

STREET
ART

GNAWING TOWARDS COLLECTIVITY

ART



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EDITORS NOTE: STILL PARASITING (BUT EVER CLOSER TO APPROPRIATION)

The second issue of Parasite Art deepens the reflection begun in the first issue about the Parasite as an artistic strategy. It is a further attempt to establish a discourse around Parasite Art as an art genre and tactic.

Parasite Art hopes to reawaken the parasite as a discourse. The term was more often discussed in the early 2000s, on different art platforms such as Kunstforum International (Germany), the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, or Michael Rakowitz's "paraSITE" intervention in New York. Recently, the idea seems to reappear in different places around the world, like in Quito, Zagreb and Berlin, creating new momentum for this publication.

Issue 1 focused on the intersection between parasite strategies and political and activist action, and attempted to produce a first draft of an aesthetic theory of the parasite. Issue 2 widens the scope, digging deeper into the historical and biological meanings of the parasite and discusses cases and stakes of parasitism as an artistic strategy. For this issue, we invited authors from different disciplines to reflect about, and apply what we are calling parasitic strategies and tease out its emancipatory potential.

Parasitic strategies may be an attempt to escape the successive appropriation of emerging radical artistic and political practices by the market or the cultural status quo, as Tonia Andresen argues in her piece. In the past decades, every new movement has been reabsorbed as part of the neoliberal hegemony. With parasitic strategies,

we work out tactics that play with forms of appropriation, and even go along with them a for certain distance; using the resources and methods of the hegemonic apparatus in order to camouflage, while simultaneously creating frictions, disruption, and irritation.

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way we understand the agency of the virus and by extension, the parasite. Nearly everybody has had a vivid experience of being affected by or confronted with a parasite. The virus's ways of settling, incubating and spreading became common knowledge on a global scale and associated with great losses. Out of this new moral position, Sabine Fabo asks if we can still see and frame the parasite as a subversive strategy. On the other hand, the pandemic made things possible again which had not been possible for the past 50 years. There was an enormous endeavor of states to support their citizens throughout the crisis, regardless of their economic status; between citizens, there emerged new practices of mutual aid and solidarity. Could we then say that the parasite caused new forms of collectivity to emerge? It is morally dangerous to focus only on the socially positive aspects of the pandemic, but, like every parasite, the parasite theorist looks at the niches, and not at the dominant or obvious stance on a topic. With the case of COVID-19 and beyond, my essay "The Parasite" also addresses the possibility of collective action through parasitic action.

As an artist who is also taking the role of editor in this publication, I was personally interested in

the possibility to reinterpret a moralized term or a negative metaphor, and give it new meaning. Today, the term may feel isolated, associated with only its biological meaning, but this, in and of itself, offers space to regenerate it.

I was also interested in the forms of subversion that are possible with artistic methods which are not created for an art, avant-garde or political scene, but rather, woven into society itself. What happens when art is no longer recognizable as art because it is camouflaged and becomes part of social operations within ordinary life? I am thinking about formats that do not get appropriated as socially engaged art or social practice and transformed into social management and welfare benefits.

Another source of my personal motivation is my own artistic practice, where I have created tactics and shapes that were often difficult to describe through the theoretical approaches I found within the canon of aesthetic theory. So I must say that this magazine is also based on a reflection about my different artistic interventions, such as *"Parasite Parking"* and *"Penthaus à la Parasit"*, and that it revolves in great part around my personal bias and interests. However, I hope that the inclusion of various authors and artists widens this personal vision and starts to stimulate a more general discourse around Parasite Art.

Finally this magazine was developed in strong exchange with the co-editor Marina Resende Santos. She edited each article and was the main exchange partner for conceptual discussions about the magazine and each of the contributions. Like most of my artistic practice, this magazine was a collaborative creation.

This edition starts at the very roots of the term, with a genealogy of the word "parasite" and the development of its meaning throughout the centuries (Jakob Wirth), followed by a reflection on the use of parasite as a metaphor, and how metaphors, in their productive imprecision, can reduce or open up complexity (Felix Bathon). To come closer to the natural sciences' major contribution to the term, I have interviewed Lisa Galle, biologist and curator of the exhibition *"Parasites: Life undercover"* at the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin. With Martin Bartelmus, we move towards a non-human perspective on parasites, and take artistic interventions like

"Parasite Parking" to observe thing-human-assemblages that create new subjects in the public space and question the bias of the dominant human perspective.

Another interesting twist to the parasite question considers our own self, the process of identity-building, and the process of artistic production as potentially parasitic with regards to our own family history and sources. Out of this reflection, the artist Maire O'Neill writes an autobiographical text in an attempt to collaborate with her deceased grandfather.

The challenges to achieving collective parasite action appeared in Issue 1 – as in my own practice. To address this pressing question, I discuss in an article the temporal dimensions of the parasite's effect on a system, between immediate disruption or disease and long-term transformation, and consider the forms of collective action that can be provoked by or constituted from rogue parasite action.

Parasite Art wants to use the energy of the system in order to invert it. There are numerous examples of this in this magazine: through the exhaust air from subway shafts or restaurant heating systems (as in Michael Rakowitz's *"paraSITE"*), through ignoring ownership and using empty parking spaces with a disregard for their usage conventions (Van Bo le Menzel), or the use of wastelands and vacant lots by different artists (as in *Open Sheds Used For What?*, Cecília Resende Santos).

Each of these interventions carry out different, small reinterpretations of public space, acting, on the one hand, with the system and its logic (camouflage), and on the other hand resisting it (irritation). When inhabiting the niche, a parasite must remain aware that its stay is temporary, and that its own life span, or its condition as irritant, have a short temporality and that every lingering involves the danger of appropriation. Perhaps this knowledge of their own limitations, the knowledge of the singularity of their niche, is what unites these parasites and creates a collectivity.

Parasite Art cannot create a new vision, cannot achieve mobilization – but it can collectively destabilize and thereby provoke new, additional parasitic strategies, forms of interpretation, criticism – and of course, inevitably, some new corporate appropriations.



innotchicago
MAGNETICITY WILD

Red traffic light



*Parasite Parking
Magnificent Mile
Chicago 2021.*

DAS PARASITÄRE IN DER PANDEMIE

1 Michel Serres, *Der Parasit* (1980), (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987).

2 *Parasitäre Strategien – Kunst, Mode, Design, Architektur*, hrsg. von Sabine Fabo, Kunstforum International, Bd. 185 (Mai-Juni 2007).

3 Karin Mölling, *Viren. Supermacht des Lebens* (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2020).

4 Mölling, 141-144

5 Hubert Knoblauch/Martina Löw, „Die Refiguration von Räumen in Zeiten der Pandemie“, in: Michael Volkmmer, Karin Werner (Hg.), *Die Corona-Gesellschaft*, (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020) 89-99, Zitat 95.

6 Ebd., 95.

7 Susan Sontag, *Krankheit als Metapher* (1977), in: Susan Sontag, *Krankheit als Metapher. Aids und seine Metaphern*, (Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2016), 9-74.

Die asymmetrische Gastfreundschaft scheint an ihr vorläufiges Ende gelangt zu sein: Unter der nunmehr zweijährigen Erfahrung der Corona-Pandemie und den an ihr beteiligten Viren sympathisiert niemand mehr mit parasitären Wirtsverhältnissen. Die Kommentierung gesellschaftlicher Beziehungen mithilfe von Metaphern biologisch konnotierter Prozesse hat sich zu einer medizinischen Lesart verdichtet, in der sich kaum noch von dem subversiven Potential unfreiwilliger, infizierender Kontakte fantasieren lässt. Parasitäre Positionen wurden 1980 prominent als eine Theorie der Kommunikation von Michel Serres in seiner Schrift *Der Parasit* ausformuliert.¹

Als konzeptionelle Strategien in Architektur, Kunst und Design wurden sie 2007 in dem von der Autorin herausgegebenen Kunstforum-Band *Parasitäre Strategien* vorgestellt.² Im Hinblick auf die Ausformulierung kulturbeschreibender Theorien zeigen die parasitären Strategien eine Nähe zu den Virustheorien, die seit den 80er Jahren geradezu viral als Beschreibungsmodelle der Subversion und Aneignung auftraten. Auch in mikrobiologischer Hinsicht teilt das Parasitäre eine Schnittmenge mit dem Viralen, da ein Virus in seinem Verhältnis zur infizierten Zelle parasitär agiert.

Nun rückt unter der bedrückenden Erfahrung der Corona-Pandemie die Gefährlichkeit von Viren in den Vordergrund, auch wenn dies eine extreme Verkürzung der Funktion von Viren darstellt. Der menschliche Körper ist von einer Vielzahl von Viren besiedelt, die zum Beispiel den Stoffwechsel unterstützen und so eine dem Körper dienliche Kommunikation in die Wege leiten. Die Virologin Karin Mölling hat in ihrer emphatischen Schrift *Viren. Supermacht des Lebens* auf die Komplexität virologischer Prozesse hingewiesen.³ So weist Mölling darauf hin,

dass Viren im menschlichen Körper lebenserhaltend sind und eine zentrale Rolle bei vielen Stoffwechselprozessen spielen.⁴

Unter der pandemischen Erfahrung sind Grenzziehungen wichtig geworden, als Schutzlinien für verletzte Körper und vulnerable Gruppen. Körper wie Institutionen begegnen dem Prinzip der Offenheit skeptisch und schließen sich nach einer Phase der Öffnung wieder ein. Grenzen werden kontrolliert, Mobilität eingeschränkt, Zugangsvoraussetzungen und Quarantäneregelungen bestimmen den sozialen Kontakt. Die Soziologen Hubert Knoblauch und Martina Löw sprechen in diesem Zusammenhang von einem Spannungsverhältnis zwischen sich widersprechenden Raumlogiken.⁵ Der „entgrenzte(n) Zirkulation des Virus“ antwortet eine rechtlich veraltete „Containerlogik der Körper“, von der man sich Sicherheit und Schutz erhofft.⁶ Gleichzeitig werden im virtuellen Bereich Grenzen ausgeweitet. Hier findet auf einem unkörperlichen Weg, vermittelt durch digitale Medien, eine vernetzte Kommunikation statt, die in ihrer dynamischen Bewegung der Distribution des Virus gleicht.

Die kollektive Erfahrung der Corona-Pandemie ernüchtert nicht nur den Umgang mit biologischen Metaphern, sondern schärft auch den Blick für unsere Versuche, Kultur modellhaft zu fassen. Auf die Problematik, Krankheit als Metapher zu sehen, hat bereits 1977 Susan Sontag deutlich hingewiesen. Sonntag stellt sich dezidiert gegen eine Metaphorisierung der Krankheit, da diese den Blick auf die Wirklichkeit einer Erkrankung und der von ihr Betroffenen verstellt.⁷ Über Sontags Beobachtungen hinaus weisen biologische Metaphern stets eine Nähe zur menschlichen Physis auf, was einen distanzierten Blick erschwert. Statt einer Parallele in Richtung Abstraktion lädt ein

organisches Erklärungsmodell zu einer Identifikation ein. In ihrem Rückgriff auf biologische Prozesse verunklären organische Metaphern gesellschaftliches Handeln zu einer zweiten Natur, die nicht mehr hinterfragt wird. In dieser Problematik stehen auch die als parasitär bezeichneten Prozesse, die zunächst einer landläufigen Auffassung folgend negativ als nutznießerische Verhältnisse konnotiert wurden. Vor dem Hintergrund von Serres' Beobachtungen wurden parasitäre Prozesse dann bevorzugt für subversive Interventionen von rebellischen Widerständlern und schwachen Minderheiten gegenüber einem systemischen großen Bruder in Anwendung gebracht. Im Hinblick auf den gesellschaftlichen Einfluss künstlerischer Strategien wurde die Terminologie der Taktik des Unterwanderns und Nutzens dominanter Strukturen von „subversiv“ zu „parasitär“ erweitert.

