

**UNDERSTANDING MULTIMODALITIES
IN ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING MULTIMODALITIES IN ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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MULTIMODAL SCHOLARSHIP IN THE ARTS: CHALLENGE TO CREATIVITY AND AUTHORITY

This issue on multimodalities opens conversations on what it means to represent or construct reality through artistic practices. Broadly, we also address social meanings and representation that go beyond art. The concept of modality arises out of semiotics that studies meaning-making through signs. In Hodge and Kress' definition (1988:124), modality refers to the "status, authority, and reliability of a message." Modality determines the value of facts presented, for example, through the modal distributions of statistics. Modalities are "semiotic resources for making meaning that are employed in a culture—such as image, writing, gesture, gaze, speech, posture" (Jewitt 2009:1).

Multimodality encompasses multiple ways of establishing facts, depending on the question or the problem. Each modal representation contains its analytical and methodological practices: "What are recognized as 'realistic' styles of representation reflect an aesthetic *code* Over time, certain methods of production within a medium and a genre become naturalized. The content comes to be accepted as a 'reflection of reality'" (Chandler 2002:64). Multimodal practices challenge the singular modal status of representations rooted in texts. Multimodality steps beyond textual analysis to bring in visual representations and images, sounds and acoustics, bodies and gestures, and other cultural signifiers. We trace this trajectory through the juxtaposition of relevant empirical examples and artistic practices that are intrinsically multimodal and which push the limits of creative expression and collaboration. In doing so, they explore research ethics and scholarly production and open up possibilities for dialogic engagement between researchers, participants and academic audiences.

Arts & International Affairs has been publishing [multimodal works](#) since its inception. Multimodality is inherently creative in moving beyond words through methods and meanings that are yet to affix their epistemic and epistemological values. This issue traverses many modalities in varied forms to provide a sense of this varied landscape: the issue contains multimodal essays from artists, arts practitioners, a geodetic engineer who is a photographer, policymakers, and scholars. Their views are represented through images, films, sounds, sculpture, speeches, interviews, and traditional scholarly essays.

The essays included in the double issue spell out the potential of multimodalities to speak to meaning-making. Yet, they also point toward a more affective dimension of multimodal scholarship that precedes cognition and intellectual stimulation. This emotive capacity of multimodality is what makes it so powerful; it is also what challenges its own usefulness. In the conclusion to this essay, we attend to a few of its limitations.

THE NECESSITY OF MULTIMODALITY

Multimodal research and publishing can be challenging. More precisely, the challenge lies in uprooting or at least rethinking established research and publishing practices, which revolve around the hegemony of the written word and the occularcentrism of knowledge production. The primacy of vision for a long time hindered previous attempts at transcending the inherent visualism of academic practices, especially in the realm of publishing. But privileging textual representations over other forms of knowledge-making is not only ethnocentric; as anthropologist Elisabeth Hsu writes: “An ocular-centric culture need not necessarily result in a more logo-centric one” (2008:435). And this without even beginning to question the validity of the claim that the “West” is indeed a visual culture.

One of the main objectives, therefore, is to embrace multimodality in ways that *stem from our research participants’ practices*. This is not a call for uncritical cultural relativism; rather, it seeks to underscore the pluralism and heterogeneity of the term as well as the practices under its rubric. For example, in a recent article on the topic, anthropologists Collins, Durlington, and Gill (2017) call for attention to the processual and collaborative nature of the research continuum, from pre-fieldwork encounters and complex media interactions with respondents to the residual, unfinished nature of research and the problematic hierarchies of scholarly publishing. In many ways, multimodality is not particularly “innovative,” in the sense that it encompasses practices that are *already* taking place, as any researcher knows, while it still seems to privilege the visual to the detriment of other “modes,” such as sound, especially in “visual studies.” Multimodality as an umbrella term can indeed help to foreground disparate research practices; however, we believe that its main dynamic lies in its capacity to question the existing knowledge/logos and authority of entrenched institutional publishing practices. *Arts & International Affairs* as a forward-thinking journal and an outlet for the creative interpretation and publication of high-quality research is at the forefront of the effort to break down textual authority.

Apart from the content of multimodality and how to adopt a multimodal approach to research and publishing, another question emerges: multimodality *for whom*? In other words, how do our published outputs become more inclusive? More dialogic? How do we establish a “subject–subject” relationship, not only with our research participants but also our audiences? The current issue of *Arts & International Affairs* demonstrates what multimodality can achieve in this respect.

Content → Form ↓	Monologic (author to audience)	Dialogic (co-creation/representation)
Textual	Academic writing	Interactive forums
Word/Visual/ Acoustic	Visual media: e.g. Documentary Film	Multimodality e.g. DiY, participatory practices

Table 1. Understanding the Content and Form of Multimodal Analyses.

There is another way to present the matrix above to indicate the movement from the exclusivity of traditional, contemplative, authoritative (or downright exploitative) research practice to inclusive dialogic communication that involves the authors and subjects in co-production of meanings.

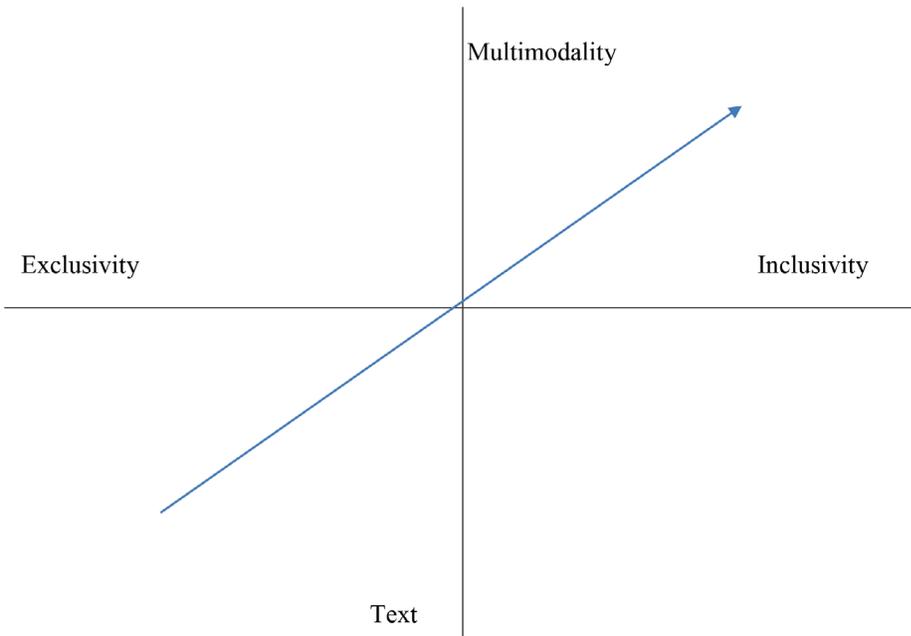


Figure 1. Moving from Textual Exclusivity to Multimodal Inclusivity.

FORMS OF MULTIMODALITY

Inclusivity relies on careful reflection. Reflection on our research, our relationships with research participants, and our role as researcher. All articles in the current issue grapple with these themes. The “authors” in this issue are aware of the power dynamics in the production of meanings but suggest different strategies around this.

In Harjant Gill's reflections, multimodality entails collaboration, and thus comes with an inbuilt affordance against a single-authored work. Harjant Gill reflects on his multimodal scholarship as a visual anthropologist to underscore the shifting grounds of anthropological fieldwork in relation to the discipline's objects of study and modes of inquiry. Multimodality and textual representation should not be seen as mutually exclusive; yet, it is the former's appeal to the sensorium that provides a feelingful register for future scholarship.

Fraser Anderson's self-reflective account as the former Chief Executive at Scottish Ensemble (SE) is interspersed with audio-visual material that animates his invaluable insights into SE and the ways in which small and medium-sized classical music companies can grow internationally. Not only does Anderson's article bridge the gap between researcher and researched but also advocates a better funding deal for smaller Scottish companies, while providing useful advice for up-and-coming ensembles. It also operationalizes a vocabulary of music to think about arts production and management in current global contexts.

Sara Scarsbrook's fascinating film and associated commentary on grounded theory in-the-making offers a highly intimate but thorough account of the process of axial coding, its physicality, as well as the manifold relations it engenders between researcher, data, space and materials—such as post it notes. It documents the sheer effort put in data analysis—a process usually not considered worthy of academic discussion—by foregrounding the mundane tasks involved in the everyday life of the analyst—indeed, ground theory in action. Sarah Scarsbrook's notes and film reveal that grounded theory, which generates knowledge out of the deep knowledge of subjects, entails physical and mental fatigue on part of the researcher. Ironically, it is not the subject who is affixed but the researcher who is exhausted in trying to understand and code the conversations.

Jean-Benoît Falisse's article on the emergence of Amani music festival in Eastern DR Congo highlights another important aspect of reflective research, namely that ubiquity of arts: Falisse is an economist who accidentally became involved in organization of the festival while he was in the country for his doctoral research. Notably, he co-curated six editions of the festival, the last one held in February 2019. Documenting the festival on film, and the inclusion of videos of several performers adds an extra layer of sound, movement and color to an already lively piece.

The issue also includes two conversational pieces. One is a discussion between John Reardon, Artist in Residence in the Politics Department at Goldsmiths, University of London, and Professor Rosalyn Deutsche about the project *Monument for Chelsea Manning*, “an ongoing attempt to permanently site a traditional bronze head and shoulders in the small market town of Haverford west, Wales.” The discussion touches on a variety of topics, from the nature of public space and monuments to identity politics and the relationship between art and politics. The interview shows that displacement of existing “monument” or sculpture installation practices in communities may not be so hard af-

ter all. The accompanying photographs blend seamlessly with the discussion to create a richly affective account of a timely and important topic.

The second is an interview between Brandon Bauer and artist Oliver Ressler on the latter's U.S.-based exhibition *Catastrophe Bonds*, which explores emerging forms of democracy and grassroots initiatives in the face of multiple threats against democratic institutions. The films and photographs that frame the interview provide the necessary context for the exhibition but also constitute an inspirational and diverse collection of activist and participatory practices in their own right. Here, multimodality takes on a life of its own and becomes a journey in everyday politics across borders.

Primoz Kovacic's "real" job is meaning-making through maps. In the photo essay in this volume, he provides a different modal map, through photographs, to suggest meanings about Nairobi and the space of Mathare within it. Taking vulnerability as his theme, he explores the interstices of everyday life in Nairobi's neighborhoods where showing weakness could determine the boundary between life and death.

Ronald Gratz declarative speech is a different mode altogether. As a policymaker and practitioner, he refracts current political and cultural anxieties through a historical and spatial lens to propose a vocabulary of cosmopolitan responsibilities. Going beyond the obsolete concept of a nation state, Gratz describes the contours of a new vision for Europe—a Europe of cultures in which the various modalities comprising it exist in harmony.

PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES

Participatory practices have destabilized the imagination and power that produced the authoritative *gaze*, or the act of observation and subject positions in the arts (Foucault 2012). The control and subordination of the Orient in Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) arises from the knowledge of the subject being the exclusive preserve of a few in the occident: "knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world" (ibid.:40). The application of Said's ideas to knowledge production practices beyond that of the Orientalism have led to an examination of the object–subject position in which knowledge results from the authoritative *gaze*.

Participatory action research (PAR) unsettles the relationship between theory and practice, and the privileged position of the researcher in the production of knowledge (Huesca 2003). Most of the essays in this multimodal issue address PAR implicitly in destabilizing the author/subject position. Even Ronald Grätz's speech exhorts Europeans, not just intellectuals, toward finding an ethic to overcome current practices of populism and nationalism. Educationist Paulo Freire's pedagogy, that informs PAR, articulates a world in which the meaning of existence, that of humans and their surroundings, arises from

a set of conversational interactions or dialogues, which allow human beings to question the story being narrated about them and the one that they might narrate themselves (Singh 2009). His notion of a cultural voice arises from a form of knowledge in which the subjects themselves produce their understandings of themselves to name their world and their existence within it (Freire 2000/1970). Aronowitz (1993:18) notes that in a dialogue “recovering the voice of the oppressed is the fundamental condition for human emancipation.”

We reported on a PAR exercise in volume 3.1 last year centered on the Edinburgh festivals in a multiauthored essay entitled [“The Arts, Participation, and Global Interests.”](#) We addressed the following question: “Can participatory deliberations motivated by the arts help us understand ourselves?”

Thirty-three Global Cultural Fellows appointed through the Institute for International Cultural Relations (IICR) during 2017–18 explored “cultural interests and values.” Their deliberations included a week of intensive activities during the world-famous Edinburgh festivals in August 2017. The Fellows attended pre-selected events at the festivals, as well as structured deliberations at the University of Edinburgh. Cultural conversations, rooted in participatory research techniques, used to explore the creation, contestation and choices around our cultural interests and values.

The 70th anniversary of the birth of the festival city of Edinburgh in 1947 offered an important opportunity to explore the cultural values that created one of the largest annual cultural interactions in human history. The global values that informed the creation of the festival resulted from the vision of a few individuals and were fostered through a network of global and national institutions (Bartie 2013). Broadly, they reflected the Enlightenment Project with an optimistic view of learning from human interactions. Seventy years after the launch of the festivals, we ask ourselves how far we have come in terms of tolerance, understanding, and respect, as well as in the spirit of universalism. However, we chose to explore the theme through participatory dialogues rather than monologic essays.

Filmmaker Guy Gotto produced several films on the participatory interactions among the 33 fellows. The overview film from documentary filmmaker Guy Gotto below describes the project and the reactions of the fellows to the seven subthemes we selected to question global cultural interests and values. These were: highs and lows questioning cultural tastes; voice and silence; role of witnessing in art; art and empathy; anger and anxiety; culture wars; and the possibilities of art to speak to a global language.

Filmmaker Guy Gotto’s reflections, reprinted in the AIA essay referenced above, address the challenges of bringing the unsettling use of a camera to record deliberations both in terms of being the “gaze” but, importantly, also for being a participant in the room.

On the gaze, he notes:

A lens is trained on you; you pose for the picture. You change how you physically present yourself for others to see. With cameras being such an intrinsic part of contemporary society, it has become a motor reflex to be aware of a camera in the room, extending the cognitive function of gaze detection.



<https://theartsjournal.net/2018/05/14/arts-participation-and-global/>

Video 1. Overview film on the Global Cultural Fellows Programme
(Password: aia37)

But then Guy Gotto moves toward the obverse of the gaze as he records the participants' conversations:

With this project I found being a silent observer particularly challenging, especially in the sub-group deliberations (prior to the group discussions). These conversations were so electric and relatable to my experiences that I found it extremely difficult not to contribute. Coming from a largely non-academic background, I found the discussions were fantastic triggers not just for further thinking, but for further research. With both broad and delicate subjects being discussed, knowing when to put down the camera is almost as important as knowing when to keep rolling.

Unlike the declarative argument of a research paper, it would be hard to note an overall macro statement that stood out to describe the experience of the 33 fellows. But that is point: the experience was complex and interactive. A social bond increasingly drew together the fellows in intense deliberations and they both challenged and converged around each other's perspectives. But even such an intensive deliberation may not have validated the Enlightenment claim that arts engender social trust. For example, the fellows discussed how arts move people toward intense interactions and conversations, but that societies' ways of privileging high arts and low arts can be divisive. Arts are multifunctional and multivalenced: sometimes they bring issue to fore that individuals and groups may not want to address. What the fellows' deliberations did reveal were the interstices and the bridges where dialogues took place. They also revealed the performative, sensory, and reason-based potential of many participants in deliberation and persuasion.

EXAMPLE 2: DiY

Evangelos Chrysagis' research on Do-it-Yourself (DiY) music practices in Glasgow is another case in point. His ethnographic fieldwork brought into sharp focus the sonic, visual and material assemblages playing an intrinsic role in DiY music-making. The ideological underpinnings of a DiY approach to music-making as a form of resistance to hegemonic authority are well known. However, while research participants critiqued the status quo in the music industry, they neither resisted nor wholly rejected relevant prescriptions and established practices; rather, they demonstrated an active desire to inhabit, appropriate and put to use spaces, materials and norms pertinent to their music-making. While such material assemblages did not become the focus of his research, they were nevertheless invaluable sources of information about DiY practices as they were integral dimensions of music events, the process of promoting gigs, as well as releasing recorded music. The sourcing and production of materials by DiY practitioners themselves also highlighted their practical circumstances, while underscoring the cross-over between DiY music and art in Glasgow: several members of the local DiY network had an arts background, which constituted an essential element of DiY creativity, in turn reflecting a multimodal approach to making music.

Apart from their practical role in music practices and attesting to a pragmatic *modus operandi* and an ethos of multimodality, such forms of material mediation served another purpose. As Chrysagis has shown (2016), printed promotional materials such as posters and flyers, social media (particularly Facebook and Twitter), tickets, as well as the production of various music formats (vinyl records, cassette tapes, CD-Rs and MP3s) and associated artwork¹ had a dual function: they were effective technologies of publicity expressing practitioners' desire for public visibility and recognition, while simultaneously promoting their obscurity. Perceiving these forms of mediation as both enabling relationships between like-minded actors within the broader DiY network in Glasgow, the UK and abroad, *and* safeguarding DiY's ethical integrity by distinguishing DiY practitioners from other music actors, can explain their paradoxical effect of (in) visibility. It further points to the contested nature of such multimodal forms of disclosure and concealment, allowing cultural producers to exercise their "right to opacity" (Glissant 1997:189–194). As Chrysagis notes: "Instead of conflating recognition with visibility or—in Glissant's terms—transparency, the right to opacity invites us to consider why deliberate concealment may sometimes be *more* empowering and beneficial for particular groups or communities of practice" (2016:294).

The intense creativity surrounding DiY endeavors is always predicated upon collaboration; it is what infuses DiY with its force but also pleasure—it is what makes it worthwhile. Nowhere is this collaborative spirit more evident than in DiY's material manifestations, which stand as documents of collective efforts. DiY is event-based—indeed,

¹ This is by no means an exhaustive list, which also included stage costumes and props, fanzines, websites and amateur videos posted on YouTube, to name but a few.

it begins from one's desire to make something *happen*—and by definition many of its creations have a transient, fleeting existence. Thus, it is the visible, audible and material evidence of activities that attest to its social and collaborative dimensions. These are the ways in which DiY practitioners document their own actions. But the trope of collaboration can be extended to include the researcher, too (Chrysagis and Karampampas 2017). The openness of DiY creativity affords a genuine—almost mundane—form of collaboration between researcher and participants; because of its ubiquitous nature, it cannot be separated from everyday action as a special realm of practice. As such, it would be difficult to tease out the formal characteristics of this emergent collaboration.

Yet, three points need to be highlighted about research practices surrounding DiY: first, research in music practices is by definition collaborative even when researchers are not participating musicians, in the sense that audiences are absolutely essential to the successful execution of music events (Small 1998). After all, being present before, during and after music events make it impossible not to contribute toward what is going on, even if that contribution is minimal, such as helping on the door or carrying stuff in preparation for the live event. Second, research participants increasingly demonstrate a nuanced understanding of what researchers are looking for and help them achieve it: in ethnographic fieldwork, for example, the traditional “informant” has become a “reflexive’ subject” engaged in research collaboration with the anthropologist (Marcus 2008:7). In Chrysagis’ case, this became apparent in discussions that conveyed his respondents’ knowledge of what ethnography is, what anthropologists do, and how academic research is disseminated. Third, precisely owing to the ephemeral nature of DiY activities, research outputs usually begin where DiY practitioners’ documentation of their activities ends, while also attempting to bring into view events, practices and materials hitherto neglected or forgotten. There is no “salvage” impetus to this; rather, in many instances, documentation becomes a by-product of fieldwork practice and subsequent collaboration: for example, one of Chrysagis’ case studies would upload on their website videos of gigs he had shot, while artists who regularly designed posters for DiY music events would provide him with images for academic publications.

The latter example raises an important issue about multimodal publishing, namely that, while the dissemination of research need not be a priori multimodal—although, to some extent, multimodality is a dimension of all research—it *ought* to be so when the subject matter demands it. Even in traditional contexts of research dissemination, such as academic conference “paper” presentations, multimodality can be present: distributing “zines” (fanzines), flyers and records or building presentations as audio-visual collages instead of listings bulletpoints have been effective presentation techniques adding a “felt” dimension to Powerpoint slides. If DiY can be perceived as a form of “bricolage,”—a patchwork constructed from a limited amount of material resources and not defined in terms of a project but by its potential use (Lévi-Strauss 1966:17–18; see also Luvaas 2012:110–111, 122–123)—then it emerges as a blueprint for research and publication practices.

EXAMPLE 3: REMIX PROJECT

The development remix project that J.P. Singh undertook with his graduate students at Georgetown University over the 2004–2012 period made the participants' aware of their agency and authorship even when translating existing materials and texts (Singh 2014). This multimodal project made the authors reflect on their own authority as cultural translators while simultaneously seeking to humanize the subjects of their study.

The project started with immersions in fictional texts from the developing world for a graduate seminar in “Technology, Culture and Development” in an attempt to understand the social complexity of people’s lives. Students became aware that even when providing a summary in class, their narration used their own words about a text found elsewhere. This led to a digital project called “Cultural Identity Narratives” that were approximately six to eight minutes in length. The students could not use their own words but remixed existing literary and audio-visual representations in piecing together a narrative.

Here are examples:



<http://vimeo.com/user11028897>

Video 2. Kelsey Burns: Reading Lolita in Tehran, 2005
Hilla Meller: Father of Daughters, 2011



<http://vimeo.com/38174563>

Video 3. Patrick Scullin: Brasil Final Cut, 2012

The project addressed one of the fundamental challenges for international development, namely that the way we represent the developing world in our conceptual imagination is linked to the solutions and policies we propose (Singh 2017). Development thought has come a long way since the postwar era when the developing world was imagined as backward, belonging to the Third World, and in need of the kinds of solutions and

technologies that made the West “modern” and prosperous. These technical solutions, unsurprisingly, did not work. They were divorced from history and cultural context.

A literary or fictional narrative is different. It speaks to both the limits and impossibilities of situating development interventions, and foremost provides a place to understand how people themselves negotiate their cultural identities, values, and lives. In the recently released Bollywood film “Gully Boy” (lit: Street Boy) Director Zoya Akhtar presents both the limits and agency of youth in Mumbai’s Dharavi slum through hip-hop. The syncretic result challenges structural practices at several levels including religion, family, class, and gender.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SC5tAqtXuTg>

Video 4. Gully Boy (2019) trailer with English translations of “Asli (real) Hip Hop” song.

Remixing a narrative from the ground-up is different from a gaze far away. The Western fictional genre is replete with narratives where the protagonist finds the spiritual plenitude of one’s inner self in the hustle and bustle of the developing world. Alternatively, s/he is either running away from uncivilized people or appearing as their savior. The Remix technique makes the author aware of these biases while also forcing them to piece together a narrative from “found” texts and materials. In the examples posted above, we are left with intertextual narratives about gender from J.P. Singh’s ex-students Hillá Meller and Kelsey Burns, or the depictions of life in favelas from Patrick Scullin.

A digital remix is a translation and one that demands a close adherence to the found texts, and a carefulness in re-presenting them. The students often spoke to several themes that stood out for them in the remix project: their own reflexivity; humanization of the subjects they presented; the possibilities of locating cultural voices and agency, and the structural limitations of doing so; and cultural hybridity in any narrative. This is very different from the “othering” in most top-down narrative that stereotypes people with distinct traits, including the one that imagined industrialization for a “backward” Third World.

J.P. Singh’s student Patrick Scullin was critiqued by his classmates for presenting a narrative of violence about Brazil, which a few found to be stereotypical, even though he was merely remixing existing materials. He provides the following reflexivity for his narrative in his vimeo link:

This is a combination of three films and two writers works. All of the material is the property of the original producers and they deserve full credit. The adaptation presented here was done for a graduate school course by Patrick Scullin. It is intended to be a Cultural Identity Narrative for a class on Culture, Technology and Development. We were tasked with watching at least one film that was produced in another country, and read at least one novel from that country, and ... then produce an 8-minute Narrative using music, film and literature. The three films I watched were all melancholy, and in the novel I read a man's best friend and his wife...well, you know... he spends a lot of his time in agonizing jealousy, I choose an excerpt from a poet as well. I tried to convey that there is beauty, dancing, love making, sensuality, despair, hope, and yes, violence in the experience I had with the directors and authors I read. It is not intended to be an all encompassing judgment or expression of Brasil. It is what I felt was necessary to communicate, not because all of the things are nice to reflect on, but because that was my experience of their experience. Life is a grand opera. It is not intended to accurately reflect Brasil, it was a reflection of my experience with the art that was created there.

CONCLUSION

If multimodality is an inherent quality of our research practices and how research participants conduct themselves in everyday life, how do we translate that in academic “scholarship”? Blurring the line between intellectual achievement and sensory response eschews proper channels of research dissemination and evades definitions of academic “rigor.” Yet, as anthropologist Paul Stoller has noted, “sensuous scholarship” demonstrates “how the fusion of the intelligible and the sensible can be applied to scholarly practices” (1997:xv). “Perhaps,” Stoller asks, “it would be better for the scholar’s body to remain blissfully asleep in analytical nirvana?” (ibid:xvi). Multimodality not only awakens the researcher’s body or recognizes it as an affective nexus, conditioned by experience to tell a story via conventional media such as text; most importantly, it calls for a profound reconsideration of the different modes of narrating and of the power relations invested in the production of knowledge.

The examples above acutely demonstrate why the conventional modality of text and its notion of exclusive authority and monologic communication fail to convey the experiential richness of academic research. They subvert the force of logos by conjuring up palpable social encounters and making felt the materiality of interactions with people and things in the ethnographic field and the university classroom. In doing so, they lay bare the contours of research participation and collaboration—as well as friction—that give rise to “knowledge.” Thus, multimodality is a priori relational: it does not “represent” but speaks for itself as the embodiment of social life—its past traces and future potentials.

