

# **Ecologies of Relation: Collectivity in Art and Media**

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# Abstract

## **Ecologies of Relation: Collectivity in Art and Media**

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How can relation be considered a creative force in the composition of experience? Investigating the status of relation in art, media, and philosophy, this thesis outlines an account of research-creation as a creative practice and tool for analysis. Research-creation, a term used to describe creative practices comprising artistic and theoretical components, provides the backdrop for a more general discussion of the production of knowledge beyond human cognition. By taking a radical empiricist approach, the thesis proposes to include preindividual, affective, and more-than-human elements in the conception of experience. From this point of view, experience is always relationally composed and manifests itself dynamically as an “ecology.” One way of developing a theory and practice attentive to such ecologies of relation resides in the notion of the collective, which refers here to a dimension of experience that exceeds the mere grouping of individual elements under a common interest, ideology, or social bond. The first chapter analyzes collectivity and relation as activities of emergence and becoming. Considered as ecological activity, collectivity emphasizes how experience comprises spatio-temporal dynamics constituting embodied, actual events and their singular forms of knowledge. Using the work of the *SenseLab* as exemplary, this chapter clarifies how research-creation might be better understood as an investigation into aesthetic and conceptual practices that mutually shape how forms of knowledge and experience co-emerge. From here, the focus on the ecological relation moves toward immersive media environments, which emphasize perception as a relational act of *immediation*. Immediation as relational act challenges the paradigm of mediation between humans and machines, and instead inserts their activity into an ecological dynamic. In this chapter, research-creation interlaces with concerns in the field of digital aesthetics. Consequently, the entanglements between different temporalities in digital media processes require a rethinking of affect as a temporal operation, which is the focus of chapter three. In chapters four and the conclusion, research-creation as a relational-ecological practice opens up

toward political concerns in urban planning and activism, respectively, allowing for the development of an extended conception of the aesthetic politics of the collective beyond art and academia. From a final speculative outlook the thesis asks how an ecological and collective account of research-creation might turn philosophy into an aesthetic and political practice of activation.

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## INTRODUCTION

“There is always a collectivity, even when you are alone.”

(Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 152)

“For politics precedes being.”

(Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 203)

“Change and life are synonymous. We have to admit and accept it. Change is what makes life interesting. There is no progress, change is all we know.”

(Marcel Duchamp in Gold 1958)

### *Involution*

Relation there is. Add movement to the mix. Think movement and relation, relational movement, always coming in multiples. Relational movements form a multiplicity through resonance – a collective act. This is what constitutes the real, a relational realism. Take the collective as that which holds together across the thresholds of virtual and actual elements of time, thought, matter, space, and feeling. Consider this relational moving-collectively as activity. Experience is activity. Experience is all there is. Lets begin anew from experience as world-activity. Not a subjective or objective experience. There is no such *thing* yet in nascent experience. Experience arises relationally, through forces and their capacity to move in resonance across different registers of existence. Experience always comes as an *ecology of relation*. Ecology is not a system but an open set of relational activities holding together while moving with the world, *a worlding*. Insert your capacities of becoming-with such relational activity to instigate acts of creative co-composition. Think of meaning, sense, and feeling as what arises in the immediacy of the event. Think of language, the body, thought, and movement as the ecologies we traverse in activating new processes of creative emergence, as the composition of an event of expression...

This project investigates how events arise and take effect as collective process of activation. Events make the shifting movement of a process felt as change. They are expressions of creativity moving an ecology towards a feeling of extension. They operate in the interstices between the potential and its activation in experience. Taking experience as the active ground

through which all other activity becomes relationally expressive, this project asks what holds relations together in the making of an event? How can we account for experience's relational activity as both auto-constitutive and relational, as what allows for participation in its processes while adding new tonalities to the mix? In other words, how can we conceive of certain practices, such as art and philosophy as engagements with such a relational realism? The proposition I will undertake consists in developing a language and mode of resonance with aesthetic practices on the basis of movement. Such thinking comes always in itself as a collective act. The conceptual developments I undertake are of a collective and emergent quality themselves. For the most part they arise from the work of the *Senselab* in Montreal and my participation in its activities. The *Senselab* addresses questions of aesthetic practice and philosophy in relation to experience, perception, movement, immediacy, and activation across different ecologies of practice. In moving-with a practice and through its materials, I suggest, one can make the active ground of experience felt in its multiplicity, often extending assumed limits of *how* we participate in processes of creation. This extension through experience points towards the ecological, which is neither human nor nonhuman but always more than human. By exploring ecologies of relation we might be able to foreground an active sphere of life operating through the human while always problematizing what "human" means, what it can do, and how it might become a collective activation. Investigating concepts and artistic practices I attempt to activate a relational ground for collective emergence in research-creation. The premise is that each encounter with a practice shapes and transforms the practice of writing in their presence, writing *with* and *through* them, not just *about* them. I conceive of this work, following Jakob von Uexküll, as a "foray" into ecologies of relation. In this foray different ecologies move across each other, building relays and resonances through processes of amplification without having to diminish the complexity of each such ecology.

Research-creation, I suggest, generates a vital ground for an ecological encounter between aesthetic expression and philosophy of art. An ecological encounter in this case means not a juxtaposition of theory and practice as act of *translation* but a "taking-account" of each other's movement and relational activity, seeking potential points of resonance without over-coding each practice's singularity. As a movement of its own, research-creation emphasizes the "creative in-between" as an emergent middle from which processes of collective emergence arise (Thain 2008). I will show how research-creation's relational status as in-between or as a *milieu*

allows for addressing contemporary practices between philosophy and art. Such practices, I will argue, mobilize the movement of perception and thought in experience, and by doing so, invent new forms of life. Research-creation as I define it throughout takes up conceptual and artistic practices along their specific movements, and activates their capacity for transducing themselves into and resonating with other practices. The contemporary discourse on artistic research builds on an institutional background, so it is not surprising that the question of its potential for knowledge production takes on a central role.<sup>1</sup> I, on the other hand, treat the production of knowledge in research-creation as side-effect, as something that happens through the creative movements I trace. Knowledge-production as a collective act brings the question of *how* such knowledge might occur (as well as for whom and where) back to the relational nexus of experience. Thus knowing might mean feeling, having a relation, or moving-with. Let me give an example.

### *Texturing*

*Collective Writing Machines* is a site-sensitive work by choreographer Diego Gil that adapts to its environment depending on its spatial constraints. In the case of its premiere at the Het Veem Theatre in Amsterdam, participants were welcomed at the entrance and asked to tell the person at the counter the first word that comes to mind while they receive a letter-sized piece of folded paper and a pencil. Afterwards the participants walked up three flights of stairs one by one until they reached a spacious attic of an old warehouse on the waterfront, with a rectangular arrangement of tables, 18 chairs, and Gil awaiting the arriving people. Once the chairs were filled the doors close. The artist welcomed the audience and explains the procedure of the “performance.” In the first step, Gil showed them how to fold the paper, doing it himself, to the size of a postcard. Then he explained that they would all write at the same time (himself included), for three intervals varying between one-and-a-half and three minutes each. The first round of writing was a test, familiarizing everyone with the practice. For each interval, a new side of the paper was written on, with the effect that one turns and refolds the sheet. Gil gave very precise instructions for the following intervals. Each writing-interval had a specific focus of attention. For the first interval, each participant was supposed to keep the attention focused on one’s own body while writing. For the second interval, one should pay attention to the wider proximity of the body. In the third interval, one should think of oneself in five minutes from the

present moment while writing in the present. After the three writing intervals, the people were directed to another door leading one floor down. Pablo Fontdevilla, another choreographer, welcomed the participants and handed out small wooden palettes suited for the “inscribed” sheets. The audience then repeated a series of writing intervals, again changing the focus of attention, but this time while walking. After two more rounds of collective writing and walking, the group was guided down another flight of stairs, this time stopping in the staircase. Fontdevilla asked one participant after another to walk down a long corridor, one person at a time (each for about 30 seconds). At the end of the corridor there was a table with journal-sized “books,” containing Gil’s poetic conceptual writings developed over the course of a year, which each participant was supposed to take as a gift. Next to the table a staircase led up two flights of stairs to the lounge at the same level where the performance started. Slowly, one participant after another arrived and sat down, looking at the book or gazing outside the windows facing the harbour.

*Collective Writing Machines* activates the process of writing as a bodily affair, while Gil’s poems also foreground an emergent quality of language, a language in the making. Treating language as emergent is a side-effect of the immediacy through which *Collective Writing Machines* activates its participants and distributes linguistic elements as materials – not as a pre-existing set of rules and entities. In the same way, the book’s particularity consists in its finely attuned treatment of the layout, including gaps, line-breaks, and juxtapositions of all sorts, putting each word and phrase into a constant movement across the page and in conjunction with other words. The paper is of the same type as that given to the participants for the writing practice; if re-folded correctly, it fits perfectly into the book’s middle, thus becoming a part of it. Through the small acts of folding, writing, paying attention to different degrees, as well as the spatial and bodily displacement in relation to the building’s architecture, a sense of collectivity arises – without having to separate one body from another, a site from its surrounding, a movement from the situation it emerged from. *Collective Writing Machines* emphasizes how there is always already a collective, even in the practice of writing that seems confined to the “self.” The performance-workshop is itself the machine, not in the sense of combining parts but through its assembling of movement qualities which become activated through the movement of writing and its emergent activation of language. In the piece, while building on bodily capacities for moving, writing, and reading, entities and acts become inseparable – and thus collective –

through the machine of writing. Language forms the background murmur, the ground for a specific mode of expression, without becoming a dominant form. The sideways activation of language through collective writing, I suggest, offers a crucial element for a philosophical practice based on language but seeking to also activate a feeling for its practice exceeding language.

The day after the premiere, I participated as Gil's thesis mentor in his final MFA defence for the Amsterdam Master in Choreography. *Collective Writing Machines* is the final outcome of a two-year process. In the room are the two program directors and two external examiners, a visual artist and a performance theorist. One of the directors formally opens the session, reminding us that the main points of discussion will be Gil's leitmotif, his approach, and his methodology for the performance. Gil explains his initiative as problematizing the relation between language and movement in a choreographic context. The questions following Gil's exposition oscillate between investigating his methodological decisions and the embodied sensation of writing throughout the performance. We witness a repeated inquiry of either the artist's intention, his use of references and methods, or questions in relation to personal impressions during the performance.

Gil's work engages with the relation between language, processes of thought, and movements that co-emerge in the event of the performance. It points to the creative infolding of different movements in the fabrication of a collective experience. The piece investigates how the practice of writing is as much a bodily activity as it is of thought, and how both co-emerge as movement. Further, I think, it addresses the activity of emergence, a vivid and pulsating middle or in-between, from which bodies, spaces, and their relation to time arise through their dynamic entanglement. From here one might ask, what a body is, how does it relate to perception, and how can we think of movement practices as one way of investigating the creative potential of such relational activity? The examination panel's interest in approaches (i.e. references) and methods only sheds light on one part of a creative practice. However, under the auspices of research-creation, I suggest that Gil's work hints at an emergent quality of experience that conventional research methods and well-defined fields of reference tend to overlook.

Someone taking minutes, two people asking about reasons, causes, methods, and giving statements about their experience of Self leaves the actual question of what happens in the midst

of experience out of the picture: how it happens and what it creates through the encounter of language and movement. The situation re-instantiates movement into already confined blocks: the human body, the self, language as inscription. But the problem resides in the fact that there is no body, no language, no space, and no stable sense of Self in the performative proposition of *Collective Writing Machines*. The defence feels like the actual artistic proposition cannot fit into the confined situation of an examination of art or artistic practice. Neither the artistic frame of reference for good practice and judgment of methods nor a narrative account of one's experience of the performance can embrace the complexity of the work. It seems that *Collective Writing Machines*' co-activation of movement and language is a case in point for the failure of the situation, trying to give an institutional and disciplinary frame to a praxis that is singular in its eventful unfolding. *Collective Writing Machines* points to a process of language-in-the-making that cannot detach from its actively moving environment of one's writing body, other bodies moving, the rhythms of pencils scratching, the space shifting with one's own displacement, etc. The work emphasizes language as relational emergence between movements populating an event and its milieu.

In resonance with the underlying project, one of the examiners addresses Gil's artistic practice as a form of research. She asserts that the situation of the performance allowed her to become a "researcher" herself, exploring and reflecting her bodily sensations in relation to language. What does she mean? Being involved in a creative and experimental practice is turning her into a researcher? What kind of research is she talking about – a kind of research on her own bodily perceptions in relation to language? To what extent do research and reflection relate to each other, and in which ways might they presume a conscious individual reflecting? By interweaving a process of sensing and research, one might be quick to assume that the entire defence actually could be considered as a conversation on what contemporary discourse labels "artistic-research." Artistic-research, the way I understand the term, addresses an institutional and academic discourse wondering if and how artistic practice includes research or can be considered as research, at once in relation and in opposition to other forms of research known in the humanities and natural sciences. The combination of a choreographic art practice and its interest in language, a dominant mode of academic expression, appears like a royal road to an artistic-research discourse of the institutional kind.

In his preparation and throughout the writing of his poetry, Gil, who also holds a degree in philosophy, addresses process, time, movement, and experience through language, as emerging through movement. Is all artistic practice research when it makes use of philosophical references and works with concepts? Would not such an approach based on interdisciplinary assumptions lead away from the emergent quality of *Collective Writing Machines*? Is not the reworking of what language does or how it becomes in a choreographic context more concerned with the way conjunctions happen between various trajectories of language, bodies, spaces, and sensations in the making? Is *Collective Writing Machines* not problematizing the separation between writing, thinking, and bodily movement as ecological event beyond any disciplinary boundary? Gil's performance points towards a dilemma which I will try to bypass with the help of an ecological approach. On the one hand, one could trace the references and methods informing his work, and ask how its use of language helps to reflect the artist's interest in the conjunction between choreography and philosophy. On the other hand, one could also focus on the way in which *Collective Writing Machines* creates an interstice that pushes language to a limit. Seeking out the limit of a process of formation – of an intensity being felt in the act of moving in between things – the creative process of the performance becomes itself a continued investigation into thresholds of creative acts as collectively activated. In other words, the focus on writing, on experimenting with movement and language, generates a singular mode of practice, of research and creation, where research means finding techniques of relating heterogeneous elements, and creation defines their potential expression through resonance and amplification. In making language a concern of movement through space and time, the work exemplifies what I attempt to do in this project: Finding an emergent language between conceptual rigour and the movement of a practice, not equalizing them but making felt what occurs in their difference, in the relational interval between them.

Gil investigates embodied sensation in resonance with language by considering sensation as a form of abstraction or abstract force, beyond human confinement. The same holds for language, which is not a fixed set but a movement in itself coursing through and conjoining with other movements (of the body, of thought, of sensation). Confining the experience of the performance to an embodied self-awareness appears too restrictive for the richness of sensation before it settles into “a body in space.” In other words, sensation, a term I use to emphasize the emergent qualities before an actual bodily perception takes place, and language are not only of a



human or personal register but *with* the world as experience in its active becoming. *Ecologies of relation* is the term I use for such co-emergent, dynamic, and creative processes in experience. Ecologies of relation are time-related, similar to how *Collective Writing Machines* enables a process of conjunctive relational becoming across various intervals of time. The time of the embodied experience overlays with the time of the building, the time of thought and bodily movement, the time of words on paper, and the time of a reading of the book – the time of experience as temporal multiplicity. The time of experience-in-the-making and its continuing across a temporal multiplicity expresses a particular qualitative aspect of ecologies of relation where expression is at the brink of actualization. At this point experience demonstrates a heightened degree of potential in the midst of the actuality of experiencing.

The aim of this project is to investigate the temporal multiplicity of experience across different aesthetic practices in art and media. The potentiality occurring, like manifold seeds ready for growth, will be considered as *collective*. Such an undertaking enables a different take on the relation between theory and practice at the core of many artistic research endeavours. Collective, for me, defines a middle-ground of emergence implying a double movement: that of an actively operating temporal multiplicity and its expression in and through experience. Collective is the term I use to contest the binary logic between abstract and concrete, where the former has a transcendental or immaterial quality, and the latter a material or physical one. The collective activity of experience might enable attentiveness to new levels of awareness – thus in itself becoming a new qualitative potentialization. From this point of view, writing in the presence of another practice also means undergoing these transformations of thought-in-sensation while being in one's own practice. This is the main impetus of research-creation as a practice for inventing techniques for moving *with* other practices, of entering ecologies of relation, without having to abstract one's practice from the ecological movement itself (Manning and Massumi 2014, 89).

Research-creation is neither a methodology nor a discourse. I would rather liken it to a toolbox of techniques for moving along trajectories of problematization emerging from specific, embodied, sensational, and pragmatic situations.<sup>2</sup> Such techniques are singularly tied to their specific milieu of emergence; they are unique in the way they operate according to their ecology. I wonder how such situation-specific techniques can instigate the development of new techniques under different circumstances. Again, this process is very different from a practice of translation.

I consider techniques as singular and part of durational processes; a technique becomes a time-quality as part of a temporal multiplicity, a field of potentials, of which it is a singular expression. As a time-quality, a technique carries collective potentials, modulating in a “movement-toward definite expression” and as re-becoming in other practices (Manning and Massumi 2014, 89). What milieus of time-qualities need to be enabled and sustained for techniques to relay in a creative act? One potential way of thinking the emergence of situation-specific techniques as being relayed is through the notion of practice. Practice defines the continuum of repetitions and their differentiation, through which each singular technique selects and activates different elements through a continued activity of refinement and experimentation. Practice is what renders technique both pragmatic and speculative. A technique in this case leads us to ask *how* do certain problems operate and *how* do they activate new movements of thought and sensation:

This idea of research-creation as embodying techniques of emergence takes it seriously that a creative art or design practice launches concepts in-the-making. These concepts-in-the-making are mobile at the level of techniques they continue to invent. This movement is speculative (future-event oriented) as it is pragmatic (technique-based practice).  
(Manning/Massumi 2014, 89)

*Collective Writing Machines* openly poses the question of *how* language operates when put into resonance with bodily movement and the movement of thought. How does such a situation generate techniques for emergence with the movement of language and the body, and how is it generative of concepts-in-the-making? Gil’s work as research-creation emphasizes the emergent and enduring character of a “speculative pragmatism” – a continued practice concerned with the experimental value of technique (Massumi 2011, 12). In this sense, attentiveness becomes a technique, walking another technique, and writing another. They neither predetermine the way sensation will permeate the situation, nor what kinds of thoughts will be effectuated. Attentiveness, walking, and writing unfold as singular techniques unlike any other and yet they are part of a practice’s lived memory of walking, writing, and attending to. Lived memory is a form of temporal affection through different, often resonating, series and their activation of a passing event. These series are always singular in their expression but multiple in their resonance throughout time. I am writing this account three months after I attended the performance in

Amsterdam, and almost two years after I became a part of Gil's project. The time of sensation as series continues all the way to the present and beyond. The problem posed in *Collective Writing Machines* still modulates, in thought and sensation, the way I engage with aesthetic practices. From this point of view the emphasis on techniques of research-creation always comes back to the collective multiplicity of time interlacing in these practices, and how they take on a certain degree of consistency, temporally as much as spatially.

### *The Chapters*

Throughout this project I will unfold what I call research-creation as a relation-specific practice (Massumi 2003b, McCormack 2010). Through relation-specificity I emphasize the co-emergent activity of *technique* and *practice*. The former defines an active mode of insertion in relation to a specific situation, while the latter allows such techniques to shift and modulate as part of a (genealogical) series. Both technique and practice constantly shift and change each other's modes of operation. In *Collective Writing Machines*, the practices of working with space and movement through the body in choreography, and the practice of reading philosophy converge on the specific techniques of writing while walking with other bodies. Through the work's deployment of specific techniques of writing, the practice of using and thinking with and through language alters how language can operate beyond a mere tool of expression or communication. The crafting of techniques depends on the relations activated by the constraints of the performance – the arrangement of the space, the materials given, the instructions, their timing, the displacement inside the building, the book. My argument is that research-creation enables a mode of thought and practice attentive to the creative and productive role of relations. The concern with relations, as I will show, unfolds through both the research-creation practices of the *SenseLab* as the driving force behind my development of the notion of the collective, and the conceptual developments demonstrated most prominently in the works of William James, Erin Manning, Brian Massumi, and Gilbert Simondon, among others. In these works, I argue, relation's capacity for activating a life that is larger and richer in potential is most strongly felt when conceived immanently and as a collective act, or what I will define as the *collective*.

The coupling of relation and collectivity moves through the compositional force of activity in experience. In experience, relations co-compose through activation. This mode of activation is always collective and operates across an ecology. In other words, causality is neither

linear nor attributable to discrete entities as substances “causing” effects. In experience, effects occur as collective acts of resonance that emphasize the singular quality of an occasion of experience and its collectively composing relational ground. Such a conception of experience, which I find particularly strong in the works of James, Manning, and Massumi, constitutes what I will address as “relational realism.” With this concept I want to hint at a dynamic and modular, but nevertheless precise operation of relation as activity composing what is often concerned as a world ready for experiential encounter. Emphasizing relation’s active and collective capacity for constituting what can be addressed as real, I argue, challenges not only the separation between subject and object, or subject and world, but offers a more speculative and activist approach to experience in general. Put differently, to account for what contributes to the fabrication of the real we should not only include nonhuman actors as active, but relation’s general capacity for activation across different modes of existence – actual, virtual, corporeal, and incorporeal. Entering an investigation of relational realism through practice allows me to account for both the emergence of actual effects and their speculative undertones, remaining attentive to how such effects are only ever partial expressions of a wider field of potential. Practice as process that operates collectively takes one of its major tasks the refinement of techniques suitable to a present issue or concern as relation-specific and singular.

The question concerning the creative act in research-creation is a question of *how* to create the right *enabling constraints*, meaning how to develop techniques of activation based on a relational ground of experience. In writing with the practice of the *SenseLab – A Laboratory for Thought in Motion* in the first chapter I develop an account of research-creation practices and their techniques for developing enabling constraints, one of the Lab’s main concerns (see Manning 2009, 65; Manning and Massumi 2014, 92-97). I mobilize the *SenseLab*’s practice as a foray into inventing ecological techniques of activation through constraints, pertaining both to a felt bodily sensation and generative of concepts-in-the-making. The *SenseLab*’s interlacing of practices allows me to develop my notion of the *collective* – a collective activity of becoming and its capacity for endurance. The *SenseLab* develops political modes of research-creation, resisting the foreclosure of the institutional contexts of art and academia that rely on objects, products, and simplified deliverables. In resisting the fabrication of “products” the *SenseLab*’s focus on techniques concerns *how* experience becomes expressive and *how* to participate in this movement, altering both the overall ecology of relation and one’s mode of thinking and feeling

*this* relation (Murphie 2008). In its practice, research-creation opens up “thinking-spaces for research-creation” where “thinking is foregrounding the corporeal, affective, and perceptual” (McCormack 2008). Thinking-spaces are activations of experience’s force of activity in a specific situation “forcing us to think” through the specific relation of a situation. This immediate practice shifts thinking toward an ecologically activated process of problematizing, of extending the range of what a situation might become. Research-creation, I argue, is concerned with life, with modes of life verging on creative co-emergence through resonating techniques and practices, that is, through a life of the *collective*.

In relation to the *SenseLab*’s practice, the question of how to generate *affective relays* translocally emerges as a concern of different *time forms* interlacing in experience (Thain et al. 2013).<sup>3</sup> Media and perception play a crucial part in the interplay of time forms, their modulation, and inflection, which becomes the focus of the second chapter. Through the analysis of two immersive media artworks, Luc Courchesne’s *Panoscope* and Kurt Hentschläger’s *Hemisphere*, I emphasize their potential for an ecological time-quality in experience which I look at as process of “immediation.” Immediation, the way Brian Massumi and the *SenseLab* understand the term, defines the double-relation of an experience being felt as perceptual expression and as part of a series, an extensive aspect of moving across different times (2011, 164-166).<sup>4</sup> This moving-across, or transduction, happens less through media as technological apparatuses, but rather occurs along their relational-material capacities as “technical objects.” Technical objects, the main concept and focus of Gilbert Simondon’s *Du mode d’existence des objets techniques* (1958), relay into wider *media ecologies*, that is, different perceptual, technical, and material time forms. Media ecologies, following the work of Matthew Fuller (2005), emphasize contemporary techno-cultural assemblages as integral aspects of how experience is co-composed. The two media art installations open up a technological dimension of research-creation as *platforms for relation* attuned to a “digital aesthetics” (Munster 2006) concerned with the “perception of perception.” These perceptive modes are Gilles Deleuze explores as “time-perception” in relation to Henri Bergson and cinema (Deleuze 1989, 98, 245). In the case of the *Panoscope* time is felt as constitutive immediacy through an edging quality of perception. In the case of *Hemisphere*, diffusion and granular synthesis of sound and vision open up experience’s interstitial flicker dancing the fine line between expression in perception and its non-sensuous qualities. Considering immediation as process of immediate activation of a body relating with

other bodies at a distance, a sense of the collective as non-local and technically extended field can be foregrounded.

The time-relation immanent to such media events defines the relations' capacities for affecting and being affected in experience. It marks their difference through speeds and slownesses, instead of substantial essences. The ways in which the "more-than-human," a notion Manning proposes instead of nonhuman, activates a felt sensation in experience is the concern of the third chapter on Ragnar Kjartansson's video installation *The Visitors* (Manning 2013a, 153). The work's content is a musical performance with a highly repetitive structure of two sentences chanted in endless variations by eight musicians over the duration of an hour. The work emphasizes specific techniques of timing in the way it contrasts different visual and gestural textures in its setup. Indeed, the piece is based on contrast, a concept crucial for Alfred North Whitehead (1967, 215; 1978, 24) and Massumi (Massumi/McKim 2009), which occurs as both a relational quality between performers on the screen and perceivers in the exhibition, and between the different materials on the screen (often very old interiors at the point of decay) and the high-definition imagery projected in the space. Through what I call the technique of *affective timing* the work emphasizes a political quality in emergent experience. The politics of affect, or aesthetic politics (Rancière 2004, Massumi/McKim 2009), concerns *how* emergent experience passes the threshold in expression and makes relational-ecological processes felt. The question of habit here is key, in one of two ways: either habit is the rudimentary platform for minimal deviation of a repetitive order, or it becomes a platform for activating new potentials in sensation. In the latter case, habit shifts into a technique beyond the overlooking of differentiation in repetition. Considering affect as political has consequences for the way we consider art as potential practice of experimentation.<sup>5</sup> Affective timing takes the potential for activation in experience as a launching pad for thinking and feeling as dynamic processes of a proto-politics of sensation. *The Visitors*, I argue, sheds light on *how* affective politics might instigate new potentials for collective activation through sensation.

The interlude on Francis Alÿs's performative intervention *Railings* functions as a relay between two major blocks of this project. While the first chapter inaugurates my investigation of relation and the collective, the second and third deal with specific technical ensembles and their potential for rethinking perceptual emergence and affective timing. Through an examination of *Railings*, I foreground a rhythmic conception of creative emergence through the acts of

performative urban intervention, its recording, and its display in a gallery space. Through the piece's rhythmic tissue of matter and movement I emphasize the ecological tension between actualization and potentialization in urban architecture as an active and vivid ground for creative ways of engaging with the city.

The fourth chapter stays close to the aesthetic dimension of research-creation's sensibility for emergence outlined so far but shifts the focus towards the practice of urbanism. Working with architect Teddy Cruz's practice between San Diego and Tijuana I develop the notion and technique of *diagrammatic urbanism*. Cruz focuses on movement relations between materials and humans along the Mexican-American border-zone that traverse political, humanitarian, environmental, and architectural registers. Together with his team, Cruz has developed several architectural procedures that interlace human and material geographies along manifold political stratifications and enclosures. By following material flows in relation to their circulation as commodities, debris, or manufacturing components, Estudio Teddy Cruz attempts to activate potential processes of life-enhancement for precarious migrant workers on both sides of the border. The notion of the "diagram," a concept I trace through the works of Foucault (1995), Deleuze (1988b), and Massumi (2011), takes on a material and conceptual function and emphasizes how Cruz's practice resonates strongly with my outline of research-creation. The diagram defines an abstract but operational circulation of power relations enabling a set of relations to sustain themselves across different registers of discourse, social life, material confinement, and politics. This kind of diagram then opens up to a more aesthetic dimension which Cruz activates through the use of his own visual diagrams as part of his practice. In these visual expressions he combines heterogeneous graphical elements expressing the "holding-together" within the space of the highly segregated and diverse border-zone. In this way, he effectuates an immediate and perceptual "understanding" of complex political situations through his mode of diagrammatic practice as visual communication. Ultimately, for Cruz, the abandonment of any boundaries between formal representation and underlying dynamics of relational forces emphasizes the potential for collective activation in experience through architectural procedures undermining conventional binaries of the conceptual and the material, or the local and the trans-local.

The last chapter is a prospectus of research-creation practices to come and a conclusion at the same time. In the previous chapters, relation-specific practices have instigated concepts-in-

the-making leading to the question of how we can develop further techniques to activate these concepts in situations different from the ones from which they emerged. How can a concept itself become an activation for another practice? How can it move towards felt effects? Put differently, if research-creation concerns techniques of activation of experience's potential through relation-specific and felt operations, then we might call it a mode of *activism*. To emphasize how, in the words of Massumi (2011), such an *activist philosophy* resonates with contemporary forms of social protest, I develop two series of intercession, one on *El Siluetazo* and one on *Occupy Wall Street*. The former was a public intervention on September 21, 1983 during the Argentinian dictatorship drawing and placarding thousands of nameless silhouettes in Buenos Aires marking the disappearance of over 30,000 people in clandestine concentration camps. The latter defines a specific form of protest that occupied Zucotti Park in downtown Manhattan and later sprawled across the U.S., Canada and the U.K. in 2011. *El Siluetazo*, I argue, activates the power of anonymity as a way of threatening a state system based on the requirements of identification and representation. Only through identification can the state can assume the "liberty" of rendering humans present or absent at its will. The same accounts for the logic under which representational politics functions. In activating the anonymous force of thousands of bodies within the urban fabric, a menacing gesture towards the reductive logic of representational politics, the dictatorship's hypocritical conception of the liberal subject comes to the fore. In *Occupy Wall Street*, I am particularly interested in the activation of the potential for rethinking representational politics through the technique of "not demanding." To occupy in this case was taken literally as inhabiting space bodily, as supported action through physical presence. The refusal to make demands challenges representational politics in its operation of opposition, capture, and integration. By not demanding, the activists insisted on a radical change to the system of representation emphasizing a life that is beyond representation, a life that is infinitely more rich and diverse than the binaries implicit in representation. Occupy has effected different, often anonymous and heterogeneous, even dissensual, forms of communication and uses of media. These activist media practices, I argue, activate a *gestural quality* in experience and thus enable modes of *affective relaying* across different times and spaces. In both cases, one of anonymity and one of the gestural, I wonder how these techniques can become intercessors for relays over time. Such time-relays, I speculate, engender a new account of practices as both emergent and enduring. Further, I propose that it requires a different mode of thinking about how



political, aesthetic, and ethical processes are as much felt as they are conceptual, and always moving through a process of collective expression. Crafting new relays, spaces, and times for these collective expressions, extending the range of potentiality, and caring for the emergence of an event are, I believe, crucial aspects for extended attempts at research-creation beyond art and academia. As a consequence, I turn in a final movement toward the contemporary art collective *Ecétera* based in Buenos Aires, asking what relational and emergent forms of media activism might fuse with activist philosophy leading towards new forms of aesthetics and resistance.

Research-creation points at “moreness to life” in experience and aims at making such moreness felt (Massumi 2008, Manning 2013a). It aims at making potential becoming felt in the immediacy of an event, not as something to come but something that is already immanently real. How is such a practice and conception of research-creation relate to the figure of “critique” based on a given set of knowledge and its verification? The moreness to life is independent of a human will or mind to retrieve from life some meaning or knowledge. The only way that such moreness can be felt is through inserting one’s practice into a series of resonances and experimentations, without recourse to a finite goal. What becomes apparent is the need of a constant process of renewal requiring support. Research-creation might be one way of offering support on the level of thinking and feeling the potential of the collective in ecologies of relation. If this has taken the form of a piece of academic writing, it is only because my practice is writing, working with concepts and feeling their edges moving in resonance with the milieu of other practices. As part of an *ecology of practices*, a term I borrow from Isabelle Stengers (2005a), I hope to generate a *sense* for the singularity through which research-creation opens up the collective. From here, and as a potential practice of activist philosophy, I conceive of research-creation as critical of knowledge, if knowledge remains a strictly human activity. In this sense Deleuze writes,

But does not critique, understood as critique of knowledge itself, express new forces capable of giving thought another sense? A thought that would go to the limit of what it can do, a thought that would lead life to the limit of what it can do? A thought that would *affirm* life instead of a knowledge that is opposed to life. Life would then be the active force of thought, but thought would be the affirmative power of life. Both would go in the same direction, carrying each other along, smashing restrictions, matching each other step

for step, in a burst of unparalleled creativity. Thinking would then mean *discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life*. [...] Life making thought active and thought making life affirmative. (Deleuze 2006, 101)

Research-creation is about discovering, inventing new possibilities of life, making life and thought activate their collective co-composition beyond any predefined assumption of what knowledge might become and how it will be felt through an ecology of relation.

# CHAPTER I - RELATIONAL REALITY AND THE COMING COLLECTIVE

## Prelude

How is a relation a creative force? This basic question opens up an entire array of problems that are pertinent to the fields of art and philosophy and beyond. The concept of relation seems crucial to contemporary socially engaged art practices, network theories and communication, and activist politics. All three fields generate the ground for the underlying investigation of research-creation as what I consider to be a relation-specific aesthetic practice. Emphasizing relation allows me to elaborate techniques that consider relation as an activity generative of creative processes in the making. The problem of relation is one of underlining that art and philosophy are both creative practices that participate in each other's activity through their capacity for relational activity – that is, creation itself. How can one consider research-creation as both creative and analytical at the same time, where either activity arises relationally in the act of practicing? Dovetailing with the general discourse on artistic research, I want to foreground research-creation's relation-specificity to underscore the constitutive force of relation in experience. Relation-specificity adds to the often-discussed site-specificity in art discourses and cultural theory, and medium-specificity in media theory, a third dynamic dimension. A relation-specific approach is concerned with process, temporality, and emergence coursing through the specific affordances of a site or medium. From this point of view, research-creation takes on a relay function for relational emergence in aesthetic practices as the dimension of activity for such practices. From asking *where* and *through what*, research-creation extends the concern towards the *how* of creative practice, underlining its potential for movement and processual differentiation. Such an approach, in return, might also alter conventional assumptions behind the link between theory and practice, and their relation to specific places and media. Research-creation as a relation-specific practice is an activity, and as such, it has to unfold always anew in relation to its field of emergence, or, what I will call an *ecology of relation*.<sup>6</sup> Investigating how the relation between a process of creative emergence and its ecology occurs leads me to underline another quality in emergent processes, that of the collective. Focusing on emergent creativity through relation, the practice of research-creation asks how relations actually relate,

and how they constitute a collective quality in emergence. The question of the collective defines a movement of inclusion, where relations actively shape what becomes qualitatively felt as form in experience. Thinking the collective in relation to research-creation is a proposition for an immanent, actively moving, and transversal aesthetic practice including abstract, material, and organic aspects in the quasi-human affairs of art and philosophy. The underlying developments arise from an interest in aesthetic practices allowing for an extended scope of research-creation where conceptual and material movements shape creative activity without having to separate one from the other, but by emphasizing their collective nature. Accordingly, this project is not philosophical in the classical sense, nor is it artistic. It uses the creative techniques of working with concepts known to philosophy and enables resonances with similar concerns in art, media, and activism pointing towards their potential for relational co-emergence. By doing so, I hope to highlight aspects in the discourse on creative practices within cultural, media, and art theory that open up relation as a dynamic activity bearing the potential for thinking the aesthetic, ethical, and political as emergent qualities in experience. Finally, I hope that in the process of writing through the conceptual and aesthetic material, the mode of writing in an academic context itself transforms into a mode of research-creation.

*First Movement:*

## **The Act and its Relation**

“Relation cannot be foretold: it must be experienced.” (Manning 2009, 41)

### *Relation and Experience*

William James considers relation a mode of existence. “For such a philosophy [Radical Empiricism], *the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system.* Elements may indeed be redistributed, the original placing of things getting corrected, but a real place must be found for every kind of thing experienced, whether term or relation, in the final philosophic arrangement” (James 1996, 42). The interplay of relations as modes of existence defines a crucial element for what will be further defined as *collective*. A relation defines neither a connection nor a thing or substance. If, as Manning explains, a relation cannot be foretold but must be experienced, we enter a conception of relation as movement, as tendency and immanent/immediate force (James 1996, 165; Massumi 1992, 12; 2008). A relation is not merely relating but collectively crafting or creating through movement; one can conceive of relation as an interstice or interval, rather than a connection. If relation concerns the in-between as a movement, it has two phases that are constantly differentiating: one is a movement of continuity and discontinuity, and the other is a movement of conjunction and disjunction (James 1996, 95).

In addition, experience and relation are infinitely entangled. Relations cannot be foretold until they are experienced. Relations are the moving mesh of any activity as experience, and without relation there is no experience. According to James, relations exist but autonomously of the thing related; they operate as force or activity with a certain tendency or propensity. Only when relations fold together with other such tendencies into *lived* experience do they come to be known as what they tended toward. James proposes a conception of experience where the knower and the thing known emerge relationally and not through a predefined positioning (1996, 4). The relation between them is temporal and resonates with other relations. At the point of becoming-known they have already moved somewhere else, perished and are ready for a different becoming-in-experience. James’s emphasis on relations defines the foundation of a

processual account of experience, where, beyond the immediate instance of experience in space and time, other potential qualities of emergence are included in its range of activity.

Relational thought emphasizes an emergent quality in experience and defines the entry point for research-creation as experimental practice between art and philosophy. Emergence as a movement operates through the feeling of change. For this very reason, I consider research-creation as an *aesthetic* practice according to Brian Massumi's formula, "*practice becomes perception*" (2011, 11). In its practice research-creation makes no separation between potential and actual aspects of experience but considers them as part of a shared continuum which is *change*. Change and relation define the primary interest of research-creation because they underline both the general activity of existence, and life formation in its continuous process and differentiation. Considered as aesthetic practice, research-creation attempts to be attentive to "the feeling of the world's more-than of activity going on, and the singular feeling of that activity specifically coming to this, just so, [as] immediate dimensions of experience's occurring" (2011, 3). Experience means accounting for change as a creative factor of existence as such, both through the movement of process as creative activity and through the singularity of an occasion of experience. If research-creation concerns the creative potential of relation, then it concerns a wider question of creativity as change-making-life. A relation, however, only ever constitutes relationally, as a form of collective activity. Change in its doubling of movement – continuous/conjunctive, discontinuous/disjunctive – defines the passage of activity as a form of collective life emergence. Life then is never organic but inorganic, as a quality of a potential "qualifying process as the production of the new: in a word, 'becoming'" (2011, 2). Change, for Massumi, as much as for James and Whitehead, underlines temporal multiplicity as the composing aspect of experience.

Accordingly, I want to consider the relation between change and multiplicity as mode of collectivity (Massumi 2011, 2; Whitehead 1978, 79; James 1996, 161). The collective as change suggests that relation is experience, and that experience, to become felt, effectuates through change. The doubling of change is crucial to avoid any split between an empirical and transcendental part of experience. While occasions and potential are terms of a relation which is experience, both operate through experience's activity of change. And yet, the actualization of an actual occasion perishes without changing (Whitehead 1978, 35). It is only as part of a relational collectivity evolving as shared continuum that an occasion relates temporally. In its activity,

relation orients change as a potentially felt quality, while extending its activity beyond the qualitative occasion of experience. Relation is the operator of a field whose activity is change. Relation operates through change shaping *how* experience becomes felt *and* exceeds its immediate occurrence. It takes effect through modes of collectivity as temporal operations. These modes are not eternal but relational and thus non-substantial (Deleuze 1988c, 91-92; Souriau 1943).

If relation must be experienced, it is because experience, as William James emphasizes, concerns the “stuff of which is everything composed” (1996, 3). Put differently, relation is experience and thus everything considered as real is relational – while “real” means all processes of activity. At the same time he clarifies the pluralist approach of his Radical Empiricism, stating “there is no *general* stuff of which experience at large is made. There are as many stuffs as there are ‘natures’ in the things experienced” (1996, 26). James underlines the differential nature of experience as relationally composed, avoiding thinking of experience as attributes of substances and their connections. Relations have movement potential, and in their resonance they compose felt experience but they are without substance. James gives prominence not to an experience of the subject perceiving the world, but experience as the only possible reality providing lines for thought and feeling to connect *with* a world made of infinite relations. “Nature” in this case designates a differential and collectively composed account of experience through the very activity of relation. Put differently, nature is relational potential – a field of force rather than an exteriority to human experience.

This notion of relation entails that experience is not based on being but on becoming; change defines its activity. Simondon calls “being in becoming” the only form of “being” that exists, *ontogenesis*. Ontogenetic philosophy considers any kind of individuation as real, where the individual “has the reality of a relational act” (Combes 2013, 21). Simondon underlines that any process of emergence, which he terms “individuation,” derives from the relational capacity of relations to generate resonance as process of ontogenesis (2005, 29). The ontogenetic approach considers the process of “knowing” across (*à travers*) individuation and not based on the individual (Simondon 2005, 24). Knowing, as in James, is a process belonging to experience, across and always in excess of any formation of a subject as the knower and an object as the known. Knowing “across” defines a degrees of sense beyond meaning, of a process of emergence “knowing” its own unfolding, as potential. Experience occurs in the passage, in the

event, where the event denotes a dynamic quality of existence, composing *an* experience as a disjunctive and conjunctive act.<sup>7</sup> An ontogenetic account of experience allows us to think existence beyond the subject, entity, or object of experience and to open up different registers – those of movement and potential. If individuation operates on the basis of resonances between relations, and relations operate collectively, then research-creation might provide a ground for experimenting with movement and potential across different registers of existence.

Understanding existence in its movement and relational capacities, attuned to the very situations of emergence, thus provides a dynamic account of the real beyond finite causes, effects, and substances. But how can one account for the non-substantial activity of relation as experience, of processes of creativity beyond the subjective or objective point of view? Or rather, how can one reconsider what objective and subjective means in relational terms? To investigate such processes, research-creation asks how we can extend the realm of what is *real* beyond the subjective encounter of an objective world. Starting from a reality of relation, we might wonder, how experience accounts for both emergence and endurance of different sets of activity, some of which are actualizing while others remain virtual. How do relations actually relate, and how can we see this activity as potentially bypassing a fixed order of subject-object relations based on substance?

### *Terminus*

William James defines “terminus” as a *sense* of movement constitutive of an experience, *this* and not *that* experience (1996, 13). At the same time terminus is a passage of experience initiating a new and emergent process. It is a marker of difference and movement. Terminus is not an endpoint but a way of continuously activating the manifold of relational tendencies and forces into an intense passing of a graspable situation. It underlines the movement of a pull that gets a process going. The coming into its “form” of *this* experience undergoes constant transformation through relation’s movement. A terminus actually never ends but is “the energy of a beginning” – a repetition of a process with similar relations but different effects (Manning 2009, 224).

Terminus as activator agitates experience’s directionality toward a process of formation yet to be determined. A terminus activates a process of formation or emergence of an occasion along a process of becoming. While taking form, however, the process might not follow a terminus’ primary orientation. There is openness to the beginning-quality of the terminus. It is a



proposition of contracting potential without controlling its unfolding. The relation between a nexus of experiential agitations and their taking from, i.e. *in-formation*, underlines the necessity for a terminus to operate through activation, not termination (Simondon 2005, 31; Combes 1999, 13-14).

Information is the rising capacity of activation, giving birth to a passage of experience without predetermining *how* an experience actualizes. Without the emergent capacity of the terminus and information, we cannot conceive of the relational nature of experience and its potential realm. Finding techniques of attending to the emergent quality and its multiplicity is one of research-creation's concerns. The surge of such a capacity entirely depends on relations, not as entities but as forces capable of affecting and being affected (Deleuze 1988c, 123). Relations as forces point towards the inorganic and transversal quality of relations capable of formation without presuming essences. Deleuze calls these quasi-formations of forces "bodies," "composed of an infinite number of particles" ready for affective relaying. Experience includes the formation of bodies as movements of collective activity; they are not the basis of experience but form relationally through experience. Deleuze considers these bodies as material and immaterial. In their formation they are not "the development of a form, but a complex relation between differential velocities" and thus underlie a temporal multiplicity (1988c, 123). Terminus foregrounds the co-emergence of bodies-in-formation and their collective individuation through temporal resonance. It is through the in-formation of bodies that effects are most palpably felt. The challenge for research-creation lies in accounting for forces operating relationally in the process of in-formation through bodies as quasi-structured and open to differentiation.

"Every relationship of forces constitutes a body - whether it is chemical, biological, social or political. Any two forces being unequal, constitute a body as soon as they enter into a relationship" (Deleuze 2006, 40). By *unequal*, Deleuze, speaking through Nietzsche, means difference, as the aspect of experience enabling actualization.<sup>8</sup> Research-creation might ask how this difference is immediately felt in an experience that opens the enabling field of potential for speculative experimentation. Deleuze makes two crucial points in support of a relational realism. The first concerns force, which rather than being a mere abstract term defines the very basis under which physical and vital modes of existence come to exist. As a field, force is a "relation of interrelations of relations (in a nonrelation)" (Massumi 1992, 31). Force as vector or tendency marks difference and therefore generates relational relays. Research-creation's double movement

of the conceptual-material has to start its practice on the level of force – that is, movement, relation, and experience – cutting across all modes of existence. Deleuze’s second point addresses the constitution of a body as a composite of forces. A body here is a *whatever* body, consisting while moving; its mode of consistency is relational.<sup>9</sup> The same accounts for experience: it is actualizing while operating virtually. Activity or activation are experience’s capacities for activating emergence, as they operate relationally beyond a unified concept of experience as *one* moment in time. Activation is always a re-beginning without discrete end, shaping experience “beyond its actual constitution” (Manning 2013a, 6). Terminus is the name one can give to the operation of activation, instigating heterogeneous elements of space and time to conjoin and disjoin at the same time. Depending on the movement, different textures of experience arise. The notion of the body emphasizes a conception of differential continuation of relations’ entanglement without manifesting a finite unity. It allows for an account of expression and effectuation as unique content of a terminus’ operation while underlining its ecological attunement in the act of emergence as part of a collective. Experience comes as a texture of forces relating, where the lines are as important as the “holes” composing the textures’ feel. The operation of the terminus might be also called a texturing through body-becoming. Engaging with a practice on the basis of texture means investing its capacities for making the process of emergence felt in its singular mode of activity.

An example of this mode of texturing might be the perception of sound. Sound in its physical state operates through undulations of air, a force generated through movement. Its activation occurs not on a sole source, like an electric impulse onto a membrane (the usual function of a speaker), but through the relational enablement of its occurrence attuned to a capacity for hearing. For this enablement to effectuate its capacity, air-pressure and electrical force need to attune together with the eardrum, but also the skin, temperature, spatial environments, and the duration of pulsation (frequency). The actual perception of a sound depends on a finely attuned relation of different forces and their quantitative capacities to become a quality in experience. Sound might be defined as a discrete signal in opposition to a general background of noise. Considered as texture, however, the signal only receives signification in contrast to its actively shaping background as a potential field of forces.<sup>10</sup> If sound becomes the relational terminus activating a sonic experience, then the perceiving body is similarly co-composed and co-composing in its capacity to hear or feel. It is sound as terminus

which enables the differential process of bodying to insert forces into their relational co-becoming. This process happens only on the level of contracting forces, physical forces of air, pressure, and tissue; the abstract forces of a sound's texture as part of *this* experience. Neither of them can be separated from the other. Finally, "relation folds experience into [its activation] such that what emerges is always more than the sum of its parts" (Manning 2013a, 2). From this first phase of a terminus' activation, sound might not just lead to an aural perception but recompose bodily sensation and the feeling thereof. As force sound generates potential relays which are often abstracted from their actual materiality. One might think of sub-audible but felt frequencies in dubstep music – that is, "listening" through the vibrating of one's intestines rather than through the ears (Brunner 2013, 256-270). Thinking existence along the activity of terminus allows us to "understand life, each living individuality, not as a form, or a development of form, but as a complex relation between differential velocities, between acceleration and deceleration and acceleration of particles" (Deleuze 1988c, 123). In sonic terms, any change of tonality is a difference in speed, altering *how* an experience of hearing occurs. Terminus operates through the interstice of change as the enabling field of relations actively composing experience. The bodying event of sound as force underlines the relay between a more abstract but nonetheless materially engaged operation and its movement towards expression. In this sense "a body is always more than one: it is a processual field of relation and the limit at which that field expresses itself as such" (Manning 2013a, 17). Such "fielding" of relational activity and its embeddedness in potential tendencies makes terminus a first phase of experience, weaving through a multiplicity of becomings. How can one experiment with an experience's initial phase of relation and its singular movement enabling a resonance beyond contained form? How can a body as excess and limit operate through the practice of research-creation? And further, how can such an account be a rigorous form of experimentation?

Experience is disjunctively conjunctive and hints at a real movement of potential as actively shaping actuality. Its processual quality is time-related and defined by movement. In order to avoid any anthropocentric conception of experience through a perceiving subject encountering the world, James introduces the notion of *pure experience*. Pure experience defines the relational tissue or texture on the edge of a distinct or embodied account of what is being experienced. Accordingly, James underlines pure experience's temporal qualities calling it an "instant field":

“The instant field of the present is always experienced in its ‘pure’ state, plain unqualified actuality, a simple *that*, as yet undifferentiated into thing and thought, and only virtually classifiable as objective fact or as someone’s opinion about a fact” (1996, 74). The particularity of a relational approach resides in the difference and co-emergence of “formed” experience and “pure experience” (Manning 2009, 38). What actually exists as present or actual for James is not first and foremost what discretely manifests a phenomenological physical world of things and bodies, but their unqualified, that is potential, presence as tendencies. From here different corporeal and incorporeal processes of individuation arise. The instant field of pure experience suggests that emergence occurs not in the individual, but relationally and *ecologically* between forces belonging to this field. Emergence is a tending of the field towards its potential unfolding while suspending its immediate expression. Once resonance across the field arises, a process of what Simondon calls “dephasing” happens. Dephasing is a cut, the beginning of a new process *and* its continued differentiation. This cut is only a quasi-detachment; similar to change’s double operation, dephasing is a “doubling of being” (1958, 159). In doubling the emergence of an individual arises from the state of a tensed system of disparate forces creating a new relational dimension. Dephasing denotes the actual creative act of body-formation while foregrounding its continued belonging to its field of emergence as resource of potential becoming: a becoming through belonging (Massumi 2002b, 76). Combes gives the example of a plant relaying two orders of magnitude in its emergence, that of a cosmic order (energy of light) and of a intramolecular order (that of mineral salts, oxygen, etc.) (2013, 4).

Dephasing dovetails with pure experience’s instant field, as they both exhibit a process of differentiating relational capacities in a process of formation imbued with transformation. Individuation defines a continued differentiation as a process of relational attunement, as new tonalities arise and others are backgrounded. These micro-shifts, while constitutive of all modes of existence, usually pass unnoticed. If the potential for differentiation accompanies all processes of individuation, practices for making these differential operations felt bears the potential for experimentation with activation. From a more conventional attempt of form-giving towards techniques for activation, we alter our attention from a mere account of *what* is given in experience toward *how* it is given. This slight change of entering a field of activity leads to another mode of practicing *with* experience as the extensive field of potential becoming. In the immediacy of emergence, of a fielding of relations, the operational quality of potential extends

the range of possible actualization. This process of activating a feeling for potential becoming might also be considered politically relevant. If politics based on representations of things, humans, states of affairs, laws, inscriptions etc. are not forms, objects, or entities, but arise through relational activity of practice, the question of “*how to practice*” becomes a crucial political concern (Foucault 2010, 49). I want to extend this question, by asking: how can we account for a practice as immanently attending to its own unfolding as part of a collective process of emergence? How can a practice become attentive to its activity while acting and thus extending its operational multiplicity? The political value of the immanent field in the continuous plodding of experience along habituated pathways underlines the ethical value of relation as creative and active ( a point I will discuss at length in the second movement). The “purity” of experience emphasizes the point at which a past world of tendencies and matter manifest a fleeting present and where future tendencies define the immanent potential of an arising situation. Becoming attentive to the instant field’s temporal operations means to practice in the presence of its extensive operation, laying potential traces for future activation. In other words, keeping the range of inflection open, so that a different set of relations might be affected by it.

Developing modes of thought and practice through a relational realism entails both a speculative and a pragmatic pole. Speculative because what defines the passing of the present is not yet qualified: it is open to infinite ways of expressing relations, terminating in conjunction as formed experience (Massumi 2011, 12). Pragmatic because where relations conjunct in their very own activity, there is always room for more relations to inflect with this activity – that is, there is room for *insertion* and *differentiation* (Simondon, 2005, 208; Deleuze, 1994, 56). This speculative-pragmatic programme amplifies the creativity of relational movement, while at the same time confining the only operational plane constitutive of *real experience* (Deleuze, 1994, 154). A relational approach thus uncovers the genuine operation constitutive of worlds and accounts for their continuous proliferation and extension. The extensive continuum, as Whitehead terms it, is an infinite augmentation of processes in resonance, without necessary unification (1978, 61-65). In a similar vein James asserts that experience is not a subtractive process but an additive one (1996, 9). Relational thought and practice has to ceaselessly encounter the limit, experience the limit, where there is no longer any opposition between formed and pure experience, but only degrees between differential magnitudes of force. In

writing that “the experiences of tendency are sufficient to act upon,” James clearly outlines the speculative-pragmatist programme for relational thought and practice (1996, 69).

### *Bare Activity, Act, Supported Action*

Working with and through experience’s relational tendencies requires a different conception of the act. If James asks us to act upon the play of tendencies, such an act is not necessarily discrete but itself a tendency or tending-toward, an inflection on an already active movement. An act as tendency lacks discrete effectuation – at least in a simplified understanding of the term. An act is never numerically one; it is not a discrete node. Thinking the act in relational terms means to consider it as a *fielding*, not a pointing. The reason why an act is never discrete but a field lies in the relational nature of experience. In the case of writing, there are many moments where fatigue or distraction lead to an impasse. One becomes incapable of continuing the train of thought (or sense), a rupture which may cause frustration. In deviating, the thinking body asks for a different set of practices to engage with, not distraction necessarily but a deviation of relations. Deviation can take many forms: taking a walk, going to the fridge, cleaning the windows. While deviating, one re-begins the process of writing at a distance – this time not by actually writing physically but by keeping a sense of writing with one’s movement. The once lost train of thought often comes back with a different texture, hopefully richer in contrast than before. The act of writing never comes across as solitary but always requires an entire field of experience to enable the act of writing as actively conditioned by its environment. Sometimes finishing a text, for example, one has to clear all the used materials from one’s desk to set the stage for something different to come; a field has to shift for new acts to take place without entirely abandoning the desk’s field as enabling surface.<sup>11</sup>

This kind of multiplicity of *minor acts* moves in resonance with pure experience’s enveloping force of *bare activity* (Massumi 2011, 1). Massumi takes up James’s definition that “the sense of activity is in the broadest and vaguest way synonymous with life” but modifies the term throughout his work (James 1996, 162). For Massumi and Manning, bare activity underscores not a form of life but of “life-living” (Massumi 201, 45, Manning 2013a, 6). As the modulation of change and dephasing described earlier, bare activity contains potential as a crucial aspect of change. Activity as the force of life-living defines the bare factual expression of change at any instance of experience. However, Massumi refines James’s notion of bare activity,

stating that each such activity of life-living contains self-enjoyment (2011, 2). Self-enjoyment, a term Whitehead employs, indicates that life in its activity has its very own modes of relating, without the need for an outside perspective of reflection. Change as bare activity needs to be taken into account as an abundantly rich field of relations always already moving together – a life imbued with the power of continued force of living, in its very own manner. The concept of bare activity underlines that the enjoyment of creativity is *meaningful* for itself and thus it cannot be subjected to an external point of view. We might want to consider a practice of research as co-creation with bare activity's own modes of enjoyment as a primary reserve of potential. This reserve of potential, often abstractly called nature in opposition to culture, is creative and self-enjoying in its ways of life and requires no explanation: it is self-explanatory in its own way. But instead of finding the appropriate translations of an otherwise withdrawn world of things or objects, one might enable shared fields of co-becoming, and in doing so generating new modes of life. These modes of life do not separate subject and object but only ever outline an intense fielding, an ecology of relation, with different degrees of subjectivation and objectivation in movement.

From this point of view, an act as a fielding cannot act upon a state of affairs but inserts itself as a tendency for change-deviation (Simondon 2005, 30). In Simondon's words, the act designates a dephasing, as ecological event, whereas bare activity is the phaseless state of the *preindividual*. This phaseless state of existence is becoming which accompanies individuation as one of its dimensions, a "mode of resolution of an incompatibility initially rich in potential" (2005, 25). As the being of becoming, bare activity thus expresses the "conservation of being across becoming" (2005, 25).

Such interplay between activity and act proposes a very specific outline of research-creation's interlacing of thought and practice. If there is no simple acting but only propositions for insertion and deviation in resonance with life's activity, then we have to develop specific relational techniques and practices for thinking and practicing with relational fields of experience. These techniques emerge in resonance with a situation's very own activity – a relation-specificity based on change's double movement. From this point of view, the act of a technique operates effectively and not as transcendental ideal (Manning 2013a, 65-70). Its becoming-effective depends, or rather belongs to, an ecology of relation where bodies inform through speeds and slownesses. This taking form requires support, which in this case means not

moral support but rather an active background of potential from which effects take form through bodying. This is what Judith Butler refers to when analyzing the happenings of protest movements and their assemblies in public squares. She states that each act is *supported action* (Butler, 2011): only by means of support do we come to experiment actively with the potential for different modes of bodying, asking what a body can do. Bare activity figures as the base line of support in the form of life-living and enlivening. The act as a form of insertion moves across the field of bare activity. Supported action as a third modality in addition to bare activity and the act assumes that each bodying happens in resonance with force as active contribution, shaping and supplying as movement enabling and constraining what a situation can become. This notion of action through support grounds the play of activity and act to take root in its supported effects while enabling new lines of support. Thinking such support as non-foundational in its constitutive and enabling tendencies defines a central aspect for practices of research-creation.

Throughout this project, I propose we consider Butler's notion of support as a spatio-temporal dynamic. Support might too easily be thought in the schema of space, a body supporting another, as a volitional form of action. Considered on the level of bare activity, any mode of support arises through the capacity of a situation to multiply durations of lived time and experience, enabling the corporeal and incorporeal ground of action to be situational in terms of its relational milieu or ecology. Support then means to enable modes of mutual insertion and activation, of termini to lure potential becomings activating the present. Concerning any kind of practice, support thus renders individuation an open process while accounting for its internal relation in respect of its genesis. The threefold conception of bare activity, act, and supported action concerns the problem of a point of beginning in creative practices. A beginning as movement of activity is never an origin but a intensification of a relational field's activity. In temporal terms, each mode of beginning is a re-beginning which carries a share of bare activity while generating new singular occasions of experience. Similarly, research-creation builds on change as the driving motor of creativity. Techniques become pragmatic propositions that hint at the more-than from which a specific occasion arises (its beyond), as an implicit gesture of speculation.