Beschreibungsmodelle parasitärer Beziehungen können da erhellend sein, wo sie das Verhältnis zwischen Mit-Esser und Wirt aus dem medizinischen Diskurs herausnehmen in Richtung einer kommunikativen Betrachtung, mit Blick auf Beziehungen, auf Kontakte, auf Annäherungsversuche, Aneignungsverhältnisse sowie die Dynamisierung dieser Relationen. Denn nutznießerische Beziehungen sind nach wie vor zu beobachten und werden nicht nur von sympathischen, widerständig agierenden Minderheiten eingegangen. Das, was häufig vereinfachend als „System“ beschrieben wird, marktbeherrschende Konzerne wie dominante Institutionen, verhält sich ebenfalls parasitär. Gesellschaftlich relevante Inhalte werden nicht eingelöst, sondern man eignet sie sich an, um Aufmerksamkeit und Akzeptanz zu erlangen. Die von der EU in ihrer Taxonomie geplante Qualifizierung von Atom- und Gasenergie als „nachhaltig“ parasitiert in ihrer offensichtlichen Greenwashing-Attitüde an der Klimadebatte, um Investoren zu motivieren. In Richtung einer Gesellschaftskritik lassen sich aktuell Aktionen im öffentlichen Raum beobachten, bei denen Werbevitriolen gehackt wurden, um Plakate gegen den Kindesmissbrauch in der katholischen Kirche zu platzieren.⁸

Die heftigen Umarmungen des „Systems“ haben somit nicht nachgelassen und es besteht noch immer die Notwendigkeit nach störenden Eingriffen. Das Parasitäre hat in der

Corona-Pandemie seine Ambivalenz deutlich gemacht, die Serres in dem wechselseitigen Bild von „hôte“ als Feindschaft („hostilité“) und Gastfreundschaft („hospitalité“) ausmacht.⁹ Die Erfahrung infektiöser Prozesse fokussiert die Beziehung der Feindschaft, wobei Serres hier von winzigen Veränderungen ausgeht, die den Wirt nach einer Phase der Irritation wieder stabilisieren und seine „Resistenz“ erhöhen. Stellenweise zeigt Serres hier eine Nähe zum aktuellen infektiologischen Diskurs, den er jedoch in seiner Schrift konsequent in eine Kommunikationstheorie überführt.¹⁰

Mit der Erfahrung von Corona haben sich frühere Metaphern der Grenzüberschreitung in eine physisch erlebbare Wirklichkeit übersetzt. Die Arbeit an der Grenze von Entitäten wird aktuell zumindest mit einer größeren Skepsis beobachtet. Ein wacher Umgang mit unseren Beschreibungsversuchen eines sich immer stärker vernetzenden Lebens ist erforderlich. Wenn wir in der Lage sind, organische Metaphern auch mit einem gewissen Abstand zu unseren Körpern zu lesen, kann der Blick auf gesellschaftliche Beziehungen geschärft werden. Eine Fokussierung der Metapher des Parasitären auf kommunikative Prozesse verdeutlicht das Spiel von Vereinnahmung und Widerstand und kann in Richtung kritischer Gastfreundschaft weitergedacht werden. Der Parasit tritt nicht immer viral auf, sondern leitet Veränderungen und Blickwechsel ein. Die Kontaktstellen, die der Parasit aufsucht, unterscheiden sich von der invasiven Dynamik des Virus und betreffen eher das Bild des Körpers als Container. Die aufgesuchte Beziehung erfolgt gezielt und individuell auf den jeweiligen Gastgeber abgestimmt. Am Tisch des Wirts lädt sich der Parasit unaufgefordert ein und versorgt seine Umgebung mit neuen Erzählungen und Deutungen. Seine Bedeutung liegt nach Michel Serres in der Fähigkeit, Beziehungen einzuleiten und zu verändern: „Und diese Macht beruht einfach darauf, daß er Beziehung ist, daß er nicht im Sein fixiert, nicht an einer bestimmten Stelle festgewurzelt ist, daß er im Funktionieren der Relationen steckt (...).“¹¹

Die hier benannten relationalen Verschiebungen lassen sich an frühen parasitären Projekten veranschaulichen. So geben die ParaSITES von Michael Rakowitz, die der Künstler seit 1998

8 S Diese Aktion in Köln wurde vermutlich von der Aktivistengruppe Public Space Intervention durchgeführt. Siehe Tim Stinauer, „Plakataktion gegen die katholische Kirche“, Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, 28.1.2022, 22.

9 Serres, Parasit, 297ff

10 Bevor man Michel Serres als frühen Befürworter einer Durchseuchungsstrategie missversteht, sei darauf hingewiesen, dass Serres in einem seiner letzten Texte Was genau war früher besser? (2017) die Vorzüge einer Impfung hervorhob.

11 Michel Serres, Was genau war früher besser? Ein optimistischer Wutanfall (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019).

12 Michael Rakowitz, „Umgehungen. ParaSITE/ (P) Lot“, in: Parasitäre Strategien, 130-137

13 siehe Sabine Fabo, „Die Kunst der (un)freundlichen Übernahme“, in: Parasitäre Strategien, 153-154.

im öffentlichen Raum in New York und Boston installierte, den instabilen Lebensräumen der Obdachlosen eine neue Sichtbarkeit.¹² Die Nutzung der Warmluft vorhandener Abluftschächte für aufblasbare Wohnräume verstand sich nicht als preiswerte Lösung der Obdachlosigkeit, sondern formulierte ein Statement gegen prekäre Lebensverhältnisse. Gleichzeitig wurden die transitorischen Behelfsräume in ein Verhältnis zur repräsentativen Stadtarchitektur gesetzt. Serres' Konzept der Gastfreundschaft offenbarte sich 1986 in den *chambres d'ami*, einer Kunstaktion in Gent, bei der Künstler vom Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in die Privaträume von Genter Bürgern eingeladen wurden, um sich dort für einige Wochen einzunisten. Eine ähnliche Kunst-Aktion fand 2016, initiiert vom Museum Ludwig, unter dem Titel *Hausbesuch in sechs Kölner Privathäusern* statt. Mithilfe eines temporären Wohnzimmers gelang dem Künstler Tazro Niscino 2005 mit der Installation *Es will mir nicht aus dem Sinn* die parasitäre Einhegung eines umstrittenen Denkmals.¹³ Die Reiterstatue von Wilhelm II an der Hohenzollernbrücke in Köln wurde ab ihrer Brusthöhe von einem Wohnraum umgeben, in

dem die Besucher in Katalogen zur Ausstellung Projekt Migration blättern konnten, in physischer Augenhöhe mit der Kaiserstatue. Das Denkmal als Symbol kolonialer Macht wurde dehierarchisiert und über die Geste der Gastfreundschaft entwickelte sich eine neue Erzählung von Macht und Widerstand.

Parasitäre Interventionen streben eine Neuverhandlung von Grenzen und die subtile Verschiebung eines übergeordneten Beziehungsgefüges an, das eher abstrahierend und nicht eng biologisch gefasst als „Wirt“ gelesen werden kann. In wohlwollendem Abstand zu organozistischen Erklärungsmodellen können parasitäre Haltungen eine kommunikative Stärke entfalten. In eher subversiver Absicht adressieren parasitäre Strategien ein eher asymmetrisches Verhältnis zu einer machtvolleren Bezugsgröße. Diese Asymmetrie ist jedoch nicht zwingend, da parasitäres Agieren auch von dominanten Akteuren wie großen Firmen oder politischen Kräften eingesetzt werden kann, wenn dieses Handeln profitabel oder zeitgemäß erscheint. Somit gehört das Parasitieren am Parasitären zur komplexen Logik parasitärer Kommunikation.

Bild rechts: Tazro Niscino, *Es will mir nicht aus dem Sinn*, Hohenzollernbrücke Köln 2005, Foto: Sabine Fabo, *Parasitäre Strategien*, Kunstforum International, Bd. 185, Mai-Juni 2007, S. 153.



DIE GENEALOGIE EINES BEGRIFFS. DER PARASIT AUF WEITERREISE

1 Parasitos (Mitesser), ursprünglich in gutem Sinne auf priesterliche oder städtische Beamte angewandt, die auf Staatskosten verpflegt wurden. Nach Bein, Alexander in *Vierteljahresschrift zur Zeitgeschichte*, (1965).

2 Vgl. Stulich, Heiko, Parasiten und eine Begriffsgeschichte, *Forum interdisziplinäre Begriffsgeschichte*, Jg. (2013).

3 Vgl. Hassl, Andreas, Der klassische Parasit: Vom würdigen Gesellschafter der Götter zum servilen Hofnarren, *The Middle European Journal of Medicine*, (2005)

4 Ebd. 3

5 ebd., S.4.

6 Bein (1965) Mit der Rezeption der griechischen und lateinischen Sprache und Literatur durch den Humanismus

Parasit, Schmarotzer, Schädling – unsere Vorstellungen vom Parasiten sind meist mit Ekel und Abschaum besetzt und oft auch mit Angst vor ihm verbunden. Es gibt eine Reihe an Hollywood-Bildern und Science-Fiction-Szenarien, die von gefährlichen Parasiten erzählen und gesellschaftliche Narrative des Schmarotzers, der auf Kosten von Anderen lebt – letztlich asozial ist - sind allgegenwärtig.

Neben dem zoologisch verstandenen Begriff der Moderne, zu dem wir direkt Bilder assoziieren oder eigene Parasiten-Erfahrungen kennen (Zecken, Würmer, Läuse), stammt der Begriff "Parasit" etymologisch aus einer Tradition der Antike, als der Begriff noch eine ganz andere Bedeutung und positive gesellschaftliche Funktion bezeichnete.

ANTIKE

Der Ursprung des Begriffs Parasit liegt in der griechischen Antike und bezeichnete mit *Ἀραασιτοζ* (*Parásitos*) = Parasit einen „Mitesser“,¹ „Bei-esser“ bzw. als Tätigkeitsbeschreibung „neben jemandem essen.“² In der antiken griechischen Gesellschaft war der Parasitos ein Gottes-Diener, der gemeinsam mit dem Hausherrn und der Gottheit das Mahl zu sich nahm. Er war dann also „para“ = nahe des „sitos“ = dem heiligen Getreide, dem Essen (der Gottheit). So war der Parasit damals der Verwaltungsbeamte einer Gemeinde und er initiierte und koordinierte Gemeinschaftsvorhaben des Tempels. Dabei lebte er von einem kleinen Anteil der Steuern, die er für die Gottheit eintreiben musste. Er lebte

daher, ohne in die gesellschaftliche Ökonomie eingebunden zu sein und seinen Beitrag in Reproduktions- und Produktionsarbeit „zu leisten“. Darin liegt vielleicht eine Verbindung zu seiner heutigen Bedeutung des Schmarotzers, doch stand dieser Aspekt damals im Hintergrund, da der Parasit eine klare sakrale Funktion innehatte.³

Über die Jahrhunderte hinweg veränderte sich die Rolle und die „Kunst des Parasiten“⁴, also die Kunst, Gott zu dienen, verlor in der sich säkularisierenden griechischen und dann römischen Gesellschaft mehr und mehr an Wert. Interessant zu beobachten ist, dass die Abwertung mit einer Privatisierung der Tempel und damit einer Privatisierung der sakralen Praktiken des Parasiten (im Tempel) zu tun hatte. Dadurch vollzog sich eine Trennung des – jetzt privaten – Gottes-Dienstes und der öffentlichen Verwaltungsaufgaben, die vorher beide beim Parasiten vereint waren, aber nun aus dem Tempel ausgelagert wurden. Dies geschah im Zuge der Säkularisierung griechischer Stadtgesellschaft und der Parasit war „nur mehr dem Anschein nach einer Hausgotttheit dienlich, in Wahrheit aber ausschließlich dem Hausherrn – und später dann Tyrannen, König oder Privatbesitzer, verpflichtet und nicht mehr der Allgemeinheit“.

„Der Verlust traditioneller Glaubensvorstellungen in der späten Antike entzog dem Parasiten letztlich jeglichen spirituellen Boden, er verkam zum Hofnarren und zum Schmeichler des

Hausherrn, von dessen Geneigtheit er nun völlig abhängig war. Als Gegenleistung für seine Versorgung wurden die Erheiterung der Gäste, Schmeicheleien, Kunststücke, Erduldung von Demütigungen und poetische Erzählungen von – wenn möglich eigenen – sagenhaften Heldentaten, manchmal wohl auch Prostitution erwartet.“⁵

In der römischen Kultur entwickelte sich der Parasit zu einer Figur im Theater. Typisch für diese Figur war ihre dynamisierende Rolle für das Geschehen. Der Parasit gab Impulse, die konstitutiv für die Handlungsentwicklung waren. Es war also die Figur, die unerwartet in eine Situation eintrat und die Dramaturgie in Schwung brachte und unerwartete Veränderungen verursachte.⁶ Doch auch die Rolle im Theater entwickelte sich mehr und mehr zu einer feststehenden Figur des Prahlers, des Intriganten und des Mitessers.⁷

NEUZEIT

Mit der im Humanismus wiederkehrenden Rezeption der griechischen und römischen Kultur tauchte der Begriff im 17. Jhd. im europäischen Sprachgebrauch wieder auf. Zuerst wurde der Begriff in der Botanik genutzt.

„Der Parasitismus lässt sich als die normale und notwendige Lebensbedingung eines Organismus definieren, der sich auf Kosten eines anderen, Wirt genannt, ernährt, ohne ihn zu zerstören [...] Um regelmäßig von seinem Wirt leben zu können, lebt der Parasit im allgemeinen in ständigem Kontakt mit ihm, entweder auf seiner äußeren Oberfläche oder in seinem Innern: Der Parasitismus stellt also eine im allgemeinen dauernde Verbindung zwischen zwei verschiedenen Organismen dar[...]. Die Verbindung hat einen im Wesen einseitigen Charakter: sie ist für den Parasiten notwendig, der stirbt, wenn er vom Wirt getrennt wird [...]“⁸

Der Parasit als Metapher⁹ wurde dann am Tag nach der Französischen Revolution prominent in einen gesellschaftlichen Kontext gesetzt, und mit einer sozialpathologischen Bedeutung versehen. In der Ansprache der französischen Revolution wurde der Adel als unproduktiv für das Kollektiv und daher als Parasit bezeichnet. Der Parasit tritt erstmals als gesellschaft-

liches Feindbild in Erscheinung. Parasiten als nicht-arbeitende Profiteure und Nutznießer, die so „nur illegitim an Gesellschaft teilhaben“.¹⁰ Die Unproduktivität der Aristokraten dient als Argument für den Ausschluss aus dem Kollektiv, da sie nichts beitragen, aber sich trotzdem was nehmen, und dadurch den anderen den gerechten Anteil und die Mittel für ein gutes Leben nehmen. Der Parasit wird nicht zur einfachen Störfigur, zum nutzlosen Tempelbeamten der Privatinteressen, sondern zur allgemeinen Bedrohung gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalts durch ein Leben von (den anderen).