The contributions to this double issue of *Arts & International Affairs* explore precisely this trajectory from social life to multimodal presentation, and tackle some of the most pressing questions about the future of academic publishing: what is the nature of authorship? Who holds the privilege of knowledge? Have academics become middlemen? Are academic journals obsolete? Multimodality, as a relatively new endeavor cannot provide answers but constitutes a provocation. The analytical practices and methodologies underlying multimodality are still uncertain and evolving (Jewitt 2009). To use a visual metaphor, shifting the frame from text to multimodality does not merely turn Descartes on his head but challenges the very nature of knowledge. As such, this is uncharted territory with all the strengths and pitfalls that such a self-reflective move involves. However, this is also a call for further specifying a research agenda for the future. Multimodality offers important ways for researchers to translate social lives in research.

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MULTIMODALITY AND THE FUTURE OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND SCHOLARSHIP

HARJANT GILL



Harjant Gill is an associate professor of anthropology at Towson University. He received his Ph.D. from American University. His research examines the intersections of masculinity, modernity, transnational migration and popular culture in India. Gill is also an award-winning filmmaker and has made several ethnographic films that have screened at film festivals, academic conferences, and on television networks worldwide including BBC, Doordarshan (Indian National TV) and PBS. His films include *Roots of Love* which looks at the changing significance of hair and turban among Sikh men in India and *Mardistan (Macholand)* which explores Indian manhood focusing on issues of sexual violence, son preference and homophobia. Funded by Wenner-Gren Foundation and Woodrow

Wilson Career Enhancement Fellowship, his latest film *Sent Away Boys* examines on how provincial communities across northern India are transformed by the exodus of young men giving up farming to seek a better life abroad. Gill is a fellow alumnus of Point Foundation. He co-directed the SVA Film & Media Festival (2012–2014), and currently serves on the board of directors of Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA) and co-edits the Multimodal Anthropologies section of the journal *American Anthropologist*. His website is www.TilotamaProductions.com

As noted in the Introduction to this Special Issue, Harjant Gill has played a decisive role in the resurgence of multimodal scholarship in anthropology. Gill returns to India in June 2019 where he will begin developing his next multimodal project “Tales from Macholand,” a six-part immersive virtual reality series that will allow audiences to step into the “virtual shoes” of six Indian men belonging to different ethnic, caste and religious backgrounds. Funded by American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) and the Fulbright-Nehru fellowship, the series will explore Indian men’s relationships with the women in their lives, and how they negotiate questions of privilege, power, consent and respect. Upon completion, the series will be showcased at universities across India to facilitate critical dialogues on issues rooted in patriarchy including sexual violence and

abuse, son preference, compulsive heterosexuality, homophobia, transphobia and toxic masculinity.

What does multimodality mean to you?

The intention behind writing this essay, “Multimodality: An Invitation” (Collins et al. 2017)¹ within anthropology is to create an epistemological and methodological intervention of sorts, similar to ones that followed the publication of “Writing Culture” volume (Clifford and Marcus 1986), where we hope to encourage anthropologists to reconsider existing paradigms for research, representation, teaching and knowledge circulation.

The concept of multimodality is not new. Anthropologists have been experimenting with different forms of media technologies throughout the twentieth century. Multimodal is a term that has been used readily since the 1970s in various disciplines including psychotherapy, phonetics, genetics and medicine to characterize different approaches to carrying out scientific research that involves, to one degree or another “thinking outside of the box.” In the early 1990s, semioticians used the terms to discuss different forms of communication across different media, eventually including digital media. Many anthropologists already practice multimodal anthropology (Chin 2017; Collins and Durlington 2014; Cool 2014; Edwards 1997; Hamdy and Nye 2018; Jackson 2004; Pink 2011; Postill 2011; Varzi 2018). Our use of term is emblematic of the greater sea change in anthropological research in regard to what we study and how we go about studying it.

Until a decade ago, our discipline largely adhered to traditional ways of conducting research popularized by our fore-father (and fore-mothers) at a time when a notebook and a pen were the only essential tools needed in the field. The reality is that we now have access to research tools that are far more industrious than a pen and a notebook, with capabilities that exceed our wildest imaginations. The reality is that we are no longer merely observing and documenting our interlocutors’ lives. Our presence and involvement as anthropologists is simultaneously being observed and documented by our interlocutors on their phones, cameras, social media streams, etc. The reality is that those antiquated definition of what constitutes “the field” no longer apply; fieldwork doesn’t end when we leave our interlocutors behind and return to our academic institutions and ivory towers. Digital technology and social media networks keep us in a constant conversation with our interlocutors, cultivating an enduring sense of intimacy and accountability that some might find unsettling and others (like me) find incredibly productive and rewarding. Whether we like it or not, we are entering a new frontier in commercialization of immersive media technologies like Virtual and Augmented Reality that have the power to

¹ <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/aman.12826> (Accessed 19 March 2019).

transport our audience and students into the field, allowing them to engage in a sensory experience of the worlds we observe at level much deeper than any written ethnography can accomplish—the question is how “deep” are we willing to go?



<https://player.vimeo.com/video/153447836>

Video 1. *Sent Away Boys*.

As opposed to traditional scholarship through text, where can multimodalities take us?

What differentiates anthropological scholarship and makes ethnography exceptional is its ability to offer its audiences with rich, vivid and deeply descriptive portraits of people and places. In an era of instant-connectivity where it not only possible to live-stream images and videos from the field, but also to transport the viewer into the landscape of a place they are interested in learning more about (via immersive VR), relying on text alone as the primary medium for storytelling, to me, seems incredibly limiting. Multimodal approaches have the ability to engage the different “sensory” and experiential modes of learning (see Bailenson 2018; Pink 2011), which, whether we like it or not, are increasingly the dominant modes familiar to our students and increasingly our interlocutors. While a film or a multimodal account might fall short of offering the broader context that can be gained by reading a scholarly paper or book, and therefore does not seek to supplant textual scholarship, when presented in tandem with it, multimodal scholarship can offer the kind of affective and emotive experience necessary to understand the human condition at a level that can rarely be accomplished by writing alone.

In this way, this shift to multimodality within anthropology is also reflective of shifts in thinking about how anthropological scholarship is circulated. Historically, our discipline has placed a greater emphasis on written accounts as perhaps the more reliable and “legitimate” form of scholarly output. While there have been important interventions in the nature of ethnographic storytelling and how we deal with questions of representation (see “Writing Culture” debate),² the entrenched hierarchies within existing structures of knowledge production and circulation that values written scholarship above (and often at the cost of excluding) films and media-based scholarship, continues to be upheld in academic institutions, scholarly journals, and at annual meetings and conferences. Often

² <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0030.xml> (Accessed 19 March 2019).



Figures 1, 2 and 3. Harjant Gill (dir.) and his production team filming *Sent Away Boys* in Dhudike Village (Punjab, India) in 2015.



the resistance to change, to trying novice approaches and to showcasing multimodal research is rooted more in the familiarity with traditional way of doing things, rather than skepticism of some of the newer approaches. However, as the “business” of academia changes and adapts to the increasing technocratization of education (online journals, interactive textbooks, instant streaming, etc.), we will inevitably see a shift from primarily text-based scholarship to multimodal scholarship. In fact, the publication of this essay in *American Anthropologist* (our flagship journal) and the coinciding name change of the new section from “Visual Anthropology” to “Multimodal Anthropologies” was made

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Figures 4 and 5. Harjant Gill (dir.) sharing *Sent Away Boys* with one of the families featured in the film (in Kotkapura, Punjab) in 2016.



possible only after the journal seized to exit as a “printed” volume (in 2013), and went entirely digital/online—which led to opening up of a space for experimentation and alternative modes of scholarly engagement, and ultimately, the “Multimodal Anthropologies”³ section. This section currently exists as a hybrid section of the journal that features video, photos, drawings, music, performance, etc. Parts of the scholarship featured in this section is included in the “printer-friendly” version of the journal that resides behind the publisher’s paywall, while other “multimodal parts” are featured on a linked online database that is publicly accessible, and will continue grow as online-content production and streaming becomes more accessible and user-friendly.

What do you see as the relevance of multimodalities/visual media beyond anthropology for social studies in general?

As anthropologists increasingly incorporate visual media and other multimodal approaches into their research and scholarly output, I would argue that it has made anthropology more accessible to other disciplines and to nonacademic audiences in general. Based on my personal experiences, translating anthropological understanding and insights into a visual/multimodal medium for storytelling often forces me to articulate my thoughts, ideas and observations in a clearer, more succinct way. It is difficult to hide behind disciplinary jargon or other scholars’ theoretical frameworks when telling a story through a film or a podcast. More so than any other social science discipline, we (anthropologists) are deeply invested in the practice of storytelling, and privilege “thick description” as form of knowledge production and to inform the holistic understanding of the world we live in (Geertz 1973). We have also been around perhaps the longest. It is encouraging to see anthropology lead other social science disciplines in a move towards toward multisensory, multimodal forms of ethnographic engagements as instruments and technologies for doing so become more and more accessible. Beyond rethinking our scholarly practice, to ignore the role different forms of medias plays in shaping our society would result in a rather teleological understanding of the human condition in current times.

Multimodality also present us with new opportunities to develop more engaged and applied practice where our scholarship has the potential to garner public attention to issues we explore and perhaps even policy changes in a much more immediate way, in contrast to the scholarly articles we publish in academic journals, most of which take long time to appear, are hidden behind paywalls and are read largely by our colleagues. While I have published several scholarly articles in a variety of anthropology journals based on my research, the number of times my documentaries have been viewed on one streaming site (YouTube.com) over 655,855 views combined,⁴ far surpasses the readership for my text-based scholarship. While I believe that both my films and my journal articles are equally

3 <http://www.americananthropologist.org/multimodal-anthropologies/> (Accessed 19 March 2019).

4 Total number of views as of March 21, 2019.

valuable, and recognize how they add to our holistic understanding of gender relations in India and diaspora, the two forms of scholarship are evaluated very differently when tenure and promotion is concerned. Historically ethnographic films have been treated more like a hobby, whereas journal articles are considered the “legitimate” form of scholarly output. Our call for making multimodality a necessary feature of anthropological research and scholarly output is also intended to challenge and ultimately reconsider these hierarchies of scholarly knowledge production while paying attention to who they benefit and how.



<https://player.vimeo.com/video/120182667>

Video 2. *Mardistan*.

Why did you turn to film as your primary medium for multimodal scholarship?

My path to ethnographic filmmaking is a meandering one. It is the result of several serendipitous life events and development opportunities that I encountered while I was pursuing my undergraduate degree in anthropology at San Francisco State University. Following my involvement in a year-long community-based storytelling project where we used film to document life in SF’s Mission district in the early 2000s, a neighborhood undergoing gentrification and radical transformation as a result of neoliberalization of San Francisco during the second “tech boom,” I recognized the value of film as an effective (and affective) medium for documentation, communication and empowerment (see Gill 2019).⁵ From that point on, I have sought to make film a regular feature of my anthropological research, scholarship and pedagogy.

I was born and raised in India, a nation with a rich tradition of oral and visual storytelling and cinema-going. My use of film to showcase my research findings within in South Asia, as well as my scholarly writing where I try to make sense of the role popular film and media plays in shaping quotidian life on the subcontinent and in diaspora, is motivated by the desire to make my scholarly output accessible and relevant to my participants and communities I study. As a “native” ethnographer I feel a sense of responsibility to communities I study and to which I belong in India, in Punjab specifically. I feel responsible to not only tell their stories and document the changes transforming their/our daily lives, but also to create an archive of their/our family’s experiences that can be readily

⁵ https://www.pluralities.org/01/06/#_ftnref1 (Accessed 19 March 2019).

accessed and shared with future generations. I am privileged to be in this position—of being the storyteller for my community—and it is a task that I approach with deep sense of respect, gratitude and love.

In addition to film being an essential part of my practice as an engaged or “public” anthropologist, the medium of film and the approach I take to ethnographic filmmaking is also informed my ethos as a transnational feminist, queer activist. My approach to filmmaking and the film that I make are rooted in rich traditions of queer, feminist, and diasporic documentary-filmmaking that challenge the conventions of ethnographic and documentary cinema through experimental, performative, reflexive and conceptional approaches. As an undergraduate student at SFSU, films by queer, feminist, diasporic filmmakers like Marlon Riggs, Pratibha Parmar, Trinh T Minh-ha and Richard Fung resonated with me in a way that traditional anthropological films and texts never did. None of these filmmakers are classically trained anthropologist, yet their films and observations on the cultures they explore are incredibly complex and multifaceted, and they produce an affective experience that can never be captured by text alone. Their films breakdown the conventional hierarchies of observer-observed, and traditional power dynamics in ethnographic storytelling. Being a queer South Asian immigrant in largely white, heteronormative, and euro-centric discipline, and someone who belongs to the communities I study and write about, the reflexive approach employed by these filmmakers spoke to me and my own experiences of growing up in India and later in the diasporic community in California. I also learned to question and challenge the conventions and boundaries of ethnographic and documentary cinemas. This ethos of experimentation and inclusion of different approaches to ethnography is an important feature that we wish to highlight and celebrate in “Multimodal Anthropologies” section of *American Anthropologist*. In transition from visual to multimodal, we want to widen the purview to be more inclusive of diverse voices, perspectives and approaches like the ones that shaped my approach to ethnographic representation, and not concern ourselves with boundary-policing (as the subdiscipline has done in the past).



<https://player.vimeo.com/video/17477281>

Video 3. *Roots of Love.*

What advice would you give other social scientists venturing into multimodalities? How can they overcome resistance in academia and from their colleagues?

My advice to social scientists thinking about incorporating multimodal interventions into their research and scholarly output is to recruit and collaborate with other artists, filmmaker, editors and technical experts to help you develop your ideas along the way. Unlike fieldwork, filmmaking is inherently a collaborative enterprise and requires different people with different technical expertise to work together in a team. When I am shooting an interview for my film, my production team typically includes a director of photography (the person in charge of operating the camera), a sound-recorder/mixer, an assistant director or a line producer (the person in charge of scheduling, logistics, releases etc.) and a production assistant (in charge of crowd control, and other necessary tasks). My job, as the director, is to focus solely on the interview and the interviewee, and to cultivate a comfortable space where an intimate conversation can take place. Similarly, while I edit most of my own films, I often work with an assistant editor to improve the “final cut” of my films, and I recruit graphic designers to design all film-related graphics and correct any color-related discrepancies in the final cut of the film. In this way, my films are conceived and shaped by the input and expertise of a team of people with variety of different technical skillset. I do not have to do everything on my own. For many anthropologists and social scientists, the fear of not possessing the technical skillset needed to undertake multimodal projects is the greatest obstacle in them trying a new approach to research and scholarly production. The best advice I can give is to develop these projects in collaboration with others, which for me has led to some of the most rewarding and memorable experiences of my career as an ethnographer and an anthropologist.

ROOTS OF LOVE

26 Min, 2011—Punjabi/English Subtitles

http://tilotamaproductions.com/Tilotama_Productions/ROOTS_OF_LOVE.html

Told through the stories of six different men ranging in age from 14 to 86, *Roots of Love* documents the changing significance of hair and the turban among Sikhs in India. We see younger Sikh men abandoning their hair and turban to follow the current fashion trends, while the older generation struggles to retain the visible symbols of their religious identity. The film is a timely and relevant exploration of these inherent conflicts between tradition and modernity, between pragmatism and faith. The choice of cutting one's hair is one that not only concerns the individual and his family, but an entire community.

MARDISTAN (MACHOLAND)**29 Min, 2014—Hindi/Punjabi/English Subtitles**http://tilotamaproductions.com/Tilotama_Productions/MARDISTAN_%28MACHOLAND%29.html

Mardistan is an exploration of Indian manhood articulated through the voices of four men from different generations and backgrounds. A middle-aged writer trying to make sense of the physical and sexual abuse he witnessed studying in an elite military academy, a Sikh father of twin daughters resisting the pressure to produce a son, a young 20-year-old college student looking for a girlfriend with whom he can lose his virginity, and a working-class gay activist coming out to his wife after 20 years of marriage. Together, their stories make up different dimensions of what it means to be a man in India today. *Mardistan* starts a conversation on critical issues including patriarchy, son preference, sexual violence, and homophobia in a nation increasingly defined by social inequalities.

SENT AWAY BOYS**40 Min, 2016—Punjabi/English Subtitles**http://tilotamaproductions.com/Tilotama_Productions/SENT_AWAY_BOYS.html

What happens to families in the absence of sons? What happens to land in the absence of farmers? What happens to communities in the absence of men? *Sent Away Boys* weaves together stories of individual ambitions and family biographies from Punjab to chronicle the gradual transformation of agrarian landscape and patriarchal traditions through ongoing transnational migration. As the promise of a secure future in agriculture grows increasingly uncertain for young Punjabi Sikh men across the region, escaping India to join the low-wage labor in countries like Canada and United States becomes their sole aspiration. In rural Punjab, being a successful man now entails leaving their village, traveling abroad, and sending money home. Through interviews with men preparing to undertake risky journeys and women awaiting the return of their sons, brothers, and husbands, *Sent Away Boys* shows how young men's decisions to emigrate implicate families and communities across North India.

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INTERNATIONAL TOURING FOR THE MODESTLY RESOURCED

FRASER ANDERSON

Fraser Anderson was Chief Executive at Scottish Ensemble (SE) until September 2018, and he has worked for the organisation for six years. He is currently working towards a Professional Doctorate at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, and also works as a consultant for a range of organisations, including SE. Prior to working for SE, Fraser held management positions at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, London Symphony Orchestra and worked at the Donmar Warehouse, London. He has presented at numerous UK and international conferences, contributed to advisory panels, and until recently was a Board member of the Association of British Orchestras.

Scottish Ensemble (SE) was founded by John Calder and Leonard Freidman in 1969, initially to be the orchestra for eighteenth-century opera productions at Ledlanet House in Perthshire. The ensemble evolved quickly, broadening its repertoire and touring activities significantly to become a major force in Scotland's classical music scene. It was, and is, a conductorless string orchestra with a dynamic and engaging performance style.

SE is currently a Creative Scotland Regularly Funded Organisation and presents a busy season of performances, collaborations, and community-focused work across Scotland, the UK, and internationally. Recent international engagements have seen the group perform at the Shanghai International Festival (China), Edinburgh International Festival (UK), Kennedy Center (USA), and Barbican Centre (UK).

Developing and touring the right work, in today's crowded and complex international performing arts marketplace, requires a huge investment of organisational resource. Yes, there are large, well-established orchestras, theatre companies, and dance groups which have woven international touring into their corporate DNA, but for many, it can be tough.

The purpose of this article is to share some of what I have learnt about working internationally during my time as Chief Executive of SE. SE is based in Glasgow (Scotland) and presents concerts and collaborations alongside creative learning and outreach activity in Scotland, the UK, and internationally. While its projects are now increasingly in demand, it does not have the same level of financial support as Scotland's national

companies, and until recently its international profile was relatively modest, though this has begun to change in recent years.

While the touring logistics of the performing arts differ significantly, much of the general reflection in this article can be applied to any performing art form, though classical music touring is its primary lens.

As well as talking openly about major strategic organisational shifts that took place between 2012 and 2018 to help us develop a more sustainable international presence, this article also explores some of the structural barriers and positive catalysts we encountered as the ensemble renewed its international ambitions. It explains how we shaped a distinctive and growing international reputation by taking bold steps into new and unknown artistic territory, finding new models of partnership to support our work, and creating a strong public narrative around change.

Creating, selling and touring international projects is always a complex undertaking. For those who are able to launch their work in the global marketplace, momentum and profile can build, leading to new international opportunities and the establishment of a cycle of success. And audiences at home may subtly shift their perception of an organisation: “well, if it’s good enough for concert halls in New York and Paris ...” is a phrase we might imagine being said by prospective audience members browsing the myriad culture choices available in most developed cities today.

Sometimes, of course, things can go in a different direction. Work that’s been successful at home doesn’t always translate to the unforgiving international marketplace. There are companies which don’t prepare well enough, or those which make a catastrophic error with their budget, letting down agents, artists, and presenters when they pull out of a tour.

Ultimately though, for many companies, becoming part of a global community positively influences the work they do, widening horizons and inspiring them to keep their level of ambition high. Sometimes, they even make money.

When an international project does come to fruition (many don’t), it can be a transformative moment for a company, propelling them into a different category of organisation. Akram Khan’s multidisciplinary contemporary dance company is a shining example of a UK arts organisation that has used international touring to swiftly and successfully grow general visibility over a relatively short period. The London Symphony Orchestra’s unceasing touring schedule includes recurring residencies at the Lincoln Center in New York, Philharmonie de Paris, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. A glance at the LSO’s corporate material clearly shows that international reach has been a key part of their overall company vision and UK marketing strategy since their founding.

However, this article is more concerned with small- and medium-sized companies, such

as SE, which have a less established international touring program but have the potential for growth. What can they do to harness this potential?

SCOTTISH ENSEMBLE

I took the helm at SE during a time when the organisation was on an upward trajectory after a period of promotional inertia on the international front. The previous CEO—with the paid-for support of touring agencies—had recently managed to re-launch and tour the organisation into the non-UK marketplace with some considerable success. These fruitful touring projects could be described as relatively traditional classical music products, often pairing a renowned classical instrumentalist with core repertoire. However, my predecessor had, at the same time, experimented with ideas to re-invent the artistic projects SE produced in the UK, with the longer-term aim of using these to forge a more distinctive path in the international market. When I was appointed to the CEO position, this new, more innovation-led route to international success was as yet untrodden; however, I did benefit significantly from inheriting an organisation on an upward trajectory.



Figure 1. Scottish Ensemble musicians in performance.

As the incoming CEO, it was my job to harness these recent and discrete artistic achievements, taking early momentum to the next level both at home and internationally. I was also aware that what we were touring to international audiences was quite different from our newer UK work and that this creative dissonance could become a major issue if left unresolved. While it is common for UK organisations to experiment with more daring work within their home, subsidised environment first, I felt that the size of the artistic

gulf between our offerings could result in organisational schizophrenia and audience bewilderment further down the line.

SE's projects are created primarily for Scottish audiences (culture is a devolved area of government policy in the UK), but we have always felt that working outside of our borders is an important and enriching part of what we do, no matter the prevailing political view of the time.

THE FLEXIBLE STRING ORCHESTRA

SE is flexible in terms of its instrumental forces, but is perhaps best known for performances of the string orchestra repertoire. Relatively well-known examples of this repertoire include the Serenades by Tchaikovsky, Dvorak and Elgar, alongside famous Baroque-period works by Bach, Vivaldi, and Telemann. There are actually a huge number of works written for string orchestra, but only a few have entered the category of “safe” and “programmable” works that are—all things being equal—highly likely to ensure audiences will attend.

The number of our direct string orchestra competitors is relatively small, certainly compared to the number of chamber or symphony orchestras operating in the international marketplace. Three of SE's best-known and most internationally successful competitors are the Australian Chamber Orchestra, Amsterdam Sinfonietta, and Ensemble Resonanz. Each of these groups foreground string performance, though the approach and level of emphasis differs from ensemble to ensemble. Some also perform with woodwind, brass, and percussion on a regular basis. At the other end of the string-focused scale, quartets are another source of competition, particularly because their core repertoire is widely seen as some of the richest and most rewarding in all the classical canons.

Each of these groups was founded for different reasons, in different contexts, and under a particular artistic leadership. What I would argue that they have in common now is a broad set of artistic influences that extend beyond the string orchestra repertoire. This is, in part, due to the type of artistically curious and ambitious musicians these smaller, high-level groups attract.

Playing in smaller, conductorless groups invites a higher degree of autonomy and places a significant degree of performance pressure on musicians: the individual performances of each and every string player in these groups impact the audience experience in a way it might not within a symphony orchestra context. Studies, such as a management paper (Anon 2003) on another small, flexible, and conductorless group, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, show that musicians in these groups generally enjoy both high levels of motivation and job satisfaction rates when compared to colleagues in other, larger groups.

Another factor these groups have in common—as I mentioned earlier—is that the core sellable string orchestra repertoire is so small it would take a group hardly any time at

all to work through it. Even if some musicians or managers would like to, a group can't tour the world performing Tchaikovsky's Serenade for Strings and Bach concerti year in, year out.

So, in order to keep musicians, audiences, and presenters interested, SE and its peer group organisations have had to think beyond the obvious programming options, building performance projects that create new artistic connections to and beyond classical repertoire.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0NJyVCQpIs>

Video 1. Jon Frank and the Australian Chamber Orchestra, "The Glide."



<https://vimeo.com/267563587>

Video 2. Ensemble Resonanz, "grenzstimmen—offbeat disappearances."

This type of artistic work—exploring formats, repertoire, and collaboration outside a core classical canon and approach—is work that the larger chamber orchestras (with their diet of Classical symphonies and concerti) and symphony orchestras (with their huge variety of options) simply don't *need* to do. That's of course not to say that they *shouldn't* do it. And, to be fair, a relatively small number do. Aurora Orchestra's (London) "Orchestral Theatre" programming and The Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra's (Minnesota) "Liquid Music Series" are two notable examples.

Partly as a result of occupying a small corner of the traditional classical music marketplace, string orchestras have become one of the classical music sector's most positive and innovative forces. They often combine a stellar level of musicianship with creative curiosity and openness to risk-taking that is lacking in some other areas of the sector. Each of these organisations has chosen to balance program innovation with more traditional projects differently, but in all cases, there is a clear strand of ground-breaking work.

Dutch music practice researcher and curator Masa Spaan (2018) coins the term “synergetic concert dramaturgy” as a way of describing this ground-breaking work that takes classical music repertoire as its starting point and makes new connections. These projects think about space, design, movement, storytelling, or other extramusical factors as a way of making the classical concert experience a more contemporary and relevant one in today’s world. The aim is not only to renew the genre’s connection with audiences but also to develop new artistic practice that enriches the repertoire itself. And, since SE introduced this mixed program of creative concepts in 2014, audiences in its home city of Glasgow have more than doubled.

INITIATING CROSS-ARTFORM AND INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK

SE first introduced these innovative, ground-breaking elements into its programming during the UK 2014 season. This season included our first major cross-artform project which was staged in our home city of Glasgow. It explored connections between the city’s significant legacy of Modernist architecture, contemporary art that explored this heritage, and classical music from the same twentieth-century period. This site-specific production was made in collaboration with internationally renowned Scottish artist Toby Paterson. It guided audiences through a derelict section of an important Richard Seifert building, placing new work by Paterson alongside curated sets of music that were performed in different sections of this sprawling Modernist complex.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fg8jyACTBCA>

Video 3. Scottish Ensemble and “20th-Century Perspectives.”

