NGOs such as Greenpeace and Doctors without borders to change people’s minds about climate change and world population. However, the positions of social movements as going concerns, transforming their environment and themselves, deserve to receive more attention. For instance, den Hond and de Bakker insist on the need to better understand social movements’ actions in relation to their representations of the causes to be addressed and the positions of other actors in the field as they co-evolve in time:

[D]uring the Brent Spar episode, Greenpeace clearly indicated that its protest was not only directed against the intended disposal of this particular decommissioned oil storage platform but against the very principle that oil platforms could be sunk into deep-sea ridges; according to Greenpeace, the world’s oceans are not dumping sites (Jensen, 2003). Finally, often a number

² Ibidem.

³ This term is used by Gilman and Statler in their interpretation of “Occupy Wall Street” (chapter 1) but it could be relevant for all the other papers in our book.

of activist groups aim to affect the nature and level of corporate social change activities in a firm, but they do so from varying ideological positions. This brings in the issue of collaboration and competition among activist groups (Zald & McCarthy, 1980). For all these reasons, it is theoretically interesting and highly relevant [...] to understand the sources of pressures for corporate social change, the mechanisms by which firms are pressured, and the role of activist groups therein. (den Hond and de Bakker 2007, 902)

The transformative action of the field by activists therefore depends on key episodes of contention in the aftermath of major events ('The Brent Spar episode'). It also depends on their ability to spread their message in the mass media and influence direct participants, onlookers and the mass media audience looking at the events from a distance to understand what they intend to do. It varies depending on the position of their target, but other social movements, policy makers and all types of stakeholders exist that may also take action and redirect the movement. For instance, activists may hold a local action and be able to disseminate their vision as it is shared by others in similar situations in the same or in very different environments around the world (here Greenpeace insisted that the ocean in general is 'not a dumping site'). To better understand such collective transformations, we believe that a combination of description and interpretation is the best method to capture the idiosyncrasies of different activist views and uses of art forms.

Social Movements as an Object of Study. Methodological Choices

The various papers contained in the book are grounded in arts and politics. All describe in detail specific situations in different areas of the world. Although they consider the field from different perspectives, they share similar questions. All describe situations where a new power balance is visible in what Fligstein and McAdam (2012) call a 'strategic action field', open to social movements and emergent constituencies in complement to incumbent actors such as institutions and organisations. In all cases, art and aesthetics are very important in the process of transformation. Accordingly, through its combination of these different cases, our book aims at fulfilling three goals: We want to learn more about arts and activists: who are they, as actors or as social agents, and what is their cause? What is the type of organisation involved? Where and when is it located/situated? What is the nature of its transformative action? We attempt to reach a better understanding of activist tactics as a collective. All social movements tend to differ in nature; however, they may hold similar grounds, so one should

be able to identify both a style and a cause and their distinctive transformations.

Finally, although we analyse social movements in terms of strategies and tactics, in reference to Den Hond and de Bakker's 2007 seminal paper on the role of social movements, we feel the issue of shared representation deserves improved attention. The authors attempt to combine strategies, tactics and beliefs (ideologies) to determine activists' choices of preferred actions and why they choose to engage in, or avoid, alliances and negotiations in an age when scaling up tends to be essential to endure against corporations (Barley 2010; Stern and Barley 1996). What specific influences may art institutions and intellectual ideas have on public problems, global trade and business interests in an age of transition? More specifically, we wonder what interactions, transactions and organisations art-oriented social movements favour (complementarity, competition). What types of communication can we identify today as 'classics', collective forms of address and positions familiar to all after the period of the great intellectual figures and of that of the dissidents?

Strategies involve targets, goals and intentions, whereas both arts and social movements are often assessed in terms of effects and spontaneity: if spurred by an event, artists and activists are supposedly an effect of that situation, and if they fail to radically transform the field, they are mentioned as just a wave or a movement. What makes a movement or an action more transformative than others, and who should be the judge (besides history)? As it is quite impossible to decide, at least, we believe that our book, amongst many others, is such a forum where keen observers, writers and readers can reach out to such activism and take a position with a better understanding of the situation and what is at stake.