Entsprechend dieses Narratives wurde in der sozialistischen Theorie und Literatur (siehe bspw. Proudhon und Lenin) schließlich die Kapitalist*innen als parasitäre Klasse bezeichnet. In der marxistischen Lehre wurden „unproduktiv“ und „parasitär“ zu identischen Begriffen, mit der die herrschende Klasse bezeichnet wurde.¹¹

Aus einem Begriff eines Gottesdieners wurde einer der Kapitalisten. Aus einer spirituellen Tätigkeit eine überflüssige Handlung, aus einer Geselligkeit eine Figur, die der Gesellschaft schadet.

ANTISEMITISMUS

Der sich ins Negative wendende Begriff des Parasiten – nun als Faulenzer und Überflüssiger verstanden – wurde vom Sozialdarwinismus vereinnahmt und diente dessen Verbildlichung. In diesem Zuge wurde der Begriff seit dem 18. Jahrhundert stark als antisemitisches und repressives politisches Instrument genutzt.¹²

Daher ist es keine Überraschung, dass der Parasitenbegriff Teil der nationalsozialistischen Rassenideologie wurde, die eine Kultivierung des sog. Volkskörpers zum Ziel hatte und alles, was dem entgegenstand, als volksschädlich bezeichnete. Die damit einhergehende Biologisierung von Gesellschaft bot die einfache Möglichkeit, die rassistischen Konzepte von „Blut und Boden“ und „Volkskörper“ evolutionär zu rechtfertigen und mit Bildern wie dem des Parasiten beschreibbar zu machen.

Die jüdisch-semitische Rasse wurde als parasitäre Rasse bezeichnet, die nur auf Kosten ihrer „Wirte“ leben kann. Der Nationalsozialismus schloss nahtlos und in völliger Totalität an die antisemitischen Narrative an: „Der Jude ist seit dem Mittelalter als Blutsauger und Aus-

kam das Wort im 16. Jahrhundert in den europäischen Sprachgebrauch, d.h. als verächtliche Bezeichnung für Menschen, die auf anderer Kosten leben, die sich durch Schmeichelei und Unterwürfigkeit Vorteile bei Reichen und Mächtigen erschleichen, ohne dafür wirkliche Arbeit zu leisten.

7 Aus Interview mit Theodor Hiepe in der Taz, 30.10.2000

8 Bein, S. 126

9 mehr dazu siehe Barton, Felix in diesem Band.

10 Stullich, S. 27

11 Hierzu auch interessant das Kapitel „Parasitismus und Fäulnis des Kapitalismus“ von Lenin, in *Ausgewählte Werke* in 2 Bänden, Berlin 1954, S. 851.

12 bspw. schreibt Proudhon 1858, „die Zerstreuung der Juden dem ihnen angeborenen „merkantilen und wucherischen Parasitismus“ zu.“

13 Die gleichzeitige Biologisierung, Technisierung und Mystifizierung von Sprache seit dem 18. Jhd. in Tradition bezog die Semantik des Parasiten auf Antisemitismus.

14 Bein, S. 124

beuter seines „Wirtsvolkes“ verschrien, dann als Repräsentant des Kapitalismus in dessen Odium einbezogen worden, immer und überall als Fremdling betrachtet und nach der Rassentheorie des Antisemitismus Angehöriger einer minderwertigen, unschöpferischen Rasse — auf wen ließ sich leichter das Bild vom Parasiten übertragen als auf ihn, auf den die biologische Definition so zu passen schien, als wäre sie eigens dafür geschaffen worden!“¹⁵ Auch der bekannte Orientalist und Kulturpolitiker Paul de Lagarde verglich die Juden mit dem biologischen Parasiten der Bazillen und Trichinen und argumentierte, dass „jeder Fremdkörper in einem lebendigen Anderen Unbehagen, Krankheit, oft sogar Eiterung und Tod“ erzeuge.¹⁶

Es wird deutlich, wie das Bild vom Parasiten zunächst mehr als Vergleich gebraucht, dann aber immer stärker mit der naturhaften Wirklichkeit identifiziert wurde und daher als Legitimation für jegliche existenzielle Diffamierung und antisemitische Handlung (ebd.) gebraucht wurde.

80ER - 2000ER

Im Nachgang an die NS-Zeit fand der Begriff ab den 80ern wiederum Gebrauch bei Jacques Derrida und Michel Serres, die den Parasiten als eine Grenzfigur beschreiben und in einen neuen Diskurs verschieben.¹⁷ Der Parasit wird nun verstanden als Störer und Irritationserzeuger.

Dieser neue Diskurs um das Parasitäre reiht sich ein in die unterschiedlichsten gegenhegemonialen Ansätze, die sich ab den 70ern entwickelten, um eine Antwort auf das scheinbar alternativlose kapitalistische Paradigma zu suchen und Counter-Strategien dafür zu entwickeln. Die theoretische Verwendung der Figur des Parasiten zeigt sich dann in der Viretheorie¹⁸ unterschiedlichster Ansätze von Subkulturen (wie in der Punkkultur).

Die Kommunikationstheorie von Serres über den Parasiten aus dem Jahr 1987 bricht dabei die Verengung des Parasiten auf sein Schmarotzertum auf und versteht ihn als ein Modell und eine Metapher für das intervenierende Andere.¹⁹

An die Stelle des Austauschs zwischen Teilnehmenden in einer Beziehung tritt „das Verhältnis des einfachen, nicht umkehrbaren Pfeils, der nur eine Richtung und kein Zurück kennt“.²⁰

Trotz dieser Einwegbeziehung, die zunächst dem Sinnbild des parasitären Schmarotzers folgt, übt der Parasit im Hinblick auf sein Wirtssystem eine wichtige Funktion aus: ähnlich dem unterhaltsamen Gast an der griechischen Tafel erzeugt der Parasit nun als Gegenleistung zum ungefragten Mitessen am Tisch Information bzw. Störung. Denn er „zahlt mit Information, mit Energie in mikroskopischer Größenordnung. [...] Der Parasit erfindet etwas Neues.“²¹

Das Neue entsteht durch die Irritation, die der Parasit durch das Eindringen (seinen Besuch) erzeugt. Der Wirt wird dadurch beunruhigt und zu Transformation bewegt, welche die bestehende Ordnung in eine neue überführen kann. „Der Parasit ist ein Erreger. Weit davon entfernt, ein System in seiner Natur, seiner Form, seinen Elementen, Relationen und Wegen zu verwandeln [...], doch er bringt [...] es dazu, seinen Zustand in kleinen Schritten zu verändern.“²²

Die Rolle des Nutzniessers weitet Serres in Richtung eines kommunikativen Dritten aus, der die Informationskanäle von Sender zu Empfänger besetzt und dort als Noise (Rauschen) Bedeutungsverschiebungen provoziert.

„Was ist ein Parasit? Ein Operator, eine Relation. Dieser einfache Pfeil stört, er stört die Organnachricht an einer Stelle des lebenden Systems. Rauschen vielleicht, auch Sprache, oft Lebendiges [...] Was ist ein Parasit? Eine Ableitung, die zu Anfang geringfügig und dies auch bis zum Verschwinden bleiben kann, die aber auch so weit anwachsen kann, dass sie eine physiologische Ordnung in eine neue Ordnung transformiert.“²³

Denn Störung ist Information, Information ist Impuls und Impuls ist Energie, die für jegliches physikalische System notwendig ist. Denn ohne Störung, die für System-Input sorgt, verhindert sie den „Tod durch Ordnung“. In diesen Bedeutungsebenen schließt Serres wieder an die antike Semantik an und überträgt sie auf Kommunikationsabläufe und die Informationstheorie.

DER PARASIT IN DER KUNST

Seit der Neudefinition des Parasiten – weg vom biologischen und sozialdarwinistischen Argument – sind weitere Jahrzehnte vergangen. Aus den biologischen, den antiken und



Terracotta figure of a comic actor wearing the mask of a Parasite, Etruscan, ca. 2nd C. BC © The Trustees of the British Museum.



den kommunikationstheoretischen Semantiken aktualisieren sich neue künstlerische Formen und generieren daraus neue Bedeutungsebenen.

Entsprechend dazu wurde 2007 eine Ausgabe des Kunstforums "Parasitären Strategien" gewidmet. Aktuelle künstlerische Praktiken wurden untersucht, die die verschiedensten kommunikativen Ansätze, die sich an ein bestehendes funktionierendes System heften und es zur Basis weiterer Arbeitseingriffe machen können, als Grundlage nahm. Es geht darin um parasitäre Interventionen, die sich auf eine Verschiebung der ursprünglichen Botschaft des parasitierten Objekts versuchen und somit Einfluss auf unsere Wahrnehmung der Dinge und Systeme nehmen. Eine Grenzziehung zwischen schmarotzerhafter Ausbeutung und symbiotischer Allianz erweist sich als schwierig, da parasitäre Positionen keine explizite Pro/Contra-Stellung einnehmen und die Rollen auch getauscht werden können.²⁴

Die Parasitäre Kunst und der Diskurs darum führt die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Begriff des Parasiten seit den 80ern fort und fragt sich, was Störung und Irritation in der heutigen Gesellschaft bedeuten. Was ermöglicht eine parasitäre Praxis in Bezug auf den White Cube, also Kunstinstitutionen, was ermöglicht sie in Bezug auf politische Kunst und subversive Strategien und letztlich, was ermöglicht der Begriff in seiner Ambivalenz, indem er mit einer Komplexität arbeitet, ohne sie auf eine Bedeutungsebene reduzieren zu müssen. Kunstprojekte wie *Penthaus à la Parasit*²⁵ provozieren Konzepte wie Eigentum nicht durch oppositionelle Kritik, sondern durch die Einverleibung dessen Logik, *paraSITE*²⁶ entfremdet Infrastrukturen und erweitert deren Nutzbarkeit, ohne sie als Lösung für sozial Probleme vorzustellen, sondern im Gegenteil mit und in der Prekarität zu agieren. Zeitgenössische parasitäre Kunst erprobt neue Handlungsweisen, indem sie herkömmliche institutionelle Grenzen ignoriert und den öffentlichen Raum als Spielfeld benutzt. Parasitäre Kunst nimmt sich darin die Nische – sucht kompromisslos die Auseinandersetzung, ohne dabei auf die Regeln der Hegemonie zu achten.

Die unterschiedlichen Semantiken des Parasiten zeigen, wie wandlungsfähig der Begriff ist

und wie er dennoch als ein Platzhalter für eine Störung, die sich entgegen der Norm stellt, steht. So bleibt (und ist) unklar, wohin sich der Parasit bewegt – welche Nische er künftig bewohnt, ob die des Kapitalisten, der ihm gesellschaftlich die Möglichkeit gibt, außerhalb von Regularien zu leben und dadurch die Ungleichheit zu manifestieren; oder die Nische des antiken Gottesdieners, der von den Lasten der Ökonomie – im eigentlichen Sinne – befreit ist.

Oder besetzt er in Zukunft eine gegenhegemoniale Ordnung? Wird er seine eigene Selbst- oder Fremdbeschreibung produzieren und sich dadurch eine Handlungs- und Bedeutungsfreiheit ermöglichen, die jeder andere bereits etablierte Begriff nicht mehr zulässt? Das Parasitäre in der Kunst inkorporiert die Ambivalenz, das Paradox, die Widerständigkeit des Begriffs genauso wie die begriffliche Entfremdung durch den Neoliberalismus, sowie auch die Zähmung des Parasiten durch Institutionalisierung. Die Wandlung ist auffällig unbeständig. Parasitäre Kunst – auch verstanden nach Sabo (2007) – kann und will stören, irritieren und eben nicht konstruktiv Probleme bearbeiten. Doch wie bei allen Strömungen, Kunstgattungen und Theorien droht auch dem Parasiten die Vereinnahmung.

Nach dem aktuellen Potenzial des Begriffs ist das Parasitäre selbst eine Ressource und keine Zustandsbeschreibung. Das Parasitäre ist Chance und Risiko zugleich – es bleibt, ja es ist sogar das Paradox. Wer diesem Paradox zu entfliehen sucht, wird selbst zum Wirt oder zur Dominanz.

Der Begriff Parasit umfasst unterschiedliche Ebenen, wurde unterschiedlich politisch, wirtschaftlich und biologisch bestimmt und veränderte sich von der Antike über die Neuzeit bis zur zeitgenössischen Kunst stetig und erlebte teils fundamentale Bedeutungswandel. Der Parasit ist auf der Reise, nichts wird seine Bedeutungsreise stoppen und so auch nicht sein Signifikat. Ob Tempeldiener*in, ungeladener Gast, Finanzhändler*in, Harz 4 Empfänger*in oder Künstler*in: auf dieser Reise bezieht sich der Parasit stets auf das gegenwärtige System und dessen Konzept von Gastfreundschaft, bzw. Eigentum und Teilen von Eigentum. : Der Parasit bleibt und ist auf Weiterreise.

24 Sabo, S.58, (2007).

25 www.penthaus-a-la-parasit.de - Guerilla Kunstintervention 2019-2021, Alexander Sacharow und Jakob Wirth. Siehe Bild linke Seite.

26 Public Art, Michael Rakowitz, New York, 2004.

Penthaus à la Parasit, Guerilla Intervention, München 2020

NEOLIBERAL DREAMLANDS? PUNKS AND PARASITES

1 Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of my Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Hampshire: Zero Books, 2013), 31.

2 Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism. Is there no alternative?* (Hampshire: Zero Books, 2009), 76 [emphasis i. orig.].