For this project and others like it, we had several key measures of artistic and operational success, including audience numbers and feedback, critical reception, artist feedback, and peer review. As the Scotsman’s 2014 review of the project said:

.... the tired shibboleths surrounding concerts were tossed aside in favour of something closer to an exciting event ... utterly enthralling, this is what music is all about. (Nickalls 2014)

Management and Board had agreed on what business success would look like and how this would be measured and evaluated. This understanding was essential if we were to grasp the effect of the changes we were introducing.

Following this first project, our performance indicators (sales, audience numbers and reaction, critical reception, self-review, and peer review) were more positive than we had dared hope. It felt as if we had tapped into something; these projects, although very different to what we had done before, felt like an artistic homecoming. They were a contemporary, relevant, and stimulating expression of values that had been with the organisation since our founding in 1969.



Figure 2. Audience and musicians at the Anderston Centre, Glasgow, for “20th-Century Perspectives.”

Very soon after this project, inspired by its success, we asked ourselves: how can we find the networks and resources to tour this new kind of innovative cross-artform work?

THE CLASSICAL MUSIC MARKETPLACE

When we were creating a new strategy for international touring, our working hypothesis was that there were, broadly speaking, three main ways in which a classical music organisation can become successful internationally. The first and most widespread is to tour almost exclusively with bankable star soloists, conductors, and composers. There is a huge range of musical quality within the group of touring organisations who take this approach—some are working at an incredibly high artistic level, but others are not. This formula presents the lowest risk to both touring organisations and their international presenters.

Much of the classical music marketplace, in territories such as North America, largely favor groups which present this type of traditional project, a story that may be familiar to managers in other artforms; however, classical music has fewer popular subcategories or breakaway streams when compared with dance or theatre, unless one considers jazz or pop as part of the contemporary classical music continuum. Partly as a result of these boundaries of genre within music, conservatism is often a characteristic of the classical music marketplace. Orchestras are expensive, existing audiences are seen as traditional in their taste, new audiences are more difficult to attract, and sponsors often favor the known.

Another approach to touring is to present repertoire in a way that is excellent and your own, putting your own distinctive and world-class stamp on a particular range of classical repertoire. Young Greek conductor Teodor Currentzis' visionary, carefully constructed approach to Beethoven's symphonies and Mozart's operas enables audiences to hear these compositions afresh, as if the ink on the score had only just dried. As the Guardian said of Currentzis at his 2018 all-Beethoven BBC Prom:

.... we get playing of an intensity that makes the music seem somehow Beethoven-plus; more Beethoven than ever before. (Jeal 2018)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPvugVYv03c>

Video 4. Teodor Currentzis records Mozart's "Le nozze di Figaro."

A more radical approach still is to do something that is original, innovative, and high quality that is new to both audiences and presenters. In this example, I'm thinking beyond the performance of either existing or commissioned music and towards creating a new (or at least rediscovered) kind of classical music presentation. Aurora's memorisation of Mozart, Beethoven, and Shostakovich symphonies has brought them recent acclaim. Patricia Kopatchinskaja's "Bye Bye Beethoven" project with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra is another example. This semi-staged performance includes costume, set and light design and creates a strong narrative around the concert's wide range of musical repertoire.

She has a visionary approach to performance and curation, and has said:

.... classical music is like a big cruise ship, with everyone sitting in the back looking backward, at the past. No one is sitting in front looking forward. (Kopatchinskaja 2016)

Her projects are controversial and sometimes divisive, but no one accuses her of being derivative. Through intellectual enquiry, dazzling ability as a violinist, a powerful on-stage presence and serious engagement with public debate, she has managed to establish herself on the international circuit while also breaking with the conventions of the sector. This is no small achievement.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz6Rs-31g0c>

Video 5. Patricia Kopatchinskaja and Mahler Chamber Orchestra, “Bye Bye Beethoven.”

One of the key strengths of building this kind of project is that it creates an artistic output that is unique to one organisation and cannot be easily repeated by a peer organisation. This is one of the ways that smaller organisations can make more rapid gains within the international marketplace. Within the context of SE, the 2015 production *Goldberg Variations—ternary patterns for insomnia* was one such project that led to a significant increase in international profile. A full description of this interdisciplinary project is given in a later section of this piece.

RENEWING VALUES

In a fast-moving world and cultural scene, it seems to me that organisations need to continually review and develop their activities in order that their output continues to represent their core values and unique offering to the marketplace. If an organisation stays the same for too long, it can become irrelevant, artistically stale, and a hollow expression of what once made it great. To remain true to your organisational values in a contemporary and relevant way, you must keep evolving.

SE has always been driven to give audiences new, engaging, and contemporary experiences of classical music. During the 1990s, an eclectic range of repertoire, standing up to perform, a stylish on-stage appearance, and a visceral, engaging musical sound helped to provide this differentiation and contemporary identity. However, as more groups adopted a similar approach, these factors were no longer enough to ensure our offering was on, or near, the cutting-edge. From around 2010, we had to rethink what a commitment to ideas of “innovation,” “difference,” “experimentation,” and “entrepreneurialism” actually meant at the start of this new decade.

Given hard evidence from our home market—and a gut instinct that this would be a positive development for the group—the SE team took the decision to explore opportunities to share our cross-artform work with an international audience. This was not a straightforward step. Our touring partners had developed a view of what our artistic offer was, and a developing support network had grown around the organisation to help facilitate a more traditional type of international working.

Early explorations to tour cross-artform output didn't bear much fruit. This new kind of work was more expensive, limited our venue choice, and was more difficult to explain. It's easy to talk about a concert program or a soloist biography, but it's more difficult to describe a creative, cross-artform response to a piece of classical repertoire, written narrative, or another artistic artefact. This new way of developing performance projects at SE was more akin to how a theatre or dance company works, and the classical music world was—and is—not yet entirely adjusted to this kind of conversation. “Couldn't you do a version of this program that's just a straight performance?” was a question that was heard on more than one occasion.

However, based on our positive indicators, we stuck to a belief in our new product and persevered. This meant diverting organisational resource away from our more traditional touring projects which was, of course, a significant risk. In the 1970s, SE had been very present across the world—partly because of its imaginative and maverick founder-director, Leonard Friedman—but this presence was reduced by the time we reached the 1990s and 2000s. It wasn't till 2012 that international work started to grow again, and this was

based on a more traditional product. The new relationships that this recent touring was based on were fragile and lacked long-term interorganisational trust, which of course was understandable. However, we all innately believed that not being bound by this recently renewed network was worth the risk, and again we persevered.

Eventually though, people gradually began to notice and hear about the change in our program. It was recognised by audiences, critics, and sector colleagues that the new work we were producing was of a very high quality. At this time, we were developing an ambitious new collaborative project

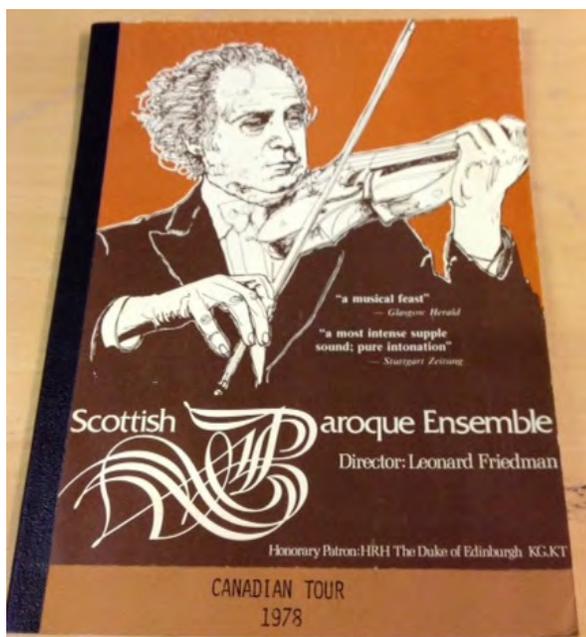


Figure 3. Scottish Ensemble Canada tour programme 1978.

with a Swedish dance company—Andersson Dance. This would go on to be SE’s most successful international project ever, something we could not have appreciated at the time. At this moment, halfway through 2015, our aim was to find an immediate opportunity to present our new strand of work internationally.

BRITISH COUNCIL

UK classical music organisations are fortunate to benefit from a well-connected and highly knowledgeable Music team at the British Council. They were one of the first to spot the new work that we were creating, and as a result in 2015 they asked SE to showcase its projects as part of their UK–Brazil Transform programme that aimed to support the development of a stronger classical music infrastructure in Brazil. Over the course of three years, three different orchestras producing excellent work in different regions of the UK were invited to showcase the innovation they were spearheading within the UK sector. In 2014, Aurora Orchestra was the first to travel to Brazil, SE the second, and the Royal Northern Sinfonia were the third and final group to participate.

While the resources available were limited, SE was still able to showcase its new work through films, performance, and conference presentations. This British Council platform not only raised the profile of our work in general, but also helped to begin a gradual shift of international perception in what the organisation was producing. There was also a genuine knowledge exchange; we learned a great deal about some of Brazil’s most suc-



Figure 4. Scottish Ensemble musicians working with a national Brazilian youth orchestra.

successful music education projects and had the opportunity to perform alongside talented classical players from throughout the country.

One of the projects we were able to showcase in Brazil was a genre-blurring collaboration with composer Sally Beamish, fiddle player Chris Stout, and harp player Catriona McKay. At the performances of this work in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, audiences were immediately drawn to the rich, distinctive musical material that combined Scottish traditional styles with a contemporary classical one. It was something outside of what a classical audience would expect to hear, but it also had obvious artistic integrity and musical authenticity that made an immediate and powerful connection, as it had when we performed it in Scotland. It was not a traditional classical program with bankable star soloists, but still audiences came and felt connected to the music-making on stage.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMJeDpf0UJw>

Video 6. Scottish Ensemble and Sally Beamish's "Seavaigers."

The British Council talks about its role as one of connectors, facilitators, or intermediaries. The days of the organisation taking large, expensive theatre productions or orchestras on long tours to politically important territories, are largely over. However, their deep knowledge of the UK sector and how its most valuable and excellent work might interact with global priorities is a huge asset to the arts in the UK. Given their connecting role, it made complete sense for them to be one of the first to shed light on the new work SE was undertaking and connect it to an international project.

The British Council is, of course, the UK's cultural relations organisation. They not only promote the work of home organisations but also try to foster greater understanding between nations through collaboration and education. SE's collaborative projects echo or amplify many of the British Council's explicit and implied objectives: mutual understanding through cross-border collaboration, an open-minded approach to creating arts projects with different creative and cultural influences, supporting artists to develop and stretch their creative abilities for the good of society and audiences, and an engagement with art that speaks to current societal trends. This synthesis of values or objectives is what, I believe, has made both organisations strong partners on several occasions in recent years, including for our 2015 collaboration in Brazil.

ARTISTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTORS

Another significant facilitator of international work for SE has been the connections it has built through artistic collaborators. As the breadth of our artistic work has widened, it has meant that we have come into contact with a new range of agents, venues, and promotional networks that can help to further our international ambitions. When our offering was narrower, our main artistic and organisational collaborators were from the classical world, whereas now we interact with the worlds of other art forms and musical genres. This has meant that while our offering has become less relevant for some classical presenters, it has connected us to other networks.

One of the most successful of these new international relationships was our collaboration with Swedish dance company Andersson Dance. In 2015, we created a piece together that combined five dancers and eleven musicians into one company of artists. Taking Bach's *Goldberg Variations* as its core material, this work presents a much-loved piece of Baroque repertoire in a contemporary and courageous way. Musicians are choreographed alongside dancers, moving across the stage in costume, memorising sections of music, creating spoken dialog, and inhabiting on-stage characters. The production has been described as a "thrilling reinvention *****" (Hewitt 2018) and as "a revelation on several levels *****" (Brennan 2015).



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/2fvzRLPYKBwFn2LHpl1plXI/bach-to-the-future-a-unique-take-on-goldberg-variations>

Video 7. Scottish Ensemble, 'Goldberg Variations—ternary patterns for insomnia'

Classical audiences are often transfixed by the fresh perspective this staged cross-art-form collaboration gives them on Bach's genius and his work's infinite complexity. It is a production that we could never have created or devised on our own—it required the collaboration and perspective of an organisation that would take us to new artistic and organisational terrain.

In collaborating with this Swedish company, we were able to combine our financial resources and international contacts with theirs to create a touring life for this production that would otherwise be difficult to achieve. In the first touring stage, both companies invested heavily in touring the work within their home markets (Scotland and Sweden) before touring to venues in Europe. In the second and third year of touring, we were able

to take the production to large, prestigious stages such as the Shanghai International Arts Festival, Barbican Centre (London), and Kennedy Center (Washington, D.C.). In these latter years, the companies were able to tour the work without drawing on their own financial resources, and this was essential in order for new large-scale work to be in the creative pipeline.



Figure 5. Goldberg Variations banners outside the Cadillac Shanghai Concert Hall.

The success of this production proved to us that our decision to concentrate organisational resource on finding new ways to present work internationally was the right one. There was no obvious pre-existing model of touring that either organisation could work to, in the sense that while collaborative projects like Goldberg Variations were not unheard of, neither organisation had the existing networks to help tour it beyond our home circuits. Its ambition and scale meant it was expensive, even for large national presenters. It being neither a pure dance show nor a concert hall piece, careful attention had to be paid to venue, in terms of aesthetic, technical capability, acoustic, and also its audience. Finding the right balance of these practical and artistic needs in each venue was often a challenge.

However, we were able to create a touring life for the show through careful relationship building and of course by showcasing the strength of the artistic idea. Achieving this international interest did require a significant amount of staff effort on both the Scottish and Swedish side, but the results for both companies were transformative, launching both organisations in a new way on the international scene.

We decided to promote Goldberg Variations ourselves in the first instance. Agents, particularly classical music agents, work with a certain range of presenter relationships, and our Goldberg Variations project sat outside of that. That's not to say that they didn't value our work or see the quality of the idea, it was just that it didn't easily fit into the classical box and so presenters were wary of taking the risk. To promote the project, we had to undertake careful, targeted conversations and work with venues to help them understand what our work was trying to achieve and how it could connect with their audiences.

Three years after its premiere and 30 performances on, we are still regularly approached to present the work at venues across the world. It is by far the most internationally successful project either company has undertaken, but without collaboration and a pooling of resources it would have been impossible.

This is a much more complex process than curating a classical music program and touring it, but ultimately, for us, it was incredibly rewarding as it allowed us to share work that we felt was creatively distinctive. It's early days, but now that we've started to develop these new relationships, future touring conversations are becoming easier, both for us and for agents. In fact, Goldberg Variations will be presented again in the United States during 2019 through an agent relationship.

NATIONAL STRUCTURES

At this point, it is worth highlighting some of the structural challenges we faced in developing and touring this work internationally, particularly at a governmental level. Reflecting on my experience—and on conversations with colleagues in Scotland—one of the challenges for organisations working within a devolved adminis-

tration is the complexity and quantity of UK political relationships any one organisation should ideally hold.

Devolution has delivered many positives, and the arts scene in Scotland has hardly been more vibrant than it is today. In the Scottish context, devolution means there is a parliament in the capital city of Scotland. Edinburgh's parliament has key decision-making powers, for example in determining spending and policy in Health, Policing, Education, Social Care, and the Arts. However, the majority of tax policy originates at a UK parliamentary level, so the biggest slice of Scottish government income is determined by London, i.e. there is significant power around spending but not around raising tax for that spending. Growth in the creative industries has consistently performed above the growth rate of the economy in general, and in the last three years alone employment in the creative industries has increased by over 15%. When I first left to study and work in London in 2006, the number of professional opportunities at home felt very limited. In 2013, when I returned permanently to Scotland, the sector had moved on significantly.

At this time, most of the national performing companies (Scottish Opera, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish Ballet, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and National Theatre of Scotland) were on an upward trajectory, and the rest of the sector felt buoyant. The wider creative sector appeared more self-confident—broadcasters, media companies, video game producers, theatre companies, and orchestras were increasingly successful and outward looking.

A clear and promising sign of this self-confidence was the fast growth and widespread success of Scotland's new national theatre, with acclaimed productions such as *Black Watch* and *Macbeth* reaching a wide audience at home and throughout the world. Scotland was producing work that was distinctive, created at home, with a domestic identity and purpose, but with international reach. To me, this felt new and exciting.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YVSc1lCO-Yg>

Video 8. National Theatre of Scotland's *Macbeth* trailer.

This richer and more distinctive Scottish scene had been, in part, supported and developed by public policy from Scotland, rather than Westminster. Scotland now has arms of government—and indeed the third sector—that are also replicated in London. London's Department for Culture Media and Sport's counterpart is Edinburgh's Culture,

Tourism and Major Events Directorate; the UK's embassy network is now complemented by a suite of Scottish staff tasked to promote the country's distinctive output; and the British Council has further developed its policies and teams in the UK nations. These are just a few examples.

What this has meant is that there are now differences in policy and strategic direction between these central and devolved government departments. For arts leaders, this means developing a new range of relationships, and to some extent managing the interactions between them. For a large organisation, this is a relatively easy task to manage, but for a small team producing a large amount of work, this fragmentation creates complexity that is a real challenge to manage.

As the constitutional settlement shifts in the UK, we are all feeling our way year by year, but at times the lack of clarity from funders and development agencies can mean missed opportunities. To some extent, there is also understandable competition between these departments and agencies, but from a manager's perspective a clearer definition about who does what, why, and when would help us to represent our nations and country more effectively.

There are international colleagues who seem to have created a better settlement than we have, so far. It seems the joined-up state support mechanisms in Sweden, for example, mean that in-country departments and the embassy network work together to create international opportunities and the funding this requires. The constitutional settlement in Canada also allows for divergence in policy, but there seems to be clearer division between provincial and federal government roles. The success of Quebec's artists abroad is a clear example of joined-up policy-making.

CREATIVE SCOTLAND AND THE NATIONAL COMPANIES

From the perspective of a Creative Scotland-funded organisation, there are still issues with the policies the devolved government and its arms-length body follow for the development of international work. I have no doubt that intentions are good and that there is a will to create the right structures, but the reality does not quite meet the intention.

For example, the already well-funded National Companies in Scotland (listed above) have access to an international/expo touring fund that Creative Scotland-funded organisations do not. While not explicitly stated as far as I've seen, there is an implicit suggestion that the work of the national companies is (a) of a higher quality and (b) more likely to be successful internationally. I wouldn't go along with this line of argument, either within the classical music sector or in other areas of the arts.

This artificial distinction between Scottish "national company" and those who are not means nothing in the international marketplace. Presenters want to show excellent work

and would have no idea that SE is not a national company, while, for example, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra is. The same would hold outside of Scotland where this funding distinction does not exist: a dance presenter is not likely to book English National Ballet over Matthew Bourne's company purely because the former has the word "national" in it. This Scottish Government policy creates a significant imbalance in the sector, meaning that larger organisations are often more competitively priced relative to their smaller counterparts.

As I have mentioned above, within the classical music sector it is the smaller companies which are creating some of the most interesting and innovative work, yet there is no year-round, large-scale formal mechanism in Scotland to support the touring of this work. The policy idea was surely to give Scotland's prestigious national companies a strong international footing, but this laudable ambition completely misses the point about the ecosystem that characterises the cultural sector. In many cases, the smaller companies are creating the innovation that feeds into the work of the larger companies. If they are excluded from meaningful government support networks, this places them—and the whole sector—at a serious disadvantage.

The national companies—which are funded directly from government—also have their funding virtually guaranteed, presumably because they are too big to fail. They are also freer from lengthy funding applications and onerous report writing when, in fact, they are the organisations that should have the resources to do this, rather than the smaller Creative Scotland-funded organisations. Again, I can see that the intention is good—giving stability to national companies does make sense at first look, but if in doing this we create stagnation in the marketplace, with smaller companies unable to compete for the same funding as larger ones, the dynamism of the sector is much reduced. This seriously affects home and international work.

Government structures in a subsidised arts system do matter, and Scotland's example shows that good intentions do not always result in effective policy making. In a recent public submission to the government's Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Relations Committee, the CEO of Red Note—a contemporary music ensemble that is funded by Creative Scotland—illustrated this point:

.... Scotland is currently running a mish-mash of the two systems, one through the National Companies (and direct government funding) and one through Creative Scotland. This causes very real tension as Scotland has, at the National Companies level, organisations that cannot fail (Scottish Opera, NTS, etc) which are managed very light-touch and are established, effectively, in perpetuity—and at the Creative Scotland level we have organisations that are not permitted to achieve the same stability, and live or die by their most recent funding application. (Harris 2018)

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article has been to give a reflective account of the organisational journey SE has been on toward producing and touring international work. While we have enjoyed significant success as an organisation in recent years, ongoing success is not guaranteed, and even if this is maintained, we have ambitions to increase our presence further still.

The range of international projects we now present is much broader and bolder. We do still tour more traditional offerings, but a large proportion of our international presentations now have element of innovation.

To get to this point, we had to ask ourselves difficult questions about the work we were already producing and its demand within the marketplace. We had to balance our new artistic vision with commercial reality and manage change over a considerable period of time. Charting this period of international development required careful planning and a clear process of stakeholder engagement. It was not without risk, but by consulting closely with our Board, musicians, audiences, and funders, we created a strong network of support and some degree of financial backing.

Change was not absolutely necessary. The desire to advance the organisation was an internal one and required huge effort, particularly from our office team, artistic director, and musicians. Each of these groups was willing to give up their time and energy to invest in a shared but untested idea. This willingness was only present because of the positive culture and internal dynamics of the SE team.

We decided to offer both our home and international marketplace an artistic product, we thought best represented our strengths, that was distinctive, and which helped to answer a need. To make this happen initially, we had to temporarily divert from our pre-existing support network and convince key stakeholders that our new work was worth investing in. To some extent, it is much harder for organisations with a long history like us to create market innovations. The expectations of long-term stakeholders are, quite reasonably, for an organisation to continue along a predictable path, but this is not what we did. Having said this, looking back at our organisation's history, a spirit of risk-taking and high ambition is clear throughout our almost 50 years of existence—but this needed to be rejuvenated and reimagined for current times.

The structures and organisations that supported our work—government, funding agencies, embassies, and touring agents had mixed reactions to the changes we made. And as outlined above, some support networks have inbuilt inflexibilities that made our journey more difficult. We had to believe in what we wanted to do first and then take others with us.

By embarking on this process of change, the organisation is in a much stronger financial, artistic, and operational place. It could, of course, not have turned out so positively—

that is the nature of risk and change. Organisational culture, careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and self-confidence were some of the key drivers of our success. Tenacity and good energy reserves were others.

I have now stepped back as CEO of SE to begin my doctoral studies, arts management lecturing, and other consultancy work. I have retained a connection with SE as a consultant and it is a joy to watch the team push even further with a renewed sense of purpose and drive.

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THE CODING CAVE AND THE PERFORMATIVE FISHBOWL

SARAH SCARBROOK

Sarah Scarsbrook is an artist, researcher and lecturer. She is a current Ph.D. candidate at Birkbeck working on the thesis The Artist and the Art School: Professionalisation in London Art Schools from 1986 to 2016. She has experience working across London's arts and cultural sector and focusses her research interests on the effect of art education, the creative industries, and cultural and educational policy on visual artists. Her artwork is thematically interrelated with her research, hinged on notions of identity, authorship, serendipity and duration. Sarah regularly exhibits, presents and publishes her work on related topics in the UK and internationally.



<https://vimeo.com/271069224>

The *Coding Cave and the Performative Fishbowl*. In a small underground room in Birkbeck College, London, the events in the film took place over seven days in autumn, 2017. The film shows the axial coding iteration of grounded theory in action. In total, around 800 hours had already been spent first cycle coding the qualitative data taken from twelve interviews with artists about their art school experience. This was the first time the data was printed out into its physical form and could be interacted with in this material way. Incorporating spoken notes, movement and editing processes, the film is a visual memo and a document of Scarsbrook's research being performed. An interconnected relationship is played out between the conceptual, the self-reflexive and the absurd in a representation of prolonged physical, emotional and conceptual immersion amid, on top and under the skin of the data.

Briefly describe the overall project for which you are using grounded theory?

I am using grounded theory methodology in my ongoing Ph.D. research in the Film, Media, and Cultural Studies Department at Birkbeck College, London. For my study, I'm examining the views of artists on their formal undergraduate Fine Art training in London art schools since the mid-1980s, with a focused interest on their experiences of professional development. To clarify, in the UK, the term art school refers to the educational institutions, universities, and colleges that deliver Fine Art education for foundation, undergraduate, and postgraduate study. From the outset, my study was conceived to be an exploratory one, and grounded theory methodology was chosen at the beginning because of its suitability for this type of study and my research enquiry. The central questions I am asking in my study that inspired my use of this methodological approach are: what are the participating artists' motivations for attending art school relating to transitioning from art student to "professional" artist? And, what are artists' encounters with furthering professionalisation in London art schools and how has this been met, incorporated, or rejected by the artists investigated? The interview was chosen as my data collection method as a method that is suited to the grounded theory approach. I carried out interviews with 12 artists from four different London art schools across three graduate exit points in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s.

As an artist myself, who studied at a London art school during this time, my research is being carried out from a position of personal experience, understanding of the terrain, and wanting to know more about this key area of an artist's development. Through my ongoing study, I am interested in exploring the reasons why artists go to art school, what their views are on formal art training and the institutions that provide it, and what they perceive they take from their education related to professional development and more widely. I wanted to talk to artists and listen to their experiences of their art schooling and provide a platform for their voices to be heard. I decided upon the timeframe as being from the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s, and the London location, through several scoping exercises, which indicated a marked increase in the implementation of a pedagogy that focused on professional development at the London art schools during that time. Grounded theory embodies an adaptable and flexible style for analysing qualitative data, and is also a methodology that encourages self-reflexivity, so was chosen for these aspects too. I considered that using this approach would allow me to incorporate and manage my experience as an art graduate alongside that of the experiences of my participants by utilising the specific grounding and distancing techniques, and constant comparative processes this method is known for.

For those who do not know grounded theory as a method, how would you summarise it?

