

**Commentary (3.3.4.)**

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### Searching for an audience (3.3.4.1.)

In June 2011 I saw a small exhibition by Trine Falch at Oslo Kunsthall. Theatre for a New Time. The exhibition 'reworks materials from the archives' of the Hålogaland Theatre, a 40-year old norwegian theatre institution, 'uncovering its beginnings as a radical 1970s collective that sought to reinvent theatre 'in the service of the people''. What stroke me as relevant for my own work with 'Aesthetics of Resistance' was the manner in which Hålogaland Theatre worked with their audiences. Working on 'the principles of the revolutionary left' they staged their productions at the same places and for the same audiences that the plays concern. I.e. the play, 'Det e her æ høre tel' , were staged in the villages Senjahopen and Mefjordvær for the local people that the play were about:

*Det e her æ høre tel (Here is where I belong), (1974).*

The play is based on the local people in the fishing villages Senjahopen and Mefjordvær on the outer side of Senja that went to tax strike when they failed to get the road access they were promised. The play was a great success and contributed to the fact that the road was built.<sup>1</sup>

In our discussions on artistic research at Malmö Art Academy the problem of how to collect or register the reactions and experiences of an audience to an exhibition or another artistic-research-event surface again and again. In my case performance is the media I have chosen for my research experiments. These performances in most cases involves an audience in one way or the other. How to work with these audiences? How to gather their feed-back to a given performance? And ultimately, what audiences to work with? For a performance to work as a reasearch experiment I need to find solution to these questions.

When I present a performance in the context of my artistic work outside of the phd-framework, it usually takes place within an art institution of some sort. The audience is most often some version of the usual art-crowd. The performance is delievered, the audience reacts during the performance or afterwards, by the level of attention they are showing. With some experience, this is quite easy to 'read'. It is actually a quite interesting topic – how an audience reacts to a performance by their presence, by collective psychosocial behavior. I often recieve a few direct comment, most often by the people who are positive. But as a rule the way one receives the reaction and reception of such a performance is scattered and neither precise or comprehensive in any sense.

The first performances I did in the framework of 'Aesthetics of Resistance' were staged in a similar manner. I was focussed on other problems in the attempt to use a performance as an artistic research experiment. Two were presented as parts of two phd-seminars at the Inter Arts Center at Lunds University and one were presented as part of a performance festival in Beijing, China. Maybe I thought that the framework of a phd-seminar would grant a different reception of the performances; that it would somehow supply me with a critical response, I could use in my further work. Since that didn't really happen, I felt a growing need to work more directly with the problem of audience and reception.

During 2010/11 I followed a program called Samtalekøkkenet (The Conversation Kitchen) in Copenhagen. Set-up as a forum for performance art in a club that usually serves as the base for the buoyant Burlesque-scene in Copenhagen, the

Samtalekøkken presented 3-4 performances in one evening once a month. Each performance followed by a discussion with the artist. Samtalekøkkenet was a rare attempt to connect the performance scene of the visual arts with the performance scene of theatre, and an attempt at developing a critical discourse around performance as a genre or media in itself. To everyone's surprise this forum gathered a quite large attendance and there would be around 100 persons in the audience to each installment.

When I was invited to do a performance at Samtalekøkkenet, I chose to do one of the performances, that I were planned in the frame of 'Aesthetics of Resistance': 'Silent Stand'. The performance in itself had a lot of problems – I will get back to that in the analysis of that performance. Directly after the performance though, there was a long discussion. Even though the questions to me were often quite critical and the discussion was in a sense way too long, it was a great revelation to me. In the direct response to the performance some questions were raised that were really useful to me afterwards. Combined with my usual evaluation of 'the presence of the audience', their psycho-social behavior, I had, maybe for the first time, a sense of a relevant response to the performance.

Here was something to develop for my further 'research experiments' in the framework of 'Aesthetics of Resistance'.

