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Reh, Sabine; Temel, Robert

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Observing the Doings of Built Spaces. Attempts of an Ethnography of Materiality

Sabine Reh & Robert Temel [*]

Abstract: *»Das Tun gebauter Räume beobachten. Ansätze einer Ethnographie der Materialität«.* The paper makes a methodological contribution to the question as to which part built space plays in social practices. In doing so, we firstly use practice theory according to Schatzki as a theoretical basis to clarify the relationship between space and activity. For that, it is important to overcome with Schatzki (and Heidegger) the difference between subjective and objective space. This is made possible by making "lived space" not independent of or dependent on subjectivity, but dependent on activity. In a second step, we will use an example of ethnographic observation to show under which conditions and advertencies it was possible to recognize space's part in activity. We describe what appeared by chance in observation theoretically with the concept of atmosphere in the third part. This concept was introduced into the discourse on architecture by Böhme, it was rendered more precisely by Seel, and we try to connect it to our starting point in practice theory. After applying the concept of atmosphere methodologically on observation, we cautiously draw methodical consequences from this for observation of built spaces as part of social practices.

Keywords: Built space, materiality, social practices, doings/activity, agency, atmosphere, appearing, ethnography.

1.   Built Space and Social Practices

The paper makes a methodological contribution to the question as to *which part built space plays in social practices*. We use practice theory according to Schatzki as a theoretical basis to clarify the relationship between space and activity (1). Then we will use an example of ethnographic observation to show under which conditions and advertencies it was possible to recognize space's part in activity and what this means for empirical work (2). We describe what appeared by chance in observation theoretically with the concept of atmosphere which we relate to practice theory (3). After applying the concept of atmos-

[*] Sabine Reh, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung, Warschauer Straße 34-38, 10243 Berlin, Germany; sabine.reh@hu-berlin.de.
  Robert Temel, Ferdinandstraße 13/11, 1020 Wien, Austria; rt@temel.at.

phere methodologically on observation, we cautiously draw methodical consequences from this for observation of built spaces as part of social practices (4).

1.1 Built Spaces

We understand built spaces as part of the social, inevitably connected to it. In doing this, we speak of *"built spaces"* and not of architecture to avoid misunderstandings: Our approach does not deal primarily with architectural artworks or buildings of "starchitects" (architects who became idols of the architecture world). It deals with all sorts of buildings, no matter whether made of concrete or glass, wood or textiles, whether streets, residential buildings or museums, permanent or temporary. This includes mobile elements and interiors, too. These spaces are *produced in practices*, they are participants in practices and are again and again transformed in these practices as well as influencing them. Built spaces are, furthermore, a specific category of *artefacts (generated in practices)* because they surround us perpetually and inescapably; and because in everyday life they are not usually the object of intended interaction but mostly remain as background and environment.

1.2 Doings

We use the notion of "*doing*" and by that refer to Schatzki who equates it with agency. *Doings* are occurrences in the continuous flow of events that befall humans, organisms, artefacts and things. There is always someone or something these doings can be assigned to, and there are always chains of events that are commenced or continued by these doings (Schatzki 2002, 191). Doings of built spaces attract attention if something does not work properly: if a wall-mounted picture falls down because the nail in the wall loosens, if built spaces do not guide passers-by correctly or are confusing. These are occurrences that commence or continue a chain of events, and this makes it clear: If built spaces work as they should, they also do something. Built spaces are, in that sense, doers (in a *Zusammenhang*, a hanging-together), but they are not actors like humans sometimes are: They do what they do in a way which is not intentional (not even in the sense of a primal directedness), not reflecting, not planning. Schatzki argues that for the integration of non-human actors into social science, the attribution of agency (in the sense of the capacity to act) is not necessary. We have the symmetrical vocabulary of doing which does not (in opposition to the notion of agency) have the disadvantage of implying intentionality, planning, reflectivity (Schatzki 2002, 200).