This book does not hold art and culture as dimensions that provide an entry to the ideas and values defended by activists within social movements. On the contrary, we instead consider them forms and material creations that illustrate the multiple tensions and contradictions that cause the dynamics of the movements, towards either expansion, disappearance or more specific transformations.

Here, in the space of these pages, we collectively attempt to describe art and social movements in a new way, one that makes the most of the literature on art forms and social movements and goes beyond the literature on culture and identity, which tend to be presented as ready-made references to avoid all forms of reification.

Culture has little explanatory power if we ignore how it is used and changed; even biography is a dimension that develops and grows rather than remaining fixed from childhood. Over time, more or fewer resources are

available to protestors; strategies become less effective as opponents come to expect them; new sensibilities and rhetoric become more plausible; even biographical needs and capacities change-not only across history but across the lives of protest generations. Recognizing history and change can prevent us from reifying one dimension as somehow prior to the others. (Jasper 2008, 64-65)

To do so, we rely on field-based analysis (Van Maanen 1988) and a visual analysis (Warren 2008; Rose 2007). We also follow the use of picture combined with text, in the tradition of photo-documentaries (Agee and Evans 2001). Since Agee and Evans's seminal book on the use of picture combined with text was published in 1936 (Lugon 2001), the role of artists working as original reporters of the people's condition, as participant observers, has become increasingly important. Most of the information we have access to about social movements comes through the mass media, and direct testimonies, field experience and participants' recordings of events are not so easily available, even though primary data may prove more reliable in terms of factual accounts. Therefore, writers with a keen awareness of social sciences and photographers using their cameras with a critical, aesthetic edge (Flusser 1993) can be said to provide alternative versions of social movements, possibly more intent on capturing their meaning and contribution to the future.

However, it should also be noted that no natural or privileged access of artists or ethnographers to the reality of the social world exists, particularly in dealing with the symbolic dimensions of the real. As a critique of anthropology, wary of its undaunted prestige, once asked, 'Is the symbolic, as a mode of being, an object of inquiry or does it constitute a method? If it is a mode of cultural existence then it is a problem for us: if it is a mode of inquiry then is a problem generated by us, a load with which we burden those whom we analyse "symbolically"' (Fabian 1983, 125). So, in the end, it is only fair to ask what artists and activists have to do with each other and how they engage in strategic action in the field.

To deal with the issue of the complexity of the 'symbolic dimension' in a more experimental approach, we thus rely very much on stories, tales and pictures. We reflect on these images and give them more room than the illustrative role they are generally limited to. This is because they transform the text and the narration and therefore must be carefully interpreted as part of the montage, as no description is devoid of interpretation, as illustrated by Denzin in her 1994 method paper, 'the Art and Politics of Interpretation'. The contributions to this collection use pictures as means to materialise the tensions that explain social movement

dynamics and that drives them to frame solutions essentially by looking at the future.

Because of these choices, we follow the same structure throughout the entire book, inserting series of two to four papers into four main chapters: ‘Seen from the Other Scene’, ‘Nailing the Stitching Point’, ‘Beyond the Point of Heresy’ and ‘On Cosmic Irony’.

Each chapter adopts a different perspective on social movements, as each paper tells a different story. The common axis of reflection is demonstrated in the tale as a form of preamble. This text of fiction is also here to remind us of the intellectual traditions of dealing with political ideas and discussing the actual state of the world. Finally, the choice to include fiction, such as epics and satires of travels and scientific expeditions, is meant to help the reader contrast facts and fiction, for as several analysts (Jasper 2014; Kriesi et al. 1995) note, ‘new social movements’ tend to promote cultural dimensions but forget about actors’ own perspectives about that notion of culture, which they may associate with facts and fiction instead of taking cultural choices for granted as an authentic part of their identity.