Grounded theory can be summarised as a social scientific methodology used in qualitative research enquiry for interpreting and explaining phenomena, elucidating narratives,

and developing theory from data. The methods and procedures used in grounded theory methodology vary, from data collection approaches in interviewing and participant observation to a range of analytic processes carried out in data coding, theoretical sampling, and analytic memoing. As a methodology, it has a broad history that has evolved flexibly with the changing ontological and epistemological approaches to research, that have been dependent on the researchers who have chosen to employ grounded theory in a study. It's fair to say, that there is not one grounded theory approach, but many, and in my experience, each are as varied as the researchers who use this methodology. As an immediate caveat, however, I feel the need to add, this does not give researchers a licence to purely do what they want and then call it a grounded theory approach; there are some specific methods and procedures that are necessarily employed, but I acknowledge that each researcher will carry these methods out by their own design. The grounded theory methodological approach begins from the conception of a study and continues right through to the conceptualisation of a narrative position or theory.

To give a brief historical context, it was conceived of in the late 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss as a postpositivist social scientific qualitative research methodology. Since then it has evolved and there have been different incarnations of the grounded theory approach based on changing research paradigms and researcher's perspectives over time. There are many useful guides on grounded theory to aid beginners and for those who continue to develop and use this approach. As a relative novice, I have found in particular, *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory* (2007), edited by Antony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz, offers a comprehensively broad and inclusive contemporary reading of the methodology. This is a practical and critical volume that outlines grounded theory's background as a postpositivist method developed by Glaser and Strauss, rooted in pragmatism and symbolic interactionism. It continues by interrogating its relevance and development as a social constructivist method, relating to Charmaz's approach, that takes into consideration the researcher's reflexivity and positionality, that I agree with, as always bearing influence on outcomes and findings in somewhat partial ways. More recently, Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane's chapter *Evolving Grounded Theory and Social Justice Inquiry* in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, fifth edition (edited by Denzin and Lincoln in 2017) continues to outline the evolution and relevance of the methodology from the constructivist perspective today.

Other handbooks and guides I've found useful, to get a sense of the different approaches are Corbin and Strauss's *Basics of Qualitative Research*, fourth edition from 2015, which gives guidance on interactionist grounded theory. In essence, this most recent edition remains true to Strauss's interactionist take on grounded theory, but is mainly now representative of Juliet Corbin's perspective since Strauss's death in 1996, which today also incorporates some of Charmaz's constructivist approach as well as Adele Clarke's more situated perspectives. Clarke's 2005 *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory After the Post-modern Turn* is another useful guide to consult, which considers itself to be a reappraisal of grounded theory that is "congruent" with that of Charmaz. Clarke's grounded theo-

ry is one set in the context of postmodernism, and embeds poststructural and feminist perspectives of the situations and contexts of meaning making, which I have found to be particularly relevant and have integrated within my approach, especially in the process shown in the film and in the making of the film itself.

To get a sense of what using grounded theory as a methodology entails, Uwe Flick gives a succinct indication in *Doing Grounded Theory* (2018) that is based on the classic and continually developing iterations of grounded theory described above. He suggests that today there are four central features of a grounded theory study. These are, “minimal preconceptions about the issue under study, simultaneous data collection and analysis, using various interpretations for data, and aiming at constructing middle range theories as the outcome of the research” (Flick 2018:3).

In my experience of using grounded theory methodology, I have found it to be open, flexible, and adaptable. Deeply critical and reflective analysis is afforded through the specific coding processes that permit the inclusion of the researcher’s position, yet also allow for an important analytic distance at all times through the continuous comparative techniques required of the researcher using this approach. All of the slightly different strands, since the 1960s, involve what is known as the “coding” of data. In my case, the data takes the form of transcribed interviews, and the coding was carried out over three “cycles” or stages. The first cycle of coding refers to studying the transcript, in a line-by-line way, and retrieving comments and points of interest around the research enquiry (but not limited to this), that refer to the specific type of code being used. This is also known as open or initial coding as it opens up the data and its many possible interpretations. It is common to use more than one type of code in this initial stage. In my study, I used four different types of open/initial codes simultaneously. I used *Descriptive code*—where, using nouns, I wrote a short quick description, usually in one word, of what was happening in the text, *In Vivo code*—where I extracted pertinent verbatim words and comments of interest from the transcript, *Values code*—where I assessed whether what was being said were assertions of a “Value,” an “Attitude,” or a “Belief,” and what that might be, (this allowed me to make meaning from the words while also assessing my own beliefs, attitudes, and values in the process), and lastly, *Process code*—where I used gerund words used to describe the action, that is, what I felt was happening on different levels that included psychologically, emotionally, physically, and practically, and also conceptually during the interviews as relayed in the transcript.

During the first cycle, many different ideas surfaced for me, some relating to and others seemingly not relating to my overarching research enquiry; all were written about however as part of my analytic memoing process, which is another key method in the grounded theory approach. The analytic memos are usually written, and are made from the beginning of the project, becoming more and less central throughout the project. They are important for capturing and developing ideas, thoughts, and concepts, and also for positioning yourself and being self-reflective of this during a grounded theory study. During coding, they continue to be made throughout the process, as and when

an idea emerges, to seize a notion, observe a pattern or grasp an emerging concept so that it might be developed further later. After the first cycle of coding is complete, which was focused on individual interviews, I put my data through a second cycle, sometimes called axial coding, whereby all of the codes from the first cycle could be cross-referenced and inter-examined. I did this to uncover further patterns and common concepts among the data as a whole. The outcome of this stage was a mix of distilled reductions (though not in a reductive sense) of the existing codes along with some new codes from the cross-referencing that are amalgamated to form what are known as core categories or themes and keys. This second cycle of coding is the stage I explore in my film *The Coding Cave and the Performative Fishbowl*. After this stage, I had discovered 21 overarching themes and categories. A third and final stage was carried out, also known as selective or theoretical coding, which I found necessary to distil the 21 themes and categories I had further, until I had a smaller selection of themes to work with. These are known in grounded theory as keys and contain categories and subcategories. This final step in the coding process is carried out to condense, sort, and finally move toward developing the theory, which happens through writing up.

Why did you decide to make the film?

My impetus to make the film is bound to both my being an artist and to my grounded theory approach used in my research. The film is a snapshot of part of my working process, which I had decided I wanted to do to document my second cycle of coding from the moment I had decided to print out all of my first cycle data to second cycle code physically in a space. It was a significant key step in my project that felt momentous at the time, given the many hours of desk-based coding I had carried out in the first cycle. For this iteration of my coding process, I printed out a slightly condensed version of the codes generated in the first cycle, and made 12 reams of data from them, one per interview, that could be rolled down to navigate and make more meaning from these numerous codes from the first iteration; this was coined as the *Scarsbrook Rolling Method*. As the film, and caption states at the beginning of this article, this was the first time the data had been printed out into a physical form and it was immediately noticeable that the research took on a different feel on a somatic level. As a researcher, having the data physically printed out provided a completely new and exciting way to be among my data, and, as an artist, it felt significant and more typical for me to work physically with materials in this way. The way of working I created felt akin to my artist practice, creatively making, doing, and thinking through interacting with ideas, views, and positions in a physical and material-based way. I had a desire to document the process to, in part, capture a sense of the performativity produced by my operating in the space I had created and of the performance of research that would take place there; of the physicality and situatedness of my enquiry at this point in my grounded theory approach. To document this vastly different way of interacting with the data from the desk-bound routine of the first cycle, it felt important to document it as an exploration of working in a more bodily way with and among the materiality of the data.

Another reason for having a camera in the space was to develop a new and more appropriate way of making analytic memos, given the different interaction that was occurring through the method I had developed to work with. During the first cycle of coding, I was desk-bound, which at times was admittedly physically frustrating and often physically pain inducing. For ease in this situation, I had typed up my analytic memos in unison with working on the spreadsheet I had created on my laptop to contain all of my first cycle codes. However, having significantly changed the way I interacted with the data for the second cycle of coding, I wanted to use having a camera in the room not only to document me and this stage in my process, but also to develop spoken analytic memos to accompany this practice, to consider and question what was happening in the data in a way that felt more appropriate, given the physical interactivity of the method I had created as a working environment. Having the camera rolling to film this part of my process was then also a decisive and pragmatic way to incorporate analytic memoing as a major component of the qualitative data coding process in grounded theory methodology, in documenting my thoughts, ideas, concepts, and making connections as they surfaced throughout the coding process straight to camera. Being able to speak these to camera allowed me to capture key discoveries in situ as they occurred, much like the typed memos of the first cycle made at my desk alongside my spreadsheet. The practice of analytic memoing is not to carry out all of the coding and then write up the analysis of ideas later, but to seize them in the moment as they come through the coding. For me, having a camera rolling with me in the room while I coded seemed like a natural and practical way to achieve this. As ideas surfaced, while using handwritten post-it notes to document the emerging codes, as you'll see me doing, I was able to speak my thoughts and ideas of emerging concepts, akin to my written analytic memos in the first cycle, but straight to camera. I also made separate voice memos using a voice recording device, to capture notions as they arose, which were also incorporated into the film.

The actual making of the film, including the editing process, then took on another dimension, and while it is not intended as a culmination of analytic memos, neither is it purely about what I did. Rather, it provided me with a way of exploring my experience of the process, as a researcher and as an artist. Throughout my grounded theory approach, I, like many others who use this methodology, found myself dealing with my entanglement with the data. The method is known for its requirements of researchers to be able to come in and out of the data, "grounding" and "distancing" through the constant comparative procedures carried out. Using this method became a highly self-reflexive process for me and so the film was also made as a way to explore this entanglement, my self-reflexivity, and my subjectivity. As well, I hope it offers some insight into common feelings and experiences of not only the grounded theory approach, but in carrying out qualitative research more widely, and what happens when we hit walls, have to face insecurities in our thinking or experience the joyous and validating eye and mind-opening moments of discoveries and knowing, feeling like it is all going to be worth it after all.

The decision to title the film *The Coding Cave and the Performative Fishbowl* is twofold. The "coding cave" part refers to the cave-like places I like to create for myself to work in. I

ensure that my coding caves provide me with just enough comfort, sustenance, daylight, food, water, sometimes herbal tea (the basics to meet my needs) to propagate the right conditions for me to work away (hopefully) undisturbed for as long as it takes. The “performative fishbowl” part of the title springs from exactly that the feeling of “performing” as a researcher while being watched by onlookers through the large glass windows in the room I worked in. Once the research took on a physical form which involved my body, and the necessity to traverse, stand on top of and navigate the reams of codes, the space I worked in took on a stage-like presence, with me at the centre, feeling like I was enacting my research. While I was examining the performance of artistic identity asserted by my participants revealing itself through my analysis, I was dealing with myself as an entangled subject and participating artist in my own study, performing being a researcher and an artist simultaneously. I deliberately put myself under surveillance, and, at times, one of my Ph.D. supervisors observed me from behind the camera, while I perform being her student, being a researcher, but all the time being conscious of being filmed in action, acting out my grounded theory approach, perhaps alluding to the famed interactivity of this methodology. The room I worked in to carry out this stage was underground, with limited daylight and thus even more cave-like, but also had two large windows on two of the walls where people going by could see in, and some, stood and watched as I “performed” from within what felt like a fishbowl. The idea of the fishbowl, of course, also contains connotations of going round and round, and back and forth, as an apt analogy for those who carry out in-depth qualitative data analysis of any kind, and I’m sure will resonate with those who work with grounded theory.

What are your main findings so far?

As my study is currently ongoing, I will keep this answer fairly brief, and focus on the present stage of my Ph.D. project, where I am in the midst of building the bridge between my coded data, which contains all of my analysis so far therein, and writing up my theory. In this stage, so far, I continue to be surprised and excited to discover that I keep finding out even more about my data than I thought I could from the rigorous in-depth coding techniques I’ve carried out. During the process of coding the data using grounded theory methodology, it is common to maintain a distance from the existing theoretical analysis in the area of study, as per one of Flick’s central features I highlighted in a previous answer. This is a deliberate move, so as to resist, consciously or otherwise, bringing ideas into the coding stage from elsewhere, but to rather keep the focus on what is happening in the data. Connecting my findings from the coded data with extant theory has been a challenging step, but one which has permitted the situating of my project more firmly within the body of existing literature and work that addresses professional creative identities in arts educational and cultural policy settings.

To briefly summarise on findings so far, however, the overarching themes I am focusing on are in the areas of motivation, absorption, and recovery, all of which are situated in the context of what art graduates have told me of their art school experience. As my

study sits now, I can see from my findings that my theory development through writing up is focused on; the motivations and reasons given for going to art school that are situated around identity, seeking professionalisation and also elements of serendipity; what happened at art school in terms of the experience of learning, what was absorbed, and what was deflected, and what happened afterwards around self-regulation, adapting and recovering from art school. All of which, I view as interrelated to professionalised and professionalising artist identities and the art schools as a major factor in the processes of professionalisation.

There is an interesting distinction between the reflexive and self-reflexive qualities of doing research as opposed to analysing data. How does the latter differ from one's positioning as a researcher in the field or the interview room?

In my film, though the participants are by this stage far removed from the interview room and while the data being analysed is a group of codes I have generated from the first cycle of analysis; the other artists are still very present, and are represented through the ongoing reflection and self-reflexivity that I show as continually taking place. Though I am shown with the data and the participants in my research are not necessarily "shown" in the film, aside from being represented in the 12 reams of codes, this is a deliberate act to highlight the contemplations and self-reflections within the context of my research and that occur more widely. Whether in the "field" or in the "interview room," whether being filmed or being recorded by a Dictaphone, there still remains both reflexive and self-reflexive interaction through the enquiry. Notes I made before, during, and after the interviews serve as analytic memos in grounded theory that are made and referred back to at all stages in the approach.

With grounded theory methodology, there is a constant overlap and conflation of data collection, analysing, and theorising. These elements of the research are carried out simultaneously by the researcher and are not considered distinct. Doing research and analysing are interconnected and there is little separation of the two. According to Charmaz, Thornberg and Keane (2017), the notion of the division between theorising and carrying out research is something actively rejected by its founders Glaser and Strauss, as this was seen to be part of the positivist tradition they were moving on from. In grounded theory, the constant comparative method that affords simultaneous data collection and concurrent analysis blends the field into an analytic space for reflection and vice versa.

I would suggest that every researcher, whether using this methodology or not is reflective up to a point, but self-reflection, in particular, is a big part of the grounded theory methodology. It is useful to remember that self-reflexivity was deeply embedded in the first study that used grounded theory carried out by its founders who were driven to consider death and dying in hospitals, while both having relatives who were dying in hospitals. Reflecting on one's relatedness, position, and questioning one's assumptions,

biases, and ideas about the situation under investigation are embedded in the fabric of grounded theory and are encouraged to be considered and evaluated in using the systematic methods used in this methodology. Self-reflection starts at the beginning of the process with grounded theory, occurring in the first instances of coming up with the initial research enquiry, through to the interview room and when simultaneously analysing the data. This is in part facilitated by the emphasis on consistently making analytic memos, but it also embedded in every stage of the methodological approach.

How “grounded” is a grounded theory which utilises an overly technical language (“data,” “axial coding”)?

The language of grounded theory is something that has been attributed to its founders’ backgrounds. According to Charmaz, Thornberg, and Keane, the use of terms such as “data” and “coding” stems mainly from Glaser’s contribution to the formation of the methodology whose background was in positivist quantitative research. Though the language was developed in the physical sciences, these terms are still used today in grounded theory as a methodology of the social sciences. The language of grounded theory was developed in the context of Glaser’s positivistic approaches that pre-date the formation of grounded theory methodology. This scientific language is something Charmaz discusses in her constructivist approach, where she attributes the early iteration of grounded theory and the language used as being derided for being conventionally quantitative. Over time, while retaining the underlying premise of grounded theory, though the perspectives of those developing this methodology have evolved and continue to do so, the language has been retained.

The word “grounded” here refers to the theory being grounded in the data; that the theory comes from the data up. It is not a hypothesis-led investigation therefore, but is widely considered inductive, or according to Clarke’s situated version is abductive. As a social scientific research methodology, using terms like “data” has become common, and in qualitative data analysis, “coding” is used widely and not only when doing grounded theory. Different meanings of the term “grounded theory” itself have also been discussed. According to Flick (2018:7), “grounded theory” can refer to a type of theory developed by using particular methods to investigate empirical material, while also referring to a specific methodological approach and the adherence to a specific attitude in the field according to Strauss and Corbin, Charmaz or Clarke, for example. No doubt as further iterations and versions continue to evolve and develop so too might some of the language, the incorporation of “abduction,” for example. Though, as seems to have been the case so far, while the methodology and those who use it develop, they also maintain an homage to its roots in retaining the language of Glaser in the processes used.

There is an agonistic, experiential and relational quality in axial coding. You mention “connecting with” data and “feeling each other,” as well as

“dominating it.” Is there a power relation at play in data analysis? Does this extend to our research participants?

Using grounded theory is an intensely exhaustive and meticulously detailed methodological approach to research. At the beginning of my film, there is an opening note about the length of time I had spent during the first cycle of coding, totaling around 800 hours, prior to the axial coding stage shown in the film. As I mentioned previously, this time had been desk-based work carried out on a laptop, so printing out the data enabled and furthered my connection with the data in a different, more bodily way, and yes, for me, in this sense, I can say there was a different feeling of power relation at play in this context. Standing on top of my data gave me an empowered feeling to take on the challenge I had set myself, that was to cross-examine all of the coded data I had generated so far in the process.

There is also a sense of me coming to terms with, or meeting the insecurities of my analysis in carrying it out this way. The film shows the performance of my insecurity and of my attempt to control my situation. The data by this stage occupied a powerful position in my life and the process I chose to confront this was an acknowledgment of this in the way I chose to control the data; fixing it onto rolls, eking it out slowly, controlling it through the apparatus I constructed for it to hang from and from which I could navigate my way through it. Hanging the data in the space was as much about containing it as it was about freeing it from the confines of my computer. In accommodating the work in the room, I built the controlling variables around me to exercise my power and control over the material within the parameters I chose. I chose to observe this, through filming the whole process, and in doing so formulated another power relation with myself of becoming the observed. Choosing this space, and these parameters and to observe myself permitted me to deal with my insecurities head on.

There had been a sense, or a doubt, at times for me in the preceding step that I might not get to this stage. To use a well-trodden analogy, it sometimes felt like the mountain was too steep and slippery, or that I didn't have the right equipment or enough rope to climb further, so by the time I was at the axial coding stage, it was admittedly a moment of joy and pride to have reached that stage, although also still tinged with slight trepidation as to how to tackle the new amorphous task I was embarking on. The sense of “dominating it” and the empowerment therein was to do with that aspect, which drew on all of the work I had done and the insecurities and uncertainties I had encountered in getting there. In reality, when I had reached the axial coding stage, of course, I found I had only climbed to a ledge, I actually had, and presently still have, a while to go before I reach the top of my mountain.

The expression I made of me “dominating” my data, after feeling like it had “dominated me for so long” was thus referring to reaching a certain point, dealing with my insecurities, and feeling self-assured to tackle my next steps, almost in a pre-match pep-talk sporting kind of way, and also acknowledging that in this iteration, I could

literally stand on top of my data, while I worked; operating from a physical position of dominance. Thinking in these terms reveals an interesting dynamic in considering the control we place on our data and on ourselves. This could act as a form of continuing motivation, to notice our feelings toward our research during the processes we use and the apparatuses we construct in order to traverse and negotiate our work in progress, especially if we create situations where we might surmount insecurities and feel more in control.

In terms of the possible power relation with my participants, I have had only the utmost respect for them and gratitude that they wanted to take part and provide me with the valuable data for me to be able to carry out my work. Without their generosity, willingness, and openness, there would be no project. In using grounded theory, I could really do all of that justice, through the ways that analysis is carried out with this methodology. A grounded theory researcher is challenged to go deep into the data, grounding and distancing, and constantly pushing and questioning the self and the validity of ones' ideas and thoughts through the process to ensure as best as is possible that the participants are fairly represented. As an artist myself, tasked with examining and representing the positions of other artists as fairly as possible, I am especially motivated to this cause. For this to be a justified and fair representation, using the working methods I have chosen, I have been able to maintain that what the participant has said always comes first. In that sense, one could say that the participant's voices are empowered through this careful and considered treatment. When conscientiously followed, I feel it would be almost impossible to push a specific agenda using a grounded theory approach and thus skew the power play in favour of the researcher. What was also important for me, using this methodology, was the interchange between the interviewer and interviewee, where for me, my in-interview process was to actively listen and create a space in which the participants felt safe and able to tell me what they wanted to. Through careful and meticulous analysis of the data, I feel a balance of power has been struck between what the artists told me and how this has been interpreted as related to my research enquiry and my experience as an artist.

The data analysis process is an overwhelming and physically demanding process. In the video, after a long day analysing data, you wonder whether you have got “enough stamina” to continue. What does the project tell us about the bodily dimensions of data analysis in grounded theory?

The film is a document of the atmosphere of a particular stage of my research process. As an artist engaged in both performance and filmmaking, the medium of film was a way to capture my somatic existence as a performer enacting research. For me, it's always important to contemplate and be aware of our bodies as we go about our worlds, which extends to research and how we carry this out and what it feels and looks like in our bodies to do so. All along I have been fascinated by bodily markers of my work from the impression my body leaves in a place I am researching in, to the stiffness I feel in my neck,

or pins and needles I get in my toes from a sitting position. I've noted the dents my heels leave on a sofa cushion, and the ring marks left by my umpteenth consumption of a cup of tea that's been continually topped up throughout the day. My approach to coding is similar to that of my approach to art making, and would entail me getting into a working zone that meant I would be engaged in the activity for hours upon end, not really aware of, or noticing that time was going by, and thus not noticing basic bodily needs of thirst, hunger, or rest/restroom breaks either. I find this way of working is tiring yet rewarding, and works for me. Having the "stamina" to work in this way is thus a part of what I feel is required of me as someone who has chosen to research using a grounded theory approach using the method I developed for this stage in my process.

I find the bodily dimension of my data analysis is always implicit in what I do and how I go about my work. In the earlier stage of coding, this meant sitting in front of my laptop for hours, due to the requirements of that stage in the process, that entailed systematically entering information into a spreadsheet I had developed to contain my work and the amorphous amount of codes generated. But, for the second cycle, this would change, and excitingly I found myself standing among the codes I had spent hours working on already. For me, my specific physicality relating to my approach was not only performative, in that I surveilled myself in a room carrying out research, but, it was also practically considered too. The apparatus was constructed with my bodily dimensions and limitations in mind in making sure I could stand, reach, and also see the top of the data, and be comfortable while kneeling, crouching, or sitting on the data, while analysing. The physicality of what I had created to work with had parallels with making art works, which in turn led to feeling more comfortable with working with the data from artists, as I connected with myself as an artist in the space. The limitations of the space I had secured to work in at Birkbeck, the university I'm based at in London, also meant my body had to adapt, in more than one way; according to space *and* time. I had a semi-self-imposed timeframe that would ensure I adhered to a fairly strict working practice and tight-ish deadline, and which also meant the space could be used by others again when I was finished. For practical reasons, I wanted to be able to read through as much data as possible at one time, but as I would have needed to rent something the length of a bowling alley to unroll my full data reams, I unrolled enough of the data to be able to work at one end of the room on this and also have a space at the other end of the room I was working in to position the cross-examined concepts in the form of post-it notes as they surfaced. As demanding as the self-imposed deadline was to meet, I was happy to prove to myself I did have enough stamina. Perhaps I can admit to this being a part of my underlying motivation in the first instance, to put myself and my body through the arduous and taxing task I had set myself.

The sensuous, affective dimension of data analysis is quite prominent in the video. For example, the data needs to be visualised in order to be coded, while the materiality of the data on paper surrounding you in the room

is further intensified by its aural presence—as you say “The narrative ... is buzzing ... vibrating.” This is not something that is covered in grounded theory. Can you comment on this feature?

The narrative, that is, analysing it and also finding and explaining it, is part of using a grounded theory approach. As per Denzin and Lincoln (in Flick 2014:7) who discuss a fifth moment, out of eight that are identified as definitive moments of change in qualitative data research after postmodernism; I am looking for the narrative. Flick’s (2014:7) interpretation of this is that narratives have replaced theories, as being more specific than grand theories, to fit local and delimited situations and problems. In effect, researchers who use this methodology are constantly dealing with personal narratives, that is, the stories people tell of their lives in interviews, in order to get the end result, which often takes the form of a narrative that explains phenomena in these stories. Implicitly, grounded theory has become a methodology that today embodies a narrative approach. Because of my awareness of this, that I know the end result is a narrative, I can’t help but search for this. While keeping control, I am also seeking the narrative. The film documents what I do with the data in order to find that narrative. It charts my hopes in finding it, which motivates me and gives me the self-assurance I need to find it. The exciting moment arrives and is documented in the film when the narrative is sensed, when I can feel it *buzzing* in the room, which encourages me to strive on.

With all of the data being in one space in its physical form, as it was for me in that part of my process shown in the film, once I was in the throes of working in this way it soon became very exciting to be among the codes I had generated from the first cycle of coding. A key idea related to finding the narrative in grounded theory is the notion of “emergence,” through which theory and the narrative is believed, especially by Glaser, to surface. This is a disputed term, however, due to the supposed lack therein of a subjective research position, which is in line with Charmaz’s social constructivist approach to grounded theory that acknowledges the researcher’s partiality in the research. From my perspective, I agree with this aspect of the constructivist position in that I see research as being to an extent partial due to what the researcher brings to it from their own experience based on their understanding of and involvement with the world. Emergence, however, for want of a different word, perhaps materialisation, realisation, or extraction works as well, does seem to happen. This is what I was noticing at that point, where I felt the narrative was buzzing and vibrating. By that point, I had an excess of ideas and concepts churning around my thoughts, popping up, coming out of, and being lifted from the reams of codes, and being distilled and refined through this practice. The room, or maybe it was me, seemed to vibrate with the excitement of these emerging findings and discoveries taking me one step closer to the narrative.