1.3 Social Life and Social Practices

Social life (or human coexistence) is a hanging-together of different people's lives and inherently transpires as part of practice-arrangement bundles

(Schatzki 2010b, 129; 2012, 21). This hanging-together forms bundles of practices and arrangements, and they form larger constellations of constellations – the total plenum formed is the overall site where social life transpires: "Because the relationship between practices and material entities is so intimate, I believe that the notion of a bundle of practices and material arrangements is fundamental to analyzing human life" (Schatzki 2012, 16; 2010b, 128). In Schatzki's conception (2002, 2010a), space is not a construction or a framework, but consists of vast nets of bundles of social practices and material arrangements, i.e. of the hanging-together of activities, of social things and of both (Schatzki 2012, 14-7). Built space is, in this context, part of the material, of the arrangements, but cannot be separated from the other elements. A *(social) practice* is an "open-ended, spatially-temporally dispersed nexus of doings and sayings", it consists of activities that hang together, that are organized in specific ways and that are connected by several kinds of relations (Schatzki 2012, 15). A practice is inevitably linked to a group of certain material entities (people, artefacts, organisms, things) – this practice and the *arrangement* of the material entities related to it form a *practice-arrangement bundle*: "To say that practices and arrangements bundle is to say (1) that practices effect, use, give meaning to, and are inseparable from arrangements while (2) arrangements channel, prefigure, facilitate, and are essential to practices" (Schatzki 2012, 16).

1.4   Timespace

The bundles are linked in several levels of complexity and, through that, form timespace. *Timespace* is, therefore, an essential feature of activity and exists only insofar as activity (opposed to mere occurrence) happens (Schatzki 2012, 17), it is opened by and only comes to be through activity and is *not* just where activity occurs (Schatzki 2012, xi).

This concept of timespace is based on an analysis of Heidegger (1978, 1999). For Heidegger, *temporality* is the meaning of human existence and consists of the past-present-future dimensionality of activity. These three dimensions are simultaneous, not successive, they are understood as thrownness, being-amid and projection, respectively: "The temporality of activity is, thus, acting amid entities toward an end from what motivates." (Schatzki 2010a, 18-9).

Spatiality is "the world through which a person proceeds", it embraces "arrays of places and paths anchored in entities where a place is place to perform some action and a path is a way among places" (Schatzki 2010a, 19). In such an understanding, time is not a chronological line on which an activity can be situated and space is not where something happens, but timespace itself is unfolded by activity. Timespace is, in this conception, co-extensive with the net of all existing practice-arrangement bundles on several levels – simple bundles, bundles linked in wider nets and nets forming wider confederations (Schatzki 2010b, 130).

To describe this, Heidegger provides a third concept of space which Schatzki called *lived space* (Schatzki 2007, 35). This term overcomes the dichotomy of the two different concepts of objective and subjective space, about which, both in philosophical tradition and in social theory on space, the discussion is ongoing (Berdelmann and Reh 2014). Schatzki calls *lived space* the space that characterizes the phenomenon of humans experientially acting. This space is not objective; although it encompasses objects in the world it does not characterize the world independently of humans. And it is not subjective because it does not depend on minds or subjects of experience but on human activity (Schatzki 2007, 35-6). Lived space depending on activity means that it consists of places to do something and paths to move between these places. For Heidegger, equipment has a specific place where it is situated to do something, it is available (*zuhanden*), it appears as "something-in-order-to" and it refers to its use and to other equipment, thereby forming an "equipmental whole", a network of equipment and places referring to what it is used for. All equipment has its place, and these places form regions, a collection of places related to certain uses (Dreyfus 1991, 62, 129) or, to speak in terms of Schatzki, an arrangement related to certain social practices. Doings of built spaces as defined by their materiality therefore are elements/constituent parts of timespace as unfolding activity.