A problem with the discussion at Samtalekøkkenet though, was that it evolved around artistic and formal questions. This was somehow a given, since that kind of discussion was at the core of what Samtalekøkkenet did. It was the context that the performance was presented in. The audience was comprised of people from the artworld, from theatre and the visual arts. The discussion dealt with the status of my performance as artistic research, if it was theatre or performance and other very relevant questions. The performance 'Silent Stand' is about the uprisings on Tahrir Square in Egypt and some of the protests leading up to this. It was done only months after the events in Cairo. In the response to the performance only a very few comments on this content occurred and these few comments were quite superficial. Of course this had to do with how the performance presented this content – there was a lot of problems here that I will get back to in my analysis of it – but it was also my impression that this audience was not interested in or capable of relating to that content. Their interests were primarily the artistic questions, which is of course not a problem, I got a lot of relevant feedback on those aspects of my performance. The problem was specifically mine; I also needed some kind of response to the content I was working with.

When trying to figure out how to proceed - how to develop an audience-situation and a discussion format, that would suit my needs for a proper response to my research performances – I reasoned that I would have to work with who the audience are, in a similar manner as the Hålogaland Theatre, mentioned above. Hålogaland Theatre was working in the 1970ties, they were part of a strong discourse on art 'in the service of the people'. A whole movement, working directly in the tradition of Bertolt Brecht and his idea of the 'learning play'. In my case it was slightly harder to detect who 'the people' are. My aim was also quite different than the revolutionary leftwing politics of Hålogaland Theatre. Whereas they saw themselves as instigators of a revolutionary momentum, I was rather running after some revolutionaries – or more appropriately - some political activists, trying to establish a practice of reflection, reflecting on their activism. In order to situate my reflections in relation to the events that they were reflections upon, I had to develop an idea of who the persons, or the

groups of persons, relevant to each performance would be. Who the audience for each performance could be, and of course, how to engage them.

For each performance I made a list of who could be considered as audiences. I envisioned to invite to or three select groups that somehow had relation to the events I had chosen as subjects for the specific performances. The performance would then be presented to this select audience, and wouldn't be open for anyone else to attend. A closed arrangement for a select, limited audience. It could be a certain group of activists that took part in a certain demonstration, it could be a group of employees working in a part of the city administration dealing with a certain topic.

I then contacted an organiser I had previously been working with, Tijana Miscovic, and together we started to organise a plan for which groups of people to contact and try to engage as audiences and participants in the discussions. It soon became obvious that the site of the performance would be an integral part of these considerations. By presenting a performance at a certain site, it would more plausible to attract certain groups of people. Or so we thought.

The project soon proved far more difficult than we imagined. One obvious problem was that most of the events were at that point already quite far of in the past. It is incredible how far away a couple of years are, when dealing with events that take place not only in the present, but in a kind of medialised present. Participants in the original events had already moved far beyond the problematics and agendas they were then engaged in, and in general had no obvious need to engage in any reflections on these past events. For the same reason it was also quite difficult to address certain activists groups, simply because the group had ceased to exist shortly after the events I had chosen to work with.

Another quite surprising experience was that in most cases people showed discomfort with being addressed as a group. As we contacted various groups of people it was a repeating factor that people were hesitant to engage in anything identified as a group; no one directly denied belonging to a group, but our invitation to come and see a performance were somehow misunderstood, rejected or just talked around. We didn't manage to engage any groups and after a while we had to give up the plan.

For 'Silent Stand', the performance dealing with the Egyptian uprisings, we wanted to bring in a group of Egyptians living in Denmark and a group of activists from Occupy Denmark, since Occupy was obviously inspired by the Tahrir Square Occupation. Tijana made a large effort to find an Egyptian community or Egyptian cultural society or something similar in Denmark, but they never really answered our approaches. I never managed to find anyone that could be identified as representing Occupy; as someone mailed me back - Occupy don't believe in representation.