### *Techniques of Relation*



Massumi calls the *relational* dimension of an occurring event the first dimension. “It is the event under the aspect of its immediate *participation* in a world of activity larger than its own” (2011, 3, my emphasis). According to this logic of participation, acting happens in resonance with activity, always already underway. Participation is the base requirement for existence to endure (Simondon, 2005, 31). A relational outline of bare activity and the necessity for participation generates specific *techniques of relation* in research-creation practices. In resonance with bare activity’s fielding, a “technique of relation ... [is the] capacity to become more-than and to create more-than” (Manning, 2009, 41). The unfolding of such a technique is not the mere production of an act but rather, in resonance with bare activity, a *becoming-active*, participating, extending, and adding instead of subtracting. A becoming-active is always also an activation, similar to the quality of a terminus. As becoming such activation is extensive and durational. As a technique of relation, the field through which relations conjoin, that is, on the level of forces, is as relevant as its effects. The effects themselves are not separate entities of experience either but add to the overall potential field another new quality giving rise to a future expression in experience. Techniques of relation generative of supportive action provide lures for continuation and differentiation of a creative process. A technique of relation generates immediate care and extends its potential toward future becoming. Manning suggests, through Bergson, that the compositional force of expression of an event taking form is never entirely confined, but extensive: “We attribute to the motion the divisibility of the space which it traverses, forgetting that it *is quite possible to divide an object, but not an act*: and on the other hand we accustom ourselves to projecting this act itself into space, to applying it to the whole of the line which the moving body traverses, in a word, to solidifying” (Bergson in Manning 2009, 18, emphasis added). The act that cannot be divided defines the complex nexus of act and activity which techniques of relation have to work through. The act needs to maintain its very own relational activity, otherwise it would lose its potential after it emerged. How is it possible to extend the life-lines of acts in their activity? One way is through composing such techniques in a way that they remain open toward future transformation.

### *The Relation-of-nonrelation*

Pragmatically, for research-creation to generate techniques of relation we have to think and act through the middle, or as Deleuze and Guattari say, *penser par le milieu* (1987, 293). This

middle is what Massumi defines as the “being of a relation” (2002b, 70). By attributing relation its very own ontogenetic status, Massumi undertakes a crucial step in avoiding either the heralding of the in-between as a “new” but fairly empty concept or reducing relations to a confined function. As an empty concept, relation is deprived of its own operational quality. Thus, it becomes another “term” simply lodged between its connected poles. While stating that one has to attribute more attention to the in-between or relational, in many cases this simple gesture suffices to gloss over the foundationalism of binary thought which enters through the back door. Reducing relation to a confined function would disregard its very own potential for change. The relation is the “unfounded and unmediated in-between of becoming. [...] If they [the relations] cannot be seen as terms in extrinsic relation, then perhaps they can be seen as products, effects, coderivatives of an *immanent relation that would be change in itself*. In other words, they might be seen as *differential emergences* from a shared realm of relationality that is one with becoming – and belonging” (Massumi 2002b, 71, emphasis added).<sup>12</sup> The immanent relation is the pulsing of change moving across a specific and intense field of relation. *Belonging* is the manner of relating without being mediated, a relation-of-nonrelation (Massumi 2011, 20). The relation-of-nonrelation defines the necessity of relations to maintain their very own mode of existence with their propensity and operational capacity. As Massumi explains, “elements contributing to an occurrence come into relation when they come into effect, and they come into effect in excess over themselves. In themselves, they are disparate. If they are in tension, it is precisely as a function of the differential between their positions” (2011, 20). The relation-of-nonrelation defines the process of effective coming-together through excess. Each of these expressive effects becomes in its very own manner or singularity. It is what it is, and yet could never be without the excessive operation of the relation-of-nonrelation. The relation-of-nonrelation is a crucial moment in the ecology of practices, where each practice is singular and should not be subsumed under the other. If research-creation is a transdisciplinary practice, its operation has to arise out of the differential between the singular manners of being of its composing practices. Without actively practicing the operation of a relation-of-nonrelation the differential vanishes and gives way to a pale application of concepts in practice, or the derivation of concepts from practice. Opposed to this logic of adaptation, research-creation, by inventing techniques of relation, enables spheres of participation without necessary unification. The new arises as a differential or diversion from the feedback loops of everyday habit without disregarding habit’s creative

potential as a practice. In creating resonances practices mutually activate a sense of a other practice belonging to the same field of potential. In the relational activation a process of amplification leads to an intensification of its capacities. It opens up unpredicted lines of differentiation.

### *Belonging as Technique*

The question of belonging and becoming seen through the prism of speculative pragmatism requires us to take account of the manner of composition which enables virtual tendencies to yield actual effects while not falling into the trap of a finite and rigid network of connections. The experimental aspect of such processes lies in activity's inexhaustible capacity for producing differences while constantly extending and renewing its lines of existence. The point at which active experimentation becomes palpable is when a habitual repetition of an inattentive passing of minute differences becomes amplified in its capacity for variation. In other words, once belonging becomes felt in its excessive character new possibilities of becoming might be activated. Such experimentation requires techniques of relation. Belonging defines the capacity of sharing a movement trajectory, of amplification and mutual participation in an ecology of relation. Simply put, belonging is the *sense* of an ecology of relation. It has collective qualities that pertain less to individuals being together but rather underline singular points in resonance. With the notion of belonging, research-creation takes account of change as bare activity enveloping emergent processes and the dephasing into expression as part of an extensive event. This logic of the event, where "relation is the being *of* the middle," is collective in a double sense (Massumi 2002b, 70): first, in terms of the event's self-relation as a singularity or remarkable point in resonance with its preindividual extension, and second, in resonance with a multiplicity of other events co-becoming through relation. Belonging "is the event-dimension of potential" (2002b, 76). It defines the relational dimension in experience allowing for discrete elements to belong together, like an animal or vegetable or conceptual body gaining a degree of consistency. Research-creation thus investigates the fielding of relations as a *belonging* that is generative of degrees of consistency.

How to make belonging a technique of relation is one of most crucial question for a speculative pragmatist. Belonging as technique requires a sense of activity which needs to be "in sync with the force of our relation as it develops" (Manning, 2009, 35). The power of syncing is

crucial for any proposition for techniques of relation. Relation is the being of the middle: pulsating, a field out of bounds, and at the same time bounding through expression while change is moving the entire system into different tonalities of becoming – that is, an *ecology of relation*. The syncing of such ecologies of relation describes the process of change becoming felt through the relation-of-nonrelation. As a plane of composition belonging enables a sense of intensity across disparate relational fields, it is degrees of intensity that generate different phases of the real beyond an entity-based model of relation, subject, or object (Massumi 2002b, 61). Belonging is thus the collective emergence of a relaying process of relations felt in their capacity for expression in experience.

To give an example, in a seminar on relational movement students were asked to roam through the building and find places where they feel heterogeneous elements coming together facilitating a new sense of relation. Another option was to activate places which seemed poor in relational potential and find ways of shifting the place's tonality, augmenting the feeling of potential for new relations to emerge. The students (mostly from the fine arts) had an astonishing ability to detect such spaces in a building which from a primary impression seem to be very low in their potential for allowing new relations to emerge. By changing the quality of light in a specific spot through opening a roof-window one of the students showed us how a space formerly dull and full of grey concrete changed its tonality to become a space which could be richly inhabited with the help of some fabrics and textiles, thereby offering a much more intimate and engaging environment than the actual seminar's classroom. The *belonging* of light was never external to that space; it just wasn't foregrounded. Light exists as much as the window, the concrete walls, and the architecturally confined structures. Their disparate belongings needed a technique of amplification for new relations to non-relationally enter the scene, thus opening up new avenues for engagement. The space was at the same time the same and totally different. The play of singularity on a preindividual and experiential level gave birth to a space's enduring yet constantly modulating existence. Working along the constitutive lines of belonging and its shifting through becoming, we enter a mode of practicing and thinking in terms of what else there is, what a space, a body, or a duration can do. As Deleuze reminds us, “we define things by what they can do, it opens up forms of experimentation” (1980, n. pag).

*Perishing as Technique*

In this kind of belonging, the different entanglements of bare activity, act, and supported action come to the fore. The bare activity of a space offering a moving-across and certain degrees of modification allows an act to intensify a specific tonality and becoming, leading to a supported action of bodies in space. Making relation the being of the middle means to consider belonging not as a mere networking of entities or forces. Following the idea of relation-of-nonrelation, it leads us to think of belonging as a field of resonances between forces and tendencies of a corporeal as much as incorporeal kind. Supported action cannot be thought without bare activity, nor without the act shaping and shifting existences over time. Belonging has much to do with self-belonging to a bodying's own ontogenesis and individuation as a field of experience co-composing what passes through expression. The relation-of-nonrelation forces each process-line of existence to come into its very own mode of expression, while at the same time accounting for a preindividual belonging to a field. Bare activity defines not only the motor of change pushing life constantly toward its limit but remains also unqualified in its operation. Operation in this case means that being can only be known “*by way of the operation of individuation and not on the basis of the term of this operation*” (Combes 2013, 2-3, emphasis in original).

Accordingly, belonging has to breach the gap between bare activity's virtual movement at infinite speed (a phaseless state, as Simondon would say) and the different ways of dephasing into acts of fielding and supported actions of expression. As aesthetic practice, research-creation invents acts of fielding through techniques of relation. Making the self-relation felt as an extensive and excessive process generates the double-bound paradox of belonging and relation-of-nonrelation. A speculatively pragmatic approach takes account of the potential manners in which belonging requires the power of composition, or what Simondon calls *insertion* (1958, 183; 2005, 30). Insertion is the process enabling an already individuating individual, a bodying, to resonate with its milieu. While bare activity courses constantly through all modes of existence, it does not withdraw itself from acts producing new kinds of relation. This becomes very clear in the operation of the terminus and what Whitehead calls “perishing,” or “the assumption of a role in a transcendent future” (1967, 237). This future, however, is always immanent in the present; it is not beyond its occurrence as potential but operates as a tonality whose relational capacity has a lesser degree of intensity than other time forms actualizing the present. When a process of relational becoming comes into itself as an actual occasion, it perishes for the sake of potential reactualization with a difference. Even the most minute re-beginning inserts itself into the range

of potential bare activity. Belonging as technique is therefore not only concerned with how to compose or inflect to yield novel kinds of relational ecologies, but also how to account for perishing as a vital and creative process. Far from being an automatism, perishing bears manifold potential for creative experimentation. What would aesthetic experimental practices look like that mobilized the power of perishing instead of exclusively foregrounding the generation of form and the logic of making?

The power of perishing underlines the fact that belonging in its non-relational relationality moves across many sheets of time and modes of expression, may they be more bodily confined or of an incorporeal nature. At the same time, perishing emphasizes the necessity for developing techniques of relation that are attentive to constant change while knitting a fine and dense mesh of time sheets, crystallizing with a felt difference. In relation to the activities of the *SenseLab* in Montreal, a laboratory for thought in motion, one might think of its event series “Technologies of Lived Abstraction” as an example. These events, which usually take place over the course of three to seven days, are often locally confined and bring together artists, theorists, and different practitioners interested in the relation between activism, philosophy, and aesthetics. While the propositions for these gatherings are clear and have a concrete outline – in the sense of generating a common concern and engaging with it through research – the manner of how things come to pass as the event happens is open and of an emergent character. After experimenting, reading, talking, sharing movement practices, and outdoor activities, the “event” perishes without closing in a confined manner. This kind of perishing is a crucial aspect of the *SenseLab*’s work on developing techniques of relation. If there were a discrete goal to be reached, perishing would lose its power for re-beginning and for new individuations to come into their very own mode of existence. What I have noticed, after seven years of active participation, is the manner in which *what* happened during the events cannot be explained in a language that is attuned to representations of clearly defined results, products, and research reports. On the other hand, *how* things come to pass in such confined and intense moments leaves highly sensible traces. These felt traces affect my ways of relating the event’s speculative and pragmatic aspects to different contexts in my own practice. Beyond the fact that sets of relations extend constantly through such work, I consider the durational aspect of the process as key for what defines the *SenseLab*’s activity.

Take, for instance, the event entitled “Generating the Impossible.” After a five-day period at a campsite north of Montreal and five other days with the group in the city, including interventions, collective readings, and working in smaller groups, constantly finding techniques to make our own process felt by other such groups (we were 50 people total, comprising eight affinity groups), the event came to an end, leaving us, as always, with little to say about *what* actually happened. It took me a year before I felt for the first time that the manner of working and interlacing things while being together for ten days had profoundly changed the way I had come to think about collective or collaborative work. It was not the first time I had worked in groups over a period of time, but in its intensity of shared time for thinking and experimenting, this particular event was absolutely singular. The singularity for me consists in how a felt sensation back then re-enlivens itself not just through a recollection, but through a felt memory allowing me to variably account for the power of time and duration in such practices. The relation-of-nonrelation and the crafting of belonging as a technique contribute mutually to an augmented power of existence as a way of coping with contemporary environments I found myself working with subsequently. In the *SenseLab* event, the relationship of philosophy and aesthetic practice fused with the operations of bare activity, the act, supported action, and time. From there a cartography emerged amplifying life-lines of practicing across an entire individuation (not a self but a production of subjectivity) without separating domains such as private/public, work/leisure, inside/outside, concrete/abstract. In developing an outline of ecologies of relation, research-creation practices have to develop techniques of making the immediate and extended activity of experience felt across a continuum of differentiations. Such an account requires reconsiderations of what we mean by an act, its temporal value, and its potential relational operation. Research-creation investigates how a relational outline addresses the field effects in experience as a collective becoming. In this collective becoming, notions of the self, the other, subject and object, thing and thought, evolve dynamically and thus challenge the idea of individual reflection or solitary creation in aesthetic practices.

### *Relational Movement – Moving the Relation*

Relation and techniques of relation are primarily concerned with how one can account for movement as the composing force of existence. Pragmatically, movement in relation or relational movement deals with how to make belonging, insertion, and perishing integral parts of research-

creation practices. “Relational movement means moving the relation. [...] Intensity of movement can only be felt when the in-between – the interval – created by the moving with takes hold” (Manning 2009, 30). The interval or in-between taking hold is the activity of relation, the operation of the terminus as a felt and bodying occasion in experience. In being-felt it opens up another temporal quality, the “time of the event” as the political ground for research-creation practices (Manning 2013a, 11). The opening of the relation-specific approach toward a time-specific account of relation makes emergent processes of the event a political issue. The event defines the complex zone between a tending toward emergence and its expression. It operates the threshold of potentialization and effectuation. This relay becomes a major point of investigation for a concept of politics in the making, a politics of emergence and the event, where an emphasis lies on *how* relational emergence becomes effective. The conventional sense of politics based on the representation of defined stakes or actors is suspended in an eventual politics. In developing techniques of relation, research-creation attunes to processes in the making, beyond a finite representation, and underlines a politics of potential immanent to representative politics of discourse or constituted bodies.

Moving a relation means to move relationally with a relation’s very own movement. Manning names this specific aspect of relational movement *elasticity*: “Moving the relation moves not a person but the elasticity of relation” (Manning 2009, 30). The acting of movements upon other relational movements requires us to rethink the interlacing of bare activity, the act, and supported action. In Manning’s words: “The relationality of relational movement moves the world as much as the world moves through it” (2009, 40). The elasticity of the movement is how it moves from bare activity into an act by means of supported action held together by a field of experience. How the relational field takes effect can never be predetermined, but how its relational movements move can be felt affectively.

Each activity at the point of its elastic relational movement produces a degree of unexpressed potential, lurking at the limit of its possible actualization. In its lurking, it is not passive but of a different degree of activity. Not being taken up in a more bodily confined phase of experience it remains active as a “*detail of activity* that produces a tendency for relational encounter” (2009, 37, emphasis added). Techniques of relation are concerned with generating a degree of attentiveness to details of activity present in experience, as potentials. Asking “how to move a relation” is something very different from acting upon a relation. In fact, there is no



acting upon a relation. If there is acting it is always *with* a relation's tendency, through techniques of insertion and participation. The acting in relational movement has the character of grasping the potential of a situation in its potential for activation. Activation occurs in the immediacy of becoming attentive to the potential of deviation from a habitualized repetition inhibiting a difference from being felt. In other words, once an opening of a novel kind can be felt and thought along the process line of a practice, new potentials for resonating with this emergent phase of experience enable different shades of process to actualize. Techniques of relation are different from methods; they cannot be deployed through an existing structure but have to unfold immanently. This requires a high degree of attentiveness to relational movements populating an ecology. What can be called the affirmative force of such a technique of relation is its embrace of a feeling of more to come if the field of attention remains active enough. However, attention is not a volitional act; it needs attunement and tuning rather than pointing or directing. This makes it a difficult task once we acknowledge that the force of bare activity is by definition indefinite and that action and acts are always already part of ecologies of relation.

How do we enable situations that sustain and extend the feeling of attentiveness for the elasticity of a process? This question defines the very politics of research-creation as a relational practice. It asks how to compose ecologies of relation where the feeling for moreness instigates an operational sense of activity. Insertion is a crucial technique because of its acceptance of the singularity of each relation, while at the same time acknowledging that relations only exist when relating. As an example, while visiting the Dia:Beacon gallery, I was less intrigued by the large-scale sculptural works of famous artists inhabiting the industrial factory halls and more attracted by the quality they seemed to acquire in the space. Stranded at the bookshop, I asked if they had anything on Robert Irwin.<sup>13</sup> The clerk responded, "yes, but not about this building." It turned out that Irwin accompanied the entire process of transforming the former factory into an exhibition space, intervening in the spatial designs, lighting arrangements, and landscape architecture with his ability to foreground the qualitative aspect of perceptual encounters through minute ways of affective attunement.<sup>14</sup> Without knowing about Irwin's interventions, I had an intense feeling that something was absolutely singular about the space, beside its gigantic structure and famous artworks. The way Irwin implemented specific patterns for daylight to enter windows, for instance, activated works of Richard Serra or Dan Flavin with a force of agitation that I never felt before looking at them. In general, I was much more attuned to my peripheral vision, rendering

my sense of perception into an unknown mode of operation, beyond its tendency toward confinement and object recognition.<sup>15</sup> Irwin's spatial propositions also affected my sense of time: I didn't notice how much time I spent with a work or in a given space, but just enjoyed the presence with the work, accompanied by a feeling of suspense. Massumi calls this form of suspense *intensity*: "It is a state of suspense, potentially of disruption. It is like a temporal sink, a hole in time, as we conceive of it and narrativize it. It is not exactly passivity, because it is filled with motion, vibratory motion, resonance. And it is not yet activity, because the motion is not of the kind that can be directed toward practical ends in a world of constituted objects and aims" (2002b, 26). Irwin's work rendered my sensation toward suspense, generating an intensity that made me feel far beyond my usual encounters with art in galleries. This feeling is reawakened each time I am in a similar situation, reactivating bodily traces which the encounter at the Dia:Beacon produced. A technique of relation remains active over time, extending the power of existence that is relational movement.

#### *Analogous Thought in Action*

Relations cannot be grasped other than in their movement and tendency. How is it possible to think such a concept of relation to give it an ontogenetic status of becoming? What kinds of techniques for practice and thought have to be in place for a speculative-pragmatic account of research-creation? A relation is not a being, thing, or defined magnitude, but rather a tendency that has operational value. An emphasis on the in-between and interval suggests that change is the only way experience becomes actively felt in expression. If relation has, as Simondon points out, a *rang d'être* (translated as a "rank" of being) then one has to find ways of creating modes of existence, that is, zones of intense experience or "intensive relationality" (Manning 2013a, 8) attuned to an ecology's active fielding (Simondon 2005, 28-29). Being, however, remains relational in its very "essence" without becoming a substance. For the same reason, Massumi states that ontogenesis is not concerned with being, but rather with *powers of existence*, the capacity of a force or relation for becoming (2011, 12). In relation to research-creation, as a practice often lodged in institutional contexts between art and philosophy, but always with a tendency to undermine the contextual and foreground the situational, we have to account for relation's *analogical operation* between thought and expressive action. This task remains a dialectical conception of spirit and world as long as we do not account for a relational realism.

Simondon proposes the term “analogy” to contest the dialectical conception of binary systems such as knower and known, subject and object, individual and environment (Simondon 2005, 36). An analogical approach considers thought emerging from the middle of experience, where the bifurcation of thought and thing is not yet effectuated.

This means that any form of practice or research cannot presume an outside position towards some subject matter but can only ever individuate alongside the phenomena it attempts to “treat.” William James’s concept of pure experience emphasizes the instant field of the present or immediate experience where thought and thing have not occurred as separated yet (1996, 23-24). It is here where an inseparable relation between thinking-feeling arises as the foundation of any experience (see also Massumi 2008). Through the proposition of analogy, we might define an account of aesthetic practice before the bifurcation between thinking and feeling results in the binary of art and philosophy. Simultaneously, we have to account for each practice’s own rhythm and manner of pacing as the differential relation between them. Based on the relation-specific outline of research-creation, I want to foreground three dimensions of thinking and practicing through ecologies of relation:

1) Operation as the mode of existence of becoming

Operation for Simondon underlines his main thesis for a philosophy of individuation, “to know the individual through individuation rather than individuation through the individual” (2005, 24). The individual, as Combes points out, is the “result of an operation of individuation” (2013, 2). For Simondon operations always exist in resonance with structure, aligning an analytical science with an operational one (2005, 565). Structure is a misnomer, though, and might be better termed *dynamic unity* in experience (Massumi 2011, 4). Operation and dynamic unity never yield a holism of form but generate a semblance of form in expression continuing its genesis operationally. Analogy accounts for both aspects, dynamic unity and operation, as co-composing through experience. Action takes on the relational quality of insertion and participation as a self-affirming dynamism of experience in the process of form-taking of an event. Action is an *in-act* inserting into bare activity’s push for continuation and differentiation (Manning 2013a, 25).

2) The *coindividuation* of thought and the beings thus known

Both James and Simondon position their interest in the question of thought in relation to experience. In their work, relations between thought and experience co-emerge along the lines of individuation's operational activity and the constant re-shaping of its dynamic unity. This is double-process crucial for research-creation as practice: we must presume no separation between theory and practice. Combes explains the *coindividuation* of thought and processes of formation:

Analogical knowledge thus establishes a relation between the operations of individuals existing outside of thought and the operations of thought itself. The analogy between two beings, from the point of view of their operations, supposes an analogy between the operations of each being that is known and the operations of thought. (2013, 10)

Thought in this case is not a human capacity for abstraction, but a general virtual force of "lived abstraction" (Massumi 2011, 15) where "*thoughts in the concrete are fully real. But thoughts in the concrete are made of the same stuff as things are*" (James 1996, 37, emphasis in original). Taking thoughts and things as emerging through pure experience, and considering relations as real as the terms related, gives the operational quality of relations a central role. The operational here underlines the multi-phasing of experience moving ecologically across all its relations. Relations in this sense are not defined as finite qualities but only qualitatively appear once they are operationally effective. In their effectiveness these relations become part of a dynamic unity in the process of formation. Beyond a chronological procedure of operational quality merging into formation, the overall process of individuation is imbued with heterogeneous temporalities. One of the ways of accounting for this temporal interplay is through the concept of memory. Memory as lived extension and process of returning activation might be one example of the constant flicker of thing and thought emerging from their belonging to pure experience. For James, thought and thing arise from pure experience's abundant relations frequenting *an* experience ever anew while not abandoning earlier appearances. In other words, experience concerns a folding of heterogeneous spatial and temporal elements into their conjunctive and disjunctive expressions. Time modulation in experience underlines the analogical process research-creation has to take up in its practice.

### 3) The time-relation of emergent experience

The world continues more or less consistently while constantly producing new modes of experience, a differential frequenting of thoughts and feelings, without abandoning any new

existence after it perishes. In perishing, an experience becomes part of a pure experience's memory, an after-image to be taken up in consciousness. Consciousness, however, is not a personal consciousness but an ecological and relational consciousness of the event. It is not an entity but a function. As part of the event, consciousness is "impersonal" and opens onto a set of relations of an energetic kind, not defining what they will become but harbouring a force of "non-perceptual experiences" – an unexpressed yet effective force (James, 1996, 5, 16, 32). In James' account of pure experience, a purely operational outline of experience emerges, where "the immediate experience in its passing is always 'truth,' practical truth, *something to act on*, at its own movement" (1996, 24). The phrase "to act on, at its own movement" suggests a very different conception of action than the humanly confined notion of a willing subject. Indeed the "truth" emerging from pure experience is felt in thought and perception. It has an immediate character "true" to the singularity of the event and its self-affirmative operation. Such a notion of truth enables the practice of research-creation to account for the immediate and singular quality of an ecology of relation generating its very own relevance, often contradictory to acclaimed systems of evaluation and classification. In other words, what passes as real and true is as much concrete materiality as it is abstract immateriality, all being part of partly shared movements. For the same reason Simondon proposes that one has to consider individuation through multiple phases and their relation-of-nonrelation (Combes 2013, 11). Activity and the act can only always align by syncing movement through phases, without having to become *one* "synthesized" movement (James 1996, 14).

Feeling the rhythm of activity's movement through life defines the ground for developing practices of insertion and syncing as a primary act for a practice to arise. Such techniques are part of what research-creation seeks to generate. Developing research-creation as speculative-pragmatic practice takes its point of departure where thinking means "following being in its genesis," and practice means to generate resonances between material relations and their potential to become through ecologies of relation. The emphasis on the ontogenetic nature of relation leads towards an account of (and practicing through) research-creation as immediate and immanent activity. Research and creation take on specific meanings under the auspices of ecologies of relation. Research concerns finding techniques of relation through an attentiveness for change's operational and temporal quality by way of participation and insertion. For its part,

creation concerns a mode of resonance with the activation-potential of a terminus, as an instigator for emergence. Pragmatically, such an approach emphasizes suspense and intensity as markers of aesthetic practices. Speculatively, it concerns the constitution of practical truths and the manner in which they constitute resonance through a logic of the event. In thinking experience as event, the time-relations and movement capacities of an ecology of relation foreground a dynamic outline of reality. This reality of relation affirms effectuation and accounts for the expressive aspect in life, but it also asks how to activate new modes of life-living and enlivening as an ecologically attuned event, escaping stratifications often associated with “human” concepts of creation and research.

## **Second Movement of the *Coming Collective***

Relation – as a crucial concept for a practice of research-creation that works between art, philosophy and activism – finds repercussions in different but parallel evolving discourses. Particularly in the 1990s the notion of the *network* as one paradigm of relation gained wide attention in the field of media theory, social sciences, and science and technology studies.<sup>16</sup> Often in relation to these fields, discussions of new modalities of perceptual experience, i.e. aesthetic concerns, arose in relation to media technologies and visual representations, urban planning and architecture, art production and exhibition, and knowledge transfer in scientific research. In the contemporary era of networked and ubiquitous computed realities of everyday life, different tunings of perception constantly impinge on an outdated naturalized conception of human perception and experience. Most recently, discourses on posthumanism have stressed various forms of algorithmic operations and the world of stubborn matter while criticizing anthropomorphic forms of thinking about contemporary culture. In many of these explorations human experience is augmented or altered through a networked and operational mode of existence, producing new forms of sociality and cultural practice. Considering human existence as relational or entangled within a wider ecology of forces, procedures, and technologies seems to define a common ground for these discourses. Research-creation as a practice between art and philosophy easily fits into this trend, promoting transdisciplinary research endeavours where conceptual and material practice enter into dialogue and potentially alter the roles of the human and the object in their relationship. The issue of relation, however, is not one of connection or creating networked media technologies for new areas of experience. Neither does it concern the relationship between humans and nonhumans as an extended perspective on a too narrow account of the human. All these issues are important in the analysis of contemporary cultural practices and the forms of experience and sociality they evoke, but I wonder, if they are sufficient to account for the intrinsic dynamics of a relational realism forwarded here?

In this section I want to focus on research-creation as a specific modality of experience that builds upon a non-substantialist outline of relational realism. From here, I will explore how different modes of relation as activation constitute processes of collective individuation. Collective and activity brought together under the umbrella of research-creation produces a new term: the *coming collective*, which I will unfold along different practices throughout this project. The potential of research-creation resides in its attempt to inflect a philosophical practice

concerned with the creation of concepts with an artistic practice addressing the constitution of percepts and affects (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 177). Considered relationally, both modes of creation, the philosophical and the artistic, move through experience as the very ground for their coindividuation. It is through experience that a decoupling of philosophy as abstract and art as concrete becomes impossible. Neither of them is fully material or abstract, but both emerge from a shared capacity of material abstraction. Material abstraction accounts for thought to arise through matter, like a body, without claiming that thought could not exist beyond matter. Similarly any bodily engagement with material requires a degree of material thinking, not in the sense of knowing the material but in finding techniques of abstracting a process of forming through the material. From this point of view, experience is the material reality of existence as a field of *resonant materialism as abstraction*. Relation concerns conceptual as much as aesthetic and material values and operates along the threefold movement of bare activity, act, and supported action. Beyond the manifestation of relations between things and humans by means of media technologies, communication, or material constellations, a relational realism makes experience the very ground for emergence as an ecological phenomenon. If this fielding effectuates in expression, causing bodyings and their mutual modulation, I wonder how can one *participate* in the fielding itself? In other words, if there is a common ground of attuned emergence, we might want to investigate the *coming collectivity through activity* in research-creation by means relational thought and practice. Investigating the *coming collective* I will focus on the *SenseLab*'s event *Society of Molecules*, a distributed trans-local event emphasizing micropolitical concerns. The *SenseLab* considers its practice as research-creation and focuses particularly on an ecological conception of participation. Since its activities bear heavily on terms and practices in art and philosophy, I will contrast my elaborations on the *coming collective* with the work of two protagonists of the relational paradigm: Nicholas Bourriaud's work *Relational Aesthetics* and Bruno Latour's development of *society and collective*. Either of these authors develops a very specific concept of the social and sociality which will help to differentiate what I consider as the *coming collective* in research-creation. The collective, or the collective-active, comprises the notion of the collective which, in the case of Bourriaud appears marginally but informs his art theoretical perspective that builds on artist collectives as a specific form of artistic work in late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Quite differently but also more prominently, Bruno Latour uses the term collective throughout his work to differentiate an inter-



human conception of the social and a more materially entangled state of affairs between what he calls *humans* and *nonhumans*. The *SenseLab* might be defined as a collective in either sense, as a social form of artistic and philosophical practice that is concerned with an ecological and more-than-human take on what constitutes such collectives. However, I suggest that the *SenseLab* embodies a third mode of collectivity, that of the *coming collective*, where relations have to be accounted for as real as anything else in experience. I see Simondon's elaborations on collective and transindividual individuation as a promising avenue for a renewed conception of the collective in contemporary research-creation practices. From this perspective, I wonder if one of the particularities of research-creation is that it is always collective and that its mode of collective existence enables any experimentation with techniques of relation and their capacity for activation.

### *Intuition of a Practice*

The *SenseLab* is a laboratory for thought in motion that has dedicated most of its work to the relation of thought and aesthetic practice in emergent situations over the course of the last eleven years. Through a series of events (*Technologies of Lived Abstraction*) the aim is to experiment through collective practices of research and creation with the help of “enabling constraints” that allow for the emergence of an event (Manning 2009, 65). Both Manning and Massumi point out that this is the main work of *SenseLab*, such that something happens which could not have happened before (Manning 2009, 65; Massumi 2008 and 2011, 149). These “constraints [...] are meant to create specific conditions for creative interaction where something is set to happen, but there is no preconceived notion of exactly what the outcome will be or should be. No deliverable. All process” (Massumi and McKim 2009). Enabling constraints vary in relation to the concrete proposition and the staging of a concern immanent to each specific event of the series. The focus on the event results from an immanent critique of institutionalized artistic and academic practices with which many of the *SenseLab*'s participants are confronted. Many of the participants share a certain immobilizing sensation evoked by heavy institutional structures, disciplinary boundaries, and foreclosures of how to act within a specific discipline. Enabling constraints underline the constitution of spaces and times for experimentation where the conventional logics of representation and positioning in an artistic or academic system are suspended. Experimentation becomes another mode of participation in a collective process

without a predefined goal but with an attentiveness to the wider context of such practices. Instead of criticizing the entire system of academia or art institutions, *SenseLab* activities revolve around creative propositions for the re-activation of overly structured protocols.

Most of the series' events dedicate a year-long preparation period to the development of enabling constraints. The constitution of a shared concern, the preparatory engagement with specific materials, and the proposition of how to come together in an event through constraints define the central building blocks of the collective practice. An event has to become what it suggests: a composed field of experience that fosters things to co-emerge in novel and singular ways (Massumi 2010b). The *SenseLab* foregrounds the notion of the event and its singular quality in an emergent experience, while also accounting for its polyvalent relations to time and space. By making this double process of singularity and multiplicity the main point of entry, the *SenseLab*'s mode of investigation is empirical as much as it is abstract. Abstract in this case means to account for the multiple tendencies and relations enabling a felt bodily experience without necessarily being noticed consciously in the actual occasion of experience. Empirical defines the expressive pole moving in parallel with the activity of abstraction, as that which yields felt effects in experience. Movement accounts for the abstract and empirical as co-compositional poles in a relational realism of practices. The emphasis of research-creation is on the interval or interstice through which change can be felt. For the *SenseLab*, "research implies an attentive posture, an openness to what is already is happening, an expanded perception of what we are already participating in. Priority falls not onto the term or another in the assemblage of research-creation, but on the creative 'in-between'" (Thain 2008).

If we deal primarily with movement and not with fixed form, how can we account for matter, expression, and politics which seem to have such concrete impacts on our lives? How, from a resonant materialist perspective, do these emergent modes of life include social, environmental, and mental ecologies (Guattari, 2008, 19-20)? The notion of ecology takes its full effect if we consider research-creation as practices that question "the whole of subjectivity and capitalistic power formations" (2008, 35). Research-creation as an ecology of practices takes the contextual problematics of subjectivity into account while considering subjectivity as collectively produced in experience. The "production of subjectivity" becomes the terrain of a form of politics embracing relational operations and their qualitative occurrence (Guattari 1995, 1-32). Also, research-creation develops no universal theory or mode of critique. On the contrary,

in ecological practice, forms of “immanent critique” arise that are attentive to relational fields constitutive of experience under specific circumstances (Massumi 2010a). Problematization means bringing a concern into a field of resonance in its ecologically moving presence.

“Concern” here refers to the “conjunction of immanence and transcendence” as feeling the tensed problematic shaping through a relational ecology (Whitehead 1968, 167).

Problematization, in the way Simondon uses the term, concerns the continuous operational activity of individuation extended to its temporal evolvment, both as an additive logic of experience in the form of a memory and as the explorative activation of potential (2005, 265).

Such a practice, in order to take concrete forms, requires ethical and aesthetic elements that actively shape the ecology of practices in the event of experimentation. One of the primary fields for an ecological activation reside in the dynamic production of subjectivity. For Guattari, the question of subjectivity always revolves around the relation between heterogeneous practices, where practices are singular activities pertaining to “natural, vegetal, animal but also incorporeal ‘species’” (Guattari 2000, n. pag). For him, “human praxis engenders heterogeneous universes, it engenders practices” (2000, n. pag.). The interlacing of practices, their ecological entanglement, thus anchors the emergence of a concern in the realm of everyday life.

One of the most challenging *SenseLab* events in the series so far was *Societies of Molecules (SoM)*, a happening distributed across 17 places worldwide during the week of May 1-7, 2009. The aim was to interlace local and micropolitical interventions on a global scale, asking “how to convey the felt quality of experience across distance.”<sup>17</sup> The goal was to enable immediate engagements with locally relevant issues and at the same time allow for local practices to become part of a larger, translocal ecology. A crucial concern was to develop techniques for relating local processes without “reducing them to the reporting of information” echoing academic and artistic routines of reporting (i.e. for scholarships, grants, or to document an ephemeral intervention, etc.).<sup>18</sup> The event aimed at evading clear definitions of pre-emptive results included in the event’s enabling propositions: “The stakes are the event happening or not, seeing what can be done to open up new ground for exploration and invention that reenergize people and makes their lives in and around the institutions in which they function at the same time more liveable and more intense” (Massumi and McKim 2009, n. pag). The notion of the event becomes most relevant here for thinking the collective as an ecology of relation. As molecules, people were working in teams over the duration of a year, taking into account their

local context but also the conditions of its emergence, which shifted a referential practice towards an event-based activity (Massumi 2002b, 9-14, 33, 42; Manning 2009, 65-71).

*SoM*'s politics reside in enabling relays for feeling the collective state of existence as a transversal concern, while making the collective "nature" of experience inflect with specific life affordances. In this sense, collective "should be understood in the sense of a multiplicity that deploys itself as much beyond the individual, on the side of the socius, as before the person on the side of preverbal intensities, indicating a logic of affects rather than a logic of delimited sets" (Guattari 1995, 9). Activating the preindividual of the collective in individuation is thus a crucial ethico-aesthetic concern of research-creation.

*SoM* revolves around a conception of the production of subjectivity that not only draws into its emergence locally interlaced ecologies and concerns but also asks how these felt and embodied intensities cross-pollinate each other without a straightforward logic of mediation or communication. The production of subjectivity foregrounds relational and aesthetic aspects in experience emerging across a translocal field of activity without subjectifying the experience as such.<sup>19</sup> In other words, one of the major concerns of *SoM* was how to interlace the local and the translocal across different subjectivities without narrowing their singularity. The event itself becomes a subjective or "subjective form" as collective individuation (Whitehead 1967, 176), while the question of affective relaying at a distance instigated the invention of relation-specific techniques. In not wanting to enact straightforward ways of communicating or reporting, a different kind of aesthetic encounter at a distance and a field of relations needed to be put in place. Accordingly, one aspect of the *SenseLab*'s practice addresses the constitution of situations or events as singular and amplifying change. Another aspect resides in the conceptual and practical work of finding sets of relation that allow for making a process felt at a distance without falling into the habit of reporting. Both concerns resonate and deviate with the propositions put forward by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* (RA). Working with RA and partly against the grain might then open up a new relational field co-emergent between philosophical concerns with thought and artistic processes of aesthetic experimentation.

### *Collectives and Art*

The notion of the collective requires some clarification, especially if we consider it as an ethically and aesthetically relevant term for specific forms of research-creation. In the following,

the collective will serve as a tool for thinking research-creation practices as operating ecologically. For that reason, the collective will differentiate itself from an inter-subjective function in relation to forms of sociality. Collectivity as a form of sociality in aesthetic practices finds a strong resonance in contemporary art theory discourse, as art collectives often target social concerns in relation to politics of representation, human rights movements, and community activism (Bishop 2012, 2006b; Thompson 2012; Klanten, et al. 2011; Lacy 1994). The relation between social and collective is a problematic one since it easily evokes concepts of the group or the mass as a unified entity, disregarding the multiple differences that relationally co-compose it. Some of the latest discourses in this regard might be swarm theory and network theory, both of which are often interlinked with media, technology, and computation (Parikka 2008; Vehlken 2013). However, the problem with these accounts is that they operate according to a numerical logic of the many that become one, and often end up exceeding the sum of its parts. In other words, moving beyond the sum of its parts by means of unification produces a conception of the collective where its parts can be known in advance and their capacities are predefined. In an emergent collectivity, on the contrary, the element or part can only ever reveal a partial aspect of its infinite capacities depending on *how* such an element enters into an experience and how it becomes known in *this* specific way.

This numerical conception of the collective rests on a binary between the individual and the collective, based on interconnections, not relations. However, Paolo Virno suggests that the universal – the one – is different from what he considers the preindividual reality of each individuation, a multiplicity of potential, not of entities (2009, 61-63). Here, the collective arises not through the mediation of constituted individuals; rather, difference between individuations occurs due to their *belonging* to a shared preindividual reality, displaying what “they have in common differently” (2009, 61). The preindividual, for Simondon, highlights the fact that each individuation is more than a unity (one) (2005, 29), a “moreness” that defines the relational ground of experience. Each account of the individual is already collective, not by a logic of number, but according to a logic of multiplicity or difference as the ground of existence. It is in this sense that Deleuze and Guattari write: “There is always a collectivity, even if you are alone” (1987, 152), a collectivity not composed of individuals but of singularities. Singularities define the point where the preindividual as infinite multiplicity is maximally singular. As Virno points out, “Instead of merging into the false unity of the State, [singularities] persist as such, precisely

because they always assert anew, in the forms of life and in the space-time of social production, the preindividual reality behind them” (2009, 59). In other words, singularities are the precise operation of the collective where the relation to a shared preindividuality is maximally felt.

Research-creation is aiming for the singular in its practice, enabling a collective sensibility in experience. This involves practicing differentially, through other means than merely connecting discourse and practice, the abstract and concrete, subject and object. It also aims to resist certain figures of the collective that celebrate consensus over dissensus (Guattari 1995, 128), which in this case means not antagonistic but heterogeneous, and thus incapable of becoming a universal or whole.<sup>20</sup> Another danger of the collective might be its misconception as a contemporary capitalist technique of belonging as a form of identification (for instance with a brand), or as an idealized form instead of a mode of dissensual resonance (Stimson and Sholette 2007, 2). In terms of a modernist practice, collectivism in art often took on the task to “envision a radically new society” and become an “expression of modernity” (2007, 2). Collectivism as a politico-aesthetic avant-garde practice took on the important role of critiquing specialization and mass production, as well as the formalism and functionalism attributed to cold-war dialectics (Stojanovic 2007, 18-20). At the same time, collectivism was subsumed as a mode of sociality between human individuals. The image of autonomy as opposed to capitalist or political oppression turned from a pre-modern sense of togetherness due to territorial bonds into the collectivism of mass-consumer culture, a point that Guattari outlines in relation to what he sees as the coming aesthetic paradigm after pre-modern and capitalist forms of aesthetic collectivity (1995, 98-108). In contemporary times, after modernism, collectivism “brings to focus [...] the broader social and economic conditions of production, which are themselves always already collective despite appearance” (Stimson and Sholette 2007, 11). The relation between the collective and the social, dissensual as it may be, leaves the question of singularity out, considering the collective as a form of sociality or social practice. While the critical lineage of resistance and appropriation appears clearly in the outline of modern art collectivism, I consider the social as inter-subjective realm as only one aspect of the collective in a relational sense of the term.<sup>21</sup>

The relation between a social form of the collective and its more abstract operations of relations cannot be separated, but has to emerge “collectively.” The *SenseLab* defines itself as an open structure without any form of membership or institutionalized program other than the

concerns it deals with. It treats them with techniques of relation and the entanglement of different forms of practice. Without claiming any historical lineage, many of its forms of working remind us of collective practices in artistic contexts, as art collectives demonstrate “a performative criticism of social institutions and politics” (WHW 2005, 14). In research-creation the need for any effective organization of resistance requires supported action as the relational backdrop for an act. In this sense, a collective device becomes a practice or an ecology of practices against a certain utilitarianism, while resisting classification and homogenization. The *SenseLab* encounters similar problems working between art practice and philosophy with a focus on emergent experience, where conventional modes of research results, like products, reports, or articles are often counter-intuitive to its practice of experimentation. Indeed, process is the *SenseLab*'s most concrete product. Similar to historical collectives like the *CoBrA* group or *Situationist International*, *SenseLab* problematizes how philosophy can operate as aesthetically and politically in its own way through modes of experimentation (Stojanovic 2007, 25).<sup>22</sup> Resisting utilitarianism and instrumentation requires resisting the immediate subsumption of research-creation into an institutional framework or methodology (Manning 2013b).

The relation between the social and the collective includes various shifts from art discourse toward broader social concerns and today's counter-cultural movements (Holmes 2007). As well, the development of media technologies and the internet are propelling the emergence of tactical media (Garcia and Lovink 1997) and post-media (Guattari 2009, 291-306), and their use in social movements. As Holmes writes: “Collective aesthetic practices, proliferating in social networks outside the institutional spheres of art, were one of the major vectors for this double desire to grasp and transform the new world map” through so-called do-it-yourself geopolitics of the anti-capitalist movements (2007, 275). He points at a general shift of visibilities and degrees of collectivity through media technologies and their appropriation. The blending of collective engagement with different political and social concerns through new forms of communication repositions the sense of space and time in these practices. A translocal conception of heterogeneous collectivity is nothing new, however. All of the above-mentioned historical collectives like *DaDa*, *CoBrA*, *Situationist International*, and *Fluxus* operated translocally and with different interests in relation to local concerns (Stojanovic, 2007).

In addition, communication media condense the circulation and potential for immediate action due to faster means of dissemination rendering collective forms of movement – for

instance, street protests – more minute and temporally agile. The time form of new collectivity after modernism, however, has often been critiqued for a lack of endurance, as in the case of Occupy Wall Street.<sup>23</sup> Media technologies and their capacity for generating immediate action need to be complemented with a more enduring practice of preserving information about what actually happened and the bodily inscriptions of felt intensity in experience. The latter manifests not only a historical memory in the form of an archive (mostly language-based and audio-visual) but positions felt experience as constitutive of a practice and its different time forms.

Accordingly, we have to include bodily, sensuous, and non-sensuous aspects in experience as actively shaping our understanding of the collective. Media technologies play as much a vital part in the emergence of supported action as a shared capacity to feel the intensity of an event, and how it simultaneously modulates forms of thinking and feeling. A physical movement then might return in experience as a movement of thought, and vice versa.

Collective practices often develop their forms of experimentation alongside theoretical and conceptual work. A good example is the extensive body of work by the *Situationist International*. Collectivity as an aesthetic practice relies on the power of creating a conceptual body constituting a degree of endurance that extends beyond the experiential instant. In research-creation, the theoretical or conceptual exceeds classical forms of notation and inscription. There is, of course, the danger of falling into habitual modes of representation, where the experimental event can be classified as art and the conceptual aspects as theory. The *SenseLab* problematizes this bifurcation in its practice. Its aim is to constitute modes of experimentation where the conceptual and practical condition their mutual co-emergence. In research-creation, a concept cannot be deployed in practice but requires modulation through an enabling constraint; this accounts for practice-experiments which cannot be translated into theory without sufficiently challenging the form theory might take. One technique of suspending the bifurcation into theory and practice is to activate the minor aspects of a concern, rather than its major signifiers. For example, one of the molecules proposed to address the major issue of migration at the Tijuana-San Diego border between the US and Mexico. The molecule's minor intervention consisted in hacking a public phone with a free skype connection available for migrants who could not enter the US. Providing a device for contacting family back home after weeks of travel through Latin America addresses the major concern of migration through a minor gesture – with immediate practical value. This gesture produces a consideration of border-crossing and migration quite



different from the major discourse of human rights. The pragmatism of the immediate action relays into another form of speculative thought in action, both with and through the event. An account of the intervention can be found at *SenseLab*'s online journal, *Inflexions*.<sup>24</sup> The journal issue on *Society of Molecules* includes projects about the engagement with urban developments for the London Olympics in 2012, the attempt to challenge Australian customs restrictions by sending ingredients for a meal back and forth between Berlin, Melbourne, and Sydney, and a workshop series in butoh dance as a micropolitical practice for "futuring" in Melbourne. However, the journal is not first and foremost a site for the documentation of the work, but rather a proposition for working with the idea of how a practice or technique might attune to and become within its own context. Through its digital capture, the instant of the event takes on an extensive temporality.

The importance of endurance evolves in parallel with a new form of experimentation, as Holmes points out: collective aesthetic practices "develop an aesthetic language of the event for its own sake, as a territory of expression" (Holmes 2007, 288). The constitution of the event is not a unification of a moment that one reflects theoretically to maintain a life after the event. Such a conception would undermine the heterogeneous and transversal character of the collective as an ecology of relation. On the contrary, in generating a field of relation for resonance between felt bodily and conceptual movements with and through a background of support – both corporeal and incorporeal – research-creation proposes to think intensity, immediacy, and temporal extension as individuation. Individuation defines the time of the event, heterogeneous and resonant, and always collective. *SoM* provides a strong example of the fused practice of inventing techniques of relation concerned with political and social issues locally, while weaving a translocal conceptual cartography. Over the course of its preparation, local groups formed around the specific concerns they wanted to investigate through micropolitical interventions or forms of experimentation. "Micropolitics," a term developed by Deleuze and Guattari, refers to a mode of politics resisting representational politics in its discursive form. Instead of being a difference in degree, it denotes a difference in kind. Micropolitics resists the developed codes of a political system based on clear definitions of the signifier and the signified, of meaning structures (1987, 241). Entering a concern through the minor means finding ways of opening up a problematic that refrains from positioning this problem in an already existing meaning structure.

A good example might be the Amsterdam Molecule, “What’s Eating Amsterdam,” concerned with urban food ecologies. The molecule developed a technique of activating the city as giant harvesting ground. With the help of activist Wietske Maas, who specializes in urban animal and vegetable life, the group harvested edible flora and fauna, celebrating the practice by eating a professionally prepared meal. Their interest resided in the non-human collectives inhabiting the urban fabric (for instance, a vast population of accidentally imported Chinese crabs in Amsterdam’s canals), and the group developed an account of the extensive relational ecologies of food in the city through video and a four-metre diagram-collage.

The aesthetic engagements with the question of food are processed digitally and find a new mode of expression through the *Inflexions* interface. Research material, documentation, and personal accounts fuse into a diagram without discrete authorship. Ethical concerns manifest themselves in a video, as moving images are fused with spoken text fragments. While the issue of food certainly defines one of the most politically relevant themes, in this case a minor encounter with edible life in Amsterdam opened up an ethical concern raised during the aesthetic process of the project.

The affective relaying with other molecules occurred through the basecamp online tool, by sharing a specific set of philosophical readings, and through the hosting and dissemination of emissaries – each molecule sending and receiving an emissary. In the one-year period leading up to the event and during the event, communication was not based on reporting one’s latest activities but relaying the local process through emissaries, who brought a seed and generated with its host molecule a recipe for relation (after creating a “relational soup”). The seed was supposed to be activated after the actual event and act as a mode of gathering the force of the molecular collaboration towards a future project. Through this technique, molecules gained an immediate account of the others’ concerns without knowing the exact context from which it emerged. This relaying enabled an “unfaithful” modulation, adapting the process seed or recipe to one’s concern. Since there was no dominant narrative, the fragments provided in the form of a seed or recipe could activate a process in their very own way: as a proposition, not an instruction. This technique might be called an “anexact yet rigorous” generation of a relational field of differences (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 367). The rigour consists mostly in being attentive to the modulations that a process requires once it shifts contexts or picks up a new movement tendency. Many of the propositions are only propositions in the sense that they offer a movement to enter

or activate. From this point of view, one might not think of failure even if such a movement remains inactive for the time being; its capacity for activation remains. Many of the techniques for activation enter the collective modes of experimentation at a later point.

### *Relational Aesthetics – Aesthetics of Relation*

The legacy of collective art practices and the potential transformation towards what I consider the *coming collective* began to take shape in the mid-1990s. The historical periodization of “collectivism after modernism” includes the post-communist era, as the idea of the collective leaves the oppressive Soviet ideal of state-imposed collectivity behind (Aristarkhova 2007; Penzin and Virno 2010). New forms of aesthetic practices began to fuse with social movements (see also chapter V) and media technologies become an important aspect for new ethico-aesthetic geo-politics (Holmes 2007). In art discourse, the social becomes central and the notion of relation gained conceptual importance, particularly with Nicholas Bourriaud’s publication of *Relational Aesthetics* (RA) in 1998. Critics have accused Bourriaud of giving a label to contemporary artistic tendencies and thus contributing to the economy of the art market (Downey 2007, 271; Stewart 2007, 371; Ross 2006, 171). On the other hand, RA introduced for the first time a more theoretical approach to relations in art discourse. One can consider relational aesthetics more as an opening for reconsidering of the object-form-subject relation, instead of proclaiming a new form of art or theory of form, as Bourriaud himself does (2002, 19). He raises some points which, if dislodged from an art critique context, shed light on a relational conception of aesthetic practices outside the usual association of aesthetics with art. His interest in relations remains in the domain of art, and as a curator he is mostly concerned with the museum or gallery as the locus of artistic action and intervention where relational artworks create “situations” (2002, 31). He uses the notion of relational aesthetics to hint at the dynamic process of formation, or what he calls the “relational form” as opposed to “social form” (2002, 83).

For Bourriaud, “these approaches do not stem from a ‘social’ or ‘sociological’ form of art. They are aimed at the formal space-time constructs that do not *represent* alienation, which do not *extend* the division of labour into forms. The exhibition is an interstice, defined in relation to the alienation reigning everywhere else” (2002, 82). Bourriaud contrasts the confined effects of such space-time constructs with an almost all-encompassing notion of relational art: “A set of

artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of (human) relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space“ (2002, 113). While the latter definition positions relations in an inter-subjective structure, the prior insistence on the interstice and space-time constructs emphasizes his interest in formation as “dynamic agglutination” and “dynamic form” (2002, 21, 24). In the process of dynamic formation, relational artworks create “temporary collective forms” while having an “infinite tendency” (2002, 42, 61). In rather confined contexts of art production, thinking the artwork as having an infinite tendency renders it into an “open object” and thus potentially interesting for a relational conception of creation (Massumi 2009, 38). However, Bourriaud, as with many other authors concerned with relational art practices, short-circuits the dynamic form of relational art practice with an inter-human concept of the social, proclaiming a “social turn” in the arts (Bishop 2006a, 2006b).

Bourriaud’s conceptual imprecision – blending philosophies of the event with a crude Marxist critique of contemporary capitalism – seems incompatible with an ecological-relational account. On the one hand, he opens up a dynamic and potentially ecological conception of space-time compositions. On the other, he considers collective forms as social “with a desire to create new areas of conviviality” (2002, 26), while addressing them as “individual and collective lines of flight” (32). The problem, similar to other uses of the “collective” in art contexts, resides in taking the social as the collective condition par excellence. Neither material support, nor other-than-human qualities of the collective, like forces, affects, and relational capacities are taken into account. Bourriaud’s interest in form derives from its strong position in art discourses. His emphasis on formation provides a possibility for opening up the concept of form toward a more relational process of individuation. Such a shift would mean taking the power of the constitution of a situation seriously, extending beyond the moment of an experience of collectivity. From this point of view, Bourriaud’s interest in the context of art production aims at art practices resisting the commodity form. Such resistance is also crucial to *SenseLab*’s practices. The question of shifting contextual capture through situational modulation leads toward the consideration of the role of institutions and how to cope with them in ways other than an antagonist form of resistance (Penzin and Virno 2010, 85).

In line with Bourriaud’s interest in Guattari’s aesthetic paradigm, one can address the dynamic unity of form as a situational occurrence. Such an occurrent situationality has the quality

of an event, where the event generates its emergence relationally and as a singularity. RA attempts to render form dynamic and thus open art objects in contextualized situations towards their potential to engage social dimensions and critique. The being of a relation is the event itself, a mode of existence or manner of being, as I showed in the previous section. As event, this being “is first auto-consistency, auto-affirmation, existence for-itself deploying particular relations of alterity” (Guattari 1995, 109). From this point of view, form is neither the result of human engagement with matter, nor does it instigate social processes between humans. Form as dynamic unity and event is never actual but virtual, and thus an infinite multiplicity (Simondon 2005, 62-63). In the process of individuation, there is a sense of quasi-formation in bodily experience, which is always only virtually felt. For this very reason, there is abstraction in experience, as that which renders a partial formation into more than what it appears to be and thus making it real – relationally real. In the final section of RA, on Guattari, the problem of transforming a conceptual outline into a too rigidly institutionalized context of the art market becomes clear. The attempt at fostering relations between a dynamic process of formation and its potential for social forms of collectivity shifts towards an examination of more interstitial or relational realms of individuation (or the “production of subjectivity,” which is the term Bourriaud borrows from Guattari). In this passage, Bourriaud continues a line of argumentation similar to the modernist desire of collectivism arising from a desire for “inventing possibilities of life” (2002, 88, my translation). However, he admits that the collective as social form must pass through a “mental ecosophy” (2002, 92).

Guattari’s outline of a mental ecosophy provides a basis for the emergence of situations which include corporeal as much as incorporeal “universes of value,” locally occurring yet abstract dimensions (1995, 124). The so-called universes of value are Guattari’s way of addressing the non-actualized but not un-effective forces of potential often opening up new dimensions of possibility as formerly inhibited by institutional power structures (1995, 27). The *mental* of mental ecosophy is not a transcendental faculty of a human mind. On the contrary, mental ecology points toward the nascent state of individuation (Guattari 1995, 6) and its relational ecology as a condition for emergence. Guattari defines this type of ecology “pre-objectal and pre-personal” and attributes it a *logic of the included middle*, that is of pure experience (2008, 36). Mental designates a specific attentiveness to the virtual or non-sensuous aspects in experience. Bourriaud’s attempt to position artworks as situations with the capacity for

activating attentiveness to the virtual multiplicity shaping “formed” experience is highly relevant for a relational conception of the collective. In research-creation terms, one might think of form as a precise proposition constitutive of a situation where the act of appearance includes a felt sensation of bare activity giving rise to the act and its possible supported action, thus enabling endured experimentation. The problem with Bourriaud’s account of relational aesthetics resides in the ideal of an artwork or situation to be implicitly social. As a proposition, a situation can take a discrete form, but it cannot presume any relation to the social; a situation’s formal quality has to operate in the mode of the collective, not the social. In the case of *SoM*, mental ecology and its power of abstraction act translocally through a shared concern, that of the micropolitical, while inflecting it differentially. One of the key outcomes of the event is a shared cartography of techniques for generating a field of activation around a shared concern. The potential self-constitutive activity of each technique abstracts its relational capacity to become effective across different contexts. Relaying techniques thus define one of the *SenseLab*’s crucial political activities, whereby a mode of collective experimentation across different territories and temporalities emerges.

#### *Institution: Context and Situation*

The *SenseLab*’s work on research-creation resonates in part with the problem of relation and creation in art contexts. Its link to relational art practices demonstrates on the one hand a historical lineage of concerns and practices. On the other, it connects with struggles against modes of capture and institutionalization, as well as the institutional inhibition of cross-disciplinary practices of experimentation. However, problematizing the institution as an external power structure opposed to *true* experimentation would lead to an antagonistic binary. So instead of positioning research-creation against the institution of art production/education or academia, we need a radical rethinking of what an institution might become through research-creation as interstitial practice. Similar to the *Situationist International*, we have to reconsider the role of the “situation” in relation to its context.

Context can be defined as the operating institutional frame of a practice – “linguistically, architecturally, and on any number of interlocking levels.” Context maintains a “relative stability as a more or less determinate given.” In the face of context’s *structure*, situation is the “event of an autonomy of experience pushing into and moving across context” (Massumi 2002b, 212).

Massumi provides an account of experience in the form of a situation – one of Robert Irwin’s installations: “The experience *takes*: it takes its own time; it takes elements into itself; and it takes in the catalytic sense of an effect setting in, or the combustive sense of a slow detonation. The experience belongs not to any one element, but to their coming-together in just this way” (2011, 165). The self-belonging of a “coming together in just this way” makes situation the creative element in experience. The collectivity of this event might generate a perceivable social form, like the *SenseLab*, but it is never limited to it. On the contrary, a situation moves in relation to more or less actualized degrees of its occurrence. Mental ecosophy reminds us of taking a situation’s self-abstraction into account. The constitution of a situation happens not without a context; it is entirely based on context (and in particular, capitalist modes of production and valorization). In its focus on relations it becomes a fold of experimental encounters potentially reworking what might be felt as social and what is discursively inscribed as *the* social. Put differently, the self-constitutive and self-abstracting capacity of a situation produces its very own modes of valorization in resonance with its contextual framing.