3 Elisa T. Bertuzzo, "From parasites to holobionts", *Parasite Art - The Exploration of the Edge 1* (2020): 32.

4 Luc Boltanski, Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London/New York: Verso, 2018/2005).

When I free-associate the term 'parasite,' my youth comes to my mind and with it punk music. In the early 2000s, punk had already been absorbed and mainly transformed into a style, but still it was a way for me to express my dissatisfaction with a diffuse outside world. In German, a common derogatory term for a punk is a tick [Zecke], a parasitic creature, describing someone who is not worthy of being part of the collective we call society. Yet using the term tick is not only used by right-wingers and conservatives to defame punks; it has also become a self-description, a common 'punk name' embracing all those who are seen as 'scum.' The parasite becomes a figure of the anti-establishment, a celebration of the dark and disgusting, the angry and disappointed working-class youth.

Punk, understood as a way of refusal, an expression of collective anger and the rejection of those in power, can be understood as an intervention into the day to day. But it is also associated with a certain habitus, an identification with negativity and "death, and the equation of death with the inhuman future"¹. The parasite evokes similar images. Both terms raise the same question: do they transpose progressive leftist politics, to then become stuck in a metaphorical romanticisation as border figures who not only do not manage to push past capitalism's co-optation, but even become neoliberal dreamlands? I ask this question because punk, as well as other countercultures, have been appropriated by capitalism and this happened precisely because some of its aspects were quite compatible with its doctrine. The *no-future-attitude* implied a "'cancellation of the long term"² which sounded disturbingly similar to Thatcher's 'There is no

alternative' and evoked images of being stuck in and accepting an inhuman capitalist future. Its innovative parts, such as creating a music style made out of three chords, its *do-it-yourself* aesthetics and styles, have been appropriated by a consumerist machinery and turned into products. Punk was no longer able to question and critique social inequalities. This becomes particularly and absurdly obvious in the German magazine *Business Punk*, which presents start-ups and 'unconventional' managers between *Excel and Excess*.

Elisa T. Bertuzzo reminds us in *Parasite Art 1* that the terminology "mediation, transformation, creation, innovation,"³ attributed to the parasite, are the myths of neoliberalism as described in detail in Boltanski's and Chiapello's *New Spirit of Capitalism*.⁴ No longer so new, this new spirit is well known by artists and cultural workers who find themselves trapped in the same dilemma: there is no way out of the neoliberal capitalist system; and, depending on your luck, your own work gets eaten up or, for better or for worse, celebrated by it. But rather than dwell on a dystopian fuck-it-all-attitude, I'd describe the parasite as a possibility of imagination and provocation. The parasite may not outline an all-encompassing approach to imagine other futures, but rather functions as an intervention into the current. A state of anger, interrupting rather than creating, and mocking rather than presenting a solution, as it is still tied to its host. The salient question surrounding parasitic artistic strategies, then, is whether the parasite functions as a temporal figure, or one that creates long-term mutation due to its intervention.

The artist Mary Maggic works on the intersection

of bioengineering, queer activism and artistic research. Their practices and aesthetics are informed by punk and DIY strategies and try to subvert current restrictions concerning the usage of hormones, especially estrogen. In their *Estro-fem! Lab* Maggic constructs an apparatus and experiments with different substances to extract hormones from urine. Their video *Housewives making drugs* (2017) is a fictional cooking show where two trans femmes explain humorously how to synthesize hormones while talking about gender politics and criticizing the difficulties of accessing hormone treatment. Hormones function parasitically as they slowly transform the body and its markers of gender, thereby subverting the disciplining order that defines who is seen as masculine or feminine. Not just hormones can be described as parasites, but also Maggic's artistic strategy to invent methods to undermine governmental as well as pharmaceutical regulations and controls. In this case, they arguably do present a solution - free hormone treatment - but the open source estrogen remains fictitious - the recipe does not work. Their work confronts us with the materiality of gender and the fact that the two states of being male and female only exist, as Paul B. Preciado points out, as "'political fictions'". For Preciado, it's not a "matter of going from woman to man, from man to woman, but of contaminating the molecular bases of the production of sexual difference", aiming towards a body that is neither nor but a "new sexual and affective platform"⁵. Hormones can be used in a 'contaminating' sense but at the same time, they function as a reinscription of gender. I owe it to my students to point out that it is questionable if legalization and improved access to hormones would override the disciplining heteronormative system. And wouldn't an open source strategy run the risk of being immediately bought out by a company? Could it even be implemented in our current system? And doesn't the free availability of hormones run the risk of being 'misused'? Yes, hormone treatment should definitely be more accessible to trans folks, but the question remains if molecules can be a long-term solution when the complex strategies that have produced this misery in the first place stay the same. Maggic's work points to the ambivalences, the dangers and possibilities of DIY-productions as well as posing questions concerning total autonomy of the body.

Parasitic artistic strategies are tied in a wider context to political/activist art and the question of what to expect from them in general. I so-

metimes question if art is able to subvert bigger structures and if it should be expected to do so, for it is still art and not social or activist work. Maggic's work to me is a successful questioning of structural conditions with a solution approach that falls short in the long term, but could still contribute to change, at least in the minds of those engaging with it.

Looking again at the history of punk for comparison, I ask myself how the concept of parasitic strategies is tied to the current political and economic crisis, and more specifically, the inequality produced by neoliberal politics. The development of punk is particularly connected to its social and historical context. The end of the 70s were a dystopian time; the revolution of the 60s had ended, a restructuring of industry in European countries took place, and globalization and post-fordism led to a fragmentation of production processes as well as of the working-class. For a long time, it seemed that an intervention into the present and imagining a different future were out of sight. Capitalist realism had taken over. Covid-19 and the ecological crisis have altered that panorama. At this moment, this is easy to see in the amount of calls in the art world referring to utopias or different futures. It seems no big surprise, then, that different ways of changing the present will emerge when the future becomes unbearably uncertain and crisis a permanent state.

The parasite might not be the expected answer to those calls, as it is no shimmering, heroine-like, but rather an uncertain figure embracing ambiguities as it penetrates and decomposes its host from the inside and, in that, initiates a process of questioning the current state of things.

The parasitic way of acting transforms into danger at the moment when its undermining faculties turn from productive decomposition into destruction, mainly through an appropriation and incorporation into the current. Both punk and parasite can become reactionary figures depending on how they are used. Parasitic strategies work with ambivalences, it is what constitutes their productivity, but at the same time it makes them vulnerable for a decomposition of their own. Do the molecules hack the gender regime or does the gender regime use the hormones to stabilize itself? Within these contradictions - who is the host, who the parasite - lies the potential of questioning and criticizing the bigger structures surrounding the outlined issues.





DER PARASIT UND SEINE BIOLOGISCHE FUNKTION.

Ich habe mit Linda Galle gesprochen, Biologin und Kuratorin der Ausstellung "Parasites - life undercover" des Museums für Naturkunde Berlin. Wir sprachen über die biologische und soziologische Betrachtung des Parasiten und ihre Funktionalität. Es ging darum herauszufinden, wo der in diesem Magazin verwendete Begriff des Parasiten auch im Biologischen übereinstimmt und wo er auf Differenzen trifft.

Jakob Wirth

Wie würdest du den Parasiten definieren?

Linda Galle

Den Parasiten an sich gibt es nicht, sondern es ist wie ein Symbiont einer Lebensform. Nur dass der Nutzen vor allem auf der Seite des Einen liegt und der Andere ist der Ausgenutzte. Es ist eine einseitig gerichtete Beziehungsform, im Sinne von: der Andere liefert Nährstoffe und Lebensraum für den Parasiten.

Jakob

Wir sind gerade in einer Pandemie, deswegen wird so viel wie noch nie über Viren gesprochen. Wie ist das Verhältnis zwischen Virus und Parasit?

Linda

Viren könnten zu den Parasiten zählen, tun sie aber nicht, da Viren keine Lebewesen sind. Sie legen einen ganz ähnlichen Mechanismus an den Tag. Sie sind für mich sogar die Reinform

des Parasitismus, weil der Virus in seinen Bestandteilen so reduziert ist, dass er ohne eine menschliche oder eine lebendige Zelle nicht fortbestehen kann. Die Zelle gibt ihm eine Proteinhülle mit einem genetischen Molekül, das in der Mitte DNA oder RNA beinhaltet. Das Virus dringt in die Zelle ein und nutzt dort darin alle vorhandenen Apparaturen, um sich selbst zu vervielfältigen, und geht so von Zelle zu Zelle.

Jakob

Eine sehr ähnliche Art und Weise des Agierens wie die des Parasiten, nur dass der Parasit als Lebewesen gezählt wird und der Virus nicht. Die Zelle ist dann der Wirt und der Virus dringt ein, nutzt die Ressourcen und verlässt sie wieder.

Linda

Auf einem größeren Maßstab ist interessant, dass die Genome aller Lebewesen zwischen den Genen viele Sequenzen haben, die von Viren stammen. Das kann man heute zuordnen und so entsteht, dass ein Teil eines Virus-Genoms in die DNA eines anderen Organismus hineingerät. Das nennen wir horizontalen Gentransfer. Wenn sich von einem Lebewesen in ein anderes etwas überträgt, ohne dass sie sich paaren. Du kannst dir das vorstellen wie ein springendes DNA Stück, was aus Versehen einmal zufällig bei irgendetwas hängen bleibt und dann dort in eine andere DNA integriert wird und dann weitervererbt

wird. Und so wächst das Genom im Zeitraum von Jahrmillionen. Das passiert nicht, wenn du dich an Corona ansteckst und dann sind Coronaviren für immer in deiner DNA, aber irgendwann könnte das passieren. Viren sind folglich ein Mechanismus der Evolution und eine Form, wie sich genetische Vielfalt verändern kann.

Jakob

Könntest du das noch einmal weiter ausführen?

Linda

Wenn wir Viren als transponierbare DNA-Elemente sehen, die auf der ganzen Welt unterwegs sind und hier und dort integriert werden, dann ist das eine Form von Mutationsprozess. Evolution findet meistens über Mutation von DNA-Sequenzen statt. Nur eine gewisse Rate an Veränderung geschieht, wenn du viel UV Strahlung oder Atomstrahlung ausgesetzt bist, dann ist die Genveränderung etwas höher. Kleine DNA-Elemente, die sich integrieren, spielen daher eine Rolle, um Mutation zu beschleunigen. Dies wäre nur eine Funktion von vielen anderen.

Diese evolutionäre Funktion lässt sich auch auf den Parasiten übertragen. Denn wenn wir ein bisschen herauszoomen aus dem eigentlich negativen Image des Parasiten, haben sie eine Berechtigung und eine wichtige Funktion im Ökosystem, nämlich dass sie als Motor von Evolution fungieren. Dies geschieht, indem Parasiten dafür







sorgen, dass ein Wettstreit zwischen Parasit und Wirt besteht. Der Wirt will den Parasit loswerden und der Parasit will natürlich am Wirt dranbleiben und so entsteht ein Selektionsdruck bzw. Entwicklungsdruck, der sich positiv auf die Evolution auswirkt.

Jakob

Ja das zeigt eine Funktion und positive Wirkung von Viren bzw. Parasiten. Ich habe in Fachliteratur der Biologie auch vom sogenannten Virom gelesen. Ein virales Äquivalent zum Biom, das wiederum die Gemeinschaft der Bakterien im menschlichen Organismus als weiteres Organ begreift und als elementaren Bestandteil von Leben betrachtet. Es hat unter anderem die Funktionen, Proteine und Enzyme zu produzieren. Das Virom ist bisher noch unerforscht und einiges noch unbekannt. Aber nun zur Ausstellung.

Du hast "Parasites - life undercover" kuratiert, was für Parasiten finden sich denn darin?

Linda

Das berühmte Beispiel ist das des kleinen Leberegels. Er sucht sich für die Entwicklung einen Zwischenwirt, nämlich die Ameise. Dort wandert er ins Gehirn und steuert die Ameise fern und bringt diese dazu, an die Spitze eines Grashalms zu laufen und sich dort festzubeißen, indem dort ein Kieferkrampf ausgelöst wird. Das ganze auch noch abends, damit dann die Schafe die Ameise mit dem Gras am nächsten Morgen mitfressen. Denn das ist der Wirt, wo der Leberegel hin möchte, um sich dort weiterzuentwickeln, bis er dann wieder ausgeschieden wird und der Kreislauf wieder von vorne beginnt.

Jakob

Interessant ist, dass die Ameise letztlich ganz klar zum Opfer wird. Es gibt aber auch oft Verhältnisse, wo der Parasit lebt und sich einen Ort sucht, aber der Wirt nicht unbedingt so stark geschädigt wird, dass er daran stirbt. Ich beziehe mich mit meinem Parasitenverständnis stark auf Michel Serres.

Er kommt aus der Kommunikationstheorie und bezeichnet den Parasiten als soziale Figur, also als Rolle in der Gesellschaft, die für Störung sorgt, Irritation erzeugt und letztlich dem Wirt aufzeigt, wo er einmal hinschauen soll. Der Parasit zwick den Wirt, der dadurch seine Aufmerksamkeit auf das Zwicken lenkt. Er merkt durch das Zwicken, wo seine Grenze beziehungsweise seine Haut ist. Also, vorher spürt er seine eigenen Systemgrenzen oft nicht.

Aber wenn eine Irritation kommt, dann geht sein Fokus drauf - und das ist eine Rolle, die der Parasit einnimmt.