For 'On Water' we tried to address Real Dania, the architectural foundation that owns the lot in which Parfyme created Havnelaboratoriet. They weren't interested in taking part in anything like that - or simply didn't want to take time off for such a purpose. We tried to address an organisation called Havn & By (Harbour & City) that deals with developing the harbour areas for the City of Copenhagen. Here I experienced the old joke of being referred to several persons that ended up making a circle so the last one referred me back to the first one. No one wanted to take on the responsibility of dealing with our invitation. We also approached the department of Mur & Rum (Wall&Space) at The Royal Danish Art Academy (this is the department of professor

Nils Norman). My idea was to engage on one side some representatives of the City Authorities, as for instance Havn & By, and on the other side a group of students from the art-academy, specifically from that department, from which several students took part in the occupation of Refshalevej, that was the main topic of the performance. Here too, our invitation seemed to end up in a maze of indifference, with no clear answer in sight. I first envisioned doing the performance in a newly defined project-space inside the art-academy and even made arrangements for a date with the person organising this. But as I learned that the students of that specific department I wanted to engage boycotted the project-space in protest against the way it was funded by a private sponsor, I gave up that idea as well, and moved the project out of the visual arts context, into the avantgarde music club Mayhem.

My most ambitious failure was the attempt to place the performance 'Climate/Kettle' in the Police School in Copenhagen and let two different audiences – a group of students from the police school vs. a group of students from Det Fri Gymnasium (The Free High School) – confront each other, first as part of the performance and later on in the following discussions. From an artist colleague I got a very good contact to the head of the Police School, who actually engaged in an hour-long telephone conversation with me, explaining the reasons why the police school would not engage in such a project. I was quite baffled with his explanation, but I must give the him the credit, that he was actually the only person in this whole series of approaches who gave us a serious and sincere answer. In a research sense, I regret that I didn't tape our conversation or turned it into a real interview, but I don't think I would have gotten such a open minded answer had it been for the public record as in an interview. As it is now it is part of this tale only as my personal recollection, but I still think it is relevant:

He gave me two reasons. First of all, one of the events in question, the large scale arrest of 944 participants in a demonstration for a better climate on december 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009, was now an ongoing court case with a high level of media attention. This made it impossible for anyone in the Police Forces to engage in any kind of public debate about the case. If I wanted a comment from the police on this event I would probably have to go all the way to the top of the hierachy, to the police director of Copenhagen for instance. No one else in the system would be able to speak in public about an ongoing court case. But this was not the only reason – if it was I would of course come back to him after january 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012, when the courtcase was to be settled – no, the substantial problem with my proposal was that involved a critical discussion of what he called the chain of command.

In the teaching at the police school they talk about two kinds of operations:

The individual operation, where one, two or a few police officers have to engage in an arrest or some other kind of maneuver. Here the officers in question take stock of the situation and decide for themselves what to do. The individual operation will often be the topic of critical discussion in the teachings at the school, i.e. a person who have been detained in a brawl in a bar could be invited together with the police officer who have detained him, and they will discuss their respective experiences and perspectives on the operation in front of the students. Such a discussion will optimize the abilities of taking the right decision in a critical moment.

Collective operations on the other hand – operations involving large units of

police forces – will never be the topic of critical discussion in a similar manner. Such an operation is completely dependant on the heirarchy of command. Decisions are taken on the top level and has to be deployed 100% by everyone in the field. There is no space for any kind of individual considerations. For this reason a critical discussion , like the one I suggested, would interfere in the systemic manner such operations are taught to the students in the Police School.

This was clear talk; there was no way to proceed and I had to figure out a completely different set-up for this performance. I decided to move the project to the other school in my first idea and make it a confrontation between a group of pupils from that school and an unspecified audience from the outside. We approached Det Fri Gymnasium and they were of course enthusiastic about such a project. We had a very fine meeting with a couple of teachers, but the problem was to ensure a group of pupils that would take part in a performance and a discussion. After a quite long process we ended up with a very sympathetic class of visual art pupils, but even they were a bit reluctant to take part in the project.

After all this uncertainty and impossibility of engaging the various groups we had envisioned as audiences for the performances we finally dropped the idea and changed our concept. As Tijana reasoned: If we approach someone and ask them to engage as a group they apparently become suspicious. They are unsure about what we want from them, why we identify them as a group and what their role will be. It is somehow obvious that we want something from them, we want them to contribute to something that they feel unsure about, they fear they are going to be exploited or pointed fingers at. If we as a new strategy ask someone as an individual, if they can attend the performance and afterwards take part in a debate, on the basis of their individual knowledge of a given topic, then that might be easier.