2. Data: Ethnography of Space and Activity

The basis of our analysis is an ethnographic research project in which the doing of built spaces became the object of observation. The case was derived from a project on the production of differences and of community in pedagogical practices of reformist secondary schools and is based on participant observation. The project is conducted by "Deutsches Institut für Internationale Pädagogische Forschung" (DIPF Berlin), the University of Göttingen and the University of Bremen at two schools in Berlin and two in Bremen (Rabenstein, Reh, Ricken and Idel 2013).

2.1 Example: The Door's Role

To illustrate our approach, we bring as an example what doors did in one of the two Berlin secondary schools. The following observation is drawn from the first of the four observation phases of this project. Observation was not focused on space – the question of space developed during observation, from activities observed in the field. During the first field phase, an observation was imposed on the ethnographers in one of the schools in Berlin: Not only is the way in which practices of teachers and pupils transpire important for the pedagogical production of difference; but even the built space defined by its materiality is

important within what can be called timespaces of the participants in a school, as the following excerpt from a field protocol illustrates:

> I go outside into the corridor. The door between corridor and staircase is also loud, it opens, a pupil comes in, it clunks shut. Back in the last room, a pupil (Paula?) comes out (the corridor lies between two staircases, there are three classrooms/"learning offices" and a storage room for learning materials). The door closes loudly. On the other side, too. Now the door does not clunk shut but is closed carefully by a pupil. That is as loud as clunking shut. The girls near me talk about a teacher who is "stupid" because she does not allow them to leave a room without asking. Again, the door clunks shut. The door to the staircase squeaks, additionally. The door to our room is still open.

In pedagogical discourse, no matter if in educational science, in pedagogical guidebooks or in practitioners' discourse, ideological knowledge is reproduced as to how school spaces affect their users and which spaces are best for learning. So we can identify an "un-historical anthropology", a tendency for instance claiming that certain color schemes and room structures are more conducive to learning than others (Rittelmeyer 2013). Beyond that, school buildings and their materiality are presumed to reflect pedagogical programs (e.g. Jochinke 2003, 287). The relationship between architectural design and the images of users expressed therein and pedagogical imaginations and topoi is comprised in figures, for example by claiming an analogy between architectural and pedagogical ideals. Visual documentations of such asserted clear relations show their inconsistency and the fact that spaces do not determine. We could find more differentiated relations.

The building of one of the community schools which was a research object in Berlin was built in the 1960s. As the new school now residing there moved in, the building was refurbished in parts. From the outside, it is easy to see that it was built in the 1960s. Plaster chips off from the exterior walls which are covered with graffiti. The building is a standard type often used in GDR times (ZNWB 1999). It is one of several buildings in a terraced structure on one big site. The buildings have four floors, each with two staircases which are connected by corridors. Each corridor has four classrooms on one side and windows to the schoolyard on the other.

Although the project at the beginning did not deal with space, during one of the field phases the doors in this building became notable. These were colourfully painted metal doors which made loud noises when they clunk shut. One of the ethnographers was reminded of the basement doors in her own house. The way through the staircases on both sides of the corridor leads through metal-framed, heavy glass doors which creak loudly. In the morning, individualized education takes place in this school in several classrooms. The pupils of mixed age classes can decide in which room they want to go to do their assignments in which subject (German, Maths, English) there. During the one and a half hour of this learning time, they have a further radius of movement compared to the lecture-based teaching in the classroom. They can determine quite freely

where they want to stay in this time. Over a longer period at the beginning and the end, many pupils come and go. Once and once again the loud doors clunk shut. The observers jotted down several times that they felt disturbed by this smacking noise. They even waited when someone entered for the noise of the shutting metal door once again a short moment later. Furthermore, the shutting door produced a certain kind of changing air pressure which could be felt. After some time, the disturbance was not felt anymore. The field members apparently did not notice this noise, or at least almost did not, as one teacher said to the ethnographers. Although no one in the field seemed to be disturbed by the noise, prefigurations and effects of the doors could be observed:

1) We noticed some sort of "*concentration*": Swarms of pupils emerged, entering through the doors in groups. They tried to pass the handle from one to the other, they became faster when they saw that someone opened the door to take the handle and stop the door from shutting; or they used their feet to prevent the door from shutting and then pushed it open to be able to pass when they came weighed-down with jackets and bags. This strengthened the impression of movement and high fluctuation.