A situation, as event, is not mere location, but operates translocally, traversing different durations. Indeed, a situation arises in a conditioned manner but it also always exceeds its actual boundaries. It is a mode of lived abstraction as continued activity of individuation. The speculative-pragmatic question of the collective in research-creation asks how to experiment in a situational manner while shifting contextual enclosures, without becoming redundant in one’s own practice. The challenge of research-creation is to relay techniques by means of situational activation while maintaining a continued modulation of the context.

In *Societies of Molecules* one such technique was to activate the environment of an abandoned but highly frequented Montreal rail yard with LED-equipped balloons through the use of long-exposure digital photography. As part of an interventionist impetus in an urban area where the municipality is planning major redevelopments separating a middle-class neighbourhood from a more precarious migrant neighbourhood, the molecule sought to draw attention to this redevelopment project without using the conventional circulation of information. Inhabiting a vacant lot bordering the area under investigation, the molecule pursued various techniques of relation to activate the area, including a kite-making-workshop and moss graffiti. The goal was to avoid any straightforward communication or knowledge distribution from people “in the know” to the “uninformed.” By calling the molecule “lack of information kiosk,”

the participants wanted to problematize the philanthropic educational outreach of many socially engaged art practices. In this way, constituting situations for a lack of information instigates a rethinking of the contextual discourse of urban development and its knowledge structures.

One specific intervention consisted in installing helium-filled balloons equipped with LED-diodes along the rails spreading throughout the area. The idea was to activate the space's nocturnal aesthetics, providing a rich ground for urban interventions and opening new dimensions for creative engagement. The stormy weather conditions impinged on installing such delicate objects, so the group engaged in an immediate collective caring for the balloons to enable their instalment. While most of the balloons burst the few installed entered a luminous dance captured on video and photo. The digital residues of the minor gesture thus become a form of abstraction providing the ground for further relay beyond the situation. Without sufficient abstraction this particular situation would have perished; it would not have had resonance over time. The constitution of a situation in itself is a specific technique enabling ethical and aesthetic experimentation. Through the power of abstraction in situations a further question might be: how do such situations (and their abstractions) gain a mobile quality beyond locative confinement? The mobility of a situation moves through resonance, and its operational quality lies in the potential for "re-embodiment" in a new situation a different aspect of its affective tonality (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 43). At the same time, sediments move with this re-embodiment process and prevent the mobile components from fully blossoming if not treated with proper care. The digital relay of the images gains a situational quality beyond the often criticized reproducibility of the digital opposed to the analog. Considered in context, the image as situation alters the conditions of its emergence through its capacity for self-abstraction. The question of activation in the example of the LED-balloons thus required a certain care for the situation and its ecological constitution through and beyond its immediate occurrence.

### *The Collective and the Nonhuman*

In relation to scientific practices, Bruno Latour has developed a notion of the collective as a fundamental component in his general program for re-thinking the modernist split between nature and culture (1993, 10-12). For Latour, the sciences are concerned with phenomena of "nature" and bear potential for rethinking political practices based on the assumption of facts. These facts, as Latour points out, are neither naturally given nor culturally produced. He outlines



an iterative and relational take on reality accounting for both the fabricated aspects of matters of fact and their facticity as having real effects. Neither of these two sides, he maintains, are produced by human interpretation but emerge through processes of articulation where humans and nonhumans confer activity onto each other in the process of *realization*.

Throughout his work, Latour uses the notion of the collective to differentiate a relational field (which he calls “networks”) of humans and nonhumans as “actants” from “societies,” which for him define only one part of collectives, “the divide invented by the social scientist” (1993, 4). Latour’s conception of the collective is specific to scientific practices and their ways of producing matters of fact in social contexts (1987, 104).<sup>25</sup> His work aims to correct a crucial misunderstanding that he attributes to modernism: the divide between what he calls primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities designate matters of fact, “the fabric of which the world is made,” whereas secondary qualities delineate representations exercised by subjective experience (Latour 2004a, 247; 2005b). What he calls, following Whitehead, the “bifurcation of nature” caused the modern split between nature and culture, subject and object, and human and nonhuman (Whitehead 1964, 26-48). Over the course of his work, he has slowly realized the problematic binaries he deployed in his anthropology of sciences and has moved toward a more metaphysical conception of nature, similar to the emphasis on pure experience in William James and Simondon. In contrast to the socially constructed version of scientific facts, symptomatic of earlier studies in the sociology of science, he has shifted towards a more elaborate relational model of things and objects that actively shape what Latour calls “matters of concern” (Latour 2004b, 2008). Such matters of concern are “gathered” by humans and nonhumans equally, not as already separated entities but as actors in a complex network of relations. Humans and nonhumans designate different forms of forces, with different capacities but always bound together as a “human-nonhuman pair [that] does not refer us to a distribution of the beings in the pluriverse, but to an uncertainty, to a *profound doubt about the nature of action*” (2004a, 73, emphasis in original). Keeping this (preindividual) uncertainty in mind, Latour proposes a clear differentiation between the concept of collectives and that of societies: “Societies will be kept only for the assembly of already gathered entities that sociologists of the social believe have been made in social stuff. Collective, on the other hand, will designate the project of assembling new entities not yet gathered together and which, for this reason, clearly appear as being not made of social stuff” (Latour 2005, 75). Collective potentially designates what James calls pure

experience, a phase where thought and thing, subject and object, have not yet occurred in the univocal process of becoming.

It remains uncertain what Latour means by entities.<sup>26</sup> One of the possible uses of the term comes from Whitehead, who sometimes names actual occasions as entities (1978, 18). In resonance with a relational outline, I consider these entities as events, even though an event is never as confining as an entity might suggest. This would be close to the definition of entity as actual occasion, a dynamic unity as a singular inflection of an ecology larger than itself. In events humans and nonhumans *exchange properties* as a way of collecting, assembling and gathering together what Latour calls a new “common world,” which is not bifurcated into “one” nature and “many” cultures but underlines different degrees of intensities, materialities, speeds, and slownesses. Based on this new common ground “the collective signifies ‘everything but not two separated’” (Latour 2004a, 59). Latour’s account of the collective opens up an important issue for the underlying investigation of ecologies of relation in providing a preindividual account of collective assembling of forces rather than forms. In relation to art and the importance of form, we might also think of the assembly of dynamic forms. In other words, any process of form-taking emerges from an eventful interplay of forces. Form is always *in formation*, dynamic and metastable. If art is a process of form-giving then not in the figural sense but as “pure plastic rhythm” engaged in the collective relational activity of its environment (Manning 2009, 10).

The terminology Latour deploys is problematic in the sense that both pairs of terms – human and nonhuman, collective and social – maintain a linguistic bifurcation that he repeatedly challenges while using it. In claiming that “collective as an assembly of beings capable of speaking [...] show that nonhumans, too, are implicated in a great number of *speech impedimenta*,” he holds on to the cultural practice of communication and mediation (2004a, 62-63). Not surprisingly, mediators are crucial for his work in actor-network-theory, as they “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry” (2005a, 39). His emphasis on mediators stresses the material and technological agency of instruments in science, for instance, as providing an account (i.e. articulation) of a phenomenon, not its finite truth, which remains open-ended if not inaccessible to the human.<sup>27</sup> His philosophy addresses the threshold where assembled collectives hold together enough to produce a fact which cannot be denied in its effects, like climate change (one of his favourite examples). Accordingly, he shifts his conception of the social as being separated from the collective. In

reference to Gabriel Tarde, Latour positions as social every organism or bundle of physical entities that share a relational movement (2008, 16). In Tarde's sociology, the social occurs through mutual external imitation of its elements (Tarde 1999; Barry and Thrift 2007), defining a group of associates rather than a collective in the sense that I have developed the term. Latour is most interested in the constitution of a context, the social, whose meaning is extended through the operation of the collective. His political concern of re-positioning nature as not opposed to culture gestures towards a social practice in the extended sense of the term. This might lead away from a conception of ecology bound to the natural-material stratum and opens up a dynamic interlacing of different registers of corporeal and incorporeal fluxes. Somewhat contrary to Latour, my understanding of ecology is closer to that of Guattari, who considers action not arising through a social context of entities; he writes in *Three Ecologies*, an "existential taking on of context is always brought about by praxis which is established in the rupture of the systemic 'pretext'" (2008, 36). This rupture is of the register of the event and becoming. The collective here is an emergent act as absolute novelty – the *coming collective*.

Collectives of beings are very different from ecologies of relation. A relation is not a being in the strict sense, but a movement, tendency, or force – a becoming. Its mode of existence is change, not essence. While Latour conceives of nonhumans not as objects but "in the form of new entities with uncertain boundaries, entities that hesitate, quake, and induce perplexity," defining them as actors, he still speaks of entities (2004a, 76). I suggest reshaping Latour's entities as relations, and adding humans to the realm of the collectively constituted and eventful emergence of experience. The collective is a mutual shaping of preindividual potential and its constant dephasing into actualized processes of individuation. In other words, we have to enter through a general "plane of composition" from which a sense of togetherness of stuff – that is, of relations – causes effects in resonance with a milieu moving with it (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 67). The concern I am raising in Latour's work is a political one that accounts for human practices such as politics and speaking, of translation, mediation, and interpretation, as parts of what he calls democracy (Latour 2004a). For a general *politics of relation* it is not enough to insert a metaphysical realm of collectively assembled entities (*Dingpolitik*, as he calls it) before politics in the social sense takes place (Latour and Weibel, 2005). Latour emphasizes emergence, the moment of articulation, when effects arise. An ecology of relation is equally concerned with the formation or emergence and its effects but its emphasis concerns the singularity of becoming

exceeding effectuation. Put differently, emergence and effects circulate through a more-than-human relational field, but they never detach from this field in their effectuation. Ecologies of relation thus impel us to think emergence not as a moment, but as an extensive dephasing through individuation in movement with its milieu.

For Latour, the collective instigates a social formation in a “common world” without itself being social. A radical empiricist account, however, bases assembled differences as “speaking” through collectives in the fabrication of scientific matters of fact and matters of concern – in relation to an *already differential existence of life as such*. Thus there is no “common world” but only a differential cosmos of potential dephasing. Depending on the ecological affordances, this supposed common world more or less enables certain kinds of practices. Accordingly, the common is never as neutrally available as some authors might argue in their political theories (Virno 2009, 2004; Hardt and Negri 2009; Hardt, 2010). Put differently, entities as actors or actants become the source of action. Thought relationally, however, the act arises as a field effect, a differential of minute differences constitutive of how these entities actually become relationally. Latour’s propositions open up a field of negotiating binaries which haunt our contemporary account of humans and nonhumans, but it remains at the level of a *human practice* informed by nonhuman actants, primarily concerned with the human (despite his insistence to the contrary). What ecologies of relation propose is not in opposition to Latour’s anthropology, but rather puts the emphasis on the otherness in language, movement, thought, and practice; it engages not with entities but with tendencies and a feeling for potential arising through an ecological attunement. More precisely, it conceives of the “cueing” of language in the making (Manning 2013a, 149-171), “preacceleration” in bodily movement (Manning, 2009, 6), or the emergent in the event, as a transversal field of activity suspending the capture of a contained form, movement, or word. Such an ecological constructive approach includes the more-than-human tendencies as immanently producing states of discourse, social action, or thought.

Latour’s philosophy emphasizes the potential of scientific practice to move beyond the bifurcation of nature and by that opening up a new register of thinking about “political ecology.” His issue is one of mediation and translation dealing with “accidents” or “contingency,” whereas a relational-ecological approach is concerned with immediation and transformation or transduction, not a conversion but a creative involution. For Deleuze and Guattari, *involution*,

not evolution, is the term that makes becoming the only form of being, as a symbiosis of relational difference. The problem of the collective is not the community of entities, but becoming as it brings “into play beings of totally different scale and kingdoms” in a process of involution – a multiplicity of heterogeneous becomings in resonance (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 238). Becoming, as Deleuze and Guattari underline “is a verb with a consistency all its own” (1987, 239). It invites us to take relations as concerned with becoming, in-acting differentially. The collective then denotes a world in becoming, which cannot be divided into beings in relation but only relational modes of existence in resonance.

Latour’s account fosters a notion of emergence and creation as analytical model for the often chaotic extension of actively gathering entities in the fabrication of the real. The shift from a bifurcated nature of mute objects and states of nature opposed to the speaking-thinking-interpreting human to a world of extensive networks is central for an ecological philosophy of the more-than human. What is partly lacking in these accounts is the question of how the instant field of a creative emergence through networks not only shapes the status of facts but also the ways in which heterogeneous elements *prehend*, that is feel, each other in their capacities. Research-creation is concerned with extending this instant field of openness as a radical slowing down or acceleration to infinite speed, rendering palpable the more-than of potential as actively moving through experience (Brunner 2012; Shaviro 2013). Accordingly, what we witness is a certain turn to aesthetics, however, an utterly non-anthropocentric aesthetics emphasizing the potential for feeling without delimiting its possible effects.

### *Collective and Transindividual Individuation*

The question of creativity in aesthetic practices folds into the question of preverbal intensities based on affect, that is, the relational capacity of forces as they resonate with one another.

Guattari defines his notion of ecology as a crucial building block of individuation, human and more-than-human, which is not based on identity but on intensity and affect. Creativity or the creative act is always already collectively conceived as a fielding of affects, in and through an ecology of relations actively shaping the process of invention. Here, invention is a form of insertion where the inventing individual is not a creator but rather a “helpmate to emergence” and a *modest witness* (Massumi 2009, 40; Haraway 1997, 22).<sup>28</sup> The creative act as ecological

emergence requires us to conceive of creation in the mode of *participation* rather than original novelty. Participation, in the case of *SenseLab*'s mode of research-creation, underlines the technique of problematization, which is precise and rigorous but does not foreclose on what needs to be taken into account for dealing with a concern. So, how do we enable atmospheres for participation, where participation is not prescriptive but an open proposition for relationally entering a dynamic movement? The different conceptions of the collective feed into a general aesthetic concern in research-creation practices. An aesthetic of participation underlines a thought and practice where "aesthetics defines what maintains an implicit memory of unity" (Simondon 1958, 179). By unity, we might want to think of the collective unity of experience, its auto-constitution and auto-valorization by means of self-abstraction. This kind of memory is similar to what I have thus far called "resonance." It has an intensive logic, an internal resonance inserting emergent acts into an extensive field of individuation. If we want to engage in a process of individuation, taking account the collective in research-creation, its mode of operation needs to be further defined.

Simondon considers the activity of "insertion" as defining the aesthetic object (1958, 183). He develops a specific conception of the object, particularly the technical object, not as an entity subject to human interaction but as an active mode of individuation (1958, 183). Crucially, an aesthetic object results from a process of invention as insertion, not imitation. For Simondon, aesthetic perception is attentive to the "exigencies" of the universe, that is, inconsistencies or creative gaps in the general process of formation. Through the invention of an artwork, a process of insertion into the universe's exigencies occurs when a process defines the basis of the collective in experience (1958, 184). The relay between the collective and the aesthetic is thus crucial, as perception becomes a feeling for the collective constitution of an act of expression in the "discovery of a superior order of compatibility" (Simondon 2005, 253). Aesthetics and act define the movement of activity enabling the transduction of a mode of existence onto a new plane of "capacitation." Accordingly, aesthetic practices concern an ethics of re-potentialization of assumed states of affairs, their forms, and institutionalizations.

The aesthetic object as open object operates as an aesthetic reticulation (*reticulation esthétique*) establishing an analogical network (*réseau*) between figurative structures and qualities of the ground (Simondon 1958, 189). Simondon's conception of art is quite different from Kantian aesthetics (2007), concerned with the beautiful and sublime, or the aesthetic as

Baumgarten's "sensuous knowledge" (1961). For Simondon, the aesthetic object is a remarkable or singular point of a universe constituting the fundamental operation of analogy enabling a differentiation between figure and ground (1958, 187-190). This definition of the aesthetic underlines emergence as a form of becoming and the event as its operational middle (*milieu*); as such, it points at the speculative-pragmatic co-involution of thought and action in the event. Art is either a set of techniques underlining the aesthetic function of analogical emergence, or, when it becomes aestheticism, an institutionalized practice whose enframing inhibits a real aesthetic opening (1958, 197). Following Simondon, it becomes clear why a relational ecological conception of aesthetic practices in research-creation only marginally copes with institutionalized forms of art. Considering research-creation as an aesthetic practice emphasizes emergence as both figure and ground, abstraction and concretization. The aesthetic in research-creation pertains to the force of emergence and becoming: "Art announces, prefigures, introduces, accomplishes, but it does not realize: it is that instigating and affirming profound and unitary inspiration" (Simondon 1958, 200). If art does not "realize," its operation is one of capacitation, a fielding similar to the operation of pure experience to which Simondon attributes the term "transindividual," referring to a not yet individuated reality: "This reality contains information relative to a preindividual reality: this charge is the principle of the transindividual" (2005, 220). Accordingly, he attributes a transductive and transversal function to art, ensuring that iterations in an individuation preserve the reality of each re-becoming (1958, 200). Most crucially, art remains outside any mode, and is thus similar to the phaseless preindividual and involves a transindividual quality. For Simondon: "Art establishes a transduction between different modes; art is what remains nonmodal in a mode, as around the individual remaining an associated preindividuality enabling communication among the institutions of the collective" (1958, 199, my translation). Simondon's association between art and the collective generates a profound conception of aesthetics as nonmodal activity ensuring differentiation, continuation, and modulation as part of the process of individuation. Thus the aesthetic dimension in experience contracts and extends, forms and transforms, without having to separate one process from the other. It defines the ground for the double movement of transindividual and collective individuation. The former ensures a continued resonance between preindividual and a process of individuation, while the latter defines the mutual resonance across individuating individuals over

time. In other words, it defines continuation while the transindividual defines temporal multiplicity (Simondon 2005, 218).

Does the aesthetic field act in relation to art? In some sense it does: as a bare activity, it is the pulsation of experience's temporal dimension. Its activity is the enablement of acts of collective individuation. It also acts by remaining nonmodal and thus forming a ground for modes to arise in experience. An act here is the "transconsistency between different degrees of consistency" (Guattari, 1981, n. pag.). Thus for Guattari, the act is a singularity that evades representation. Quite different from the assumption that an act is what represents action, in this case it operates in a different register. Singularity is not an entity or a moment but a tendency in excess of its own expressive capacities. A singularity is always a multiplicity and thus an expression of the collective in action – a *collective*. An act as singularity designates the interval or interstice, the fabric or tissue, which holds the passages of activation together without having to choose between more concretized or more virtual aspects.

In *SoM*, seventeen molecules performed different modes of constituting their micropolitical interventions, often through dedicated techniques of activation, which gained their consistency only in resonance to the field in which they emerged. They were singular, while their capacity for activation exceeded their local zone of intervention. The *collective* quality of *SoM* emerged through its capacity for transconsistency. Through the shared conceptual engagement of philosophical readings and ways of relaying the concerns with the help of emissaries, a transversal operation engaged the molecules' techniques as one of "outcomes" awaiting future modulation. The modulation of techniques defines the aesthetic dimension of the event itself – its multiply inflected singularity. One such modulation is the tangent section of *Inflexion*'s third issue, where one can access documentation and expressions from the molecules' interventions. The platform itself remains nonmodal but operatively active, shaping the collective of the event in its own consistency with the help of temporal operations moving through digital media. Through perceptual and conceptual engagement with the online platform, the collective continues to weave new modes of existence by activating the transindividual dimension of individual users. Thanks to the dynamic programming in Flash, artist Leslie Plumb built the tangents in a way that they exceed any sense of conventional documentation or representation. The digital fold of the event itself transduces the material and enables new relations to emerge through the interface. Thus the material becomes transductively interlaced with the vital



operations of both the collective and the transindividual. In their digital materiality these operations define a ground combined with an infrastructural technology enabling such forms of digital affective engagement (Fritsch, 2009). Other modulations have occurred in more recent *SenseLab* events, where seeds of techniques have been re-invented and activated in new situations.

The process of transduction concerns how the relaying of an aesthetic process cuts across all strata of existence, while fostering a process of structuration (Simondon 2005, 32). If art, as Simondon points out, does not eternalize but renders transductive, it generates the power (*puissance*) of experience to relay crystallizations of space-time. From a transductive perspective, aesthetic practices are truly creative, in the sense Deleuze understands the creative act. For Simondon, the aesthetic act, which is auto-constitutive, is similar to knowledge, but only *aesthetic knowledge* bears the power of action, which renders the aesthetic object an intermediating operation between knowledge and action (1958, 193). How are knowledge and action combined, and to what degree do they concern a practice of participation which Simondon relates to the process of transduction? *Participation* is the aesthetic act par excellence, opening up an emergent relational capacity of a field of resonances to account for their mutual support and consistency. The nature of this field is non-relational, and thus rich in potential for relational resonance. In transductive terms, a structuration of an experience becoming expressive is not mono-directional or causal, but heterogeneous and multiple. In this sense there is always an ecological attunement of a process of expression which, if thought aesthetically, activates both, a concretization in perception through action and an extension in affective terms. The perceptual and the affective, as much as action and emotion, are thus inseparably operating across the threshold of individuation in experience. Their mutual modulation navigates elements of potential actualization in expression. Put differently, individuation allows us to think the aesthetic as that aspect of experience which enables activity to be felt as simultaneously actual and virtual; a quality of presence immersed in an immanence of potential. Research-creation is concerned with experimenting how this relation between actual effectuation and immanent potential can be accounted for in aesthetic practices as a politics of activation. Activation is never a linear or unifying process but a heterogeneous assemblage of tendencies populating the event of expression. Collective individuation points at the immanent process of world-participation in each form of action – shaping, extending, and expressing capacities of bare activity, ready for

transductive relay. Speaking about art as participation means seeking points of inflection enabling a heterogeneous field to become operable and open for insertion. Insertion means adding new elements to the process, activating novel capacities, new ways of experiencing, new alliances of formerly unrelated political practices. Research-creation asks how to sensitize a practice to the attunement of capacities so that their coming-together is extending the range of potential. In this sense, adding means not necessarily amassing but rather amplifying and augmenting. Such operations can also consist in a cut or subtraction, which might be better called an intensification. All of these operations pertain to the creative act in the way Manning and Massumi talk about enabling constraints, brought up earlier in this chapter. The need for composing enabling constraints hints at a practice of material precision as a form of abstraction through proposition. It requires specific techniques of thought and material practicing; a material thought. Such aesthetic thought operates transductively in resonance with an already transductive universe of individuation.

As an example, one might appoint to the recent *SenseLab* Europe Hub meeting in Zurich, part of the *Immediations* project.<sup>29</sup> For this meeting, participants decided to meet on the basis of movement profiles based on their proximate environment; such profiles were already partially active as one of *SoM*'s techniques for relation. The idea was to initiate the meeting by presenting these profiles as an engagement with the overall theme of urban fabric, and thus bypassing the conventional mode of representation by stating one's institutional affiliations and background. In 2014, the original idea transduced into an activating technique for encounter and the co-composition of an event in the making. The enabling constraint came itself as a proposition: How can we meet on the basis of singular accounts of the urban fabric without homogenizing the minute differences in the materiality and mediality of these encounters? How can we eschew the personal or identitarian in introducing our modes of practicing, creating an immediate platform for participation primarily based on affinity of techniques, not fields of knowledge, discourse, or representation? Simply put, an enabling constraint defines a transductive activity opening towards participation.

Participation is contrary to inter-subjective communication. For Simondon, participation operates as an intermediary preceding either a "community of action" or "the content of consciousness" (2005, 249). Participation is not discrete action but provides a lure for activation through an affective relaying. Massumi explains:

participation precedes recognition: *being precedes cognition* [...] Experience under way is a constitutionally vague “something doing” in the world. Something-doing is a participation that is logically and ontologically prior to its participants: the doer and the done in their separate, contextualized identities. It is a coming-together prior to the divisibility of its own components. A being-in-relation prior to the cognitive terms of the relation. (Massumi 2002b, 231-232)

Whatever is expressed in experience has already participated in a collective process of individuation through which the differential of expression becomes distinct while maintaining its relational entanglement with the preindividual field of potential. Simondon relates the affective process of participation to an aesthetic operation of perception: “Participation consists of gestures, while perception gives these gestures a support of objective reality” (1958, 192). Perception, however is always a collective effect from which the act of perceiving arises in a metastable and ecologically composed manner. The emphasis on gesture underlines a form of relaying without communication. Gesture here means a mode of insertion into a movement that creates a change in another register. A gesture is not necessarily bodily, but may be of a more abstract kind. Its particularity concerns a different mode of taking account of the more-than-human as a virtual process which functions as the ground for human experience to emerge. It is a relational process of expression in the immediacy of its occurrence and through the singularity of its ecological relationality. Gestures make the transductive nature of experience felt as immediate intensity and abstraction at the same time.

In the *SenseLab*'s attempt is to investigate a world of pure immanence, attentiveness to gesture becomes extremely important in the constitution of a situation. For example, during *SoM*, the Concrete Gardens Molecule in Montreal developed techniques of paper-making that included embedding seeds into the fibres of the paper. The idea was to make a relay between the potential to write, implant, and grow plants as a gesture-based relationality of materials and their potential for a mutual co-composition between the typically unrelated realms of writing and planting. In a public space, the molecule invited passersby to craft paper and take it home for planting or writing, and possibly sending it to one of the molecule's members. The relay of the seed-paper-conjunction enabled a form of public engagement through a playful gesture of making, without

undermining the conceptual efforts leading up to the actual intervention. The art of the *collective* thus finds its multiplicity in the different degrees of expression through a shifting of gestures depending on the situation. A public intervention rarely works if the public is bombarded with a conceptual framework they are not familiar with. Instead, the work of the *collective* attempts to develop a transconsistency between the transindividual dimension of participating individuals and their collective co-becoming.

The transductive dimension of a process is always collective, where collective denotes a preindividual and pre-vital realm of potential reticulation (Simondon 2005, 303). Transduction is the expression of a collective process, the relational tissue ensuring a mutual taking-into-account (*prise en charge*) of the individuating individual in experience and the preindividual capacitation of its emergence *and* endurance. Transduction is the *dynamic unity* of the event, ensuring its singularity as expressive multiplicity; its quality is that of activating disparate relations and entering a joint process of becoming while not synthesizing but rather generating an internal resonance (2005, 29). Through transduction, a relaying of incorporeal and corporeal forces co-emerging and relating in experience becomes possible: “Transduction expresses the processual sense of individuation; this is why it holds for any domain, and the determination of domains (matter, life, mind, society) relies on diverse regimes of individuation (physical, biological, psychic, collective)” (Combes 2013, 7). Without the notion of transduction, any conception of relation and ecology too easily falls either onto the side of relativism or the opposite, that of predefined essences. Through transduction, a double movement is effectuated: on the one hand transduction underlines the capacity for dephasing, that is for emergence to take on the semblance of a unity, a dynamic unity, in experience. The transductive mode of dephasing Simondon terms the collective aspect of individuation (2005, 29, 167, 310). On the other hand, transduction activates the preindividual resonance of forces as a potential ground for dephasing cutting across all modes of existence. This form of collectivity Simondon terms the transindividual, emphasizing the abstract extension of a first structuration (2005, 279). For Simondon, both the transindividual and the collective concern processes he attributes to the psychic individuation of mammals. However, due to the transductive nature of life in general, these forms of individuation are always occurring in resonance with other phases of individuation like the physical or vital. Collective and transindividual individuation are not separate but move in resonance to each other, one pertaining to a transductive capacitation and

the other emphasizing forms of mental relaying. Accordingly, transduction is the only “eternal” reality of individuation.

Simondon associates the act with an ethical value, which is its “capacity of a transductive kind” (Combes 1999, 106). An act, as activation, rising from the ground of bare activity is ethical in that it fosters the occurrence of a singularity in experience while expressing its transductive resonance through the incorporeal and corporeal dimensions of a relational ecology. Aesthetics and ethics are thus intrinsically entangled in Simondon’s conception of the act, and the activity of individuation. Ethics is an act of contracting a field of forces towards expression while maintaining its activity in excess of the contracted instant. If I said earlier that in its practice the *SenseLab* aims for the singular, it is because the relay between ethics and aesthetics is at the heart of its experiments in research-creation. The mutual interest in the movement of thought and the creation of concepts in philosophy combined with experimentation in the arts fosters the ethico-aesthetic potential of research-creation. Here several questions emerge: How can practices account for the mutual emergence of conceptual and bodily movements enabling modes of participation attentive to the immanent power of ethico-aesthetic activity in research-creation? How is such a practice political and able to generate concerns capable of emphasizing the collective nature of ecologies of relation? And how is the act of relation itself political in its capacity for resonance, as potential?

One might also ask: potential for what, a more-than of what, and why? While potential underlines the preindividual as the necessary ground for emergence, perishing, and re-emergence, it requires further contrast to become an effective notion for thinking through the politics of ethico-aesthetics. In starting from the unity, the entity, the subject, or object, one suppresses attentiveness to their relational constitution, their dependence on an open structure of becoming as their *sense* of survival, as the sense of life in general. In the words of Simondon: “The aesthetic universe [...] represents the sense of becoming” (1958, 188). Transduction foregrounds both the relaying of individuation throughout different strata of existence as a continuous process of organisation, where the “others” relate through their operational value, not their essence. Modes of existence persist because they can take consistence through activation, asking *how* its milieu can become in resonance with it, not against or in difference to it. Engaging in the practice of participation means finding the relays for activating a co-becoming with a milieu or ecology as a process of amplifying the powers of existence. The relevance of

developing such techniques appears in the examples of *Society of Molecules*, where an ecology of practices problematizes translocally and in situ – without one ruling out the other.

Amplification occurs in different ways through different degrees of corporeal and incorporeal phases, affectively and as bodily effects being immediately felt-thought (Simondon, 2005, 209). The double articulation of thought and physical effectuation generates a mutual advancement, suggesting that either side expresses and abstracts as part of a shared movement. In terms of *SoM*, the shared movement of micropolitical engagement and affective relaying constitutes a cartography of techniques for relation which take on a life and form of their own. They exist across the digital and analog material to be found in personal archives and through *Inflexions*. In their activity, they are singular according to their conditions of emergence and collective moving across a continuum of differential elements, while the concepts generated and deployed take on a new tonality in a collective advancement of thought. Propositions are revisited and re-inserted into new constellations of experimental encounters throughout. *SoM* proposes an open structure for thought and research-creation practice in action, in-acting through its very own individuation. Felt bodily traces, gestures, encounters, feelings, and emotions play as crucial a part as their conceptual advancement in thought and language. The immediate transductive capacities of these relays – the body, a thought, language, or movement – generate an extensive ecology of relation whose consistency is the capacity for activation. Research-creation thus means critically addressing the structures of academic research and artistic practice, often aiming to contain the life of a practice in a method, a structure, an object or subject, or in definite results. In research-creation, the levels of effectuation are distributed in a minor sense; these effectuations become part of a *coming collective*, rather than an institution or a research-group producing insights and advancing knowledge, and thus becoming authors and owners of knowledge.

In this twofold chapter, an analysis of the *SenseLab*'s practice of research-creation gave rise to the importance of relation, the act, activity, and activation as part of what I call the *coming collective*. The main concern of developing techniques of relation – taking bodily and physical, as much as incorporeal and more-than-human activities in experience into account – leads to further questions about their effects on the everyday contexts of enclosure, control, and the politics of perception. In other words, none of the conceptual developments takes effects on its own, without activation and amplification moving through bodies and materials. The concern of

a relational realism resides in asking how the collectively attuned ground for activation disregards any split between concrete and abstract in the first place. Here, material designates not a substantial form, but a preindividual singularity as a force, with specific capacities for affecting and being affected under specific relational circumstances. From here felt bodily effects and political consequences for life arise, but never as a set framework of a mechanical paradigm whose parameters can be known before the event of their emergence. The following chapter scrutinizes more closely the modalities of effectuation in a relational realism from immediacy to perception. Looking closely at two immersive media artworks, I investigate perception as a collective act, and give a precise account of the ecological relation between media technologies and human affective engagement with and through them. *Society of Molecules* raised some crucial questions of relaying research-creation processes affectively across translocal constellations with the help of media technologies. The next chapter will further elaborate how such technologies form an integral and active milieu through which the political role of perception and experimentation leads to an aesthetic politics as an integral aspect of research-creation.

## CHAPTER II

### BECOMING ATTENTIVE TO THE UNKNOWN: IMMEDIATION AND PERCEPTION

#### **Prelude: *Panoscope* – The Horizon’s Edge**

The *Panoscope*, developed by Luc Courchesne, is an immersive interactive media environment equipped with a 360°, custom-built single-channel hemispheric projection system. Its particularity results from the technical arrangement allowing a complete bodily immersion into projected audio-visual content. It is

“a hemispheric projector placed above a downwardly flaring hemispheric screen; it projects an anamorphic disc image composed so the full horizon is placed at about 4/5ths of the image radius. From within the installation, visitors see the horizon at eye level all around them, and are immersed in a distortion-free projected space.”<sup>30</sup>

Usually, one user inside the space navigates the three-dimensional spaces through an iPhone app (“posture pad”). The radius of the floor space is about 1 meter. So far, only one user can navigate through the projected content in the *Panoscope*. The technical set-up is particular due to its 360° enclosure at eye level and its openness toward the ceiling (the *Panoscope* is located in a dome that is not closed on top), allowing for the technical mechanism to reveal its presence. The top-edge of the hemisphere defines the contrasting limit between projected immersion and its technically enabling “outside.” Several *Panoscopies* can be linked together, all connected through shared audio-visual content. Eight cameras typically capture the user’s torso, which becomes visible through a screen-like tele-presence when encountering another user in the “virtual” space projected inside the *Panoscope*. This function also allows for audio-visual communication between separate localities (as demonstrated, for example, in “Posture – Paris/Montréal,” 2011). The different projection scenarios vary from jump-and-run games (“Catch & Run,” 2006) played against other users, to virtually modelled gallery scenarios (“You Are Here,” 2010). The system provides a juxtaposition of different historical and temporally distant elements into dense navigable spaces or time-lines. The most prominent temporal juxtaposition was assembled by Courchesne himself by compiling work documentation of his media art practice together with private family footage and relevant historical events that influenced his own practice (“Where Are You?” 2005). As part of this time-line, proposing a different way of documenting digital



media art inside art exhibition spaces, Courchesne's panoramic videos and photographs are of particular interest. They generate an unusual visual quality of being immersed by one homogeneous horizon, and the experience inside the videos radically alters habitual perceptions of the horizon and the spatial order.

Upon entering the *Panoscope* a slight change happens in the way we habitually perceive our immediate environment. The usual scanning and ordering of sense-perception as a human affair shifts toward the immediate attraction to the *horizon* of the projection-scenario. While immersed in the *Panoscope*, perception enters a relation with the projected visual appearances vibrating through the space. For example, 360° video-images of seashores puts vision directly in relation to a now distributed vanishing point of the projection's horizon. Indeed, the horizon fuses the material ground of the media installation with the moving bodies of the user and the projections, all three co-emerging as part of one of the experience. The horizon becomes the flickering line where perception fuses bodily experience and its technical milieu. Massumi comments on such images in the *Panoscope*:

The image contains a virtual dynamic, more temporal [...] than spatial in nature. All this adds up to an experience [...] Experiences do not connect geometrically in three dimensions. They connect processually, in many dimensions, including dimensions of felt intensity that inhabit the sight seen, but do not show (2003a).

At the conjunction between the technologically effective and confined material ground of the *Panoscope*, including its computational procedures, and the embodied state of experience, perception occurs as a re-working of the human-technology relation. What if, triggered through the edging quality of the horizon, experience with immersive digital media emphasizes the experimentation with the emergent relational quality of perception? From here possibilities for further conceptual development about media and the body arise. In this chapter, I will bring the relation-specific outline of the collective into resonance with perception and the human body. The aim is to open up a human-machine relation at the centre of a medium-specific approach and turn towards its ecologically attuned and collective process of immediate emergence.

How can we think about a technological assemblage like the *Panoscope* outside its manifold material representations without ignoring the material traits and their active contribution to the resonating activity of experience? In other words, are there ways of conceiving of media not as entities, apparatuses, or instruments but as platforms for relation? As platforms, such technical ensembles actively engage with their environments, not as interactive media but actively relating platforms for relation. Media are thus not prostheses nor containments, but rather electro-magnetic and metallurgic environments or ecologies to be explored (Murphie and Potts 2003, 86). I want to ask if there are ways of accounting for immersive media environments in terms of their operational capacities for relation rather than through mere functionality? And how would experimenting with such platforms and their ecologies of relations look like? Taking the *Panoscope* as a springboard, I will develop the concept of *immediation* in two movements: The first movement proposes an ecological-relational account of interactive media environments that attempts to rethink the relationship between humans and technology in terms of their potential for co-emergence through shared media ecologies and practices. The second movement turns towards immediation as a form of perception and its capacities for modulation. Positioning perception as autonomous process allows me to underline the collective-emergent character immanent to immediation.

## First Movement of Immediation and Media Ecologies

*“The living lives at the limit of itself, on the limit [...] The characteristic polarity of life is at the level of the membrane; it is here that life exists in an essential manner, as an aspect of a dynamic topology which itself maintains the metastability by which it exists.”*

(Simondon in Deleuze 1990, 104).

### *Operation*

The *Panoscope* and many other immersive media environments share similar conceptions of enclosure, juxtapositions of different realities, and forms of temporal dynamism. “Virtual” immersive environments have existed since at least the invention of the so-called “panoramas” at the end of the eighteenth century. In these early examples, spatial experience was described as disjunctive, and the focus was on being in two space-times simultaneously: one in the actual circular room where the display was set up, and another inside the depicted content of the image (Oleksijczuk, 2011, 2-3). I will argue here that the aesthetic point of departure among contemporary immersive media environments varies quite widely. In considering the *Panoscope* not as a space for virtual reality but as a platform for relation, I investigate how perceptual immediacy generates a sense of multiplicity of space-time components exceeding the split between content and expression in experience. As a platform for relation, the *Panoscope* cannot be addressed as a conventional medium or even the networking of different media. A medium-specific approach to analyzing a medium either in terms of its components and historical lineage (an approach similar to Actor-Network Theory or McLuhan’s technological determinism) or through its mode of mediation is insufficient. On the contrary, a medium’s assembled state is constitutive of situations of perceptual immersion potentially challenging an exclusive contextual framing of perception through media technologies. In relation to research-creation I attempt to unravel the *Panoscope*’s operational capacity as a platform for relation and thus develop techniques of relation through media ecologies attentive to their temporal and immediate emergence. Such an approach takes account of the medium-specificity and acknowledges the function of parts, elements, and objects in these wider “networks.” However, I want to investigate what more there is beyond the structural analysis of media in relation to human perception and its cultural repercussions, on the level of power, discourse, and sociality. Supposedly confined constellations of media technologies and their effects on the way cultural

practices arise, circulate, and control our activities can be juxtaposed with a more dynamic, fluctuating, and emergent conception of media as operations circulating through matter. Matter, or non-organic life, generates the foundation for an incorporeal material thinking of media practices in relation to their capacities for collective emergence. While non-organic life “can express itself in complex and creative ways,” a task for thinking media as relational affords us to investigate how it *matters* beyond the material (DeLanda 1992, 133). Perception, as I will emphasize in the second movement of this chapter, defines one potential relay for rethinking the activity of non-organic life generative of media and human activity.

While traditional panoramas were used to represent “reality” through a focus on different images of distant places (often with imperial aims), contemporary immersive media environments are part of the shift where “the visible escapes from the timeless order of the camera obscura and becomes lodged [...] within the unstable physiology and temporality of the [modernist] human body” (Crary, 1990, 70). Such immersive media environments not only reposition perspective and movement but underline a different set of dynamics as part of their computational outline and capacities. As digital media environments, they comprise modulatory capacities of juxtaposition and temporal layering, creating speeds of processing that exceed human capacities of sense recognition. Through the fold of the digital, these environments allow for experimenting with thresholds of perceptual emergence due to their precision and computational capacity. In other words, the digital is not superior to the analog because of speed and quantification, although it can render the general process of sense-modulation more sensible due to its capacities. In addition to the repositioning of the making of perception and its visual effects, what I would like to do here is address the historical dimension of media technologies not as evolutions of technology as such, but a transmission of techniques. The development, transformation, and tradition – that is, the passing on (from the Latin *tradere*) – of techniques emphasize technical objects’ activity through practices embedded in the “timed” operational capacities of such technical objects (Murphie and Potts 2003, 5). “Timed” is another way of considering these processes as situated according to a specific set of interdependencies which arise through the techno-social milieu. A media environment like the *Panoscope* bases most of its capacities on the circulation of forces, energy transformation, feedback, and resonance. On the other hand, its becoming is both based on a material-technical affinity and it immediately

depends on its situation for emergence. Time folds doubly here, once as an immediate vortex and again as an extensive continuum.

In relation to immersive media environments, the relation between vision and time should be subsumed neither under a technological paradigm of acceleration nor the human body as metric and locus of temporal perception. In other words, the relationship between perception, the human body, and technology, I think, offers the most potential for an *immediate* and *emergent* account of experience traversing and modulating its technological, bodily, and perceptual qualities. Such an account would build on a relational quality of experience between bodies and technology immediately co-emerging across different phases of experience. What comes to define a coupling of human body and a technical ensemble, such as the *Panoscope*, requires an actively shaping milieu – technical, vital, and physical. A first step towards a technogenetic – that is, emergent and modulating – conception of experience with new media technologies requires an active re-thinking of the conditions of their mutual emergence. Conditions of emergence are not mere circumstance or the cultural and technological context of a particular moment in time. While these circumstances, which science studies has scrutinized under the label of “path-dependence” (MacKenzie and Wajman 1999, 19-24) and through the activity of actants (Latour 1987, 83-85), are a crucial feature in the analysis of media as technologies, conditions of emergence rather emphasize the occurrence of creative activity in the immediacy of experience, as unmediated affect. As an ecology of relation, the immediacy of a situated technological activity has self-reference, that is, it enjoys its own emergence as a “system.” In relation to its effects, it opens the potential for co-emergence in perceptual experience, for instance as human participation.<sup>31</sup> This participation in the fabrication of an event of experience moves through a field of potential to activate a technical operation and a bodily movement in resonance with the field’s movement. The attunement is mutual and does not precede its own occurrence. It is self-referential as an occasion of experience, as a singularity, and in this way generates the terms of its own valorization. From an artistic point of view, the self-valorization of a composed and conditioned emergence, which cannot preform the actual emergence of an event, defines a critical practice of addressing contextual frames of reference. In other words, it challenges acclaimed and habitualized modes of thinking and feeling through experimental sense modulation.

A relational account of media has to investigate *how* they inflect, attune and become with the relational activity of their environment. Such environments are neither universal nor finite and overly structured, but rather exist far from equilibrium: that is, they are dynamic and metastable. As metastable, the environment or milieu expresses the time-quality of *change* as the bare activity immanent to experience (Massumi 2011, 1-3). Change as base-movement of experience, and experience as the stuff of which everything is composed, allows for a thinking of media technologies as themselves modulating and inflecting such changes in relation to their active milieu. Media then, are not entities but movement-operators, capable of rendering flows of energy into confined sensuous expression. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, one can say that bodies and technologies are mutually produced by a *mechanosphere* comprising technological, biological, and cultural elements (1987, 69-71). The insistence on the actively shaping milieu in resonance with a technical or human individual emphasizes a mechanosphere as an in-between state or interface without form but imbued with operative capacities and functions. In a process of technical refinement, most media artists might not only identify the given properties of a technical device, but also experiment how it might relate if taken out of its habitually deployed context. An example might be the work of Ei Wada, entitled “Braun Tube Jazz Band,” in which the artist connects videotape recorders using Braun tube television sets. Each tape contains a specific frequency displayed as a repetitive light pattern on the screen. Once the artist touches the screen the conductive effect of his touch leads to an amplification of the sound. The television sets thus become percussion instruments where light is transformed into sound, and back again. Through this specific constellation, Wada carves out a relation-specific capacity of formerly individual technical entities. The coupling of the milieu and the technical-human compound defines an ecology of relation where relations actively shape the emergence of technological objects and human bodies.

In relation to interactive media technologies, the relational quality can be termed *operational*, by which we can understand the processual and temporal quality of such environments in their becoming. The emergence of experience as a process called operation always moves “across” (*à travers*) domains and not from “one point to another” (*à partir de*) (Combes 1999, 10). Operation means to foreground the genesis of an environment in its movement and becoming and not presuming a substantialist origin or being. Such an operational process always develops in resonance with a milieu which is itself not static (Simondon 2005,

30, n. 6). For instance, the *Panoscope* defines a more or less stabilized technical ensemble, enabling an operational quality that resonates with other such ensembles and their capacity for resonance. It is neither the mere sum of many assembled parts which allows the *Panoscope* to evoke effects in sense-perception, nor the human capacity for perceiving, but their mutual attunement in a material and vital ecology as the ground and limit of their emergence; it is this ecology which renders them operational. The operational quality of experience with technology entails genealogical processes of confinement and stability (the crafting of technical objects) but also their attunement with further flows of activity such as other technological objects, electricity, temperature, air quality, etc. A techno-social process entails the mutual resonance between forces and their activity as part of a shared nature-culture continuum (Latour 1993; Massumi 2011, 148).

Making the operational quality in experience felt through such immersive and interactive media environments turns them into confined zones of experimentation with processes of perceptual emergence. As Andrew Murphie points out, VR environments do not necessarily model a virtual resemblance of the real but rather confine the over-full potential of actual experience to concise experimental fields of “perception in the making” (2002, 193). These environments function as techniques for experimenting with processes of virtual activity, giving rise to processes of co-emergence. They have a practical value before they acclaim any status of being known. The *Panoscope* is not a simulator for a virtual “image” of the real world, but rather offers a different aspect of the real, making the potentiality of the virtual felt in the process of actualization. *Interaction* is actually not of the human-technology register, but rather of relations actively affecting each other. This process of affective relaying is intrinsically political, since it composes aspects that will be effectively felt in experience, that is, in their material manifestations across different bodies (see chapter III).

The materiality of bodies and technologies mingling evokes a rethinking of what we usually account for as media and their technological implications. The horizontal edge of the *Panoscope* delineates a limit, or as Simondon states in the opening quote, a “membrane.” Awareness of the limit as edge for emergence allows not only for perception arising within a technologically enhanced environment but also addresses the spatio-temporal shifts and continuity of experience over time. Through the *Panoscope*’s technological-material constraints, a repetitive flicker in perception itself becomes perceivable. Drawing attention to the limit or

membrane of experience initiates processes of actively experimenting with the potential of future experience and their effects in the immediacy of present experience. Put differently, if there is a constant material, bodily and energetically pulsing, producing experience inside the *Panoscope*, processes of emergence that might be considered “of the future” might be not only captured by attention after the fact but in the immediacy of its appearance. The emphasis on limit-ness makes the *Panoscope* a limited device for experimenting with what is usually overseen in our everyday habit of moving within our sensuous environment. Immediacy in this case not only foregrounds the emergent quality of perception but also the contingent nature of technology in resonance with its milieu.

Through its structure, the *Panoscope* distributes as continuous 360° line of the horizon at eye level. The edge of this horizon marks the border between the projected content and the technical assemblage. At the top-rim of the hemisphere one glimpses the operational backbone of the projection space, contrasting with the enclosed environment inside the *Panoscope*. The material edge flickering between the “world inside the *Panoscope*” and its surrounding enabling structure is as crucial as the limitless continuation of the projected horizon. There is a constant flicker between enclosure and outside-edge, a visual continuation and its rupture. Such “leaky” aspects of the artwork underline the rupture and continuation at the heart of experience. Accordingly, media technologies, especially in the digital era, might be best addressed in terms of flows, movement, and openness working with the enabling limit of rupture instead of foreclosing them as entities or finite forms (Murphie and Potts 2003, 32-35). The same accounts for the body. Interactive media environments in their limiting yet enabling operations help us to understand the *body as event* or process constantly modulating its relational outline and resonance with its milieu (2003, 130). In experience, bodies and technologies share the same ground, and only through a transversal operational movement do they inflect into a resonant field. The process of inflection emphasizes the immediate quality co-composing an embodied sense of experience and its active milieu, both of which are metastable, in flux, and constituted through movement. In their mutual composing, cracks and ruptures in the smooth continuation of the audio-visual provide the potential for active *insertion* and *participation*. Such forms of participation occur through a sense and sensation of the immediacy of potential movement. The flicker of experience renewing its edging into presence generates a sense of continuation across differential gaps of potential becoming. In juxtaposing different audio-visual materials inside the



*Panoscope* and allowing for jumping or falling through non-Euclidian spaces, a sense of differential assembling and attunement occurs. Instead of merely modulating possibilities of combination through digital technologies, the multiplicity of potential directions of *how* a next-situation might arise renders them as operational tools. Their potential lies in revealing experience's constitution by means of a *movement-across*. The question of art concerns making the immediate felt in its contingent occurrence. The question of continuation of such contingency is always double, a continuity of the field in resonance and the tangential taking-off of new lines opening a different, formerly overshadowed, aspect in experience. Continuation and differentiation are primary playmates in aesthetic experience. Both define the base-movement of the process of dephasing. From here one can develop this doubling procedure into a proposition for experimental research-creation practices.

In activating the operational quality of such environments, research-creation investigates how techniques resonate with technological ensembles, where both become aspects of a mutual attunement to an ecology of relation. From a research-creation point of view, and interested in the relation-specificity of experience, we might ask what are the operational qualities of such media environments? The general call of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) – “follow the actors” – remains on the level of discrete entities, which, in the case of technical ensembles co-composing perceptual experience, seems insufficient (Latour 2005, 12). What we can follow (what ANT has also done) are practices as the ground for media-ecological experiences. From a practice point of view, we might then enable a more ecological account, where practices are not traceable to individual actors but arise between them, enabling action as such. Another modality of media is the question of mediation. If immediation foregrounds an immanent quality of collective individuation in experience, the role of operation needs to be further clarified as different from mediation. Finally, as ecology of relation, the collective activity in experience depends not only on material capacities for continuation in resonance, but also a virtual operation of continued capacitation. I will explore this aspect of relation-specific practices of research-creation with media through the concept of *technicity*.

### *Media Ecologies of Practices*

Artistic practices deal with media through a “compositional dynamic” where the medium as a “standard object exists only as a cliché. One of the powers of art, despite of its current limitation

of a special case, a zone of exception, is to insist on the possibility of the entirety or any part of life always being reinvented” (Fuller, 2005, 169). The power of reinvention is not only given to art, and does not confine itself to the artist as inventor. In an ecological-relation approach, “invention is less about a cause than it is about self-conditioning emergence” (Massumi 2009, 40). From a radical empiricist perspective, it might be useful to consider engagements with media on the basis of their participation in life’s general capacity for activation, in this case, as a mode of supported action, a mode of enabling the continuation of an ensemble of humans and more-than-humans. Art and life, far from being a romantic alliance, take on a more profound interplay if we consider aesthetic practice as an attempt to make the power of actualization immanent to a field of relations. These relations become felt as a force in the immediacy of life-living. In other words, this relational emergence emphasizes the creative self-conditioning of live open for insertion and participation.

Media are not discrete entities but operators, and their particularity resides in their manner of practicing and participating in larger ecologies. From this point of view, a technical ensemble like the *Panoscope* is composed of different capacities of practicing relationally across technical, human, social, and conceptual domains – a mode of practicing transcutively. A medium’s contained form can be seen as a metastable constitution of an internal resonance whose essence is relational and not substantial. Isabelle Stengers’s term *ecologies of practices* allows us to situate emergent experience and its ephemeral taking-form in a wider context, beyond the human (Stengers 2005a, 2010a, 2010b). With ecologies of practices, she does not simply address human-centred practices of experimentation but emphasizes a certain “taking-account” of the processes constantly moving and shifting a technical ensemble and its milieu. Considering these practices as “open-ended” means that there is always a certain degree of unactualized potential resonating with the movement of process of the ensemble, which is distinctively different from a logic of “anything goes.” Taking process as the defining trope of a technical ensemble renders accustomed paths of analyzing technical apparatuses difficult. Stengers’s ecological impetus concerns each situation as a nexus of various “populations” of practices.<sup>32</sup> For her, ecologies of practices are “about the production of *new relations that are added* to a situation already produced by a multiplicity of relations” (2010a, 33). Thinking of the *Panoscope*, such an ecology of practices operates technically and infrastructurally, while inviting different modes of interacting with this structure through practice.

Stengers's main focus concerns the question of emergent knowledge through scientific practice. Considering the production of meaning as an ecological event requires a certain allowance for instability being immanently part of ecologies of practice. Stengers's conception of ecologies of practices offers a mode of thought that opens science to new modes of investigation, and creates another way of thinking "transversalities" in the way knowledge production can be addressed. The politics produced in these scientific practices follows a logic of "symbiosis" rather than consensus (2010a, 35). Similar to the development of media as platforms for relation, Stengers describes processes of symbiosis as "symbiotic agreement, [...] an event, the production of the new, immanent modes of existence, and not the recognition of a more powerful interest before which divergent particular interests would have to bow down" (2010a, 35). Her symbiotic approach underlines the emergence of a dynamic relational field in scientific knowledge production as ecologies of practices. From here, one can start thinking about ecological conversions of Stengers's focus on science into other domains, like media art. While art, as Fuller underlines, allows for the reinvention of life, Stengers's proposition of an ecology of practices as symbiotic agreement emphasizes that the process of invention depends on different forces to agree upon the fabrication of an expression like a technique, artwork, or a medium. The *Panoscope*'s edge lends itself to the powerful operation of experience as productive of such symbiotic agreements across a techno-experiential ecology. Thinking of ecologies of practices as symbiotic underlines the autonomy of relations in their capacity for entering an ecology. Stengers's propositions suggest that a symbiotic agreement remains metastable; for "now" there is an agreement which might turn into a disagreement at any other instant. But symbiosis is different from synthesis. Symbiotic agreement foregrounds the middle ground of collective individuation to produce a differential emergence of experience. Differential here refers to the double movement of change, as both bare activity and the felt intensity between instances. The differential is the novelty factor in experience marking the transition of change as felt quality. Without the symbiotic quality and the potential for agreement, the elements of a technical ensemble could not maintain their role and function. However, this process does not necessarily include the human. In relation to the fabrication of perception, there is a quality of nonhuman perception in the symbiotic agreement of media environments. Nonhuman perceptions "are perceptions in themselves: they *are* how they take account, in their own self-formative activity, of the world of activity always and already going around" (Massumi 2011,

26). The collective of a shared experience through an ecology of practices arises here in concise experimentations with perceptual emergence in media environments such as the *Panoscope*.

The *Panoscope*'s technological arrangement in itself embodies a certain degree of symbiotic agreement that allows for a sufficient degree of containment for an actual engagement with it. Each of its elements up to the most ephemeral aspect (such as electro-magnetic waves) depends on the co-composing mutual immanence of agreement of other elements to become a larger technical ensemble. Actually, these elements can be thought of as elemental, that is, in terms of their capacity to symbiotically agree and thus embody their ecological emergence as a collective individuation. The concept of symbiotic agreement proposes a differential and processual account of emergent experience not as a reduction but as a multiplication whose most discrete expression is pragmatically confined and simultaneously and conceptually extensive and contingent. Experience inside the *Panoscope* lures different topologies of corporeal and incorporeal dimensions to symbiotically agree upon the emergence of an embodied experience. At the same time these operations foreground the experiential continuum of life individuating collectively and thus across different registers of existence and temporalities. All of this happens immediately, in differential attunement and with an immanent push toward continuation. From this point of view, the *Panoscope* might be best understood as a propositional device instead of a confined installation. It proposes to engage with the composition of fields of experience through their material seepage into expression (symbiosis). This process leaves traces that impinge on the way habitualized modes of thought and practice operate. Once immersed in the shape-shifting operations of the *Panoscope*, the experience of the horizon will never be the same, I think.

Matthew Fuller has termed "media ecologies" the practices and modes of existence emerging from media assemblages immanent to contemporary everyday experience (Fuller 2005). For him, there is no contained definition of either media or ecology; rather, both terms shift from an enclosed conception toward extended fields of corporeal and incorporeal movement across electro-magnetic, physical, technological, perceptual, and conceptual planes. In media ecologies, "parts no longer exist simply as discrete bits that stay separate; they set in play a process of mutual stimulation that exceeds what they are as a set" (2005, 1). Also, in their constant modulation, media ecologies attain states of metastability (Stengers 2010a, 34). Another way of accounting for this metastable and moving set of relations constituting media ecologies is

by considering it as a population of practices. These practices are abundant and parasitic, as Fuller explains in relation to the media ecologies of pirate radio:

It is the enormity of and variability of number of scales, speeds, and forms of conjuncture in the urban, in the “postindustrial,” and all that it works in and out of, that make these connections and the popular consciousness and manufacture of them – the perceptual of subjectivation folded into them – that requires the building of new orifices in order to intensify and explore this process. These organs are called media (Fuller 2005, 38).

A double process of immediacy resurfaces at the intersection of an ecology of practices and media ecologies. In relation to research-creation an ecology of practices is a “science of multiplicities, disparate causalities, and unintentional creations of meaning” (Stengers 2010, 34). The relational dimension cuts across open domains of processes and matter. At the same time, these processes create fields of experience that are as relevant for media ecologies as for other types of practices. As Stengers writes, “the field of ecological questions is one where the consequences of the meanings we create, the judgements we produce and to which we assign the status of ‘fact,’ concerning what is primary and what is secondary, must be addressed *immediately*, whether those consequences are intentional or unforeseen” (2010, 24-35, emphasis added).

Immediation concerns not only the immediate attentiveness immanent to experience but also its relational unfolding along and across “populations” of practices. These populations constitute milieus as the nurturing, enabling, and resonating field through which a specific ecology of practices and media ecology emerge. Media ecologies as a concept and practice aims at developing techniques for working across stratified levels of formed networks, encouraging new relations to emerge and therefore reshaping experience. Media as practices of immediation are produced “in the dynamic and nonlinear combination of drives and capacities that, stimulating each other to new realms of potential, produce something that is in virulent excess of its parts. Indeed, such parts can no longer be disassembled, they produce an ecology” (Fuller 2005, 173). As such, assembled ecologies media are techniques in their very own respect. Through operation they immediately self-condition their emergence as a mode of existence, a life in formation.

Media ecologies and ecologies of practices are concerned with material practices. One can say that media ecologies and ecologies of practices adhere to a logic of the event where each occasioning of such events is distributed equally across the plane of experience. A research-creation approach to interactive media environments accounts for the entire experiential ensemble as a platform for experimentation without clearly defined hierarchies between actual things and their operational (relational) quality in larger ensembles.