Nine Texts and Four Lines of Research in Relation to Social Movements Tensions and Dynamics

As we replace complementarity by a form of discordance, we believe that examining the tensions rather than the harmony between arts and politics explains why the different chapters in this book bring to the table ideas and representations, tensions and contradictions, that may have received too little attention to date.

Each part of the book adopts a different perspective on social movements as each paper tells a different story. The common axis of reflection is reflected by the tale as a form of preamble. This text of fiction is also here to remind us of the intellectual traditions of dealing with political ideas and discussing the actual state of the world. Finally, the choice to include fictions such as epics and satires of travels and scientific expeditions is meant to help the reader contrast facts and fictions, for as several analysts (Jasper 2014; Kriesi, et al. 1995) point out, “new social movements” tend to promote the cultural dimensions but forget about actors’ own perspective about that notion of culture, which they may associate with facts and fiction instead of taking it for granted, as an authentic part of their identity.

Tim Gilman-Ševčík and Matthew Statler mention the influence of the ‘social sculpture’ on the institutional sculpture the Occupy movement, conducted from Wall Street’s Liberty Square.

Immanuel Schipper reconstitutes the democratic state in the field in four theatre plays on stage in an attempt to imagine what Colin Crouch refers to as ‘post democracy’. They both mention top secret international organisations, secret services, society under construction, mega-projects and public private partnerships). To them, public representation is channeled by ‘dreamline’ collective (tapping sheep) voting material and the ‘Davos State of the world’ the cooperation between political and economic elites. In Schipper’s paper, the attribution of the quote ‘it is easier to imagine a world without democracy than a world without capitalism’ remains open to discussion.

The aesthetic route (or regime) is at the heart of Pierre Guillet de Monthoux’s contrapuntist analysis of Ruben Östlund’s film *The Square* (which received the Palme d’Or at the 2007 Cannes festival), as he refers it to Jacques Rancière’s ideas on films, from Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Camera* (1929) to the 2018 film *Dignified Image*, a piece which is partly the amateur and professional videos produced by the Syrian collective Abounaddara. Potentially, a form of the transmission of the use of picture through the ages can be found in this investigation about the art world.

The three papers seem to question what stands as the origin and the legitimacy of the present order of things in their worlds. Accordingly, we refer to this first part of the book as the ‘missing scene’, the primitive scene where we may imagine that ‘things were set up in a certain way’ (as a cause of our present state of affairs), which we may never be able to find, as it is doubtful it ever existed. What happens once one decides the missing scene is no longer missing, as it does not exist? On what grounds can you set up a certain order and make it acceptable?

Frank and Patrik Riklin work in their studio (the studio, as noted by Svetlana Alpers in her analysis of Rembrandt’s and Velasquez’s work, tends to disappear, whereas artists used to be considered inventors and scientists, as they worked in such places to prepare very public events, shows and displays). Christina Luethy relates the work practices, the studio work of Frank and Patrik Riklin, to their artwork and the values that constitute their art practices and interaction with spaces and organisations.

Maarit Laihonen’s paper describes her experience as part of a collective reacting to the planned installation of a nuclear power plant near a river in Finland. She insists on the importance of changing perspectives by having each and every member of the collective become an expert in nuclear technology, mega-projects and risk.

Going beyond the one time/one place experience, the ‘utopia’ here is consistent with the old pastoral idea of building knowledge as a live research experiment. Yet, there is no longer any opposition between nature and culture, no abstract science principles to determine the fate of a river; still, we can see that questions arise as to our prevailing categories when we, humans, examine the world around us and build joint commitments so as to coexist. We very much rely on pivot notions that operate connections in complex systems. Yet, as they become prototypes, self-reproduced and self-imposed, the ready-made solutions may become part of the problem rather than the solution. Because we see activists build, cut and rebuild ties in an effort to make interactions more meaningful, more connected to everyday practices and experiences, we entitle this second part ‘the Knitting Point’.