Linda

Aha – ein Störelement.

Jakob

Michel Serres spricht davon, dass der Parasit die Gesellschaft vor dem Tod durch die Ordnung schützt. Ohne die Störung des Parasiten würde das System ihre Entropie, Maßeinheit für Energie, verringern und irgendwann würde es vor Starrheit stehen bleiben. Und der Parasit setzt sich immer an die Grenze, irritiert und dadurch kommen immer wieder neue Informationen ins System. Er sitzt auf der Türschwelle und sagt "Hallo" und lässt etwas hinein und etwas hinaus. Er ist eine Schwellenfigur.

Siehst du da Analogien in der Biologie? Machen solche Aussagen auch in der Biologie Sinn?

Linda

Wie du es beschrieben hast, klingt es für mich wie das Prinzip, das man auch biologisch beobachten kann. Wenn man also rauszoomt aus der rein individuen-basierten Beziehung, zwischen beispielsweise einer Zecke und einem Hund und es auf eine größeren evolutionären Ebene beobachtet, erzeugen Parasiten dann vielleicht keine Irritation aber Energie – sprich Impulse – für das System. Und das beschleunigt Evolution. Daher finde ich das sehr vergleichbar mit dem, was du sagst.

Jakob

In den 80er und 90er-Jahren war die Theorie um Graswurzelbewegungen, die ein System infiltrieren und daraus gesellschaftliche Veränderung erzeugen, en vogue. Genauso war die Virus-Theorie von Baudrillard, die besagt, dass Viren destabilisieren, und das ist ein ganz wichtiges Element, um gesellschaftliche Spannungen zu erhöhen, und dadurch das System ins Wanken zu bringen. Das ist nun sehr bildlich gesprochen.

Wenn wir nun erneut herauszoomen und den Parasiten oder Virus nicht nur auf individuellen Ebene verstehen, wo beginnt es, dass Energie gewonnen wird, oder dass es zur Evolution beiträgt? Das kann man ja in ein, zwei Generationen wahrscheinlich noch gar nicht sehen. Also das sind immer so riesen Zeiträume.

Linda

Das ist schwierig, das allgemein zu sagen. Aber wenn du ein neues Element in ein vorhandenes System einbringst, wie bspw. eine Bettwanze, dann kann dieser Parasit in einen neuen Lebensraum kommen und wenn er dort einen Wirt findet, wo er seine Nische findet, dann kann er sich dort vermehren. Er destabilisiert dann dort.

Und nun kommt es darauf an. Also wenn ein Parasit auf einen Wirt trifft, der völlig unvorbereitet ist, aber einen perfekten Nährboden für den Parasiten bietet, dann kann dies auch total schlecht ausgehen für den Wirt. Und die Population beziehungsweise die Dichte der Individuen kann dann zusammenbrechen.

Dann wäre die Irritation beziehungsweise die Störung, wie du es nennst, zu groß gewesen und kein Treiber von Mutation, sondern dessen Ende für diese spezifische Population.

Jakob

Noch eine andere Frage, die aus der sozialen Theorie kommt, wo der Parasit als eine Figur beschrieben wird, die Nischen besetzt, also Räume besetzt, die vom Wirt nicht unbedingt sofort gesehen werden.

Linda
Die wollen ja nicht gefunden werden.

Jakob
Die Nische ist eine Nische, weil sie nicht gesehen wird, und genau deswegen bietet sie andere Lebensbedingungen, weil dort andere Regeln zählen. Man befindet sich dort außerhalb vom Gesetz, indem man beispielsweise auf einer Brachfläche, die niemand sieht oder kennt, etwas darauf baut.

Das Bau-Ordnungsamt kommt gar nicht erst vorbei, da es eine Nische ist, und die ist viel zu klein für das Amt und daher unwichtig. Die Nische entwickelt ihren eigenen Mikrokosmos und ein eigenes Ökosystem und das ist auch das Spannende am Parasiten. Er findet diese Nischen und braucht sie, um zu überleben, und gleichzeitig ist ihm auch bewusst, dass, wenn er laut wird, irgendwann das Bau-Ordnungsamt kommt und sagt, "hey – wenn ihr fünf Stockwerke hier baut, dann ist hier mal Schluss." Und dann ist dem Parasiten klar, er wird bestraft und so weiter. Oder er schafft es, vorher zu verschwinden und zur nächsten Nische zu gehen, oder er wird zum Gast und zum Teil vom System und reicht eine Bauordnung nach.

Linda
Oder passt sich an, das passiert häufig.
In der Ausstellung gibt es das Beispiel einer Laus, die auf einer Robbe sitzt. Dieses Tier war evolutionär betrachtet ein Landtier und ist aber dann irgendwann zurück ins Wasser gegangen und da ist der Parasit mitgegangen. Er ist als eine Körperlaus, die angepasst war, an der Luft zu leben, am Tier dran geblieben. Ist wieder mit in das Wasser und hat sich also angepasst und dadurch hat die Laus ihre Nische erhalten.

An diesem Beispiel können wir sehen, dass Parasiten sehr flexibel sein müssen, um zu überleben. Das heißt, es gibt für den Parasiten nur die Wahl – entweder er versucht sich anzupassen beziehungsweise zu adaptieren an die Nische oder er ist von der Bildfläche

verschwunden.
Jakob
Was ist denn der biologische Begriff einer Nische?

Linda
Die Nische definiert die Parameter des Lebensraums, der für einen Organismus notwendig ist. Nicht unbedingt geografisch, aber von den Bedingungen drum herum. Du besetzt eine Nische, an die du gut angepasst bist und dies so, dass dir kein anderer die Nische streitig machen kann und dich verdrängt. Das Konzept der Nische im biologischen Sinne heißt also nicht etwas Verstecktes oder Kleines, sondern es beschreibt insgesamt einen Lebensraum, an den du am besten angepasst bist.

Jakob
Noch einmal zurück zur Einweg-Beziehung, die den Parasiten beschreibt. Also, dass er etwas nimmt und der Wirt gibt. Nun in Bezug auf eine künstlerische Praxis. Was mich interessiert ist, an welchem Punkt gibt der Parasit etwas zurück. Lese ich da zuviel hinein? Wir haben vorher in Bezug auf die Zeit darüber gesprochen, die sehr große Dimensionen einnimmt.
Bei so einem künstlerischen Projekt geht der Rücklauf meist über den Diskurs, also darüber, dass andere Leute sehen, dass ein Kunst-Parasit da sitzt und irritiert und dass das gewisse Reaktionen hervorruft. Daher die Frage, wie geht der Wirt mit anderen cohabitierenden Lebewesen oder sonstigen Viren um?

Linda
Du möchtest einen versöhnlichen Parasiten haben...

Jakob
mh – der künstlerische Parasit ist eindeutig unangenehm – er irritiert, lässt sich schwer vereinnahmen, daher weiß ich nicht, ob er wirklich versöhnlich ist.
Das Spannende könnte wiederum die Frage sein, ob nicht erst dadurch dass eine Zecke den Hund befällt, alle

anderen auf den Hund aufmerksam werden. Also übertragen auf die Kunst würde es bedeuten, dass ein spezifisches Thema („Hund“) erst durch den Biss des Parasiten in die Aufmerksamkeit kommen. Also wo befindet sich letztlich die Inspirations-, beziehungsweise Kritikquelle?

Linda
Ich überlege gerade, der Parasit als Inspirationsquelle. Letztendlich viele Mechanismen, die Parasiten verwenden, sind interessant, wenn wir sie molekularbiologisch anschauen. Parasiten, die im Körper des Menschen unterwegs sind, in der Blutbahn, müssen sich vor dem Immunsystem tarnen. Und dafür müssen sie Oberflächenproteine entwickeln, die diese Tarnung gewährleisten. Und diese sind wiederum interessant für andere Anwendungen für die Medizin. Es gibt bestimmte sekundäre Nutzungen, die unabhängig der direkten Wirkung des Parasiten auf den Menschen agieren und noch einmal neue Anwendungsmöglichkeiten erzeugen. Denn es sind diese evolutionären Mechanismen, die sich sehr lange entwickelt haben und die man sich nun zu Nutzen machen kann als Werkzeuge, um diese in einem anderen Kontext zu verwenden.

Jakob
Also es scheint auch dort eine Entfremdung des Parasiten zu geben. Der Parasit wird selbst wiederum Wirt für Humanmedizin. Ohne es zu wissen hat er eine Technologie entwickelt, diese Oberflächenproteine, die nun als Material, oder wie du es sagst, für eine Sekundärnutzung verwendet werden. Und da sind wir dann wieder bei Michel Serres, der davon spricht, dass der Parasit immer versucht "der letzte in der Kette zu sein." Der Kette von Parasiten untereinander.



Casa Parásito, El Sindicato
Arquitectura, Quito, Ecuador.
© Andrés Villota



CASA PARÁSITO

Casa parásito (“Parasitic house” or “parasite house”) is a minimal design object meant to be placed atop an existing building located in consolidated areas of the city. It is focused on solving the basic habitation necessities for a person or young couple, including: bathroom, kitchen, bed, storage space and to-be space (eating, working and socializing), which secure all the facilities of a dwelling in a reduced area. The house’s functional concept comes from the search for living space which is optimal to the performed activity. We proposed a rectangular core, where all the standing activities are performed and where one can access all the utilitarian spaces. The utilitarian spaces, adjacent to the rectangular core, are within triangles and rhomboids; geometries that, apart from containing their own activity, offer stability to the whole structure.

Although it is possible to build the project in urban or rural plots without existing constructions, the project is meant to be built on underused rooftops of urban edifications that are structurally sound. It is intended for buildings where one can connect to the existing water, waste and electrical grids in places of the city which already have public transportation and services. In this way, we can contribute to the densification of cities on a very small scale, and we can provide a primera vivienda de calidad with minimal economic investment and use of resources while contributing to the conservation of the architectural heritage.

We identified three points which led us to make a parasite house and which we defined as strategies to develop the project: questioning traditions, making decisions, and searching for solutions.

QUESTIONING TRADITIONS

Geography endows us with characteristics, our societies imprint their customs and traditions on us, and our families tacitly impose on us rituals, inherited ways of living or doing things; some of them may have consonance with our own internally developed lines of thought, and some may not. For us, it is not until we question those inhe-

ritated ways, that we can develop our own ways, that we can truly appropriate and give importance to those that resonate more with our thinking and feeling and break the circle of replicating those that we do not truly define as ours.

As young Latin-American architects we have come to the conclusion that our society has imposed on itself ways of doing things, in all realms of life, including architecture. Forms of construction which use ancestral techniques and technologies or that use local materials have lost value in favor of construction in metal and concrete. This is clearly a strong component of neo-colonialism, which directs our focus towards reproducing the established methods of building the so-called “first world.” It is not necessarily bad to reproduce what is done in the “first world”, but doing it without questioning, adapting and understanding them in a real way is problematic. This can bring about serious problems such as those related to the 2016 earthquake which mainly affected steel and concrete structures. These days, it is not at all easy to find construction workers who have mastered the ancestral constructive techniques which resisted earthquakes for hundreds of years in pre-colonial times. Today, instead, the techniques that are passed from one to the next generation refer to the (often inadequate) use of steel and concrete. The parasite house came from questioning how we live and what we have been doing as an office. We have made many single-family home designs which, although they have never been ostentatious or crazy, left us with a taste that something very good can be done with less. Even though we are always pushing our clients to do less, we were still not experiencing that ourselves. Then we asked ourselves why we, as architects, don’t apply these questions to ourselves. Why do we need all the spaces that our houses have? Why are they the sizes that they are? Why do they work the way they do?

At the time we conceived the project, what bothered us and had us wondering was the amount of resources spent on construction, as well as the exponential growth of the urban sprawl in contrast to the low density of the city and the large amount of unused urban spaces in Latin



American cities. The answer we found was to make a project that questions the need for such large houses and that is able to occupy unused spaces: a parasite house.

MAKING DECISIONS

Committing to decisions is the most difficult part of building parasitic architecture, because we are constantly attacked by a nostalgia for familiar and known things. This is especially so when the processes of deconstruction distance us from that which we love or want, but is no longer compatible with our ideologies or searches. Then there is also the natural fear of the unknown, the difficulty we have in detaching ourselves from, and letting go of, familiar practices; and above all, the difficulty we always have in breaking with social pressure which pushes you to live in „normality.“

In Casa Parásito, that pressure came at first from family and close friends. Unsurprisingly, they came around with three main doubts: 1 - why make a wooden house and not a concrete one? 2 - why make a minimal house and not one with a “normal” size? and 3- why build it on a rooftop or terrace and not on a lot? All of the answers we have found for these questions raise a common point: as a society, we have imposed as inherent the concept of the progress of a hyper-capitalist first world.

The decision to parasitize with minimum housing came from personal convictions, and not from an specific economic situation. We were responding to our own questions, which came up from an engagement with philosophy, an awareness of resource consumption, and even a fight against social inequalities, for access to decent housing and for the use of underused spaces. The biggest limitation to living in a parasite house is and always will be to do it only because of the economic situation one is in. Staying in the voracious capitalist logic that forces us to have more and parasitizing only because we cannot pay more increases exponentially the chances that the strategy will fail.

If we change the way we think about the irrational consumption of resources, even if we had the money to scale up from a parasitic house to a traditional one, we would not do it, we would not go back to the consumerist quests of the obsolescent system in which we live.

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

We focused our efforts on two basic approaches to developing the project.