In reality, there was no actual sound of buzzing in the room, or really much in the way of specific auditory quality to the work, but for a few paper sounds as it brushed together when moved through the rolling process and perhaps a felt tip pen squeaking against

the post-it notes while a code was conceptualised. The main actual sound came from my movement and my singing of song lyrics of popular music that referred to specific categories that I was labeling in the data, like, George Michael's "Freedom" and "Faith," David Bowie's "Fame," and Chrissie Hynde's lyric "Special" from her hit *Brass in Pocket*. These songs and more sprang into my head and out of my mouth as I created a live soundtrack to accompany my working process and which I felt became a fitting musical tribute that I performed as a marker of my time in the room.

The role of the post it note in idea-generation. See e.g.:

<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/688952>.

Any comments?

My decision to use the humble post-it note was not consciously, as is referenced in the film, to elucidate some kind of "Beautiful Mind"-esque backdrop to me or my world as I coded. It was not to convey a kind of frenzied or feverish approach to promote an image of the hard-at-work or semi-crazed researcher-in-action. It was, in reality, much more practical than that. It was to facilitate me getting my ideas, in the form of codes, written down quickly and physically onto the data reams and then easily off again and onto larger pieces of paper on the opposite walls when grouping these into key themes. It was part of a specific and deliberate distillation process at this stage in the method. The post-it notes indicate a next step in my process and give a physical appearance to the process of reduction. The analytic memoing is where the ideas are opened up in greater depth, but the post-it note was a continuation, albeit in a different format, of the coding procedure from the first cycle; that of conceptualization and distillation. It is not used as a substitute for, or a "decontextualisation" of deeper thinking, as the article alludes to, but in my approach is part of the reduction processes involved in grounded theory. I chose to use the post-it note for its simple size, pragmatic form, and its ease of maneuverability. The context in which I use the post-it was a way I developed to approach what I wanted to do at this stage, and much like the specific apparatus I created, and the *Scarsbrook Rolling Method* I developed to carry this out, it was a practical choice to interact with the data, to be able to sift through the codes, write a post-it note, and stick it down on the relevant position on the reams. In order to find my way back to that position once the post-it note had been moved to the larger pieces of paper that contained the overarching emergent themes, I used an alpha-numeric code, already developed for the computerised version I worked on in the first cycle, to locate the participant, the type of code, and its place in a given transcript.

Using the post-it notes did provide an interesting shift in the coding practice as the "handwritten" came into play. Not only the handwritten, but also items were color-coded using a range of different coloured felt tips, so the post-it note's role became an integral vehicle at this juncture. It enabled the physical "cutting" and "pasting" of codes, lifting and shifting the codes out of the coded reams and onto the large pieces of paper that acted as grouping zones where the post-it notes were gathered and given a new home as this

part of the conceptualisation and distillation process was carried out. Once allocated in an overarching code zone, also known as a theme or category, on a larger piece of paper at the opposite end of the room, the post-it note codes have remained in their positions on these pieces of paper since, and can be referred back to if necessary.

For me, the idea of embarking on a physical practice of coding over using a computer-assisted process, as alluded to in the article, is preferable for many reasons. Though there are various computer software that can be used in qualitative data coding practices, I would always prefer to be in touch with my data. However, the advantages are posited by many who use grounded theory, Corbin and Strauss (2015) suggest they can be useful and attractive for novices who are insecure or tentative about how to go about entering the data, that they provide a way in and a way of organising and sorting through huge amounts of data. It is also suggested that many computer programs have been specifically developed for use with grounded theory and so are more difficult to use with other qualitative research approaches (Flick 2018). For me, however, I prefer to be in control of the organisation, filtering, elucidating, and conceptualisation of looking for the meaning in what my participants have said. There seems to be a tension between the physical and the nonphysical nature of using and not using a computer to aid our methods. I see all as physical, but would certainly prefer to be more physically engaged with my work than less through the use of computer-assisted processes.

Using grounded theory to carry out my research has, for me, also been particularly attractive because I have similar experiences to those of my participants. The physicality of my process has enabled my dealing with the entanglement of myself with my topic through using specific approaches to my data, which using a software would, I doubt be possible. On reflecting on the article, the post-it note in my approach provided something I don't believe an algorithm could, which is a physical, hands on approach, where I could think through interacting, rationalise through enacting, and generate ideas through physically relating to my data and then fold this back into the process on my continuing journey en route to the generation of my grounded theory.

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“PLAYING FOR CHANGE, SINGING FOR PEACE”? MUSIC, DANCE, AND PEACE IN THE AFRICAN GREAT LAKES REGION

JEAN-BENOÎT FALISSE

Jean-Benoît Falisse is a lecturer at the African Studies Centre of the University of Edinburgh. Seven years ago, as he was doing some of his PhD research in the city of Bukavu, Eastern DR Congo, he bumped into a distant relative. They sat for a beer. Jean-Benoît mentioned in passing the amateurish documentary film on music in post-conflict Burundi he had just finished shooting with friends. The distant relative explained an idea he and many others gravitating around the Foyer Culturel de Goma, an arts school, had been ruminating for a couple of years: organising a music festival in Goma, just across the lake. Jean-Benoît got involved, bringing artists and friends from Burundi to the first edition of the festival and working on different bits and pieces. He has kept working with Amani festival since and is one of its trustees. He is writing in his own name.

Most would call organising a three-day open-air music festival in Eastern DR Congo sheer madness, which is probably a very good reason for doing it. The region is infamous for its relentless human rights abuses, its countless displaced people, and its ruthless rebel groups. A few years ago, some poorly-inspired international journalist—or maybe was it an aid organisation seeking to raise more funds—even dubbed its largest city, Goma, the “rape capital of the world”. The conflict in Eastern DR Congo is complex and multi-layered, but one thing is clear: interpersonal and inter-ethnic trust is very low. There are tensions between the Congolese and the Rwandans, between the Hunde and the Hutu and the Nande, between the Hema and the Lendu, etc. Could more music, this other thing DR Congo is worldily famous for, reconcile people and soothe the bleeding heart of a troubled region?

Probably not. It may well be that “musick has Charms to sooth a savage Breast, to soften Rocks, or bend a knotted Oak” (Congreve 1697) but many in the Great Lakes region also painfully remember the killer songs of the Rwandan genocidaires (Li 2004) and dictator Mobutu Sese Seko’s instrumental use of rumba music (White 2008). Music rarely stops bullets, as we came to realise when we had to cancel the first edition of our festival in August 2012 because the M23 rebel group was besieging and bombarding Goma.

Anybody remotely acquainted with DR Congo knows the central importance of (Congolese) music in Congolese society. This includes the many economic and political actors who strategically use musicians to seize markets and votes. In the fierce battle for the Congolese beer market, superstars [JB Mpiana](#) and [Werasson](#) represent Bralima (Heineken), while another superstar, [Koffi Olomide](#), has been contracted by Bralima's main competitor, Bracongo (Groupe Castel). The political battleground sees equally decided attempts to rally musicians, this time behind politicians—but still using dollars. (In)famously, Koffi Olomide dedicated a song to President Kabila in 2012 before later joining the ranks of the opposition. Abroad, *the Combattants*, an acephalous diaspora political movement (Pype 2017), oppose the regime by obstructing concerts by Congolese musicians. Even the Catholic Church is getting involved: on 10 November 2017, the archbishop of Kinshasa said a mass for the Congolese artists. The regime promptly denounced a black mass seeking to incite artists to insurrection. Add to the mix international NGOs promoting their activities through the voices of often handsomely paid local musicians (Ndaliko 2016), and you will have some sense of the heightened stakes around music in the DR Congo.

There is, however, some hope that music can be a positive game-changer in Eastern Congo. We have run our three-day music and dance festival for six consecutive years and the latest edition, in February 2019, gathered 34,000 festival-goers, 40 bands, and the international media.

When the first edition of the festival finally took place 14–16 February 2014, just a few months after the M23 rebels had disarmed, it was an instant hit. 25,000 festivalgoers came from across all parts of town and the entire region to rejoice together with Congolese artists [Lokua Kanza](#), [Lexus Legal](#), and [Inness'B](#) among others. In the months before the festival, many among the volunteers, artists, sponsors, and authorities had expressed doubts about the feasibility of the project: the whole thing was evidently driven by contagious enthusiasm rather than expertise or experience in organising a large-scale cultural event. However, most were also inclined to give it a chance; perhaps because, for everybody, there was not much to lose, and much to win. Eventually, everyone would be able to pride themselves of having contributed to something different in the Kivus through one of the largest music festivals seen in the region in recent memory. The organising team had slightly changed after the near-miss initial festival attempt of 2012, but it still revolved around Guillaume Bisimwa, the head of the *Foyer Culturel de Goma* and Belgian entrepreneur Eric de Lamotte. Their local network and business acumen would prove instrumental in transforming what was a nice—but some said “lucky”—one-off success into a yearly event that has contributed to changing the way Goma is perceived, and what it is associated with, in the region and in the world. The following six editions of the festival proved even more successful than the first one in terms of attendance, and they attracted world-famous African artists such as [Tiken Jah Fakoli](#) from Côte d'Ivoire, [Habib Koité](#) from Mali, [Nneka](#) from Ghana, [Ismael Lo](#) from Senegal, [Sauti Saul](#) from Kenya, or many of the DR Congo stars including [Fally Ipupa](#), [Werrason](#), [Jupiter & Okwess](#), and [Baloji](#). The organisers, including the hundreds of local volunteers, have devel-

oped real expertise in a series of festival-related activities ranging from catering to video editing, crowd management, and stage management. The emergence of Amani festival has been one of building up skills, organisational capacity, and networks after a slightly crazy idea became an immediate success.

Over the years, the event has become one of the largest music festivals in the region, and we now even have tourists crossing the dreaded Congolese border to join the fun. The festival is named Amani, the Swahili word for peace, and it seems that it does, indeed, create some peace; the city celebrates and some even forget the harshness of daily life during the festival. The unimaginable happens: a mainly Congolese crowd cheers Rwandan artists and all, from sometimes antagonistic ethnic and political groups, dance and re-joy. How did we get there and how did we navigate the political economy of Congolese music? There is probably no recipe, but two elements are certainly worth emphasising.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdTEl0KxiDw>

Video 1. Amani Festival 2018, “after movie.”

Amani Festival is, first and foremost, resting on a strong contingent of over 700 hundred volunteers. They are overwhelmingly young Congolese aged between 18 and 25 and the core group is engaged in different activities at the *Foyer Culturel*, a local youth centre promoting music activities throughout the year. The festival belongs to them and they are determined to make something of it that doesn't resemble the factionalised and violent environment in which they grew up. The festival did not *create* a strong base in the population, it is very much made of, by, and for its prime audience. Of course, not everybody is involved at the same level, but the volunteers of the *Foyer Culturel* maintain a strong engagement with their neighbours, friends, and families through a round-the-year song contest (whose winners sing at the festival) and mobile concerts in the different parts of town.

Doing something different cannot, however, mean organising the festival in isolation of the different key players in Eastern DR Congo. This simply would not be possible. The size of the event requires collaboration with the Congolese police and administration. The United Nations peacekeeping mission (MONUSCO) is the only one that has the massive mobile generators needed to power the main stage. The NGOs and the private sector have the money necessary to keep the ticket at US\$ 1 and making it accessible to

all. The local civil society is a key mobiliser in the population and, as the NGOs and the private sector, they can apply for a stand where to promote their activities, around the entrance of the festival. Even the mighty Catholic Church is involved in the festival as the owner of the college that serves as the venue of the festival. The strength, survival, and success of the festival rest on working with those different partners while maintaining a project that genuinely belongs to the volunteers and organising team of the festival.

Pinpointing the precise effects of the festival on peace and stability in Goma is an arduous endeavor we just started. What is, however, clear to us is that the core achievement of the festival has been to act as an incubator for doing things differently: up and coming artists have used Amani's stage to forge a path of their own, young entrepreneurs have used the event as a stall to reach new audiences, and volunteers have been inspired to develop their own initiatives. One striking example of such initiatives is Goma Dance Festival, a yearly hip hop festival created by Amani Festival volunteers.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TI-t-VM9OrA>

Video 2. Goma Dance Festival 2018, “after movie.”

Music has been a powerful instrument for creating a new space in a context marked by mistrust, multifaceted conflicts, and failed attempts to build peace. I don't know what will flourish next in the space created by the festival, but this is precisely its point: unleashing unexpected new and positive energies, for the road to peace is not worked out in advance.

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"PLAYING FOR CHANGE, SINGING FOR PEACE"?
MUSIC, DANCE, AND PEACE IN THE AFRICAN GREAT LAKES REGION

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OLIVER RESSLER: CATASTROPHE BONDS

BRANDON BAUER AND OLIVER RESSLER

Brandon Bauer uses art as a space for critical and ethical inquiry and dialogue. His work explores themes of nuclear abolition, war, terrorism, and critical histories embedded in cultural ephemera through photography, video, collage, installation, and collaboratively produced projects. Brandon's work has been exhibited, screened, and broadcast internationally. Brandon was the lead curator and exhibition organizer for Catastrophe Bonds, as well as the lead editor and designer for the publication that accompanied the exhibition. Brandon is currently an Associate Professor of Art at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin, USA.

Oliver Ressler organizes theme-specific exhibitions, multichannel video installations, and projects in public space. His work addresses issues such as economics, democracy, climate change, social alternatives, and forms of resistance, and it often blurs the boundaries between art and activism. Ressler has exhibited his work extensively internationally, including in recent exhibitions in the Museum of Capitalism in Oakland, California, USA (2017), and at Documenta 14 in Kassel, Germany, as part of an exhibition by The National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens (2017), as well as in recent survey exhibitions of his work at Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo—CAAC, Seville, Spain (2015); at the MNAC—National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest, Romania (2016), and at SALT Galata, Istanbul, Turkey (2016). The exhibition Catastrophe Bonds was the first survey of Oliver Ressler's work in the United States. Oliver Ressler lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The multi-site exhibition *Catastrophe Bonds* represents the first survey of the work of Austrian artist Oliver Ressler exhibited in the United States. Ressler's work is both urgent and timely. Reactionary populist movements have been on the ascendency in the United States, Europe, and elsewhere, and counter-movements seeking to reassert

the values of liberal democracy have risen in opposition to the threats against civil liberties and the attacks upon democratic institutions. In this exhibition, Ressler's focus on enacting and expanding forms of democracy is especially compelling and timely. The selected works in the exhibition focus on forms of grassroots democracy, economic and political alternatives to the existing state of global affairs, activism around climate change, and issues relating to what has been described as the European "migration crisis." But, as Ressler's work points out, it is not a crisis of migration. Rather, it is a crisis of war, terror, and economic strangulation that has forced people to move. A key unifying theme running through the work is envisioning and attempting to enact new forms of vibrant social and economic democracy where all voices are welcomed in the deliberative process. This theme is explored through documentary work highlighting grassroots organizing efforts, video interviews with contemporary thinkers on alternative social and economic models and their historic precedents, and on the pressures that the current catastrophes of climate change and emergency migration are having on representative democracies around the globe.

The exhibition and its related public programming were developed as a collaborative project sponsored by the art programs at St. Norbert College and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, and through the joint International Visiting Scholars Program of the two institutions. The exhibition was curated by Brandon Bauer, Associate Professor of Art, St. Norbert College, in association with Shan Bryan-Hanson, curator of art galleries and collections, St. Norbert College, and Kate Mothes, curator of the Lawton Art Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. A catalog was published to accompany the exhibition by the St. Norbert College press.

CATASTROPHE BONDS: AN INTERVIEW WITH OLIVER RESSLER

This interview was conducted as an online exchange between Brandon Bauer and Oliver Ressler during the summer of 2017.

Brandon Bauer: When we were discussing this exhibition and deciding on the title, you suggested "Catastrophe Bonds," which I was immediately drawn to for the layers of meaning I found in the phrase. Can you talk about what this phrase means to you, and why you proposed it for the title of the exhibition?

Oliver Ressler: Catastrophe bonds are financial derivatives and more or less what the name suggests: The holder gets a payout in the event of a specified natural or other disaster. In times when permanent financial and economic crisis and global warming—all themes that are addressed in this show—have become the new normal, catastrophe bonds will become more important. Central to the concept of the exhibition was the second meaning of bonds when choosing this title; it is the social solidarity under crisis conditions, the belief in people's capacity to self-organize that connects all of the works in this exhibition.

BB: Before diving into some questions about your work, I would like to ask, what were some of your earliest influences? What made you pursue art? How did you begin down the path to the work you have been developing throughout your career?

OR: I made the decision to become an artist as a teenager. I was interested in political issues at an early age; I wanted to find out about the world and how it functions. With 24 or 25 years, I managed, for the first time, to bring together these two fields of interest, art and politics—to merge them, to express political things through the means of art. While still being a student at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, I moved to installation and graphic works, which I managed, for the first time, to present in public space in the mid-1990s. I was interested and influenced by many different things. Political artists, such as Hans Haacke, Martha Rosler, or John Heartfield, definitely played an important role, but also ACT UP and the exhibition programs at Shedhalle in Zürich or Galerie Metropol in Vienna.

BB: I first encountered your work through the exhibition *The Interventionists*, curated by Nato Thompson at MASS MoCA in 2004, in which your video work *Disobbedienti* was exhibited (see Video 1). This piece documents a group of Italian activists engaged in civil disobedience actions during demonstrations against organizations like the WTO, IMF, and G8. They were a part of the broader movement against corporate globalization—often called the Global Justice Movement or alter-globalization movement—which has been described as a “movement of movements.” Given that you have been documenting these kinds of grassroots social movements—from the Global Justice Movement to Occupy Wall Street and the European Movement of the Squares, as well as the current Global Climate Justice movement—over the past two decades, what are your observations? It seems as if your documentation from inside these movements is meant to be instructive about how to engage in this kind of activism. How do you see these various movements as related, and how are they different? What do you think young activists can learn from these movements?



<https://vimeo.com/261090492>

Video 1. *Disobbedienti*, 54 min., 2002 (with Dario Azzellini).

OR: All these movements are leaderless, horizontally organized movements. Decisions are being made directly, without representation. All confront the capitalist system, but in different ways. The Tute Bianche and *Disobbedienti* directly confronted the police,

attempting to enter the red zones of the summits. This tactic was militarily defeated by extreme police violence at the demonstrations against the G8 summit in Genoa. Today's tactics are smarter; many of the movements attempt not to directly confront police but use tactics such as the five-finger tactic to flow through police lines. A less-male concept is also more inclusive toward women and younger, less experienced people who are just about to join the movements. I think it is important to learn about all these kinds of activism as it enables people in struggles to use certain ideas and to apply them to what fits to the specific local contexts in which people are active. Therefore, my analytic films are also regularly used by activists.

BB: I find a consistent thread in your work of documenting social movements from a very intimate perspective. You do not create an objective remove between the camera and what is being documented, but that technique allows the viewer to become a fly on the wall as these movements negotiate their ideals, tactics, and strategies. A good example of this is your piece *Take the Square*, although this approach is used in several works. Where did this approach to your work begin? What do you intend to convey with this approach?

OR: I first applied this method documenting a demonstration against the World Economic Forum in Salzburg (Austria) in 2001, where demonstrators were encircled in a police "kettle" and detained for seven hours. I was among the 900 encircled demonstrators. I created the film *This Is What Democracy Looks Like!* that consisted of voices of demonstrators from inside the kettle (see Video 2). I worked with several movements and, in broad terms, identify with these movements. This creates the possibility to establish situations where the only language comes from participants of the movements. For *Take the Square*, I initiated a situation that created the opportunity for activists from the Occupy and Square movements to speak (see Video 3). I asked four to six people to meet on one of the squares that were used for the occupations, adopted the existing format of the "working group" of the movements, and used it to make the participants discuss with each other along a few questions I outlined. These were primarily questions about organization, decision-making processes, and the meaning and the function of the occupation. I recorded a couple of these conversations at squares in Athens, Madrid, and New York, and the most interesting ones were used in an edited form in my film and three-channel video installation *Take the Square*.



<https://vimeo.com/208302829>

Video 2. This is what democracy looks like!, 38 min., 2002.



<https://vimeo.com/48680002>

Video 3. Take The Square, 89 min., 2012.

BB: What do you see as your role in the movements you bring light to? Are you documenting? Are you participating? Is your work advocating on behalf of these movements?

OR: I think it is a combination of all of this. I felt the necessity to be involved in these movements. I think the involvement that makes the most sense for the movements and myself is to work with and about the movements, to produce something that can be used by the activists themselves. While my first films on the alter-globalization movement were driven from the desire to transfer this moment of excitement of a political event, in doing these films I became more and more aware how these pieces not only document reality but also construct reality. To participate in a movement opens certain windows, certain possibilities. Over the years, I have participated internationally in a considerable number of people's assemblies, working meetings of social movements, demonstrations, blockades, and mass actions of civil disobedience, and I have often recorded these activities. For some time, I have been personally unsure whether my artistic work relating to activism should be described as activist work, or indeed whether I should be seen as a participant of these movements at all. Was I an activist by virtue of this activity, or was I rather a sympathetic observer positioned in solidarity with the object of research? I still have no definite answer to this question, partly because my practice of varying strategies between one project and the next could generate different answers in each particular case. But I have received an answer many times over from activists and movement participants when presenting and discussing my work both within an art-world context and outside it. Social movement activists have repeatedly told me they regard me as part of the movements because of the way I approach my work. They see my work as wholly unlike that of even the most personally sympathetic print or broadcast journalist, whose reporting is bound by a professional code of neutrality to eliminate all trace of such sympathies. Whether neutrality is epistemologically possible at all in politically contested matters is doubtful, to say the least; what is beyond doubt is that neutrality or impartiality in hegemonic media organizations means compliance with political precepts held to be self-evident.

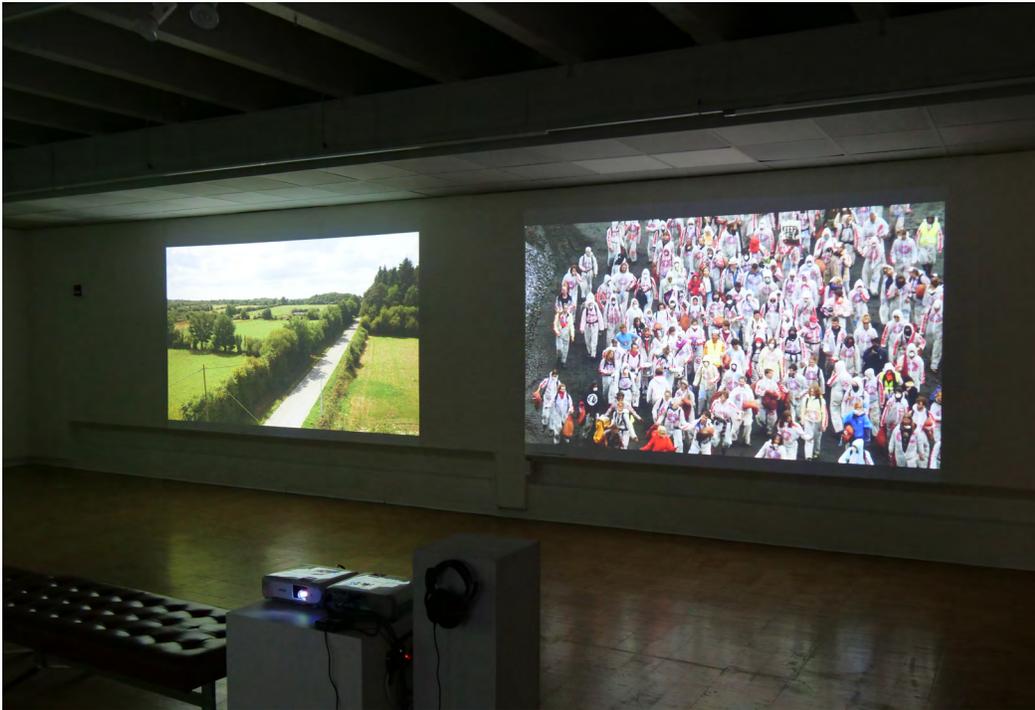
BB: That is very interesting. Along with that, I have noticed in a number of interviews you are often asked if what you are doing is art and how you justify that position. Do you find this to be a tiresome question? I can imagine it could be frustrating to constantly

justify what you do as art, even if your position in documenting these movements is not neutral or removed from the subject and the concerns they advocate.

OR: At the beginning of my artistic development, I only had very few possibilities to publicly speak about my work. I remember I found it quite annoying to work a year on a project, accumulate such a lot of knowledge on a theme, and the audience is not so much interested in the theme itself, but more in the question whether this is art or not. I have the impression the more my work is presented internationally, the more my work was shown in major museums, festivals, and biennales, this question about the status of my work loses importance. What is defined as art is, of course, a question of negotiation, and the negotiation power of a major art institution is a big one. Today the question why what I am doing is art still pops up from time to time, but I don't care anymore. I have the feeling in the meantime the main focus is on the content of my work and the formats and specific strategies I use to get the work done. This is a change that satisfies me a lot.

BB: Given the nature of your work, as we were just discussing, I can understand why this question is asked of you, but I think asking you to justify your work as art just skims the surface of what this question implies. What I am wondering, in a more in-depth way, is if you find that art and its related discourses offer something more to the dialogue you are trying to engage that would not be possible if your work were more formally in the vein of documentary filmmaking, journalism, or academic study. What is it that the field of art offers your work that other forms of discourse do not or cannot?

OR: Some of my works have connections to critical, investigative journalism. But even in those works where this connection exists there might be elements in the work that would not be acceptable in journalism or in an academic study. I reject the idea of neutrality, and usually do not include the voices of representatives of the state or of corporations. Many of my works are being presented as multi-channel video installations in exhibitions, which allow experiencing the work while walking in the space. A spatial presentation creates new forms of visibility; the audience can explore different perspectives on a work while walking through an exhibition. Presenting the films with different actions of civil disobedience simultaneously, for example, in the work *Everything's Coming Together While Everything's Falling Apart*, next to each other at the same time creates a much stronger impact than to see these actions one after another in a linear way like in a cinema (see Figures 1 and 2, and Videos 4 and 5). Also, my work can take the form of photography or text and image montages that are being presented in public space or in exhibitions. These formats are even further away from the fields you mention. The field of art allows me to choose any of these formats according to what I need to carry out for a particular idea. I can also change the format in the process of production or editing, when I see another format fits better to the topic. I don't know any other field but art where I can work like this.