Valeria Lembo describes the challenges of the ‘periferia’ of the city of Naples. She chose to follow a theatre play as it both mirrors and displays the out-of-stage space. She shows how all onlookers can find their effigy there as officials even herself, as the “sociologist”. So, instead of being in the safe position of observers passing a judgement on the inhabitants who struggle with economic and social challenges.

Nora Rigamonti mentions two aesthetic styles in hospitality traditions, taking in new inhabitants, dodging inhospitable rules. Activist groups show how migrant laws may contradict the principles of citizenship. Two movements invent collective spaces for practices that make it possible to take people in and make it a simple act – as human rights principles are – as it is made very complex because of contradictory rules from distinct institutions.

More specifically, we find that both papers deal more particularly with a specific object or an action that we believe may enter a repertoire of forms of expression – *pathos formal* – in relation to the stage, politics and the public sphere (Didi-Huberman, Rehberg, and Belay, 2003). By expressing tensions and contradictions, by walking through symbolic thresholds, activists and other actors seem to challenge prejudice and resentment, as well as orders and control, at a distance. At the same time, we see that they go beyond such a challenge, as they are forced to act upon their own contradictions and intense dissent regarding what a good order of things would be. Thus, we refer this third part of the book as ‘the Point of Heresy’.

The fourth part is directed towards the influence of social movements on places of history such as museums and monuments. Instead of confronting activists with the complexity of the present, it deals with the transformations of the world and what to make of collective memories.

Lorne Larson mentions the iconicity of the ‘largest’, investigating the figures of Leviathan as they appear in our museums, how they are found, appropriated, exposed and hidden from view in the course of political transformation due to the dominant order of a post-colonial, global world, when social movements and protests challenge previous organisations of official displays about people, time and space.

Elen Riot’s paper is about an invented matriarchal tribe and the creation of a museum show that imitates recent exhibits mixing arts and anthropology under the influence of fashion brands’ patronage.

Both papers reflect on the transformative nature of symbols and the difficulty of reaching a compromise about their meaning and, accordingly, what should be done in terms of measures of protection towards the great heritage of humanity. Patrimonial goods are at the heart of battles about the appropriation of land, natural resources and their uses, but also animals, humans and culture. One may see that relying on a diversity of perspectives and referring to the variable and questionable nature of social construction is hardly a solution, as all parties reject a role of stakeholders negotiating shared exploitation at a round table. Like in a family heritage, satisfying compromises are very hard to reach, as some specific kinds of goods cannot be just given away; they must be transmitted (Appadurai 1988), and this transmission may affect the social life of a great deal of actors. In terms of aesthetics, this entire ensemble of inherited and suppressed meanings may constitute what Baxandall (1988) called ‘the period’s eye’, when he analysed the emergence of the modern perspective in the Quattrocento. It seems that it may be somehow easier to access the ‘period’s eye’ of a bygone age than of ours, and that we would need cats’ eyes to know what eyes will see in the future, although prefigurative movements would very much wish to know that. So, we decided to refer this chapter to ‘Cosmic Irony’.

As we shall presently describe, the four parts of this book correspond to distinct lines of investigation about social movements and collective political action: the missing scene, the quilting point, the point of heresy and cosmic irony. They have in common the questioning of the nature of the transformation that social movements intend to effect. This transformation is often described in reference to turbulent change and uncertainty, as spontaneous movements are characterised by their emerging nature. However, social movements are also inscribed in a time and space, quite different from a bubble isolated from the rest of the world. Therefore, we identify four pivot points that the nine papers in this book contribute to describing and interpreting.

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PART 1

THE MISSING SCENE

Preamble of the text: Gulliver's Travels

In Gulliver's travels, Jonathan Swift describes an episode that reflects his own situation in England after a major bankruptcy caused by speculators. In the story, the rebellion reflects the situation of the people of the British Empire, such as Dubliners, who wish to escape from the empire of speculation. Swift presents the island of Laputa as the head of an Empire; it is perfectly circular, and it flies around, conquering new territories by imposing itself in their sky, hovering over their heads, defying Newton's gravitational laws by speculating on equilibrium possibilities. The island is conducted by means of 'philosophy and geometry', with a stone, the Adamant, controlling its speed and control via engineer's computation.