Firstly, we needed to understand the city’s regulations, studying them in depth and finding in them the points that can come into play in favor of the project. In Quito, for a construction of less than 40m², it is not necessary to approve architectural project plans. You just need to obtain a permit for various construction works, without needing to present the project to the municipality. If it doesn’t have fixed foundations and measures less than 27m², a house is considered a piece of furniture, so you do not need municipal approval for its occupation; it’s basically like having a dollhouse on a terrace. We understood that, from the legal point of view, although you probably cannot build a house on the terrace, you can live in a dollhouse on a terrace.

The second necessary solution pertains to the dweller’s ways of living. In order to push the limits of the home to a minimum, it is very important to understand the occupant’s way of living, their daily rituals, and their priority activities, and to design with a very strong focus on that: a minimum space that is not adapted to the resident can become hell.

In Casa Parásito, for example, according to the first resident’s way of living, it was decided that the kitchen was much more important than a social living space, as the resident likes to cook a lot and hates having guests. By contrast, for the second owner of the place, the kitchen was not necessary, as he never cooked; so the kitchen space was reduced by half, freeing up room for a larger social living space. Small changes in such reduced spaces are life-changing and require that the dweller, as a user of the space, understand their own ways of doing things. They also get to understand and develop small rituals, such as putting away all work items to be able to eat on the same surface, or to determine that they will only climb up a loft bed when they intend to rest.

Parasitizing led us to see that we do not need big houses to live in full comfort, that luxury is not dictated by how much money is invested, but is rather more in the hand of the dweller’s self-knowledge and of a design that is conscious of their needs. We now see that the city, although full of problems, is also full of opportunities—and that enjoying them is within our reach.

Interior, Casa
Parásito, El Sindi-
cato Arquitectura,
Quito, Ecuador. ©
Andrés Villota



THINKING THROUGH METAPHORS: THE PARASITIC OBSERVATION

1 Michel Serres, *Der Parasit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987).

2 Sabine Fabo, *Parasitäre Strategien — Kunst, Mode, Design, Architektur* (Kunstforum Band 185 März-Juni 2007).

3 Ivor Armstrong Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936).

4 This happens all the time, inferential patterns are constantly 'transferred' from one conceptual domain to another (George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

5 Susanne Lüdemann, *Metaphern der Gesellschaft Studien zum soziologischen und politischen Imaginären* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 2004).

6 Emanuel Gaziano, „Metaphors as scientific boundary work: Innovation and authority in interwar sociology and biology“, *American Journal of Sociology* 101, no. 4 (1996): 874–907. Teresa Sousa Fernandes, „Chemical metaphors in sociological discourse: Durkheim through the imagery of Rousseau“, *Journal of Classical Sociology* 8, no. 4 (2008): 447–466.

7 Richard Swedberg, „Using Metaphors in Sociology: Pitfalls and Potentials“, *The American Sociologist* 51, no. 2 (2020) : 245ff.

1. THINKING THROUGH METAPHORS

Everything can be observed as a parasite¹: arts parasitising on the epistemes of science², a house as an artistic intervention and political practice that gnaws on other houses and the city, a biotope in which landlords and tenants feed on each other. But these remain metaphors, tropes, non-factual descriptions that are close to analogy. In everyday life, it is difficult to identify a house not as a house and landlords and tenants not as economic subjects but as squirming worms, without attracting the attention of psychiatrists and psychologists (who in turn can be observed as feeding on such deviations).

The normal Aristotelian form of a metaphor is $A = B$: a noun (primary object) is denoted with another noun (secondary object). Landlords are parasites. The assertion of identity through semantic distance enriches the primary object with meaning³, but only the interaction of the two produces a residual surplus of meaning. The producers on the housing market, the landlords, become biological organisms who feed on the tenants – hedging their capital against inflation and getting their loans paid off, with their eyes wide shut for tenants' stagnating incomes. At the same time, a reciprocal relationship is revealed. The tenants also feast, and the city, the biotope or the ecological niche does so in any case, because living space needs to be provided – real estate agents are undoubtedly the parasites par excellence here, as they add nothing to the value chain apart from linking landlords and tenants and disappear after they

have extracted their commission (resources). Presumably it is the surplus of meaning that heightens the imagination (negation potentials), captures the attention and, as a result, makes such ad hoc descriptions convincing in and of themselves.⁴ These opportunities for reflection, which make experience and action accessible in all their depth and richness, would be lost if what is illustrated were expressed prosaically. This is a complexity-absorbing function of metaphors that is well studied as a societal phenomenon. This is less true, however, for the nevertheless widespread use of metaphors in the domain of science, especially in sociology.

2. SOCIOLOGICAL METAPHORS AND THE EXPLOITATION OF MEANING

In sociology, metaphors drawing on the source domains of chemistry and biology, as well as technology, are particularly popular. Society is then an organism or body, as in the case of Emil Durkheim or Thomas Hobbes, a system (Talcott Parsons, Niklas Luhmann) or a machine, or a network. Then, depending on the chosen metaphor, different properties and functions are attested to society: the machine has cause-effect chains, is efficient and precise, each element fulfils (at least) one function; in contrast, the metaphor of the organism suggests naturalness and growth, society can be sick, its parts assimilating or competing with each other.⁷

Such scientific metaphors are directed at an audience and can be applied for discovery and justification, in the process of theorising

about the world as a strategy of knowledge production.⁸ At the beginning of an analysis, in the context of discovery, they serve to focus problems, define objects, and establish discourse, and draw attention to specific (causal) relations. As extensions of understanding, they reveal implicit interpretive possibilities, and generate contexts and alternatives that reveal the ambiguity of social relations beyond the immediate facts. Within a justification, metaphors fulfil suggestive and expressive functions: as they compress and expand the meaning of statements, and thus trigger fascination, they establish chances of convincing others. They enable descriptions and explanations to appear self-evident, an information transfer that is related to the inductive method, and which, moreover, can serve in the formation of collective memory in science.⁹

The quality of the parasite metaphor now lies in unveiling specific questions, allowing for the exploitation of certain descriptive and explanatory potentials as well as the reflexive variation of the researcher's own decisions in the research process.

3. A HEURISTIC FOR THE METAPHOR OF THE PARASITE

The core meanings of the parasite have been hinted at already. A comprehensive conceptual history (of the metaphor) of the parasite cannot be provided here.¹⁰ We settle for the basic linguistic imagery and derive from it some indications for the heuristics of the parasite metaphor. Firstly, a parasite refers to an organism that lives in or on another species and at its expense. In addition, there are two other meanings emphasised by Michel Serres: the parasite as a guest that abuses the hospitality of the host, and an information-theoretical interpretation, in which the parasite is both cause and effect of noise, without which no information and information transmission would be possible.¹¹

The brief heuristic of parasitic observation, which cannot deny its proximity to sociological systems theory, focuses on observing empirical cases with this metaphor and organises these possibilities of observation with a second heuristic, that of three dimensions of meaning: social, factual, and temporal.¹² The social dimension of the parasite heuristic includes the identifi-

cation of the parasite and the host. Who is the guest and who is the host? Everything and everyone can be observed as a parasite: material objects, actors such as landlords and tenants, but also social practices, actor constellations and social orders, such as the city, or interactions, organisations and small groups, as well as the functional systems of society. If a potential parasite and host candidate are not directly visible, one can ask about the included and/or excluded third, which establishes the relationship of the parasite and host or is established by and feeds on their relationship.¹³

With the social dimension and the corresponding identification of parasites and hosts, the factual dimension of the parasite metaphor now comes to light. The factual dimension is concerned with the content of the relations of exchange and exploitation. What possible courses of action do the participants have? How does the parasite irritate the host and how does it establish relationships? What resources does it extract and what resources does the host have in the first place? Landlords feed off the rental income, tenants wear out the living spaces, the city feeds off both as it would not exist without them.

The heuristic of the parasite metaphor, however, only gains analytical scope through considering its temporal dimension, which encompasses the problem of how the presence of a parasite may contribute to the formation of social order. Basically, two forms of order formation over time can be distinguished. On the one hand, the parasite may sustain the host – it is useful, an irritant that provides the system with further information and triggers structural changes that sustain it and solve problems; in short: a reciprocal relationship. Too much noise, on the other hand, can be destructive; a parasite may be harmful, eroding and hollowing out the host. With a view to the factual dimension, this raises the question of which resources contribute to preservation and which to destruction, and how. The exchange relationships between parasite and host, it seems important to note, can be variable over time. Initially damaging relationships may stabilise; the system has changed, but now maintains itself at a different level of order, the parasite becomes a host and vice versa.¹⁴ The metaphor thus also draws attention to the fact that change is constant and not an exception,

8 Matthias Junge (ed.), *Metaphern in Wissenskulturen* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS., 2010). See Richard Swedberg, *The Art of Social Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press., 2014), 80-98. Rudolf Schmitt, *Systematische Metapheranalyse als Methode der qualitativen Sozialforschung* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS., 2017), Mats Alvesson and Jörgen Sandberg, *Re-Imagining The Research Process Conventional & Alternative Metaphors* (London: Sage, 2021).

9 see Swedberg, „Using Metaphors“, 247.

10 Ulrich Enzensberger, *Parasiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 2001).

11 Serres, *Der Parasit*, 20f., 253ff., 282ff., 313 et passim.

12 see Michael Schmitt, „Parasitäre Strukturbildung: Einsichten aus System- und Netzwerktheorie in die Figur des Parasiten“, in *Korruption als Ordnung zweiter Art* ed. by Birger Priddat and Michael Schmitt (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), 43-59. Wolfgang Ludwig Schneider, „Parasiten sozialer Systeme“, in *Interaktion – Organisation – Gesellschaft revisited. Anwendungen, Erweiterungen, Alternativen* ed. Bettina Heintz and Hartman Tyrell (Suttgart: Lucius & Lucius, 2015), 86-108. Wolfgang Ludwig Schneider and Isabel Kusche, „Soziale Netzwerkbildungen in Funktionssystemen der Gesellschaft. Vergleichende Perspektiven“, in *Netzwerke in der funktionalen differenzierten Gesellschaft* ed. Michael Bommes and Veronica Tacke (Wiesbaden: Springer VS., 2011), 89-118.

13 see Serres, *Der Parasit*, 41ff., 316ff.

14 see Schneider and Kusche, „Soziale Netzwerkbildung“, 180f., 204. Schneider, „Parasiten“, 100 et passim.

15 see Serres, *Der Parasit*, 283.

16 fundamentally Niklas Luhmann, „Funktion und Kausalität“, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 14, no. 4 (1962): 617-644.

17 see Serres, *Der Parasit*, 253ff., 282ff. et passim.

18 see Schneider and Kusche, „Soziale Netzwerkbildung“, 204, Niklas Luhmann, *Soziale Systeme. Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984).

19 The production and absorption of noise and uncertainty can ultimately be differentiated according to where it takes place, i.e., where the parasite is located (see Schneider, „Parasiten“, 204f. et passim): is it internal (to the system), an endoparasite, or is it located within the context of the system and the environment, colonising the border, and can therefore be described as an ectoparasite? On the one hand, it is a case of insufficient absorption of uncertainty in the system (host), on the other hand, it is a case of demands on the system that can only be assigned via external criteria [Mir ist nicht klar ob sich „on the one hand“ hier auf den ersten Fall (endo) und „on the other hand“ auf den zweiten Fall (ekto) bezieht – ist das so? Wenn ja, würde ich umformulieren: „on the one hand“ => „in the first case“; „on the other“ => „in the second case“] (see Schneider, „Parasiten“, 205). Inspiring studies on intra-scientific school formation, intra-party groupings, protest movements, conflicts in interactions and networks in organisations as parasites can be found in Schneider and Kusche, „Soziale Netzwerkbildung“ and Schneider, „Parasiten“.

20 see again Schneider, „Parasiten“.

21 Crosbie, Guhin, „On the Ambivalence of the Aphorism“.

22 see Swedberg, „Using Metaphors“, 243, 245ff.

and that deviations are part of every order.¹⁵ We can then ask which structures were added to cause this stability and how this happens, since noise reduction and noise amplification are mutually dependent.

