

## The Diagrammatic Practice of the Micropolitical – the Spatio-temporal Expression of Play between Power, Knowledge and the Aesthetics of Existence

***“... life making thought active, thought making life affirmative ...” – Gilles Deleuze***

*An International symposium curated by Dimitrina Sevova and Christoph Brunner in cooperation with Prof. Elke Bippus, in conjunction with the transdisciplinary project consisting of a platform of irregular non-serial events, interventions, and collective art research and production, on the theme of Opportunities for Outdoor Play? Playgrounds – New Spaces of Liberty (The Question of Form) <outdoorplay.tumblr.com>, curated by Dimitrina Sevova at Kunsthof Zürich between March and October 2013 in cooperation with Prof. Elke Bippus, Franziska Koch and the Bachelor Medien & Kunst, Vertiefung Bildende Kunst of the Zurich University of the Arts.*

The symposium takes its point of departure from the notion of *play* in order to re-activate its potentiality in urban space, considered as a playground of deskilled, affective and precarious labor at the exterior limit of the conditions under which the system functions and imposes its rules. It aims to re-contextualize the spatial dimension of the outdoor as an ecological subsystem, applying praxes of play at the heart of which lies a rupture which carries within itself the catalysts of existential change. We relocate the notion of play from the outdoor to the outside as an environment and extended space. Here, playing together involves the power and capacity of forces creating dynamic situations as intensive fields of affection. Both playing bodies and the process of learning, as a social process, a process not acquiring anything, as a common, as self-productive and living knowledge, perpetuate new forms of social subjectivity and its immanent growth.

The symposium interrogates how we can re-invent the ontological and creative power of life we consider as micropolitics. Micropolitics defines a way of practicing and activating the potential of play as a process of differentiation from the habitually enclosed power relations and their confined manifestations in urban environments. Mobilizing the micropolitical on a global scale reveals possibilities for the ‘weaving’ of potential forces – like the unknown, unspoken, hidden, marginalized or repressed – to construct new forms of life and existence.

The symposium’s main focus departs less from a historical discourse on playgrounds with their structures and equipment in the urban space imbued with disciplinary functions to directly subjugate the body, but rather foregrounds the operation of play and the playground as apparatuses exerting control over bodies being next to each other, their social relations and modes of (re)production. Through different art practices of artistic research, production, interventions, and events with their specificity and different thematic unfolding of the subject, the project undertook an ecological analysis of the social and political microclimate of playgrounds and their urban environment as a diagrammatization of power.

By diagrammatization we mean an active and relational process responsible for the emergence and maintenance of power relations and their localization and specificity in actual social and urban settings. The diagram is an uncontained field of potential able to seek confinement through occasions of experience that are bodily felt, for instance, along architectural or urban structures as apparatuses of power. Foucault analyses such diagrammatic activity in his well-known study of the Panopticon, and Deleuze extends the notion of disciplinary diagrams towards contemporary mechanisms of control through unconfined flows of semiotization in the age of cognitive capitalism and biopower.

In re-contextualizing playgrounds as diagrammatization of power in the micropolitical we aim to better grasp the on-going processes of restructuring of the urban environment, not only raising anew the question of its ownership, but also “how? from what perspective? in which case?” We have the opportunity to reinvent outdoor play as praxis in the context of the local with its specificity, *i.e.*, non-totalized play. For us play is not a volitional act of the human but a potential way of *practicing with and through* the diagrammatic activity of

expressed power relations and of (re)composing them into new lines of alliance from which new spaces of liberty can be constructed.

This leads us to investigate three interrelated lines of inquiry emphasizing the outside with its interiority as opposed to exteriority and outdoor, the body as a plane for the production of subjectivity and life as an affective sphere of resistance and activity.

### **1) Re-thinking the Outside and the Politics of Its Inside**

How can we today re-think the vital politics of the outside, especially when the predominant statement is that there is No outside with regard to the integrated control of people's behavior and their subjection to and semiotization by it? Public spaces with their exteriority are still a matter of form; in this respect it is important to us to approach and understand the context of outdoor (as belonging to a public space and playing bodies there) as an environment with its microclimate, as diagrammatization of power relations, in relation to their outside. Outside then designates something quite different from an exteriority as opposed to an interiority – both notions presupposing confined bodies with defined boundaries.

*The question of form* plays a crucial role for us in relation to play. If we conceive of the diagrammatic as a play of forces contracting discrete and bodily experienced power relations, we might be able to fold into this process practices of difference, both at the level of force and their expression as power. Power then is not exercised by particular urban settings or actors but felt and experienced in its constant re-emergence and self-renewal. From this point of view, power as both *potestas* and *potential*, implies resistance. The outside is opposed to a conception of exteriority and confined form. In relation to play and playgrounds, the outside defines a diffuse but actively operating force, enabling an inside to constitute itself as a contrast to its milieu (French for *middle* and *environment*). The idea is to raise a discussion not only about playing bodies in the public space itself, but also about play with ideas and concepts, with the thought of the outside and its fold, introducing a deep inside within the outside as an active space or arena where different contradictory orientations confront one another in their practical realization. How does the folded interiority of the outside become the specificity of a context with all its micropolitical as well as ethical aspects? How does the dynamic field of molecular forces relate to the micropolitical, where following Deleuze on Foucault “we must not take ‘micro’ to mean a simple miniaturization of visible and articulable forms; instead it is a new type of relations, a dimension of thought that is irreducible to knowledge. ‘Micro’ therefore means mobile and nonlocalizable connections.”