We then changed the format. The performances would be open for an unspecified audience by 'normal' invitation. We would then ask two or three persons to take part in a discussion after each performance, thereby hoping to engage the audience as well in a discussion on the topics presented in the performance. This actually worked quite well. The persons we approached were all very positive and in most cases it was only a question of possible dates that we had to discuss. The format of the discussions and the relationship between the audience and the 'panel' was more traditional than originally intended, but I guess this was the price to pay for including the debates in the last series of performances in a realistic manner.

What remained from the first format, though, was the choice of venue. By placing the performances at places, chosen as specific contexts for each performance, the performances were opened up for audiences that wouldn't otherwise attend such events. This proved especially important in case of 'Revolution By Night' that was placed at The new Youth House at Dortheavej.

If I had known all these troubles beforehand, I would probably have limited the number of performances and tried to establish one or two audience groups with whom to work on a longer term. This would have been a much longer process than what was here possible and would have taken a kind effort that was not realistic in this framework. In this somehow troublesome process I can glimpse a format of performance, where the mix between performers and audience, between expression and reception, between participation and collaboration, is organised in a far more radical manner, resembling the direct democratic processes of the activism I have

been researching in this project. Such a project though, would have to be the main focus of an entire project. A radical update of Brecht's Learning Play and the theatre activism of Hålogaland Theatre.

The Russian art group Chlot Delat? is at the moment working with a series of contemporary 'Learning Plays' and similar considerations appear in the work of the Polish artist Artur Żmijewski.<sup>2</sup> The problematics have fuelled parts of the so-called 'relational aesthetics'. Still, there is a whole new format of performance/audience-relations to be explored. This might be a possible topic for further investigations.

Here in this project though, our aspirations met the reality of possibilities. What we arrived at was not an ideal, radical method for engaging an audience in discussion. What we had to settle on was more pragmatic, a series of compromises that enabled things to actually happen. In connection with the five performances in the last round of research performances only three of the discussions worked well, the last two were obstructed by coincidental mishaps. Out of the three working well, two were really great; far beyond whatever one could have expected.

The general question in this 'search for an audience' still stands: How to retrieve the reception of a performance from an audience? Even in the cases where the discussions worked out extremely well – in 'Revolution By Night' and in 'Climate/Kettle' – the outcome of the discussion still gives only a part of the complex set of collective emotions that constitutes the 'reception'. The collective psychosocial behavior mentioned earlier in this text is an important part as well. My intentions with staging the discussions was to retrieve some kind of feedback from the audience, especially concerning the content of the performances, the various hypotheses on activism they each contain. Now, afterwards I can see that the quality of the performed images inherent in the performances is at stake as well. If the audience is included in the performative reality in a convincing manner. This is not possible to detect in a discussion afterwards, it has to be 'read' immediately, in the moment when it happens. The mode of this inclusion is the collective psychosocial behavior of the audience and the performers. (If we quote the American sociologist Georgy Katsiaficas, used elsewhere in this project, we can also call it the eros effect of performance.)

In the analyses I have written on each performance I have tried to evaluate these various modes of reception. The analyses also go through the discussions and how they did or did not supply valuable feedback.

The discussions might not be the optimal format for contracting the feedback, still they actually delivered a lot of information. They were a possible format.

They were valuable for another reason as well. By setting up a discussion and presenting it as part of an evening's program, the invitation to the audience was different than if they were just invited to see a performance. By including discussion in the invitation the audience was invited into an active role, to experience something AND to talk about it as well. As Tommy, who helped me organize the performance at the Youth House so clearly stated when I was in doubt as to whether to include the discussion in the event at all: "If we don't organize a discussion, people will not get the possibility to talk about the topics we are presenting. The discussion is a main part of why they are interested to attend. They are not interested in performance as such. That's why we cannot leave out the discussion."