Gulliver is not surprised by bizarre displays of authority and performances of power. Before this, during his travel, he has encountered two opposite parties in the empire, who, under the names of Tramecksan and Slamecksan, fight about the high and low heels of their shoes, the ultimate symbol of distinction. The island of Blefuscu is also engaged in a most obstinate war about 'the way of breaking eggs at the convenient end'.¹ The specificity of the Adamant is that it is very focused on mathematical computations.

FROM GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

It was eight Months before the King had perfect Notice that the Lindalinians were in Rebellion. He then commanded that the Island should be wafted over the City. The People were unanimous, and had laid in Store of Provisions, and a great River runs through the middle of the Town. The King hovered over them several Days to deprive them of the Sun and the Rain. He ordered many Pack- threads to be let down, yet not a Person offered to send up a

¹ Gulliver, Chapter IV. Transcribed from the 1892 George Bell and Sons edition by David Price, Gulliver's Travels into Several Remote Nations of the World by Jonathan Swift (first published in 1726-7). <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/829/829-h/829-h.htm>

Petition, but instead thereof, very bold Demands, the Redress of all their Greivances, great Immunitys, the Choice of their own Governor, and other the like Exorbitances. Upon which his Majesty commanded all the Inhabitants of the Island to cast great Stones from the lower Gallery into the Town; but the Citizens had provided against this Mischief by conveying their Persons and Effects into the four Towers, and other strong Buildings, and Vaults under Ground.

The King being now determined to reduce this proud People, ordered that the Island should descend gently within forty Yards of the Top of the Towers and Rock. This was accordingly done; but the Officers employed in that Work found the Descent much speedier than usual, and by turning the Loadstone could not without great Difficulty keep it in a firm Position, but found the Island inclining to fall. They sent the King immediate Intelligence of this astonishing Event, and begged his Majesty's Permission to raise the Island higher; the King consented, a general Council was called, and the Officers of the Loadstone ordered to attend. One of the oldest and expertest among them obtained Leave to try an Experiment. He took a strong Line of an hundred Yards, and the Island being raised over the Town above the attracting Power they had felt, He fastened a Piece of Adamant to the End of his Line which had in it a Mixture of Iron mineral, of the same Nature with that whereof the Bottom or lower Surface of the Island is composed, and from the lower Gallery let it down slowly towards the Top of the Towers. The Adamant was not descended four Yards, before the Officer felt it drawn so strongly downwards, that he could hardly pull it back. He then threw down several small Pieces of Adamant and observed that they were all violently attracted by the Top of the Tower. The same Experiment was made on the other three Towers, and on the Rock with the same Effect.

This Incident broke entirely the King's Measures and (to dwell no longer on other Circumstances) he was forced to give the Town their own Conditions.

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*ⁱⁱⁱ

The narrative ends in melancholia, with Gulliver at home in Redriff, where he states that one of his activities is to 'behold (his) Figure often in a Glass, and thus, if possible, habituate (him)self by Time to tolerate the Sight of a human creature' (Swift 1998 [1726], 287).

Swift's satire obviously refers to the political situation of his time, yet it is still relevant today. Both the imagination and the realism of the situations are meaningful. What connects them together is the mysterious nature of the rules and regulations that presides over each of the worlds Gulliver travels through. Gulliver's misanthropy makes us understand that, in the end, the entire repertoire of political constitutions and local customs is specific to the humans. The positive aspect of joint commitments mostly

appears in the resistance to the Laputa kingdom's 'adamant rule' by the inhabitants of one city, as it threatened by the looming island floating in the air. In a sense, this resistance is built against a dominant external order, whereas all of the other groups Gulliver meets are attempting to abide by such an order that they seem to have internalised as their inheritance.