2) Further on, we could see in one space that the door was *left open* during study time. One teacher said that this allowed her to check on pupils in the corridor. She had decided to do so although the mood in classroom was better if the doors were closed. This made it possible for pupils to work in the corridor by taking chairs and tables outside, which was not allowed in other classrooms with closed doors, as the following field note shows:

> Talking with us in the schoolyard, Ms Müller (she is supervising) describes that she has decided to leave the door open to be able to better look after the pupils who want to work outside on the corridor. Otherwise, they would do something else all the time. The atmosphere ("Stimmung") inside of the room was of course better if the door was closed. I mention that the loud door disturbs me; she is surprised. Yes, some of the pupils do not have any idea about closing it quietly. Apparently, she does not feel disturbed.

3) How pupils opened and closed doors varied as strongly as the way in which they passed on the doors using their hands and feet. We were able to observe that the *doors were great instruments to express certain feelings*; e.g. anger of pupils and annoyance of teachers when they closed them especially loudly or even threw them shut or closed them silently. The latter happened rarely. At one time, a pupil finished an individual work session and was intent on closing the door as silently as possible. Another situation: The doors are closed in the morning, before learning time starts, until teachers come with the keys when the expected opening time comes near. When the teacher is anticipated, individual pupils stand at the door with the handle pulled-down as if they wanted to express that it is time to unlock it. This is exemplified by the following field note:

While passing by, several pupils push the door latch – metal, rounded, cheap. As time goes on, the push sometimes takes longer – as if the door would open from that, maybe to raise a legitimate claim: Now it's time. A pupil stands in front of the locked door for quite a time.

Opening a door as a doing with the door, with this special door, befalls the individuals with certain idiosyncrasies and differences. It cannot be said at this point if individual identities of using a door exist.

4) Along with the observed *insensibility against the door noises* (all doors in this school made noise, as we noticed during observation), the ethnographers were able to recognize another kind of insensibility in relation to the built spaces. This was definitely not an effect of the first insensibility nor the other way round. All over the building, pupils left paper with writings on it and waste paper on the floor, they tipped over chairs and waste bins in the classrooms. In relation to this school's propagated respectful attitude against people and nature this seemed rather ostentatious as an atmosphere or mood to give meaning to the spaces, to protest, to not be attentive, even not against oneself and one's own products.

A topological relation positions the doings in class and the doers, it brings them close together. On one hand, the materiality of space, of the doors lead to the shutting, the loud noise and the jerking (of the ethnographer) which is a causal relation. On the other hand, the pupils' reactions on this together with the intentional relation (the school's schedule for individual work) can be seen as prefiguration. The fact that the door shuts and makes a noise brings the participants into a powerful relation to one another, allowing for domination and subordination. The door, and this could also be seen as its doing, therefore gives power to certain individuals, e.g. the power to disturb. With the idea to keep the door open, the teacher relates intentionally to conditions of built space. In no way the space determines such a doing; other teachers on this corridor keep their doors shut. This relation enfolds spatio-temporal and shows a doing of built spaces and of the meanings related to them – but it needs a certain kind of observation.