*Processes of mediation, re-mediation, and mediality*

In 2007, at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin, an inverted hemisphere was installed by Austrian artist Ulf Langheinrich. In contrast to Courchesne's *Panoscope*, Langheinrich's *Hemisphere* is an immersive environment which foregrounds emptiness. While the *Panoscope* deals with potential alternatives of bodily encounters with visual objects and places through its projection technology, *Hemisphere* emphasizes the fringes of perceptual dissolution. Through a technique of granular synthesis, images are projected and dissolved through processes based on the physics of fractal structures of particle systems.<sup>33</sup> Pulses of images, sounds, light rays, and colours shift at a micro-temporal scale, producing a subtle audio-visual particle storm. The work focuses on intensity, minor modulations, and slow processes of differentiation. *Panoscope* foregrounds its edge or limit through a clear demarcation that circularly continues around the person navigating inside the sphere. *Hemisphere* instead fosters the collective state of experience in perception working through a permanent shifting of attention through the diffusion of discernible limits. In the case of the *Panoscope*, the edge of the horizon becomes the zone for experimenting with perceptual emergence. *Hemisphere*, rather foregrounds the process of perishing as a creative process. It further enables not only a sense of collectivity through the activation of a relational field, but it creates an immediate sense of togetherness due to its open structure under which people can gather. The surface underneath the projection dome is ample and filled with cushions. Many people lie under the audio-visual particle storm, chat, interact with each other and share the sense of physical proximity in their immediated bodily state. Attention is held aloft and distributed while subtly being captured due to the work's intense flicker. What is felt is actually how the work effectuates minor transitions in perception: we do not see particular forms or objects of sound and vision. *Hemisphere* enables a sense of immediate and minute shifts in attention belonging to the continuum of a collectively shared experience. It opens up an

attentiveness to differential qualities in perception due to its algorithmic operation fused with its material setup. The differential emphasizes the emergence of a novel process of perception resulting from the differentiation of movements in resonance. Inside *Hemisphere*, sound and vision remain distinct but mingle in their coupling due to the differential effects of digital processes of modulation. The actual act of perception marks the differential as transition or change being the only “content” of perception. The *Panoscope*, on the other hand, cues attention directly into the centre of the space, making the user an individual supposedly in charge of what happens next. One work marks the edge of perception, while the other underlines its dissolution and continued deferral. Edge and dissolution of the edge or limit in continuation define the productive paradox that is immediation. In fact, immediation establishes a *field of experience* where subject and object are yet to be constituted. Fused in the *pure* state of experience they share a common ground before any process of mediation. But the question arises: How can we conceive of media technologies in relation to experience as immediate fields of experience and platforms for relation?

Immediation as a concept and a process attempts to rethink the communicational paradigm of mediation defined in relation to predefined terms, such as subject and object, or perceiver and perceived. Classical models of communication theory start from the assumption that information exists and can be transmitted between a source and a destination through the intermediaries of transmitter, channel, and receiver, mostly based on the work of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver (1964). Transmitter, channel, and receiver form the “media elements.” In cultural theory, this model was significantly modified through the work of Stuart Hall, who includes cultural practices of content transformation into the communicational process he calls “encoding/decoding,” replacing transmitter, channel, and receiver with the message (1973). While Hall added a crucial dimension to communicational models by emphasizing the culturally shaping of the signal’s content through knowledge practices, production circumstances, and meaning structures, the paradigm of transformation of information along formal procedures persists. In other words, both models maintain a split between form and content that is entirely unsuitable for a media ecological and relational approach (Fuller 2005, 22). Simondon’s conception of in-formation directly criticizes such a hylomorphic model, where idle matter is formed by the idea of form, as in classical information theory. Can we still account for experience inside the *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere* as processes of communication along

meaning structures and knowledge production? The *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere*, I suggest, do not focus on the process of production of meaning or knowledge based on communication and mediation in relation to culturally relevant signifiers. On the contrary, I argue, these works activate a different relational quality in experience based on an immediate mutual emergence between the individual and the techno-social milieu. If there is knowledge and meaning, it is of an emergent and situated quality – a practical truth, as William James calls it, arising immediately through ecologies of practices.

Ian Bolter and Richard Grusin have critically addressed the notion of immediacy in their work on *remediation*. Bearing the cultural implications of mediation in mind, they point at the problem of the immediacy of mediation, eschewing both the material context of such mediation and its techno-cultural genealogy. Their problematizing of immediacy allows for a more refined conception of immediation beyond a reduced conception of its immediacy. For these authors, the problem of mediation resides in a binary logic between what might be called media materialism – à la Marshall McLuhan’s famous “the medium is the message” – and transcendental immaterialism, in the style of critiques of disembodiment through digital technologies (e.g. Hayles, 1999). Bolter and Grusin name the “logic of (transparent) immediacy” the dematerializing aspect of mediated experience (1999, 5). They also emphasize the desire for “achieving immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation” (1999, 6).<sup>34</sup> Far from being a mere critique of the transcendentalizing aspects of immediacy, Bolter and Grusin’s insistence on the process of mediation as a material activity is close to the underlying conception of immediation. Their proposition for “remediation” takes off from a general observation about cultural media practices: “Our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them” (1996, 3). The authors suggest that remediation defines a genealogical perspective on media technologies and their evolution, as it defines the process of mediation as “a genealogy of affiliations, not a linear history” (1996, 55). In resonance with remediation, immediation is a temporal process pointing at the immediacy of mediation as a genealogical activity. Immediation foregrounds the temporal entanglement of a situated experience and its conditions of emergence. It further enables a sense of potential becoming as immanently felt in the immediacy of a passing occasion. In different ways, both the *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere*



enable a concise field of experimentation with perception through immediation. They operate according to a technical genealogy of processes of remediation, that is, the way that specific contents become expressive through a material assemblage in relation to a body, and the mutual attunement to a shared field of emergence.

Bolter and Grusin emphasize that mediation as a process of representation historically led to an approximation of perceptual experience with content while backgrounding the expressive assemblage actively shaping *how* such representations are received. Through that process, a form of production of the real by means of content erases a material reality of mediation, co-producing how the *real* in experience is fabricated. Media are not mere entities anymore, nor do they erase the process of mediation but remediation and immediation “express” what media are. The process of immediation is not abstract, but moves through the technical, social, and material affordances of a milieu. This significant shift underlines what I have earlier termed platforms for relation. In relation-specific terms we might want to consider the process of immediation as a materially embedded activity of transduction and dephasing as an operational outline of techniques. In other words, as platforms for relation technical objects enable the emergence of a dynamic unity in experience by drawing heterogeneous forces into a metastable expression. Pragmatically technical objects are taken into account as having functional properties of resilience. However, despite their pragmatic insertion into operational technical ensembles, these objects bear the potential for experimentation, that is, for speculative activation depending on the relational capacities of the milieu. The work of Ei Wada can be seen as exemplary for opening new potentialities in so-called standard objects like a television set. In similar ways, Fuller describes media as imbued with affordances that they embody while they are only a partial expressive composite of their relational capacity (2005, 174). Similarly, Bolter and Grusin’s notion of remediation foregrounds the infra-structural activity of media technologies generative of operational qualities in new digital media. For them, “a medium is that which remediates. It is that which appropriates techniques, forms, and social significance of the other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real. A medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, because it must enter into relationships and rivalry with other media” (1996, 65).

Once media are confined in their operational particularity, their manner of mediating, they manifest a particular mode of constituting reality – for instance, the difference between a

photograph or video of the same event. Remediation, on the other hand, emphasizes that the transparency of constituting the real is never as transparent as it appears, but underlies a process of continued relational relaying and differentiation (a term which I prefer to “rivalry”). Finally, the authors describe media as “hybrids and networks of formal, material, and social practices” (1996, 67). Remediation, rather than ascribing to media their specific attributes, concerns their activity according to their capacity for shaping content and expression simultaneously through the very act of immediation – which itself is the term for a sensible emergence in an ecology of practices.

The problems of immediacy and the materiality of mediation are helpful for understanding that media are never just technologies. Technologies emerge through cultural techniques and practices generating technical ensembles conventionally addressed as technologies. In other words, technologies are always assembled by practices, material capacities, and their environmental conditions. The challenge is to consider a medium as imbued with material affordances *and* as emergent through practices. They are immediate and mediating, if mediating means operating relationally. Mediation as remediation is always temporally multiple and without discrete origin. For this reason immediation evades the chronological gesture which sticks to remediation, assuming that there might have been an origin at some point.

Bolter and Grusin emphasize the concept of “hypermediacy,” which they define as a “multiplication of functions and meanings” (1999, 12). The authors juxtapose hypermediacy to the formerly critiqued term immediacy while emphasizing their parallel occurrence. Such parallel processing is not unique to media technologies. One might think Gordon Pask’s *Colloquy of Mobiles* as part of the “Cybernetic Serendipity” exhibition in 1968 (Pickering 2011, 353-361). In this work, Pask devised an early interactive media artwork through multiple layers of operational sound and light activity among “sensing” machines. In the age of digital media, however, the computational capacity for layering has distorted a coherent sense of presence by multiplying dimensions. Hypermediacy emphasizes the immediate presence of multilayered content, thus altering the spatio-temporal arrangements in a condensed manner. Screen cultures and the layered use of different content can be considered symptomatic of this process. The same layering also appears in the *Panoscope*. However, in these media environments the site is not the screen. Content is composed expressively between surface, technical operation, bodily

movement, and perception. While, for Bolter and Grusin, immediacy thrives for the transparent experience of content's representation and the potential for interactivity, hypermediacy underlines the multilayered structure and relaying between parallel representations (i.e. multiple parallel windows on a desktop computer).

As platforms for relation, media are both imbued with certain affordances as composites and entangled in an ecological process of reality formation. Considered in terms of their operational capacities, these platforms enable relays between heterogeneous forces by means of modulation – for instance, a piece of code or a MAX/MSP-patch becoming a sound or visual effect. Remediation as a temporal operation suggests that the immediacy of an experience's expressive aspects, i.e. effectuation, is always the result of an extended relaying of material, cultural, and political practices. What if media environments such as the *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere* enable an account of immediate experience which does not eschew the process of remediation through a sense of immediacy? And what if this immediate taking into account of the extensive process giving way to an expression generates content that itself exceeds its immediate passing? Thinking of these media environments as zones for experimenting with techniques of relation allows us to consider them as generating a sense of immediation – a material and temporal process expressing the extensive field of potential through perception. This would be a felt extension of the present, a kind of mutual operative reflexiveness of the media ecology of relation (Fuller 2005, 172). Reflexiveness means not mere reflection as a faculty of a human mind or memory. On the contrary, reflexiveness denotes a general taking into account of the multiple assembling components moving across a platform for relation. Such a perspective emphasizes the “refusal to assume it already understands what is there and what it does” (2005, 172). What if such media environments not only take account of their own immediating capacities but actively include such reflexiveness in their future agitations? Experimenting with such modes of computational reflexiveness might render a technical ensemble into an open system. Similarly, immediation effectuates a time quality in experience, as potential immanent to an event's actual passing. Such a process is thought-felt as a shock, a kind of received novelty in the immediacy of perception in resonance with a technical ensemble (Massumi 2002a, xxxi). Immediation not only challenges medium-specificity and the problem of immediacy as transcendental but relays the formation of a body and its milieu into a relational process where affordances of the technical and their potential modulation in a creative act are

mutually inclusive. More so, the process of immediation, similar to remediation, extends the time-span of the present, making it an event, and thus emphasizing the metastable emergence of experience dependent on its continued re-potentialization. Philosophically, one could say, each process of experience is always a remediation but without actual mediation – it is the relation-of-nonrelation (see chapter I). In relation to digital media and perception, immediation does not mediate but rather activate the mutual belonging of a process of bodily experience in its milieu, arising from a collectively attuned process of co-individuation.

For Grusin, such bodily couplings with technological procedures happen through what he terms *mediality*, a term that underlines the “continuity between the formal, technical media practices [...] and our own everyday practices of digital” activity (2010, 69). In other words, mediality generates an ecology of practices between technical and experiential processes traversing the sphere of technological confinement and experimentation with everyday life. Grusin uses the example of the torture photographs taken by US army members at the Abu Ghraib war prison in Iraq. He asks why these images had such an impact on public debate in the US in times of oversaturation with violent imagery of similar kinds. For him the key to the images’ effects lies in their “affective coupling” of everyday technologies, such as the digital compact cameras the soldiers used, with our own bodily habits of making similar images, i.e. holiday snapshots (2010, 81). In other words, mediality creates an affective leap through the style of an embodied engagement with technologies. Affect here defines the gray zone of experience-in-the-making before a discernible difference between perception of an object and the perceiving subject arises. It relates the human body to a quality of experience that enters and activates the body materially through visceral, tactile, and proprioceptive processes before we come to mentally “rationalize” its effects (Massumi 2002b, 58-59). In other words, there is always a becoming *with* the world that distributes sensation, orchestrating the field of experience of what is going to be actually felt before a mental recognition takes place. This process is not pre-conditioning but an immanent aspect of experience, an immediate and immanent shock, and an actively pulsing ecology of relation. In the example of Abu Ghraib, it would be easy to consider the camera as an “object” of everyday use producing an aesthetic easy to identify with. In affective terms, such an analogy of identification falls short. What happened in the case of the Abu Ghraib images was an immediate visceral mediation of a gestural quality of a body-technology-compound. In the case of the

images, perceptual habit was triggered without any reflective mediation, if we consider reflection as a cognitive activity. The images were disgusting because they engaged the gestural habit of making family images with joyous, not deadly, content. The affective shock in Grusin's example produces the link between bodily practices with media and the activity they yield rather than simply acting as an emotional reflection on the content of the image. Through mediality, a relational process of relaying shows how specific and contextual experiential qualities abstract themselves and instigate an immediate and affective relay, translocally. Habit as a base activity in experience is thus as crucial for enabling such effects as are the techniques for disrupting habit in experimental practices.

Remediation and mediality in the works of Bolter and Grusin enable a reconsideration of the classical model of mediation, which tends to leave much of the relational activity in experience untouched. Immediation emphasizes relational aspects in experience that cannot be mediate but remain unmediated, though not without effects. Relations do not mediate but resonate through operational processes of dephasing and transduction. As fields of potential activation, media environments become experimental zones for the *coming collective* coursing through technical milieus concerned with relaying experience. This relaying is not a mediation in the conventional sense, but a differential actualization through the interstices of a shared perceptual texture, including technological affordances as much as bodily capacities and social contexts. Immediation takes account of the middling function of mediation and stresses the capacity of digital media environments to actively experiment with the multiplicity of potential. In the complex process of actualization only fractals of the overall range of potential actualize through a body and a medium. Moreover, immediation operates not outside of the ordinary habitual circuits of experience but builds them a derivative activity, making the ingress of novelty stand out. As technical objects, these media environments insert their activity into processes of perceptual experience while making the creative role of perception felt in its immediate operation. The crucial question remains: how can we conceive of a technical mode of individuation as part of collective individuation, and how can this possible movement instigate practices of experimentation in research-creation?

*Towards an Incorporeal Materialism*

The actual operation underlining immediacy is not a transcendentalizing process, but always happens through experience in and with matter as non-organic life. But what do we account for as matter? For starters, its most rudimentary operation is not substance but *change* (Massumi 2011, 1). Change, what Massumi calls “bare activity,” undoes the temptation of an understanding of immediacy as either arising out of nowhere or suggesting a real authenticity of experience (Bolter and Grusin 1999, 11). Change is always happening; it is the temporal force of modulating experience with reference to its genesis. Change generative of modes of collective becoming is thus a crucial (bare) activity shaping the process of experience. If media concern the relaying of experiences, and if such relaying operates according to immediating procedures, we have to further investigate how such relaying occurs. The process of relaying is an affective operation and affect proceeds through activation, which is unmediated and ecological. Activation denotes the relay between a preindividual but phaseless charge of potentiality and its dephasing. As Simondon writes, “it is affectivity that expresses a preindividual charge in a becoming and supports collective individuation” (2005, 252). In relation to perception one can think of *Hemisphere* and its capacity for diffusion, whereby it heightens attentiveness by opening up a *minor* dimension of perception amplified through granular synthesis. This kind of perception is not localizable anymore in a source or a perceiver but fleetingly moves across the entire media environment. The quality of audio-visual experience constantly differentiates without any clear direction while being utterly focused. At the same time, experience provides the ground for a non-substantialist and modulatory conception of interactive media environments. So how can we conceive of matter as non-substantial but expressive of change?

The operational qualities of body and materiality certainly play a central role in the conception of media, but their potential should not be reduced to an objectifying materialism based on form. As platforms for relation, media emphasize an immediate quality of emergence to be felt as a differentiation in experience and its continuation for more differentiations to come. These immediately felt potential differentiations are forces immanent in the actual experience. Such forces are time qualities drawing potential modes of becoming into the immediacy of *an* experience. If we think of digital media as imbued with specific capacities, then one of them is the intensification of forces as time qualities through a field of expression. Digital media operate through time modulation and provide an account of this process through their capacities of inflecting them in perceptual expression. In *Hemisphere*, for example, the granular

differentiation might be diffuse, but in its multiplicity it generates a sense for future activation while proceeding coherently. Immediation underlines the double movement of change, an actual expression and a spatio-temporal virtual multiplicity, as felt qualities in media environments. The technologically enhanced fractal differentiation of sound and vision pairs with the co-presence of many bodies in the space. Simultaneously, a sense of collectively composed relationality in emergence transduces into a sense of co-inhabitation and sharing. A collective activation here moves not only through the technical distribution of perceptual fractals but also emphasizes the co-composition across multiple bodies moving in the space. A kind of digital-analog choreography arises, texturing the entire space of *Hemisphere* with a relational multiplicity of micro-temporalities.

The traversing of different modes of existence, the inflections of energy flows and relations create what we could call an *incorporeal materialism* (Foucault 2010, 231; Massumi 2002b, 5). What I am suggesting here is that it is the incorporeal but actively operating quality of matter which produces experience as a kind of “event texture.” As Massumi writes, “in a media interval, the event is a material but incorporeal immanence (an electron flow) moving through a dedicated milieu” (2002b, 84). We could say that what renders an immediating process operational is the emission of activity throughout a dedicated milieu. But how can we actively experiment with the texturing of activity through media environments like the *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere*? How can we conceive of them as both assembled sets of affordances of confined elements and as exceeding discrete functionality due to their relational openness? A technical object, in the way Simondon defines it, always evolves in relation with an associated milieu. This milieu describes a technical object moving in resonance with a field of potential, operating as the ontogenetic drive of its becoming while shifting according to each becoming of the technical object. The associated milieu is the technical object’s moving relay to a preindividual charge of potential (Brunner and Fritsch 2011, 125). In resonance with the operation of transduction, the associated milieu “is defined by the capture of energy sources, by the discernment of materials, the sensing of their presence and absence (perception), and by the fabrication and nonfabrication of the corresponding compounds” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 51). These operations occur not as stratification but maintain an activity of potentiation.

The technical object marks a first remove from both the human and the world. For Simondon, the technical object inhabits the interstice between humans and nature, while

clarifying that neither of them exists outside the operational nexus of technical object and associated milieu (Simondon 1958, 57). The technical object possesses emergent relational potential and becoming “in a way that places the technical object and art in the same orbit, without reducing one to the other” (Massumi 2008, n. pag.). In media art the technical object becomes the focal point from which new modes of thinking the relationship between human and more-than-human activities are under negotiation. The technical object, instead of being a mere entity, emphasizes the potentiality responsible for activating effects in experience without having to contain their actualization. In other words, the technical object leaks, emits, pulses, and energizes, but it does not contain in a finite form. Its operation is incorporeal as a capacity for relation, while operating through corporeal expression. Simondon stresses the relation between technical object and art, since both possess a consolidating function of a prior separation, that between culture and nature. Incorporeal materialism defines the operational quality of technical objects individuating in tune with their associated milieu. One can consider this double movement as a proposition for participation through attunement and resonance, not through control and domination. Through such a process invention takes place, neither as a transcendental act, nor as a mere accident. Invention, Simondon underlines, “is an activation [*prise en charge*] of a system of actualities by a system of virtualities” (1958, 58). Invention requires attuning a process of material assembling to its virtual potential of mutual activation. As technical objects, media emerge along specific lines of individuation without ever exhausting their capacities of being relayed, that is, for mutual activation through an associated milieu. Based on an operational outline, the process of media art experimenting with experience as a form of research-creation underlines the importance of including potential iterations of an element in an ensemble. This circumstance is often considered an obstacle, a glitch, or a lack of fidelity of the presumed object. From an aesthetic point of view, itinerant activation reminds us of the preindividual charge of potential maintaining the capacity for future actualization.

The *Panoscope* is interesting in this respect because it leaves many lines of activation unfinished, potentially resulting in moments of boredom or irritation, leading to unexpected modes of engagement with the projected content and its material envelope of the media environment. The immediate activation of itinerant play provides a sense of the technical ensemble’s abstract texture being activated through an affective engagement with the work. Such



an engagement is bodily and gestural; it affords a corporeal mode of experimentation with the incorporeal materialism which co-compose occasions of media experience.

Immaterial differs from incorporeal. As Massumi states, there is an incorporeal materialism at stake in immediation concerning the interval or in-between state – the middle ground of change effectuating – of affective charges before a clear order of the perceptual situation arises. The danger of the concept “immaterial” is that it could fall into the category of the transcendental or abstraction, in its opposition to matter.<sup>35</sup> Incorporeal materialism operates without the divide between material and immaterial. James’s framing of pure experience explicitly undoes this apparent bifurcation. Materiality extends into the realm of “abstract” but “concrete” fields of forces. In *Hemisphere*, the diffused state of expression emits pulses below the descriptive order and representation. The entire system thus defines a technique for reworking perception in the making of it. Experience is only in its most extreme expression material. Its actual “substance” is change, the interval, and not formed matter. Experience is always out of step with itself, timely and spatially.

Immediation works toward incorporeal materialism where forces precede actual entities. It respects the material terms of experience (everyday confinements of use of technologies for instance), as much as the incorporeal interplay of forces (which are affective as much as electromagnetic qualities).<sup>36</sup> At best, media technologies are processes embodied in objects, which are not only material but contain a “delight in conceptuality”; that is, they are part of an incorporeal materialism (Fuller 2005, 1). For media technology, this delight in conceptuality of an activated sense of incorporeal materialism functions as a lure for research-creation practices. In addition, as ecologically composed intensifications of experience through perceptual modulation, media environments generate an immediate co-evolution of a creative process that is both concretely embodied and abstract (Massumi 2011, 27). The delight for conceptuality arises as a creative act in the midst of a sensual occurrence, not as an outside perspective on a state of affairs. This is what might be considered a thought-in-the-act as a situational abstraction, where thought is not of the human mind but an ecological event of felt potential (Manning and Massumi 2014, 19-22). Research-creation experimenting with media environments accounts for the confined capacitation of technical constraints and thus foregrounds the details of activity as immanent processes of potentiation. In artistic media practices, the false deployment or transversal assemblage of different technical objects creates quasi-confined openings that tap into

modulations of operability as heterogeneous processes. Instead of one medium replacing another and thus changing the mode of experience they produce, a relation-specific approach opens the potential for the amplification of otherwise unnoticed processes of activity. Providing ways of taking into account the multiplicity of activity beyond the representational impetus of visualization – a strategy often used to make computational activity tangible – seems to be one major challenge for research-creation. The question for creative media practices thus becomes: how can one enable and amplify a medium's capacity ecologically so that a sufficient degree of activity can be felt but does not become prescriptive of its own ontogenesis? Put differently, while there is a myth that all forms of information and data can be represented according to the interface used, a more interesting perspective might ask how degrees of activity can generate a sense of activity as part of a wider media ecology, and what kinds of modes of participation might these ecologies enable.

In the case of *Hemisphere*, the spatially bound technical ensemble exceeds its capacity as a projection sphere through the modulation of content. Through the intensification of sound and vision, the divide between form and content perishes, giving way to the operation of expression which shifts form and content while itself re-composing its potential re-becoming – another term for differential continuation. What would happen if a digital sensing and registering media ecology actively takes account of its continuous re-becoming and thus expresses what conventional human perception cannot account for? Between two elements, the content and its form, a third, unmediated dimension of expression constitutes an extensive experience of immediacy itself. As forms of *taking-account*, media ecologies hint at the constantly assembled character of media technical objects and their resistance to mere functionality. And through their operational qualities they insert shades of potential into the overall event of experience, thus co-composing milieus of mutual participation by experimenting with how experience emerges as generative of life with all its effects – and affects.

### *Technicity and Element*

So far, the attempt to outline media as platforms for relation has moved from media as entities towards their ecological genesis as processes of immediation through the activity of an incorporeal materialism. The importance of media as both materially active and exceeding any discrete confinement leaves the question of how a technical object individuates open. Put

differently, I am asking how the individuation of a technical object turns it into an “object” without dissolving its movement trajectory and thus making it inoperable. While I explored a similar question through the notion of the terminus in the last chapter, in relation to technical objects, I now want to focus on Simondon’s conception of technicity to underline their singular yet relational composition.

For Simondon, technicity defines the potentiality of a technical element. While technical ensembles are made up of technical elements, their composition figures as less important than the technicity of the elements (Simondon 1958, 72).<sup>37</sup> With the notion of technicity Simondon hints at the qualitative-relational level of such elements taken as a whole. Technical elements are building blocks of technical objects and technical ensembles. An element, in the way Simondon understands the term, is a material component with operational values. Its technicity defines its capacity for entering an ecology of relation contributing to a collective individuation, while attuning its own activity as part of an ensemble. Stengers’s definition of symbiotic agreement echoes Simondon’s description of technicity in part, as technicity concerns an operationally active element itself as a system. Simondon uses the term to challenge the part versus whole logic often deployed in conceptions of media as networks. Elements themselves are the aspects in a media ecology that have a degree of resilience, allowing for their deployment in different contexts. Simondon also emphasizes that the genesis of technical objects occurs within its geographic and technical milieu (1958, 52). By geographic and technical, he means that each element and the composition of a technical object or ensemble depends on other technical but also environmental conditions for its emergence. For example, a motor might work well at room temperature, but when exposed to temperatures below -20°C it might become inoperable in its primary function. Technicity thus underlines the drawing together of different conditions across corporeal and incorporeal strata of existence.

Technicity complements the concretization of technical ensembles in terms of its associated milieu. While conceptions of situatedness of a technical ensemble foreground the dependence on environmental circumstances, technicity allows us to take further-reaching procedures of technologies into account, such as time, co-emergence, and contingency. Technicity in this case operates doubly. On the one hand, it confines the range of potential of a technical element in resonance with its milieu without pre-determining the potential through a logic of finite combination (Simondon 1958, 204). It is an immediate accounting for potential

which prevents any slippage from contingency (as not finally determinable) into arbitrariness. On the other hand, technicity specifies “originary technicity” as the interlacing of different orders, which cut across physical, biological, and incorporeal domains (MacKenzie 2002, 8). The cutting across and resonance with its milieu occur as immediating activities of the technical object. Immediation accounts for this double movement as an ecological activation of potential through specific conditions of emergence. Experimenting with these conditions along the operational value of technicity thus proposes the activation of a multiplicity of time-folds for affective engagement with media, while simultaneously practicing with them.

Technicity is neither entirely of the human nor of the technological; it is an autonomous yet productive force in experience. Adrian MacKenzie explains that technicity “can be brought forward to show how a margin of indeterminacy is associated with technology that neither belongs solely to human life nor belongs to some intrinsic dynamism of technology” (2002, 10). Technicity defines an operational process of delimiting without making the limit a finite and fixed entity. In relation to potential, MacKenzie states that the concept of technicity refers to an aspect of collectives that is not fully lived, represented, or symbolized, yet which remains fundamental to their grounding, their situation, and the construction of their limits. Technicity thus interlaces geographic, ecological, energetic, economic, and historical dimensions without being reducible to any of them (2002, 11).

Investigating interactive media environments through their technicity allows us to reconsider what constitutes the dense zone of experimentation of immediation instead of falling into simplified logics of mediation or agency. Technicity provides a mode of thought concerned with shifting phases at the constitutive level of a techno-ecological unfolding of experience. These phase-shifts bear operational value and can activate new modes of expression, thus extending what an embodied experience might become. Technologies as much as human bodies are not abandoned in their material presence. On the contrary, their material presencing allows for ecological and relational activations through technicity’s attentiveness to the differential unfoldings of converging and diverging times. Beyond a first determination of a technical ensemble, processes of engagement happen through perception and technicity as the non-organic but also incorporeal forces co-composing with the material modes of existence. For example, the *Panoscope*’s horizon as limit and membrane plays such a crucial role because its “edginess”

draws attention to the process of technicity and perception constantly moving and rearranging without any determinable point, nor without being entirely arbitrary.

From a pragmatic point of view, the question of new media art might be posed less in terms of what are the connections or mediations to be fostered, but the ways we can, along the lines of technicity, carve out new potentials of such technological ensembles. Working with technicity means experimenting with “how the *conditions* for the event (of experience) come together” and how the margin of indeterminacy, i.e. the limit, is an integral part of any technology (Massumi 2011, 182; Simondon, in Manning 2009, 105). The technicity of an element or technical ensemble allows us to account for these “objects” or “things” to be worked with beyond their conventionally attributed functionality or form. At the same time, technicity underlines a certain degree of consistency and continuation of such assembled elements. Beyond assuming a substance in things, elemental thinking “accounts for how things become what they are rather than what they are” and therefore demand technical thought to take account of the unaccountable (MacKenzie 2002, 16). In this way technicity’s capacity for carrying a technical object from one ecological expression to the next emphasizes its time-relatedness. As well, this process is never linear but heterogenic and heterochronic (Guattari 1995, 40-41). The operational value of technicity can be felt while navigating inside the *Panoscope*. Once perception starts quivering along the sphere’s edge, its flickering between projected content, edge, and the hemisphere’s environment inside the *Panoscope* evokes a sense of the technical co-evolution of the situation with the moving body, multiplied by the multilayered content on the screen. The different compositions intersect in the event of actualization while immediately pulling the situation into its next becoming. Making the interval of the pulling operable for experimentation thus means investigating the creative (self-)emergence of perception in media ecologies.

## Second Movement: The Politics of Perception and Digital Aesthetics

“Technological machines of information and communication operate at the heart of human subjectivity, not only within its memory and intelligence, but within its sensibility, affects, and unconscious fantasm.”

(Guattari 1995, 4)

### *Introduction*

In the first movement of this chapter, I developed a conception of media ecologies that emphasizes technical objects as operational, open-ended, and actively in-forming. I addressed the problem of media as entities and mediation as connection through a relation-specific approach, in addition to the usual claim of medium-specificity. The aim was to develop an account of media as platforms for relation imbued with material, geographical, technical, and cultural constraints which contribute to the way, but do not predetermine how, media ecologies shape experience. From here I proposed a more operational conception of media as enabling different modes of experimenting with their capacity for activating perceptual processes in experience. In this movement, I will further investigate how immersive media environments such as the *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere* allow for perception to achieve an autonomous state, neither of the human nor of the technological, but as affective glue holding experience together. Experimenting with the *perception of perception*, I attempt to develop immediation as a potential technique for experimenting with emergence, with a particular emphasis on how such emergence underlines a politics of sensation (see also the next chapter/interlude). While the previous section focused on immediation’s operation as concrete experience in relation to a larger media ecology, this movement focuses on the capacity for holding experience together in the process of being felt.

I consider immediation as a limit-concept and practice allowing for a *grasping* of experience in the immediacy and materiality of its very operation. A limit-concept emphasizes the cusp of an affective operation on the level of force and its potential expression. If research-creation is a practice between philosophy and art, most of the conceptual development concerns the creation of limit-concepts as movement operators between an abstract field of potential and field of expression, both yielding real effects in experience. In this case, I will investigate the operations at stake in immersive media environments enabling embodied perceptual experience arising not

as an act of mediation but as the composition of space-time for experimentation through perception. In the case of the *Panoscope*, putting vision on the edge by emphasizing the horizon rearranges the habitual order of perception, as much as the physical and mental environment of the media assemblage. Perception as capturing or framing vanishes, reappearing as a quality that enables experience.

A quality, in the words of Massumi, is “a perceptible expression of uncontained affect. It always retains a sense of openness” (Massumi 2002a, 220). Shifting perception from a capturing to a qualitative operation opens up new ways of engaging affectively with media ecologies. As “perceptible expression of uncontained affect,” a quality harbours a sense of change without predetermining how this change comes to a finite goal in experience. What disrupts the habit of perceiving inside the *Panoscope* is an immediacy of the perception of perception – the sensation of openness. The edging nature of the *Panoscope*’s horizontal limit ungrounds a clear distinction of habitually divided domains of experience, such as thing and thought, or corporeal and incorporeal. Immediation thus offers the potential for considering matter, sensation, and thought as operating on the same plane, collectively advancing experience into its potential becoming. This is what I account for as the general and autonomous operation of perception.

#### *Attention and Attentiveness as Threshold*

How is perception a constitutive process in embodied experiences in media ecologies? The unsettling sensation of vision being not a determining technology but something that is symbiotically agreed on the spot between perceiver and perceived highlights the relational ground of perceptual experience (Massumi 2002b, 51). In this particular case, vision emerges as a partly autonomous dance along the *Panoscope*’s horizon, making the edge of an emergence felt, rather than actually seen and captured. The *Panoscope*’s emphasis on the edge of its physical confinement and the horizon of its projected content contrasts with the dispersion of sensation inside *Hemisphere*. In the latter, it is difficult to locate any discernible perceptual cue attached to one particular entity or visual object inside the installation. While the *Panoscope* seeks confinement and telepresence, *Hemisphere* offers a leaky sense of different movements co-populating its projection zone. The felt intensity is quite different between the two. The *Panoscope* proposes very concise experimentations with perception, sometimes overshadowing its dynamic underpinnings through a too concrete and personified experience of the actual user,

also due to her actively navigating through the projected scenarios. Inside *Hemisphere*, on the contrary, the visitor is free to immerse herself in the already very active agitations of the artwork. Interaction here happens less between user, interface, and projection system, but rather between minimal shifts in perception and the cueing of attention. This rather intimate sensation of the granular system is collectively shared through the presence of the other visitors lying on the floor. By letting perception detach from the “active” subject, *Hemisphere* immediately engages our bodily and affective capacities in a feeling of collectivity. This feeling includes the co-presence of bodies, the digital processing and expression of content, and the wider technical ensemble. Neither of these aspects takes precedence over the other, but they require each other for this singular and distributed sensation of collectivity. The relation between perception and its potential for instigating a feeling of collectivity contains plenty of potential for the politics of immediation I am attempting to outline here.

So far, the development of immediation as an operational tool has enabled an exploration of the techno-processual nature of the *Panoscope*. But what about the sensing body as part of these techno-processual experiences? After the prior development of media as platforms for relation we can now ask how the body becomes less of a container ready to meet the outside but expresses a leaky process of technogenetic bodying. Technogenesis is the process of experience altering not only the human bodily aspect of perception but also the capacity of the technologically enhanced environment (Manning 2009, 64). Technogenesis is a way of accounting for perception as the relational-constitutive force for bodies and technologies in a process of co-becoming.

A necessary and complementary avenue for the analysis of such operations in relation to the body lies in the notion of *attention* and how it navigates experience. Attention as a part of perception defines its activation of a process of expression through the relational operation of the experiential field of activity; in other words, it marks a dephasing as it operates at the cusp of experience. By foregrounding the edging procedure of emergence, attention also emphasizes the potential to draw forces together. My suggestion here is that through contracting forces a collective expression takes hold of what comes to pass as felt experience. Attention not only functions as a lure towards collective expression, but it also amplifies its immanent potential for continuation. In other words, attention defines a lure for expression, thereby generating a proposition as a potential expression in experience. Attention, rather than following a stimulus-



response model, thus emphasizes a differential activity for relaying occasions of experiences as a collective process, not a linear one.

Attention draws awareness towards a double process constitutive of experience: that of an emergent collectivity through contraction, and its potential continuation through its own force of modulation (expansion). Attention immediately relates to what has been addressed as affect by philosophers such as Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari, and Massumi. Affect is the force that allows for relations to compose, rather than being composed, and their enveloping over time. Massumi stresses the autonomy of perception through his conception of “impersonal affect [which] is the connecting thread of experience. It is the invisible glue that holds the world together. In event. The world-glue of affect is an *autonomy of event-connection* continuing across its own serialized capture in context” (Massumi 2002b, 217). Attention orients an affective process of relaying different forces as the potential continuation of an individuation without foreclosing it. Through the activation of attention, affect enables a continuum through which an individuation expresses its differential becoming, that is, its genesis along the limit of what it might become.

Above, I explored this process in relation to technical objects through the concept of technicity, which emphasizes the continued and directed unfolding of potential moving through a technical object or ensemble. Both technicity and affect open an operational field leading toward the process of immediation as constitutive of embodied experience, which we call “media.” These media require new modes of “affective engagement” and experimentation, and at the same time alter the way we account for such media and conceptualize the role of the body (Fritsch 2009). Technicity in its operational activity pertains not only to technologies but also concerns the co-emergence of various bodies. Bodies are the counterpoint of the relational quality of attention and perception in their edging into experience (on counterpoint, see the interlude on rhythm below). As Massumi states, “Relationality is already in the world. [...] It registers materially in the *activity of the body* before it registers consciously” (2002b, 231, emphasis added). Attention and perception as autonomous activities resonate with activities of the body, both autonomous and resonant. The symbiotic agreement engendered by the operations of attention and perception include bodily as much as technological elements. The human body is to a certain degree also a technical ensemble where elements have to attune to varying kinds of technicities without foreclosing their potential collective becoming.

Approaching the question concerning the body through the concept of attention means investigating experience at the threshold between its potential becoming and its actual expression. A focus on attention supports the conception of the limit or edge of perception as an extensive and processual motor of experience. Attention defines a crucial operation in relation to perception and the role usually attributed to media as a conveyor of meaning and information. Asking how perception constitutes experience challenges the straightforward definition of attention based on sender-receiver models of communication between humans and technology. Jonathan Crary has conceived of “modernity as an ongoing crisis of attentiveness” (2000, 14), and the emphasis on attentiveness as historical phenomenon tied to the development of media technologies goes hand in hand with a historical shift in the conception of perception. “The relocation of perception,” he writes, “in the thickness of the body was a precondition for the instrumentalizing of human vision as a component of machinic arrangements; but it also stands behind the astonishing burst of visual invention and experimentation in European art in the second half of the nineteenth century” (2000, 13). Crary identifies modernism as a period where vision and perception become a relay between visual technologies and the human body. His conception of perception in relation to the human body is phenomenological and thus distinct from my emphasis on perception as an autonomous relational process of composition. However, and beyond the new locus of perception, Crary stresses perception’s autonomization toward more machinic, that is more processual, assemblages, including technology, the human body and its social milieu.

Attention becomes an operational and social-discursive quality around which new media assemblages emerge and new modes of experience unfold. We should not consider attention as merely a tool for marketing strategies and the control of human perception due to modern human-machine couplings. Crary has traces the double logic of attention that has developed in relation to visual culture, writing:

Attention was not part of a particular regime of power but rather part of a space in which new conditions of subjectivity were articulated, and thus a space in which effects of power operated and circulated. That is to say, new constructions of attentiveness occurred amid larger refigurations of subjectivity in the nineteenth century, and, as we have learned from the studies of madness and sexuality in the same period, it was always a question of shifting relations between discursive/institutional power on one hand and a

composite of forces that inherently resisted stabilization and control on the other hand (Crary 2000, 24).

Crary complicates conventional accounts of attention as human-centred action in relation to an outside world. His interest in attention suggests a first step toward a dynamic conception of perception as a cultural operation. His conception of the human, however, emphasizes a constituted subject perceiving her environment, and thus circumscribes the target of any operation of attention. Media technologies can extend the range of potential cues of attention when transgressing the deployment of technologies for the control of attention, but for Crary these technologies presume human sense-modalities as a given. Attention operates through media technologies as much as it includes bodily capacities for participating in the process of perception. Crary's interest is historical, as he traces the development of technologies in terms of human perception through alternations in modes of attention. From this point of view, his analysis echoes Foucault's conception of relation, force, and power (1990, 92-98; 1995, 207-209; 2010, 44-49). His analysis of attention resonates with the question of power, not as a discrete exercise but as a distribution of forces that circulate through bodily confinements, relationally. In this sense, Crary remarks that the modernist interest in attention altered cultural techniques toward the "new importance of models based on an economy of forces rather than an optics of presentation" (2000, 38-39). In relation to processes of immediation where perception cannot be situated in the human body but rather operates through a field of forces, we have to take the general interest in attention and twist it towards a more-than-human activity. Forces in this case address an incorporeal yet effective level of power as part of any media-related experience. It is at this specific, ephemeral level of constitutive activity that perception as autonomous and creative can be engaged.<sup>38</sup>

In the words of Massumi, "perception is *of* the world in its very own activity" (2011, 26, my emphasis). Instead of the human subject being the constitutive locus of perception, perception itself constitutes its subject and object. Attention as an operational quality of perception underlies a bare activity of existence, both affectively and in relation to power. Attention is the constant and self-directive pulling forth through perception's ability of contracting bodies and their environment. Or in other words, "attention is the base-state habit of perception"; but perception is autonomous and so is attention: "rather than you directing

attention, your attention is directing you” (Massumi, 2010b, n. pag.). Tapping into the operation of attention opens up new avenues for experimentation. From this point of view, the *Panoscope* and other media environments do not just generate specific images or experiences but play on the edging function of perception and the role of attention. Indeed, experimenting with attention is a viable way of altering habit from its in-attentive passing to an attentive fielding for potential, as power usually exercises its impact through habitualized enclosure without making the open-ended or contingent structure of perception apparent.

Massumi writes that “acts of attention [...] are forms of incipient action” (2002b, 139), thus action and perception are intrinsically intertwined; they depend on and co-compose each other. Also: “Perception is an incipient action [and] action is an incipient perception” (2002b, 139). The sensation of attention is the incipient relay between action and perception. Action is activation, and perception defines the field through which this action can draw its milieu into an expressive ecology of relation. While composing the capacity for expression, an activity folds back into perception’s primary phase, re-activating a perceptual re-becoming through the orbit of potential. In this sense, attention, far from being directed, controlled, or evoked, can be a subtle technique for making the incipency of perception as action felt in its fullest potential. Attention, in the way Massumi outlines the term, thus activates a field of potential movement without preforming how the movement unfolds relationally. Attention enables a sensation of a new phase of experience before its actual dephasing is executed. Its unfolding occurs collectively in the taking of directionality. At the same time attention re-directs its future becoming (and its relation to its former becoming). Attention is the feeling of potential as a life-in-forming, a life-living at the cusp of a collective individuation. From here we might investigate further how perception is an activation rather than a process that can be controlled. The “wild” activity of autonomous perception exceeds the techno-determinism which supposedly controls “our” attention through contemporary media. If there is an operation of control imbued in contemporary media ecologies, then it functions through continued inattention. One might say we are embedded in circuits of continued inattention in the guise of directed attention.

### *Perception as Modulation*

Concerning attention and perception, the question remains whether and how digital processes of media ecologies operate in relation to the analog world of embodied experience. What defines

embodied engagements with digital technologies is not an abstraction of the “real” into binary code. The digital does not abstract in a conventional sense of the term. It rather modulates phases of perception into potential extensions of reality (Deleuze 1989, 27). As numerical code we have to consider its dynamic potential in relation to movement, that is, through speeds and slownesses. The digital, indeed, becomes only palpable in its materially confined execution (the technical term used for effectuating code) but it remains active operationally, that is, as a moving across. What constitutes the relation between analog and digital realms is the process of perception as *modulation*: “For modulation is the operation of the Real” (Deleuze 1989, 28). Modulation constantly reworks the relation between perceiver and perceived and creates relational ecologies of experience. In an event of emergence the relational bond between the thinking as abstracting pole of embodied experience and matter as the material ground is most affectively felt. In other words, its potential for actualization is an expression which “strikes the body first” before any mediation can occur (Massumi 2002a, xvii). And perception, as Simondon points out, is the *ground* for the relation between subject and object to arise in the genesis of formation (2005, 33). This process of individuation operates through modulation, that is, phasings from a heterogeneous disparity of elements toward a metastable expression in experience. In a world of immediation we “don’t mediate [but] modulate” (Massumi 2002b, 198); similarly, the relation between the digital and perception works through modulation not mediation. Their common ground is the process of perceptual mattering, that is, the point of an emergence charged with potential (abstractly felt) and expressive force toward actualization (a bodying event).<sup>39</sup>

The digital becomes material through its processual nature and force for expression. It effectuates affectively through the feeling of a specific time-quality in experience. In itself the digital is a pure time quality, a switch or marker of difference, which receives its proper capacity to act in resonance with a more collective process of ecological co-emergence. The digital operates similar to affect: it has a mattering quality in that it can become the modulator of electrical forces in experience by constituting a felt intensity of time. In itself it matters as a lurking potential for time qualities to actualize in the event of experience. In other words, the “off” state of the digital’s on-off binary is not a void, nothingness, or inactivity, but a highly intense and virtual state of potential movement activity. Perception as autonomous process becomes particularly sensible in relation to the digital and its emphasis on modulation; they both address a time-shifting quality in experience, a (de)phasing (Manning 2013a).

Interaction as a human-machine relation falls short of the complex relation between a digital process of affective expression and its relation to emergence as a collective event interlacing bodies and code.<sup>40</sup> Immediation renders bodies into processes of bodying. In digital media, the production and relation of bodies by means of code and differentiation challenges what a body can do or might become: “it opens up forms of experimentation” (Deleuze, 1980, n. pag.). The operation of immediation in such processes takes on a double function: on the one hand, the challenging aspect requires continuation, that is, the seeking of future experiences at the horizon of perception’s worlding. In the constitutive process of mattering, it is immediation that accounts for the immediacy of the elements that relationally compose an experience. The human body in itself consists of manifold immediating processes; in its immediate folding with the digital processing, perception becomes an operational tool for experimenting with sense modulations beyond mere sensuous appearance. Immersive media environments such as the *Panoscope* or *Hemisphere* address bodily perception as generating attentiveness for an ecological dynamic bearing potential for becoming without having to actualize immediately. Modulation always comes with a lag or glitch that suspends linear continuation. The challenge in digital aesthetics is how to develop practices that are attentive to the heterogeneous or syncopating forms of continuation. In its heterogeneous but concatenated unity experience always includes a “more-than-one-quality” of its becoming (Manning 2013a; Simondon 2005, 25). Rendering this moreness sensible and finding ways of actively including its virtual dimension into processes of actualization constitutes a crucial concern for research-creation practices with digital media. The process of modulation in perception and the digital become entry points into the overall activity of ecologies of relation. But how can we describe this process of emergence brimming with potential, taking perceptual modulation as the base movement for experimental practices?

### *Dynamic Event Contours*

Inside the *Panoscope*, the horizon’s operation in 360° immersive video images functions as a limit membrane interlacing modulations of bodily sensation, the technological apparatus, and our spatio-temporal conception of the entire scenario. In other words, the experiential quality of the horizon’s edging in itself becomes a dense fold of techno-genetic movement, transforming sensation as well as its bodily, technological, and mental milieus. Immediation as a concept and

practice hints on the one hand at the transformative force of experience at the moment of its conjunctive emergence, and on the other hand provides clues of how to enable such modulations.

Let me explain: The work cycle of videos taken with a 360° lens at sea shores around the globe puts the “perceiver” in the midst of a landscape consisting of lines and vectors. The line of the water at our “feet” the line of the horizon at eye level, the line of the technological “sky” of the projector above our head, the lines of the cameras tracking our motions, lines of binary and language-based code and the bodily lines of sensation: all mix into each other to activate an experience that adheres neither to Euclidian geometry nor linear time. In their in-mixing – that is, in their modulation – they constitute what comes to pass as a felt experience in an interactive media environment by supplanting topologies of vision, sensation, digital flows and light. In their vectorial outlines, the lines are limiting forces in perception. Their presence inside the *Panoscope* jumps out of the scenario in a manner that disrupts our habitual accounting of horizontal lines. Inside the *Panoscope*, the compositional force edging from these lines becomes apparent.

The vectorial outline of the images allows the edge to function as a relation in its own right, not as a connection but a productive force. The digitally enhanced technologies at work provide an aesthetics based on the immediacy of differentiation at work in the overall whirl of repetitions – vision trying to grasp and contain the horizon without ever arriving at a clear resolution (or a clear conclusion in terms of thought). Such digital aesthetics foreground the process of constant differentiation along habitual repetition as part of every experience. Put differently, the operation of modulation, as the ground movement of relational experience, appears in its power to differentiate. Usually, differentiation is a form of repetition with a minimal variation, often inattentively bypassed in experience. However, through the horizon’s edging operation the differential in perception becomes apparent through digital modulation. The edging lines provide a means to grasp the potential at the brink of sensational emergence, while at the same time pushing digital media practices toward further experimentation. As Murphie and Potts point out: “In the digital realm, the world is something to be constantly created” (2003, 81). The digital realm is not subjected to the force of a human imagination making and building worlds. Through perception and the digital sharing practices of modulation, either of them, humans and digital processes, receive a quality beyond the material-immaterial binary. As mattering they both resonate through the bodying tendencies of an event, while including their

future potential – that is, an incorporeal beyondness, a driving continuation. The particularity of digital technologies lies in their capacity for activating time-qualities contracted into the immediate dynamic of an emergent experience. From this point of view, there is not only a future potential immanent to such immediating experiences, but also an activation of past events re-becoming in the dynamism of *this* event. The edge of the horizon points to the constant flicker between a tentative forming and its unforming due to temporal incursions that modulate experience. This process I call the production of *dynamic event contours*.<sup>41</sup> The contour defines the most palpable expression of perceptual embodied experience. It is a rhythmic procedure by which a moving-across gives an experience of its duration and inner dynamic. By dynamic event contours, I want to emphasize the compositional and transversal aspects of experience. There is a time-quality in how the dynamism plays out in its contouring. Through the contouring, a bundle of tendencies in-forms a bodying in relation to an actively shaping milieu; in becoming, both body and milieu have to modulate their prior existence to co-evolve. Herein lies the potential for change through modulation yielding beyond the confined instant of the present.

The dynamic event contour of media environments describes its relational quality for emergent experiences as immediation. How do we engage thought and bodily experience with such media environments following its dynamism? Investigating the dynamic event contour means neither disregarding the technological apparatus enabling such media environments, nor does it proclaim a vanishing concept of bodily experience. On the contrary, the dynamic event contour conceives of continuity and discontinuity as the temporal building blocks of experience. Mobilizing the limit or membrane of such media-infused experiences means asking how unforeseen avenues for experience might be actively included in our accounts of a situation, technology, or environment.

### *Digital Aesthetics and Mattering Bodies*

An active, embodied engagement with media ecologies by means of immediation and perception allows us to enter a domain of digital aesthetics beyond human-machine binaries. The coupling of attention and perception generates corporeal and incorporeal entanglements of forces constitutive of experience. How the human body folds into “technoecologies” of experience defines a specific concern in relation to digital media environments (Parisi 2009). While the critique and re-positioning of the terms “remediation,” “mediality,” and “media ecology”



contribute to a more dynamic and change-based account of experience, one should not efface the necessary process of form-taking in experience – in other words, the *contouring* of an event. While the conception of the body alters in relation to an emergent and immediating process of bodying, we should not underestimate its vital capacity for resonating with the autonomous activity of perception as modulation. For the body to become-with other activities, it requires capacities of resonating. The same holds true for digital media technologies. Both the body and technology co-emerge affectively through a shared ground of modulation relayed in perception. Thinking through perception in relation to the digital in this way might bring us closer to the operational quality of an incorporeal materialism I have been tracing through the examples of the *Panoscope* and the *Hemisphere*.

In her work on digital media art and embodiment, Anna Munster addresses perception in relation to digital technologies: “Digital media are quite capable of registering affectively; we underestimate our corporeal capacities if we suggest that the speed and geographical fragmentation wrought by these media lead to dematerialization, indifference or destabilization” (2006, 159). Similar to Massumi, she emphasizes that perception as the mingling sphere of quasi-subjects and quasi-objects occurs on the level of matter (or mattering), and not cognition. According to Massumi, the empirical makes its presence felt not as an already formed world, but through the capacitation of matter to account for experience. In a radical empiricist manner, experience thus comes to define or replace what traditional philosophies have termed matter as physical structure of existence. From this point of view, the physical is but one aspect of an ecological dynamism at work in experience.

Munster considers the digital not as an abstract dematerialization per se, but as differential: “To take the differential into account in an analysis of information culture is to reinsert the value of those intervals of non-capture, malfunction and chance fluctuating immanent to materiality back into the series of perfect replica” (i.e. the digital code) (2006, 29). As differential, the digital is not an on-off binary but itself produces ruptures, breaks, and contingencies related to a *vital materialism* underlining all digital/analog processes (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 411).<sup>42</sup> Vital here designates a dynamism which exceeds the mere assertion of matter in terms of its substantial properties and emphasizes its relational and affective capacities. In other words, matter as mattering requires movement to effectuate change. Through ruptures, malfunctioning, or non-capture, the digital’s very own movement becomes perceivable. Hence,

matter in itself is not a mere factor of contingency ready for appropriation by a human will. The contingency of matter is neither neutral nor arbitrary. On the contrary, contingency defines the persistence of a certain openness immanent in matter's co-emergent elements. Matter is not the material, and the material, in the way Deleuze and Guattari define the term, is not necessarily physical. Herein lies the productive paradox of the notion of matter developed in relation to the digital. Matter defines what *matters* in a process of emergence, what constitutes the dynamisms of a contour appearing and is included in an ecology of relation. Munster's coupling of the differential and the digital is absolutely crucial for a conception of experience as mattering activity. Digital processes are differential operations where the interval, the non-capture, and the non-sensuous aspects of experience co-produce what comes to be perceived as a bodying event.

In the case of the *Panoscope's* hemispheric videos, a sensation of an enveloping edge of vision arises, folding the body right into the projected space without having to enter it. The digitally enhanced perception creates a haptic experience as a result of the differential operating across the entire perceptual ecology. For this ecology to pertain to all its elements as part of a technogenetic process it has to change an effective enveloping signal leaving techno-bodily traces. This requires an affective transformation beyond a logic of prosthesis, taking the body as confined and extended by technology. As Manning suggests, "Affective transformation depends on evolution in the machinic system such that both bodies and technological system are altered" (2009, 64). In other words, immediation points at the ecological transformations that concern all its elements without having to follow linear cause-effect logics.

### *Attentive Habit and Non-Sensuous Perception*

Immediation defines the ambulatory perceptual emergence of an experience without foreclosing it. What passes as effectively perceived is just a fraction of the excessive potential immanent to the bodying engagement with immersive media environments. Experimenting creatively with the excessive potential of emergent perception requires an extension of the material, sensory-motor linkage of perception. *Infra-material aspects*, such as time and thought, are immanent to perception and enable practices of becoming "attentive to the unknown" (Deleuze 1991, 165).

This attentiveness has bodying qualities, which are the affective-relational activities immanent to experience constituting the fleeting present as metastable manifestation where

effectuation takes place. Attuning to the emergent quality in experience through its temporal, mattering, and incorporeal aspects opens up ways of altering habitual patterns of perception, and thus modes of feeling and thinking. The main value of immersive and interactive media environments lies in their capacity to investigate the culturally inscribed and conditioned habits of how perception is orchestrated across contemporary media ecologies. Habit defines a primary field of investigating thresholds of perceptual emergence and the distribution of what can be felt and thought in relation to media techniques and technologies. Immediation thus cuts across the habitualizing constitution of everyday experiences through perception. Both *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere* challenge, in their own distinct ways, how perception folds the sensing body and its technoecological milieu into each other. This folding process happens through modulation, that is, by attuning elements and altering their overall capacity for co-composition. As Simondon would say, in perception there is a resolution of a former disparity between elements (2005, 33). However, and herein lies the particularity of such instances of fusion, this disparity is not synthesized into a new entity, but *attunes tonalities* or capacities to operationally engage in a shared movement. Immediation lies at the heart of this mutually confining process of habitualization and perception. Taking immediation as praxis and mode of analysis points at an ecology's potential for insertion through differential modulation. In an earlier section, mediality defined the coupling of everyday media practices with specific experiences through affect. The affective link through embodied practices applies here as well. From this point view, habit concerns the enabling feature of mediality and affective contagion as it needs to be constantly differentiated to allow for continued experience. Habit in this case is the zone where repetition and difference are negotiated on the spot. Thus Massumi calls "habitual inattention" the captured and confined repetition without change or difference being noticed (2011, 100). On the contrary, attentive habit makes the occurrence of change felt in experience. Felt change or difference means accounting for experiential modulation, which Manning considers rare: "It depends on the capacity to create events that are 'new' enough that they catch attention, and graspable enough that we can relate to them" (2009, 64).

The differential and mattering aspect of the digital allows us to investigate the political and affective dimensions of experience in media ecologies through the constant flicker between the new-enough quality of change becoming felt and its relation to experience as a kind of disjunctive linkage. The linking is what becomes felt. From interval to interval, the switching

and mattering of the digital's signaletic pulsing constitute felt effects in sensuous experience. What might be considered the highbrow or exclusive realm of playing with new media technologies in confined spaces such as art galleries actually addresses the potential for experimenting with regimes of perception and feeling fuelled by contemporary media ecologies. Artistic experiments with perception are thus semi-public laboratories for emergent experience and its implicit power relations. The difference between a media-specific account of such technologies and a relation-specific approach resides in *how* these technologies become elements in wider ecological procedures of orchestrating experience by means of perception.

Perception producing experiences of bodily and environmental co-emergence activates new modes of *attentive habituating*. Attention usually rises when the smoothness of the technologically enhanced procedures is disturbed; failures, glitches, noise, and breakdown are the spectres of digital technology. Ease of use and functionality are two of the highest and best marketable values of such technologies. In that sense, many contemporary media techniques foreground smoothness. Such smooth operations nurture a mode of inattentive habit aiming at uninterrupted flows of consumption. However, such media technologies have potential as platforms for relation. It is a question of technique making the inattentive smoothing apparent in its potential for differentiation. From this point of view, perception thus provides an immediate channel for attuning with media's immanent potential for differentiation. Indeed, technology's very own internal resonance always maintains a degree of contingency as the very nature of its capacity for becoming-with its milieu.

Perception in relation to media ecologies is a pattern moving across different modes of existence and contracting various forces into a disjunctive and heterogeneous yet co-emergent ecology of relation. From this point of view, perception makes habit a primary playmate for the everyday navigation of bodily movement in and with our environment. In bodying, however, the body and its milieu both require a degree of self-relation to be considered continuous and evolving. The digital as a mere fluctuation of states seems insufficient without a mattering, relational trajectory over time: the digit cannot be without a relational compounding with other digits. As compounds, these chains of changes in state generate a singularity in expression and as such they intervene in the actual emergence of experience. *Hemisphere* is a good example of this. The granular and fractal logic of sounds can only become apparent in experience through the differentiation in relation to other audio-visual sound grains. Only in their collective

undulation do they compose a contouring event as bodying. The strength of the work is the active embracing of the openness and meandering of its aesthetic effects, which do not foreclosing what and how perception should be sensuously conceived. The work operates below the threshold of formal representation, activating a non-sensuous quality in experience.

For Whitehead *non-sensuous perception* emphasizes the interval between instances of experience as they affectively constitute what is felt in the expressive passing of experience (1967, 183). *Non-sensuous perception* underlines a temporal quality in experience where the immediate part of a passing present can be felt in its active shaping of the present. Non-sensuous perception emphasizes the temporal envelope of experience, while sensuous perception registers the expressive peak of experience as an actual occasion of the present. No sense perception can occur without a relation to becoming, that is, past elements being included in the present and future elements pulling this present toward its next occasion. However, and this might be one of the most interesting aspects of digital media ecologies, there is no straight linearity of past-present-future. The non-sensuous aspect in experience underlines a co-inhabitation of past and future in the passing of the present. Through acceleration processes and random-access-memory, digital technologies are capable of modulation procedures that make felt the folding of past and future dimensions in their experiential interval of the present.