Social Movements and the Problem of the 'Hidden Scene'

In Gulliver's travels, we may regard different social worlds as many possibilities to organise society, and yet in all of them, one finds a similar reference to another (superior) reality, the hidden dimensions of the world, that social movements often refer to as they aim to challenge the dominant order. They question the secretive and sometimes esoteric nature of what the legitimacy of the dominant order is built on. The movement may therefore act in the public sphere, either by claiming that reality is misrepresented or by denouncing silence and invisibility. The reference is that of a 'Hidden Scene'. The debates focus on possible choices of new modes of (re)presentation: how can 'it' be shown? If 'it' is possible to show it, should 'it' be shown, or something else, the nature of the consequences or the prefiguration of alternatives? The idea comes from a transposition of Freud's taboo primitive scene to the political public sphere by Etienne Balibar. He makes sense of this transfer as follows:

[T]he economic and administrative functions of nation-states, as they are defined in the framework of an unequal world market, only represent half of what is necessary for understanding the nation as social "form" or "formation." But understanding halfway is the same as not understanding at all, if it is true, as I would like to suggest here, that the "law" of history is indirect action or action at a distance. The determining factor, the cause, is always at work on the other scene—that is, it intervenes through the mediation of its opposite. (Balibar 2004, 19)

Balibar describes situations of power and domination where the origin and source of the order comes from outside, making it difficult for actors comprehended under its rules to reach it directly and change it.

Such is the general form of the "ruse of reason" (which is every bit as much the ruse of unreason): economic effects never themselves have economic causes, no more than symbolic effects have symbolic or ideological causes. But the cause, or the determination of the efficacy of ideological causes, on account of the fact that a given ideological force, a given symbolic structure does not remain without historical effects, can only be economic, just as only ideological causes' or 'structures can account for the fact that

economic forces or interests have a given social effect [...] the cause as such is essentially “absent” from the scene where its effects are produced. If the effects are necessary, they are neither predetermined nor predictable, but subject to an essentially indirect, and thus ‘aleatory, ‘determination’.

(Balibar 2004, 19)

This dimension of secrecy and silence is central in the critique triggering many social movements, as illustrated in the first chapter of this book. The critique therefore operates by offering new views (the clarity of the Enlightenment) but also by showing the fallacy of some supposedly clear and obvious realia, imposed by dominant regimes of truth, and characterised by their abstraction. Both social movements and artists embody such resistance by offering direct access to social scenes, as they are accessible by direct prehension. That explain why, on many instances, they may be mistaken in their choice of target or mode of action and their actions often fail (Den Hond and de Bakker, 2007). They may also end up in secrecy and violence, a dimension Balibar seems unwilling to fully acknowledge by discriminating different types of social movements, depending on their causes, willingness to use ruse and violence and ideology². It makes it even more interesting that, in the best case scenario, artists and activist can really invent ways to re-examine situations in the public space and take a position on everyday scenes by seeing them in a different light, as if it were suddenly speaking their secrets.

For instance, Jappe and Hemmens parallel numbers in Wall Street with such writings on the wall as an ominous signal of the end to come:

On Thursday³ it was reported on The Guardian’s website that the building in Times Square, in the heart of Manhattan, which displays the amount of U.S. public debt, no longer has enough room for such an astronomical figure of trillions of dollars, to wit 10,299,299,050,383, a humongous number due principally to the Paulson Plan and the government bailout of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. Even the ‘\$’ sign, which occupied the last space on the clock has had to be removed so that passers-by could see the number to the last decimal point. (Jappe and Hemmens 2017, 58)

They refer it to a very ancient message which also appeared in public space for all to see, with no author:

² https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/06/05/en-soutien-aux-victimes-de-josu-urrutikoetxea_1731948

³ The note refers it to October 8, 2008.

‘Mene, Mene, Teke, Upharsin’. These were the mysterious words that, according to the Old Testament (Daniel 5)⁴, were written by a supernatural hand on the walls of the palace of King Belshazzar of Babylon at the very moment when he believed he was at the height of his success; words that lead the king to discover that he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting, and that his kingdom had been given over to his enemies who were waiting outside its walls. Radical critique remains wholly unfazed since it has no intention of saving our way of life’. Crisis theory has always met with outright rejection, as much from traditional Marxists as from bourgeois thinkers” (Jappe and Hemmens 2017, 10).