Figures 1 and 2. Oliver Ressler, “Everything’s coming together while everything’s falling apart”, 4-channel video installation, 2016–2018 (Installation view: Lawton Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, WI, 2018; photo: Oliver Ressler).





<https://vimeo.com/237898842>

Video 4. Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart:
Code Rood, 14 min., 2018.



<https://vimeo.com/236277743/>

Video 5. Everything's coming together while everything's falling apart:
The ZAD, 36 min., 2017.

BB: I can see art offers flexibility in the way you approach communicating your ideas that other forms may not. I find the methods you employ in your work to be pragmatic. How would you describe your approach to making? How do you decide what strategies to employ to communicate your ideas? How do you choose your subjects? What is that process like from the initial kernel of the idea to its final realization?

OR: There is no single answer for this question; it changes a lot from project to project. There are some projects where I hear about a specific theme and start thinking about how to best connect to it through an artwork. But I also get invitations from art institutions to work on a specific theme or to create work for a very specific context in a museum. There are projects where I need to raise funds myself, and other ones where the entire budget comes with an invitation. There are (smaller) projects that need to be done in a few weeks, others on which I work for five years. There are in any case topics that have been really central for me for many years—democracy, ecological issues, capitalism, resistance, and alternative organizing. Most of my projects stay within this wide field of interest. Working on my projects allows me to commit a lot of time to do research on themes I am interested in. This is quite a privilege. I try to learn as much as possible about a specific topic before I start to work. In this research phase, I already start collecting different ideas of how I could proceed formally, which angles I should take, which people to involve. But I have no blueprint how to get work done. It is a

quite open-ended process that leaves space to the many unexpected things that happen when engaging with other people and specific situations. While I prepared for a long-planned trip to Istanbul to shoot my film *There Are No Syrian Refugees in Turkey* as part of my solo exhibition at SALT Galata in 2016, the attempted coup d'état took place (see Video 6). This had, as one might imagine, quite an impact on my shooting that took place only a couple of days afterward. Everything that had already been agreed on before needed to be renegotiated, and the attempted coup d'état became a central element of the film.



<https://vimeo.com/186752681>

Video 6. There are no Syrian refugees in Turkey, 30 min., 2016.

BB: Very interesting. Thank you for that example; I think it speaks to the flexibility you have in your work. To follow up, while I see your methods as being pragmatic, you often use a straightforward approach to complex subjects and concepts by using very direct methods. The subjects you present are very idealistic, yet these ideals are often negotiated as they confront reality. This creates a very interesting, almost dramatic, tension in your work. Is this intentional—or do you think this is a product of the types of subjects, situations, and ideas you are addressing?

OR: This has something to do with the nature of the subjects. For example, I have been working on factories where workers did find ways to organize labor under their own control, most recently for the film and video installation *Occupy, Resist, Produce* (see Videos 7, 8 and 9). As a result of their struggles and radicalization through the struggles, the workers come up with great ideas of how to run their business differently, in a democratic manner. But when you produce something you cannot really escape the fact that there is still capitalism all around you, that your product will need to compete with those produced from factories run upon capitalist principles and under exploitative conditions. It is very hard to establish a successful worker-controlled enterprise under these circumstances—nearly impossible. It works best in situations where many of these worker-controlled businesses exist, so that they can engage in trade with each other, establish their own market based on the principle of solidarity, as it happened in Argentina, or if they exist in a situation where they have access to governmental support, as has been the case in Venezuela. If you are a single recuperated business in a Western European country, the situation is very, very difficult, and sometimes the ideals the workers had at the beginning begin to melt.



<https://vimeo.com/136730782>

Video 7. Occupy, Resist, Produce—Vio.Me., 30 min., 2015
(with Dario Azzellini).



<https://vimeo.com/131018982>

Video 8. Occupy, Resist, Produce—Officine Zero, 33 min., 2015
(with Dario Azzellini).



<https://vimeo.com/108556043>

Video 9. Occupy, Resist, Produce— RiMaflow, 34 min., 2014
(with Dario Azzellini).

BB: That example does get to some of those nuances your approach allows for. I have noticed that many of your works can be seen either as a single-channel film or as a multi-channel installation. How do you determine this? Do you set out to create flexible works that can function in these different formats from the beginning, or is it more of a fluid process depending on the way the work takes shape as you are developing it? What decisions is it dependent upon?

OR: In most cases, it is decided in the editing process whether it will be a single- or multi-channel video installation. For exhibitions, the multi-channel video installations work really well. Their disadvantage is they cannot be presented anywhere outside of ex-

hibition spaces. My work very often is based on the voices of people in struggles, and I think the work I am doing that is based on these people's knowledge and experience must also be given back to them in a format they can access and share. Therefore, I also produce one-channel versions of many of my multi-channel video installations. So, some of my larger works exist as films and video installation, and in some cases even related photographic works are produced as well.

BB: I have noticed in much of your video work you favor the mid-shot, particularly in interviews. What draws you to this shot type in your work?

OR: I assume it is simply the wish to put the speaking person in the center of the work. I like people who analyze the situation in which they are and let us learn about their specific struggles talking in front of the camera from a strong position. I do not only want to show the faces, but also part of the bodies, to see the gesticulating hands. And especially if you film not single people but groups of people talking to each other, the mid-shot is the most likely section to choose. It also leaves plenty of space for subtitles, as all my films get translated in different language versions.

BB: You have collaborated on a couple of films with Zanny Begg. These pieces have a distinct sensibility about them with the incorporation of animation. Can you talk about these collaborations? How did they come about? What is the collaborative process like in creating these works?

OR: I have been collaborating with Zanny Begg since 2007, when we started to work on our film *What Would It Mean to Win?* that merged interviews with activists, material recorded at the G8 blockades in Heiligendamm (Germany) with three animation sequences (see Video 10). Zanny has been doing drawings before, but this was the first time she did animation for a film. While in our first film, we were together while shooting and editing; in the collaborations that followed we shared the responsibilities and got the work done with each of us working on different parts of the production on different continents. For the film *The Bull Laid Bear* (2012), I carried out the interviews with economists and activists on the financial crisis and recorded them in different cities in the United States in front of a bluescreen, while Zanny did the animation work (see Video 11). This animation allowed us to construct a kind of semi-fictitious narration around the fraudulent bankers, dumb governments, and corrupt courts. It is a really interesting aspect of the film to construct a reality through animation that is not more unreal or fictitious than the "reality" presented to us as the reality of the economy, according to which we are still meant to believe neoliberal paradigms—for example, that private enterprises are more efficient than the state. The editing work we did together, but geographically distant from each other, with Zanny being based in Sydney, and myself in Vienna. Tight production budgets often do not allow us to meet, so we rather discuss everything via Skype.



<https://vimeo.com/258939488>

Video 10. What Would It Mean to Win?, 40 min., 2008 (with Zanny Begg).



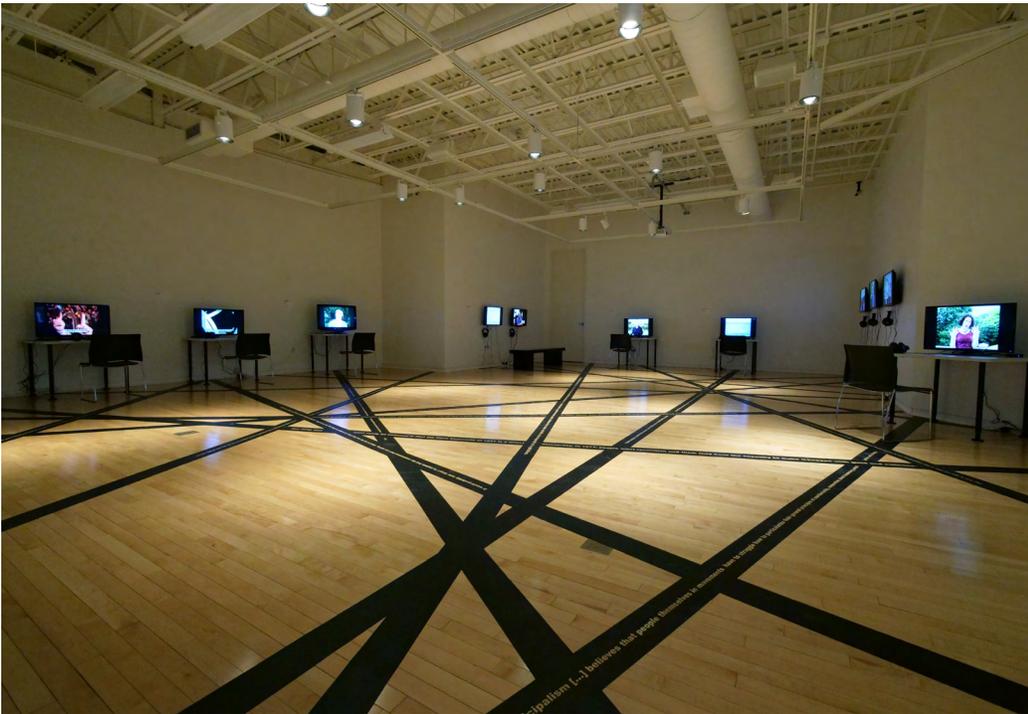
<https://vimeo.com/39507156>

Video 11. The Bull Laid Bear, 24 min., 2012 (with Zanny Begg).

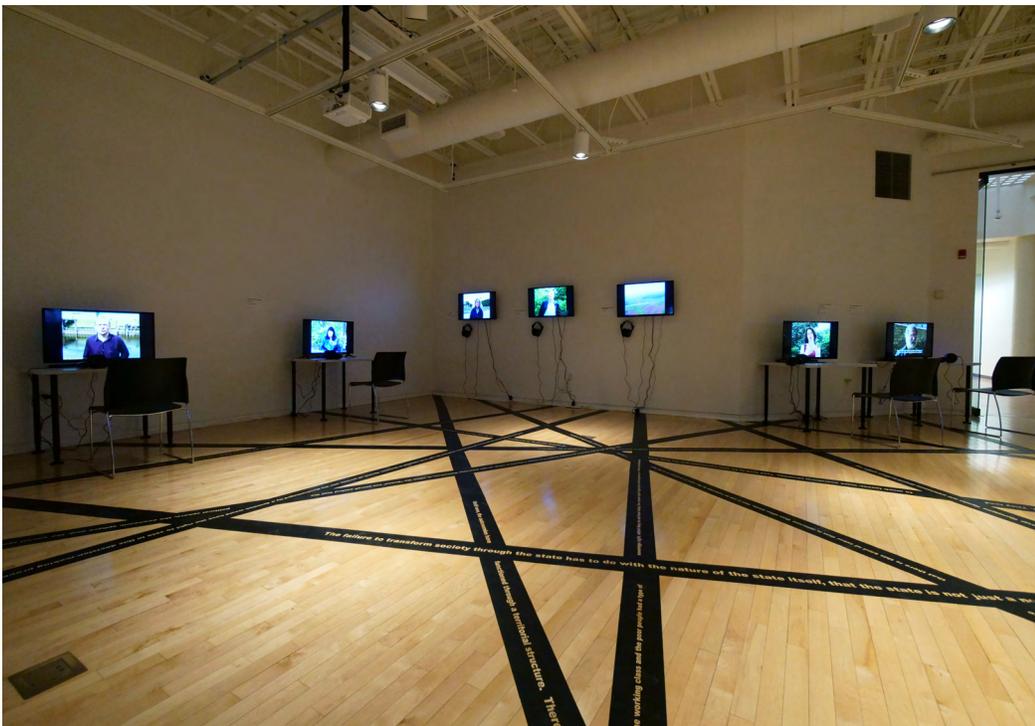
BB: Your installation *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* is a pivotal piece in your *oeuvre* (see Figures 3 and 4). Can you talk about how that piece came about? What was the initial impetus for it?

OR: I worked on *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* between 2003 and 2008, before the financial and economic crisis. I was kind of inspired by the well-known quote by Margaret Thatcher, “There is no alternative,” and thought it might be interesting to collect a few concepts or models that I considered important when we actually discuss alternatives. Of course, I am sure there must be an alternative. It was important not to highlight one concept, but to present several. Up to 2008, I produced 16 videos, each describing one model. A real democratic society cannot be achieved through a master plan that someone has in mind. It needs to be a large democratic process based on broad dialogue, involving as many people as possible. It has to be a kind of open, transparent, bottom-up development process. The idea of *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* was to create a space for thought, where people could inform themselves about the theme and strengthen their ideas of how a different economy and society might look.

BB: The scope of *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* is very ambitious; you are tackling big ideas in this installation. It seems, from what I have read, it came together in different stages and interviews were added in different iterations of the installation. Can you talk about the process of developing this work? How were interview subjects decided? How was the project funded? How many years did it take to come to its final shape, and how many versions did it go through before it came to its final state?



Figures 3 and 4. Oliver Ressler, "Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies," 16-channel video installation, 2003–2008 (Installation view: Bush Art Center Galleries, St. Norbert College, De Pere, WI, 2018; photo: Oliver Ressler).



OR: I started the project with two solo exhibitions at Galerija Škuc in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in 2003 and at Kunstraum der Universität Lüneburg (Germany) in 2004. That included five videos that were funded as part of a project by eipcp, the European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies. *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* was very successful from the beginning; I received numerous invitations to present it and traveled around with the project for several years. Whenever it was possible, I took part of the exhibition budget to create one more video. It finally became a 16-channel video installation in 2007. Even though I considered the project as ongoing and open-ended, I stopped working on it in 2008. Of course, my interest in alternatives continued, but I was keen on working in different formats and other contexts. *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* includes different models that were influenced by a socialist- or anarchist-thinking tradition, highlighting different ideas of direct decision-making processes and self-management, and aiming at flat hierarchies.

BB: The *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* installation seems to be generating a second wave of critical response. I know it was recently presented in the Museum of Capitalism in Oakland, California, and now it is here as the anchor for this survey of your work. What do you think of the reassessment and renewed interest in this installation?

OR: *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* was presented in 21 exhibitions between 2003 and 2008, in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. Even though I had some of my works presented in the United States, this specific installation was never presented. It appears the extreme right-wing political shift has helped a bit in bringing *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* to North America. For me, it is exciting to install this work again, which is still the largest installation I worked on, and I am super-curious to learn how it will be perceived and if it will be able to generate a debate.

BB: Your installation *What Is Democracy?* has similarly been experiencing a critical re-evaluation and was recently exhibited as a part of Documenta 14, in Kassel, Germany (see Video 12). What do you think of the reassessment and the renewed interest in this work?



<https://vimeo.com/224024405>

Video 12. *What Is Democracy?*, 118 min., 2009.

OR: Both *Alternative Economics*, *Alternative Societies* and *What Is Democracy?* are closely connected with each other. While *Alternative Economics*, *Alternative Societies* directly draws on the knowledge of economists, political scientists, or historians who wrote or did profound research on specific models or concepts, *What Is Democracy?* is based on conversations with activists in 18 different cities around the world. They criticize the hegemonic model of representative democracy and refer to ideas of how democracy could be imagined differently, in a sense of really involving people in decision-making processes. We as a society are facing a multifaceted crisis—an economic, ecological, social, and political crisis. As my work not only analyzes and criticizes, but also provides space for different forms of alternative organizing, there seems to be much interest in my work these days.

BB: The curators of Documenta 14 staged what has been described as a combative press conference during the Kassel opening, where they pledged to fight neofascism. The election of Donald Trump in the United States and Brexit in the UK are most often cited as harbingers of this new wave of reactionary politics across the United States and Europe. At the same time, there have been a number of events after the U.S. presidential election and after Brexit that seem to be halting the momentum of this Western right-wing populist revolt. Given your analysis and critique of politics over the last couple of decades, do you see these trends as a cause for alarm or as an aberration? Should artists and activists be rethinking their tactics in the face of neofascism, or do you see that analysis of the current political situation as alarmist?

OR: I see the entire political shift to the right as a central tendency of the past two decades, not only in the United States but also in the UK. This has clearly economic reasons. It has to do with the widening gap between rich and poor, which makes it more and more difficult to survive in this jungle. The pumping of trillions of dollars into the global financial system, into the pockets of banks, shareholders, and the super-rich, only leaves austerity for the majority. I see this increased inequality as a main reason for the right-wing antiestablishment backlash. Even the World Economic Forum, the annual gathering of world business and political leaders in Switzerland, warned that the growing concentration of income and wealth at the very top of society is the biggest single risk to the stability of the economic and political order. I hope the resistance against this shipwreck known as the economy will become stronger in the coming years globally, and I hope cultural producers can play an active role in this much-needed social transition process. Therefore, I try to produce work that is not only informative, but also mobilizes people to become active.

BB: You have been critiquing representative forms of democracy for some time, and making an argument for more direct forms of democratic engagement. In your work, you highlight the way activist organizations enact direct forms of democracy organizationally. Are there examples you are aware of that demonstrate a larger, more scalable way of

enacting direct democracy in society as a way to move beyond representative forms? This is an issue that was touched upon in your piece *What Is Democracy?* What is your answer to this question?

OR: Yeah, there are a few examples. The most well-known probably is the autonomous self-governed region of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico. Those capable of seeing behind this veil of lies generated by corporate media (and also a few more leftist ones) will find large-scale experiments involving millions of people in direct decision-making processes in Venezuela. The system of *Consejos Comunales* (community councils) was the most successful around 2010 when Venezuelans had the possibility to decide on their concerns collectively via assemblies in more than 30,000 *Consejos Comunales*. But direct decision-making also spreads to the economy; today, we find lots of worker-controlled companies.

BB: You focus considerable energy on documenting nonhierarchical direct forms of democracy in which consensus decision making is the goal. While that may be laudable in these activist organizations, where everyone involved is working toward the same goal, how do you think that would translate into a larger form of social organization, especially in increasingly ideologically divided societies? If an obstruction occurs in representative forms, where an impasse can be overcome by the will of a majority, wouldn't consensus lead to the possibility of even more obstruction?

OR: Some groups move away from consensual decisions when they feel it does obstruct their work. Sometimes, consensus is impossible to reach and those people who want to do something together move forward with what they want to achieve. Some groups decided a qualified majority is sufficient to take certain actions. I believe the most important thing is to build alliances between different groups who can agree on a set of terms to reach a specific goal (an action consensus). Those who don't agree simply do not participate. Certain ideals such as consensus must never be sacrosanct; otherwise, the result will be immobility and inaction.

BB: You have spent a great deal of time critiquing capitalism as an economic model in different ways, from the dictates of the market to the unregulated forms of post-Soviet capitalism, as well as the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and your investigations into theoretical alternatives to capitalism. Where did this vein of your work come from? When did you begin tackling capitalism as a central subject of your critique?

OR: In the mid-1990s, early in my artistic development, I was primarily focusing on ecological issues and this complex of immigration, right-wing politics, and borders. Working on and reading about these themes, it became obvious that these issues have a common basis, which is capitalism. It was just much more difficult to address this directly in public at the time, in comparison with today. The aftershocks of the global financial crisis

changed many people's perceptions. In most Western European countries, the majority of people know capitalism isn't working to their advantage. The question stays: How to overcome it, through which strategies, and how to establish a truly democratic system?

BB: I can see that as a central question in your work, which leads to my next question: Several philosophers, from Fredric Jameson to Slavoj Žižek and others, have made the claim that for the prevailing ideology it is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism. I would say that much of your work refutes this ideology and suggests ways that the end of capitalism is something that can be envisioned. What are your thoughts on how capitalism limits our imagination to think beyond it?

OR: Well, the problem is, if we do not manage to end the capitalist system, “the end of the world” might come for more and more people as further regions and states will fail, will be governed by even more corrupt and fascist governments; the transnational corporations will take over even more of the existing wealth; and, as David Harvey states, the accumulation through dispossession will be intensified, pushing hundreds of millions in the Global South over the edge. But also, too quick changes will lead to catastrophes. This will require a democratically driven transition period, the direction of which will be formed as a result of negotiation between emancipatory movements.

BB: Do you think that capitalism by its nature will always interfere with the functioning of democracy, or is there a market-based economic model that would be compatible with a direct democratic society? How does one create a liberatory economy? Perhaps this question is really about bringing us full circle again to the *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies* installation: What are some of the alternative economic models that, in your view, hold the most promise for a world beyond capitalism?

OR: It is clear that the current system of neoliberal capitalism is not compatible with direct democracy. Switzerland is a country with strong components of direct democracy. There are numerous cases when voters elected against their own interests, because they are afraid economic problems might occur otherwise. For example, in a referendum some years ago, Swiss people voted against limiting the payment of CEOs in corporations to 12 times of the lowest-paid staff because the industry was lobbying heavily against it, arguing it would undermine Switzerland's competitiveness. I think it will be impossible to run our complex societies without a certain amount of economic planning, especially for larger infrastructure projects, energy, public transport, etc., that require international coordination. This is also important ecologically, as global warming requires an incredibly large investment globally in new zero-energy housing, new public transport infrastructure, and investment in solar energy and windmills to outrun fossil fuels. And you can hand over a lot of economic activity to workers' control. Concepts such as Michael Albert's “Participatory Economy” or Takis Fotopoulos' “Inclusive Democracy” outline some brilliant ideas (see Video 13). But, as said, how the future economy will look will need to be decided through democratic means by movements in struggle.



<https://vimeo.com/192424602>

Video 13. Participatory Economics, from *Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies*, 37 min., 2003.

BB: With this being the first survey of your work in the United States, what are your thoughts about the selection of works chosen for this exhibition? I know the threads the curatorial team were attempting to bring together in our selection of works, but what are your perceptions? What are the central ideas you see running through the works on view? Is there any work you would have liked to see added to the exhibition, or excluded?

OR: If there were works I wished to exclude, you can be sure I wouldn't have made them available for a presentation. I had several larger survey exhibitions in the past few years in Europe, most recently at MNAC—National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest; SALT Galata, Istanbul; and Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo—CAAC, Seville. In some, I was given a *carte blanche* and was free to present whatever works I wished. I, in part, took over the job of the curator as well, which gave me the possibility to review a few earlier works and to see how they work in a dialogue with newer works. I really love this work of looking back and seeing what is still valid. It is a bit different this time in that the curatorial team had a quite precise idea what they wanted to present. This has given me an opportunity to learn through this process which existing works the curators think are of importance given the current political crisis in the United States.

BB: I do have one final question for you: Who or what currently inspires you, currently motivates you? What pushes you and your ideas forward? Also, is there anything you find yourself returning to as an inspirational ground, something or someone that continues to nourish you?

OR: I draw inspiration out of so many things. These can be self-organized autonomous zones, such as the ZAD in the west of France. I love meeting interesting people, activists, artists, filmmakers, and writers. I enjoy browsing the web doing research and to see exhibitions. Also, to participate in demonstrations or activities of civil disobedience can be really empowering. All these things combined provide inspiration for my work. I could come up with an idea for a new project every week. I am full of zest for action. The only limitation is a day's limitation of 24 hours.

KAA RADA (STAY READY)

PRIMOZ KOVACIC



Born and raised in Slovenia, Primoz Kovacic is an entrepreneur and geodetic engineer who lives in Nairobi, Kenya. Primoz is the founder and director of Spatial Collective, an enterprise that supports communities and organizations in adopting available technologies to collect data that is important to them. A PopTech Social Innovations Fellow (class of 2015) and former teaching and research assistant at the School of Media and Public Affairs, the George Washington University, Primoz has more than ten years of professional experience in land surveying and GIS, technology training, community organizing and participatory development, establishing collective action initiatives, and research. He has significant field experience in Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Swaziland, South Africa, Nigeria, and the USA.

Editor's Note: Primoz Kovacic is a geodetic engineer and an amateur photographer in Nairobi. AIA approached him for permission to publish a few of his pictures.

In Nairobi, you never let your guard down. This city eats the weak. You must put up a front, a face that tells everyone you are not to be messed with, you are strong, you are aware. To let go is a sign of weakness; it is a sign of intimacy and truth. This city is made of people. Vulnerability is private, but is there to find for those who know what it really means to be vulnerable.

These are my friends.

Thank you friends, for gifting me this.



Figure 1a. Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Nairobi.



Figure 1b. Mathare, Nairobi.



Figure 2a. A man in a leather jacket with band Rancid and anarchy sign drawn in the back. Mathare, Nairobi.



Figure 2b. “Katoto Kel Askofu” or “Child of a Bishop” written on the back of the man’s jacket. Viwandani, Nairobi.



Figure 3a. Isaac "Kaka" during a group meeting. Mathare, Nairobi.



Figure 3b. Isaac "Kaka" sitting next to a peace graffiti. Mathare, Nairobi.



Figure 4a. Eddy during a boxing match in Kibera. Kibera, Nairobi.



Figure 4b. Eddy sitting in the street. Mathare, Nairobi.



Figure 5a. The house door with a beautiful sheet. Viwandani, Nairobi.



Figure 5b. Vacant room available. Viwandani, Nairobi.



Figure 6a. Joe. Kibera, Nairobi.



Figure 6b. Joe with Kibera in the background. Kibera, Nairobi.



Figure 7a. Members of Mathare Empire hip-hop group freestyling. Mathare, Nairobi.



Figure 7b. Ebu. Mathare, Nairobi.

NETWORKED CULTURES: TRANSLATIONS, SYMBOLS, AND LEGACIES

Some Thoughts on Europe after the Nation State

RONALD GRÄTZ



Ronald Grätz, born in 1958 in São Paulo, has been the Secretary General of the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen and the editor of the quarterly magazine KULTURAUSTAUSCH since September 2008. He studied German language and literature, Catholic theology and philosophy at Tübingen and Frankfurt. He was, inter alia, Deputy Director of a UNESCO project school in São Paulo, Head of cultural programmes at the Goethe-Institut Moscow, Consultant to the Board of Trustees at the head office of the Goethe-Institut Munich and Director of the Goethe-Institut in Portugal.

Editor's note: The following keynote was presented in Edinburgh on January 11, 2018, at the conference on “Networked Cultures: Translations, Symbols, and Legacies.”

I am very happy to be able to be with you here in Edinburgh today, and I am very grateful and honoured to be able to share a few thoughts about the cultural development of Europe. “Networked Cultures” express precisely what I want to reflect on. I am interested in a Europe of cultures, a post-national-state cultural politics, and a new perspective.