2.2 Empirical Steps

Our approach is based on practice theory and on our theoretical considerations of the concept of atmosphere. We propose to perform specific steps to observe the doings of built spaces:

1) At the beginning, we tried to leave behind the usual attitude of an ethnographer. Usually she pays attention to the participants (defined as humans), to what they do and how they interact. This is even the case when (to speak using Hirschauer and Amann) she tries to achieve a perspective of alienation. We see our approach in succession to the concept of alienation (Amann and Hirschauer 1997, 7-52), but still different. Alienation tries to avoid

wrong familiarity with one's own culture, to bring it further away for the observer, to objectify it to discover something new about it (Amann and Hirschauer 1997, 10-2). Seel's *aesthetic perception* avoids conceptual determination to perceive a thing in its sensuous appearance. No one certain aspect is important, but the repleteness of all its sensually perceivable aspects, momentarily and simultaneously (Seel 2005, 24-7). While alienation plays the game of changing between familiarity and distancing, aesthetic perception tries to keep all aspects in similar distance of appearance, avoiding the familiarity of purposes as well as the distance of objectivity; here, the game goes between appearances. Alienation is "curious", aesthetic perception is "confused". Both approaches see the observer as instrument using a "free-floating attention" (Amann and Hirschauer 1997, 27) in the field.

2) At a certain point during ethnographic fieldwork, we propose to *avoid focussing attention on humans and to look explicitly at something else than the human actors*, although one is in the same space together with them. While refraining from the participants and consciously resigning to understand them in their actions, we have to let the space affect us in a sense of atmospheric appearing. We try to *trace how the surrounding materiality of space encounters us – to perceive and sense what we hear, smell, see and feel, to respond to the atmosphere of the space we are in, to the interaction between our body and its material surroundings*. With such a perspective; contextuality and situationality are not part of a subjectivity we have to overcome. They allow the perception of (not isolated elements but) relations, connections, forms, i.e. differentiated formations integrated into contexts. Corporal perception means that forms of organization come into play and formations of Gestalt and of structure take place (Reh 2012, 20). To achieve such a perspective focused on materiality, the ethnographer has to refrain from what happens around her and draw her attention to what happens with herself, with her body and between it and her surroundings.

3) Later on, we withdrew from this kind of "Gestalt perception" containing cultural-historical knowledge. We *concentrated on individual things, details* – maybe becoming conspicuous for the first time now –, and to focus on them with all senses or to reactivate the synaesthetic forms of perception and try to describe what we perceived with new metaphors. The necessity to describe the perceived appearing afterwards strengthened our attention in the situation (not to be mistaken with activity, but also not with passivity). This made it possible, for example, in the empirical case to put built space into the focus – which it was not at the beginning of the fieldwork.

4) And finally, as mentioned, it is important to *go back to observing human activity, too, and to try to relate it to the observations made before while focusing on built space*. In doing so, the ethnographer can find relations between humans, their activity and materiality that have not been visible before.

3.   Observing Appearing and Atmosphere

Theoretical basis for the empirical steps described above are the concepts of atmosphere and of aesthetic perception which we will introduce now. Our theory-led question is: How can the doings of space – as described above – be noticed, observed, described and, finally, analyzed? This question develops on the background of contemporary trials to overcome thinking in dichotomies, to leave behind such polarisations such as the one between subject and object and to historicize in a radical manner categories of observation and thinking which contain anthropological a prioris, e.g. the one of the human actor. Our example shows that built space's role in social practices is complex and multifaceted, it influences human activity in many ways not always occurring in the ongoing situation of a human acting, therefore it is not enough to observe doings of human beings. This makes clear that there is something else to be discovered: the interdependency of materiality and human actors in the field (among them the observers). Therefore we turn to a concept that gained new importance recently (not only) in architecture theory through Gernot Böhme's (2006) work: the concept of *atmosphere* or mood ("Stimmung"), bringing sensual presence in place of hermeneutics (Gumbrecht 2004, 2011) or to put emphasis on "atmospheric appearing" (Seel 2005). Atmosphere, says Böhme, mediates between architecture and the human body ("Leib"). In opposition to geometric space which was the traditional space of architecture, the space of bodily presence comes into focus. This space consists of places, has directions, is characterized by narrowness and comprehensiveness, impressions of movement and constraints, light and dark, transparency and opacity – by categories through which our surroundings modify our feelings to be here. In this sense, atmospheres are tuned spaces or spatially effused, quasi objectified feelings. They mediate between the objective qualities of an environment and the condition of the observer (Böhme 2006, 15). Atmosphere is a basic fact of human perception in which someone through her condition at the same time feels where she is. Reading moods, discovering them in artifacts, means to engage oneself affectively and bodily with them (Gumbrecht 2011, 31). That also means that atmosphere is perceived through many or even all of the senses. It is not possible to see space, you feel it (Böhme 2006, 105). But Böhme's atmosphere and atmospheric perception is in its tendency an unhistorical concept (Berdelmann and Reh 2014), and he generalizes problematically atmosphere as a basic concept of aesthetics (Seel 2005, 92-3). Therefore we propose to adopt Seel's proposal of an "atmospheric appearing". What, then, is that, how can it be perceived, what does it mean to perceive it and what has to be done for perceiving it?