### **Exodus (3.3.4.2.)**

“The State will crumble, then, not by a massive blow to its head, but through a mass withdrawal from its base, evacuating its means of support. It is important, however, that this politics of withdrawal also simultaneously constitute a new society, a new republic. We might conceive this exodus, then as engaged withdrawal or a founding leave-taking, which both refuses this social order and constructs an alternative.” (Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt)<sup>3</sup>

The occupation of Refshalevej happened spontaneously, as a surprise act. As Jon Vedel, an activists (and artist) who took part in the occupation, tells in an interview I did with him, the plan was to do a demonstration that would end up at Refshalevej, where people would try to build a intermistic playground. A group had prepared the action by sampling some building materials, leaving them at the site to use when the demonstration arrived. By collective improvisation, people stayed overnight, and began building huts and primitive shelters instead. Words spread fast and soon a lot of other people joined the occupation. Jon tells how he went home, fetched a hammer and then moved out into the settlement. It was as easy as that. The first night around 200 people slept over.

Already on the first day after the spontaneous sleep-in, the first communal meeting was held. The first assembly. Due to the very mixed assemblage of people – the larger part were skillful veterans of the Thursday Demos, but others were young kids with no collective experience, or homeless people seeking shelter, yet others the pirate party people looking for fun – the discussions in the first assemblies were difficult and it was really hard to reach agreement. A basic lesson in the hardship of consensus democracy. How to establish a common language? How to reach consensus on decisions? How to manage logistics?

All this happened in the early summer of 2008, a couple of years before the first protest camp hit Tahrir Square in Cairo, in what was soon to be a global wave of protest camps to occupy major squares in a range of big cities all over the world. The image of the protest camp was already there long before Tahrir, as a sleeping myth waiting to be released by the right circumstances. It appeared already back in Beijing in 1989, in the occupation of Tianenmen Square, and it has probably appeared in smaller, unknown versions in countless places since then. It appeared here in Copenhagen, in a long warm summer in 2008, but as Jon recounts in the interview, it was like a mirage, a fleeing dream, that was soon to be forgotten. Something barely believable. Or as he says: “The fact that it happened is an image in itself.”

Jon recalls how everyone very fast became completely absorbed in the occupation. In the warm summer atmosphere, the rest of the city was forgotten, soon nothing existed outside of this new community. One side of it was the joy, the carefree living outside in the summer. The parties, the ongoing open-air festival, the collective feeling of happiness. Another side was the practicalities. The building of huts, houses, rafts and house-boats. The folk-kitchen, the sanitarian solutions. Lots of stuff to organise.

And then there were the exercise in democracy, the ongoing disagreements, the impossibility of reaching overall agreement. This is where the occupation became political. Jon recalls how there was an ongoing internal disagreement on what was going on. Various groups wrote completely different manifestos and expressed different ideas on what the settlement was about. It didn't even have one name, but



many names. Jon describes these disagreements as a strength. It was an unsettled debate, an ongoing dispute. It was real anarchism in the sense that the opposed groups stayed opposed; a compromise wasn't reached and this continuous unresolvable was the dynamic that kept the community going. It might also have been the reason why the authorities didn't react, they simply couldn't figure out what was going on, who was responsible and what kind of measure to take against it.

This unsettled state, the unrecognizability, closely resembles what Mikkel Bolt calls the 'not recognizable subject'. He found it in the first chaotic phase of the Youth House Movement, fuelled by anger and revelling in destruction. Here, at Refshalevej, it appears again, but this time in a peaceful, constructivist mode. Peaceful, but still unruly and unresolved.

The Italian thinker Paolo Virno talks of 'exodus'; a term developed from the biblical story of how the Israelites fled the Pharaonic armies in ancient Egypt by departing through the Red Sea, where the waters waned and a safe, dry passage opened up. Once on the other side, in the desert, the fleeing communities, led by Moses, established a new law, and thereby constituted a new society. Virno uses 'exodus' as a term for an 'engaged withdrawal', where the de-humanizing social order of capitalism is left and a new alternative order is constructed. For Virno 'exodus' is closely related to the crumbling of representative democracy and the emergence of a new political subject, 'the multitude'.

In their seminal book 'Empire' Anthony Negri and Michael Hardt describes the transformation of the People, who was the central proletarian subject in Marxism into the new term The Multitude, a complex many-layered subject of radical differences. Hardt and Negri describes the Multitude as "an open network of singularities that links together on the basis of the common they share and the common they produce". The Multitude is thus connected to the Common as opposed to Empire, which is the manifestation of globalised international power. Common is public space, an attempt to propose a new public sphere. Another social space.