*Hemisphere*, I think, could not effectuate such strong sensory responses if it did not trigger a suspension of form recognition due to its diminishing effects, and thus give a glimpse of immanent futurity as a form of potential. The modulation of such potential in experience happens disjunctively, or non-sensuously, in feeling and thought triggered through affective bodying and digital mattering. One could say that such bodying modulations generate the potential for a new mode of attentiveness arising from the middle of such an experience. It is an ecology in constant differentiation. This process renders immediation into a technique for experimenting with the “influx of the *other* into that self-identity which is the continued life of the immediate past with the immediacy of the present” (Whitehead, 1967, 181). The past continues with the effectuation of a contracted present. But what does such a processing look like in relation to the digital? The digital as differential and mattering requires a degree of self-relation which is usually the code. Through coding, the activity of processing becomes a signaletic quality mattering its way into expression – digits need to be attuned to each other. The enveloping into codes and their effectuation moves through the differential of expression in a bodying procedure. The non-

sensuous quality of experience is an immediate shock that actively shapes processes of emergence by means of continued differentiation. Processing becomes a technique for attentive habit once we can glimpse its differential nature and affective capacities. The digital is indeed virtual due to its high degree of modulation, but so is perception and experience. Immediation as a technique seeks to develop media ecologies as empowering ecologies of practices, where each mode of practicing actively attunes to the other without overruling its activity. Thus there is clearly an ethics of potential immanent to digital aesthetics.

### *Prospectus of Research-Creation in Digital Aesthetics*

Activating the operational quality of ecologies of relation is not a mere demonstration of the hidden aspects of experience. More crucially it concerns ways of making and doing, a practice of research-creation through and with experience at the core of its emergence. In relation to research-creation, immediation points towards a pragmatic mode of creatively operating within media environments and extending the limit of practices and thought. Media environments, as much as human bodies, are not fixed entities with clearly defined capacities. On the contrary immediation allows both media and bodies to differentiate themselves relationally from their prior existence through situated constitutions of perception. In their setup these environments underlie certain constraints (as the human body does as well), but their potential for immediation depends always anew on the situations they engage with. In this way, considering the *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere* as operational tools allows us to abandon any logic of judgement about their technological constraints and shift towards thinking and experimenting with what they enable.

The margin of an aesthetic experience altering the way it comes to pass as a felt after-image might be just one part of an ethics embedded in aesthetic experiments. Another crucial aspect resides in the way we actively learn to operate with the contingent potential of matter's push for change (i.e. bare activity) in and through immediation. Immediation delineates the cusp of experience edging into a recognizable event. It has a membrane-quality in the way it inserts into the experiential process of emergence through the autonomous force of perception – a layer of suspense and action at the same time. It also has activation-potential, suspending the habitual accounting and processing of perception as effect towards its more affective layer of composition. As activation it provides a molecular degree of experimentation, potentially

altering habitualized processes of practicing. The *Panoscope*'s horizontal edge puts the visitor constantly in the situation of not being able to entirely differentiate between something seen and recognized, and something felt but not actualized. Its operations across digitally produced perceptual situations are in between an *affective sensing* and an *emotional recognition*. The assertion that a subject perceives and orders its objectified environment as different from the "self" is challenged by the immediated suspension of a straightforward perceptual order. In this way, immediation outlines a way of coping with the different expressive forces of humans and more-than-humans as co-populating actual events of perception.

Through the edging quality of perception, the *Panoscope* emphasizes an emergent collective quality in experience. The collective here arises through affective capacities of forces, flows of energy moving through different matters, to instigate a bodying event. The *Panoscope* might lead its user to conceptualize this immanent collectivity between human and more-than-human elements too abstractly, often bound to an idea of the willing subject. It is quite possible to consider the *Panoscope* as "interactive" due to its capacity for control and navigation by *one* user at a time. While I foregrounded that interaction actually happens through infra-material modes of resonance, differentiation, and continuation, interaction as human-machine binary easily overshadows its technoecological activity. Finally, this assertion might be even more fuelled due to the many representations of contained images, clear architectural structures, or the focus on the face in *Panoscope*'s telepresence mode where spatially separate *Panoscopes* are connected through live-streaming. However, the system becomes most interesting when it focuses on the horizon as the edge where perception operates freely to evoke an emergent collectivity operating immanently in media ecological experiences. While there seems to be a gap between the *Panoscope*'s potential technoecological capacity and its content, *Hemisphere* constitutes an immediate affective engagement with its aesthetic expression. The *Panoscope* requires us to refine our bodily habits due to a counter-intuitive operation of the controller. Despite potential frustration, this problematic allows for play and creative use.

Inside *Hemisphere* bodily habit lures us into its intensity. The shifting colour qualities and the droning sound subtly work on sense perception often below a discernible sensuous threshold of change. The work puts us into a fold in experience where time becomes malleable. Only after its occurrence change arises consciously, while the artwork's activity has taken perception somewhere less unconsciously syncing with change's pull toward becoming.<sup>43</sup> The

collective here is a collective of co-emergent temporalities folding into each other in experience. The granular and fractal processing through digital technologies takes perception beyond bodily confinement and form recognition. One attunes to the work rhythmically, along its minor pulsations. It is through the digital relaying of different matters that a nascent collectivity immanent to the work allows the bodies in the space to attune to each other differently. People lying underneath the *Hemisphere* might seem passive and docile while they are actually highly engaged in what is going on, moving from primary sensuous to non-sensuous modes of perception.

In relation to research-creation the question would then be: how to compose with such time-qualities of mattering and the differential in relation to perception through the constitution of dynamic contours that are “new” enough to catch attention and “graspable” enough so we can relate to them? In this context, contouring defines the craft of composition and activation of affective capacities of matter. Through the digital we approach processes of infinitesimal differentiation and the ability to render them perceivable by means of amplification and modulation. Thinking the digital as an operational backbone orchestrating modes of thinking and feeling makes it a highly contested field of investigating the power of perception. Media ecologies are active fields of practices and techniques interlacing and producing technologies of perception, and alongside them potential bodily becomings. Neither mystifying the human nor the technological but seeking out their shared ground for co-compositions along their affective capacities gives rise to new emergent practices of experimenting in the presence of their activities. Contouring produces no finite shape but intensifies a field quality depending on the actual capacities of the composing elements, that is, in terms of their technicity.

Finally, immediation points at the temporal quality of heterogeneous co-composition and continuation which allows experience to receive a quality of duration. Perception’s autonomous quality for producing perceiver and perceived generates a temporal interval for experience-in-the-making to be felt as an immediate realm of potential. The emergent milieu of experience links the immediate with the potential, and it mutually includes a variety of paths toward actualization while allowing for the selection of one path; in doing so, emergence receives a bodying effect. Immediation emphasizes that selecting is different from excluding; it is a process of amplification, while other aspects receive less activity. Nevertheless, it is far from being inactive. In this contouring procedure of perception, the interval of re-potentialization allows for



inserting grains of attentiveness, actively accounting for the less amplified but nonetheless active elements. Extending the range of attention enables more differentiated modes of expression and affective pulsation. Often, these amplifications can be associated with contemporary media incursions into every niche of our everyday lives. Supposedly, media activities have come to “control” and orchestrate attention in ever more tightly knit meshworks of information, data mining, and high speed decision-making (Crary 2013, 126). Immediation, however, does not necessarily mean augmenting and amplifying more and more. The struggle over attentiveness requires us to engage in practices of suspending decision-making or emphasizing selection as ecologically produced and thus differentiable. As platforms for relation media modulate according to their milieu and thus produce novelty in experience and invent new modes of existence.

In this chapter, I developed the notion of immediation in order to emphasize perception’s autonomous status in experience, while focusing on two immersive and interactive media artworks. The reason for such a specific choice is twofold. On the one hand, I am following Andrew Murphie’s assertion that VR technologies are useful in their confined and limited capacities if we want to investigate aesthetic experimentation and perceptual emergence. While similar experimentations have existed since the invention of panoramas, I consider the technical ensembles of the *Panoscope* and *Hemisphere* as vital entry points for a media-ecological approach that leads beyond the primary assertion of these artworks as actors within defined networks between humans and nonhumans. Perception, as immediate and immediating activity, thus becomes the focal point of both art works as intense operational fields, imbued with very specific capacities for blending technical digital activity with aesthetic expression – both in and through experience.

The notion of immediation foregrounds a specific time quality in experience. In the following chapter, I will further explore how timing becomes a technique for activating an affective – that is, immediately felt and collective – layer in experience. In thinking of affect as aesthetic process, I wonder how contemporary aesthetic practices, like the one proposed by Ragnar Kjartansson, offer an investigation into aesthetic politics through high-end media technologies. Beyond a primary account of another media artwork, the investigation of affective timing elaborates on the prior work on perception and nudges its operation toward a more

molecular, yet extensive and collective, field of experience across different material strata – that of the screen, the moving body, of sound, and the moving image.

### CHAPTER III

#### AFFECTIVE POLITICS OF TIMING: ON EMERGENT COLLECTIVITY IN RAGNAR KJARTANSSON'S *THE VISITORS*

*The task of perception entails pulverizing the world, but also one of spiritualizing its dust.*  
(Deleuze 1993, 87)

##### *Introduction*

Upon entering the exhibition space, one is immersed in an envelope of black carpet with modular cushion furniture and nine immense screens. The room is ample and invites prolonged inhabitation. Many children are present. There is constant movement, subtle chatting, walking around, and running. Everything happening in the room moves through and with the visual and sonic envelope of Icelandic artist Ragnar Kjartansson's audio-visual installation, *The Visitors*. Each screen shows a musician playing in one of the rooms of upstate New York mansion Rokeby Farm. The musicians jam together, wired through headphones, while spatially separated. Speakers accompany each screen emitting the sound of the instrument (dis-)played. Their musical performance consists of different phases of improvised variation of a the poem "Feminine Ways" by Ásdís Sif Gunnarsdóttir repeated over and over again. The musical mantra of the refrain and its rhythmic variation in repetition stuck with me hours and even days after I left the exhibition. It marks one of the strongest aesthetic impressions holding the work together across its disparate elements. Depending on one's position in the room, a visitor to the installation can tune into one particular instrument by approaching the screen or enjoy their blending by moving toward a more central position in the space – always carried along by the refrain. Apart from the eight screens with musicians, a ninth screen shows a porch with another handful of people, overlooking the green hills rolling down toward the Hudson River. Outside, a

cannon, operated by an elderly man in an old-fashioned firefighter helmet, is lit three times every 20 minutes giving the musicians a temporal orientation.

After the third shot (at about 60 minutes), the musicians gather around a grand piano on one of the screens and then appear next to the porch continuously singing while walking down the green hills until they disappear. At the same time, a technician, quietly humming the main refrain, turns off one camera/screen after another until only the last screen illuminates the space, which then goes black. The choreographic quality of the musician's activity toward the end of the performance coming together in one scenario is partially mirrored by the audience in the space. Many of the visitors gather in front of the screen where the "primary" action is happening. In the space I experienced a particular tension between this tendency to gather and the activity of the technician. Both are actively shaping the ending of the performance, one by continuously singing the main refrain of the piece, the other humming it while shutting down the technical ensemble that defines the technical and aesthetic infrastructure of the work.

Rokeby is a colonial mansion built about 200 years ago and has been modestly maintained so that it keeps its patina without entirely falling apart. For a short period of two weeks, the performers become residents at Rokeby farm. In their appearance on screen, it feels as if they have been there forever – the setup for the performance organically integrates into the space. One can see a Banjo player lounging in a home office with a library as if he has done so for weeks, and Kjartansson himself plays the guitar while stretching out in a full bathtub. The whole mood of the piece draws on a slow and subtle process of dramatization of the space and its shared endurance in the performance. The performativity of the piece is partly staged and partly emerges in the fine attunement of given spaces and the way they are inhabited by the musicians. The dramatization emphasizes the attunement of different, often heterogeneous, elements to fuse in an occasion of experience. One of the tensions of the piece is the use of contrast. Three major points stick out: 1) The old and decaying mansion in its textured appearance is projected on the screens through crystal-clear high-definition images. The visual ambience of the old house is juxtaposed with the use of sophisticated technologies, enabling both the musicians to interact and the visitors to have very detailed accounts of the performance. Rokeby Farm's aged spaces reveal their texture particularly strongly in contrast with the sober yet comforting design of the exhibition. 2) The actual performance was shot in one single take, which gives a strong feeling of both immediacy and improvisation. At the same time, all the juxtaposed elements (spatial,

technical, human, and nonhuman) feel highly choreographed. The relation between performer, spaces, and technologies, for all its nonchalance, carries a sense of utmost precision – similar to the practice of improvisation that requires a lot of training. 3) The sense of separation and concentration of each musician suggests a certain “individuality,” while the practice of making music together evokes the opposite effect in the actual exhibition space, given the mixing of each screen’s soundtrack attached to one musician and instrument.

Similarly, the title underlines a contrast. On the one hand, in the live event, the musicians and their friends on the porch are visitors at Rokeby Farm. On the other hand, in the installation event, the visitors of the installation are drawn into the interior of a space composed of screens, sounds, and cozy surfaces. The piece folds different events into each other, the event of the performance amongst the musicians and the event of its experience by the audience in the exhibition. One way to look at it is that the collective quality of the artwork moves through singular points, such as the screens, instruments, or visitors, while it is held together through sound, rhythm, and a technical ensemble. *The Visitors* activates different modes of perception through the juxtaposition of different rhythms, the rhythm of the singing and playing, the visual rhythm of the space on the screen and in the exhibition, and the rhythm of bodily movements. From my prolonged encounter with the work, I suggest that it activates a heightened awareness of temporal composition of experience between different rhythms of material, corporeal, and technological aspects. From this temporal multiplicity and weaving through rhythm, perceptual events arise as acts of collective expression. Being inside the exhibition, one’s sense of time and space shifts dynamically in resonance with the rhythmic movement patterns of the work and the other visitors. I propose that we consider this emergent activity of a trans-rhythmic emergence as one possible way of experimenting with ecologies of relation in research-creation.

At first sight, through its content *The Visitors* evokes clear *signs* pertaining to togetherness, friendship, and conviviality.<sup>44</sup> On the expressive level it is a soothing and warm piece because of the slow and mostly clam chanting in a homey setting, as well as the exhibition space being covered by a thick carpet. The work potentially reminds us of times with friends or merely the hedonistic beauty of enjoying life. However, under the surface of the convivial and joyful, the work pushes towards another conception of perception that is salient in such immersive media artworks. Through its highly choreographed and precise juxtaposition of

technical, bodily, and audio-visual elements it points at the *conditions* of experience emerging across a sensation of shared time and space.

In this chapter, I want to take the view that *The Visitors* does more than create a site for immersion into a sound event played collectively at a remote location. While it certainly does do this, I want to suggest it makes palpable its activation of a particular sensation of collectivity and togetherness through an emphasis on timing, and in particular, by means of *suspension*, *attunement* and *relaying*. These modes of temporal activity emphasize the dramatization at work in *The Visitors*. Suspension of the usual modes of consuming art by means of categorization is one aspect. Attunement to the singular time form of the experience in the event happens across different technical, visual, and bodily elements. A relaying of different temporalities emphasizes the compositional aspect of movement in the artwork. All these modes pertain to a collectively composed process of emergence between relating time forms, materials, techniques, and movement rhythms. Sensing the collective while individually experiencing the work over a longer period of time reworks, I suggest, the general temporal order of the aesthetic regime of perception in contemporary art. One possible reading of contemporary conceptual and political art resides in a critical distance from and clear opposition to major political, economic, or social signifiers and their entanglement with capitalist operations. While these critiques are utterly necessary in aesthetic practices, they resemble in part the structures they critique. Such resemblance, I argue, happens in the way lived experience becomes contained and quantified. Through distancing and critique, quantification happens through the extrapolation of a clear category, sign, or signifier positioned within the chronological order of a temporal linearity.<sup>45</sup> In contemporary capitalism, the parceling of time into discrete entities originates in early industrial rationalizations of labour power and finds one of its most advanced iterations in the computerized, high-frequency trading of the stock market (Crary 2013; Wilkins and Dragos 2013). In other words, the entanglement between perception and capitalist modes of value extraction pertains to constantly refined modes of timing through techniques and technologies that retrieve “valuable” information from increasingly minute gestures, movements, and practices.

Against critical or capitalist quantification, *The Visitors*, in its affirmative gesture, rather proposes a qualitative, heterogeneous, and emergent time immanent to lived experience. In foregrounding its eventful unfolding, I suggest, the work subtly re-orient signs of a bohemian

lifestyle such as “playing music and have a good time with friends” towards a sensibility of the temporal qualities at work in emergent experience. The *collective quality* of the work thus defines a potential avenue for developing an affective aesthetic politics where affect activates a thinking of experience-in-the-making. In taking the work’s temporal qualities as a point of departure, I will outline three conceptual entanglements, one concerning the relation between affect and sensation, one underlining what I call the work’s “etho-ecological” aspect, and one pertaining to time as primary matter. The latter refers to how all aspects in experience occur through relational movement, that is, speeds and slownesses, and the differences they generate. The primacy of time defines a non-chronological aspect as qualitatively shaping *how* experience composes and how it contains potential as temporal multiplicity, while contracting into a space-time composite in perception. Accordingly, it is not primary in a before-after dialectic, but as general ground and multiplicity from which singular events arise. Treating affect, sensation, and time as primary matter concerns how processes of time and timing constitute what comes to pass as felt embodied experience. And in pointing at the emergent quality in experience, where different timings relate affectively to form sensation, we might then think of a politics of affective timing. Finally, while chapter II emphasizes how immediate experience becomes a bodily field of aesthetic experimentation, this chapter emphasizes how time itself includes forms of resistance against a chronological and quantifiable subsumption of the present instant under capitalist values. The present defines the very contested field of experience which becomes either subsumed under pre-existing critical, perceptual, or capitalist values, or a zone of experimentation of time’s potential for generating forms of experimenting with processes of emergence, their compositions, and durances. I will make use of specific aspects of timing immanent to *The Visitors* – not as an ideal example for a general argument about time, but as a quasi-material experiential field inspiring a conceptual movement about the affective politics of timing.

### *Framing Affect and Sensation*

*The Visitors* gains its strength by evoking a sense of co-presence and collective inhabitation between performers and actual visitors. The installation operates by folding sonic and visual elements and the spaces they traverse on the screens directly into the exhibition, generating an immediate relation to the sensing bodies of visitors moving through and with it. The screens, in

their size and with their high-definition images, produce an immediacy of the on-screen performers in the exhibition room, while also receding into the detailed background of the images. There is an elasticity between the visual content and its expressive affection on the bodily movement of the visitors. One is lured into the affective pulsation of the work, moving between screens, mixing their sounds, and thus actively synthesizing them. A relaying occurs between the artwork's content, its "mediated" expression, and how it relates to the bodies inside the exhibition. Inside the exhibition space this relaying works through rhythm and tonalities rather than discrete objects and structural signs. The sonic envelope of the repeated refrain becomes the rhythmic envelope through which other elements can enter the composition of perception; its activity is purely affective. Slowness in this case means not only the musical refrain which inscribes itself into our sensation of the installation, but also the ample space given for attuning to the work. The screen as a surface becomes a conductive tissue through which a sensing of the piece's aliveness resonates between the actual performers and their immediate environment. In its affective force, the work immediately works on the way bodies move with and through it. This spatial folding is also a temporal folding of shared time, repetition, and resonance between spaces, bodies, and their relation to sensation. Sensation defines the zone of experience where a bodily capacity of sensing *with* its environment precedes a distinct perception of a body positioned in space: "Sensation is the mode in which potential is present in the perceiving body" (Massumi 2002b, 75). Through its spatial, technical, and aesthetic arrangement, *The Visitors* foregrounds the fleeting relay between sensation and perception, between a process of becoming and its actualization – both being immanent to bodily experience. In its dynamic between perception and sensation, the body itself is not a mere container, but in a state of constant transformation – a *bodying* oscillating between motion and rest, speeds and slownesses.

Affect is the relay between an indeterminate openness immanent to sensation and its expression in perception. It is the rhythmic field of experience through which sensation and perception operate, towards an expression. Affect is not perceived or sensed but defines a tonality that alters the environment for an emergent occasion of experience to arise. Sensation is attentive to the affective dimension of emergent experience, that is, "a perceptible expression of uncontained affect" (Massumi 2002b, 220). It has an in-between function of pure movement and attends to a field activity, without identifying one unitary source of an emergence. If there is an

emergent zone of experience-in-the-making, *The Visitors* not only emphasizes collectivity on an intersubjective level but also addresses an emergent collectivity immanent to experience, before bodies are positioned in space and time. Considered in relation to affect, the collective stresses that the world's general relationality always exceeds what becomes expressed in a situated (or eventful) experience. Working with sensation's openness for relationality proposes an aesthetic politics of potential as a creative activity of co-composition. The question for an aesthetic practice thus concerns how to compose an affectively engaging environment that activates sensation's openness in experience. From this point of view, sensation itself operates like a microperception, inserting a new felt time dimension into the overall continuation of ecologies of relation (Deleuze 1993, 87). Microperception defines a way of taking into account a process in resonance with one's own individuation – both mutually attuning to each other according to their capacities for relation. It foregrounds experience at the level of attuning forces as relations capable of activating an occasion of experience across an event ecology. In other words, “To sense, we must cut through time and space, moving, challenging both semantic and geographical boundaries. Sensation is not a coding of bodies. When we sense we are not producing a map that will lead us back to an origin” (Manning 2007, 20). The crucial temporal operation in aesthetic practices such as Kjartansson's concerns how to make sensation's cut felt in its very own quality beyond spatially, bodily, or discursively pre-defined categories. The cut as process of emergence that nevertheless accounts for its temporal milieu (its past) emphasizes a politics of affective timing immanent to aesthetic practices. Thus, activating attentiveness to sensation's operation as a mode of microperception provides one potential path to follow in the creation of practices generative of a *coming collective*. In this way we can conceive of the *The Visitors* as a proposition for investigating sensation's microperceptual activation through the function of rhythm.

What is felt inside the exhibition is not simply the technological or sensual material presented, but the “quality of experience” in its movement and tendency across an entire ecology of relation (Massumi and McKim 2009). Affect is the *capacity* of these relations to resonate in the unfolding of an event, as it inhabits the relay between a pure qualitative state of emergent experience, that is time, and its quantitative expression in space (as perceived).<sup>46</sup> Crucially, these states are not chronological but co-emergent and together compose the “dynamic unity” of experience (Massumi 2002b, 225). One of the particularities of *The Visitors*, as it occurs to me, is



its ability to encourage long visits inside the piece, the meandering path through the space being very subtly choreographed toward the end, assembling the visitors in front of the last screen. This slow and enduring attunement to the work, I propose, suspends the immediate capture of trying to categorize what is happening and what it might mean. In other words, immediated sensation opens up registers of experience that evade the structural foreclosure of meaning attached to already existing categories of sense-making (i.e. common sense). Foregrounding the emergent qualities of time in experience points to techniques of affective timing actively working on the qualitative level of sensation, while taking its effects in space and time as bodily states into account. Qualitative here refers to time-related compositions in their potential resonance and bifurcation, constituting what comes to pass as perceived in experience. The work evokes strong associations of convivial togetherness, but immediately undermines them through its power of suspension. Collectivity arises not by having the same sensation as other individuals in the space but in the very process of temporal attunement itself. In the work, suspension through looped sound and a distributed field of sound and vision, encourages one to stay with the installation without prefiguring the potential meaning such an experience might yield. *The Visitors* allows us to attune to a politics of perception in the making as a collective activity of timing – a form of conviviality exceeding inter-human affection.<sup>47</sup> In other words, a process which is usually either subsumed under a definition of collectivity through co-location in a chronologically parceled time-chunk or individualized as subjective time, shifts towards sensation's attentiveness for time-qualities relating asynchronously. The time felt in an occasion of experience is singular while being composed collectively. It is event-time, neither belonging to a perceiving subject or a perceiving object. The time of the event is instead the emergence of a new rhythm interweaving other rhythms. In the case of *The Visitors*, we can conceive of the musical rhythm co-composing with the movement rhythms of the performers' and the visitors' bodies. The visual content of the performance setting has its own rhythm of the house and its material ground co-composing with the rhythm of digital processing of the sound and visual technology. Each occasion of experience is always the collective individuation of interweaving rhythms, their resonances, and capacities for mutual amplification (see the Interlude).

Affect addresses the relay of a complex relational entanglement between fields of potential and their actualization. It underlines activity, and processes of activation: "Affect activates the very connectibility of experience. It is the force, the lure, through which a certain

constellation comes to expression” (Manning 2013a, 26). By relating affect to time, the emphasis lies on *how* activity traverses different forms of existence temporally. In other words, affect concerns the relaying between a “bare activity” and the immediately felt effects of embodied experience as an act of affectively engaged ecological activation. Bare activity, as described in the first chapter, underlines the autonomous, non-organic life of potential through which affect operates. It is a kind of proto-rhythm through which other rhythms occur in resonance and differentiation. There is a double temporal quality in experience, a relational field of forces and their concretization in an actual occasion. It is the latter that usually overlooks the former and which is worth investigating through affect.

The affective interval is not a spatial gap but a temporal cut and suspension which has its very own time. The time of the in-between, the interval, is the time of *affective attunement*,<sup>48</sup> which underlines a crucial process in emergent experience where relations constituting an event operate differentially. The “form” the artwork takes in the exhibition is actually a catalyzer for differential attunement to the same expressive event across bodies. In this way, each individual body attunes to the work differentially while being part of a shared event. Furthermore, affect as temporal quality concerns the phase of experience where relations as tendencies or movements attune to each other and start to resonate to become expressive. In other words, attunement is not a grouping of bodies but their singular capacities for differentially resonating with the work through a shared sense of timing. Inside *The Visitors*, bodies can thus be “induced into inhabiting the same affective environment, even if there is no assurance they will act alike in that environment” (Massumi and McKim 2009, n. pag.). The affective tonality of the work, for instance the way a soundscape activates perception, makes an opening for sensation to foreground its differential operation of attunement. People are not acting alike at all, but I believe many share a sensation that something has changed profoundly in the way they conceive of their perceptual experience after visiting the piece. How such a sensation plays out individually over time relies on the changing milieu through which the sensation’s traces return, as a felt thought activated through a sensuous memory.

Affect opens up a temporal interval of change preceding stasis; such intervals are “dynamic thresholds” (Massumi 2002b, 43). *Dynamic* here means that these thresholds emerge through movement “expressing” in experience without having a discrete origin or finite goal. In having their own time-quality, these intervals bear the potential for immediate modulation to be

felt in experience. In *The Visitors*, one such dynamic threshold is the poem chanted repeatedly throughout the entire performance. In repetition, the tonality of the poem's expression varies while its content remains the same. Thus visitors to the piece, in attuning to the continued repeated differentiation, experience the elasticity of the content through its varied expressions. The expressive quality experienced depends as much on the musician's active performance as it relies on the visitors' movement in the space. And finally, the refrain marks one of the strongest sensuous resonances over time, being felt and silently repeated long after one has left the exhibition. What is experienced affectively are not discrete entities but the *relational movements* of processes of attunement in the making across a field of relations (Manning 2009, 13-17; also see Interlude). In this sense, affect generates a nucleus of attunement moving toward emergence while bypassing an immediate capture as present experience. Massumi writes that "the present is held aloft by affect" [where] "affect is not in time, it makes time, it makes time present, it makes the present moment, it's a creative factor in the emergence of time as we effectively experience it; it's constitutive of lived time" (Massumi and McKim 2009, n. pag.). Experimenting with affect in aesthetic practices allows for the making-felt and making-operative of experience in the making. Time modulations yield a different sense of the relation between body and space through sensation. Affect is thus not an entity or discrete signal, but an aesthetic expression which can be sensed through resonance and attunement, both over time and through time.

A body, and particularly a human body, feels in advance of its conscious registering an affective charge of potential-in-formation as the initial phase of experience. Its temporal disjunction with the present as felt, this after-image, points toward an immanent futurity, that is, a change or a coming differentiation. One can glimpse the temporal process of differentiation between *contraction* and *extension* in the contrast between the scenographic arrangement of the rooms at Rokeby Farm and the slick "totality" of the immersive installation in the gallery. There is an incompleteness to the space in the house as an analog, texturally rich, and lived space, compared to the absolute space of the digitally enhanced imagery on the screens and the precise sound in the exhibition. This contrast is felt affectively as an immediate productive deviation from its potential classification through habitual recognition. The fissures and friction of the visual lushness of the images' background become an active operator for *affective relaying* by means of the digital contrast. Without this disjunction of the digital and the analog the effect of perceiving perception-in-the-making as a temporal process would not be possible (Massumi

2011, 75-76). While affective attunement emphasizes the differential activation immanent to experience as event, relaying addresses the re-potentialization of a felt impression as actively operating through becoming as part of the event. In other words, it defines the process of temporal relation to constitute the passing of the present, once in its emergence and once in its perishing. The creative paradox of affect lies in the circumstance that emergence and perishing are not consecutive but co-composing (see the section on the “terminus” in chapter I). Such relaying is a differential mode of continuation, allowing new encounters and elements to alter the initial experience. The temporal problem affect poses lies in its operation as a simultaneously *immediate* and *direct registering of potential* in experience, while generating a felt bodily perception. In this way, sensation is attentive to experience’s temporal involution, and its *expression* in space and over time as an event.

#### *Virtual Time Forms and Depth of Field*

Affect folds the body and its milieu into an intense zone of mutual becoming. It is neither physical nor vital, but pre-individual and non-organic; it involves the virtual. Indeed, as a time form, affect “belongs to the virtual, defined as that which is maximally abstract yet real, whose reality is that of potential – pure relationality, the interval of change, the in-itself of transformation” (Massumi 2002b, 58). In the process of individuation, actualization happens through relations’ capacity of mutual activation of a collective becoming by means of resonance. (Resonance instigates an expression without the need for a synthesis.) *How* an expression comes to be felt concerns the entire *ecology of relation* constitutive of an embodied and sensed experience. Effects arise affectively, through sensation’s attentiveness to experience’s most open phase in becoming. The reality of potential virtually shapes what comes to be felt in experience’s sensuous effects. This virtual shaping, however, operates through the expressive actualization of experience. Experience arises through an ingression into the virtual and material ground populating ecologies of relation. In other words, experience constitutes the poles of an actualized and virtual dimension as its two tensors moving according to the specific singularity of a situation. Neither mere progress nor a straight connection between already constituted elements, experience defines the very nexus of emergence, change, continuation, and disjunctive expression affectively folding into each other in the making of a felt bodily event. From a research-creation perspective, the question at stake is less what things are than how they become.

Becoming is not a mere progression but a time form of its own. In becoming, things *are*, not according to an essence or substance, but due to their relational-ecological capacities to affect and be affected.

How can we account for the process of becoming as autonomously unfolding while leaving openings for participation? How is the potential of the “not-yet” shaping the passing of the present as duration and not a mere moment? Ingression is the term Whitehead uses to express how the virtual participates as realm of potential in the process of actualization (1978, 23). Ingression is becoming’s activity, a next-ness character of continuation in the register of potential. Actualization occurs through the heterogeneous resonance of materials. The double-sidedness of experience presents a paradox of the disjunctive unity constitutive of the singular time of the event. In this double-meaning of experience, a major philosophical shift occurs from “transcendental philosophy to immanentism, and empiricism into ethical experimentation” (Massumi 2002b, 33). In relation to aesthetic practices, immanentism emphasizes the composition of an affectively open field, contained enough to navigate perceptually but sufficiently uncontained to allow for the differential attunement of bodies in co-composition. Modes of ethical experimentation arise whenever this field of composition achieves a certain degree of self-referentiality, that is, an auto-affection maintaining a singularity of experience becoming part of an ecology of relation. But how can we conceive of such processes of affection as ethical experimentation immanent to aesthetic practices? And how does such an activity operate through distributing affects?

*The Visitors* addresses both the constitution of an immanent field of experience, and its ethical experimentation. The installation investigates an aesthetic politics at the heart of emergent experience. In the piece, the composition of heterogeneous human and more-than-human elements constitutes a delicately choreographed performative environment where visual and aural aspects mingle with bodily and mental movements. The aural-visual coupling can be described as amodal because it does not translate one movement into another, but, in affecting and being affected, generates a novel and singular occasion of experience beyond any pre-given mode. Sensuous perception works through amodal ingression into the virtual, as excessive potential immanent to what is being felt physically. Perception, beyond any modal confinement, has to re-invent its capacity – what it can do and become – depending on the affective-relational

field of aesthetic composition. Aesthetics defines the excessive fielding of affective resonance producing bodily events of perception.

The screens of *The Visitors* alter scale relations, shifting the apparent anthropocentric image of friends playing music into a different register. In addition to the repetitive sound loop of the refrain, the screens define the second strong element of the work's structure. Their almost cinematic size with extremely detailed images defines a contrast between the uncontainable texture of Rokeby Farm's spaces and the exhibition's visitors feeling quite proximate to the projected content. The size effects the mode of visual perception, preventing an overview while allowing for minute attention to detail.

One way of conceptualizing such an effect of simultaneous dispersion and focus of perception becoming aware of its affective compositional fielding is Deleuze's concept of the *depth of field*. He describes depth of field as an effect in cinema, in this case writing about Renoir and Orson Welles, where time forms become directly perceived in their affective capacity for relation. Depth of field denotes "the circuit through which something can flee: the crack" (Deleuze 1989, 85). The crack is a hole in time, a suspended moment or diversion from which new potential time-qualities arise. The depth of field is a quasi-diffuse but precise operation as activity that foregrounds a pure time-quality in perception. If we address the screens as one perceptual field in *The Visitors*, their size and detail constitute the potential cracks for vision detaching from the performers, thus opening different ways of apprehending the work affectively. The screens are thus differential points of entry, facilitated through the depth of field.

For Deleuze, the particular quality he attributes to the time image and its cracked nature has immediate political repercussions. He writes: "What is specific to the image, as soon as it is creative, is to make perceptible, to make visible, relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented *object* and do not allow themselves to be reduced to the *present*" (Deleuze 1989, xii). Against the object and a reductive sense of the present, Deleuze foregrounds a time-quality in specific images that multiplies and suspends the empirical order of chronological time. A time quality irreducible to the present emphasizes an affective layer of experience which operates across different temporalities, potentially contracting into an event which is always, and creatively, out of step with itself. The process of making relationships of time perceptible through the depth of field emphasizes a kind of perception beyond timed immediacy, that is, the a-chronological temporality of sensation. As an aesthetic procedure, the perceptual luring of

affect moves through sensation, opening up an account of the sensuous beyond contained sense modalities. The amodal operation of aesthetic experience as felt temporal multiplicity in sensation contracts in sensuous perception through a non-sensuous operation of affect. Non-sensuous perception, in the way Whitehead develops the term, is an “ingression of the immediate past on the immediacy of the present” (1967, 181). Affect is a time-envelope in support of the self-relational effectuation of the event. Before there is any form of sensuous perception in experience the event has already activated its self-relational fielding as a mode of non-human creativity into which different bodies enter by “laying down rhythm” (see Interlude). In *The Visitors*, non-sensuous perception attunes the field of experience through the material and temporal rhythms of the piece and from there felt perceptions of sensuous difference arise, like a sound, a gesture, or an object, always moving through the relational ecology of affective timing.

Perceiving time in the making through the depth of field effects a distribution of affective lures across the nine screens of the installation, inserting bodily perception into an instance of suspension. *Suspension* as felt extension of a potential timing impinges directly on the habitualized modes of classification, allowing bodily perception to navigate and select from our sensuous surrounding according to accustomed schemes of relevance. The aesthetic politics at the heart of *The Visitors* emphasizes the depth of field’s time operation, thus giving an extensive quality to time forms other than chronological and classified time. Where critical schemes of classification want to position new perceptual experiences into predefined categories (or even to make new ones), the effects of an affectively felt suspension engage perception in an experiential field outside any chronological order or classification. The absence of distinct political signifiers in the artwork, in this case, is the necessary condition allowing for an aesthetic politics to arise in the immediacy of a felt experience of suspension. Immediacy here takes on a double line of flight: from an instant subsumption under prescribed values, and from a mere moment in time. Such immediacy outside time thus opens up new forms of sensation beyond the most minute temporal measure.

The high-end projection technology and the presence of microphones, amplifiers, and headphones surrounding the performers on the screen mark a strong contrast to the romantic interiors and landscape. They remind us of the technically enhanced multiplication and collapse of disparate spaces and their respective temporalities. They actively participate in the plurality of relational space-time compounds actualizing collectively. In contrast to the rather romantic

ambience of the house and the act of playing beautiful music together, the physical presence and audio-visual effects of the technological ensemble remind us of the artificial and constantly re-assembled structure of the installation. The disjunctive quality of the work occurs alongside the heterogeneous time-fractals exposed through the technical operations (see also chapter II). First, there is the lived immediacy of embodied presence in the space. Another element is the minutely timed yet improvised performance. A third aspect is the time of digital processing and alteration beyond the time-scale of perception. The time of the material ground of Rokeby Farm functions as another temporal envelope with a historical dimension.

In *The Visitors*, all of the time forms attune differentially to one another, depending on the viewers' actual movement in the space. Alterations of perspective, tone, intensity, vision, and sound reveal more and more details of the piece without ever providing a sense of total overview or unity – in spite of the totality such immersive media environments tend to produce. The piece becomes “one” only as an after-image in memory, once the exhibition has been left. While moving through the space, I suggest, the perceptual capacitation of our senses is exceeded and triggered toward their time-relation in sensation. Sensation itself re-works the piece amodally (or the fragmented impressions thereof) as a feeling of collectivity, long after we have left the supposed collective togetherness with other visitors inside the exhibition. Collectivity thus takes on a temporal dimension, operating translocally, amodally, and by means of virtual modulation. Such an ethics of experimentation means to take up the lines of felt and thought sensation and re-insert them into new situations, practices, and techniques. How they make ingress into another actuality depends entirely on the newly emergent ecology of relation.

### *Techniques of Amplification and the Ethics of Event-Ethologies*

So far I have addressed the composition between visitor and immersive media environment through an affective-relational shaping of experience. Ecologies of relation, however, attempt to problematize the divide between individual entity, force, or individual, and its milieu. Affect as the interval of change foregrounds the active co-composition of so-called elements, forces, and effects in experience. The insistence on the virtual – as time forms in potential, as immanently constituting and constitutive of the actual – leaves us with a complex infolding of processes of amplification, demonstrating *how* some capacities are activated in experience while others remain backgrounded. Ecologies of relation include what has been backgrounded from an actual



occasion of experience as active virtual contribution in the form of potential. While there is contraction and expression, that is, actual felt bodily effects, there are infinite lines of re-becoming occupying and cueing the passages from one occasion of experience to another. This cueing, a certain amplification through suspense, of potential becoming, however, is not a mere possibility of future effects, but remains a-temporal and discontinuous. Moreover, “future” in this case does not refer to a coming-after of the present in a chronological manner, but a temporal lure for felt multiplication in the immediacy of an occasion. It is not yet “in time” and thus has its very own manner of becoming.

From this point of view, an ecology of relation is not a hermetic system but an *ecology of practices* (Stengers 2005a; see also chapters I and II). In such an ecology, each practice underlines a specific mode of affecting and being affected, without being like any other practice. In their difference practices resonate, thus producing a *differential* as an ecologically expressed peak of an experience, felt spatially and over time. In the overall circulation of differential attunements in relation, an *amplification* takes place (a dephasing) which selects several out of the many potential lines, but without disregarding the others. This process is politically relevant because an ecology thus marks not an already closed system but activates the potential to actively attune to an emergent situation “in the name of that which emerges” (Stengers 2005b, 999). In other words, it is a politics of *immanent* and *immediate* affection. Amplification is a major technique of the ethico-aesthetic practice of research-creation. Simondon suggests that it is a constructive process through which disparate elements constitute a continued system without either presuming the elements as substance nor synthesizing their togetherness into a finite unity. All aspects of the emergent “system” arise from a primordial base of disparity from which a process develops along an “uncontained dimension,” according to which relations become a system (2005, 207-208). In this sense, a system is nothing more and nothing less than an emergence, a point of actualization, enabling embodied navigation and resonance with an active and affective milieu. It is a set of practices and their respective activity attuning to and co-producing lines of amplification. Amplification dramatizes emergence as a technique through which disparate elements crystallize into a concrete situation. Simultaneously amplification yields beyond its actual iteration re-occurring as a future cause for another amplification. One could consider the affective temporalization of *The Visitors* through the refrain as one such continued line of amplification. Indeed, leaving the exhibition, the refrain [ritornello] stays with

you, evoking an intimate feeling of the collective experience and shared time with the piece and the other visitors. Beyond this microstructure, I would argue, the singularity of the experience as deeply moving but undifferentiated into identifiable causes (why the piece touches one so intimately) generates a potential feeling of different modes of living and collectively in the face of late capitalism's continued emphasis on individualism.

The political aspect of an affective process of differential attunement through an ecological and relational perceptual emergence fosters an *ethics* immanent to experience. Such an ethics is "ethological" in the sense that Stengers and Deleuze use the term. In her cosmological proposal, Stengers writes on the blend of "etho-ecological" practices, which affirm "the inseparability of *ethos*, the way of behaving peculiar to a being, and *oikos*, the habitat of a being and the way in which that habitat satisfies or opposes the demands associated with the *ethos*, or affords opportunities for an original *ethos* to risk itself" (Stengers 2005b, 997). Considered in affective terms, Stengers actually addresses processes of becoming and emergence rather than the behaviour peculiar to and habitat of a "being." She suggests that what passes as "relevant" in processes of emergence is the ecological-relational *quality* giving a certain tonality to an event. Ecology as ethology includes relation's capacity for affecting and being affected immanent to an event or occasion of experience. For Deleuze, it is affect that turns relations into pulses of becoming opposed to already confined beings. As affecting and being affected, an "animal or a human being [is not defined] by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; [but by] the affect of which it is capable" (1988c, 124). Moreover, capacity or capability is not a fixed value but an ecologically shifting process of valuation – that is, a qualitative activity.

The complexity between potential states and the selective process of expression is open-ended on both sides of the continuum. There is always a fractal expression in immediate bodily perception and a continued envelope of sensation, making forces of the past and potential futurities frequent the fleeting instant of the present. To make this complexity operable for bodily navigation, and also in relation to processes of thought, affect always denotes a capacity with "a maximum threshold and a minimum threshold" (Deleuze, 1988c, 124). But these thresholds are actually not quantitative measures but rather define qualitative potentials for attunement. In this sense, aesthetics is the art of attunement beyond the prefiguration of an ideal harmony. Etho-ecological aesthetics as affective attunement moves through the immanent *foyer* (often translated

into English as nucleus) of an event, producing a marker of the event's very own manner of timing. Thus the "art" in artworks such as *The Visitors* resides in making the attunement felt in its openness and differential capacity. The supposed structural elements of the piece, such as the screen, the musicians, the technological recording and projection devices, and the exhibition's visitors cannot but collectively co-emerge by means of temporally attuning to the singular time of the exhibition's event. In their ecological-relational outline, these elements define their mode of existence through speed and slowness, motion and rest, affecting and being affected: "The speed or slowness of metabolisms, perceptions, actions, and reactions link together to constitute a particular individual in the world" (Deleuze 1988c, 125). Crucially, *an individual here arises not necessarily as subject but as the singularity of an event of collective emergence*. The individual or element cannot exist without its moving milieu, its relations to other elements, and their capacities of affecting and being affected. In that sense, there is a feeling of potential, a specific power of existence of a work of art when it activates an ability to sense new potentials that increase the capacity of what an event is capable of. Everything moves through the ordeal of the passing present as a passing and the activation of thresholds of potential. For instance, the immense screens in *The Visitors* enable viewers to zoom in and meditate in close proximity to the specific material texture of the piece with almost overwhelming perceptual detail. Paradoxically, while one might regard the performers as the main content of the videos, they actually insert themselves into the detailed space surrounding them. Affects go astray on their own, luring perception into activating new thresholds of attention as yet un-felt. The distribution of proliferating affective lures is held together by the piece's sonic rhythm that diffuses the individual performers in their collective chanting. Visitors of the exhibition partake in affective activation processes by moving around, tuning into the different scenarios, and making felt the situation differentially due to spatial displacement. The piece thus emphasizes the constant ecological reworking of dynamic thresholds of bodily activation through a perpetual process of affective relaying. At the same time, the attunement of speeds generates amplifications and intensifications without pre-tracing all of the situation's potential outcomes.

In this sense, ethology is ethical because it allows for an open process of experimenting with different modalities and modulations of potential through emergent processes of experience. *The Visitors* emphasizes the propositional character of aesthetic experimentation by means of an ecologically attuned affective milieu. The affective-compositional texture of the piece is

primarily temporal: an ethico-aesthetic activation operates along the different speeds and slownesses of material and incorporeal elements frequenting the passing present of experience generating a singular mode of time, the time of the event. This process of timing is outside chronological time and is felt through suspension.

For the time of the event taking full effect, it has to distribute points of entry amplifying and intensifying the habitual bodily relaying of milieu and perception. Points of entry are temporal tensors. They operate by tweaking the minimum and maximum thresholds of a body's affective capacity through speeds and slownesses. In their modulation, the thresholds produce differential effects as felt activation of a new quality in experience. In *The Visitors* these modulations are minute and distributed throughout visual, aural, and spatio-temporal layers. A particularly strong effectuation of differential attunement arises through the contrast of digital and analog technologies, and their specific time qualities. While the musical instruments and voices function through analog processes of physical energy transformation, the digital recording technologies add another time quality, extending the range of speed and density of information in the space of the exhibition. Only through the almost overburdened material analog texture of the scenography, the piece enables a particular sense of timing through digital processing. The differential of speed and the fact that what appears as live performance is recorded (and repeated) generates a looping of processes of temporal capture and juxtaposition. In the work, suspension becomes a major technique of amplification because of the piece's singular time and speed. Beyond the aural ritornello, the performers on the porch make small, minute, and slow gestures, causing the scene to resemble an impressionist painting. Suspension thus shifts the mode of attuning perceptual attention to the content of the work, as viewers take in more and more details while moving with the rhythm of the song. The piece contains a chronological time form: that of the actual and staged performance of a musical piece, plus the final gathering and slow disappearance of the performers. However, due to the continued aural and visual looping, the end marks an opening rather than a closure, generating a desire for re-beginning. Not surprisingly, many visitors stay for more than one cycle of the video.

The blending of digital and analog processes in perception underlines the abandonment of a clear divide of natural and artificial in such ecologies of relation. Bodies are not necessarily organic, and perception is not natural, as much as digital processing is not necessarily artificial. All of these elements share a collective plane of ecologically attuned resonances enabling them

to become what they “are” relationally. In other words, ethologically they share an ethics of a more-than-human kind, generating mutual affection and being affected through the primary operation of collectivity. The more-than-human quality permeates all modes of existence and can be considered a form of affective timing. Affective pulses of timing are not timed yet; rather, they express pure relational potentialities attuning differentially by means of resonance. In this sense, Deleuze writes: “So an animal, a thing, is never separable from its relation with the world. The interior is only a selected exterior, and the exterior, a projected interior” (1988c, 125). Selection and projection are thus forms of temporal attunement, of affect making time. The transductive phase of collective individuation between different strata of the physical, organic, mental, and transindividual is the first phase of individuation, which Simondon calls *nature*. Nature here defines the relational reality of existence as such, not a realm opposed to the human (Combes 2013, 46; Simondon 2005, 305). In relation to ethico-aesthetic ethology, nature as the relational ground re-distributes the culturally inscribed power relations between humans, animals, vegetal and inorganic life. It takes account of each co-composing relational element as force to actively shape how experience becomes felt. From a relational point of view, this re-distribution is very different from merely giving the nonhuman a place in a human world of activity, or separating the world of matter or things from the world of the human. While these attempts, which appear in the work of Bruno Latour and some strands of Object-Oriented Ontology, point at the more-than-human activity in experience, they continue a mode of thought which presumes to know what the *human* is in opposition to the nonhuman. Instead, a type of relational realism as nature enables us to rethink what we mean by human as a relation-specific process of transductive and collective emergence.

What happens in aesthetic creation are processes of generating time-milieus for attuning differential speeds. Resonance and attunement as concepts and processes resist the capture and subsumption under a universal unification or synthesis like chronological and quantifiable time. Visitors to the exhibition do not have the same feelings or share the same experiences, but they are collectively attuned to a certain degree of intensity allowing for differential individuation. The ethico-aesthetic question is then: “How can a being take another being into its world, but while preserving or respecting the other’s own relations and world” (Deleuze 1988c, 126)? The paradox of affective timing resides in the double process of an individuation and its collective immanence on a shared plane or within an ecology of relation. We could also think about the

different voices and tonalities co-inhabiting the performance of *The Visitors* and the way they all insert themselves into a collective envelope of the emerging perceptual event while following their very own ways of mattering. This comes back to affect as

the sensation of invisible forces acting on a body; the abstract dimensions of sensation falling out of step from emotional responses and neural mapping. What comes first here is not the neutral representation of the states of bodily feeling, but the direct inarticulate sensation of change: the arrest or snapshot of perpetual motion, the residual rhythm traversing sensing-thinking regions of a body. (Parisi 2009, 190)

So how might *The Visitors* in its outline enable us to address the temporal folding immanent to affect and investigate its political potential as etho-ecological?

*The Visitors'* political potential lies not in a critique of something but in *how* habitually emergent experience is instrumentalized by an immediate subsumption under potential capitalist values in the present. One might consider the omnipresent capture of attention through algorithmically operating interfaces in contemporary media devices and omnipresent screens in our everyday life as one example of continuous and “unbroken engagement” for the sake of “information that can be extracted” (Crary 2013, 75). Instead, *The Visitors* proposes aesthetic techniques of suspending the immediate capture of attention, subsuming the emergent under the label of a present that has pre-empted its potential for unexpected emergencies to arise. It deals with economies of attention, the quantitative separation of time-chunks, coordinating activities such as labour, but also looking at art, writing essays, or checking emails on the subway. Indeed, the piece makes explicit use of contemporary technologies which some critics like Jonathan Crary and others consider as perpetuating mechanisms of control. In playing with the contrast between these technologies’ computational and aesthetic abilities and their ancient environment, the work emphasises awareness for new sensuous and affective points of inflexion, which are often inattentively subsumed under the continuous modulation of attention.

Affect, in making time or making time present, addresses the very clamour over techniques of timing, determining what comes to pass as present and thus immediately relevant. It also underlines the fact that the present is a mode of convention, order, or discourse, something to be resisted as a time form subsumed under certain modes of stratified surplus value extraction. Linear or chronological time is the most rudimentary aspect of experience, expressed in spatially confined situations. However, to endure, such constellations require temporal operations of

differentiation. The crucial political difference concerning *change* lies in either conforming to a predefined order or attuning differentially according to ecologically relevant attractors. In relation to sensation, affective timing potentially embraces the qualitative openness of emergent experience, adding new tonalities to an existing ecology. This qualitative leap is opposed in part to the mere quantification of such temporal operations for the sake of calculability. A differentially emergent nexus of relation can thus alter conventions of habit by amplifying unexpected potentials.

### *Qualitative Quantity - Seeds and Crystals of Time*

From an etho-ecological point of view, *The Visitors* combines different *techniques of affective timing* through the use of specific technologies. The work in itself is minutely produced by digital means and their capacity for precise amplification. The emphasis on sensation as a bodily zone of experience before it settles into distinct perceptions neither neglects the vital body and its sensuous constraints, nor does it disregard spatial confinement. On the contrary, foregrounding sensation means asking what more there is to experience than what can be found in contained conceptions of perception. In relation to ethology, this also means that experimentation requires a high degree of refinement without actually foreclosing potential effects in perception. To make the operational quality of affective timing felt, aesthetic practices have to amplify experience's immanent interval of change before it is subsumed under the habitual categorization of perception. The politics of aesthetics resides in amplification and intensification, thus emphasizing the excessive nature of ecologies of relation. *The Visitors*, I suggest, evokes such strong reactions on behalf of the audience because its affective capacities move through the *quantitative* dimensions of space and from there open up the *qualitative* dimension of time. Contrast defines the work's inner dynamic and allows for affective relaying.

As ecology, the work foregrounds relational activity as dynamic process of co-composition where the individual and its milieu never presume any state of totality.<sup>49</sup> Through its continued openness, the installation avoids predetermining how a body can *become with* the piece. Accordingly, it provides lures for activation over time, rather than presuming participation or turning the visitor into an actor. What becomes collectively sensed is the work's emphasis on activation, a certain manner of operation, a *how* rather than a pre-defined *what* of the emergent encounter. The digital-technological enables a relaying technique through the work, making the

spatially disjunctive temporally conjoin in the exhibition space. The work's collective quality resides in its open gesture in the movement of affective relaying. The collective as an emergent quality renders none of its elements into actors but activates their potential for resonance. In bodily experience, resonance moves through the body's affection as sensation and leaves traces as a kind of sensuous memory. This form of sensuous memory is intrinsically temporal and differs from recollection. While recollection builds on including experiences into a coherent temporal continuity, sensuous memory emphasizes the collective in experience as time-related. Time in itself is a collective operation directly activating its affective capacities through a sensuous memory attentive to the incipient temporal infolding of the event of experience.

The problem of chronological time versus a time of the event should not lead us to undermine the general experience of continuity attached to the quasi-causality of past-present-future. The problem resides in thinking chronological time not as opposed to non-chronological or qualitative time, but as *qualitative quantity beyond infinite division*. In other words, is there a way of addressing chronological time as quantitative beyond its relation to real numbers, and thus as finitely measurable? And further, is there a possibility of addressing such in-measurable yet continuous time as the capacitation of difference as such, that is, as potential for continued differentiation without having to claim any "outside of time?" The singular time of the event includes relational tensors shaping its unique tonality by resonating with past and potential future activations. As past activation, we might want to think of memory in different variations: individualized, collective, and cosmic. A future activation does not define a next instant following from the present, but an expansive fielding of potential, that is, a driving process of amplification coming from an ever-expansive passing of the present from the past. In relation to the affective politics of timing what is of interest here is the way in which time-involutions contract space (matter) and time (operation) into a sensible zone of activation, co-constituting a present of the act and a potential for activation. Thus time, it seems, defines the ground from which differentiations of singular events arise collectively.

Carrying singular grains of experience across a shared space and time turns the audio-visual seeds of the artwork into concrete perceptions. Each screen functions not as representation or source of an image, a body, and a sound but as a *seed* or *germinal time quality*. The chanting and looping, its slowness and intensity, creates an envelope of the situation where image and



sound become seeds for potential sensuous relay. Such differentiation underlines what Deleuze attributes to sensation and its relation to quality. He writes: “[sensation] is the operation of contracting trillions of vibrations onto a receptive surface. Quality emerges from this, quality that is nothing other than contracted quantity” (1988a, 74). Quality, vibrations, surface: these terms emphasize a germinal aspect in perceptual experiential emergence transducing heterogeneous elements into a contracted situation (on “situation,” see chapter I). Deleuze calls the virtual potential a “quantity,” not in the sense of finite numbers or ideal forms, but in terms of quanta, that is, seeds of potential emergence attuning and resonating with each other without having to unify as one.<sup>50</sup> The surface is the most apparent layer of perceptual and embodied experience, a surface that constantly shifts while inducing intensity. As temporal seeds, the screens remain separate while the sound generates a dynamic crystallization making *sense* of each screen’s singular expression as part of a collectively constituted situation. The screens are more than mere elements with defined attributes – their resonance goes beyond the constitution of a new *whole* or totality. Rather, their relaying moves through material encounters as an ecological procedure, as each aspect of an ecology (capable of affecting and being affected) potentially relays into what comes to be felt in sensation before it produces a discrete and induced perception. As seeds, the screens foreground “time as primary matter” through which each material aspect of experience has to pass (Deleuze 1989, 115).

Time as primary matter becomes the common ground of activity pushing towards expression; it “distributes affects” as differential time qualities (1988c, 124). It also defines the potential of emergent collectivity to form from the most heterogeneous relations. Through the distribution of seeds, *The Visitors* constantly produces new points of entry, and new relays, for attunement. To become effectively felt in perception, the seed needs to crystallize into an image, a felt sensation as after-image, a quasi-object. Herein lies its specific relation to the body as itself a continued and shifting mode of existence capable of self-affecting its eventful becoming. Such self-affection across differential temporal attunement might be called *memory*. This memory is coupled to sensation as “acting immediately on the nervous system, which is of the flesh” (Deleuze 2002, 31). Sensation, memory and affect define different modes of temporal composition. They are the actual “elements” creating an embodied experience across time and extending beyond the present instant. Sensation as affective activation of the nervous system does not produce a transcendental or ephemeral aspect of embodied experience but rather defines

an interval beyond the chronological measure of succession. Such time-involutions create an emergent collectivity built not on series of events but from an affective timing expressing itself differentially while emerging through time as primary matter. In the image as time-image there is a tendency toward emergence, a bare activity to perpetuate both change and self-differentiation. The seed is as much actual as it is virtual, affectively active with *incipient* effectuation (Manning 2007, 31; 2013a, 13-28).

In considering the screen as seed and germinal time quality, the question of its ecology and process of collective individuation arises. Embedded in time as primary matter, the seed's expressive tendency (affection) resides in its capacity for crystallization. As a chemical process, a crystal grows at the limit toward extension and depends on its solution (or milieu) – but both crystal and solution require mutual attunement to effectuate growth. Deleuze writes that by crystallizing, time splits into a past as constituted at the same time as the present and an “immediate future which is not yet” (1989, 81). In *crystallization*, the differential forces express their fractal collectivity in resonance to their milieu, marking a flicker of stability while underlining their dynamic relationality toward future extension. Deleuze takes this processual and spatial image and foregrounds its temporal aspects: “We do not know in advance if the virtual seed will be actualized, because we do not know in advance if the actual environment enjoys the corresponding virtuality” (1989, 74). In the process of extending the limit, each virtual image of a seed and its membrane-character becomes a potential attractor for resonance and attunement. However, these attractors have to be attuned to an environment and vice versa. Accordingly, an artwork like *The Visitors* must not be considered as conceptual in the sense of staging an idea, but has to function as a proposition for making the attunement process felt in its immediate occurrence, and thus allowing for differential experimentation with the affective threshold of emergence. As a felt sensation, the activity of moving-with and being moved abstracts in memory, creating bodily ingression through a future act and in a different context. Etho-ecology underlines the experimental character of an unknown that elides the present while affectively shaping the passing of the present. Through the formation of crystals, *The Visitors* proposes bodily encounters attentive to the temporal fragments attuning to an emergent event of perception. Rendering the crystal-nature of the aesthetic experience inside the exhibition sensible

produces a feeling of the work's virtual and actual multiplicity co-composing the immediate passing of the present.

But how are such intense fields of attunement composed? In *The Visitors*, a sensation of comfort and enjoyment affectively engages and coordinates attention in the exhibition space; it is a lure for attraction. The moving bodies are included in their capacity for relaying perceptually, through habituated modes of sensing and movement in space. In other words, they are "comforted." However, comfort alone would not generate the effects the piece actually has on its visitors. Something more is required, suspending the habit of comfort and making bodies inhabit the space over long durations, especially in times when art and its reception builds on critical distance, analysis, and well-defined categories for its social, political, and ethical value.

The work actually produces an abundant flow of micro-shocks and minute perceptions on the level of sensation, before reaching the level of conscious classification. Such fissures are the distributed seeds which might be found in a vase or wallpaper in one of Rokeby's rooms or the omnipresent witnesses of cameras and sound recording devices, modulating the recorded piece into a semblance of a live-performance in the exhibition space. Making these elements come alive collectively emerges from the technical compositional setup transducing across the moving bodies inside the exhibition. One might first be lured by the soothing tone of the piece but then more and more details take up space, slowly exploding perception to the point that any immediate capture of classification is suspended. In this suspension, another quality of the immediate arises where past and present collectively compose what comes to pass through sensation. Sensing experience-in-the-making relays through the body toward a differential operation of the overall event – and beyond. In the fissuring interval of affective attunement, an immediate capture and its suspension work alongside each other, as much as duration as a qualitative element and space as a quantitative element together shape experience.