Jappe’s reference to this anonymous writing on the wall corresponds to an alternative to the ‘missing scene’ system, as it challenges its present inheritance by anticipating its disappearance. What then appears are other possible worlds. What then is the role of social movements and joint actions with alternatives to make the transformation more than just the catastrophic descent of an era into chaos? Although we find it is not always as well-oriented as he seems to believe it is, Balibar regards reflexivity as a guidance for strategic action. To him it is a starting point for a long travel, searching for the ultimate meaning and intent of collective action in politics:

There is no a priori strategy of civility. But (as philosophers, or theorists) we can try and schematize the paradoxical trajectories along which modalities of extreme violence and strategies of civility meet, and clash. This is what I have attempted, in an allegoric manner, through the designing of a “topography” inspired by Lacan’s use of the “Möbius strip,” which can be read also as a sort of inverted picture of the structures and superstructures where classical and post-classical Marxists tried to locate the antagonism of conservative and revolutionary politics. In a previous publication I called it “the other scene” of politics. It is disturbing for a conventional form of rationality, but conceptually decisive, that the other scene is always the same scene, in one of its unpredictable metamorphoses. (Balibar and Goshgarian 2015, 12-13)

In a sense, to free ourselves from the missing scene complex, we may have to admit that this scene is always looming and that although it is always different, as in Gulliver’s travels, its rule is always the same, although actors make different things of it. The three texts in this chapter give us a sample of how it operates, between violence and civility.

⁴ They were four names of weights, but Daniel interpreted the cryptic message as the end of the King’s realm.

About the Three Texts of the Chapter

All three papers demonstrate a form of resistance operating as an effort to reach a collective understanding of situations by increasing their visibility. This involves a form of resistance against traditional modes of power, which try to conceal the actual disruption.

Tim Gilman-Ševčík and Matthew Statler mention the role of collective resistance at the heart of the Occupy movement, conducted from Wall Street's Liberty Square. Their query follows a succession of steps. First, a group of actors spontaneously react to a catastrophic event and envision its future recurrence. The authors of the paper decide to use art as a form of resistance and observe how others' acts can be creative. Accordingly, the authors describe all of the possibilities of action that the social sculpture is built with, offering a material, grounded, slow counterpoint to the speed of financial capital flows. They can also represent the sort of form this flow creates, as opposed to their social movement and the moves of everyday practices, as they write, 'By viewing social institutions as sculptural form we can focus on two disparate trends, which we can call the "Occupy Sculpture and the Capitalist Market Sculpture"'.

One key point in the analysis is that both sculptures actually use the same resources (those of the finite planet Earth) in very different styles: from physical space and natural resources to political and interpersonal relations, contemporary and historical ideas ethics and obligations in social systems, as so on. This sculpture orchestrates a form of story (Küpers, Mantere and Statler, 2013) enacted as a form of street performance or a mystery play, a fairgrounds theatre (de Monthoux and Statler, 2008; Statler and de Monthoux, 2015; Statler, Roos and Victor, 2009). At the end of this sculptural display, a form of enacted demonstration, onlookers (who are not activists) should be able to envision a clearer picture of the situation, of what is at stake and where the difference lies. One question that we may still ask, though, is how long a social sculpture can remain (resist) in a hostile environment, which is the problem that the collective and its members individually faced, still face and will be faced with daily, even when no social sculpture is at stake. This leads us to ask whether it may be better to begin with the very principles supporting the institutions, as illustrated in the next paper.

Immanuel Schipper reconstitutes the democratic state in the field in four theatre plays on stage in an attempt to imagine what Colin Crouch refers to as 'post democracy' (top secret international, the secret services, society under construction, mega-projects and public private partnerships; dreamline collective (tapping sheep) voting material and the 'Davos State