I myself, as Professor Singh said, am a protagonist in the field of culture, a cultural manager. I work in the field of international cultural relations for a very independent organisation that disseminates culture—the ifa, Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen or Institute for International Cultural Relations, which is like a partner organisation of the Goethe-Institut. It is important to know that we are independent of government and state, but work close to society. Our mission is not nation branding or soft power, and we do not pursue any specific interests. Instead, our work is conducted with a sense of global responsibility. We build bridges between science, art and culture, and politics and the media. With 180 staff today, we have been doing this for a hundred years.

I myself am Brazilian by birth, and I am a convinced European and “regionalist,” meaning that my Europe is a Europe of cultures. And I am a pragmatic man, as I believe that it is successful practice that works and convinces people. It is ultimately always the test of the relevance of theory.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Edinburgh is not just any city in Europe, but rather in many ways (together with Barcelona) a magnifying glass for the issues that matter to Europe today.

How can a new productive relationship between regions, nation states, and the European Union come about? Or is the nation state going to become obsolete in Europe?

What is the role of culture in this difficult development process?

Can culture give Europe a new perspective and provide direction?

What can people working in civil society and cultural politics achieve?

I believe that these are major questions about the future of Europe. They are very hotly discussed now within the European Union, but the discourse is relevant for all European states, regions, and cultures.

That you all work on the networking of culture is very good—and it is important. There are not many people who are looking for new ways in culture. If you see a chance that we might develop a new Europe and post-national politics out of culture, then I share that hope, and I want to explain why I am so optimistic.

PROLOGUE

Let me begin with some literature. Towards the end of the First World War, Hermann Hesse was asking himself what the future humankind would look like. In his story “The European,” he addressed this question with a reinterpretation of the Biblical story of Noah’s Ark.

In Hesse’s story, the “great patriarch” Noah not only rescues the animals from the floods, but also people of every kind, including the “last European.” Hesse writes: “The patriarch smiled benevolently. His work was done, and he had rescued one of every species of earthly beings.”

There ensues a dialogue between animals and humans, in which each tells of their special abilities, all except for the European, who has nothing convincing to offer.

“My gift is the intellect,” the European says. “Show it,” the others call out. “There is nothing to show. [...] What makes me special is my intelligence.” [...] “Intelligence? Then

show us your intelligence.” [...] “There is nothing to see. [...] I can imagine and reshape the whole world in my brain.”

Then Noah asks: “What is the good of that, recreating the world, which God has already made?” The animals applaud. The patriarch concludes:

“Children, [...] you have a lot to forgive these white men, as it is they who once again have devastated our poor world up to the point of a last judgement. But see, God has sent a sign telling us what He intends to do with the white man. You all [...] have brought your dear wives to begin a new life on earth as soon as you can—you have brought your negress, you your Indian woman, and you your Eskimo wife. Only the man from Europe is alone. For a long time, this made me sad, but now I believe I know why. This man is sent to us as a warning.”

The European—a warning that is as topical today as it was back in 1917, when Hesse wrote his story. Again we may have the impression that Europe is moving towards a “last judgement,” with increasing right-wing populism, overt right-wing nationalism, new self-confessed autocrats, protectionism against everything that is not “our own,” limitations to and even the abolition of freedom of opinion, isolationist and exit movements, anti-Euro sentiment, financial problems and problems in economic policy for states, regions, and the banks that are allegedly essential to the survival of the system, extreme social inequality, an increasing number of refugees and asylum seekers that are presented and seen and felt as threat, the fear of Islamist terrorism and the fear of a loss of social standing—the EU and Europe are indeed in a problematic state, perhaps even a miserable state. As in Hesse’s story, “Europeans” right now do not seem to be in a position to constructively determine their own future. Instead, we seem to be preparing our own demise and to be offering a terrible example to the whole of humanity.

NATION AND STATE

The fact that Europe is becoming weaker in relation to the world powers shows us that we cannot continue to fail to find solutions to key issues, as we have been doing for too many years, and that we cannot live without a justification for the existence of the Union that creates a common identity.

The Iran treaty that the United States has withdrawn from, new tariffs and the threat of a trade war, of course Brexit and all the people who have said their own farewells to the idea of Europe, all show that Europe has not succeeded in explaining its undoubted great benefits to its people in such a way that they see the idea of the European Union as more important than the interests-based politics of their own states, and that they see Europe not just as an anonymous administrator, but a shaper of the future. That they appreciate freedom, security, relative affluence, social security for the elderly, infrastructure, the health system, and education (notwithstanding all the inadequacies in some countries) more than they once again bemoan overly bureaucratic rules on the shape of cucumbers (if that was ever the case).



Figures 1 and 2. Opening of the ifa exhibition “An Atlas of Commoning,”
Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Berlin 2018. Photo: Simone Gilges,
© ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen).



So far, people do not believe that Brussels can guarantee security. They rather trust their own state to protect them against the EU, as it competes with other states to gain as many benefits as possible for its citizens. That is why the EU is a place where everyone's main aim is to promote their own interests. The nation state is seen as the most reliable guarantee of the future.

But what is a nation state? That a nation is identical with a state is very rarely the case, as nations are formed through spaces of knowledge and identity, spaces of language and history, rituals, traditions, and specific characteristics. They are what we call "home." Nation has much in common with region. Nations do not end at state borders. Nation is a legal construct, whereby the nation is everyone in a legal space. And the nation is also, as Marcel Mauss says, "institutionalized solidarity." Nation, home, identity—these are volatile concepts. But I am not using the concept of the nation in a legal sense here, but as a working term to show that it is what is not related to the state that is the true "glue" in Europe.

The state is the regulatory administrative unit. We need regulatory authorities and a functioning societal organisation. The state guarantees—at least in democracies—the division of powers into the judiciary, the legislative, and the executive, with freedom of the media as the fourth estate. This means the rule of law, protection, freedom of opinion, and provision for needs. But the state does not construct and structure people's identities.

We have states and we have nations, meaning states in which nations live—in Spain, some years ago, there was talk of a state of four nations.

If the concept of the nation basically has more to do with the region, the home and identity than with the state, then the Europe of the people is a Europe of the regions, of cultural, linguistic, and knowledge spaces, spaces of communication, and cultural heritage. It is not a Europe of states. A Europe that is really a union will therefore be post-nationalist.

In many countries in Europe, however, the new right is appealing to the concept of the nation, arguing that a national (and culturally defined) unity—if not purity—must be defended.

But what might new models of international cooperation beyond the concept of the nation state look like?

Guy Verhofstadt, head of the liberal group in the European parliament called in "Europe's Last Chance" (2017) for much closer links within the EU. Drawing on Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian freedom fighter of the nineteenth century, Verhofstadt wishes to declare the "United States of Europe."

Thomas Piketty sees things similarly, publishing the brochure "Pour un traité de démocratisation de l'Europe" with three colleagues in 2017, suggesting that the Eurozone be strengthened, as a key step towards a new Europe.



Figures 3 and 4. Fellows of ifa's CrossCulture Programme during a workshop, Stuttgart 2018.
Photo/©: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)/Wolfgang Kuhnle.



In a recent interview with the German weekly *DIE ZEIT*, Jürgen Habermas suggested “deepened and binding cooperation in the small circle of states willing to cooperate.”

Sociologist Ulrich Beck, who died a short while ago, favours the model of a “post-imperial empire.”

Only Emmanuel Macron has set out a broader vision for Europe, in his Strasbourg address. Since the Renaissance, since Kant’s dream of perpetual peace that led to the idea of the United Nations, liberal politics has been searching for “universal peace.” In his new proposals for the future of the European Union, Macron sees this idea as not far-reaching enough. He says that we need to draw on Churchill’s 1946 Zurich speech to the academic youth. It is a matter of the whole “European family,” and not about mulling over the state of the 19 or the 27, or however many it is. For Macron, we need to rethink the Europe of 47. Macron argues that we need a Europe that includes all these countries. This is the only way to continue to live in peace sustainably. This Europe will not need to be based on contracts, as is the EU.

The states of the EU are bound to contracts and laws. We also need to address customs and habits, culture and values. This was what mattered for thinkers like Václav Havel and Umberto Eco, Bronislaw Geremek and György Konrád, when they thought about Europe. They wanted an “organic” Europe.

In November 2017, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, Jeremy Adler, professor of German at King’s College London, suggested founding a network of European academies. He argued the need for a new intellectually independent academy uniting the leading thinkers of all the countries, artists and scientists, so as to share ideas, set standards, and to promote intellectual activity. Examples are the highly significant *Academia della Crusca*, founded in 1853 in Florence, and the national cohesion provided by the *Académie Française*, founded in 1635, or the *Royal Society*, founded in London in 1660.

This new academy must be based in Greece, the birthplace of the sciences. It could lead to lively exchange, better cohesion, and then to the development of a European identity, argues Jeremy Adler. Perhaps, this idea relates to your own thoughts when planning this congress in Edinburgh. I think it is a brilliant idea.

I hope you are not thinking that all of this is typically German, considering the sometimes problematic political role played by Germany in Europe over at least the past 10 years. I think that Germany, with its free states and federal states, is a successful and pretty well-functioning model for uniting regions (one might also say nations) in one state with all necessary autonomies and rights, creating a single form that historically speaking was a relatively artificial “Germany.”

I would like to more closely address the ideas of two important proponents of models for a new Europe whose publications have led to many important debates.



Figures 5 and 6. Fellows of ifa's CrossCulture Programme during a workshop, Stuttgart 2019.
Photo/©: ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen)/Wolfgang Kuhnle.



Ulrike Guérot, professor in Krems, published a book entitled “Warum Europa eine Republik werden muss! Eine politische Utopie” (“Why Europe Must Become a Republic! A Political Utopia”). She writes: “We must come up with a new idea for Europe.” The utopia that she outlines goes as follows: “The citizens of the European regions and cities build a quite new Europe: decentral, regional, post-national, parliamentary, democratic, sustainable, and social. A political and institutional system.” The post-national democracy in Europe sketched out here would be a network of European regions and cities, over which the protecting roof of a European republic would arch, and under that arch all European citizens would be politically equal. Guérot speaks of a “coherent European unity project beyond the nation states, oriented on the history of European cultures and ideas.”

Austrian Robert Menasse published a book “Der europäische Landbote. Die Wut der Bürger und der Friede Europas”—(“The European Courier. The Anger of Citizens and Europe’s Peace”). He wrote: “Either the Europe of the nation states will fall away, or the project of overcoming the nation states will fall away. [...] Either Europe will be more and bigger, but peacefully this time, the avant-garde for the world, or Europe will once and for all prove to the world that key lessons from history cannot be learned, and that there is no human way to turn attractive utopias into the realm of reality.”

Menasse is not advocating a super state, and not any new centralism. He is calling for a constitution for a free and peaceful Europe of the regions, a “continent without nations, a free association of regions, not a super-state centralism, but lived democratic subsidiarity, with a centre in which real institutions of community work on sensible frameworks and guarantee the legality—is it worth fighting for this? How does this compare to a commitment to defend the democracy that was once given to us?”

According to Menasse, we need to invent a new democracy, a democracy that is not linked to the idea of the nation state. Of course, a post-nation-state democracy cannot have the same form as a nation state. “Our democracies to date and our concepts of them, our experiences with democracies, our expectations of them and our standards concerning them—these were all national democracies. Of course a post-national Europe must be a democratic Europe, but the form of its democracy is different.”

Menasse sees regional identity as the root of European identity. It is the continuation and securing of the European peace project and it can secure a united Europe after the national state for all of our futures.

When thinking about a post-nation-state Europe, then must not fall victim to illusions:

- Many states are still in the process of nation-building, such as the states of the former Soviet Union.
- Some states wish to increase their identity as nation states again, in a form of defence against a loss of significance, sovereignty, protection and security.

- The concept of the nation is perverted and must be defended against its false use as a cultural nation that leads to the idea of a leading culture for migrants.
- The EU cannot work as post-nation-state entity overnight. We are talking of a long process.
- Culture is not a national “glue” on the path towards post-nation-statehood, but it is by nature a platform and a venue for discourse, a *modus vivendi*.



Figure 7. Martin Roth Symposium “What can culture do?,” Mohsen Mostafavi (Harvard Graduate School of Design), Nico Daswani (World Economic Forum), Mateo Kries (Vitra Design Museum), Sarah Bergh (Pedagogical Institute for the city of Munich), Berlin 2018.
Photo/©: Paul Hahn.

A EUROPE OF CULTURES

There is no European culture—there are the cultures of Europe. There is a shared European cultural and historical framework, consisting of Roman law, Greek philosophy, the Christian and Jewish religions, the values of the Enlightenment, and general declarations of human rights. This is our shared cultural heritage.

This unifying canon of values and the diversity in unity form the core of our coexistence—culture is the core of our coexistence. We are some of the cultures of Europe—

and often we are several cultures, since identity, which is primarily formed by cultural points of reference, is complex, ambiguous, volatile, and multifaceted.

Europe and its states have a chance for the future if we can create a true union, a true cultural union. This would mean the end of some rights of subsidiarity, but also create a new sense of purpose and identity. This is the chance for a new narrative derived from culture and an emotionally and rationally founded context of justification—a narrative of how we came to be what we are, and why this is fortuitous and can take us forwards into the future.

I am very aware that narratives cannot be wilfully invented; they develop in their own ways, leading to the assertion of meaning, such as the slogan “No more war” in Europe after the Second World War, or “Nuclear power, no thanks” after Fukushima—the decision to abandon nuclear energy; or “We can manage” in the light of the large numbers of refugees—we will help immediately (even if I believe that this was a political mistake). A new European narrative will emerge from the nations, from the existence of the nations, and from culture.



Figure 8. Martin Roth Symposium “What can culture do?,” Wayne Modest (Head of the Research Centre for Material Culture at the National Museum of World Cultures, Netherlands) and Geraldine de Bastion (political scientist and consultant), Berlin 2018.

Photo/©: Paul Hahn.

Protagonists in the field of culture, scientists, practitioners, politicians, the media, and institutions are all analysing in detail the many different ways that the loss of an awareness of unifying cultural foundations to the European idea is one of the main causes of our helplessness when faced with a plethora of problems, and one of the motifs for what has become a fashionable opposition to the EU. Nationalist and conservative governments and parties appropriate culture as the core of their nationalism and use the idea of a defined lead culture to posit the threat of “multiculturalism.”

- How can culture contribute to bringing the concept of a European community of values alive again?
- How strong is a shared cultural foundation on which European politics might build?
- What can culture offer to counter the distance of European institutions to citizens?
- When is culture not a form of national refuge, but the embodiment of the principle of openness and networking?

The crisis of the EU is a challenge that culture has to face, meaning the people and institutions involved in culture. A crisis is an opportunity to find new meaning in Europe, also by using culture. When, if not now, should we be using cultural strengths to develop new prospects for the future? We must be using the means of culture and cultural policy to give new life to our hard fought achievements in our liberal and democratic order, but now within very different and complex societies of migration. Culture, the cultural scene, and art are the factors in the development of society on which the creation of convincing alternatives to illiberal nationalism will depend.

We saw in the late years of the Weimar Republic that the world of culture did not oppose right-wing nationalism and emerging fascist national socialism decisively enough, and that culture was turned into a manipulative propaganda tool. When we ask whether culture can be a key building block of a new Europe, by establishing public, ethical and political resistance against increasing nationalism, then we are assuming that culture can have a bridging function between different European identities, and that this can lead to the development of a new narrative of community. Culture as an ideal value builds bridges between people with different ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds and strengthens intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

This is also emphasised in a 2016 joint statement by the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, on a future EU strategy for international cultural relations. The states of Europe and their cultures have shared roots, they say, and a shared cultural heritage

that unites them in diversity. Cultural relations are the fundamental force behind social cohesion in Europe, a priori to our sustainable economic development and processes of democratisation—and successful cultural relations also work to prevent conflicts. The aim must be to utilise culture in Europe to create and to protect the spaces where culturally diverse narratives can coexist, where histories and images can be read differently, and yet where they all can be accepted and understood.

This EEAS strategy defines guiding principles for the action of the EU, names the major fields where cultural cooperation between partner countries can take place, and appeals for a concerted strategic approach to cultural relations. Laying down guiding principles aims to make sure that the EU's foreign affairs policy and action contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity, human rights, and intercultural dialogue.

1. Culture should be better used as a driving force for sustainable social and economic development (particularly in the creative industries and their potential for rural development and job creation).
2. The role of culture and of intercultural dialogue as a key for the sustainable consolidation of peace and reconciliation should be strengthened.
3. Collaboration and cooperation for the protection of our cultural heritage should be sustainably reinforced. This includes the preservation and the development of cultural heritage for tourism and economic development in crisis regions (such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan) by means of knowledge transfer and grants.

A deeper awareness of the significance of Europe can be attained primarily by means of Europe's culture, which has existed throughout the centuries independently of state borders and political and military conflicts. The unity of Europe does not derive from its sameness, but from the ways in which its diversity is seen. There cannot be one single Europe; instead, it is the ways in which we guarantee our basic ideas and values that distinguishes us Europeans from societies based on religious authorities, and from authoritarian and dictatorial states and tribal societies.

I am not thinking here of a melding of cultures into one, and not of cultures coexisting adjacent to one another, nor of them adding up to make a form of togetherness. The harmonisation of national and regional cultural specifics is also not the answer. We need the infinite expression of all identities within Europe and a mutual understanding and respect in a community of never-ending learning.

While preserving autonomy and recognising aesthetic freedoms, a European cultural policy must also make pragmatic suggestions for a cultural contribution to a process of European unification—in the sense of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, which defines culture as an economic good and yet also emphasises its aesthetic autonomy. Pure competition, as in all other areas of the economy and in the creative industries,

cannot be the way forward for culture, which needs different criteria for measuring its effects, success, significance, future, and meaning. If we wish to see the cognitive and emotional dimension of plurality, tolerance, freedom, and democracy, which are basic cultural achievements and success, as the core motives behind political, social, and economic prosperity, then this must be accompanied by well-founded scholarly reflection and also by comprehensive cultural education.

Cultural politicians today must take into account—within the scope of their national responsibilities—that Europe requires the cultural input of the entire European cultural landscape. We are used to the ministers of the economy, the interior, and perhaps also of agriculture seeing themselves as the indispensable and responsible ministers when it comes to shaping Europe. But culture is the primary way of illustrating why we see ourselves as Europeans, and it is culture that makes us able to present ourselves as recognisable to the world.

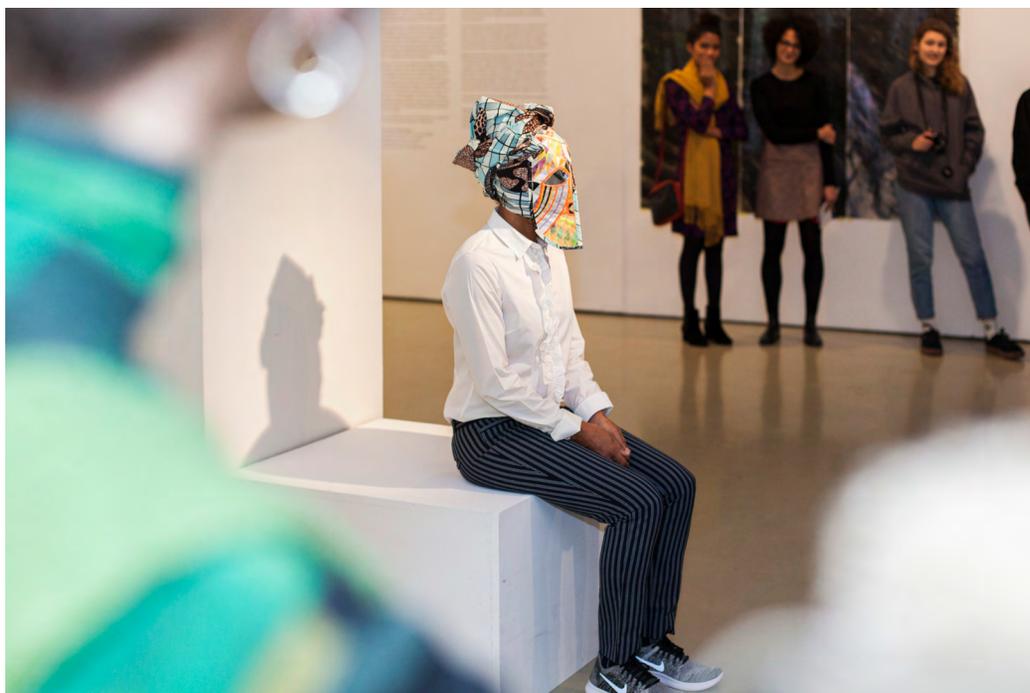


Figure 9. Wura-Natasha Ogunji: Every Mask I Ever Loved, within “Untie to tie—On Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Societies”, ifa Gallery Berlin 2018, Photo: Victoria Tomaschko, © ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen).

A shared national identity for every functioning democracy is essential, and I see no reason why this shared identity cannot also be conceived as a European identity. The European states have many differences, for sure, including cultural differences, but I do

not think that these differences are so large that we cannot build a shared identity around key values like freedom, solidarity and human rights.

It is one of Europe's great strengths to appreciate and to protect Europe's diversity. The cultures of Europe are something that we Europeans can be proud of, precisely because of their diversity. I myself am proud of the cultural heritage that this continent has produced. Whether it is Picasso or van Gogh, Homer or Hartman von Aue, Kafka, Cervantes or Shakespeare, Beethoven or Puccini—philosophy, music, science, and literature from the continent of Europe have shaped our lives and the identities of us all. Cultural diversity is not just a value in itself—it is real and has the potential to create a real Europe based on culture—a Europe of cultures. Post-national.

CONVERSATION ABOUT MONUMENT FOR CHELSEA MANNING WITH PROFESSOR ROSALYN DEUTSCHE, NEW YORK, JUNE 7, 2018

JOHN REARDON

Monument for Chelsea Manning is one of a number of ongoing projects by John Reardon. Reardon is Artist in Residence in the Politics Department at Goldsmiths, London. Johnreardon.info

This conversation took place as part of the project Monument for Chelsea Manning, an ongoing attempt to permanently site a traditional bronze head and shoulders in the small market town of Haverfordwest, Wales. I wanted to have this conversation with Professor Deutsche for myriad reasons not least because she has been so instrumental in disabusing us of the idea that there is a pre-given or proper meaning of public space. And how we need to be mindful that “social space is produced and structured by conflicts” (1996:xxiv).

I embarked on Monument for Chelsea Manning after discovering Chelsea’s link to Haverfordwest. Her mother Susan was born in Haverfordwest and it’s where she met Chelsea’s father Brian who was at the time stationed at nearby RAF Brawdy as part of the U.S. Navy. Susan and Brian left for the United States in 1979 and had Chelsea in 1987. In 2001, Susan returned to Haverfordwest with Chelsea who attended the towns Tasker Milward secondary school for several years before returning to the United States and joining the army.

The project attempts to bring Monument for Chelsea Manning together with this small Welsh market town and as part of this process attempt to frame and work with the controversy this produces as “incommensurable”—in the manner Kent. A. Ono and John M. Sloop describe in their essay *Critical Rhetorics of Controversy*—as outlaw discourse or critique. “In incommensurable controversies, the legitimacy of the logics and institutions employed are at base being undermined ... An outlaw critique looks for logics that could potentially undermine dominant logics rather than for controversies that illustrate how well it [the system] works ...” (1999:10).

In 2016, I approached Pembrokeshire County Council with the project and was told—off the record—that it would jeopardise inward investment to the town and divide the community. In short, I would never be granted planning permission for this. I also approached the churches in the town as they have a separate planning body and the pow-



Figure 1. Model of Monument for Chelsea Manning and bronze cast before cleaning 2018/19.



Figure 2. Haverfordwest, Wales.

er—within reason—to grant planning permission. Most of the churches—of which there are many—didn't want to engage with me about the project and the one church that did agree explained they only allowed monuments to be erected on church property to “extraordinary people.” Despite arguing how Chelsea fitted this criterion; how she is courageous and how she chose her own destiny, the church argued she wasn't extraordinary in church-terms. In other words, as someone who gave her life to the church. It was then I began canvassing support for the project from Assembly Members in the Welsh Assembly, Cardiff and Welsh MPs in the House of Parliament, London. I received a mixed response in terms of support for the project, although I was invited to show and talk about it in the Welsh Assembly and it was also raised in a live debate on First Ministers questions.

And why I'm relating all of this is because I also want to think about where this project starts and stops? There is a bronze head and shoulders, a temporary site for this, a limited-edition publication to accompany it and also a possible walking tour. In other words, there's a kind of “unsettled” space or space of potential, opening up around the work which I'm interested in sustaining for as long as possible.

I began the project by contacting Chelsea's family in Haverfordwest as well as her campaign team in the United States and the UK when Chelsea was still serving her sentence in Leavenworth Penitentiary. From there, I got in touch with Philadelphia-based portrait artist Alicia Neal who was commissioned by Chelsea's campaign team to make a portrait of her for a campaign poster. At the time Chelsea wanted a new image of herself commissioned for this and Alicia Neal was chosen from a number of shortlisted portrait artists. Alicia worked from a small self-portrait of Chelsea and through written correspondence with her in Leavenworth.

Using Alicia's illustration of Chelsea, I began working with a designer to digitally model this before beginning to model it in clay. What I liked about Alicia's illustration and why I initially chose to work from it was that I thought it spoke as much to the realm of the imagination as to the actual real-world campaign to release Chelsea in the sense of who Chelsea imagined she could be, who we were imagining Chelsea to be, what public officials in Haverfordwest were imagining a public sculpture to Chelsea in Haverfordwest could be and so on.

The problem I discovered with working from Alicia's illustration was that it didn't translate anatomically into a three-dimensional portrait and to continue with this would require my having to carefully frame or contextualise the work with a lengthy explanation—of how it evolved—as it entered the public sphere. Once I realised this, I began again on another three-dimensional portrait and by inviting artist Suzie Zamit from *The Society of Portrait Sculptors* to help me work out the anatomical detail of this using images of Chelsea—mostly taken from an interview she gave shortly after she was released from Leavenworth Penitentiary. Suzie was of enormous help and support. This change in direction consolidated my approach to the project, and to making a bronze head and



Figure 3. How Chelsea Manning sees herself. By Alicia Neal, in cooperation with Chelsea herself, commissioned by the Chelsea Manning Support Network, April 2014.



Figure 4. Monument to Henry VII, or Henry Tudor—born at Pembroke Castle in 1457.