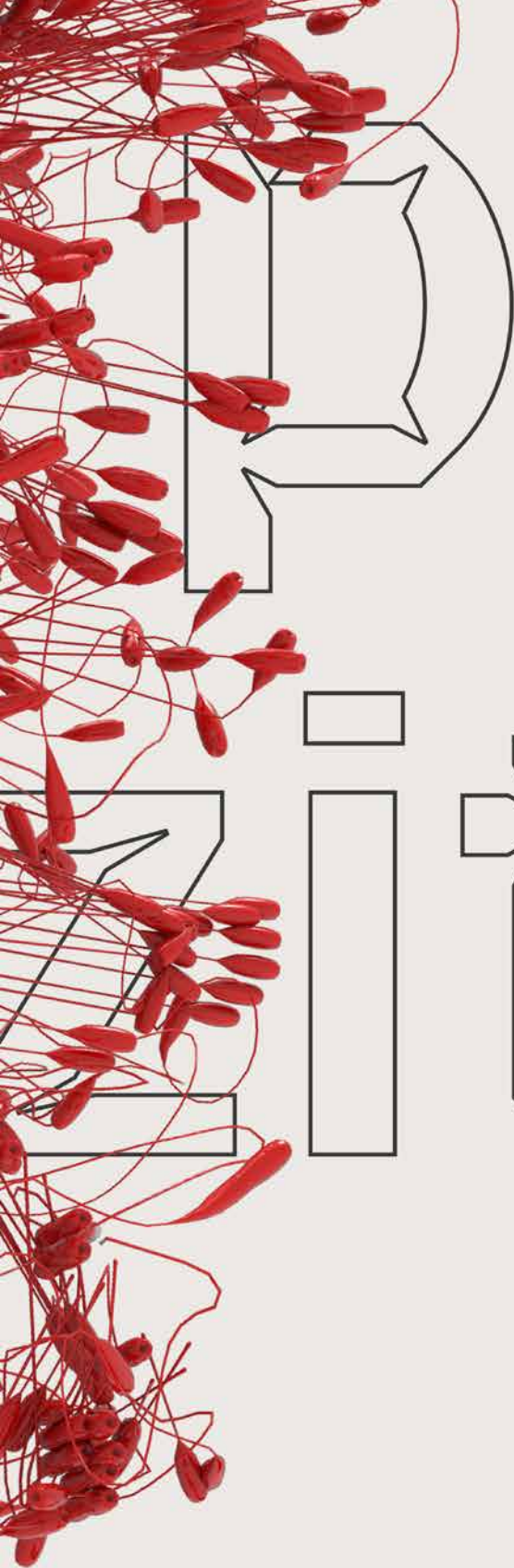
In sum, the parasite metaphor suggests presumptions of causality and, more precisely, a functionalist methodology that carries the de- and recontextualisation of the phenomena under study. Manifest phenomena are explained by revealing more or less latent functional and dysfunctional relationships.¹⁶ Such analysis may at the same time obscure the metaphor, because as a biological metaphor the parasite directs the attention to survival or death. However, survival is only one type of system-level problem that the parasite may influence. Another problem in system-theoretical sociology is, for example, the problem of creating expectation certainty, for which social phenomena need to develop unique, functional solutions, which themselves are connected to functional and dysfunctional consequences. At this point, Michel Serres' information-theoretical interpretation of the parasite can be fruitful.¹⁷ Uncertainty of expectations or incompatibility of expectations creates noise that unsettles subsequent action. Sociological systems theory introduces, among other concepts, the parasite metaphor at this point: it describes conflict as a parasite which attends to the problem by transforming noise into information.¹⁸ Conflict absorbs uncertainty of expectations, as it reduces the situation to a clear either-or and thus makes subsequent actions of the participants expectable to each other. At the same time, conflict also hollows out the system, because it drains resources by reducing the possibilities for observing each other to the binary friend/enemy scheme.¹⁹ Certainly, mutually incompatible expectations can simply be handled side by side or one after the other. This again requires structures, sufficient and necessary conditions, which differ depending on the type of social order: interactions, small groups or organisations each have their own defence structures to deal with conflicts, with irritation, to absorb and process deviations, to transform uncertainty into security, mistrust into trust, or to suppress them as noise.²⁰

4. PITFALLS OF WORKING WITH THE PARASITE METAPHOR

Within the meaning space of physical noise, parasitic noise and interference, parasitic animal and (uninvited) guest, the parasite metaphor revives its own parasites, the researchers themselves, when they sharpen their imagination on and through it and use it as a strategy for argumentation. Metaphors alone, however, are not conclusions, nor are they to be confused with actually understanding an empirical case. Herein lies the difference between understanding something as and understanding something through something (Hans Blumenberg). As a scientific metaphor, the parasite can thus also be disturbing: it can contaminate the aspiration for terminological and epistemic clarity when it enriches observations with its diverse meanings. The destructive noise lies in the oversimplification of the empirical case, to which all metaphors tend.²¹ Everything (and nothing) then becomes a parasite, everything is observed as a reciprocal extraction of resources.

To this, we may counter that the parasite, the researchers, are careful with (over)using their own resources. It is advisable to work with metaphors only once the sociological problem is known, to detach oneself from the metaphors once fruitful ideas become visible through them, and to then test the revealed connections and to generalise them, that is, to test their validity in relation to many similar or dissimilar cases.²²

To avoid erroneous conclusions, it is also advisable to take the ontology of the parasite itself seriously: accordingly, the properties of empirical cases do not originate from fixed, inherent attributes but from relations between the world and the observer - they are therefore subject to observer dependence. This applies in particular to the distinctions between guest and host system, endo- or ectoparasite, and functional or dysfunctional. Furthermore, the observer's emancipation consists in varying the distance from which the case is observed, not so much in using the metaphor as a heuristic, but rather in letting the material speak.



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URBAN NICHES – A PARASITE RECLAIMS PUBLIC SPACE

In October 2022 the artistic intervention *Parasite Parking* reclaimed public space through activation and habitation. For 8 days, *Parasite Parking* squatted parking spaces in different neighborhoods in Chicago. Those parking spaces, formerly owned by the City, were privatized in 2009. With the 75-year lease of most of Chicago's parking area, the non-democratic stakeholder ParkChicago became one of the main actors defining and managing big parts of the public space and its potential transformations. Due to the negotiation with ParkChicago and increasing costs related to the contract, parking spaces in Chicago cannot be easily transformed into bike lanes, gardening areas, or other types of public infrastructure and adaptations to urban and social needs.

Parking spaces are now one of the battlegrounds of the future city. They are a multiple border zone: between private and public; between staying and leaving; between the mobility of yesterday and the more climate-friendly alternatives of tomorrow; between privileged areas and areas of deprivation. Just like every other available space in the city, parking spaces are increasingly subject to gentrification and rent-seeking. However, they can also transform into a niche for budding new uses and create spatial potential for emancipatory practices.

Parasite Parking occupied these niches and explored their subversive potential. It provoked and worked on the attendant allowance of such a space. How far is it possible to expand the niche without being caught or expelled by the host (authorities)? How much can be executed without any permissions? *Parasite Parking* intervened in the public space by means of a multi-functional platform camouflaged as a parking space – a platform and container covered with concrete on the top surface, and clad in mirrored plates on the sides. The platform was thus

able to adapt to its paved environment and was simultaneously ready to fold out into a space for various uses: a living space, a performance stage, a street assembly for activist meetings, a café for the neighborhood, or back into a conventional parking space.

Parasite Parking is an uninvited guest on the spaces that should be available to all of us, and yet are currently occupied only by the steel bodies of modernity.

Parasite Parking appropriates private space which used to be public. The parasite does not ask about ownership and its rules, but about the limits of making public space usable and about who holds and who can take public agency. *Parasite Parking* defamiliarizes the use of parking spots, overtaking and reclaiming nearly a third of urban spaces.

Moreover, the parasite asks what will happen to this privatized space if parking spaces are no longer needed at all. By using it in various ways, *Parasite Parking* works on de- and recoding parking spaces by introducing a new imagination of how we can redesign our public space.

Public Space of Chicago

The modernist city is not built for people, but for cars. Nothing shows this more like the countless parking spaces clogging up urban space. Between 50% and 60% of space in cities is used for cars, around 20-30% for their parking. So much more is possible in this space. In the same space, we could work, sleep, cook, make music, experience community – or simply be. This is exactly what the parasite does. In doing so, it wants to ask: who owns public space, who decides over it, and most importantly, who has access to it in the first place? Is the city built for humans or for cars?

Image: Supported by Mikle a neighbor: *Parasite Parking* piled up on a pick-up, being transported from the Magnificent Mile to Downtown Chicago.



Parasite Parking in front of 6018 North in Edgewater Chicago. Image info from right down: A guest drinking Champaign with the parasite. And *Parasite Parking* in its bedroom variation.

The first site for the new parasitic action is Chicago, which is an extreme example of this issue. Due to a contract that leases parking space to various international private investors until 2084, the city has lost most of its control of and ability to transform the vast parking area in the city. The city cannot adapt easily to new needs of transportation, social life or ecology. With this loan, a public good has been sold which is elemental to public space. In the words of urban analyst Aaron Renn: "In effect, these deals aren't just about parking spots, they are assigning a property right interest in the biggest component of public space in the city to a private monopoly that doesn't have the public's best interests at heart."

The parasite's first parking experience

Parasite Parking started in front of 6018|North, an art space located in Edgewater, a diverse neighborhood despite the general wealth of the northern part of Chicago. By squatting this parking spot, *Parasite Parking* created space for meeting up with and between neighbors, in a street where this may happen between next-door neighbors at their

garden fences but not so much between strangers and locals. It led to conversations about parking space, privatization of space and possibilities of micro-appropriation through small interventions like this – as well as to ordinary chats. The parasite was very shy at first, since it was not sure if people would complain about the missing parking space or if the occupation would lead to a fast complaint and eviction by the police. Surprisingly though, the intervention received barely a bad comment from passing cars, locals, or passers-by – even though parking spaces are lacking in that street.

Instead, the parasite was kindly provided for and supported by the neighborhood in different ways. People passed by to bring coffee, food, or equipment such as pots and candles; others supported the transportation of the parasite platform to the next parking site.

Interesting moments happened when cars just stopped beside the platform, lowered their window, and started a conversation about the parasitic intervention, even if a long queue of cars built up behind them. Such moments show that even as it was received with curiosity and friendliness, the Parasite actually irritated the neighborhood and its customary dynamics.

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Parasite in Motion: Use of urban infrastructure – adapting to the host

A parasite can't move without an external source of energy. If *Parasite Parking* wants to move, it needs to use an existing and already active infrastructure. The public transportation system seemed to be designed for the parasite. In its movable shape, stacked in container modules, *Parasite Parking* fit perfectly inside train station elevators and CTA train cars, where the parasite made use of the wheelchair infrastructure. The parasite always depends on a host and on the ability to move away before being expelled, so modes of transportation are core to its design. *Parasite Parking* is constructed in the standardized dimensions of a euro-pallet, which also made it easy to ship it in a container ship and to use conventional transportation infrastructure.

Apart from its adaptable size and its ability to use existing routes, another defining characteristic of the parasite is a bold attitude. Niches are hardly found coincidentally, an active search and sometimes even a concrete engagement are needed to open up a niche. In the case of public

transit in Chicago, the parasite used its cultural capital and referred to its connection to the Chicago Architecture Biennial to give the project the gleam of official authority and give CTA staff a reason for their own support in moving the structure and a legitimation for doing something outside the norms.

In this case, niche and privilege are not far apart. If you are privileged, you can raise different arguments and be believed on the level of argumentation, as was the case when convincing CTA staff members to transport the parasite. By contrast, if you are not privileged with the base credibility of skin color, language, gender, or an institutional affiliation, arguing may lead nowhere other than further distress.

This is a point where I as an artist must frequently question the concept of the parasite; I would still think that it is easier to apply to a white person, coming from Germany, than to a person of color, who might still have to fight against the image and racism of being a parasite to society. And the question always remains over whether a parasite exploits or gets exploited – it can be described in both ways.



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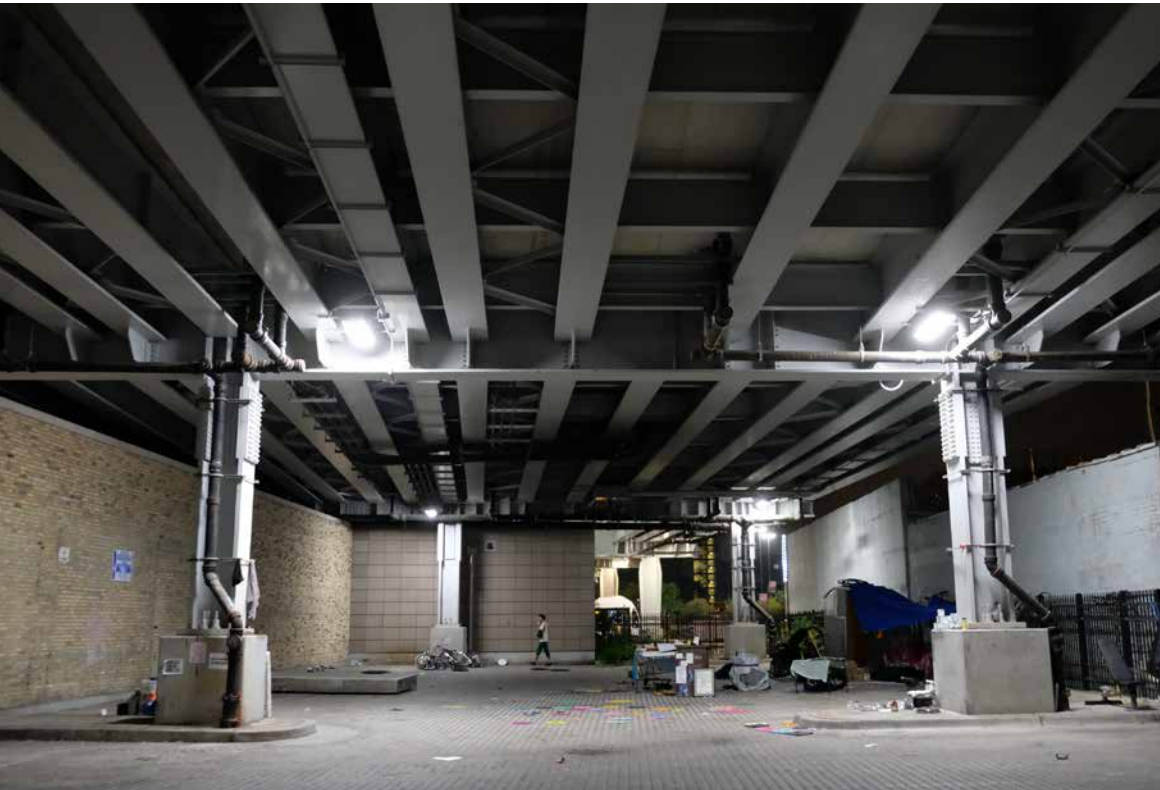
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Mississippi, an activist and squatter of Campo Ponderosa invited Parasite Parking to join the camp for a night. Fighting against gentrification, homelessness, false imprisonment and police violence.