For Virno, who is closely connected with Negri and Hardt, it is exactly this Common, the founding of a new public sphere, that is the central task in Exodus. The Multitude in its complex character of 'an ensemble of acting minorities' is not representable and none of its parts 'aspire to transform itself into a majority', that can rule the others:

"Exodus means, more than taking power or subduing it, exiting. Exiting means constituting a distinct context, new experiences of non-representative democracy, new modes of production."<sup>4</sup>

Virno describes the common as a 'score', an 'acting-in-concert'. It is not some kind of specific composition, rather a 'score in the broadest of senses':

"It consists in making Intellect resonate precisely as attitude. Its only 'score' is, as such, the condition of possibility of all 'scores'."<sup>5</sup>

Virno calls this 'resonating intellect' the 'general intellect'. It is a collective intellect, that connects the Multitude. In a sense 'general intellect' is a defining factor of the multitude. It is the 'acting-in-concert', that the term 'general intellect' implies, that constitutes the multitude.

The Multitude is not a new political subject to be defined in the flight from capitalism, in the exodus. It already exists. It has emerged with the transformation of work, from industrial Fordist labour to Post-fordist immaterial labour. The 'acting-in-concert' is already meticulously orchestrated by capitalism. It is the reverberatory pulse that runs through all immaterial labor. All the immaterial, computerized operations that makes up increasingly larger parts of our daily labor. It is not necessarily an ongoing communication, it is rather 'the condition of possibility' in the ever present communication. The fact that we are all tuned in, all of the time. Available.

Here, in capitalism, this new collective presence, is paradoxically both fulfilling and exploiting all the buzzwords that comes with it; creativity, innovation, nomadism, flexibility, etc. General Intellect exhaust and collapse the traditional structures in work/leisure, public/private and substitutes the hard-won working conditions and democratic rights in representative democracy with an omnipresent servitude. We are permanently available – even in leisure, as consumers, we are productive, fulfilling society's need for increasing economic growth. Empire is the common of capitalism. It is the omnipresent, omnicomplex structure that we all feed into - by working, by consuming, by being.

Exodus is a withdrawal from Empire. Not a withdrawal to the past, as an attempt to re-install the old orders, before everything went wrong. Exodus is a withdrawal on the conditions of the Multitude. It is an attempt a creating another General Intellect than Empire. A refusal to engage in the 'acting-in-concert' orchestrated by capitalism, and in the same move constituting an alternative 'acting-in-concert'.

Virno quotes Hobbes: "Our obligation to civill obedience, by vertue whereof the civill Lawes are valid, is before all civil Law."<sup>6</sup> The foundation of the State rests on this obedience. The State is comprised of a set of Laws, these Laws are only valid, if we presuppose our 'unconditional acceptance of command'.<sup>7</sup> No matter what the contend of a law is, we have presupposed that we will obey the law. In the post-industrial societies, the Nation State has become increasingly important as the reference of power. The war on terror and the inherent set of new security laws utilizes the State as the highest organ of power, to which we as citizens are expected to obey. The State is now before democracy. With reference to security, the state can suspend the civil rights that used to be the foundation of the state. The State has loosened itself from its foundations and has become an ultimate power. As representative democracy crumbles, as our experience of direct influence is waning, our 'unconditional acceptance of command' transgress into servitude.

Civil Disobedience, or Radical Disobedience as Virno calls it, is the exodus from this servitude of the State. By disobeying one law in an act of civil disobedience, its not only that certain law that is disrespected, it is the general obedience to all of the laws of the State that is targetted. It is the very foundation of the State, the 'unconditional acceptance of command' that is challenged. This is the reason why the State appearently invests considerable more force and capacity in encountering collective acts of civil disobedience, as The Youth House Movement, than in battling other kinds of crime. Civil Disobedience is not only a security threat in certain - proportional - limited parts of the city. It is a general threat to the symbolic foundation of the State.