1) Firstly, *aesthetic perception* is a specific kind of perception, but a very common one, as Seel writes. It is characterized by an avoidance of functional orientation. "We are no longer preoccupied (or no longer solely preoccupied) with what we can achieve in this situation through knowledge and ac-

tion." (Seel 2005, 20) The object of aesthetic perception, for example a space or a thing in space, is set apart from its conceptual fixation: "To perceive something in the process of its appearing for the sake of its appearing is the focal point of aesthetic perception." (Seel 2005, 24).

2) Such a non-determining perception looks for hardly specifiable and not conceivable qualities of the perceived. The focus is on phenomenal individuality of the perceived, to stay in its presence and to look at the object in attentiveness as an end in itself. Seel talks about a dysfunctional presence (Seel 2005, 29).

3) Aesthetic perception is not constrained to one sense, it works always as syn-aesthetic perception. Everything in a situation – "temperatures, smells, sounds, visuals, gestures, and symbols" (Seel 2005, 93) – touches the observer.

4) This includes a consciousness of presence and a certain position against oneself, a "sensing oneself": "We cannot pay attention to the presence of an object without becoming aware of our own presence" (Seel 2005, 31), without "sensing [our] own presence while perceiving the presence of something else." (Seel 2005, 32) Something captivates us, it befalls us: "Aesthetic perception is attentiveness to the occurrence of its objects" (Seel 2005, 56, 88-9).

5) Objects or situations can now not only be perceived in their mere appearing, in a "contemplative aesthetic perception", but also in a reflection of a life situation. In this case, Seel talks about "atmospheric appearing" (Seel 2005, 90). Life situations have in their "repleteness of their appearances" their own character and can be opened up by the observer as a "sensuous-emotional awareness of existential correspondences" (Seel 2005, 93). This kind of aesthetic perception is always a "meaningful perception" containing knowledge about cultural-historical references and "perceptive sensing" of how this situation corresponds with the "weal and woe" of the observer (Seel 2005, 94).

Material entities in certain places are, in Heidegger's words, available for their users and for certain uses. For observation, this means that one either can use them or observe them, but not both at a time. To recognize the doings of built spaces, it is necessary to refrain from trying to understand the human actors. Above all, perceiving atmospheric appearing is a way to grasp such doings or traces of such doings beyond what actually happens during observation. It requires refraining from actual activity to perceive the traces of past or future activity. Atmospheric appearing allows intuiting the "existential significance" of entities, as Seel describes: "The ball thus reminds of the sound of children who are long gone; an apartment's furnishing portrays a standard of living that can be seen to be bogus" (2005, 92).

4.   Conclusion

The focus on the doing of built spaces methodologically means that not so much data analysis but data generation has to change: We need to introduce a specific approach in (participant) observation to make perceivable not only what human actors do, but also what built space does. It is important to emphasize that such an approach does not mean to ignore human activity, but to refrain from observing doings of humans for certain phases of observation so that other doings can be observed as well. Of course it is also necessary to use phases of observation focused on human activity and to combine both in data analysis. For social scientists (and presumably for all humans), human activity comes to the fore quasi automatically. Therefore observers have to prescind from it at times to be able to see something else, too.