### *Resisting the Present*

An affective politics of timing concerns ways of foregrounding how time-compositions at the heart of experience can become potential sites for aesthetic experimentation. As the time form of an aesthetic politics, affect addresses experience in the making and how it composes a felt sense of the passing present, which itself exists as an expansive field, a flicker between an ever extending past and a constantly attuning future. Affective politics is thus a politics of struggle

over the question of *how* the present defines either a field of experimentation or a pre-ordered structure adapted to immediate value extraction. Contemporary forms of capitalism produce an ever-increasing array of techniques and technologies for the extraction of surplus value from the most minute activities and gestures of the human and more-than-human sphere. In relation to the human body, one might think of tools for constant geo-location via GPS devices built into every smartphone, data-mining algorithms, or the unnoticed eye-tracking of webcam-users while surfing online, in an attempt to figure out where and how to place ads on websites. In times of informational value extraction one might consider an affective politics of timing through techniques such as *The Visitors*' use of suspension, which foregrounds a *relational value* beyond any calculable quantification. The affective interval of time in the making defines the contested field of both aesthetic techniques of creative time and the narrowing of potential emergence through strategies of preemption.

In its focus on rhythm and togetherness, as well as by folding spaces into each other through movement and timing, *The Visitors* resists the contemporary urge for representational conceptions of the political in contemporary aesthetic practice. Indeed, it contains a "resistance to the present," if the present denotes an immediate subsumption of a creative process under the capture of capitalist value extraction (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 108). The piece has an immediate effect on the way we move with and through it, on how we frequent it in memory and through sensation. In opposition to capitalist value extraction (i.e. the meaning or political relevance of an artwork), the installation evades an immediate critical distance often deployed in art critique for the sake of objectivity and clear positioning in the art world. It lures the visitor into a sensually charged situation, playing with the habitualized recognition of comfort, friendship, and joy while suspending these impressions from immediate capture and value extraction. Through this suspension-effect, an affective extensive and intensive time-fold becomes actively perceived. Affective politics concerns not only ways of making such temporal extension felt in aesthetic experience but also how it alters the general state of experience related to becoming. Put differently, the politics of affective timing extends our conventional conception of the present as caught between past and future toward time as primary matter and a singular time of the event. Both poles define the ground for differential emergence in experience.

While preemption attempts to preclude the range of potential felt in experience, an affective politics of timing fosters the emergent collectivity of time-relations working

transversally across different modes of existence. The famous half-second lag between a bodily sensation and its capture as consciously registered is the zone of an entire politics of affective timing. Repetition and habit define the primary vehicle for such a pre-emptive politic. In their operations repetition and habit seize upon the affective interval in experience which is capable of making time. On this point Massumi writes that,

we normally think of habit as bare repetition and of repetition as barren by nature. In Kierkegaard, as in Nietzsche and Deleuze, repetition is a positive force carrying the past forward into a next expression. It is a positively organizing, even creative, *force of time*. This implies that it may be captured and put to use. The elision of the operative moment may be operationalized. (Massumi 2010b, emphasis added)

Preemption attempts to inhibit the registering of potential affective charges in experience for the sake of control, and such politics are omnipresent, for example, in contemporary media productions, military research, and warfare tactics.<sup>51</sup> Making time affectively as an extensive field of potential becoming turns into “the-force-to-own-time” as the pre-orchestrated *distribution of the sensible* controlling how perception comes to pass in experience (Massumi, 2010b).<sup>52</sup> Preemption thus develops techniques of foreclosing affect’s uncontained openness by inserting mechanisms of immediate counter-actualization into the process of emergent experience. However, in affective timing, an immanent form of time’s own mode of resistance comes to the fore. Time as primary matter resists a mere subsumption under measured and chronological time. In becoming a time of the event, it contracts into materialities through space and time, as it marks a cut and novelty, disrupting chronological time. In fusing time as primary matter and the time of the event, a potential extensive field for experimentation opens to which sensation, if recognized in its temporalizing capacity, is intrinsically attuned. The distribution of seeds as germinal time quality cannot foreclose the actual crystallization, and the crystal cannot *fore-trace* its re-becoming in a future ecology of relation (Massumi 2011, 188-120). The making of the crystal is a dynamic expressive gesture pointing at the limits and edged of an emergent process. While the crystal includes a strong concept of structure, its structuration, as Simondon points out, always happens in resonance to its milieu. In other words, the seed and the crystal are embedded in an ecological process of attunement requiring specific conditions for their emergence to take place. In *The Visitors*, for example, time-relations constitute an immanently

felt potential across bodies in the midst of the expression of an experience. If carefully activated, aesthetic practices thus enable a shift from the commodifications of time and experience toward relational values beyond any finite measure.

Suspension as a counter-technique foregrounds sensation's immediate activation potential of the nervous system before any process of ordered rationalization takes hold of the present. The present, as Deleuze and Guattari attest, is the very time-field which capitalist value extraction seizes upon. The claim for immediate and lived experience as one type of participatory and socially engaged aesthetic practice, however, undergoes tremendous changes in times of preemptive techniques and technologies. Preemption structures and controls the former "performative contingency" or "liveness" of the immediate present. Indeed, what we conceive of as the present is a semblance of spontaneity pre-programmed toward preemptively controlled operations. Resisting the present is not a longing for a better past, nor a transcending of immediately felt experience, but rather it requires us to attune to asynchronous and differential aspects of timing in experience. *The Visitors*, for all its affirmative and non-critical aspects, proposes such a mode of resistance to the present through finely attuned techniques of suspension. The time of the piece is only superficially chronological while actually recomposing time forms ever anew depending on the movements being relayed. Time spent in the exhibition seems useless in the register of value extraction, whether as knowledge or a political message. The time of the useless, of the soothing and comforting, however, is utterly necessary in a time where every aspect of life is encroached upon, as capitalism extracts attention and commodifies the minutest bodily gestures.

The capitalist mapping of the anthropocentrically confined field of the sensuous, however, requires another deterritorialization of time towards more-than-human modes of existence. These modes are temporal before they are formal or objective. They contribute in their very own way to an etho-ecology "in the presence of" what emerges differentially and without any quantifiable foreclosure (Stengers 2010b, 1002). Such processes rarely crystalize into an object or finite entity. They are events and as such they depend on their very own constitution and values but also on an ethics "respecting the other's own relation and world." What arises from the differential occurrence of time forms are open-objects, quasi-subjects, contingent, heterogeneous, and problematizing fields of emergence. The perceiving subject attunes to these time forms by means of auto-affective openness for transduction and transformation. In other

words, it is a mutual opening through differentially attuned forms of timing which bring to the fore the temporally heterogeneous character of lived experience. The art of etho-ecological aesthetics resides in making the shock and suspense of a “specious present” felt, and in finding techniques of relaying and attuning to one’s very own field of potential (Massumi and McKim 2009). Such processes cannot arise, I suggest, without feeling the process of attunement of the collective temporality giving rise to and differentiating an embodied experience. The collective in resonance with a preindividual reality of potential provides a thinking-feeling of new forms of collectivity (not necessarily of a human kind) as political practice according to emergent experiences. From a different point of view, one might then think of Kjartansson’s work as an expression of temporal forces of resistance, not against a general zeitgeist but against a reductive treatment of time as chronological, measureable, and evaluated. Instead of generating orders for the extraction of sensuous surplus value, *The Visitors* distributes multiple points of entry into an intensive field activating the potential for the generation of new *relational value*. Such ethico-aesthetic practices might also propose a new form of aesthetics as a pedagogy of differential collectivity exploding conventional accounts of the collective as inter-subjective concept.

The relation between time and affect is not self-evident, if one neither wants to presume any form human-centred perception nor any stable concept of the subject and the object. The emphasis on a relational realism in chapter I and the re-positioning of perception in relation to immersive media environments inevitably draw attention toward time as the eternal passing of the present, but often without foregrounding time’s heterogeneous character. *The Visitors* provides a sense for the complex time relations composing experience through its specific aesthetics, that is, its expression and content. What seems at first like a convivial artwork celebrating friendship and good life turns out to be a highly choreographed and technically crafted piece of research into the affective making of time. Through the power of suspension, the actual effect of people staying over long periods of time inside the exhibition, the work draws attention to modes of creative practice coupled with life that cannot be subsumed under capitalist modes of immediate classification and value extraction. Against a general affective politics of pre-emption omnipresent from warfare to advertisement, *The Visitors* resists against a reduced conception of the present, where the present can always be explained before it actually took place.

New time forms of resistance always emerge throughout an entire field of relations. In their fielding, different nuances are foregrounded while others recede into the background. In *The Visitors*, this contrasting process moves through the affective attunement of differential time forms as seeds for potential as felt in their immediacy. The operational mesh through which both affective potentializing and pre-emptively foreclosing forces attune and effectuate relationally is never neutral. Thinking of time as primary matter and the time of the event requires us to account for an autonomous yet operable relay between virtual potentials and their actualization as bodily effects. The exploration of affective timing as political technique is a first investigation into the relational ecology traversing not only different states of the corporeal and incorporeal layers of experience but also their capacity for critically investigating contemporary forms of relational politics. Such politics, as I will explore in the following chapters, operate perceptually, materially, and virtually. Segueing to the political side of research-creation practices in architecture and activism outlined in chapters IV and V is an interlude on the artist Françis Alÿs. In exploring the notions of rhythm, consolidation, and transduction this interlude becomes the relay or in-between of the present project, a free radical in the toolbox of an emergent language of research-creation. The concepts raised so far: relation, activation, collective, immediation, and perception all find their playful and self-generative encounter in Alÿs's work, which itself uses the figure of the minor or gestural rather than the grand statement to emphasize politics in our everyday experiences.



## INTERLUDE

### RHYTHM, CONSOLIDATION, TRANSDUCTION: ON FRANCIS ALÿS'S *RAILINGS* <sup>53</sup>

#### *Rhythm's Relational Movement*

Between 2004 and 2005, the *Artangel* gallery commissioned artist Francis Alÿs to engage with London as a city. Drawing on his work on minor interventions into vernacular life in Mexico city, Alÿs developed practices of walking, culminating in what he named the *Seven Walks* cycle. Over the course of one year the artists experimented in various formats different ways of engaging with inner London through movement practices and their relational quality. Most of the actual “work” exists in the form of sketches and research material juxtaposed with videos documenting the walks, including a fox running through the National portrait gallery filmed by gallery's CCTV system or London's famous Coldstream Guards marching in different formations through the streets. One of these performances, entitled *Railings*, stands out for its simplicity and yet it underlines a deep perceptual engagement with the city's architecture and its urban environment.

Rhythmic patterns emerge from the sound of a drumstick gliding along railings, carefully moving across cars and striking wooden barriers at construction sites. Walking *with* the city, and running a stick along railings, shifts the visual perception of architecturally confined spaces into an urban polyphonic field. Carved out from the general noise-field of a city, the stick's drumming generates new resonances, foregrounding “different sonorities that the railings and architectural patterns [can] offer” (Alÿs 2005, 22). Instead of merely emphasizing built boundaries and zones of enclosure and exclusion, the rhythmic activation of the railings creates a relation between the act of performance, material thresholds and architecture as malleable. Alÿs explains that he is “feeling” the architecture with a drumstick in the act of passing as the “details of the architecture automatically generate a sound pattern” (2005, 22). The rhythmical encounter with architecture also allows him “to listen to the architecture” and to craft with the environment using rhythm as a foundation for performative practice.<sup>54</sup> What does such a rhythmic activation of architectural structures do? On the one hand, one might argue that “playing” architecture as an instrument brings out the hidden rhythmic quality of visually confined matter. Sound becomes the ephemeral “medium” for an acoustic aesthetic experience. Such an account leaves the divide between vision and sound intact as well as the separation between concrete and ephemeral.<sup>55</sup> On

the other hand, the sonorous activation of architecture can lead to an ungrounding of what is usually accounted for as stable. From this point of view, rhythm is always already immanent to a material ground.<sup>56</sup> Physically, sound is neither ephemeral nor immaterial but a force of agitated air pressure undulations closely intertwined with the perception of space and duration (Blessner 2007, 21-26). Alÿs's use of sound as activating aesthetic expression taps into the *rhythmic quality of matter* as a milieu. Matter here defines an "exterior milieu of materials" that weaves through rhythm with an "interior milieu of composing elements," an "intermediary milieu of membranes and limits, and an annexed milieu of energy sources and actions-perceptions" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 313). For Deleuze and Guattari, matter and material are different aspects of a specific mode of activity in experience. On the one hand, matter defines "the unformed, unorganized, nonstratified, or destratified body and all its flows" (1987, 49). On the other, material denotes an engagement with matter as a "sensible intuition of variation" producing individuations through events (1987, 369). Thinking about matter and material as part of a rhythmic weaving of milieus helps to see the phenomenon of sound as an activity of collective individuation. *Railings* proposes not simply another way of perceiving a city's architecture but an entirely new aesthetics of space and time through rhythm. From this perspective, rhythm functions as an enabling quality for the emergence of aesthetic experience. Deleuze describes the activity of creation as a practice of insertion further explored below. He writes, "one never commences; one never has a *tabula rasa*; one slips in, enters in the middle [milieu]; one takes up or lays down rhythms" (1988c, 123). Playing architectural boundaries such as cast iron railings like a percussion instrument activates a new perceptive register integral to the sensual outline of inner London's architecture. In relation to aesthetics, the performative intervention activates with the encounter through movement as the milieu of perceptual emergence. Through the activity of laying down rhythms, the movement between matter and material weave into the sensuous fabric of experience.

Alÿs's performative intervention was filmed and assembled into a video-installation for the final exhibition of *Seven Walks* in 2005. The exhibition shows three screens and sound streams juxtaposed in a kind of triptych generating a polyphonic rhythm machine. The machine's main operation consists in *modulating* the original footage into a dense and quivering experience of perceptual multiplicity. Rhythms of drumming paired with the continuously walking body on the screen dismantle any stable state of space and time as continuous and coherent. While gazing

at one screen, aiming at bringing sound and vision into line, a parasitic rhythmic pattern or visual feature from another screen or sound-system enters and takes the experience somewhere else – “sensation going for a walk.”<sup>57</sup> The art installation showing the performance in the gallery augments the play of rhythms composing a city as various processes of bodies in movement. These bodies are not necessarily of a human kind, but Spinozist bodies, not made of substance, but of speed and slowness, motion and rest. It is through shared rhythms that such bodies can attune to each other and find resonance in a coming collectivity. While rhythm defines an enveloping ground for such attunement, resonance generates a relay between a body’s own dynamics and the singular dynamics of other bodies.<sup>58</sup>

Walking with a stick in the city is neither an extension of the human body as prosthesis (McLuhan 1966, 19), nor does it simply signify the manifestation of power imposed through built confinements. Rather, *Railings* foregrounds the productive force of relation as a way of “capturing forces” through aesthetic practices (Deleuze 2003, 49). Movement defines the second crucial aspect for emergent perception. Considering relation as movement enables it to take on a creative role rather than act as a mere connection (Manning 2009, 16-17). Before there is anything there is always already movement. To become as a moving-with, such a process depends on relations as productive forces. In *Railings*, rhythm describes a *relational movement* weaving throughout different milieus to constitute a perceptual experience. As Manning writes, “relational movement is one with the world, not body/world, but body-worlding” (2009, 13). As potential sonorous event, it is immanent to architectural patterns; relational movement is always already there, ready to actualize in a capturing of forces. The drumstick becomes the lever of a rhythm-machine ready to modulate into a new assemblage – a relational field of bodies, movement, and sound – a field of experience. In relation to the urban fabric as generative of different modes of movement, as well as their capacity and conduct, *Railings* raises the crucial question of how to craft with the relation potential of rhythm towards a gesture that emphasizes the political immanent to the aesthetic?

The relational movement in *Railings* hints at the emergent point of aesthetic perceptual events. At the same time, bifurcations happen: we are accustomed to distinguishing sound from a moving image, differentiating a built construction from a moving body. What Alÿs’s work might offer (in addition to a logic of the included middle moving beyond pre-defined terms ready to be connected) is a reworking of “habitual inattention,” which shifts toward “attentive habit”

(Massumi 2011, 100). Habit is not necessarily a bad thing; it allows a minimum degree of navigation through a space-time of infinite perceptual lures. Hence, perception and habit feed off each other. The crucial question concerns its mode of *repetition*. In habitual inattention, perception overlooks the potential difference immanent to repetition. Attentive habit, on the other hand, allows for perceptual continuity without glossing over the differentiating nuances ready to be taken up at any moment. In a similar way, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that “every milieu is vibratory, in other words a block of space-time constituted by the periodic repetition of the component” (1978, 313). The component is what becomes directional, which is carried through habit in its process of differentiation as a transversal movement across milieus. Rhythm defines the drawing together between different milieus as heterogeneous space-times. From here we can see rhythm as the interval of a movement-across constitutive of a complex relational field of space-time components.

In *Railings*, movement, rhythm, and resonance are the techniques operating in the assembling of aesthetic expression and experience. The power of the work, its singularity and consistency, is the power of constant potential, transformation, or rather modulation – a sensational shock that is material and abstract, without opposing the one to the other. Through sensation as immediate shock, it opens up an incorporeal dimension which might be called thought, or a “shock to thought” (Massumi 2002a, xxxii). In attuning rhythmically, bodies contract through this shock into a specific mode of resonance that cuts across physical, vital, and mental bodies. It draws on matter and material through the relational operation of the associated milieu in individuation. The immanent relational entanglement of sensation and thought “disallows any primacy of the one over the other” (Deleuze 1988c, 18). Two crucial questions arise at this point: 1) How does an aesthetic practice based on relational movement compose itself? 2) How does it maintain a certain consistency as an act of re-beginning?<sup>59</sup> In other words, aesthetic practices underpinning relational movement are concerned with and foreground questions of *becoming* and *duration*.

### *Matter and Counterpoint*

Alÿs’s practice is not site-specific, but rather operates as an exposure of an immediate encounter with the city as *emergent milieu*. Right from the outset it is clear that the city as a milieu is nothing pre-defined but rather operates as an emergent assemblage of materials, desires, and

encounters constituting complex and dynamic *ecologies of relation*. *Railings* thus engages with the city as a material or “vibrant matter” in movement (Bennett, 2010). Instead of imposing forms onto a material ground (as classic accounts of matter-form dialectics suggest) Alÿs’s techniques open up an interstitial zone between matter and material from which perceptual events emerge. *Perception* here functions as an interstice allowing for the emergence of both subjects and objects through a *potential* for perception. The notion of matter in relation to perception undergoes a transformation in the way Deleuze and Guattari understand the term. Investigating the activity of emergence and perception they speak of a *matter of expression* underlining the incorporeal aspects of matter which allow for a rhythmic relaying in the activity of an actualization (1987, 315). In *Railings*, the vibratory capacities of the material modulate through the act of friction, effectuating a shift in the expressive capacities of formerly heterogeneous elements. The movement activity generates an interstitial matter of expression, the performative act, while activating the rhythmic capacity of the shared field of material resonance between stick and railings, walls, or cars. While rhythm defines the capacity for the emergence of a new event to become expressive, the expression itself occurs as an attunement across the field directed towards a perceptual dimension of experience.

How can we understand the processing of what Guattari calls “matters of expression” towards a perceptual event while maintaining that expression and perception are self-constitutive and autonomous (Guattari 2013, 64)? In *Railings*, this process happens through the relations between material, resonance, and rhythm. The drumstick rubs against different materials, tapping into material’s molecular and rhythmic structure, resulting in audible resonances. In its autonomous state, perception always moves through the *affective tonality* of an event, through its capacity for a relational effectuation (Whitehead 1967, 176). The tonality is a rhythmic pulsing of difference and repetition of corporeal and incorporeal forces. Rhythm as the enabling quality for sonic action-perception resides as much in the moving body as in the drumstick, the railing, or wall – and the vibrating air with its pressure oscillations becoming audible as sound. The actual performance in *Railings* is not the artist having an idea to walk around with a stick drumming on railings and walls, but an ecological co-composition of multiple rhythmic bodies open for mutual resonance. Drawing this movement back to the question of thought as self-abstracting potential of the actual event, we might want to address Alÿs’s practice as a mode of

material thought. Such thought is concerned with a matter of expression while seeking out potential modes of co-composition in a field of rhythmic activation.

The material and mattering ecology emerging through Alÿs's practice resonates with other (more organic) definitions of ecology. The notion of "counterpoint" taken from Jakob von Uexküll's work *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* provides an account of relations as productive forces for the emergence of complex ecologies (2010, 190-195). His work on ecologies concerns a relational model of life where things do not operate by defined cause-effect relationships but through a permanent process of mutual activation through counterpoint. Using musical terms, von Uexküll describes the emergence of any form or formation as "melodies in counterpoint" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 314). He also provides an example of a coffee cup where the handle becomes the relay between hand and coffee (2010, 191). It is counterpoint, he explains, that influences the motif for producing a cup – the material from which the cup is formed plays a secondary role. Counterpoint defines the qualitative centre or middle for a co-emergence of hand and cup, relayed to further bodily compositions of counterpoints, such as a the counterpoint between hand and viscera and cup, with the picking, shipping, and buying of coffee beans. Counterpoint, similar to rhythm, is multiple and immanent. What appear as pairs, such as the hand and the handle, defines only the most narrow, minute, and concrete situation of an encompassing ecological composition of relational movement. In relation to Deleuze and Guattari's developments on the rhythmic weaving of milieus, counterpoint addresses the question of a continued transcoding, the movement of one milieu into another, without either erasing the other milieu's singularity by creating a new whole, or remaining unchanged by this encounter. Counterpoint as transcoding means that the rhythmic quality in experience is "difference, not repetition, which nevertheless produces it" (1987, 314). Accounting for difference in acts of repetition defines the *art* of any material thought.

Beyond the relational and moving outline of an ecological process, the main question concerns how an aesthetic expression maintains a certain degree of consistency. *Railings* shows how the process of aesthetic emergence and the development of inter-related counterpoints is intrinsically dynamic. *Becoming* describes this dynamic process. An element of crucial importance lies in the particularity that becoming is not defined by the connection of many little parts. On the contrary, it is a collective attunement of qualities through counterpoint. For instance, the hardness of a stick and the railing becoming a relational counterpoint for the

emergence of sound. Both have to have the other “in counterpoint” to give birth to a third dimension, that of sound. It further proposes to account for form not as something fixed but as a metastable result of different matters and movements interlacing their potential forces. The capture of forces is less a capturing of a concrete material than the temporal quality of an ecological emergence. How to work and create with these qualitative forces and their potential for counterpoint? What are their operational capacities?

### *Consolidation, Transduction and Insertion*

*Consolidation* concerns the constitution of consistency, which poses the question of how things hold together, allowing for heterogeneous components to be part of the same relational field while maintaining a degree of autonomy. Deleuze and Guattari describe the process of consolidation (which they take from Belgian sociologist Eugène Dupréel) through three central aspects: First, “there is no beginning, from which a linear sequence would derive, but rather densifications, intensifications, reinforcements, injections, showerings.” Secondly, “there must be an arrangement of intervals, a distribution of inequalities, such that it is sometimes necessary to make a hole in order to consolidate.” Thirdly, “there is a superposition of disparate rhythms, and articulation from within of an interrhythmicity.” And, they conclude: “Consolidation is not content to come after; it is creative. The fact is that the beginning always begins in-between, intermezzo” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 329). Consolidation accounts for an always already active relational movement instead of proclaiming the myth of a unique beginning; and yet, there is a quality of *emergence* or *difference* immanent to its activity. Consolidation underlines that continuity as a felt quality in sensation operates through the in-between as a felt change or differentiation. It is a relational continuation.

The sonorous expression deriving from Alÿs’s walking consolidates forces in a way that intensifies a rhythmic and resonating quality, arranges intervals and superimposes disparate rhythms. This becomes particularly clear in the installation, where not only sonic rhythms are superimposed but different material rhythms are perceptible: the rhythm of the body walking, the architectural rhythm, the rhythm of projected images, the sensual polyrhythm of the audience’s bodies, and, more subtly, the rhythm of computational processing. Accordingly, the process of becoming through consolidation is perpetually doubled. Through the installation, the

consolidation processes of the prior performance re-consolidate again in a relational ecology of the exhibition. Consolidation is a process of continuous variation while activating continuous becomings; it moves rhythmically across while instigating processes of emergence through resonance. In *Railings* what endures in the different encounters of materials –of the stick, the walking body and the railings or the media materiality of the installation – is the qualitative capacity for composing sensations. In resonance, these sensations receive their singularity as being felt while maintaining their rhythmical mooring. Consolidation is one way to speak to the ability of a series of processes to both be felt in their difference and to be experienced as one. Consolidation thus marks a point of *rhythmic and differential attunement* (Massumi 2011, 129).

Becomings of continuity mark a cut, an emergence of a new process or resonance, which I call *transductive dephasing*. Transductive dephasing concerns consolidation's second aspect, the making of a hole. The hole is not a void but a new *tonality* or *resonance* emerging from the polyrhythm of a field's relational movement. Transduction describes resonances between processes of consolidation, while dephasing underlines the emergence of a new process of individuation. How do we move from a consolidation of the stick and the railings to another counterpoint of sound and sensation? How can we understand the shift between the stick and the railings to sound and sensation? Where does the consolidation occur that allows these to come together in experience? If we see transduction as the activity that dephases from one process toward another, making felt the difference between different kinds of events, how can we also understand the bridging of this difference in sensation? Transduction makes the process of attunement in consolidation felt as a mode of expression (Simondon 2005, 32). This quasi-structuration in expression, however, includes an attentiveness to the *how* of this emergent process and not only its *what* – it concerns an immanent feeling for potential activity through sensation (the shock in sensation I referred to earlier). Through transduction new process-lines constantly unfold in resonance with consolidation's force of attunement. In other words, resonances occur on top of shared rhythmic attunements.

Transduction and consolidation both emphasize the attunement of heterogeneous elements through a field of experience, as well as the active differential processing at the heart of sensation. Sensation then is the zone of experience in the making, of rhythms interlacing and resonances occurring, neither of them fixed but actively moving in potential attunement. From this perspective, one could say that *Railings* is an aesthetic practice of *activation* through



*insertion*. As aesthetic practice, insertion accounts for the immanent relational movement in a field of experience: the different rhythmic potentials populating it. It renders the operation of transduction into a technique. Insertion as a technical procedure seeks ways of attuning to a field of experience by capturing forces, such as carving out an actively sonorous quality of materials allowing us to feel and think the mutual co-emergence of bodies, architecture, and movement in new, potentially empowering ways. Insertion also enables us to think of aesthetic practices through capturing forces as attunement and as not an “invention” of a genius. The political value of insertion potentially alters the way we think about participation, as one major paradigm in contemporary art and media practices. Insertion as a practice of participation respects the relational movement actively operating in a field of experience. It seeks ways of becoming-with that field rather than predefining how to participate. The preformation of participation as a political act of control enforces attunement, as opposed to the mode of participation I am outlining here. The public announcement at US airports “thank you for your participation” preforms modes of attunement to a situation of travelers preparing their documents correctly for smooth passport control. It is an attempt to narrow the actual potential for participation through relational movement as a body-worlding. Opposed to the foreclosure of attunement insertion offers a different possibility of practicing attunement as creative act. As a general activity of participation in a worlding, insertion enables an emergent engagement with its ecology. Such acts of insertion and participation define the base-operations of relational activity of existence. The act of creation requires the development of techniques of relation capable of capturing forces without preforming their potential for activation. Such an aesthetic practice of opening up potential is quite different from the media-assisted structuration of everyday life. Here the control of *possible* activation is a key concern for all sorts of consumption, civil conduct, and maintenance of flows of activity – for the most part aimed at maximum surplus extraction in late capitalist control societies (Deleuze 1995, 177-182).

In relation to Alÿs’s work, insertion operates through consolidation. There is a consistency in walking along the railings, in feedback loops, its media-enhanced capture and presentation – they all attune to each other. Insertion marks a process of modulation rather than translation. The video-capture of the actual performance does not represent the performance in the exhibition dispositive; rather, it inflects minor gestures, sonorities, and visual material in a way that the juxtaposition results in an amplification. Amplification is an increase in potentiality

in the expressive act of capturing forces. Such a process becomes art due to its refinement and continuous re-working of the material through a field of continued problematization (i.e. walking for an entire year). In other words, amplification is the constructive passage between disparate elements to attune towards an expression that extends the range of possibilities in thinking and feeling becoming (Simondon 2005, 207). In this way, *Railings* uses different modes of amplification through a media milieu to activate the aesthetic and political potential of urban structures of confinement.

Any act of creation requires thoroughgoing practice, a sustained movement-with and attentiveness-to certain aspects of life and their materialities. In such practices one becomes capable of amplifying singularities that open up a collective individuation with other practices and their singular modes of inflecting matter. It also makes use of transduction as the point where new process-lines take on their very own activating capacity. This activation-process requires expression: it has to pass through sensation, not as a totally discrete experience but rather a metastable quasi-structuration with an immanent quality of more activity to come. Here, sensation is a feeling for coming activity in the immediacy of an event of expression, or “sensation is the direct registering of potential” (Massumi 2002b, 97). In this way, consolidation and transduction underline a kind of proto-politics of sensation: a politics where the emergent is as crucial as the continuous, and where the context counts as much as its modulation through a singular event or situation. In sensation, experience receives its most ample phase where the potential of becoming is held aloft in its emergence and thus allows for experimentation. Art practices experimenting with the emergent quality of sensation are one way of addressing the politics of aesthetics.

Capturing forces does not describe a volitional act of the artist/creator, but a kind of second-order re-emergence among the self-generative process of matter always already moving relationally. Crucial for a capturing of forces in a field charged with rhythmical potential is the question of the entry point. Alÿs explains: “The entry point is always a detail, an aspect of architecture, or some social mechanism, a tic, some kind of phenom[on] which recurs throughout the city. Then you can start opening up a larger field of investigation” (2005, 16). Accounting for rhythm as an in-between quality for emergence provides the notion of creation with a specific self-inventive capacity. The stick can be banged against the railings in different ways and the walk can be slowed down or accelerate, what becomes expressive is due not only to

the performer but most importantly to the rhythmic intervals or in-betweens that make the relational field of an aesthetic experience become alive. The sound patterns, from banging to scratching and rubbing, activate perception as an ecological event. The minor activations of the patterned urban fabric in Alÿs's work find a major point of entry: the omnipresent railings that generate a perceptual rhythm and bodily conduct throughout inner London. The pattern defines the entry point and expands it through the technique of walking with the stick, a habitual and embodied act. The entry point of the performance allows for an immediate affective engagement with the work – one can literally feel the stick's movement in one's own hand while visiting the installation. The playful gesture of running a stick along railings is amplified in the exhibition dispositive. The primary point of entry expands and abstracts by activating further dimensions immanent to the work. What does the audio-visual rhythmic expression tell us about the way we engage with a built urban environment? How do underlying patterns structure the event of perception? What other modes of moving-with the world might be activated in a future engagement with these patterns or their alternation? The point of entry is molar as much as it is molecular, in the way Deleuze and Guattari explain the difference. For them the molar defines an aspect of experience where the potential movement is confined in a repetitive structure with minimal deviation, for the sake of control and order. The minor emphasizes the off-beat of the molar in experience, pointing at the impossibility of finite structuration (1987, 217). In other words, the minor is not opposed to the molar in any dialectical sense but marks a difference from the dominant refrain of a discourse, situation, or act. This minor difference is itself differentiating and procedural, while the molar attempts to control this differentiation, often resulting in effects of redundancy and deadening habit. *Railings* takes the pattern of a material confinement and activates from its molar enforcement of power and structuration a rhythmic potential for playful reactivation. The modulation of the actual act of walking with the stick multiplies the patterning towards an encounter of rhythmic emergence on top of the primary entry relation of architecture and sound. This multiplication is crucial, as it generates a technique of relation that produces further techniques as a mode of collective individuation. Indeed, the inventive force in research-creation is the proliferation and relaying of techniques.

### *Undoing Dialectics?*

The function of rhythm in *Railings* supports an outline of aesthetic practices and modes of thought beyond pre-defined binaries. Alÿs's actual performance transduces into always-new consolidations. Furthermore, it facilitates thinking about processes of becoming and their duration without assuming opposed terms which have to be synthesized in order to yield a "solution." Relational movement occurs always from the middle of an experience, which is not a point or a beginning. It rather defines a rhythmic nexus of potential resonances. Until the very point of an emergence it is not possible to predict how the process of becoming will unfold. From this point of view, aesthetic practices operating through relational movement are non-dialectical in the traditional definition of the term. Consolidation, transduction, and insertion are techniques that allow for a thinking-practice that considers binary elements as mutually included in each other – a logics of counterpoint, not of opposition. Simondon explains this aspect by criticizing Hegelian dialectics based on the synthesis of two opposites. He emphasizes that the *negative* is not a second-order reaction (anti-thesis in Hegel) but that there is an immanence of the negative in the primary condition. He continues to outline the negative not as an opposite but as the aspect of an emergent event whose potential is withheld from actualization (2005, 34). Such withholding from actualization is different from erasing it. The negative has its presence, virtually, as a counterpoint, without necessarily having to actualize. The emergence of an event is therefore not a synthesis and the constitution of an entity, but part of a continuous unfolding of meandering torsions. We can imagine how the polyrhythmic experience in Alÿs's work foregrounds this continuous yet heterogeneous process of becoming – and its endurance.

Aesthetic practices activate sensation. Such a process requires entry points. The material process of finding an entry point in artistic practices – for example, the activation of the rhythmic qualities of railings – finds another expression through the philosophical process of problematizing. To problematize means to generate resonances among different matters (abstract as much as concrete) to mutually and relationally activate them. In this case the problem at stake is one of rhythm, its autonomous relational quality, and the way it works upon bodies as much as thought. It is transduction that makes this relation apparent. Emphasizing the qualitative-relational autonomy of rhythm through aesthetic expression yields a differentiation of thinking

through feeling. What aligns artistic practice and philosophy is their capacity to generate fields of resonance for creation. In either case it is not a question of imposing a form or idea but enabling processes of consolidation, transduction, and insertion across heterogeneous dimensions. We might want to replace dialectics with a general operation of differentiation. Moving through counterpoints and varying rhythms, thought and aesthetic practice always emerge from the shared problems they create – a relational movement on the go.

## CHAPTER IV DIAGRAMMATIC URBANISM: PROCEDURAL ARCHITECTURE AS A PRACTICE OF ACTIVATION

### *Introduction*

Diagrams play a crucial role in architectural, artistic, and scientific practices. As a general concept, diagrams often define a technique for visually expressing the relations between entities or movements as part of a complex system. They sketch out, provide overviews, and connect. Beyond the representation of complex systems, diagrams can also emphasize process and movement, in addition to connecting entities. From a relation-specific point of view, diagrams provide a vital material investigation of the movements between a visual representation of complex systems *and* their potential for activating movement at the same time. Through the work of architect Teddy Cruz, I will outline a conception of the diagram as both a visual technique attentive to relations, and as a concept underlining the movement across and among these relations. The particularity of diagrams, if used as technique of relation, is their double function as visual tool of confinement and a means for expressing movement beyond confinement. Especially in architecture and the arts, diagrams are used to open up a dynamic dimension in processes of formation. One might think of architect Ben van Berkel's diagrams for *Möbius House*, whose construction is based in the dynamic form of a twisted Möbius band, or artist Gordon Matta-Clark's *Untitled (Energy Forms)* (Fig. 01, Fig. 02).

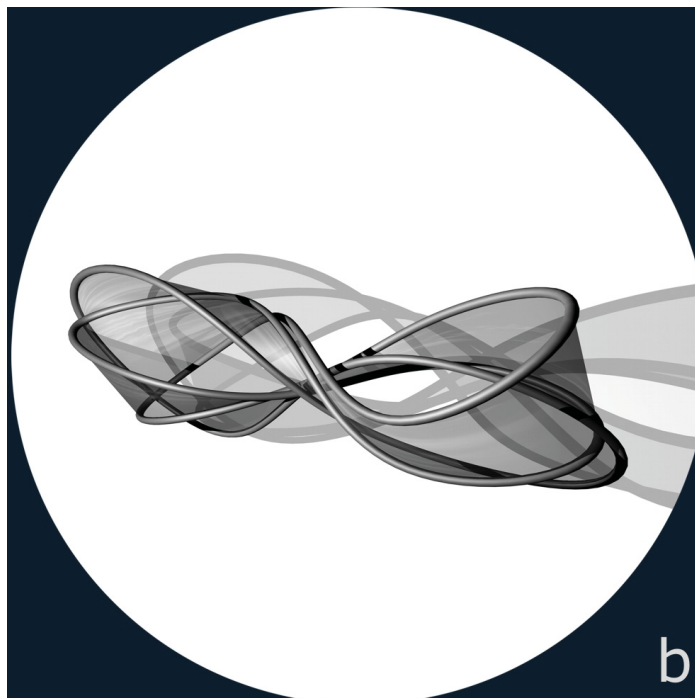


Figure 01 – Ben Van Berkel, *Diagram Möbius House*

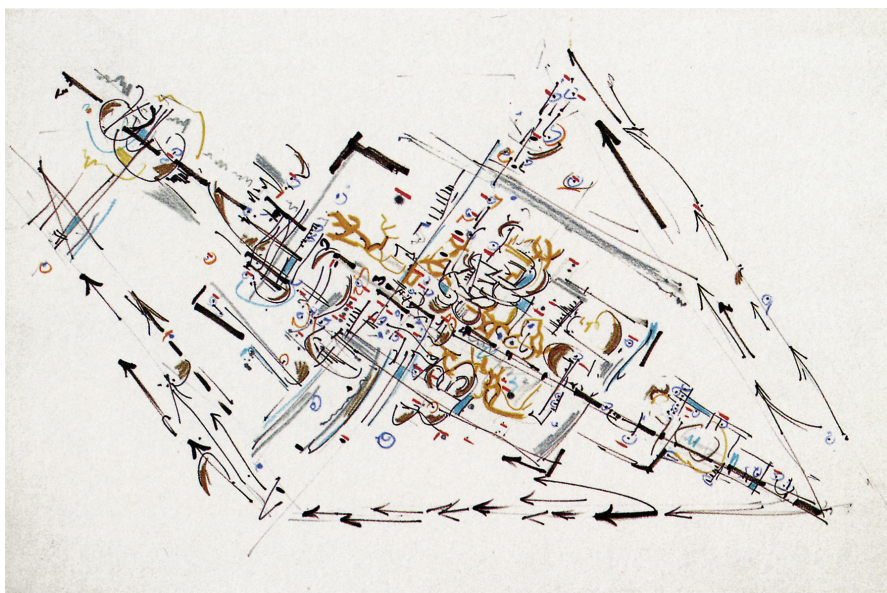


Figure 02 – Gordon Matta-Clark, *Untitled (Energy Forms)*

Cruz’s architectural procedures and practices make extensive use of diagrams, as he folds social, economic, and material dimensions into each other to develop propositions for what he calls a *transborder* urbanism “beyond the property line.” His diagrams often include structural

elements, common to visualizations of specific states of affairs, and combine them with a wild range of colours, photographs, lines, and arrows, weaving highly complex visual expressions that sometimes suggest Situationist International work on psychogeography or Dadaist collage art. However, their purpose is highly pragmatic, seeking to communicate problems of urban development in migrant communities to a public audience, while paying specific attention to the power of aesthetic refinement. His aesthetic approach fuses with political and activist concerns while avoiding subsumption of one under the other.<sup>60</sup>

Through his diagrams, I will argue, an aesthetic dimension operating on the level of perception activates a political dimension of empowerment and activism. Cruz's techniques resonate strongly with one of research-creation's major interests: How to find modes of political practice based on emergent relational qualities in experience, across different modes of existence and ways of acting and thinking. In relation to aesthetic practices, such endeavours require us to think and practice in a way that emphasizes ecologies of relation and their immediating potential for movement and expression. Estudio Teddy Cruz provides inventive *techniques for activation* that address socio-political problems pertaining to issues of transborder migration, exploitation, and community activism. These diagrams operate as techniques for aesthetically opening up a political issue towards a process of empowerment and direct engagement seeking change.

### *Procedures over Products*

Cruz's practice is a hybrid mix between architectural thinking and artistic ways of communicating his ideas, or in his words "between research and practice."<sup>61</sup> From an architectural point of view his practice is defined by a unique mix between re-development projects, mostly for Hispanic migrant communities in the US, fused with conceptual developments in community organization and activism, and a particular interest in flows of humans and goods across national border-zones worldwide. Born and raised in Guatemala and trained as an architect, Cruz teaches in the Visual Arts department at UC San Diego, where he has worked for almost twenty years on urban development along and across the San Diego-Tijuana border zone.<sup>62</sup>

While architectural propositions are often the initial motive for his work, Cruz states, "we can not only design fantastic buildings, but also configure social, political, and economic



agendas that can yield particular architectures and special configurations” (Cruz and Sokol 2008, n. pag.). His rather unconventional architectural approach becomes apparent when looking at the website of Estudio Teddy Cruz (ETC). The works presented are not necessarily “architectural” in the conventional sense of built structures.<sup>63</sup> The site contains only videos showing ETC’s projects and design research models, ranging from design propositions often developed along specific devices (like a light-weight scaffolding), to documenting workshops held along the San Diego-Tijuana border, or a diagram-movie explaining the negotiation processes for urban re-development between communities, political stakeholders, and industry representatives. Only one project, Casa Familiar, presents a housing development, explored under the title of “the performance of a small parcel.” Symptomatic of all of the project presentations is the use of bright colours and collaged photo-material as a common thread throughout the works; indeed, ETC provides design strategies as social and political practices.<sup>64</sup> By design strategy, we can understand a relational and participatory approach towards architecture which attempts to insert specific techniques or tools into the existing urban fabric. Accordingly, their approach is different from architectural endeavours that pursue the construction of a new building as the minimum point of departure. The particularity of ETC resides in the aesthetic strategies it chooses to underline its practice, which is as much carried by an architectural approach towards urbanism as research strategies from design, social work, art, and cultural theory. One can say that its approach is site-specific, as outlined so far, basing its mode of conceptual, social, political, and material engagement on the problem at stake. On the website, the videos or slide shows interlace visual elements with processual aspects such as graphs and short texts explaining the foundational concepts and stakes for each project. Similarly, the projects bear titles which include a sense of movement and process: “the informal: not its image but its procedures,” “60 linear meters of transborder conflict,” or “a micropolicy for the neighbourhood,” to mention just a few. The entire website itself emphasizes processes over products and avoids confined representations, such as the building sketches and models common in architectural practice.

Cruz’s extension of architectural practice marks a shift in attention away from mere built intervention to the production of architectural “products.” In his eyes, one cannot treat a particular public or private territory without investigating the underlying power relations such as political or economic stakeholders, existing values, social needs, and flows of movement at the heart of local communities.<sup>65</sup> Cruz calls this process of instigating new relations between these

factors “trans-border urbanism” where design aims at changing conditions for social and architectural processes to emerge. ETC’s practice focuses on *conditions of emergence* and their *transversal* (or trans-border) qualities, rather than assume pre-set and confined structures. Such a thinking extends accustomed habits of architectural development by focusing on “complexity, hybridity, and improvisation” providing a *temporal urbanism of insurgency* (Heath 2009, 94, 98). Accordingly, Cruz and his colleagues have developed a body of work that focuses on procedures, operations, and retooling architectural (and artistic) means of intervention and representation. One can conceive of such a procedural practice as a “populist architecture of hypothesis approached as a community-wide collaborative initiative” (Gins and Arakawa 2002, 61).<sup>66</sup>

To give an example, the housing project in collaboration with NGO Casa Familiar, a community centre for mostly Hispanic migrant communities in San Diego’s suburb San Ysidro, entails a complex set of procedures enabling its final realization. Due to the informal social and economic structures of local migrant communities, a modular and dense building complex was devised, including different spaces for smaller and extended families to co-inhabit varying and modular units, community spaces for micro-entrepreneurial exchange such as weekend markets, as well as studio-flats for artists to live in and provide services to the community (see Bratton, 2004). To effectuate the building of the centre, a change of municipal zoning-laws of San Ysidro had to be achieved. In other words, architectural procedures as means to address representational politics were needed. And there was no other way for Cruz to move forward on the project other than getting elected to the city hall’s urban planning board. Once elected, Cruz had to convince the board to modify its single-unit-per-parcel policy towards multi-unit architecture. In other words, he had to shift from the usual suburban family home (which Cruz calls “McMansions”) to a denser urban multi-unit architecture. This political and representational procedure took many years before reaching its goal, and Cruz’s resigning from the board after achieving his goal is part of the procedure. Overall, Cruz conceives of the architectural procedure of Casa Familiar as a process from “official conforming” to “informal non-conforming.” And what he calls “urban pedagogy” encompasses all conceptions of such extended architectural procedures as ways to “enable new institutional protocols by producing new interfaces with publics and unorthodox cross-institutional collaborations, rethinking the very meaning of infrastructure, housing and

density, and mediating top-down development and bottom-up social organization” (Cruz 2011, 111).

The ecology of practices composing the architectural procedure called Casa Familiar becomes felt most concretely through the visual diagrams accompanying and visually communicating the project and its genesis (Fig. 03). In ETC’s work, diagrams become an active operational tool of complexification, communication and transformation of architectural, as well as social and research, practices.



Figure 03 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Informal Use and Nonconforming*

A procedure, as outlined in Cruz’s work, is a folding of heterogeneous acts, materialities, and practices through techniques of relation, including diagrams as aesthetic tools and concepts as lures for thought. His procedures attempt to rethink architectural practice in the way it engages with social and cultural concerns, its use of communicating beyond the confined entity of built structures, and deployment of concepts as mostly abstract explanations. Cruz transforms the

power of conceptual invention into a procedural approach attentive to social and political issues, and their material and economic entanglements. The creative potential of concepts thus instigates a speculative movement of thought that co-evolves with social, political, and material movements. In such a dynamic and procedural unfolding, they constitute ecologies of relation. This relation between architecture as social and political practice, and its resonance with conceptual invention, renders Cruz's work particularly interesting as a mode of research-creation. Through their interlacing, the conceptual, social, and political do not pre-exist one another in ETC's practice but mutually shape each other according to their shared ecological field of emergence. The relationship between conceptual and architectural practice finds its densest expression in diagrams, and each of the procedures outlined below unfolds according to a material-expressive quality of diagramming and the inventive force of concepts. Put differently, the procedures define dense activities of mutual activation of a political, social, and material process. Through the use of diagrammatic visualization, procedures directly enter the field of perception, making their effects felt as a movement potential for activation. In their aesthetic presence, they provide a sensation of real potential for empowerment without having to deliver any "master plan" or finite solution, as architecture often attempts to do.

"Retrofitting," for instance, is a major strategy used by Cruz, to remodel existing structures, such as suburban single-house units, or abandoned Levittown bungalows shipped from the US to Tijuana's sprawling shantytowns to provide new housing structures (Fig. 04). Retrofitting as a procedure not only addresses space as given, but also investigates materials and their potential uses for making new spaces. For instance, the production of lightweight scaffolding structures (in Cruz's words, "plug-in scaffolds") in maquiladoras next to Tijuana's shantytowns instigates a procedure for enhancing the partly dangerous housing structures in the area. Taking the capitalist conditioning of economic and material flows as ground, ETC thus initiates negotiation procedures between local communities of manufacturers. The maquiladoras outsource cheap labour power to sites along the Mexican border, producing such scaffoldings for the US market. Shantytowns grow around these factories. Through procedures of redistributing a small percentage of the produced scaffoldings locally, new possibilities for sustainable and liveable building structures are made available (see Figs. 05 and 06).



Figure 04 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Propped Bungalow in Tijuana Shantytown*

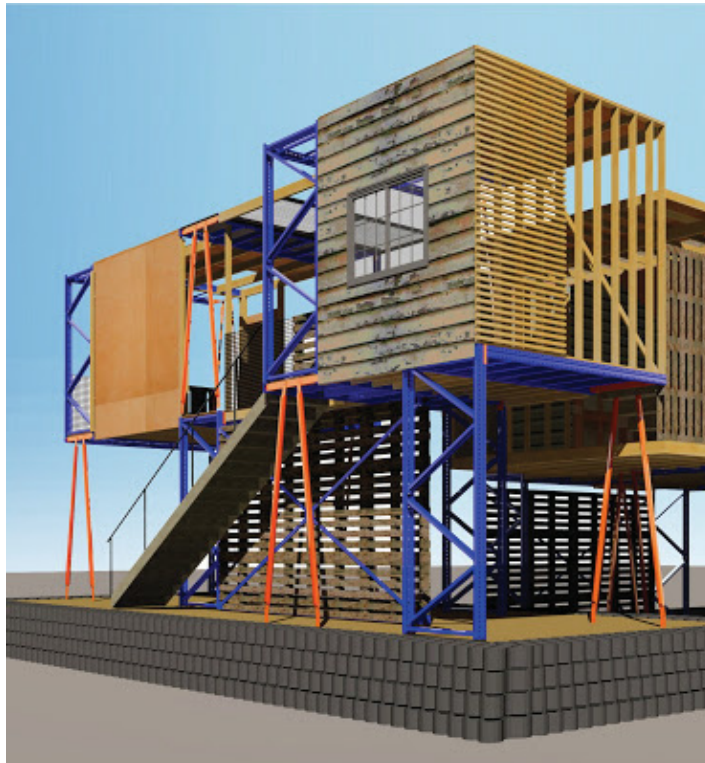


Figure 05 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Favela Scaffolding*

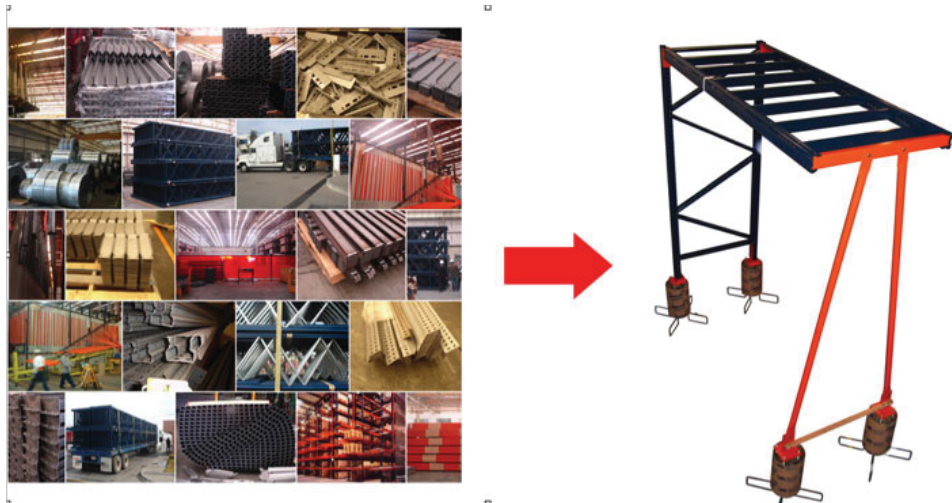


Figure 06 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Scaffoldings*

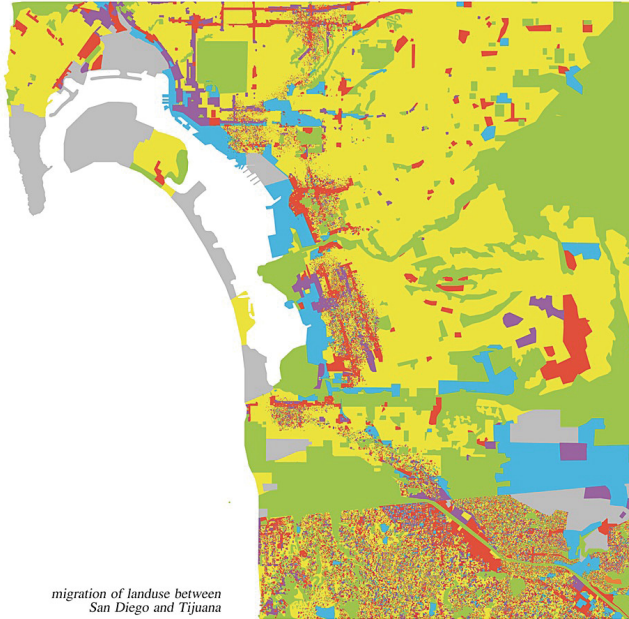
Another procedure, “Pixelation,” underlines an architectural technique for micro-scale interventions to creating space for multi-purpose inhabitation depending on current needs. For instance, Casa Familiar contains small sheds as flexible spaces for extended families, as office spaces a student studios, for example. Pixelation is also a visual technique that emphasizes dynamic flows of social activity rather than demographical data as immobile sets of information, thus shifting representations of spatial entities from confined maps to distributed elements (Figs. 07 and 08).

Another procedure called “conflict as operational tool” describes an affirmative take on conflictual situations to empower local communities when negotiating building projects at the “scale of the neighbourhood.” In an interventionist manner, Cruz engages in “tactics of translation, making the invisible visible and expressing territorial power” in order to effectuate a process of negotiation and socio-political participation. Translation and territorial power emphasize the importance of accounting for the more-than-human conditions that need to be included in the negotiation to enable a political process of change. Conflict thus becomes a possible point of entry into emergent social and political processes.

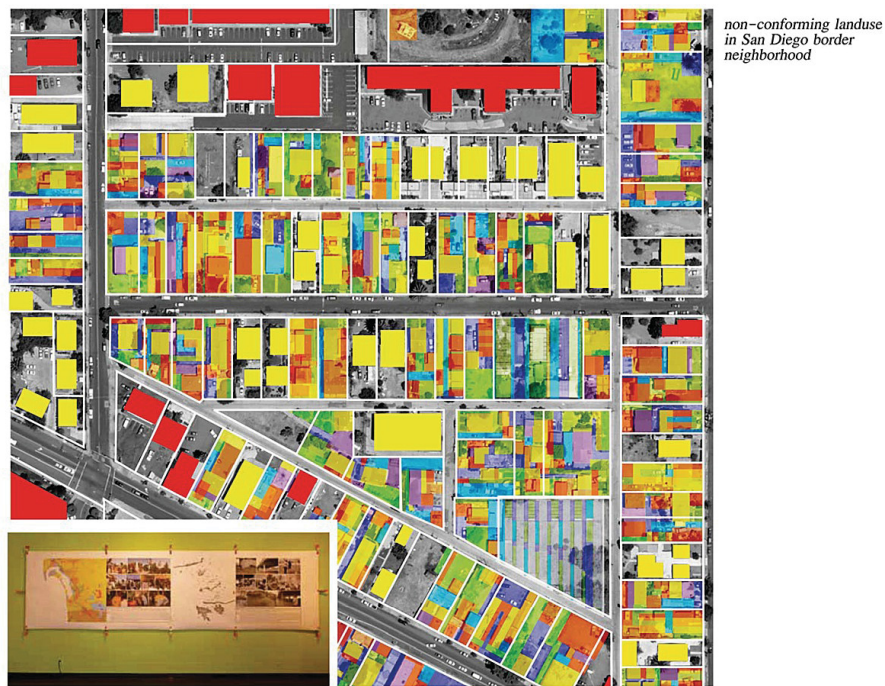
## From the Global Border to the Border Neighborhood

Estudio Teddy Cruz

On display at the  
Movimiento Arte y Cultura  
Latino Americana;  
2010 San Jose Biennial  
and  
at MOMA New York;  
*Small Scale, Big Change:*  
New Architectures of  
Social Engagement  
until January 2011



migration of landuse between  
San Diego and Tijuana



non-conforming landuse  
in San Diego border  
neighborhood

Figures 07 and 08 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Pixelation*

What Cruz calls the procedure of an “urbanism of insurgency” involves a rethinking of the social dimension in relation to contemporary urbanism and possible architectural interventions.<sup>67</sup> In general, his focus on procedures, flows, and movements underlines a reworking of scale, density, and confinement towards a mobile conceptualization of urban activity. Many of his projects thus address the material circulations of debris and labour power

across borders. A major concern for ETC resides in detecting these flows and movements, investigating their temporal dimensions, and identifying spatial urban “fragments waiting to be activated through synergistic development, their potential residing in a certain contingency rather than cure-all master planning” (Bratton 2004, 120). In their contingency these processes are dynamic and address *immediated* operational qualities and techniques of working with them (see chapter II). ETC emphasizes a strong political concern, not only in terms of re-negotiating local and often conflictual situations. It also critically approaches architecture as spatial structuring in relation to contemporary forms of global neoliberal capitalism, and the way it affects the organization of (social) space (Cruz 2008, 2009, 2011).

For Cruz, local and global are not shallow buzzwords but rather attach themselves to constant flows and operations yielding new urban practices entangled with a global capitalist system. He conceives of the San Diego-Tijuana border as a laboratory, undermining its dividing function and mobilizing its potential for conceptualizing and developing procedures across this particular field.<sup>68</sup> In Cruz’s practice, capitalist motifs and their structures (such as maquiladoras and commercial centres) ground his investment in relationships of private-property vs. micro-economies in local communities (Solnit 2002, 7). In other words, he folds small-scale interventions and the global effects of contemporary capitalism into each other.

Cruz’s understanding of different forms of sociality tied to a re-modeling of space and material directly relates to a global phenomenon of circuits of material and human distribution. His projects emerge through redefinitions of the social by extending its scope. On the one hand, he analyzes the social conditions for emergence, such as confinements, movements, economics, relations, modes of production, and the ethics implied in them. On the other hand, by focusing on the procedural, the notion of the social extends to more-than-human dimensions, opening up concepts for thinking relations across various domains. In this type of relational realism, the social includes both human and more-than-human forces, such as material flows and power-relations, affects, and intensities. From an architectural point of view, Cruz re-imagines the urban along such “vectors of force,” which are not based on individual actors but ecologies of relation (Cruz 2010, 82). These vectors, as I explored in chapter I and the interlude, are the transductive operations of an emergent experience cutting across all strata of existence. As a result, the procedural and movement-based practice of such an urbanism requires new ways of conceptualizing and aesthetically expressing these transductive activities.



### *The Aesthetics of Diagrammatic Practice*

In his procedural practice, Cruz traces and mobilizes institutional structures, material and human flows, and specific social circumstances into specific modes of expression. Despite the complexity of the projects, his goal is to communicate ways of enabling and empowering what are most often restricted power relations and procedures for new forms of urbanism and social conduct “beyond the property line” (Solnit 2002, 2). Accordingly, Cruz contrasts his approach, which he calls “literal,” with the metaphorical as “the way [in which] representation has produced levels of commentary without producing actual tactics in art and architecture” (Cruz 2008b). Being literal, he admits, might entail a naïve breaking-down of the actual complexity of a situation; on the other hand, it allows him to reach a wider public and produce comprehensible tools of empowerment.

Looking more closely at his work, Cruz develops highly refined visual techniques in order to carve out the specific relations of the social and the material as bases for new architectural procedures as empowerment. Through the visual technique of the diagram in his power-point presentations and videos, he has developed a new kind of aesthetics of politically engaged practice and activism, thus making his work particularly interesting as a form of research-creation. His work, I suggest, demonstrates how a specific artistic techniques activate political processes of urban community activism through aesthetic expression in perception. Indeed, the aesthetics of the diagram activates an immediate sense of the complex ecology of relation at stake in Cruz’s projects through an affectively engaged perceptual process. As much as one understands the complex relations of a diagrammatic display, one feels the movement activity of its material, social, and political forces. From here a different mode of activism as a practice of activation arises, which I see as particular to Cruz’s work on architectural procedures.