The occupation of Refshalevej isn't a 'mass withdrawal' from the base the State – it is rather a 'temporary autonomous zone' - but on a smaller scale it fullfills the traits of Exodus as laid out by Paolo Virno. The argument on legal versus illegal in the script

is crucial in this respect. It is only by breaking the Law that the occupation can challenge society on a general level. It is exactly in refusing to obey the Law that the occupation is a refusal of capitalism. 'Havnelaboratoriet' in the other end of the harbour is still defined as art; it still operates within the Law and in this sense respects the system with all its institutionalised channels of critique.

The beauty of the occupation of Refshalevej is that it goes beyond refusing capitalism. Whereas the tactics of the Black Bloc has massive focus on exiting society, on performing the destructive powers released in the exit, the new community on Refshalevej goes beyond the destruction and establishes another common, an alternative public sphere. In the daily assemblies consensus democracy is explored; its very interesting to note that the continuous disagreement in these assemblies are seen as a quality, a fuel that keeps the community going. It is not an ambitious result – a cohesive proposal for another kind of community – that is the quality here. It is the chaotic, unresolved process of trying to become another kind of community that is interesting. If the occupation is already in the initial dismissal of the law, by the fact of the occupation itself, a refusal of the State, it is in the following two months, in the process of evolving and performing the new community, that the occupation is 'constituting a distinct context, new experiences of non-representative democracy'.

This is how to understand Jons remark: "The fact that it happened is an image in itself."

### Organising Freedom? (3.3.4.3.)

In his seminal text, 'The Temporary Autonomous Zone', Hakim Bey writes about maps:

"The 'map' is a political abstract grid, a gigantic con enforced by the carrot/stick conditioning of the 'Expert' State, until for most of us the map *becomes* the territory – no longer 'Turtle Island', but 'the USA'. And yet because the map is an abstraction it cannot cover Earth with 1:1 accuracy. Within the fractal complexities of actual geography the map can see only dimensional grids. Hidden enfolded immensities escape the measuring rod. The map is not accurate; the map *cannot* be accurate."<sup>8</sup>

It is in these 'hidden enfolded immensities' that the Temporary Autonomous Zones can unfold.

By mere coincidence the occupation of Refshalevej occupies ground that is administrated by no less than three different offices, two in the City Administration of Copenhagen and one in the State Administration. The road is guarded by an office in the City Administration, the water-side of the road by another office in the City Administration, while the 'Christiania-side' of the road is guarded by an office in the State Administration. In the interview Jon explains how this complexity makes it hard for the authorities to decide what to do, it is not one authority, but three authorities who has to agree upon some kind of standpoint and which action to take. By uniting these three separate items the occupation confuse the authorities and create a new temporal site to be considered.

In a similar vein Jon talks about the loopholes of jurisdiction connected to sailing. One is permitted to stay three nights each place you land. A community on water moving from place to place, would thereby be able to escape the radar of the Law. This way of thinking with and around the law, reminds of the brilliant way egyptian activists circumvented the law in the action Silent Stand - I'll get back to this in the script of the same name.

The exchange with the authorities takes a new turn when the activists write an application to the City Administration of Copenhagen, proposing to redefine the occupation as a 'festival' and asking to be granted permission to stay on the premises for a certain period over the summer. How to look at such an application? Is it a joke? Or is it the project-entrepreneurship of the involved artist-activists that comes to play? By submitting an application to the authorities the activists recognizes these authorities and their right to govern the the site. All of a sudden the occupation resembles Havnelaboratoriet in the other end of the harbour – its is recognisable project that respects the conditions given by the authorities. The occupation subdues to the authorised channels of critique.

In the cultural self-image of Copenhagen there is a slot for this kind of activity. If you are young and rebellious, if your activity is creative and artistic, if you belong to the so-called 'layer of cultural growth' there are places for you to exercise your critical creativity. Empty factory buildings, vacant lots and temporary festivals in certain parts of public space. There is even funding available if you are experimental enough. As also discussed in the script on G13, this field of critical cultural activity, to which also the new Youth House belongs, can be seen as the way the authorities neutralize

political critique. By accepting its existence, by providing spaces for it to unfold, society secures that these activities are limited to certain subcultural groups, where they don't get out of control. This is the authorised critique to which also art belongs.