Participant observation as a method to analyze space is not new. We argue that for our specific topic, built space, as well as for materiality in general, it is important to focus on materiality and not on interactions or human doings; to do this by perceiving the atmospheric appearing of this materiality; and to refer the observed back to other doings in the observed setting, e.g. the doings of humans. Therefore the (partial) focus on materiality does *not* mean that human actors and their practices are ignored in our perspective, but only that we have to take specific methodological measures to integrate materiality into the picture. Social practices always relate to material elements (arrangements), whether that may be only the bodies of the humans engaged in these practices or huge arrangements containing many different elements. But materiality often plays a bigger role in these practices than appears at the first glance: It is not only important as a tool or something that is handled during practices. Schatzki identifies five different kinds of relations, and there might be more: Relations between practices, its activities and material entities are causal, topological, intentional, prefiguring or intelligibility relations (Schatzki 2002, 41-7; 2012, 16-7). *Causality* is the relation of effecting and guiding. The *topological relation* (Schatzki calls this spatial relation, 2002, 42) is an arrangement of places to do something specific or an arrangement of doings at certain places and the connections between them. The *intentional relation* consists of humans acting towards built spaces or having thoughts, convictions, purposes and feelings about them. Another type are prefigurative relations, a kind of influence coming close to Giddens' constraints and enablements, but not being based on an ephemeral structure but on material arrangements. For Schatzki, prefigurations are not only constraining and enabling, but they are conditions that modify activities in manifold ways, e.g. making them easier or more difficult, more expensive or cheaper, needing more time or less, etc. Prefiguring is similar to how Foucault conceives power: "To govern [...] is to structure the possible field of action of others" (Foucault 2001, 341), and that is exactly what built spaces do, too. It is clear that there are not only intentional prefigurations but also unintentional

ones. The last type, finally, is the *relation of intelligibility*, comparable to Gibson's notion of affordances but not naturalizing the meaning of objects as he does it (Gibson 1977). E.g. the spatial formation of a fence, the entrances, tables and chairs, sunshade etc. makes it easily comprehensible that a part of a square is a dining area, although nobody eats there now – this is true even if one never has been at this place but knows the institution of garden restaurants.

Many of these relations are difficult to observe. We believe that with applying the concept of atmospheric appearing in ethnography, observation will be made easier and will allow the perception of elements that do not come to the fore otherwise. If the focus is on observing the hanging-together, concrete material arrangements, the doings of built spaces, then in Seel's sense an open attitude is necessary for the material "mere emergence" and the "atmospherically articulated emergence" (Seel 2005, 93), an "articulation of realized or non-realized life possibilities" (Seel 2005, 92). Intent observing with all senses happens in bodily (maybe not always in the participant's) presence, attending to one's own actuality and to the responsivity of the observer. How, then, is it possible to put oneself into such a condition, how can one achieve such an attitude to be able to perceive atmospheric appearing? We suggested four empirical steps and showed above how to apply them in research practice. Our methodological proposal is to use atmospheric perception at certain stages of ethnographic fieldwork (especially at the beginning) to avoid focusing on specific aspects, to restrain from functional orientation, as Seel puts it. This allows the observation of doings of built spaces (and of other artefacts relating to a space's atmosphere) as far as they exist in relation to the activities of certain practice-arrangement bundles. A built space is, in this sense, always part of a material arrangement and therefore relates to specific social practices. Aesthetic perception is a way to observe activities as part of these practices that transpire beyond human actors – or beyond activities that are not conducted by them alone, but that are in certain relations with non-human actors like built space. An analysis based on aesthetic perception lies, then, the foundation to go back to focused, "functionally oriented" observation in later phases which puts the doings of built spaces into relations with other aspects of social practices – the ones that are observed with usual methods of participant observation.

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