Figure 09 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Diagram of political stakeholders (Casa Fam.)*



Figure 10 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Negotiation processes*

In ETC's practice, diagrams define the threshold between an aesthetic activation and its potential for processes of political empowerment, thanks to their relational qualities.<sup>69</sup> For Cruz, they serve different purposes, sometimes more artistic or material, and sometimes more structural in their style and format (see Figs. 09 and 10). On the one hand, a diagram is a visual device making relations between complex entities apparent (see. Fig. 03). My focus on the

diagram in the work of ETC is influenced by Foucault and Deleuze and Guattari, for whom a diagram concerns power relations immanent to institutional structures or rules of social conduct, without being necessarily attributable to clearly identifiable individuals or places but rather operate across an entire field. These forces are as much material, like the physical forces of built structures, as they are ephemeral yet effectively operating, like an unspoken law that is tacitly obeyed even if not uttered. Cruz himself reflects on his practice in a similar way, proposing structural or organizational modifications that effectuate change (e.g., empowering political representation). At the same time, he underlines the active and mobile character of power relations immanent to the scope of his work (criticizing the overly representational side of architecture as metaphorical). He describes his practice as “retroactive mapping of the processes emerging from the global South, translating not their images, but their *operative procedures* so that those urban operations can enable public policy and activism” (2011, 11, emphasis in original). Focusing on the double sense of the diagrammatic (representational and dynamic), Cruz’s work points to a central dimension of analysis in research-creation: the relation between material, social, and political confinements and representations, and their mobile and modular character open for change.

On a “representational” level, his work attempts to make this double structure of analysis expressible both in a confined manner and open for future change and empowerment. A third dimension, beyond the architectural and the aesthetic-expressive, is the *conceptual* level of engagement and the development of new modes of thought. Linked to the diagram these dimensions of the relational, representational, and the conceptual immediately address questions of power. As visual tool, a diagram draws out dependencies, alliances, and connections between institutions, stakeholders, and other relevant actors, suggesting a confined overview of a precise state of affairs. On the level of force-relations, diagrams render the operational strategies of power felt in experience. Finally, new concepts accompany the shift of attention from confined building blocks toward mobile processes, similar to the movement of thought itself.

The diagram not only renders movement perceivable through visual presentation but also enables such movement to continue in domains other than the visually perceived. In relation to thought, diagrams emphasize a crucial concern of research-creation: the relaying of movement across different modes of existence. As visual, conceptual, and relational devices, they foreground a sense of collective activity in practices of research-creation, underlining the relay-

operations immanent to the activity of emergence, flickering between discrete expression (a bodying) and its potential differentiation as it actively participates in expression. Cruz's interlacing of social, material, and political dimensions in his diagrammatic practice accounts for activity in a confined situation in terms of the qualitative-relational aspects of forces, rather than as identified actors. Qualitative-relational activity here refers to practice as a *mode of becoming*, producing social, material, or political processes. In this way, the diagram becomes an assemblage through which the relational field of practices co-composing ecologically in experience can be felt and actively shaped. Thus the diagram, in its threefold relaying, is a practice "that does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 142).

Taking practice as the founding activity of social life addresses temporal processes of continuation and emergence. As Deleuze says, "It is praxis that constitutes the sole continuity between past and present" (1988b, 115). Social processes move through the bodily-expressive realm of experience, but are not confined to it. In other words, practice concerns a specific mode of activity, defining what conventionally is classified as an entity, such as an object or a body. As a practice, such confinement is a contour of a dynamic process. Linking the diagram to practices unfolds a further temporally enduring dimension beyond the contouring effects we tend to perceive in habitual processes of perception (see chapter II). In becoming attentive to practice as an actively engaging process, a diagrammatic dimension allows us conceive of the collective nature of practices in resonance, which constitute the real as continuously differentiating. The diagram operates underneath or transversally across the manifestation of contours; it is their dynamic content. A challenge for research-creation resides in making the dynamic character of the qualitative-relational apparent in and through habits of perception. Such an altering of habits – opening them up to new relational dimensions – engages an emergent politics as a practice of activation.

In relation to the work of Foucault, the diagram becomes a conceptual tool for thinking *power relations*. Foucault uses the term diagram in direct reference to architecture: in *Discipline and Punish* he addresses the successive institutionalization of confinement and control over bodies and their conduct by means of disciplinary techniques such as prisons, schools, or military academies (Foucault 1995). He defines the military camp as confined space of surveillance and control as "diagram of a power that acts by means of general visibility" (1995, 171). He also

links such confined zones of visibility and control to the urban planning of “working-class housing estates, hospitals, prisons, asylums, schools,” but immediately shifts his focus to a new emergent model not based on exteriority and visibility, but rather interiority and the obscure (1995, 171). In other words, he asks how control through visible exteriority can be extended to the inside. Such forms of architecture operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them. Indeed, the old simple schema of confinement and enclosure thick walls, a heavy gate that prevents entering or leaving has been replaced by the calculation of openings, of filled and empty spaces, passages and transparencies (1995, 172).

Such a desire for control brings to the fore another conception of power which cannot be attributed to an individualized notion of control. Power is hard to locate, expressing itself instead in concrete bodily situations across an entire field of interrelated attributes (or force vectors, in Cruz’s terminology). In thinking of power as relational and not localizable but inscribed in the way architecture confines and controls, Foucault conceives of power as effecting actively instead of being exercised. In this sense, the diagram is the invisible but pervasive field of power relations interlinking and effecting itself on bodies, while never externalizing its cause from an immanent procedure and movement.

As an example, Foucault analyzes Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, a circular-shape prison with an observation tower at its center. Each windowed cell faces the tower. implying that at every given moment, one might be observed. Such an architectural confinement has the effect of an inscribed self-control based on the *possibility* of being observed, even though there might be no observer in the tower: “It is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use” (1995, 205). The detachment from any specific use gives the diagram a double-edged function. On the one hand, it maintains an abstract-operational status of distributing forces. On the other, the resonance between such forces creates relations with felt effects in the form of power. For the diagram to become a political technology, it has to remain abstract on the level of force and emerge as concrete power relations. As Massumi writes, “Force culminates in boundless potential. It takes the uniqueness of the event to its limits. Power

delimits and distributes the potential thus released” (1993, 19). The particularity of the diagram lies in its capacity to interlace both abstract forces in their capacity to affect each other “virtually,” as well as through their “actualization” in bodily confining relations. As a technique of research-creation and practice, the diagram thus enables a thinking and working through this dynamic process as a politics constitutive of felt bodily situations while taking into account the dynamic force field as an ecology of relation.

I mentioned earlier that Cruz conceives of new forms of sociality imbued in the procedural practice, an idea close to Foucault’s conception of the diagram. In his book *Foucault*, Deleuze notes that “the diagram [...] is a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field” (1988, 34). In other words, the social never pre-exists the play of constantly shifting power relations. It also means that force and power in their co-extensive movement constitute a “physics of abstract action” which nevertheless has a kinetic quality that defines a material reality (Deleuze 1988b, 72). The diagram thus traces and propagates the relation of movements of relations across different modes of existence (both abstract and bodily) producing *conditions of emergence*. Such conditions are composed; indeed, one of the potentials of research-creation as a political practice is the ability to compose with the dynamic emergent processes of diagrammatic productions of reality. Their composition arises as an event, not a preformation. It is a process of co-composition where the activation of a potential process of emergence defines the compositional interstice in experience. The diagram denotes an aspect of a field where intensity can be felt most strongly. In Cruz’s diagrams, this intensity arises through heterogeneous visual elements that are held together through layers of colour, as different elements take on different qualities, and aesthetic expression exceeds the mere presentation of an object or entity. Composition is always co-composition in perceptual emergence, while the diagram itself can only ever operate as a lure for activation. It can contain a degree of consistency and intensity, but it activates relationally depending on the attunement to an entire ecology of relation. The challenge is to account for such dynamic emergent processes as pertaining to the social, material, or political (in their emergent quality) capable of generating new, unknown, and potentially richer ecologies of relation.

Cruz’s procedural and diagrammatic approach resonates with the diagram’s operation as a co-extensive field of power relations. The focus lies on the process of actualization, necessary for such power relations to become effects. Deleuze writes:

If the effects actualize something this is because the relations between forces, or power relations, are merely virtual, potential, unstable, vanishing and molecular, and define only possibilities, probabilities of interaction, so long as they do not enter into a macroscopic whole capable of giving form to their fluid matter and their diffuse function. (1988b, 37)

Actualization thus defines a process of formation and condensation of interlocking, diagrammatically varying activities. This process is enveloping and not individualized as such; rather, actualization pertains to an entire ecology in formation while maintaining its dynamic state “in that it does not deny that which it cannot include” (Manning 2013a, 24). In their informing diagrammatic forces become “real” effects. The process of actualization evades any logic of cause and effect; it is rather an *immanent process of causation*. Deleuze calls *immanent cause* “a cause which actualizes, integrates, and differentiates itself in its effects. Or rather the cause is actualized, integrated, and differentiated by its effects” (1988b, 37). A cause only occurs immanently, and its encompassing diagram “cannot be known as such, [but only] felt in its effects” (Manning 2009, 217). In other words, in actualization a diagram generates expressive effects as immediately felt in experience. In Cruz’s architectural procedures, the immanent cause defines a self-relation of a complex situation that has its own dynamics and affords relation-specific techniques. Through a diagrammatic practice, Cruz amplifies the necessary self-relation of his architectural procedures, not as an outside view or intervention but as a mode of participation and insertion. His techniques for insertion and participation arise partially through an artistic approach to diagramming, enabling the aesthetic quality of perception to affect other domains of activity, like community organization or political processes of decision making.

Cruz’s work quite subtly undoes many of the presumptions immanent to architectural practice and its modes of (visual and material) representation. Focusing on procedures that create immanent causes and making their effects felt underlines the double logic of the diagram, non-local but effective, invisible but expressive. My suggestion here, working through the work of Cruz, is that creating conditions through these operations might allow us to develop new practices of *diagrammatic urbanism* where the causes and effects (as much as the approaches to analysis) need to be constantly modulated and renewed. Such diagrammatic urbanism thus emphasizes the procedural, formative, and temporal activities generative of a dynamic outline of urban social-material practices.

Cruz's negotiations and design propositions for the use of lightweight scaffolding produced in Tijuana shantytowns for the US market provide a good example. ETC engaged in a negotiation process with local maquiladoras, empowering workers to obtain a certain amount of the scaffolds they produce for their own construction projects, building provisional shelters (Fig. 05 and 06). The studio used architectural graphic techniques to develop potential procedures for including the scaffolds in already existing but often unstable or inefficient structures. In this case, the material and industrial production context provided the ground for new relations to arise: a situation of capitalist exploitation is not necessarily abandoned, but a different potential for enhancing the workers' living conditions is activated. This first procedure potentially expands the scope of how the conditions of production and local economies relate to the broader concern of material circulation and life conditions in a globalized context. In this way, it becomes clear that material-economic flows impinge directly on social processes. All sorts of debris, like abandoned bungalows or garage doors, move from the US to Mexico serving as construction material for Tijuana's shantytowns around the maquiladoras. In these new centres of production, the factories exploit cheap labour benefitting from the North American Free Trade Agreement. The relationship between the political, the material, and social as dynamic fields thus provides the ground for diagrammatic urbanism as activist practice.



Figure 11 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Transborder Traffic, southwards*



Against a logic of pre-defined actors and entities, Cruz uses the power of a situation to generate a new immanent cause which differentiates the habitual circulation of materials and their relations to labour, exploitation, and global capitalism. In the case of the scaffolding maquiladoras, the situation of material production and transborder traffic of debris leads to a new process of drawing relations for a negotiation process with a direct impact on the lives of the people in this area (Fig. 11). The power of a situation here defines the capacity of an activation of potential from a seemingly confined situation – that of exploitation. Through diagrammatic urbanism, ETC activates processes of empowerment by contracting forces of a situation's capacities in their practice. Diagrams define a crucial relay for making these forces felt and operable as instigators for a political process. In addition, the studio's procedures follow the diagrammatic flow of forces, potentially materializing outside their conventional confinements while still working in the diagrammatically held circulation of power relations. Cruz's gesture of generating architectural procedures works by detecting the flows of activity in a problematic and tensed field. Tensed here means a virtual field brimming with potential at the cusp of actualizing. Such a field is problematic in the sense that it is capable of inflecting heterogeneous elements into a novel emergence and by that creatively advancing a process of individuation.

From here, we can ask: how can we carve out the potential for new, different, and more liveable relations and effectuate change as a generative and collective process? The scope of the projects is often small-scale, avoiding any general critique of the horrors of capitalist exploitation. The aim is rather to generate a practical deviation of capitalist capture and value extraction by inserting minor techniques activating aspects of the system that allow for an effectuation of change from within its operations. From a precise definition of a problematic and its activation through architectural procedures, the general problems of a more expanded system of capitalism reveal themselves in direct relation to the situation. This makes Cruz's architectural procedures graspable as activations of minor practices focused on the re-potentialization of a formerly captured system of redundant power relations. Diagrammatic urbanism thus proceeds through minor practices of empowerment where the situation inserts itself differentially into the flows of a creative procedure in the process of production. While the goal is to generate local effects by activating a political process, architectural procedures lead to more conceptual elaborations of the specific operations of contemporary capitalism and forms of activism. Cruz builds such conceptual trajectories into his architectural procedures, and I consider this interest

as an activation of future potentials for a procedure's individuation through change, as well as a way of relaying disparate activities into a more complex ecology of relation. Such work is, in the words of Massumi, as much *speculative* as it is *pragmatic* (2011, 12). It is speculative since it attempts to trace potential lines of differential emergence from a conventionally confined context. It is pragmatic because it inserts itself in the presence of other practices actively shaping the entire process ecology underway (2011, 15). In other words, diagrammatic urbanism requires us to conceive of its practice as a "pragmatism of the multiple" (Deleuze, 1988b, 84); composing with the multiple forces of the diagrammatic fosters new ways of inflecting such forces speculatively.

### *Matter and the Microphysics of Power*

The diagram as a concept raises the question of *how* forces and power relations come to the fore, take effect, and how we can make them perceivable for the sake of change and empowerment. By mobilizing the border-zone of San Diego-Tijuana as a *laboratory* for diagrammatic modes of research-creation, Cruz undoes the divide between conceptual abstraction and aesthetic expression. By focusing on new architectural procedures and aesthetic techniques for social empowerment, he wants to render his insights sensible through specific techniques of perception. Two of the most remarkable aspects of Cruz's practice are his use of visual material and the way he condenses hybrid information into sensually lush power point presentations.<sup>70</sup> The visual diagrams thus define a crucial pole of diagrammatic practices as an "insubstantial boundary" expressing the "activity of relation" on a perceivable surface (Massumi, 2011, 89).



Figure 12 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Border Postcard*

In 2000, Estudio Teddy Cruz produced *Border Postcard*, a series of collaged photographs depicting vast amounts material fragments collected between Tijuana and San Diego; the images depict “debris” from the entire border-zone visualized as collages and quasi-architectural constructions (Fig. 12). Their appearance foregrounds the assembled intensity immanent in materials of San Diego-Tijuana, rather than an architectural formalism. In their collage-like character, the images cluster urban patterns such as fences, and create new visual rhythms that render the material-physical domain of the area into an active zone for the production of power relations, i.e. the use of fences and borders to inhibit the freedom of movement for particular inhabitants of that zone. Simultaneously, such emergent rhythms activate aesthetic forces immanent in the material ground (matter) of the images beyond a discursive interpretation of the image’s content attached to a clear meaning. The relation between political, discursive states of affairs, and their felt quality in experience thus generates a diagrammatic fold between micropolitics and microperception. In this respect, Doruff writes: “Within the diagrammatic micropolitics and microperceptions share resonant functions. [...] Both micropolitics and microperceptions effectuate through the immanent cause to perceive, think, act and distribute through a diagrammatic process” (2009, 132).

Instead of being a mere metaphor for the material flows across the border, *Border Postcard* aims at reshaping architectural practice: “Let’s observe conditions from which architects have been distant, and let’s negotiate those environments in learning what’s behind them. Those conditions produce contemporary practice” (Cruz 2008b). In relation to force, these

conditions might be better understood as *processes of conditioning and attunement* (see chapter III). Cruz's interest in materials traversing the urban zones of Tijuana and San Diego ultimately provide new ways of developing architectural procedures. Relaying the material in its potential relational quality with other practices, such as community activism or micro-economies in alleyways, generates singular diagrams that investigate scale-relations. Cruz's "urbanism at the scale of the neighbourhood" is thought through material circulations, opening up an immediately felt relay between the "microphysics of power" and the "political investment of the body" (Deleuze 1988b, 24).

This processual architecture analyzing microphysics of power concerns the political investment of the body as the relay through which the diagrammatic as force materializes. The diagram brings its real potential to the fore once its visualizing components are themselves conceived as intersecting fields of relations traversing other fields, such as the field of the visual or the body-in-becoming (see chapter II). Following Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of the diagram, Cruz's practice emphasizes forces (corporeal and incorporeal) as *functions* – in terms of their operational capacities – and materials as confined forms of *material flows* – tendencies which have not yet physically formed and need to be followed in their activity (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 142, 409). What the diagram expresses is the threshold of activation, a point of emergence where power takes form – ever so fleeting – without being reduced to finite causes. It is through the aesthetic techniques of diagramming that the emergent quality of expression receives a degree of consistency to work with creatively, without necessarily reducing its complex ecology of relation. In the case of *Border Postcard*, the focus on the material allows for a sensing of the dynamic forces becoming aesthetic points of activation. Put differently, compositions of debris become intercessors for an emergent politics of diagrammatic urbanism (see also chapter V).

Diagrams open up the potential for sensation to become the main point of political activation to produce an emergent sociality. Cruz's diagrams and practice of making power-point presentations initiate a felt bodily sensation of empowerment foregrounding the dynamic layer of the social-in-becoming through forces affecting and being affected aesthetically. Thus, an entirely different way of politics and activism beyond the representational arises. This is a politics of aesthetics where capacities of feeling extend the range of possible expressions and ways of perceiving, and extend the range of activity of the world.<sup>71</sup> Such aesthetic politics

undermine the instrumental use of representative politics. Indeed, diagrammatic urbanism as an aesthetic politics accounts for dynamic force relations constructively shaping the potential for emergent collectivity to be felt and endured in experience.

### *On Metamodelization*

The most common critique of Cruz's practice is the lack of actually building things: many of ETC's projects exist on paper, in power-point presentations or beautiful visual expressions, but not in "reality." But such critiques underestimate the diagrammatic activation of forces yielding effects in political practice *and* their ability alter how to think about contemporary forms of urbanism, that is, how to conceptualize with them. In opposition to such critiques, this section asks how a shift in the methods and models of contemporary architecture needs to be deployed to arrive at a diagrammatic urbanism. The proposition outlined through Cruz's practice not only accounts for movement and dynamic flows in urban environments but also the invention of new modes of analysis and expression. Processual architecture and diagrammatic urbanism, I suggest, foregrounds the inventive force of rethinking urban practices as immanent techniques for research-creation. Following such a line of inquiry, I will turn in a final step toward the development of a differential account of practicing research-creation without it either becoming arbitrary about the relations deployed nor exclusive of relevant but often overlooked processes.

A diagrammatic urbanism attentive to movement and flows abandons disciplinary boundaries for the sake of novel, immanent, and procedural practices. The question then might be, then: is it possible to devise such procedures independent of their context? Or, in a more architectural manner, is there an underlying model to be deployed and applied in varying environments? A diagrammatic practice is neither entirely local nor global, which Cruz hints at in his project *Political Equator*. Tracing a line around the globe marking zones of conflict – called "urbanities of labour and surveillance" like Tijuana-San Diego, Palestine-Israel, Ceuta-Melilia, India-Kashmir, and China – this work demonstrates flows between the "Functioning Core" (North) and the "Non-Integrating Gap" (South) (Fig. 13). Coming from the south, migrants are seeking work, while the functioning core outsources its production zones to the south. While there are global processes, which can be assimilated between these border zones, Cruz emphasizes that his practice consists of "series of minor modifications" and not building a "humanist utopia" (Cruz and Tate 2010, 81).

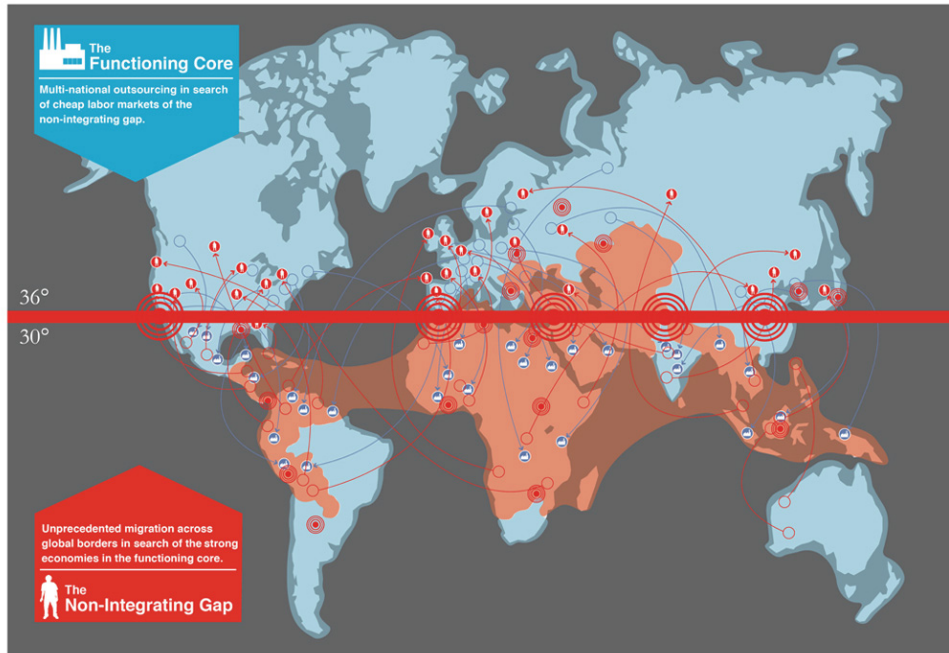


Figure 13 – Estudio Teddy Cruz, *Political Equator*

In Cruz’s work, the site-specific tendency transgresses and translates into what might be called a *relation-specific* approach. Conceiving of borders as a tool for thinking – thus making this endeavour an ecology of practices – allows us “to speculate on how we can address all the cities and all the territories around the world” (Cruz, 2008, n. pag.). In developing this diagrammatic urbanism, one thus has to embrace paradoxes, conflicts, and contradictions between power relations, their tendencies, and the potential for modulation. The local never transforms into the global, or vice versa; this is an insufficient binary. On the contrary, a relation-specific and diagrammatic approach enables us to embrace the heterogeneous and open flow of social, material, and political forces and to identify techniques and tools for addressing them – both locally as a situation and in resonance with a more globally encompassing context. This means generating practices radical inclusion rather than exclusion. At the same time, inclusion is never arbitrary but itself defines a complex process of interrelating diagrams.

For Cruz’s the notion of the *informal* emphasizes such a tendency:

I see the informal not as a noun but as a verb, which detonates traditional notions of site specificity and context into a more complex system of hidden socio-economic exchanges. [...] I see the informal as the site of a new interpretation of community, citizenship and praxis, where emergent urban configurations produced out of social emergency suggest the performative role of individuals constructing their own spaces. (Cruz 2010, n. pag.)

In this case, the conceptual exploration of the informal instigates architectural procedures from specific situations and provides the potential of relating this process to other situations. Such forms of situated emergence and trans-situational relaying become clearest if understood as the operational capacities of a diagram as forces and power relations oscillating between expression and abstraction. In other words, they need to be actualized always anew in specific situations where they shift the entire set of relations, as one can see through the effects of tracing materials and displaying them in new ways. With each actualization, Deleuze writes, a diagram integrates itself into other diagrammatic processes: “a collection of progressive integrations that are initially local and then become or tend to become global, aligning, homogenizing, and summarizing relations between forces” (1988b, 37). Drawing attention to these processes we can see how the interlacing of the visual, conceptual, and material fold with their very own diagrams into the social, political and, architectural circulations in the San-Diego-Tijuana border zone – and how they might transgress the local boundaries into larger (global) concerns.

Moving from site-specificity to relation-specificity produces an “interdisciplinary collaboration” focused on “operative dimensions” targeted at “exchanging procedures” (Cruz and Tate 2010, 87). This exchange of procedures might be better understood as a process of relaying and modulation, which shifts ecologically when inserted into a new situation. Developing specific procedures tailored to the concerns at stake while generating platforms for relation thus explodes the conventional conception of the model and moves towards what Guattari has termed *metamodelization* or *meta-modeling*. Similar to Cruz’s conception of the informal as a verb and not a noun, one might envision the process of modeling as an alternative to the rather confined notion of the model. Guattari’s urge for developing practices beyond disciplinary boundaries leads him to invent new strategies of *emergent modeling* rather than relying on pre-existing models for application.

Cruz’s emphasis on temporal urbanism and his conception of interdisciplinary research resonates strongly with Guattari’s idea. In both conceptions, the main insistence resides in defining and generating immanent causes and working with their power to effectuate change within lived situations. The foundational question thus becomes: how can we account for the diagrammatic power relations becoming effective in their expression without foreclosing or finitely delimiting their future potential? In other words, how do discursive elements of

signification and expression resonate with non-signifying “virtual enunciative nuclei” (Guattari 1995, 60)? For Guattari, metamodelization:

has concerned something that does not found itself as an overcoding of existing modelizations, but more as a procedure of “automodelization,” which appropriates all or part of existing models in order to construct its own cartographies, its own reference points, and thus its own analytic approach. (Guattari 1996, 122)

Auto-modelization and auto-affirmation are key concepts in Guattari’s account of metamodelization. They underline aspects of each process of emergence operating outside discursive referentiality while not abandoning the value of discursive expression. The main concern shared by both Guattari and Cruz lies in the difficult process of bringing non-discursive and incorporeal, that is abstract, forces into resonance with an expressive discursive realm without reducing the dynamic potential immanent in this expression. Diagrammatic urbanism and Guattari’s practice of schizoanalysis both aim at making new dimensions of potential felt in expression through the prism of discursive expression – and thus transforming the discursive. They both emphasize “complexification [and] processual enrichment” (Guattari 1995, 61). Operating both conceptually and in the visual format of the diagram, Cruz has thus developed a “pragmatic cartography” that opposes reductive representations of dominant signifiers while opening up new dimensions of thought through aesthetic techniques (1995, 60).

Cruz’s diagrammatic urbanism finds junctions with existing systems of thought and procedures, activates new dimensions like material or human flows, and generates an automodelization, providing each element with a procedural (diagrammatic) agency. However, such a process can never become universal (i.e. global) in its aims, which is what models often aspire to. On the contrary, as Guattari writes, “each modelization is always grounded and reaffirmed in a singular situation” (Guattari, 2000, n. pag.). In other words, relation-specificity grounds the emergence of a new practice and the invention of novel procedures; it generates effects. Without these effects, nothing in the overall discourse would change. By finding new modes of working between artistic experimentation and social engagement, Cruz diagrammatically metamodelizes the emergence of new techniques and procedures of an insurgent architectural and social practice – with both global and local repercussions.

Far from being a method or the cross-linking of different approaches, *metamodelization thinks modeling as modulation*. Modulation names the process of a phase-shift of an



individuating process, a change of state, a new relational capacity. In addition, Guattari's insistence on self-referential enunciation and auto-affirmation underlines the immanent causation required inherent in each process of metamodelization (1995, 60, 106). Auto-affirmation means that each modeling deployed consists primarily in resonance with its associated milieu and is not a mere accumulation of parts. Auto-affirmation emphasizes process and immanent change. Thus, metamodelization as "operative diagramming" moves beyond the initially interesting but finally hollow statement that the whole is more than the number of its parts. Metamodelization attempts to develop techniques based on extensive and excessive potential operating actively across an ecology of relation, thereby rendering it operational.

Metamodelization is another way of accounting for diagrammatic movement being part of engaged practices. In relation to San Diego-Tijuana, it would seem evident that local phenomena refer to global causes such as poverty, exploitation, and capitalism. As a consequence one might then claim that each of the local effects has its very specific ecology of relation producing the singularity of the underlying state of affairs. Such dialectical thinking leaves the terms global and local unchanged in their operational value. Metamodelization, on the other hand, concerns the emergent collectivity of practices in their ecological formation and endurance, their heterogeneous, heterochronous, and differential qualities. As collective individuation, the process of metamodeling thus requires tracing different historical, social, and economic factors, but also their operational potential, in terms of what they might become and how they may change in an unfolding process.

Architect Greg Lynn makes a clear reference to diagrammatic urbanism in his conception of diagrams as a technique for undoing the divide between idea and form, which he commonly sees deployed in architectural practice: "For an architect, these diagrammatic techniques operate primarily as conceptual, rather than formally descriptive, tools. They are neither material, functional, ideal, scientific nor exact" (2004, 224). He points to the diagram's abstracting value considered as abstract material equally relevant as built structure and form. To be really attentive to emergence while maintaining a rigorous way of "making things," architecture as any other practice needs to think and act in the presence of other practices, their operations, and their potential for collective activity. For research-creation in architecture, it is not enough to introduce philosophical concepts into architecture without accounting for the transformative activation generated conceptually as much as materially. Metamodeling thus underlines the

inventive necessity of problematizing the relational ecology at stake before developing techniques for encountering and creatively working-with this problematic.

The auto-modilization immanent to diagrammatic practices emphasizes the self-perpetuating activity of each process and plugs it into a more collective constellation of transindividual becoming. In the case of Cruz's work, diagrams function as the relaying device of an architectural metamodelizing procedural practice and its relation to social, political, and material matters of concern. The diagram as force field contracted into a visual form thus allows for making the co-composition of the situated and the transversal felt as part of the same experience. If the diagram were only conceptually conceived without being felt, it would lose all its rigour, becoming a mere symbol devoid of any movement. The force toward expression defines the necessary passage for an affective contagion beyond mediation. Cruz's practice would not gain such interest, nor a refined degree of complexity, if he did not choose the appropriate discursive and non-discursive *functions* to yield felt effects. The varying degrees of intensity and matter mobilizing in this practice traverse personal political involvement, the highly specialized craft of architectural and urban development, the active participation of social community workers, and the migrant inhabitants themselves in their everyday desires and activities. To find appropriate *forms* of communicating complexity without reduction affords more than creative representations or communicative skills. In chapter II this problematic was developed through the concept of immediation.

As an immediate process of formation, diagrams enable a perceptual process that opens a complex concern to a wider audience while being specific to the relational ecology at stake. As part of a procedural practice, Cruz's diagrams become a field for collective attunement, while simultaneously enabling singularization. In their openness and precision the diagrams invite individuals to resonate with and relate to a context in their singular way. From here, a mode of subjectivity emerges that is relationally composed and not situated in the subject of the perceiver. In addition, the relation between diagrammatic urbanism, metamodelization, and subjectivity is crucial for its operational value. As Guattari writes, such a relationship "produces its own existence across processes of singularization, because it engenders itself as *existential territory*" (1996, 125). By existential territory, Guattari refers to lines of individuation coursing through a collectively sensed ecology of relation, thus grounding sensation in experience and rooting it in bodily, spatio-temporal continuities. This non-identitarian element of subjectivity is one essential

aspect of an temporally extensive, that is, endured, and lived practice of existence. Similarly, Cruz's architectural procedures would not have any effects if they could not find ways of inserting themselves into the micro-social desires and needs – that is, problematics – populating a specific field of relations such as the usefulness of light-weight scaffolding for enhanced building structures in Tijuana shantytowns. In other words, “Metamodels are not just abstractions because they require the putting into place of the organizational and institutional means for their collective realization” (Genosko 2003, 138).

In relation to subjectivity, metamodeling provides the pragmatic ground for layering and inserting multiple points of entry into a problematic and tensed ecology of relation without prescribing what kinds of effects will result from an encounter with the milieu. However, for such a field-experience to take effect, it requires a marker or attractor taking hold of the encounter and generating its very own rhythm. The primary experiential encounter requires endurance while working itself into memory and feeling. The sought complexity expressed in diagrammatic practices extends not only through sensation, but also through auto-modeling processes of subjectivation in abstraction: “What distinguishes metamodelization from modelization is the way it uses terms to develop possible openings onto the virtual and onto creative processuality” (Guattari 1995, 31). Opening onto creative processuality does not mean adapting another creative model to be deployed in one's own practice or thought. Rather, it foregrounds attentiveness to movements populating a tensed field, thus enabling potential transformations or transversal techniques singularizing into new expressions. Guattari's insistence on resingularization and a “virtual ecology” define the poles of diagrammatic expression which tend toward future activations of a felt intensity. It also allows for the constitution of new existential territories while avoiding redundancy through monotonous recollection instead of differential repetition (see chapter III). In repeating a felt intensity differentially, a diagrammatic expression transduces its force into a new form of existence. Thus, from transindividuation to collective individuation and back towards the emergent process of the production of subjectivity, new fields of reference and potential are immanently activated in expression.

The diagram and the practice of metamodelization both concern the extension of heterogeneous universes, that is, different registers of existence, being part of lived experience. These universes

concern abstract-virtual, actual-corporeal, discursive, and non-discursive levels of existence. The main concern of diagrammatic practices resides in finding ways of re-composing these universes into singular modes of subjectivity while maintaining a sense of collective individuation as their ground for emergence. Teddy Cruz's diagrams as visual operators render the complex relations between different matters (corporeal and incorporeal) and their political entanglements perceivable. Without reducing complexity he has found ways of interlacing heterogeneous fields of power relations. His diagrams become propositions for an urban development beyond the property line, which could also mean beyond a finite property of entities. Considered as a practice of research-creation, they foreground techniques for making things felt. In their activity, diagrams give an account of the immanent process of actualization and virtualization in experience. This process is felt perceptually and bodily, as much as it reaches beyond an occasion of experience. In other words, diagrams are as much concretizing as they are abstracting. In their activity they generate concrete and abstract phases as part of a shared relational continuum. However, the potential for abstraction is not a refusal of pragmatic action. On the contrary, abstraction becomes the necessary pole to oppose a reductive politics of representation and a simplified causal logic of relationality. Abstraction in this case points to the potential for the transformation and relation of each element of an ecology. Abstraction also emphasizes that complexity is not an insurmountable transcendent state evoked to inhibit further inquiry. Considered as part of a diagram, abstraction means an active practicing-with, and a potential becoming. The challenge of new modes of subjectivity lies less in communication or the creation of a common sense, but rather in the activation of collective individuation instigating ecologies of practices and their affective relaying. Research-creation as diagrammatic practice thus addresses ways of contracting heterogeneous elements into series of relational relays, leading to the development of modes of sensuous encounter. These sensuous encounters then become part of a temporal diagram, moving affectively through the interstices of experiential actualization. Metamodelization is procedural; its main activity resides in distributing intensities that move diagrammatically, across different situations and throughout different times. In the last chapter, I ask how such a relaying process at the heart of research-creation operates through a series of activist aesthetic practices.

## CONCLUSION

### HOW TO RELAY A MOVEMENT? ON ANONYMITY AND INTERCESSORS

#### *Introduction*

After he gave a very interesting talk on the topic of “exodus,” I asked Italian philosopher and member of Autonomia Paolo Virno what he thinks about the relation between activism and philosophy considering the context of his lived experiences. His answer was short: “There is none.” His response led me to think about this relation more intensively, since I wished to find a way of contesting him. His answer, I understand now, was a cautious one: considering the popular appropriation of post-structural theory, we witnessed the often banal and mechanical deployment of complex philosophical concepts in art, politics, and even warfare, as Eyal Weizman has shown in the example of the Israeli army (Weizman 2007). The refusal to straightforwardly interlace an activist way of life and a philosophical practice, does not make it impossible, however. Philosophy concerns what Deleuze calls “the creation of concepts” (2007, 318), while activism concerns a mode of resistance that involves one’s entire life in the creation of ways of living in resistance to any form of domination. But is philosophy as a creative act not a form of resistance against certain forms of domination? Is not the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who write about the need for “resistance against the present,” intrinsically concerned with philosophy resisting the immediate subsumption or refusal by a dominant system of logic and reason (1994, 108)?

In *Semblance and Event*, Brian Massumi proposes the term of “activist philosophy” as a mode of thought concerned with the power of activation in conceptual creation. Activist, in this context, emphasizes on the one hand that philosophy might be considered as an political practice and, on the other hand, that any form for activism comprises a sense of general activity with which philosophies of movement and process are concerned. I have investigated conceptual movements of philosophy in resonance with aesthetic practices because I believe there is a co-emergence between thinking and feeling, as much as there is a resonance between the creation of concepts and the creation of activist (political) ways of life. Both practices are singular in the series they constitute, but both have the potential for relaying each other’s movement and thereby extending the scope of what is relevant in our lives. As forms of movement, philosophy and activism gain maximal proximity through aesthetic practices concerned with life as an active

ground for propositions of new realms for thinking and feeling. These dimensions become particularly interesting once they emphasize the collective state of their emergence and enduring resonance. In other words, once they transgress disciplinary boundaries and open up new alliances between formerly heterogeneous domains. In this chapter, I turn towards contemporary forms of activism foregrounding their capacity for overcoming Virno's proclaimed exclusion between philosophy and activism. Art or aesthetic practices, I suggest, define the relay between political and conceptual encounters, which have to be felt and sensed before they can be conceived in their abstract potential and as political effects.

The beauty of the term movement lies in its double operation in relation to contemporary practices of activism, and to relational movement as the texturing of activity in experience. On the one hand, movement is that what moves, a bare activity underlining change as its principal expression. On the other hand, we can think of movement as the "social movement" of bodies through space and time. Exploring the force of bare activity as that of "something doing" from which dephasings generate acts of collective individuation opens up a relay between the general activity of change and change as specific mode in activism. The concept of change as bare activity, I suggest, might fuse with an attentiveness to time and timing in contemporary forms of activism. Change as vital force and change as modulation are time forms whose capacity for activation and experimentation define the ground of the research techniques I have investigated above: immediation, suspension, affective timing, and diagramming. From here I wonder how we can consider contemporary forms of activism beyond their vital and important genealogy of struggle against oppressive forms of violence and think their capacities in the immediacy of an event of resistance? Considering modes of resistance as time forms requires us to ask how techniques of timing as suspension or endurance resist the unification of time as chronological and its subsumption under the representation of an antagonist narrative of political activity. In the case of Occupy Wall Street, we witnessed a refusal of clear demands, which was often criticized by more traditional forms of political activism. I consider this refusal as a resistance to the immediate foreclosure of a time form that is antagonistic and thus integratable in the dialectic apparatus of capitalism. The dialectics of capitalist antagonism bases its primary operation on the constitution of resistance "against" its contemporary operation. Through the registering of the opposite pole, it immediately becomes susceptible to capture and integration (or subsumption). However, activating life-living as an ecology of relation enables activist practices concerned

with relaying time forms and modes of temporality. These emergent and lived temporalities, I believe, open up sensation for another mode of life, of living with and through a continuous process of renewed differentiation – a life of individuation. In this sense, “living consists in becoming an agent, milieu, and element of individuation” (Simondon 2005, 214).

My exploration of contemporary forms of activism emerges from the exploration of the *collective* throughout the prior chapters and the development of different modes of aesthetic and ethical activation. I investigated the collective as a crucial element in the process of individuation, I and emphasized its more-than-human registers. In this final chapter, I am asking how the seeds of collective individuation can operate across a wider range of individuals than we find in current social movements. I wonder how we can think about these forms of social movement neither as social in the conventional sense of the term, nor as ideological enterprises. As social, such movements might exclude the more-than-human and non-organic aesthetic, non-sensuous, and affective dimensions of the *collective* I have emphasized so far. As an ideological enterprise, these movements would subsume a heterogeneous and differential cacophony of activity and desires immanent to such movements under a universalizing domination. As some authors have underlined in relation to contemporary forms of activism, the proliferation of specific aesthetic techniques immanent to these forms of protest – like Reclaim the Streets, the anti-G8 and G-20 summits, or Euromayday – have opened an affective realm of engagement through new artistic forms of protest, often operating translocally and enhanced by specific media practices (Raunig 2007; Holmes 2011; Escobar and Osterweil 2010).

So far I have explored aesthetic practices of activation through an ecological-relation process of emergence, immediation, timing, and procedure. The development of a strong relation between act and activity as relational operation generative of collective individuation includes ecological dimensions of matter, both organic and non-organic, as well as virtual registers. My argument is that the transductive entanglements of these heterogeneous dimensions of existence activate new modes of perceiving, feeling, thinking, and practicing. I have traced these mutually activating processes through different engagements with philosophy, art, media, and architecture in order to extend the scope of research-creation practices. It is the relational-ecological ground of movement potential, of activity as change, which allows new lines of activation to shift into experience. As collective emergence, these aspects of experience are what constitutes the production of subjectivity, as a singular expression. The production of subjectivity is the term I

take from Guattari to emphasize a conceptual and bodily dimension of the co-emergent power of activation in activism. In a similar way, Marcelo Expósito provides an assertion of the urgency for new forms of activism:

Nowadays, subjects all over the world seem to feel themselves at an impasse. At first glance, the reasons are various, but there is an underlying thread, a red string running underground, that seems to connect our disquiet: a feeling that we are at the end of a biographic cycle. In many places, in many ways, for five, eight, ten years, while the opportunity for radical change was perhaps not, realistically, within our grasp, it did at least seem that we had the opportunity to question and considerably diminish the legitimacy of those dominant world forms under which we don't ever again want to live. (2007, n. pag.)

Dominant world forms here designate the impoverished forms of individualistic and antagonistic reductions to which Guattari opposed his claim for a new production of subjectivity as a relational-ecological event (1995, 2). Subjectivity is never just one but always collective, and what emerges in the production of subjectivity is a double movement of the collective in the mode of the singular. The transversal agitation of different ecologies of practices in the production of subjectivity foregrounds their collective emergence through resonance. Singularity is the element of a movement potential, a capacity; as *pre-individual singularity*, it is the capacity for contrast, a differential arising through relations affecting and being affected (Deleuze 1990, 103). In dephasing, singularities contribute to the emergence of an event, which, while constituting its own time form contains a degree of novelty that, if activated, can be felt. The event itself is the second mode of singularity as novelty, as preindividual and actualized singularities resonate with each other across the continuum of experience as relational activity.

Making novelty in experience felt through the movement of change traversing different modes of existence and time forms defines one crucial aspect of research-creation as an ethico-aesthetic activity. The occurrence of a felt novelty in experience contains what Whitehead calls *aim*:

By this term *aim* is meant the exclusion of the boundless wealth of alternative potentiality, and the inclusion of that definite factor of novelty which constitutes the



selected way of entertaining those data in that process of unification. The aim is at that complex of feeling which is the enjoyment of those data in that way. (1968, 152).

Aim operates as effectuation, as a singularity in this way. It defines an expressive cadence in an overall unfolding of an event, and I focus on how such cadences can be activated in experience as felt, and how to move in resonance with them, potentially participating in an activation of an extended field of potential. The activation of fields of potential is aesthetic in the sense that it includes the wider activity *worlding*, while making the aim an expressive peak. Aesthetics defines the felt dimension of the extended field as an ecological belonging through sensation. It is also ethical, in the way it reaches beyond its actualization, drawing in elements of movement to come in the felt passing of an occasion.

The ethical thus extends into a movement of thought. It concerns how a practice of participation takes account of the ecological activation of other, more-than-human modes of existence. It also emphasizes the necessity of renewal of an event through differentiation becoming an individuation and thus generating consistency. Aim carries an actualization to its expression and generates the passage from one event to another – in other words, it is a terminus (chapter I). The ethical and aesthetic elements in experience define emergence as participating in a wider field of potential. In this sense, Guattari writes about what he proposes as the new aesthetic paradigm, with which I associate research-creation:

The new aesthetic paradigm has ethico-political implications because to speak of creation is to speak of the responsibility of the creative instance with regard to the thing created, inflection of the state of things, bifurcation beyond pre-established schemas, once again taking into account the fate of alterity in its extreme modalities. (1995, 107)

Guattari emphasizes ethico-aesthetics as a mode of activating the power of the immediating capacity of experience in the mode of a multiplicity – as collective individuation. “The thing created” is less an object in the conventional use of the term, but an event in its singular activity of relational actualization. Guattari underlines that ethics means to care for the event in its singular unfolding – to celebrate its singularity. In the event, the ethico-aesthetic paradigm considers emergence and potential continuation as ecologically crafted. His assertion of such activity as political thus turns my development of different modalities of activation into a potential form of activism. The mode of activism I conceive of in research-creation problematizes the institutional, media-communicational, or political foreclosures of potential

emergence of experience in the event of an ecological-relational activation. The feedback loops of controlled thought and sensation through strategies of confinement, capture, and immediate subsumption require a breaking up of contained forms of the distribution of the sensible in everyday experience. However, an ethico-aesthetic approach seeks the minor, the deviation, extension, and suspension of rigidly confined situations. In other words, activism is an ethico-aesthetic practice of a collective quality, which includes heterogeneous time forms and organic and inorganic modes of existence in its activity of participation.

In this final chapter I will turn towards contemporary forms of activism that put an emphasis on aesthetic dimensions in resonance with ethical and political concerns. The concern is one of collective individuation in these practices. Instead of following the many interesting discussions concerning the relation between aesthetics and politics as realms that belong to art and governance, I will continue to ask in a minor way, how forms of activation in activist practices that address molar and often global problems move through specific forms of *affective relaying*. Affective relaying as a technique has to move through a practice; it has to activate a sense of collective emergence and endure as a rhythm, instigating new rhythms in resonance to their specific situation. It occurs in two ways: between different subjectivities and between different phases of events. The former is intrinsically intertwined with the latter – they are co-emergent and consubstantial. From a relational-ecological approach toward activity and techniques of activation, the question of how a collective individuation occurs is crucial. Thus far, I have argued that techniques of relation attune a field of forces through the development of enabling constraints, such as the diagram in chapter IV.

Enabling constraints define a concise mode of insertion and participation in the bare active unfolding of an ecological event. By inserting – that is, attuning to different rhythms – new rhythmic emergences occur that potentially extend the range of future feeling, thought, and action. The effects occurring in the process of individuation as actualization affect how bodies in space and time perceive, relate, and act – or, in the words of Judith Butler, how a mode of supported action occurs across bodies. Accordingly, what is required from techniques of relation is an “existential grasping” that establishes a “holding-together” between the preindividual singularities of a field of experience and its expression in the event (Guattari 1995, 113). The question is, how can this grasping be effectuated, and how can it be felt in a way that it yields beyond its emergence, affecting future acts? In other words, I ask how to relay a movement

across heterogeneous activities and different durations through experience? The emergence of new rhythms of sensation between an active but virtual field and its actualization occurs with the help of what I will call *intercessors*. Similar to the production of subjectivity as a field of urgency, which we have to work on in order to craft an ethico-aesthetic politics, Deleuze stresses the urgent need for intercessors:

Intercessors are fundamental. Creation's all about intercessors. Without them nothing happens. They can be people [...] but things too, even plants or animals. [...] Whether they're real or imaginary, animate or inanimate, you have to form your intercessors. It's a series. If you're not in some series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my intercessors to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own. (1995, 125, translation altered)<sup>72</sup>

I will explore the question of existential grasping through intercessors in contemporary forms of activism by focusing on the notion of anonymity. This latter concept, I will argue, activates a sense of potential felt in expression. It offers a diagrammatic approach attentive to the double movement of relations of forces in resonance and their inflection in expression. Making the power of anonymity perceptually felt, I suggest, provides a strong sensation of the operation of a field of potential in processes of individuation. These processes primarily activate a bodily movement, altering the way we engage with the social and political contexts in which we are embedded.

In times where the invention of techno-social and economic dispositives constantly increase their power for the immediate capture of each novelty, anonymity as a proposition for thinking and acting provides a vital ground for lines of flight. These lines of flight are immanent to the material, social, and political environments we inhabit, but they need to be actively expressed in their capacity for engendering new modes of existence, and life-living. They have to become intercessors capable of activating an existential grasping in sensation. Anonymity foregrounds the transindividual and collective charge in individuation, allowing for singular productions of subjectivity while emphasizing their potential for relaying. What Deleuze calls a series defines the manner or style of a movement in its capacity for relaying; a series is a *heterogeneous synthesis of resonance* through which a production of subjectivity moves

(Deleuze 1990, 232). From the anonymous charge of existence, I wonder, what kinds of intercessors do we know and have to invent, in order to actively relay these situations to create a series? In other words, how can a first sense of a new creative emergence from a captured situation instigate a series of other activations in different contexts, across different geographies and times?

How to relay a movement was a major concern of the anti-capitalist protests in the late 1990s and early 2000s. After the enthusiasm over new, creative, and often carnivalesque forms of protest (and after their violent capture by police forces) waned, we witnessed another strand of protest emerging. New forms of activism like Occupy Wall Street foregrounded the desire for other modes of life and living than the ones proposed by an antagonistic representational politics. Especially in relation to their aesthetics, these movements base their desire for non-representational, anti-identitarian, and collective practices on encounters between art and activism in history. With *El Siluetazo*, a 1983 public intervention during the Argentinian dictatorship, I will provide an early example from the continuum of aesthetic gestures in these newer forms of activism. The desire not to represent in a way that an immediate subsumption turns these desires into another “lifestyle” allows us to think along micropolitical lines of continued activation of new potentialities in the production of subjectivity. As Deleuze and Guattari write, the “micropolitics of perception, affection, conversation” operate through the “micro-relations between molar binaries” like classes or sexes (1987, 213). Put differently, they emphasize the interstices or intervals in which an affective relaying co-composes experience in its specific capacity to become felt and perceived through the event of expression. A possible reading of *El Siluetazo* on the basis of a visual politics or representation requires an extension towards the more-than-human and affective layers in experience, pointing at a politics of the pre-individual. Accordingly, the new propositions arising in some strands of this activism pose the question of the collective – not as a community, but as an affective relay for the heterogeneously creative forces immanent to ecologies of relation. Ecologies of relation emphasize the need to overcome the boundaries between domains of life, thereby foregrounding practices in their capacity for relational activation. These new emergences arise in the intervals of relaying events, not through the mere connection of entities or moments. In developing two series of intercession, I want to pragmatically speculate on how research-creation as a political activity operates in the interstices of emergence, relaying, and through the amplification of the collective force of

ecologies of practices as a *minor activity*. In this sense, intercessors are what I call the relaying of techniques which allow for one practice or mode of activation to enter a different mode or practice, instigating a new process of activation, without having to overcode its singularity.

### *First Series of Anonymity*

In September 1983, during the devastating period of state terrorism in Argentina, the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires, the site of continued protest against the regime, transformed into a “vast, improvised outdoor workshop” for the production of so-called “El Siluetazo” (Longoni 2010, 9). El Siluetazo is the name given to the production of thousands of body silhouettes drawn on Kraft paper in public and pasted on walls throughout the city, reminding the onlooker of the vast number of people disappeared by the oppressive regime between 1976 and 1983. Commonly executed in clandestine concentration camps throughout the country, about 30,000 mostly young people, sometimes entire families, disappeared during this time.<sup>73</sup> The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo (also known as the Mothers or The Mothers of the Disappeared), one of the most well-known and still existing human rights and activist groups in Argentina, developed several techniques to publicly mark the disappearance of family members, mostly their children and grandchildren. Conceived by an artist group (Rodolfo Aguerreberry, Julio Flores and Guillermo Kexel), El Siluetazo was neither staged as an artistic intervention by its creators, nor was it meant to be political in the conventional sense of addressing representational politics like many other human rights interventions did at that time. Ana Longoni proposes to see the event of El Siluetazo as an emergence of a “‘new aesthetics’ [...] merging art and life from the set of ideas upheld by the historical avant-garde movement” (2006, n. pag.). At the same time, she points out, following Roberto Amigo, that El Siluetazo can be called “aesthetic actions of political praxis,” while the acts of the intervention became “a collective action whose becoming dilutes (or even forgets) its ‘artistic’ origins” (Longoni 2010, 14). Accordingly, she emphasizes that the assertion of the intervention as art was not important. For her “El Siluetazo achieved the socialization of a visual tool that opened a new ‘social territoriality,’” without having to claim art as its primary mooring (2010, 14). Under quite different circumstances, one can observe similar tendencies with some of the activities of the Situationist International some 25 years before El Siluetazo. From this point of view, we might be able to trace a continuum of collective practices as translocal phenomena (see chapter I).

The constitution of a new social territoriality through an aesthetic intervention resonates with Guattari's term "existential territories" (1996, 125; 1995, 4, 26-28), which define aspects in the production of subjectivity that allows for resonance with other forms of subjectivity. For Guattari, these territories resist a "transcendent, universalizing and reductionist homogenization" through processes of singularization in the production of subjectivity (2008, 95). He points out: "what does matter is the mutant rhythmic impetus of a temporalization able to hold together the heterogeneous components of a new existential edifice" (1995, 20). Existential territories are not necessarily social but contain the seeds for sociality based on an immanent and immediate creative process. The constitution of existential territories is always processual and in resonance with other, more incorporeal universes – that is, preindividual and abstract forces. The new social territory here defines the capacity for different subjects to resonate with an emergent collective process of becoming of one's singular individuation – they have a collective quality. The artists behind *El Siluetazo* state that their concern was to create a "graphic fact," drawing new attention to the disappearance in the mainstream media (2010, 10). A graphic fact in this case underlines a singular expression, that of the silhouettes, traversing multiple bodies. It can become an existential territory, a rhythmic emergence of felt intensity across a heterogeneous collective of attuning subjectivities. The constitution of an existential territory moves through the force of bare activity as life-living, taking bodies of the participating subjects as a "material" relay for activating the collective absence of the disappeared. Thinking of *El Siluetazo* as an existential territory defines not a space but a marker, an intense field or point of inflection, which enables activation for collective acts of resistance.

Through the collective participation in the fabrication and placarding of the silhouettes, a shared memory arises across the anonymous field of present and absent bodies. Also, the affective relay residing in the performative making of the silhouettes moves through the immediate act of lending one's body as a support for a felt activation of absence. The result was a plethora of anonymous silhouettes populating the city of Buenos Aires. An existential territory thus emerged spontaneously with far reaching effects for the people involved, but also for other forms of protest tapping into the power of anonymity as vital form of resistance in more recent forms of activism. The aesthetic quality of the silhouettes in their singular expression joins a collective field of emergence, doubling the aesthetic operation. The silhouettes are an expression of the many individuals who disappeared and at the same time they take their expressive power

from a non-representational realm of collective anonymity. A fact in this case functions less as finite truth but as an aesthetic and ethical expression of a material and abstract kind. This difference is crucial for an understanding of El Siluetazo outside the realm of a visual signifier as part of a politics of representation. Also, as part of a continuous struggle for human rights in Argentina, El Siluetazo marks an event where the power of anonymity in forms of political resistance, and also its abuse by forms of state terror, become apparent. Beyond the strong and singular marker of the public event in 1983, a sense of anonymity as a power of resistance has unfolded in a series of new variations in contemporary forms of activism. One might think of the omnipresent use of the Guy Fawkes mask, the carnival-like “masked” anti-globalization protests, or the use of white masks worn by thousands of people, thus “lending one’s body to the disappeared” in Buenos Aires on April 25, 1985 (Longoni 2010, 14). El Siluetazo thus foregrounds an aesthetic force of visibility of what is physically absent, without relying on the conventional use of signs, symbols, and codes to clearly identify its content.<sup>74</sup>

In the midst of a politically charged discourse on the entanglement of state terrorism, the public sphere and its politics of appearance and disappearance, El Siluetazo figures as particular hallmark in a line of strategies that could be framed on the basis of identity politics. Longoni points out that the preceding actions of the Mothers – including the public circulation of images taken from ID cards’ depersonalized and standardized photographs, but also family images – have operated in the realms of desubjectification and resubjectification of disappeared individuals by naming them, giving dates to their vanishing and by opposing the state’s attempt to render these people without any real existence (2010, 15). The spectre of depersonalization in the face of state violence haunts life and comes full circle when mass graves without any names were discovered after the dictatorship ceased. In these discourses, making visible, maintaining presence in the public sphere, and publicly remembering the disappearance of the people have defined key strategies of human rights activism in Argentina.

A different undercurrent arises if one considers the specific force of an *aesthetics of anonymity* haunting the physical presence of a politics of representation. The particular power of El Siluetazo, I think, resides in its primary attempt to mobilize a force of an anonymous but quantitatively overwhelming mass of nameless silhouettes, making their presence felt by remaining anonymous, and thus occupying an abstract but felt realm of sensation. Sensation defines the relay between an affective cuing of resonant forces and their actualization. It enables

a feeling for the anonymous force of emergence to be expressed in the actualization of anonymous body silhouettes all over Buenos Aires. In light of such an aesthetic politics, El Siluetazo shifts its mode of expression from indentitarian structures towards what can be called the force of anonymity (Bordeleau, 2012). Anonymity, the way Bordeleau has developed the term in relation to the work of Foucault, defines a zone of the *outside* of any contained individuality or form, may it be an object, language, or body (2012, 43). Foucault describes the outside not as a spatial exterior to a form or body, but as defining a milieu that resonates with and co-produces any form of subjectivity through language (Foucault and Blanchot 1990). It is an anonymous yet active force; it bears potential for more to come, for life-living. Anonymity here can be understood more as a limit of an existential territory which has multiple modes of (re)actualization through the production of subjectivity. It is not just the potential promise of a “more-than,” but becomes operable once it is amplified, as is the case with El Siluetazo, a singular expression through a process of collective individuation. Here the power of anonymity emphasizes the force of a people who have been effaced in their existence, physically and discursively, by allowing them to re-enter the sphere of politics both through visual expression, and a non-sensuous but felt threat against state violence by manifesting their absence.

Anonymity is an important technique targeting the state’s mechanisms of identification whose objective is both producing and undermining human rights defined through a normative conception of the human. To be clear, the problem of human rights in this case resides in its apriori definition of the state what counts as human and what does not. Through this act of defining “right” or the law, the state instantiates a deliberate will to render lives present or absent through its representational institutional apparatus. The logic of representational politics builds on identification, while an anonymous politics emphasizes the power of other forms of life outside the grid of identification. In the same way, representational politics defines what passes as “human” and what is a “right” based on the identity of a citizen. Beyond identification, new modes of production of subjectivity arise. The crucial decision not to name the silhouettes emphasizes the refusal of identifying reduction of something that concerns representational politics in general. Indeed, El Siluetazo, I suggest, is not only about the mothers whose children disappeared and who want to have them back (or at least to know what happened to them), but it also problematizes practices of identification through state institutions. The dispositive of the identified individual dominates the legitimacy of rendering something or someone present or



absent, relevant or irrelevant, while the force of anonymity points at a collective state of existence. It breaks open a bare and active life refusing to accept identity and identification as practice defining what passes as true, real, and legitimate. The collective here not only opposes the identitarian individual, but it points more crucially to a phase of collectivity existing and acting across processes of individuation. In *El Siluetazo*, we witness an expressive gesture of the anonymous force of collective individuation as a vital aspect of life as actively shaping experience through virtual potentiation. The actual individuals might have disappeared physically, but here they re-emerge not as identified individuals but as a collective expression of anonymity affectively threatening the state apparatus' administration of individualism. Deleuze sees a similar line in Foucault's assertion of resistance extracting "the forces of a life that is larger, more active, more affirmative and richer in possibilities" (1988b, 92). *El Siluetazo* thus activates anonymity as a force of life larger than the identitarian logic of representational politics. The force of anonymity in life takes the individual life beyond its capacities as an individual, rendering it part of collective individuation, singular and expressive, and thus operating effectively on the level of perception. Deleuze expresses this process of political activation before representation through the relay between power and life that can be felt in *El Siluetazo*'s participatory invitation for bodies to relay materially and anonymously: "Life becomes resistance to power when power takes life as its object. [...] When power becomes bio-power resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environment [*milieu*] or the paths of a particular diagram" (1988b, 92).