My point in this script/performance is that it is the distinction between legal and illegal activity that separates authorized critique from real exodus. Only by employing civil disobedience a radical rejection of society at large can be reached. If the Upbuilders really mean it when they reject the Danish State in their manifesto, then an application to the same State Authorities is no-go. A permission to continue as a festival would neutralize the political potential of the occupation. It would reverse the exodus. The exitants would re-enter into society. The occupation would become a project.

I don't know if the decision to make an application was taken in an assembly, if there was consensus on this decision or if it was done only by a fraction of the occupiers. I also don't know the real intentions behind it – maybe it was done in order to gain time, as yet another way of confusing the authorities. In any case, it was rejected.

All of sudden, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, the authorities show up, decisive as ever and the entire occupation is cleared of in a couple of hours, leaving almost no trace behind. The clearing is a clean cut. It leaves the occupation as a clear image. It existed. It fulfilled its potential as an exodus. A temporal autonomous zone.

The occupation of Refshalevej can be seen as the poetic demise of The Youth House Movement. It started out in anger and sorrow, in an explosive rage that turned the streets of Copenhagen into a month long rampage. Through a year of intense weekly experimentation with a wide range of protest forms, it won over the sympathy of large parts of the city population and reached its ultimate goal, a new youth house. The new Youth House is another story though. The Movement dissolves in the summer heat at Refshalevej. In a 2 month long party it 'hoists the flags of revolution and pushes the ship off shore!' It disappears – not into a permanent realistic solution like the new Youth House – but into an imaginary exodus. At Refshalevej The Youth House Movement becomes image.

This is the legacy of The Youth House Movement – that it for a period and in various versions – managed to create imaginative alternatives to capitalist society; holes and scars in the surface of an all encompassing regime.

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**Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> quoted from: *the Exhibition Guide, Anja Kirschner and David Panos: The Empty PlanTrine Falch: Theatre for a New Time*, Oslo Kunsthall, May 14th - June 26th 2011 (published online at: [http://www.kunsthallaslo.no/images/stories/KO/Anjadavidtrina/ny2\\_emptyplan\\_falch\\_english.pdf](http://www.kunsthallaslo.no/images/stories/KO/Anjadavidtrina/ny2_emptyplan_falch_english.pdf)) included here as Appendix ???

<sup>2</sup> Chto Delat?, the russian collective of artists, critics, philosophers and writers founded in St. Petersburg in 2003, has produced a series of Lehrstücke – learning plays – where a group of invited participants meet for a short intense workshop, 36 hours or 48 hours, improvising the script collectively from a given theme. The play is then performed by the same participants in front of an audience, with several inserted discussions and other alienation effects employed. 3 examples can be seen at the web-site of Chto Delat?: "The Russian Woods", at Tramway, Glasgow 25.03.2012, "The urgent need to struggle" at Institute of Contemporary Arts, London 10.09.2010, "Where has communism gone?" at SMART project space, Amsterdam February 2011 ([www.chtodelat.org](http://www.chtodelat.org)). They have also used the idea of a commenting choir intensely in their 'Songspiels' – a form derived from soviet theatre tradition. For a lengthier discussion of the post-communistic aspects in the work of Chto Delat? see 'What Remains? – Chto Delat?, Post-Communism and Art' by my phd-colleague Simon Sheikh.

<sup>3</sup> Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt: 'Glossary of Concepts' in 'Radical Thought in Italy – A Potential Politics', ed. Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, London: University of Minneapolis Press 1996), p. 262

<sup>4</sup> Paolo Virno: *A Grammar of the Multitude* (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), pp. 70-71

<sup>5</sup> Paolo Virno: 'Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus' in 'Radical Thought in Italy – A Potential Politics', ed. Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, London: University of Minneapolis Press 1996), p. 195

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983), chap.14, sec.21, 181

<sup>7</sup> This and other quotes in this section are from Paolo Virno: 'Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus' in 'Radical Thought in Italy – A Potential Politics', ed. Paolo Virno & Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, London: University of Minneapolis Press 1996)

<sup>8</sup> Hakim Bey: The Temporary Autonomous Zone (<http://www.t0.or.at/hakimbey/taz/taz3a.htm>), included here as Appendix 3.3.5.4.