### **2) The Body as Transindividual**

Extending the dynamic force of the outside, as opposed to the binary of exteriority and interiority, we have to reconsider how the body becomes. The body is not only a surface but also depth. It is not just a stratification across which the formation of power relations runs. Bending the normative power, the machinic-metabolistic body appears as a nervous system. As a vital part of life it has its very own modes of resisting the capturing operation of diagrams of power. The body is a relational and metastable nexus of forces intersecting and normative power ephemerally manifesting itself – it is as much constituted as it constitutes. On a diagrammatic level of force, the body is defined by its capacity of affect and to be affected. The body, in its first movement, does not relate to an exteriority but constitutes its inside in relation to an outside as process of auto-affectation, the force of existence as potential self-empowerment through becoming: “the affect of self by self.”

In other words, how can we account for such bodying processes of emergence – which Guattari calls the production of subjectivity – beyond an identitarian conception of the self, while still not depriving a body of its ‘singular’ capacities? Auto-affectation always happens through a collective state of co-emergence. A body *as such* is a tautological conception. On the contrary, a body *worlds* with an entire ecology of becoming processes affecting and being affected through bodies and their shared milieu. In mutual co-emergence, such bodies generate alliances, fields of forces, diagrams of potential, which are transindividual.

Play expresses this process of transindividual emergence accounting for the primacy of auto-affect and self-affirmation while resonating with an entire field of other bodies in co-becoming. How are we today to re-think and re-articulate the importance of a politics of 'vital ideas' in relation to the production of subjectivity, ideas that must be created through affect which is "a general condition for material life" – the forces that vitalize and animate, productive forces with their creativity that is not to be understood as attributed to individuals, but is able to create them?

### 3) The Politics of Existence as a Life of Resistance

How does the *knowledge* of a molecular (vital and living) body, of the playing and acting body in the dynamic field of affects, function? This is a body that escapes judgment and in its movements confronts biopower, not as an organism, but as a new organization. Such organization is composed of organic and non-organic elements (partial objects and partial subjects), 'deprived of the organization of organs,' an affective, intensive, 'a powerful, nonorganic vitality' in a constant process of becoming. As part of non-organic vitality, the realm of thought empowers the transindividual becoming of bodies becoming-together in solidarity and love. Within this dynamic thought is not a cognitive faculty which can be subsumed under capitalist seizure but defines a power of resistance and force intensifying difference. This force reworks diagrams of power toward their becoming, that is, the unthought of thought as immanent to emergence. The folding of the outside constitutive of an inside beyond the binary of interiority and exteriority, the extension of forces and power relations across diagrammatic operations, all these processes are constitutive of a differential dimension of feeling and thinking with a world of becoming.

In relation to biopower, the manifestation of confinements and exercise of power across bodies, the transindividual dimension of thought beyond such enclosure, foregrounds a differential of resistance immanent to life. The emergent and evolving folded inside of the outside has to be recognized as an aesthetic and political space, which is actually "a diagrammatic of a non-place," because with Deleuze we can say that "when power becomes bio-power resistance becomes the power of life, a vital power that cannot be confined within species, environment or the paths of a particular diagram." We are interested in how to constitute, endure and modulate such diagrammatic forces and their power relations toward new micropolitical and diagrammatic practices actively becoming-with life's potential for resistance. What kinds of mental, social and environmental ecologies emerge from here and what kinds of productions of subjectivity can we enable through play as an active and relational and diagrammatic practice?

How does the logic of intensities, the multiplicity of movements engaged in an irreversible duration in the field of power express the forces of the outside, and mobilize "a relation which force has with itself, a power to affect itself". (Deleuze) How can these transversal relations, through a denaturalization of the real that enables a body to resist within the ontological and creative power of life, disrupt the diagrams of power? How does this ontology that begins with the body and unfolds the potentialities of the space for actions, as its extension by means of transversal tools, activate tactics that are no longer only self-reflexive play but overcome the binary of surface and depth, not explicitly critical but rather self-inventive and auto-productive, affirmative, in the depth of life and leaving the space of representation, a matter of self-initiated mobilization and self-government to increase self-valorization?

How does a permanent state of crisis affect the appearance of the active subject? How can its ontological political horizon in times of cognitive capitalism be re-defined deploying the whole range of unquantifiable skills and unintegrated knowledge rearticulated through deskilled labor and its inherent immeasurability? From there new practices of play reveal themselves with their "quality of irreversibility" as form of '*autoaffectation*.' We then ask, how does the creative struggle for subjectivity present itself today as a right of power, a right of knowledge, a right of difference with all possible variations and transformations, which is to say, a right of life.

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