In calling the abundant number of silhouettes a multitude, Longoni positions these visual facts as having a particular force without the need for discrete names. In their anonymity, the silhouettes become the collective force of bodies as quasi-bodies, that is, anonymous shapes reminiscent of bodies ephemerally and concretely haunting the public sphere of Buenos Aires. In their presence, these quasi-bodies create less an archive of each disappeared individual than an impersonal and virtual force of the anonymous collective. The impersonal quality in experience operates on the level of affect, constituting relays of collective individuation. As Deleuze writes:

The affect is impersonal and is distinct from every individuated state of things: it is none the less *singular*, and can enter into singular combinations of conjunctions with other affects. The affect is indivisible and without parts; but the singular combinations that it

forms with other affects form in turn an indivisible quality, which will only be divided by changing qualitatively (the ‘dividual’). (1989, 98-99)

The silhouettes thus define a realm of expression which is not exhaustible through its visual presence. They require another sense of singularity being part of an event. Deleuze terms such singularities “anonymous and nomadic,” “impersonal and preindividual” (1990, 102, 107).<sup>75</sup> Anonymity defines the singularity as impersonal affect, a preindividual singularity which resonates with other singularities collectively “fielding” experience towards its expressive capacities.

The expressive character of El Siluetazo makes the preindividual operation of experience as collective attunement of affective capacities apparent in its effectuation. Such an effective-expressive manifestation of a virtual operation pertains to a politics of emergent experience immanent to life and opposed to the structures of identified “actors” or “causes and effects” in representational politics. As Deleuze points out:

Far from being individual or personal singularities presiding over the genesis of individuals and persons; they are distributed in a “potential” which admits neither Self nor I, but which produces them by actualizing or realizing itself, although the figures of this actualization do not at all resemble the realized potential. (1990, 103)

In the case of El Siluetazo, the singularity of the event occurs through the potential of a force of anonymity to express its relay between potential and actualization through the human bodies becoming the material ground for the production of the silhouettes’ quasi-bodies. It is the force of the event coursing through multiple bodyings which makes the loss of lives part of each present moment walking through the streets of Buenos Aires. Life itself becomes the relational relay of forces attuning their singularity as a field-effect in expression, which is the power of anonymity. As Longoni writes, “the *Siluetazo* was an event in the fullest sense of the word: an exceptional moment in history in which artistic initiative coincided with demands coming out of social movements, and which gained momentum thanks to the support of a multitude” (2010, 9). As an event, one cannot really speak of a blending of art and political activism in the practice of El Siluetazo but rather of an activity which allows for a sense of singular and collective expression within the overall envelope of anonymous forces of the impersonal. An event is exceptional, but its exceptionality is part of a series whose individuation defines a practice unlike

any other.<sup>76</sup> The impersonal emphasizes the force of a dephasing as a resonance between individual and milieu in the process of individuation. As well, the impersonal charge of activity resonates throughout the entire duration of an individuation, as it defines its capacity for amplification. In this sense, Massumi writes: “Departing from representation means returning the semblance to the event of its native abstractness: the spontaneous, impersonal force of thinking-feeling that comes amodally to vision through the cracks in the artefact’s sensuous form” (2011, 133). Semblance is thus “the experience of a virtual reality,” which, as Massumi explains, activates a sense of re-potentialization of an act of expression (2011, 15). This return forward – or one could say, eternal return – is what I have attributed as the aesthetic element in my exploration of a relational realism. For this very reason, we can think of El Siluetazo as a phase in an anonymous series as power of existence, a trans-temporal and transductive element in specific aesthetic practices of activism.

Defining anonymity as impersonal makes it a “force of vitality detaching itself from someone in particular to affirm its own qualitative-relational consistency: ‘a’ life” (2011, 134). A life, Manning writes, is “a concept of life that extends beyond the specifically organic to touch on the force of becoming that accompanies all processes, all phases” (2013a, 19). But by naming these forces anonymous, one should not think they are random or arbitrary. On the contrary, Bordeleau emphasizes that anonymity as a force allows for the emergence of different forms of expression outside the confined and identitarian realm of subjectivity favoured by a state apparatus (2012, 47).<sup>77</sup> Naming and identifying personhood tends to fall back into a production of subjectivity that is susceptible to the myth of a liberal subject of representational politics, who is in fact deprived of actual freedom. The figure of the impersonal takes the place of the disappeared individual, rendering it an abstract and singular yet concretely expressive force of multiple lives suspended from their actual presence in society.

The event of El Siluetazo is not representational but singular and expressive on the level of force felt in perception. With thousands of people participating in the event, it generated a visual quasi-form of what cannot be represented – the absence of thousands of bodies. The silhouettes acquire a specific effect due to their quantity; however, their expression also works as a qualitative multiplicity, shattering the identification of each silhouette with a person. El Siluetazo activates what Deleuze calls microperception, a perception that “is lacking an object” (1993, 86). In lacking an object or discrete form of identification, it does not lack the singularity

of a political concern over violence or the attempt at anaesthetic oblivion exercised by the state. El Siluetazo's emergence courses through life, a life of bare activity through means of singular anonymity. In such activity, one has not yet made an actual singularity, and one has not yet perceived in a subjective sense of the word, but one has felt a field of potential becoming through multiple micropereceptions populating the event's impersonal realm of anonymity. Such non-representational, preindividual, affective, and collective modes of politics lie at the heart of new forms of activism as ethico-aesthetic practices. Thus anonymity, I suggest, defines a singular operation capable of forming a series of activating modes of resistance – translocally, transversally, and trans-temporally.

The event has a quality of participation not in relation to something else but first and foremost to itself, to its very own past, present, and future – its becoming (Longoni and Bruzzone 2008, 8). In resonance with El Siluetazo the bare activity of life finds its mode of expression in the process of generating a multitude of bodies without identity but with *grains of participation* in the same (political) event. It should be mentioned that leaving the silhouettes without names was the primary desire expressed by some of the Mothers, while others wanted to give them bodily features and names resembling their lost children. As Longoni points out, the force of an anonymous mass being open to anyone who wanted to join forms of protest (even without a lost child) caused anxiety among some that such a depersonalizing practice “denied any political identity to the disappeared” (2010, 14). An event in its expressive qualities constantly abstracts its very own unfolding. The silhouettes abstract from the fact of disappearance an anonymous and aesthetically menacing force haunting their presence. At the same time, the desire for naming the silhouettes shows the need for addressing state violence on the level of representation. Indeed, one should not underestimate the necessity of this act crucial for being noticed on the level of signification. The point I am developing is not opposed to these forms of representational resistance. They are always part of the micropolitics I trace through the figure of anonymity. Representation occurs, structures, and gives relevance, but only to one part of life, while denying the other part of the spectrum operating in different but no less relevant and active registers of a life beyond representation. With a relation-specific approach I want to point out these other parts of life which shape representation while not being represented in the conventional circulation of meaning structures. Ethico-aesthetics, in the way I understand it,

concerns the active inclusion of these parts of life in their singular manners of existence, their “other” or more-than-human capacities of generating relevance.

The silhouettes are as much actual as they are virtual. In their virtual quality they maintain a power of the un-expressed as active force, that is, bare activity – a common and future “power of existence, a power to become” (Massumi 2011, 12). The power of existence as a power to become emphasizes the immanent politics implicit to acts of creation. Through techniques of relation different powers of existence can be activated or left aside, producing singular modes of expression and effects. Becoming attentive to the unfolding of an event as an act of care means to care for the ecological emergence as non-reductive of the complexity of the relation field giving rise to an event. The power of existence is an invitation to participate through one’s own power to become-with an ecological activation process. It requires a politics of emergent insertion, attunement, and modulation opposed to identification. Such a politics, I suggest, requires intercessors capable of activating powers of existence that resist representational simplification and the separation of domains such as art and life, or theory and practice.

So how does the singularity of *El Siluetazo* operate, if its attribution to a politics of visual presence and human rights activism comes as a felt after-image of its force as preindividual singularity? And how could such powers of existence become part of an ethico-aesthetic practice? In other words, what would be the intercessors of the disappeared not as individuals but preindividual singularities? Beyond the individual or personal framing of the silhouettes, one has to trace their virtual potential for becoming in resonance with a presence that makes people disappear under a regime of terror and state violence. The anonymous force of an aesthetic practice such as *El Siluetazo* diminishes, once we follow the quasi-personification of an artistic intention. Similarly the actual practice would undermine the potential of anonymity if the distribution of the artistic act across many people would be a mere doing without being attentive to its aesthetic effects (Longoni, 2010, 14). It is neither art nor the making of silhouettes in themselves which operate as intercessors in *El Siluetazo*. If we conceived of art as outside of politics, we miss the aesthetic power of bare activity moving through experience alongside modes of expression. At the same time, if we consider art as political from the outset, we might subsume an aesthetic force of potential to an already identitarian logic of a politics of representation. Modes of expression imply perceptual lures, and the lure of perception in

emergent experience is what allows for insertion and participation. Such lures augment the power of existence as “a power to become,” defining what I have called throughout previous chapters *capacity*. Specifically, it is the capacity for taking up a lure of perception and expressing through and with it a new aesthetic force for becoming, while accounting for the event created in its singular expression. This singularity is identified by Longoni: “Although it was born in the midst of the human rights movement and under the leadership of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, its irruption was far from assimilated into a prefixed political project. It is precisely that indeterminacy which grants the *Siluetazo* its singularity as an event” (2010, 14).

By emphasizing El Siluetazo’s singularity we can see how it can generate a politics of the immediate force of felt and bodily sensation, rather than a representational and contained scheme of politics. An aesthetic practice as act or event has to proceed through the immediacy of its passing, its resurgence of a felt memory, and its future emergence. Such an aesthetics foregrounds a temporal process of relaying events into series of heterogeneous elements. The power of the anonymous can only be open and complex in its potential unfolding. The multitude of faceless silhouettes, cast by tracing vital bodies, the reduction of the face on ID-cards, the deprivation of a name in mass graves, and the mass of non-identifiable bodies protesting against state violence all stand next to each other without necessarily providing any straightforward qualification as relevant or irrelevant, representational or non-representational. They are all both at the same time, with different intensities. This realm of preindividual singularities is also full of potential for effacing the face as dominant figure and its re-emergence, for de- and reterritorialization, and for micropolitical deviations and their macropolitical capture (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 168, 10, 235). Any of these processes arise from the same plane of anonymous forces, of preindividual singularities and bare activity ready for relational emergence as part of singular events. The force of anonymity as an *impersonal intercessor* defines a primary technique for experimentation. Only by tapping into this force field do we open what might become differently, altering what a body, a situation or a life can do and might become (Deleuze 1980). Evoking the force of anonymous and preindividual singularities takes account of an actualized world in which very concrete power relations are institutionalized and represented *and* which need to be activated for repotentialization. On the other hand, the force of anonymity points at the always active current of a differential and auto-constitutive field of relations, resisting the reductionist capture of a human politics of representation.

The anxiety provoked by erasing identity and not naming the silhouettes expresses a discomfort with abstraction as a transcendentalizing instrument of power. Deleuze describes a similar process attributed to modernism, reinforcing abstraction (i.e. transcendence) as opposed to *movements* and *vectors* (Deleuze 1995, 121). He emphasizes a practice of insertion into already existing movements countering fixed “points of leverage” and “eternal values” (1995, 121). By activating the anonymous force immanent to the silhouettes the prior anxiety of the non-identitarian becomes a different kind of movement, an insertion into bare activity’s vivid tendency to form singular events. By moving the silhouettes onto walls, giving them a space within an urban ecology, haunting the visual domain of public order, all these movements are part of the aesthetic force immanent to the silhouettes’ anonymity. Giving the horror of disappearance a new life through making apparent without immediate identification means “being open about things. Being open is setting out the ‘facts,’ not only of a situation but of a problem. Making visible things that would otherwise remain hidden” (Deleuze 1995, 127). The collective quality of El Siluetazo is its participation in the fabrication of a problem through a shared public procedure. Problematizing collectively produces singular subjectivities moving through a collective concern, which is expressed in a singular yet heterogeneous event. Intercissors thus address the question of how such a novelty in perceptual emergence provides a multiplicity of future relays as a mode of embodied, felt, and activated memory. In El Siluetazo the intercissors are neither the Mothers nor the artist or the many participants, but the force of anonymity manifesting itself as a threat to stratifying state power. Activating the power of anonymity by participating in bare activity and inserting silhouettes into the urban fabric thus becomes a technique suitable for re-beginnings at other points in time and in different situations facing similar problems of oppression and identitarian politics.

### *Second series on gestural media*

The invention of the so-called human microphone marks one of the most prominent techniques developed during the Occupy Wall Street encampment at Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan from September 17, 2011 to November 15, 2011. Due to the private ownership of this public space, the use of any technologically enhanced means of amplification was prohibited. To enable ways of communication for several hundred people in an open-air environment during the general assemblies, the occupants started actively echoing aloud the utterances of the speaking

person. Some of the *intercessors* turned their back toward the speaker repeating what was said, some listened, and others transformed the enunciations into bodily gestures. These collective chants were far from a homogeneous repetition of the original content. Some repeated the exact wording, while others changed its initial meaning and content. Thus not only a collective chant, but a murmur of polyvocal enunciations emerged.

From the outset the practice of the human microphone could be conceived as universalizing a mass under the dominant speech of a single person. Another possible problematic might arise from the trance-like chanting and repetition, without actually engaging with the content of the words uttered. When they become automatic, the statements are closed onto themselves within a function of (self-)subjection, instead of an open circulation of enunciation (see Brunner, Nigro and Raunig 2013, 13). The homogeneous semblance of the immediate practice of the human microphone receives a more positive turn when addressed as a constant bifurcation of enunciations, a perpetual differentiation. Indeed, the practice of converting speech into particles of enunciation does not annihilate content, but rather provides it with the necessary differential operation of expression (Guattari 1995, 13). What happens is a collective attentiveness for potential singularity expressed through each subjective utterance. These utterances resonate with the initial content but are partly autonomous in their operations. Guattari foregrounds language's "dimensions of the unconscious aesthetic" and their "active mode of *insertion*" into a situation (1995, 13, emphasis added). The capture of language through multiple bodily relays, its content and expression, generates an instant cartography of enunciation, simultaneously autonomous and inserted into an immediate bodily presence. Beyond a mere logic of conveyance or mediation, an immediate and immanent force of contagion comes to the fore which can be called *immediation*.

Deleuze and Guattari speak of "pragmatics as a politics of language," emphasizing the double-edged function of the order-word as the element in language which cannot be escaped. On the one hand, it functions as enclosure and an identifiable signifier, and on the other hand it marks the point of inflection for new forms of sense emerging through expression. For Deleuze and Guattari, "the instantaneousness of the order-word, its *immediacy*, gives it a power of variation in relation to the bodies to which the transformation is attributed" (1987, 82, emphasis added). The order-word is a double form of variation: on the one hand a dominant realm of confined and controlled meaning (which I called representation in the last section), and on the



other hand the point from which new enunciative bifurcations emerge (which I concern as non-representational). What Deleuze and Guattari describe as pragmatics in language accounts for other non-linguistic domains equally:

When one submits linguistic elements to a treatment producing continuous variation, when one introduces internal pragmatics into language, one is necessarily led to treat nonlinguistic elements such as gestures and instruments in the same fashion, as if the two aspects of pragmatics joined in the same line of variation, in the same continuum. (1987, 98)

The line of variation is what intercessors of a collective assemblage of enunciations have to effectuate. It is therefore not surprising that the general assemblies at Zuccotti Park did not confine their processes to the formulation of unified and coherent demands. On the contrary, eclipsing demands while enunciatively expressing their will to persist and resist (physically as much as mentally), the people of the occupation used the force of the line of variation as an autonomizing power against a general conservative rhetoric of crisis and its politics of fear (see Massumi 2005). Deleuze and Guattari account for the power relations underlying these processes. The order-word and the emergence of a redundant order between a statement and its act of being uttered potentially locks down new variations. At the same time, each mode of expression through language and gestures comprises an unactualized, anonymous force – a murmur of the not-yet-actualized but potentially already felt (1987, 84; Bordeleau 2012, 49-64). In language and expression, everything circulates around the immediacy of emergence. All elements in an enunciative event contribute equally to its expressive passing in language: “In becoming-immanent to the event of expression, they [the elements] become immediate contributory forces. They are *immediated*” (Massumi 2011, 166). This immediacy is not ignorant of the prior distribution of many order-words and power systems. On the contrary, the enabling of expression in the active force of a potential becoming in the immediacy of the present gives the instant of expression a power of existence without foreclosing its potential unfolding. The immediate force of the order-word does not prefigure what actually comes to pass in the event of expression. Its unactualized potential is inevitably impersonal and anonymous; it is never passive but always active. An enunciation is not of the subject of language, it is an assemblage, abstract as much as it is concrete. Therefore, the acts of enunciation at Zuccotti Park

were always on the verge of a redundant re-ordering and a wild deviation and differentiation which does not require a successive order to exist and “enjoy” existence. As autonomous, immediation – not of the present but rather a future-past – inhabits the moments of passing expression. In expression there is a felt tendency toward becoming, an enjoyment of bare activity, which requires a politics of immediation, not of mediation in new forms of contemporary activism.

The political question coursing through processes of immediation asks what kinds of powers of existence are constituted through the differential elements fusing into an event without foreclosing its immanent effects. In the face of a potential capture of the order-word as dominant refrain and a newly adapted rhetoric of mainstream media, one has to craft specific techniques for dealing with potential capture. Immediation addresses a temporal as much as a spatial and physical dimension of immediately felt and simultaneously suspended processes. Without communicating clear demands, Occupy Wall Street effectuated a powerful mode of suspension in response to the immediate apparatuses of capture, such as the mainstream media producing contained events (i.e. a spectacle). Boredom, uncertainty, and frustration are possible outcomes on behalf the institutions and media who operate on logics of identity, communication, reporting, and universal statements. The message was, simply, that there was no *single* message but an anonymous bodily and conceptual resistance not against one problem but an entire way of living. Suspending the production of confined demands and effectuating immediate presence and bodily persistence in space and over time percolated into felt effects – even at a distance – by means of immediation.

The space and time for relaying a movement are neither determined by physical presence nor independent of it. In physical presence an immediate realm of bodily resonance and physical action allows for an affective contagion yielding direct effects. And yet, many of these “gestures” were witnessed, recorded, retold, and replayed in many variations (of the same events) throughout media ecologies. How can we think this physicality of Occupy in relation to a wide array of “mediated” images, sounds, texts, and films through the prism of immediation? The political question of immediation is one of both timing and duration, forms of acts that resonate with bare activity. Tied to the notion of language as pragmatics, Deleuze and Guattari underline the temporal and active process of enunciation with and through language. In the act of enunciation, language can either emerge as a “statement tied to a signifier and enunciation to a

subject,” or it can foster a line of variation inhibiting language to “close itself off” (1987, 82). The crucial question for Deleuze and Guattari concerns how to foster a “language in the making” that is not yet a statement belonging to and defining its subject (Manning 2013a, 157). They develop a conception of language which is not a *constant* but a *dynamic form* tied to its situational unfolding – neither “synchrony nor diachrony, but asynchrony” (1987, 97). Immediation is by nature asynchronous; in the situated act of the human microphone’s murmur – and in the differential encounter across screens, posts, and tweets – a gestural space and duration arises which is immediately embodied and abstract.

The doubling of the event as immediately embodied and self-abstracting makes the event a differential operation, whereby it emerges through the resonance of different force relations and marks a difference from any other set of expressive force relations. It is a novelty in the real sense of the word, singular not only as a physical expression in space and time, but also in its own manner of making time felt. The time of the event is asynchronous. It can be part of a series of differential occasions of experience (different phases), though such a series is never chronological, but poly-phased. Asynchrony refers less to a difference in temporal sequencing than to differential elements of space-time performatively acting through powers of existence. Each grain of expression, may it be in spoken language, bodily movement or through a thought, is part of a shared gestural line of variation. The media operating in these situations are most effective when leaving the closing-off realm of language through figures like the talking head commentary or well-reasoned reflection, and enter a sphere of gestural forces acting immediately on a situation beneath the level of discernible signifiers. Immediation creates resonances and feedback loops across media ecologies because it operates on the gestural and incommunicable level of expression. The gestural is asynchronous due to its constant variation – the relaying of movement through movement. It takes on the role of the intercessor moving between immediate expression and hovering content, asynchronously composing potential effects. Indeed, by relaying movements, the gestural moves between *content* and *expression*, between *act* and *situation* (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 3-8; Deleuze 1986, 162):

The independence of the two kinds of forms, forms of expression and forms of content, is not contradicted but confirmed by the fact that the expressions or expresseds [*sic*] are *inserted* into or intervene in contents, not to represent them but to anticipate them or move them back, slow them down or speed them up, separate or combine them, delimit

them in a different way. The warp of *instantaneous transformation* is always *inserted* into the woof of *continuous modifications*. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 86, emphasis added)

The gestural quality of expression intervenes and inserts itself into content, therefore altering and extending its field and temporality. Immediation's power of effectuation moves across different time-spaces, shifting and resonating over time and across space diagrammatically. Media as *gestural* become intercessors when plugged into the continuous lines of variation constitutive of occasions of experience. Some activist media practices are less focused on capture but rather foreground the gestural as a minor operation of an enunciative act, tending towards another movement or gesture. Their technique is one of relaying the gestures of a collective-becoming across different bodies, materials, and technologies capable of activating life's own mode of resistance. At the same time, by carving out the gestural quality of bodies moving collectively in space, such media productions give insight into the proximity of the techniques deployed by protesters and their opponents – for the most part police forces. The gestural realm of contemporary activism emphasizes another sphere of protests and the contraction of forces for acts of violence and resistance. Often, these media productions provide an immediate affective relay between the people on screen and the onlooker – a viral and contagious bodily activation rather than a cognitive abstraction.

We have to conceive of the gestural as itself constituting an autonomous field of potential frequented by different becomings of language, bodies, and acts. Occupy as an event does not perish; it rather shifts and relays its very own modes of expression across the gestural realm of media, bodies, and thought. As a politics of timing, actions across different cities and through formats such as the human microphone or general assemblies, it has generated an immense proliferation of techniques available for addressing modes of capitalist capture and foreclosure, preemption and inaccessibility. The relaying of a movement always depends on the durational quality of its techniques, and their potential for transformation and extension according to the necessity of a situation: “What characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported” (Agamben 2000, 57). For Agamben, the gesture defines a different kind of quality independent of the act of production or action being its own end. The gestural defines the immediacy of a politics where what is becoming is

also effectuated through expression. Immediation thus gives the act its proper field of resonance with bare activity's power of existence and the necessity of a situation.

### *Time-folds of Research-Creation as Activist Practice*

During George W. Bush's visit to Mar del Plata, south of Buenos Aires, in 2005, a group of young artist-activists arrived in small boats from the sea. Their faces were covered, in their hands they held carton silhouettes of automatic guns and banners showing the word "Errorista." Within minutes the small activist group was surrounded by a platoon of military policemen aiming to arrest them. The group replied they were shooting a movie, "a parody of the media's exaggerations of terrorism," and pulled out a forged permit (Holmes 2007). The event was documented in all its details, while the police were challenged in their authority, unable to sustain any arguments for arresting "artists" shooting a movie, even themselves admitting the ridiculous situation of Bush's presence in a country that has undergone near-permanent economic and political turmoil over the last thirty years. The *Errorist International* is the invention of artist-activist group *Etcétera*, who actively participated in creative interventions before and after Argentina's 2001 economic crisis. Errorist, a term that emerged as a typing error in an email among members of the group, points at the use of the omnipresent figure of the terrorist as a pretext for shutting down critical resistance against the state-economic continuum of neoliberal capitalism. The new forms of activism occurring in Argentina, including groups like *Grupo Arte Callejero* (GAC), *Arde! Arde*, and *Taller Popular De Serigrafía* (TPS), alongside HIJOS (the human rights organization of the children of the disappeared), have "re-articulated an artistic and popular memory that had been smashed to pieces by the ruthless gagging imposed by the dictatorship" (Longoni 2006, n. pag.). Indeed, the relation to art in these forms of protest has instigated a new mode of thinking the aesthetic and political together, often producing critical inquiries into publicly staged political concerns and criticizing the art market hungry for new fields of potential value extraction (Longoni 2006).

One of the most significant and wide-ranging acts of political activism in the 1990s was the so-called *Escraches*, exposure protests of "social condemnation" against the perpetrators of the dictatorship's genocide. Since many of the former functionaries under the dictatorship have been protected by the so-called *Full Stop Laws*, the activists "disclosed the repressor's identity, his face, his address and, above all, his past as a repressor to his neighbours and work mates"

(Longoni 2006, n. pag.; Colectivo Situaciones 2004). *Escraches* became a popular form of public protest and denunciation of criminals living unmolested amongst those who had lost family members because of them. In the case of *Escraches*, the force of anonymity became something to be revealed and uncovered by giving a subject *one* kind of individuality: a face, a name, and a list of the deeds he committed during the dictatorship. The interventions, while exposing a claim to execute vigilant justice, show how complicated the play of anonymity and representation is in relation to public media productions and the suppression of multiple truths. While El Siluetazo already problematized anonymity as both a collective force of individuation and as a technique deployed by the repressive state, here we witness another aspect, by clearly identifying the repressors. *Escraches* are based on the mobilization of a small group who through research stage and execute a public event. Much different from mainstream media, which have officially supported the prosecution of former military functionaries without much political effect, the *escraches* generate a micro-mobilization based on active interventions (2004, 16-17). The naming and personalization as part of the practice emphasizes the continuum of autonomy as a different mode of politics beyond representation. Most of the people accused do not undergo juridical consequences, but their environment shifts, so they cannot rely on their habitus as an individual in their milieu anymore. This process relates less to a discourse of justice, depending on whose side you are, but rather generates an awareness of the ambivalence of truth as part of contemporary society.

As part of the *Escraches*, *Etcétera* also made puppets, often grotesque and ambivalent figures, where military functionaries are not just evil but evoke sympathy for being ridiculous. The aim here was to capture the attention of the mainstream media covering some of the earlier *Escraches* and garner affection and support for the intervention from a wider audience (Creischer and Sieckmann 2004, 28). The humorous and ridiculous puppets entered the screen through a gestural activation rather than just claiming to support the content of the intervention as an act of justice. *Etcétera's* interventions often approached the limit between political concern and its surreal extension, a fine line between an aesthetic act of experimentation in resonance with a strong political act. Their interventions, like their appearance at the beach of Mar del Plata, show the degree of ridiculousness of the signs and signifiers employed by neoliberal politics, which are often echoed by the mainstream media. Together with several other contemporary political groups, *Ecétera* is part of activism's historical series of practicing anonymity. The question of

how to relay a movement is one of temporal trans-consistency by means of continuous re-singularization. Such re-singularization requires conceptual creation alongside aesthetic experimentation and politics implicit in resonance with an activist philosophy of research-creation. In relation to *Etcétera*'s interventions, which are often based on extensive research, I see a strong link between what has been called the activist or militant researcher and research-creation as activist philosophy (Holmes 2005; Colectivo Situaciones 2003, 2005). Brian Holmes conceives of activist-research as "locating yourself against the horizons of disaster, then finding modes and scales of intervention into lived experience, [which] are the pathways for intellectual activism in the contemporary world-system" (2005, 740). I would add to Holmes's assertion that such forms of activist research as research-creation have to undermine the personal, replacing it with a subjectivity of collective awareness, and to think of the world-system not as a totality but a fractally inflected mesh of interrelations which have to be addressed through relation-specific modes of insertion and active resistance. Indeed, the play of anonymity and (non-)identification is also a play with communication, its transformation, or refusal.

In his talk, "What Is the Creative Act?" Deleuze makes a link between control societies, as the ones I have emphasized under the label of representational politics, and communication (2007, 317-329). For him, any form of communication is information distributing order-words as confined and controlled meaning structures in language and thought (2007, 325). These modes of communication as part of control societies "will no longer pass through places of confinement" (2007, 327). Accordingly, the distribution of control in contemporary societies does not operate on a binary logic, but as a pervasive distribution of order-words immanent in modes of communication. Deleuze suggests that art can produce forms of counter-information as acts of resistance, concluding that they are a resistance to death, either as a work of art or as human struggle (2007, 329). Crucially, there is no dialectic at work between art and life in Deleuze's statement. On the contrary, they fuse, as an aesthetics moving through the interstices of a material process and the intervals of its emergence. They constitute an ethics that takes account for the immediacy of an emergence and its capacity for opening future potentials. From *El Siluetazo* to Occupy Wall Street and *Ecétera* we witness an anonymous force of time forms moving between the bodily and abstract, the mediated and immediate, the real and the surreal, all sharing a continuum that is life-living. Beyond this general potentiation of *a life* intercessors need to take on the role of actively instigating processes of emergence, dephasings into

expression, manifesting a process of actualization taking effect in a series of differentiations through repetition. Intersensors are operators of potentiation with singular capacities for making time and thus for effectuating differential time events suitable to emergent forms of life. These forms of life require the development of other modes of valorization, escaping “the moral psychological, and social lamentation of capitalist valorization, which is only centred on economic profit” (Guattari 1996, 266). For Guattari, indeed, “ethical and aesthetic values do not arise from imperatives and transcendent codes. They call for an existential participation based on an immanence that must be endlessly reconquered” (1996, 266). Existential participation is an ethical mode of insertion moving with the most minute shift of events, calling for a thinking-feeling with the differentiating capacities of an emergence. Through the operation of anonymity, I pointed at one singular, transindividual mode of operation of a relational ecology moving across heterogeneous time forms and places. My critique of representational politics is a first remark of what activist philosophy might contribute to a more speculative and pragmatic take on ecologies of practices at the heart of the production of subjectivity. Anonymity here emphasizes an order of uncertainty, “a stripping of forces of chaos that always haunt structures that are dominant, self-sufficient, and that believe in their own superiority” (1996, 272).

How can we conceive of research-creation as a speculative cartography embracing ethico-aesthetic politics in contemporary forms of activism? We can first consider the emphasis on the relational and ecological as an attentiveness to a politics that is always already immanent, as an activity of life-living, as seeds for activation of a life that embraces multiplicity, change, and differentiation, instead of identification. Extending the field of its resonances, starting with art and philosophy, moving toward politics and activism, undermines not only their separation but also opens up new existential territories of a transductive and collective kind. Research-creation thus propagates a *politics of immanence* where techniques of activation attune to the ecology of relation at stake. Also, research-creation is fundamentally processual, working from the hyphen of a situated and relation-specific emergence instigating *how* to develop a singular mode of research and contract forces in the process of creation. As a speculative practice, research-creation investigates experience as frequented by “potentials which are not a simple virtuality of future states, but that which pushes these states towards being” (Simondon 1958, 155). Potentials are forces of becoming, they are active lures of an ecology’s capacities to activate new modes of life-living. The ethics of research-creation thus lies in the valorization of



potential in its emergence, neither prefiguring it (preemption) nor registering it after its occurrence (reflection). As immediate and diagrammatic techniques of relation, research-creation operates immanently, according to the ontogenesis of collective modes of individuation. Thus one of the most crucial tasks for research-creation is to develop its capacity for becoming a mode of collective individuation, operating through transduction across different time forms. As a practice, it has to be relation-specific, speculative, and pragmatic. As a political activity, it has to practice an activist philosophy attentive to more-than-human capacities for activation that arise ecologically and across practices and their singular time forms. Finally, to take account of its own ontogenesis beyond self-reflection and difference to other disciplines, research-creation has to develop *memories of the future*, a kind of uncertain and creative production of thought and feeling resisting its own death as a new discipline.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The discourse on artistic research informs the underlying discussion but is not central to it. I attribute to artistic research a mostly institutional discourse that deals with questions of inter- or transdisciplinary research methods between art and (mostly) the humanities, asking how artistic research might be a new mode of producing knowledge, a sensuous form of non-discursive knowledge as different from the knowledge acquired through other scientific and academic practise. On the question of trans- or interdisciplinarity, see Klein 1996, 2000, 2005; and Weingart and Stehr 2000. In relation to knowledge production in artistic research, see Borgdorff 2011, and Kjörup 2011. The number of edited books about artistic research has increased greatly over the last ten years. See, for instance, Balkeman and Slager 2004, Biggs and Karlsson 2011, Barrett and Bolt 2007, Elkins 2009, Leavy 2009, Hannula, Suoranta and Vadén 2005, Holly and Smith 2008, Sullivan 2005, and Schwab and Borgdorff 2014. On the relation between scientific discourse and artist research, see the collection of essays dealing with Hans-Jörg Rheniberger's notion of experimental systems (Schwab 2013), and Scott 2006 for her take on artists-in-labs.

<sup>2</sup> Research-creation is a term that emerged around 2000 as part of a newly installed funding program of the *Fonds Québécoise de la Recherche sur la Société et la Culture* (FQRSC) and later in 2003 by the Canadian *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council* (SSHRC). Based on these funding programs the term designates an “approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms)” (<http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22>). (Accessed August 14, 2014). The term has been further deployed in design contexts (Findeli and Coste 2007; Lécho Hirt, 2010). In the field of art, research-creation has taken up the relation between art practice and theory through institutional and methodological discourse (Gosselin and Coguie 2006; Chapman and Sawchuck 2012, Poissant 2014). In the Canadian context, most related publications and institutional formations are based in Montreal, with PhD programs at Concordia University and the Université du Québec à Montréal, the inter-university *Hexagram Centre for Research-Creation in Media Arts and Technology*, and public institution *Société des Arts Technologiques*. Another perceivable

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centre is the *Research-Creation Working Group* at the University of Alberta. In 2015, the first internationally staged and cross-disciplinary exposure of research-creation will be the Anniversary International Conference on the History of Media Art, Science, and Technology, accompanied by a symposium entitled “2015, RE-CREATE: Theories, Methods and Practices of Research-Creation in the Histories of Media Art, Science, and Technology.” As I will show, my attempt here is to consider research-creation informed by art and theory practices to prevent its creative capacities from becoming overly institutional.

<sup>3</sup> The notion of the “time form” was explored at the 2013 symposium “Time Forms: The Temporalities of Aesthetic Experience,” co-curated by Alanna Thain, Eric Lewis, and Stephen McAdams, and it incorporated a wide range of academic, artistic, and research-creation practices investigating the relation between time and aesthetics.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of immediation defines the basis for the seven-year SSHRC partnership grant the *SenseLab* received, entitled “Immediations: Art, Media, Event” for the period 2013 to 2019. The goal of the project is to interlace a radical empiricist conception of experience with contemporary media practices constitutive of an immediacy of mediated experience without deploying the typical communicative sense of mediation. As immediation, the proposition that will be further explored over the years, experience with and through media technologies cannot be abstracted from its immediate emergence. One of the challenges for the project is to explore ways of taking account of the immediate capacity of experience reshaping the expressive and meaning structures of a situation without having to deploy a linear conception of chronology, spatiality, or causality. Immediation might become the foundation for a renewed investigation of what contemporary media ecology can do and might become as open, operable and more-than-human fields for immediate capacitation for activation and action. See [www.senselab.ca/immediations](http://www.senselab.ca/immediations).

<sup>5</sup> The notion of experimentation might be regarded as problematic if a delicate differentiation between art and other experimental practices, such as the natural sciences, are concerned. I certainly agree and therefore emphasize the need for a differential account of experimentation in the arts, which is mostly concerned with the creation of percepts and affects (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 164). The notion of experimentation is interesting once we consider collective aesthetic practices emerging from a so-called “lab-structure, like the *SenseLab*, but also the Topological Media Lab founded by Sha Xin Wei at Concordia University or the Mobile Media

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Lab at York University in Toronto and Concordia University. Thomas Jellis investigates the *SenseLab* and the Topological Media Lab in his dissertation *Spaces of Aesthetic Experiment* unfolding a differentiation between aesthetic experimentation and other forms of experimentation. Similarly, the co-edited volume *Practices of Experimentation: Research and Teaching in the Arts Today* emphasizes institutional research and teaching environments, such as art schools, as places concerned with specific artistic modes of experimentation (Brunner and Schiesser 2012). A recent treatment of Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's scientific concept of "experimental systems" in relation to art is the collection of essays in *Experimental Systems: Future Knowledge in Artistic Research* (Schwab 2013).

<sup>6</sup> I take the notion of relation-specificity from human geographer Derek McCormack, who adapted the term from Brian Massumi. See McCormack 2010; Massumi 2003b.

<sup>7</sup> Simondon links the notion of ontogenesis to the concept of haecceity, a "this is" or "here is" as aspects of reality "that consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 261 and 540-541, n. 33).

<sup>8</sup> The shift from quantitative to qualitative denotes no dichotomy. Quantitative means primarily a difference in difference, or difference in kind, as Deleuze developed Bergson's concept (1988a). The qualitative in experience takes "not a form of discrete 'things seen, heard or touched' but of 'qualities of shape, number intensity level'" (Daniel Stern in Manning 2013a, 7). Quality concerns not a concrete objective world, but the movement pattern of relations of a quasi-stable passing of lived experience.

<sup>9</sup> On the notion of the body, Deleuze and Guattari define it as "the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude); the sum total of the intensive affects it is capable of at a given power or degree of potential (latitude)" (1987, 260). The notion of "whatever" (*quelconque*) means not arbitrary, but rather "in becoming," not stable but metastable (see Agamben 1993, 1-2; Deleuze 1988c, 123).

<sup>10</sup> Aden Evens provides the basis of this thought in his work *Sound Ideas: Music, Machines, and Experience* (2005, 14).

<sup>11</sup> An extended treatment of the role of surfaces as it appears in the work of Gilles Deleuze can be found in Manning's chapter "Waltzing the Limit" (2013a, 41-73).

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<sup>12</sup> Thinking of relations as an unfounded and un-mediated immanent relation (change itself) echoes the main conceptual developments and the critique of mediation and foundationalism developed in Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* (1994, in particular chapters I-III). On the problematic of mediation see p. 8; on the problem of foundationalism and the ground, see pp. 28-29; on the issue of differentiation and the differential, see pp. 170-181. In chapter II, I turn again to Massumi's conception of experience as itself being autonomous (2002b, 212).

<sup>13</sup> Robert Irwin is a Californian artist concerned with modes of perception through different formats of painting, installation art, landscape design, and architecture. In all his work, he attempts to activate an awareness for the ecological composition of perception and thus dislodge the conventions of contained form and object-based art. For more insight in Irwin's philosophy and aesthetic conceptual work, see Welscher 2008.

<sup>14</sup> On Dia:Beacon's website, the entry on Irwin states: "Robert Irwin's work at Dia:Beacon may elude the casual visitor. It consists of a master plan for the museum and its outdoor spaces, as well as design work on numerous aspects of the project, most notably the extensive landscape environment, where Irwin was involved in every aspect of the plantings, paving and fencing, and windows and doors. Most important, Irwin helped Dia consider the design of the Beacon project in experiential and environmental terms as a totality—from the visitor's entrance, by car or by foot, down a driveway marked at its top by a gate and a new copper beech tree, through an orchard that serves as a parking lot, into a plaza that signals one's arrival at the museum, into either a café and bookshop or the newly constructed entrance to the galleries, and from there down any of a number of possible paths through the museum's interior and into the artists' spaces, each specifically designed by the artist in question and/or by Dia to accommodate the work on view. Irwin's work in Beacon lay across the borders of a number of different roles—landscape designer, architect, aesthetic philosopher—in a manner completely consistent with his practice as an artist, in which, among other things, he has questioned exactly where the boundaries lie around the role of the artist today."

(<http://www.diaart.org/exhibitions/introduction/84>)

<sup>15</sup> In both of their works, Erin Manning and Brian Massumi unfold an entire philosophy of perception through the concept of the body and movement, particularly in relation to the notions

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of the diagram and the biogram (Manning 2009, 119-142; 2013a, 133-148; Massumi 2002b, 177-207; 2011, 87-104). The notion of the diagram will be further developed in chapter V.

<sup>16</sup> See Terranova 2004, Shaviro 2003, Anna Munster 2013; Castells 2000; Bourdieu 1993; Latour 2005, Lovink, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> See <http://senselab.ca/wp2/society-of-molecules-2009>.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://senselab.ca/wp2/society-of-molecules-2009>.

<sup>19</sup> Translocal is a term I use to attempt to go beyond the binary of local-global. While the term is often used without much conceptualization, its most grounded deployment is in geography. In this case, I refer to a 2008 research project “Translocal Practices” by knowbotiq and Felix Stalder. During the project, the team of artists and media theorists investigated immigrant relations in Switzerland through artistic interventionist practices (see knowbotiq and Stalder 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Chantal Mouffe and Claire Bishop expose an antagonistic take on collectivity and relational or social art practices, adhering to a dialectic conception of creation rather than a differential one, that I foreground (Mouffe 2007, Bishop 2004).

<sup>21</sup> Certainly, the cultural theories of “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983) and “time of the tribes” (Maffesoli 1996) play an important part in the reimagining of the collective in a social context. However, since the focus here resides on aesthetic practices and research-creation, I emphasize artistic and philosophical contexts.

<sup>22</sup> CoBrA is the name of an international group of artists that existed between 1948 and 1951. Its name refers to its member’s home cities: Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam. The group experimented with collective practices through a shared interest in Marxism and a rejection of surrealism. The Situationist International existed from 1957 to 1972, shifting from a primary artistic interest in transformations of urban conditions of life towards more political activist concerns and theoretical developments. Its most prominent founding member and also theoretical motor was Guy Debord. For a good overview of the Situationist International, see McKenzie Wark 2008, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> For an extended analysis of Occupy Wall Street in relation to media technologies and the critique of endurance, see Adams 2014.

<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.inflexions.org/tangents/sandiego/freephone.html>. (Accessed August 18, 2014.)

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<sup>25</sup> I am explicitly focusing here on Latour's development of the collective in relation to his long-term investment in the social and anthropological study of the sciences. While his elaboration on art and aesthetics provide a fruitful avenue, I consider the discussion of the collective developed more clearly in his take on the sciences. For Latour on aesthetics, see Latour 2008, and on art, see Latour and Weibel 2005.

<sup>26</sup> In the online platform to his *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence*, the notion of entity relates to articulation, the term Latour uses to designate the first phase of individuation: "Entities are not dumb, rather they are articulated; we do not speak because we have language but because we conspire with, and participate in, this generalized articulation. It is the articulation of beings that enables us to talk about them and to judge, that is to say, to monitor the risks they take in being 'permitted by' and 'promised to.'" <http://www.modesofexistence.org/inquiry/index.php>. (Accessed August 23, 2014)

<sup>27</sup> The inaccessibility of matter or objects as phenomena is one of the major concerns of philosophies labeled under the title of Object Oriented Ontology, and in particular the theory of Graham Harman. It is no surprise that Harman has written a major work on Latour (2009). The position Harman defends refuses a relational realism, insisting that objects have substance and are thus the only real entities. For a useful negotiation between the relational outline exposed here and Harman's position, see Shaviro 2011 and Harman 2011.

<sup>28</sup> "The modest witness is a figure in the stories of science studies as well as of science. S/he is about telling the truth, giving reliable testimony, guaranteeing important things, providing good enough grounding-while eschewing the addictive narcotic of transcendental foundations-to enable compelling belief and collective action" (Haraway 1997, 22).

<sup>29</sup> For a more detailed description, see "Immediations" at [www.senselab.ca](http://www.senselab.ca).

<sup>30</sup> See Luc Courchesne, *Panoscope 360°*, <http://courchel.net>.

<sup>31</sup> As I will show in the second movement of this chapter, perception is anything but human. Nonhuman perception concerns not only technological processes of perception (which are often modeled on the basis of an anthropomorphic phenomenological conception of perception) but also *non-sensuous perception* as a time quality of an immediate past having ingress on the emergence of a present occasion in the way Whitehead describes the term (1967, 182).

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<sup>32</sup> The concept of population originates from Deleuze (2007, 28), who underlines the qualitative-relational aspect immanent to creative acts by emphasizing populations instead of specificities. For him, populations rely on an internal process or “internal resonance” before any essentialist conception would turn them into specificities. Similar commentaries appear in Latour’s elaboration on Gabriel Tarde’s conception of societies extending beyond the human scope (2008, 14-15, Tarde 1999, 58). Whitehead also considers the grouping of occasions as societies throughout his work (1967, 211; 1968, 165; 1978, 56). As demonstrated in chapter I, Whitehead’s is similar to James’s in considering actual occasions or experience as the stuff the world is made of and therefore his conception of society figures closest to my elaboration of the notion of the collective.

<sup>33</sup> The concept and practice of granular synthesis has been developed by Kurt Henshläger and Ulf Langheinrich. For more than 20 years both artists have been occupied with fractal physics as the basis for audio-visual aesthetic modulation. For a good summary of their practice in relation to digital art and performance, see Scheer 2010 and Langheinrich 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Similar critiques of such a conception of immediacy see VR environments as disembodiment and digital technology as transcendental, pretending to detach from “real life” embodied conditions of human existence (see Turkle 1995).

<sup>35</sup> Without exploring this line further here, I consider my critique of the immaterial and the proposition of the incorporeal in resonance with much of the writing on immaterial and affective labour (Hardt and Negri 2000, 289-294). In these contexts the notion of immateriality becomes partly synonymous with affect, and affect denotes a primarily inter-subjective conception, either of them opposed to my development of the terms. For an extended and critical review of the term “immaterial labour” and its different tonalities, see Wright 2005.

<sup>36</sup> At this point it would be interesting to further investigate how the incorporeal materialism of electromagnetic flows and their qualities could be considered as crucial part of an affective spectrum. Such a development would allow for an in-depth investigation of affect through an electromagnetic incorporeal materialism at the heart of digital technologies.

<sup>37</sup> Simondon writes: “Souvent, la qualité d’individus comme un moteur, un amplificateur, dépend de la technicité des éléments simples (ressorts de soupapes, transformateur de modulation) bien plus que de l’ingéniosité du montage” (Simondon 1958, 72).



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<sup>38</sup> In many aspects Crary's interpretation of attention resonates with Foucault's analysis of power. For Foucault, power is not something manifested, like a physical act of violence, but for the most part defines a field of forces widely distributed through techniques, like psychiatry, discipline or governmentality (1973a, 1995, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> I follow a conception of matter as something that consists of corporeal as much as incorporeal elements (including their technicities). I borrow the term *mattering* partly from Karen Barad and partly from Isabelle Stengers. For Barad, "matter(ing) is a dynamic articulation/configuration of the world" (2007, 151), whereas for Stengers mattering describes "an idea [that] always exists engaged into a matter" (2005a, 193). Both authors express in their definition of mattering the movement crucial for a conceptual development of immediation. Mattering, similar to the relationality of perception, figures as the activating force for both poles, thought and matter, neither of them entirely material nor immaterial but part of an incorporeal materialism.

<sup>40</sup> One could say, following Haraway, that "bodies in this context are compounds, things made of other things that are "material, specific, non-self-identical, and semiotically active" (2006, 119).

<sup>41</sup> The notion of the contour in relation to movement and event is an elaboration derived partly from Manning's treatment of rhythmic contour of movement in perception (2009, 145) and Massumi's use of Daniel Stern's term "activation contour" in relation to emergent perception (2011, 107).

<sup>42</sup> In her book *Vibrant Matter* Jane Bennett takes up the conception of a vital materialism in a slightly different manner than that intended by Deleuze and Guattari (2010). She considers matter in itself as always active, attributing this quality to matter itself, giving it an autonomous way of live. I see Deleuze and Guattari's elaboration of vital materialism differently. For them, I think, vital materialism pertains to a logic of the included middle, where an activity of expression and contraction moves across different modes of existence, considering either of them as a degree of matter. Thus, there is no objection to considering the most "abstract" modes of existence, such as thought, as matter.

<sup>43</sup> Without having the time to further elaborate on this point, I consider Guattari's work on the "machinic unconscious" as a vital path for investigating the relation between technological milieus, their operational activation through and with perception, and thresholds of conscious experience. The machinic unconscious is the term Guattari uses in reference to Freud's

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elaborations of consciousness at the “molecular level, which would escape from any representation and whose manifestations would only arise from a-signifying figures” and a “relative unconscious, at the molar level, which would, on the contrary, be organized in more or less stable representations” (1989, 34). In either case he opposes his reading of Freud to Lacan’s emphasis on the signifier, which Guattari opposes with his own development of the machinic (see also Guattari 2009).

<sup>44</sup> In an art context, all of these aspects could be considered in relation to what has been termed “relational aesthetics.” See chapter I.

<sup>45</sup> A prime example of such tendencies can be found in Bishop 2012.

<sup>46</sup> This concept of sensation derives mainly from Bergson, for whom “our senses perceive the qualities of bodies and space along with them” (2001, 91-92).

<sup>47</sup> Whitehead has a term for this kind of more-than-human conviviality. Self-enjoyment defines a kind of conviviality of the event of a collective individuation as an ecological activity (Whitehead 1968, 150).

<sup>48</sup> The concept of affect attunement was been coined by Daniel Stern and adapted by Massumi (Stern, 1998, 138-161; Massumi 2011).

<sup>49</sup> In his essay “Onmes et Singulatim,” Michel Foucault describes what he calls “pastoral power” as the process of addressing subjects as individualized beings and part of a larger group of shared values and beliefs. He uses the image of a shepherd (a synonym for the Christian god) as the one who knows each sheep by its name but also holds the (spiritual) responsibility for the entire herd (2000, 401-417).

<sup>50</sup> Deleuze undertakes a major shift from a mere differentiation between quality and quantity as a split between differences in kind and differences in degree in his work on Bergson. He addresses the “problem of differences in kind as a quantitative pluralism,” which he then pairs off with a “limited pluralism” and “monism.” All three forms of time co-exist and thus the binary split between qualitative and quantitative time transforms into two kinds of multiplicities, “actual and virtual multiplicities” (1988a, 74-80). In relation to Whitehead’s elaboration of mereotopology and his notion of eternal objects, Luciana Parisi develops an incalculable quantitative logic of virtual multiplicity which renders digital practices such as parametric architecture beyond a classical notion of quantification (Parisi 2012).

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<sup>51</sup> In relation to military practices dealing with preemption, see Massumi 2007, and Rice and Massumi 2010. In relation to mass media and politics, see Grusin 2010, 41-49.

<sup>52</sup> On the distribution of the sensible, see Jacques Rancière 2004. On owning time as military strategy, see Massumi 2010b.

<sup>53</sup> This chapter partly emerged from a collaboration with artist and theorist Bianca Scilar Mancini, to whom I am grateful for having exposed me to the work of Francis Alÿs. A first expression entitled “Between Motion and Rest: The Politics of a Rhythmical Polis in the Work of Francis Alÿs” was presented at the conference *A Return to the Senses: Political Theory and the Sensorium*, at Trent University, Canada, in May 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Francis Alÿs by Sue Turton, Channel 4 News, September 27, 2005.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pzmHzmS64co>. (Accessed February 17, 2012.)

<sup>55</sup> On the relation between sound and vision as indivisibly intertwined in cinema, see Michel Chion’s *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (1994).

<sup>56</sup> The example of detecting buildings’ frequencies demonstrates acoustically that even a “concrete” architectural structure underlies rhythmical patterns and movement; see Kunsthalle Bern (ed.), *Florian Dombos: What are the places of Danger. Works 1999-2009* (Berlin: Argobooks, 2010), 33-34, 44-47. In architecture, Le Corbusier used the notion of rhythm in relation to visual patterns of building structures and their facades (1986, 72).

<sup>57</sup> I owe this beautiful phrase to the choreographer Diego Gil, whose recent writings develop the idea of “sensation going for a walk.” See <http://diegogil.com>. (Accessed April 22, 2012.)

<sup>58</sup> In relation to the body and Spinoza, Deleuze writes: “When a body “encounters” another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other, destroying the cohesion of its parts” (1988c, 19).

<sup>59</sup> The question of a re-beginning accompanies Deleuze’s entire philosophy from its first iterations. In one of his earliest texts, “Desert Islands,” he directly addresses the question of a beginning as a re-beginning where the emergence of a new phase is always known by its re-beginning and only the re-beginning contains a reappearance of the first emergence once it has perished (2004, 13).

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<sup>60</sup> In a way, Cruz's popular but aesthetically finely crafted diagrams echo Walter Benjamin's developments on the relation between aesthetics and politics. For Benjamin, art cannot be subsumed under politics. Aesthetics, if subsumed under politics—as an “aestheticizing political life”—leads to war. Politicizing aesthetics, on the other hand, enables a wider range of individuals (for Benjamin, “the masses”) to collectively create a new political ground for society, which Benjamin attributes to Communism (2008, 41-42). The relation between aesthetics and politics raised throughout the last chapter finds its expression in Cruz's diagrams as political aesthetics, open propositions for an empowering process activated through perception.

<sup>61</sup> “Interview with Teddy Cruz,” *Artkrush* ([www.artkrush.com](http://www.artkrush.com), no longer available). Cruz provides a distinct definition of his vision of research, while the notion of practice seems to remain rather unreflected as a concept. He writes, “Many architects talk about research and practice. I'm trying to problematize that relationship as well. This not only means researching issues for the sake of researching, but also that architects must enter into certain institutions to actually see the way that they are operating” (Cruz 2008, n. pag.).

<sup>62</sup> The notion of San Diego-Tijuana received prominent exposure as part of the art-event inSite\_05 including exhibitions, interventions, walks, and artist workshops including, Teddy Cruz in San Diego-Tijuana. See Osvaldo/Conwell 2006.

<sup>63</sup> See [estudioteddycruz.com](http://estudioteddycruz.com). (Accessed September 10, 2014.)

<sup>64</sup> If not indicated otherwise, Cruz's expressions and vocabulary is derived from the short video-clips at [www.estudioteddycruz.com](http://www.estudioteddycruz.com).

<sup>65</sup> Cruz differentiates his practice quite strongly from contemporary architectural phenomena, which he clearly criticizes: “It has been unsettling to witness that some of the most ‘cutting edge’ practices of architecture rush unconditionally to China and the Arab Emirates to build their dream castles, reducing themselves to mere caricatures of change and camouflaging gentrification with a massive hyper aesthetic and formalist project” (Cruz 2010b).

<sup>66</sup> Architects and poets Arakawa and Gins promote architectural procedures as one of their main concepts for rethinking the relation between architecture and life.

<sup>67</sup> At this point it should be mentioned that Cruz's architectural practice is by far not the only “architectural” position focusing on procedures. One could think for instance of Eyal Weizman's work on Israel (2007) or his laboratory *Forensic Architecture* (<http://www.forensic->

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architecture.org). Other examples might be Cedric Price (especially his *Fun Palace* project in relation to interaction), Archigram's work on movement (<http://www.archigram.net>), Coop Himmelb(l)au with their actions (<http://www.coop-himmelblau.at>), or Lebbeus Woods with his exploded diagrams (<http://lebbeuswoods.net>) to name but a few. In relation to artistic practice, one can think of Gordon Matta-Clark's *Odd Lots* project, or the collective urban intervention platform *Adaptive Actions* (<http://www.adaptiveactions.net>). However, in relation to architectural discourse, my affirmative reading of Cruz's work marks a specific attentiveness to the multi-layered nature of contemporary urbanism as a continuous flow of social, economic and material vectors at the heart of this analysis.

<sup>68</sup> In relation to the border as laboratory Cruz comments: "The critical observation of this locality transforms this border region into a laboratory from which to reflect on the current politics of migration, labour and surveillance, the tensions between sprawl and density, formal and informal urbanisms, and wealth and poverty—all of which have increasingly come to characterize the contemporary city all over the globe" (Cruz 2010).

<sup>69</sup> For an extensive and excellent treatment of the diagram in relation to architecture, including Brian Massumi's contribution which implicitly shaped this article, see "Diagram Work," *ANY* 23 (1998).

<sup>70</sup> In relation to his PowerPoint presentations Rebecca Solnit writes: "His PowerPoint presentations are things of beauty, zooming from maps of the world to details of children at play, combining computer generated images, architectural models, his lush collages, photographs of buildings, streets, and aerial views, and leaving crowds exhilarated and ready to change the world" (Solnit 2002, n. pag.).

<sup>71</sup> In reference but clear divergence from Jacques Rancière's concept of the "distribution of the sensible" as a non-discursive way of exercising power (Rancière 2004), Massumi develops a notion of aesthetic politics as affective politics illustrated through Whitehead's notion of contrast: "Contrasts are tendential unfoldings that are held together in the same situation. They are alternate termini that come together in the instant, even though their actual unfoldings are mutually exclusive. Their mutual exclusiveness is a kind of creative tension. It is the contrasts between termini that interfere and resonate, and modulate what comes. [...] Whitehead defines the aesthetic in terms of this intensity of contrasts. An aesthetic act brings this contrastive

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intensity out from under the shadow of action's instrumentality or functional aim" (Massumi and McKim 2009).

<sup>72</sup> In this citation and throughout the text I have modified the translation of the French word *intercesseur* into "mediator" as it appears in the English version of *Negotiations*. Mediator evokes a meaning of mediation which seems contradictory to Deleuze's general critique of mediation.

<sup>73</sup> Literature on the topic in relation to visual culture and aesthetics is quite recent and has received a lot of attention in light of the 2001 Argentinian economic crisis and the subsequent creative emergence of interventionist practices. See Longoni and Bruzzone, 2008; Longoni 2010, 2007; Madres de Plaza de Mayo 2007; Taylor 1997; Fisher 1989; Abal 2011; Colectivo Situaciones, 2009, 2003; Creischer, Siekmann, Massuh 2004; Holmes 2007; Sternard 2011).

<sup>74</sup> In my further exposition of El Siluetazo I diverge clearly from Longoni's interpretation of the visual realm as politically manifesting facts and focus on the emergent character of an aesthetic force as a vivid undercurrent of any form of life. However, the bare "matter of factness" of the disappearance and the visual politics are not denied in their value and relevance as part of the overall human rights movement. I argue, though, that the politics of representation as exposed by Longoni (2007, 2010) require another potentially non-representational and performative aspect, which I develop as a "force of anonymity." As demonstrated below, Longoni herself seems to have extended her understanding of the events in 1983 from a representational logic toward a logic of the event.

<sup>75</sup> In *Always More than One*, Manning discusses the function of the the colour scheme of "amber-gray-black" in Ari Folman's film *Waltz With Bashir*, evoking as Deleuze does the "fourth person singular" as an anonymous but constantly active force of the passing present of the event (2013a, 41-73).

<sup>76</sup> The way I deploy the event as exception through the operation of bare activity is opposed to Agamben's thoughts on the "state of exception" and "bare life" as techniques of legitimization of state violence (1998, 15-20, 6-10).

<sup>77</sup> The Invisible Committee evokes in a similar manner the force of anonymity in their book *The Coming Insurrection* (2009, 122-114). The authors acknowledge anonymity as a viable strategy

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for suspension and the gathering of forces, while at the same time acknowledging that moments of presence are unavoidable for the effectuation of change.

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