Figure 5. Monument to Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Neyland, Pembrokeshire (replica of stolen memorial. Unveiled April 2013).

shoulders through working with the kind of traditional, formal language used in already existing monuments in the Pembrokeshire area. I wanted Monument for Chelsea Manning to speak this language, to speak to these existing monuments. In thinking through this process, I was reminded of the essay by James E. Young *The German Counter-Monument* in which Young explores Germany's *Denkmal-Arbeit* around the *counter-monumental*, or counter-memorial. I decided I wanted to try and avoid Monument for Chelsea Manning being framed as counter-monumental or counter-memorial.

RD She looks like Renée Jeanne Falconetti in *The Passion of Joan of Arc*.¹

Young uses the term “counter-monument” to name works of memory—mnemonic representations—that don’t take the form of the traditional monument in that they don’t aspire to permanence, and solidity. But we can add to that the idea of countering monumental memory by engaging in a dialogue with existing monuments. Take Krzysztof Wodiczko’s projections as an example; they’re counter-monuments in Young’s sense but also in the sense that they “talk with” traditional statues and architectural structures.

It’s interesting that your Monument for Chelsea Manning is a bronze bust because traditionally bronze, marble, or stone monuments embody what Nietzsche calls “monumen-

¹ 1928 French silent film based on the actual record of the trial of Joan of Arc directed by Carl Dreyer and starring Renée Jeanne Falconetti as Joan.

tal history.” In *The Use and Abuse of History for Life* (2010[1874]), Nietzsche challenges nineteenth-century Germans’ excessive esteem for history, identifying three different kinds of history.² Monumental history is what Walter Benjamin later calls the history of the victors or the tradition of the oppressor. It’s the history of “great” men and events, which are supposedly eternal and form a chain—a “high road”—for civilisation. What, then, does it mean to use traditional monumental form for Chelsea Manning who doesn’t embody monumental history but something closer to what Nietzsche calls critical history or Benjamin’s history of the oppressed (1940),³ of, that is, the struggle against oppression? Lately, I’ve been asking the same question about other traditional monuments to non-monumental topics, such as Bryan Stevenson’s lynching memorial that just opened in Alabama.⁴ In the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, there’s a permanent abstract memorial with the names of individuals who were lynched. It doesn’t take the *form* of a counter-monument in James Young’s sense because it’s permanent (although it does have a participatory dimension) but it does reject the notion of history associated with traditional monuments.

JR I’m also wondering about questions of duration and context in terms of what constitutes a traditional monument over and above the material it’s made from and the form it takes and how much this is connected to context and physical place in terms of where you often find these monuments, like outside a town hall, courthouse, public building and so on?

RD I teach a course called Art of Witness, which is about mnemonic representations of historical, politically motivated traumas. Usually we examine the non-conventional, anti-monumental, or counter-monumental but I also have to deal with the question of oppressed groups that deserve memorials, whether in traditional monumental form or not. Do you think your Monument for Chelsea Manning will function as a

2 “... In three respects history belongs to the living person: it belongs to him as an active and striving person; it belongs to him as a person who preserves and admires; it belongs to him as a suffering person in need of emancipation. This trinity of relationships corresponds to a trinity of methods for history, to the extent that one may make the distinctions, a monumental method, an antiquarian method and a critical method” (2010[1874]:17).

3 Basic aporia: “*The history of the oppressed is a discontinuum.*”—“*The task of history is to get hold of the tradition of the oppressed.*”

4 “The National Memorial for Peace and Justice [...] on a six-acre site overlooking the Alabama State Capitol, is dedicated to the victims of American white supremacy. And it demands a reckoning with one of the nation’s least recognized atrocities: the lynching of thousands of black people in a decades-long campaign of racist terror. At the center is a grim cloister, a walkway with 800 weathered steel columns, all hanging from a roof. Etched on each column is the name of an American county and the people who were lynched there, most listed by name, many simply as ‘unknown.’ The columns meet you first at eye level, like the headstones that lynching victims were rarely given. But as you walk, the floor steadily descends; by the end, the columns are all dangling above, leaving you in the position of the callous spectators in old photographs of public lynchings.” <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/25/us/lynching-memorial-alabama.html>> (Accessed 25 February 2019).

kind of projection onto the existing monuments in the area around it, interfering with the meanings they project? Will it change those monuments, shake them in some way, make them less solid? I think the Manning monument calls into question the assumptions underlying traditional monuments, especially assumptions about greatness and extraordinariness. Individuals memorialised by traditional monuments are represented as heroes and indeed you heroicise Manning. But, in an essay he wrote about the barbarism of World War I, Freud distinguishes between two kinds of heroism. He says that there's a rational basis for heroism: that certain general goods are more important than an individual life. But more frequent is an irrational, impulsive heroism, which writes Freud, represents regression to an infantile state of believing that "nothing can happen to me"—a fantasy of invulnerability characteristic of primary narcissism (Freud 1957). When people invoke Freud's analysis, they often forget his idea about rational heroism, which is not based on a masculinist drive for mastery and is perhaps applicable to Chelsea Manning.

JR I think that's where I was instinctively drawn to, to the traditional monumental form. Among other things I was reminded of how Young talks about Monument Against Fascism in Harburg, Hamburg by Jochen Gerz and Ester Shalev-Gerz and about how this kind of reflexive gaze on history that so often positions and identifies a counter-monument could be "buried" or embedded in the traditional form of Monument for Chelsea Manning.⁵

I was also wondering if we can only ever "mark" rather than "memorialise" an event? Memorialise suggests something more concrete, more permanent. Something almost certain to fail? Is there a built-in obsolescence in monuments that needs to be acknowledged and worked with rather than treated as a failure of monuments to memorialise? Might this obsolescence reveal the monument to be inadequate, inappropriate, and/or absurd. To be flawed. And can we think of this as other than a failure to memorialise?

5 James Young writes "For young German artists and sculptors like the Gerzes, Norbert Radermacher and Horst Hoheisel, the possibility that memory of events so grave might be reduced to exhibitions of public craftsmanship or cheap pathos remains intolerable. They contemptuously reject the traditional forms and reasons for public memorial art, those spaces that either console viewers or redeem such tragic events, or indulge in a facile kind of *Wiedergutmachung* or purport to mend the memory of a murdered people. Instead of searing memory into public consciousness, they fear, conventional memorials seal memory off from awareness altogether. For these artists, such an evasion would be the ultimate abuse of art, whose primary function, to their mind, is to jar viewers from complacency and to challenge and denaturalize the viewers' assumptions. [...] Under the illusion that our memorial edifices will always be there to remind us, we take leave of them and return only at our convenience. To the extent that we encourage monuments to do our memory-work for us, we become that much more forgetful. In effect, the initial impulse to memorialize events like the Holocaust may actually spring from an opposite and equal desire to forget them. In response to these seemingly generic liabilities in monuments, conceptual artists Jochen and Esther Gerz have designed what they call a *Gegendenkmal*—built at the City of Hamburg's invitation to create a Monument against Fascism, War and Violence-and for Peace and Human Rights" (1992: 271–272, 272–274, 274–278, 279, 294–295).

I'm thinking about these things as I've been feeling my way into the project. At some point after Pembrokeshire Council said no, I'll never get planning permission for the project. I began looking a bit more into where Chelsea's mother Susan's family grew up in Haverfordwest. I think Susan's parents came over from Ireland in the 1950s and settled in a small housing estate in Merlin's Bridge on the edge of town. The house still exists so I went to visit whoever lives there now and I met this extraordinary woman. I knocked on her door on a rainy Friday night and introduced myself by telling her I might want to put a monument in her little front garden, and can we talk. She invited me in ...

RD There is a God ...

JR Since then I've become increasingly interested in this as a possible site for the work and how it might look displaced, contained, corralled, or quarantined in her front garden and how I might direct people towards this, direct people to the edge of town, and into this little estate. And then, I also met with Conway Hall Ethical Society in London about installing the work on temporary loan—until a more permanent site can be found—in their library among the existing busts, all of whom are men ...

RD And then the work would initiate a dialogue. This might be a really interesting context. It makes me think of current debates in the United States about monuments to the Confederacy—traditional monuments to great men, military figures, war heroes—and in the midst of this debate, traditional monumental forms are being used for non-traditional subjects, such as slavery and lynching, as I mentioned earlier. This situation parallels that of the Chelsea Manning statue among the great men in the Library and the statues from Pembrokeshire.

JR And speaking of the struggle in Charlottesville, can I read you the very end of something James Young writes about Germany's Denkmal Arbeit and then show you an image as I thought there may be a correspondence between one and the other. Young writes "the best German memorial to the Fascist era and its victims may not be a single memorial at all but simply the never to be resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end ...

RD That's the democratic public sphere ...

JR "... instead of a fixed figure from memory, the debate itself, perpetually unresolved amid ever-changing conditions might be enshrined." (Young 1992:270).

JR This is an image of a covered Stonewall Jackson statue in Charlottesville's Emancipation Park. I was thinking how it is such a powerful monument in this form. And I was wondering if this could be thought about in relation to Young's "never to be resolved debate."



Figure 6a. The library, Conway Hall Ethical Society, Red Lion Square, London.



Figure 6b. The library, Conway Hall Ethical Society, Red Lion Square, London.



Figure 7. Stonewall Jackson statue, Emancipation Park, Charlottesville.

RD The picture is amazing, but what worries me about Young's statement is that in glorifying debate it avoids the necessity of taking positions. I mean, I support taking down Confederate monuments and I support taking down the Confederate flag. I don't claim my position has a God-given foundation, I'm too much of a *poststructuralist* for that, but for me poststructuralism, is about taking positions in the absence of extra-social foundations for doing so. There's value in what Young says insofar as it counters the idea that there can be non-conflictual monuments and insofar as it makes clear that the public sphere is not just a material space but, rather, what Hannah Arendt describes as the space between people wherever they appear, even if they're on different ends of the world. But Young's statement needs to be articulated with the necessity of taking positions?

JR I think what I saw in this was also some connection to Ono and Sloop's outlaw discourse or critique, and to the possibility for ongoing actual and symbolic violence that could be done to these monuments, something that could be sustained over time. It put me in mind of a long past event in Ireland involving a statue of Queen Victoria and University College Cork, (formerly known as Queens College Cork). In 1849, a one-tonne statue of Queen Victoria by sculptor Edward Ambrose was installed on the topmost eastern gable of the university to coincide with the then 30-year-old Queen's visit to the city. Because of an outbreak of cholera Queen Victoria's retinue didn't stop in Cork or visit the university but were able to see the statue being hoisted into position as they

drove out of the city. The statue was removed in 1934, during a strong nationalist period of Irish history. On its removal, the college didn't destroy the statue but instead put it under lock and key in a room in the east wing of the college. This was viewed from time to time by invited guests as if viewing "a scandal" according to John A. Murphy, Emeritus Professor of history at University College Cork. However, because the statue had, over time, a damaging effect on the floorboards it was decided to bury it. This happened in a mock-ceremony during which it was lowered into a straw-lined grave in University College Cork's Presidents garden. The statue remained there until late 1994 when it was disinterred in the middle of the night and in great secrecy. It was placed in a glass vitrine among the artefacts of the university and to be part of a future exhibition marking the 150th anniversary of the college.

RD That's great. It's like Michael Asher's intervention at the Chicago Art Institute, in which Asher moved Houdon's statue of George Washington, which was outside the museum, to the 18th-century gallery inside. The value of that act lay not just in facilitating the ability to see the sculptural object in two different spatial contexts and that it signifies differently in each one, but in underscoring that such objects and their meanings move through history. Pictures of George Washington being hoisted up or going into storage are powerful interventions in the pretensions of the monument to possess stable significance. Returning to the question of positions, I think you're taking a position in the very act of making Monument for Chelsea Manning. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think you're saying she's a truly extraordinary individual.

JR Yes, I am but I'm also mindful about what I'm doing here and if I'm claiming to speak on behalf of anyone and how I work with this. I'm very interested in how Philip Nobile describes the story of LGBTQ historiography which he says "cannot be told but as one of struggle against discipline, a term that designates not only an academic field but the rhetorical efforts, often cloaked as 'objective' praxis and judgement, that preserve hegemonic constructions of sanctioned domains of inquiry into the past" (Morris 2004:102).

RD This is such a can of worms.

JR I had this brief but interesting correspondence about the project with Felix from the organisation Action for Trans Health in London. Felix wrote about the issue of "public recognition and visibility of historically important LGBT (especially trans) figures being notably absent in the UK. It's important to recognise that those who are visible (Manning being one, Turing being another) are recognised primarily for their non-LGBT related achievements, which still sidelines the history of our struggles. I'm not as up on queer history as I'd like to be, but people like Michael Dillon, Roberta Cowell, and Mark Ashton spring to mind."

RD Your story brings up the question of who can speak for whom, of identity and identity politics, which is so timely and fraught at the moment. In some cases, there's a zeal



Figure 8a. Queen Victoria and her retinue in Cork (Statue of Queen Victoria on gable end of building—left hand side of image). Courtesy of UCC Archives.



Figure 8b. Queen Victoria statue disinterred, 1994, University College Cork. Courtesy of UCC Archives.



Figure 8c. Queen Victoria statue disinterred, 1994, University College Cork.
Courtesy of UCC Archives.



Figure 9. Statue of Queen Victoria, as exhibited at the U.C.C. 150th Anniversary
Exhibition, 1995, University College Cork.

for destruction that has an almost erotic nature. I'm not referring to destroying Robert E. Lee monuments; there's a rational reason for that. But the failure to be self-reflexive about calls for destruction—about what drives such calls—is very scary to me. As are certain accusations of cultural appropriation. Can white authors write about black characters? Straight people about gays? And vice versa? Should Dana Schutz's painting of Emmett Till in his coffin be destroyed? It's a sensitive issue but I do think it's important that we be able to speak across oppressions. Identity is so complex. Stuart Hall called it "an unfinished conversation." Both terms—unfinished and conversation—militate against certainty and fixity.

Our relation to otherness hinges on what comes after the word "speaking" or "writing." Do we speak about, speak *for*, speak *to*? The Filmmaker Trinh T. Minh-ha suggests "speaking nearby," which is wonderful in the way it works against power in representation. It reminds me of the relationship between psychoanalyst and analysand. It might offer a way to think about representing Chelsea. I don't believe it's helpful to stop conversations by saying one can't speak about something or someone. There may be specific occasions where that's appropriate and of course we need to think about *how* we speak.

JR But surely, we need to ask—going back to your reference to the Emmett Till painting—why Dana Schutz chose to do this? Why she, as a white artist created this death spectacle, and attempted to appropriate trauma that is not hers to appropriate? Why she chose to cause so much pain and hurt because she must have known in advance that this is what would happen? White people can't pretend to be innocent or naïve; to think "Oh, well I'm an artist and I'm just doing this and why is everyone so angry with me, why is everyone being so unreasonable?" Why did Dana Schutz choose to make this painting? Did it do what she wanted it to do as she cannot have been under any illusion what she was doing? And was it worth it for her?

RD Yes, of course one must be aware of what it means to represent others. But to simply say a white person can't do this or a straight person can't do that by virtue of their being white or straight or vice-versa seems regressive, when there's such a longstanding, high-level discourse about identity. When we've had Stuart Hall. But, as you say, one can't be naïve and profess innocence. No.

JR I've been reading Karen Barad's work, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007).⁶ She writes about boundary-making practices and about the connectedness between things. Offering an account of the world "as a whole rather than as composed of separate natural and social realms. ... In an agential realist account," according to Barad, "the world is made of entanglements of 'social' and 'natural' agencies, where the distinction between

⁶ Karen Barad is Professor of Feminist Studies, Philosophy, and History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

the two emerges out of specific intra-actions. Intra-activity is an inexhaustible dynamism that configures and reconfigures relations of space–time–matter.”⁷

I was particularly interested in how Barad begins to illustrate this through the example of a laboratory space and setting up an experiment and how she describes the “apparatuses” involved as “not passive observing instruments” but are “productive of (and part of) phenomena [...] Apparatuses are themselves material-discursive phenomena, materialising in intra-action with other material-discursive apparatuses” (ibid:146). Barad asks is the “outside boundary of the apparatus coincident with the visual terminus of the instrumentation? What if an infrared interface (i.e. a wireless connection) exists between the measuring instrument and a computer that collects the data? Does the apparatus include the computer? Is the printer attached to the computer part of the apparatus? Is the paper that is fed into the printer? Is the person who feeds in the paper?” (ibid.:142–143).

I’m really interested in this series of interconnections Barad makes and I was very much thinking here about Monument for Chelsea Manning and again where the work starts and stops and how something can be sustained and worked with as this is process-led work and happens over time and has this degree of connectedness to other things.

RD Yes, that’s very important.

JR So there are different processes and iterations of the work within the same project and I try and follow and work with these processes and to pay attention to what is going on and to try to be cognisant of questions of context, identity, material, and who’s coming in and out of the work and where the work is being directed towards and prompted by if that makes sense?

RD Barad’s work, as you describe it, reminds me of Mouffe and Laclau’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics* of 1984. The authors distinguish between Lyotard’s idea that there are separate, distinct language games and their own idea that no language game, discourse, or identity is a closed entity but is, rather, always relational. Both ideas challenge foundationalist grand narratives but Mouffe and Laclau question the notion that any element is a complete totality.

Your account of Barad also makes me think of the film *Hiroshima mon amour*, with its encounter between two traumas. The last lines are something like “Hiroshima. That is your name. Yes, that is my name. And yours is Nevers. Nevers, in France.” I’ve always read this ending as a bridge between collective traumas, a transcendence of the isolation of each. Maybe it’s an example of ‘speaking nearby’ rather than closing the borders of identities.

⁷ <https://feministstudies.ucsc.edu/faculty/publications/meeting-the-universe.html> (Accessed 21 March 2019).

JR And could you extend that for a moment to the image of the tarpaulin-covered Robert E. Lee or Stonewall Jackson ... I've been looking at monuments in London of people connected to the slave trade for example, people like Sir John Moore, Sir Robert Clayton, Sir Hans Sloane, Sir John Cass, William Beckford and Thomas Guy. I've been thinking about some kind of violent displacement of public monuments and I was wondering if there is a case not just for the permanent removal of certain public monuments but in some cases for their "reduction" to feats of engineering; for example, taking them off their pedestals, upending them and replacing them with the support of a metal armature put in place to hold what is now a precariously balanced statue.

RD Rather than destroying them?

JR ... I mean literally standing them on their heads and the violence of this action being also visible through the metal armature that is there to hold the statue in place and that enters the body of the statue at whatever points it needs to ensure it stands up and is securely fixed in place. Is there a case for certain monuments continuing to exist but doing violence to them and the violence is "visible" in their actual physical form.

RD Of course that would be a kind of destruction—what Wodiczko calls a "symbol-attack." We don't have to do away with monuments physically, as the Paris Commune did with the Vendôme Column. Literal destruction can even be seen as a tribute to a monument's power—the way repression makes something stronger. But we can destroy monuments by playing with them, as Charlie Chaplin does with the Peace and Prosperity civic statue at the beginning of *City Lights*. He destroys the statue's monumentality without tearing it down. So do Wodiczko's projections, and your Monument for Chelsea Manning, no?

JR I started working on another and maybe parallel project in Berlin when I moved there in April 2018. It came from trying to answer the question how do I arrive in Berlin as an artist? How do I touch it lightly? What kind of footprint do I make on the city? How do I speak to it? How do I give rather than take from it and who or what needs to be acknowledged in this process? I started a project called Aftercare and what I've been doing is looking for "overlooked"—often abstract—pieces of public sculpture around Berlin that have fallen into a state of disrepair. I've started to look after and maintain them, I trim the grass, repaint the signage, and so on. I also appropriate these spaces, these overlooked pieces of public sculpture to the project Aftercare by marking each space with a sign carrying a brief description of the project.

RD I like the idea of Aftercare. It's close to Jewish burial tradition, in which the mourner, stays at the grave until it's fully covered with soil. That's the last act of caretaking, making sure nothing dangerous gets in there. Care is also connected to the trope of prosopopoeia, the figure of speech in which one gives a voice to an inanimate object or an absent or

dead person, something that can't or doesn't speak. J. Hillis Miller's example is Plato's Dialogues, which are narrated by Socrates. Socrates was silenced by power and Plato brings him to life. Ethical aftercare.



Figure 10. Aftercare.

JR I'm interested in the idea of care ... in his essay *The Appearance of Public Memory*, Charles E. Scott writes: "To speak of culture and memory is to speak of care. Care is a disturbing word. In its history of meaning, it suggests loss and grief—it derives from the Old High German word *kara* which means 'lament.' Blended into its meaning are experiences of uncertainty, apprehension, and responsibility. 'Care' contains a suggestion of anxiety and watchful attention. To have a care is to look out for danger and adversity. To be careful is to be solicitous of things that can suffer damage and loss. To feel care is to feel concern and uncertainty [...] The word memory has in its history the ancient Greek word *mermeros*, 'care for' something losable. From which the Latin *memoria* derives. In the many overtones, the word memory suggests mourning, remainder, solicitude, and mentation." (2004:150).

I've been mapping these "abandoned" public sculptures and wondering if some of them might equally speak to an abandoned hope for a different kind of Berlin, and for a different kind of world, now lost with the "vanquishing" of Socialism, the disappearance of the Berlin Wall and the years immediately after its disappearance where people dreamed of a different world, a different kind of city, a different way of organising themselves. As mon-

ey now pours into Berlin and a consumer-driven economy takes hold of and reshapes the city in its image, I was wondering if some of these overlooked public sculptures might speak to or embody that kind of lost or abandoned hope.

RD Aftercare can be about repair, of something broken. In Jewish mysticism, which I know very little about, there's a concept about "the breaking of the vessels." It's a creation parable. God created physical matter and infused himself into it, but because matter is finite and can't contain God, the vessels shattered and evil was released. It's the job of human beings to repair the world. The parable is considerably more complicated and I wish I could describe it more rigorously. In any case, the word *Tikkun*, which is the title of a Jewish liberal publication, refers to the ethical task of repairing the world.

JR That's really beautiful.

RD I know. It's as fascinating as another Jewish mystical concept, the Tzadikim Nistarim, that in every generation there are 36 righteous or just men, who save the world. They're hidden, no one knows they're the righteous men, they don't even know it. I don't know why 36, it must have mystical significance, but we need them now!

JR Are there women among them?

RD Not traditionally, but we can add them.

JR Yes, I would like to add them.

RD We'll just think 36 righteous women.

JR That's fabulous.

RD Yeah, I love it.

JR This is a kind of rambling conversation but I suppose what I'm seeing is that these projects are overlapping and speaking one to the other in different ways.

Is there any caution you would add, as regards taking a position? I think I try and avoid taking an explicit position as I think the work can tip into being didactic to the point where it is rendered almost mute. I'm interested in how to hold something open, how to keep things unsettled ...

RD I don't like didacticism in art either, but to make a monument to Chelsea Manning is to take a position, as I've already suggested. Taking a position and being didactic aren't the same. What I wanted to caution against was mistaking the idea that there are no absolute foundations of meaning for sitting on the fence, a common error. What's im-

portant is taking a position in a non-authoritarian way, by which I mean not claiming to speak in the name of a source of meaning outside the social world, whether that source is God, Supreme Reasons, or Nature. So when I talked about taking a position I meant that you're not sitting on the fence about Chelsea Manning.

JR No I'm not sitting on the fence.

RD One thing you might consider, and it may just be as part of your thought process, is your own investment in the project, which is not only about Chelsea Manning but about your search for Chelsea Manning. I always think it's good to ask, "what is my desire here?" This is the subjective component of a work that can also provoke self-questioning in viewers.

I just wrote an essay about Mary Kelly's lint works. The first one, *Mea Culpa*, includes various women's testimonies to historical traumas they've lived through. Have you seen it?

JR No I haven't.

RD Kelly describes the process of wanting to make a work that deals with the other side of the masculine warrior, whom she had explored in her previous work, *Gloria Patri*. In other words, she wanted to explore the victims of the atrocities that the masculinist, militarist subject inflicts. The result was *Mea Culpa*. While thinking about how to do this, she struggled with a lot of the questions you're asking, and others, too, like how to make images of suffering that don't betray the victims, questions raised by Theodor Adorno in relation to art and the Holocaust. At one point, Kelly saw a photo taken in Sarajevo that showed a body lying under a shroud. Subsequently, Kelly had herself photographed lying under a voluminous sheet, as a dead body. When she looked at the photographs she noticed how her body was displaced onto the folds of the sheets. That led her to the idea of using clothes lint, which is also a trace of the body, but it also helped her establish an affective relationship with the trauma victims she cites in the work. There she was at home in California listening to a television report on torture, bombings, and killings. They were both faraway and immediate. How to establish a relationship with the people undergoing them? How to encourage viewers of an artwork to establish such relationships. Maybe instead of worrying about speaking for others, you might think about your relationship to Chelsea Manning.

JR I've often thought about how Chelsea, when she felt called upon to act, how she met or embraced that moment.

RD What moment?

JR Where she didn't flinch in putting the injustice of what she felt was going on in the world before the world.

RD That speaks to Freud's rational rather than narcissistic basis of heroism. And that's something you admire ...

JR Yes.

RD What's not to admire? She's one of the 36-righteous men.

JR Or women—who attended school in the small market town of Haverfordwest.

RD From this “ordinary place” and from “ordinary people” there emerged the extraordinariness of someone who embodies the heroic moment. It's deeply moving.

One suggestion: There's a book by Kenneth Gross called *The Dream of the Moving Statue*. The chapter titled “Talking with Statues” is about engaging in a dialogue with existing monuments, which I mentioned earlier. It could also include engaging with a city or a space, which you're doing. I've used it to help me think through counter-monuments as engaging with the visual things of the built environment. It seems very important that your project is an ensemble of things.

JR And when you say things ...

RD I mean the bronze cast, the walking tour, publication, all the parts that constitute the work. The bronze cast is great for memorialising Chelsea Manning, but you want to do more than that. Your passion exceeds that act, and the other elements of your work will put the bust into play with some broader purposes.

JR I think that's what I'm interested in—I'm interested in the head and shoulders being as much a catalyst for other things to happen but moreover, I'm interested in how to keep something going, not allow things to settle ...

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