The camouflaged parasite: Reinventing the logic of the host

Parasites live in spaces where the host can't see them or where it can hardly fight them. In order to expand and to open up a niche, one of the parasite's strategies is to imitate parts of the logic of the host. *Parasite Parking* uses a concrete-paved surface and mirrored sides to adapt to its environment and to be able to go unnoticed. The parasite does what is needed to make its camouflage more effective and at the same time to expand its niche as much as possible. Because if we see the niche as a free space (or a legal vacuum); indeed as a heterotopia, since it doesn't fall into the usual norms, laws and paradigms for the use of public or private space, then it has to be able to do both. It must be able to totally disappear in case the host comes looking for the niche – and to totally cause chaos while the host is occupied somewhere else. Like the mouse which throws a food party as long as the host is not in the kitchen.

In the case of *Parasite Parking*, this means that the parasite pays parking fees as long as officers threaten to come, as that can effectively disarm any argument for eviction. It also has a license plate to adapt even more to the norms of appearance and registration of cars that occupy parking spaces. The potential of a parasite lies in its subversiveness and surprise. It eats from its host's pantry when they doesn't expect it.

The parasite does not use direct forms of protest, even if it could have the same outcome.

Parasite and Persona

The parasite works and lives as a social and artistic figure or persona. The artist, me, is not the main actor - I stay in the background and only activate through living in the parasite; I co-habitate. But the artist is not the parasite, despite Tricia van Eyck's question, "Who is the parasite?". The parasite is defined by its relation, not through its materiality. Therefore you can define both of them as parasites.

There is also a host-parasite relation between me the artist and the parking parasite - we are both dependent on one another. I can't live on the street without the parasite, I won't be an artist without the platform and couldn't sustain myself on the street. On the other hand, the platform needs me to move on, and to get their parking fees paid.

Cohabitation: Campo Ponderosa – Question of appropriation, tokenizing, and social experiment

The artistic practice of *Parasite Parking* implies the experience of living in the streets for a certain amount of time. This practice can be seen as a social experiment, a situationist exercise, an activist intervention, or a perverse social tourism created out of a privileged situation. It is clear that it is a conscious process and a choice; that I, the artist, was not forced to live on the streets and that there is always an exit point. However, the project is not about the experience of sleeping on the street, or about enacting another reality lived by sections of the city's populace. Rather, the project seeks to break shared norms for the use of parking and of public space, and to pervert the overuse of public space for cars, speculation, or privatization, instead of human needs. Dwelling in the project is also a strategy to ensure that the intervention can endure for longer periods, in comparison to a static object intervention, which doesn't have many rights to lose or to claim; by contrast, to remove me, while I am sleeping there, could be more difficult for authorities. That is a hypothesis, which hinges on both moral and practical considerations about humans and things in public space. It is true that a car wouldn't have problems occupying that space.

On the streets, I experienced the big gap of structural inequality, which differentiates me, with my privilege, from a person without shelter, as we do the same thing. I was in direct contact and we spent time together in the streets, drinking coffee, or having a chat. I built up trust with people around me which led to an invitation from Mississippi, an activist "leader" of Campo Ponderosa - a small squat on a parking lot under a bridge in Uptown Chicago - where activists and people without shelter live and claim space against the dynamics of gentrification in the neighborhood. There I spent one night, having dinner and exchanging ideas about counter-gentrification strategies in Berlin and Chicago. The discourse of identity politics and the critique of experiencing something outside your own reality is another big discussion which is beyond the scope of this article. It is interesting, though, to observe from whom or out of which position the critique of appropriation comes from. I was not criticized (for engaging in another concern) in the public space, by passers-by or by the people who lived on the streets, but on social media,

Parasite Parking
at Campamien-
to Ponderosa,
Squatted activist
camp in Up-
town, Chicago

PHOTO DOCUMENTATION



Public discussion about „Reclaiming the right to the city.“ In front of the city hall in downtown Chicago.

and by people who don't have an experience of homelessness.

This led me to conclude that the people who live on the street can grasp and observe the attitude of the parasite quickly. They can perceive if an action is "authentic" – to once use that problematic term – or only affirmational or extractive towards their own lived reality. They know, because they are in the best position to say so, if an intervention is or is not about faking their experience, appropriating their way of living, or utilizing their stories for another, personal or unrelated goal.

They could have seen my work as appropriative, and revealed to me something that I did not see. But as the residents of Campo Ponderosa, like Mississippi, felt positively about the nature of my work, they respected me and invited me to their own occupation.

The most important for such delicate interventions is the attitude with which you work - the way you approach and listen to people in spaces outside your "own" - and that the work is open whilst being defined in its questions.

Parasite vs. Authorities - "This is not a vehicle"

"This is not a vehicle". We heard this a couple of times from a City officer whose function, although he was not a police officer, was to guarantee public order. Once the parasite has been spotted, its niche is gone, and it has to move. That member of city staff followed *Parasite Parking* for a couple of days and found it in two different areas downtown. He was not amused and wanted to bring it to an end, but was not sure which rule he could apply; it seemed he only knew that something was wrong. On the first day, he appealed to disorder in the public space, disturbance of the public order, and danger to the traffic. Thereby, he affirmed for *Parasite Parking* the essential trait of a parasite, which is to create disorder in a system and thus to stimulate entropy.

On the second day, the officer called more and more authorities from different public departments: the police, the city administration and the contracted staff of ParkChicago. Among themselves they debated rule breaking and what is

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allowed and what not. Eventually, the discussion hinged on whether the parasite is a vehicle or not. To be seen as a car, the parasite referred to its wheels and presented itself as a movable structure. Meanwhile, nobody knew exactly what definition of a vehicle was written in the contracts with ParkChicago. The question remained, who has the power to define what is a vehicle and what is not?

Reclaiming, taking or squatting space

When I first put the platform in a vacant parking space, I was a bit nervous. Questions came to my mind like, am I allowed to use this space? Is it okay to take so much space out of public infrastructure? Do I have the legitimacy to do this? I felt uncomfortable and again conscious of my privileges.

But after being there for a while, I noticed that the car in front of me didn't move for the whole day and nobody questioned its existence. So I started to feel more entitled, and gradually more welcome in that space. I felt that my being also had value in the comparison of human vs. car, human space vs. car space.

Stigmatized Neighborhoods

The last station of *Parasite Parking* was in Pilsen, a traditional neighborhood, with a Mexican-American community that is undergoing a process of gentrification. This process has already pushed out many families to neighboring Little Village and other areas of the city. The neighborhood was known for gang violence, informal labor and insecure streets; while this profile has probably changed considerably, the stigma remains for people who live farther away – or for the police.

During my stay on the North Side and downtown, I never had real problems with the police. Already on the first night in Pilsen, the police arrived aggressively, with blue lights on, and halted by the platform, blocking the lane. The officer in the car informed us bluntly: either we leave in the next five minutes or we go to jail. We listened and began packing up, but also continued to tell the officer about the project behind the platform – uncertain if the strategy could backfire. For the officer, the danger of Pilsen where he “attends calls for shots fired





Image above:
Panel discussion
with different
artist and comu-
nity organizers
about Parasitic
Strategies

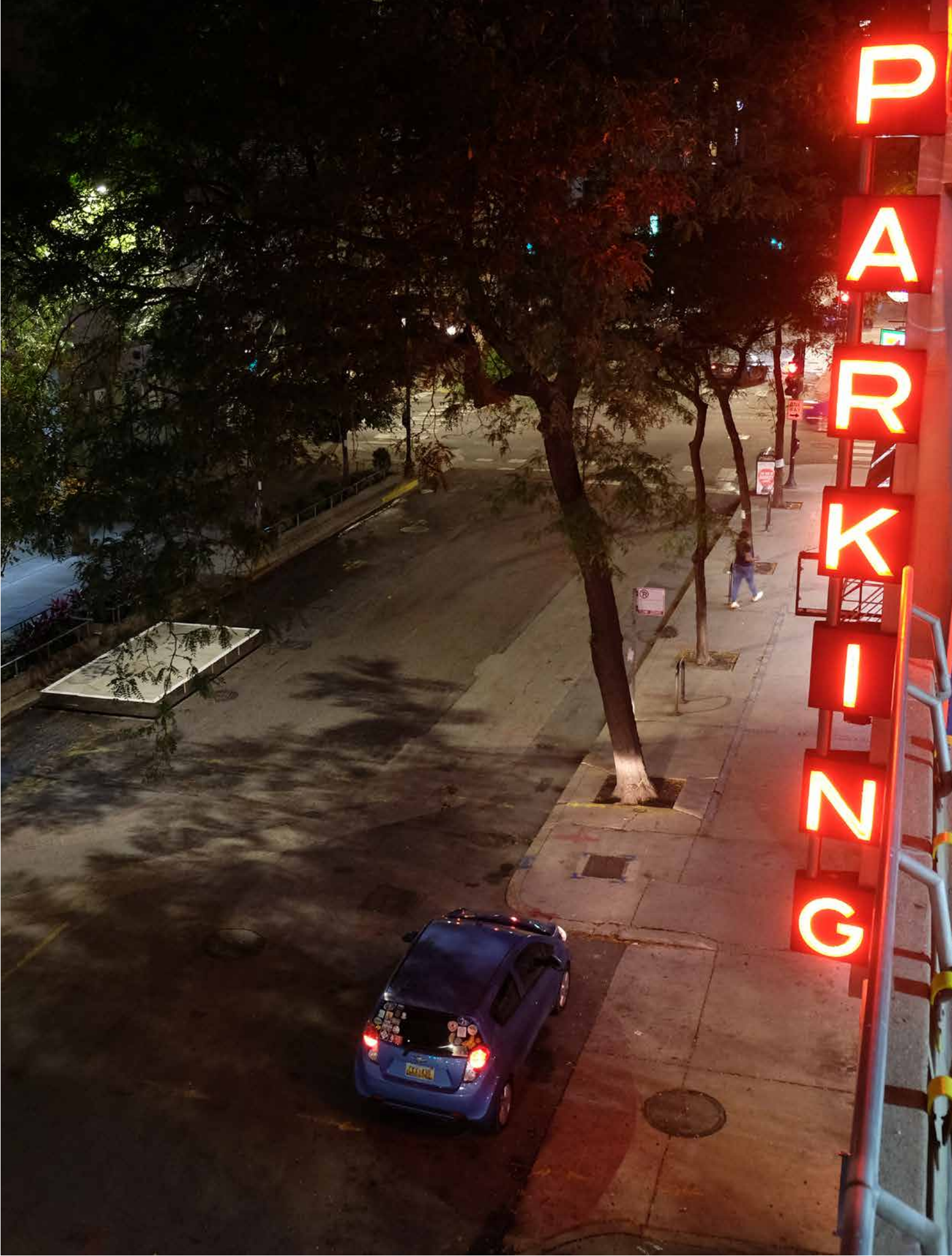
every night“ was both, a reason to expel us (it was unsafe for us, and that could create unsafe situations for even more people) and a reason to ridicule us, diminishing our defiance and improving our need for police-time in face of the more important crime scenes he should be heading to. Finally we managed to stay and the police disappeared, but this episode showed once again how strongly unequally the presence and attitude of the police is distributed in the city. According to our direct experience, the predominantly white North Side and wealthy downtown receive a more collaborative treatment from the police, with a two-way communication, opportunity for explanation and polite language. As we go further down, to the West and South Sides, the police become more aggressive, confrontational and unyielding.

Image right side:
Parasite Parking
at Magnificent
Mile Chicago.

Activation of parking space

At every site of intervention, *Parasite Parking* collaborated with different organizations of the respective neighborhood. In the old downtown location, *Parasite Parking* and the Chicago Tenants Union organized a political discussion and exchange about tenant strategies in Chicago and Berlin. In Pilsen together with Open Sheds Used for what we organized a panel discussion about counter strategies against privatization and spatial strategies of reclaiming public space. With NoNation Tangential Arts Lab, in Wicker Park, we organized a performance night to activate the street and transform it into a scenery. Other times, we did that by simply cooking dinner or making coffee and inviting people passing by. These actions led to a connection to the city, weaving the parasite’s yarn into the urban knit.

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PARKING AND SUBJECTIVITY. NOTES ON PARASITE PARKING TOWARDS A SYMBIOTIC PUBLIC

Is urban infrastructure made by autonomous individual subjects for autonomous individual subjects? Was it ever created for the human subject at all?

1 Schwarte Ludgar. "The city – A popular Assembly." *Producing Places*, Zeitschrift für Medien- und Kulturforschung, no. 5/1 (2014): 73 – 84.

Following Michel Foucault, we can claim that urban infrastructure is a form of power over human subjects. Those who decide where streets should be built and where people may and have to walk, sit, park, enjoy themselves or not, exercise power over bodies, gestures, identities, subjectivities – lives. But not only the autonomous decision of an absolutist sovereign produces lives, but those infrastructures, as dispositifs, do that too. When the "Roi-Soleil" Louis XIV's built grand avenues in Paris as a symbol of his power, it literally made the space for the French Revolution¹ showing not only that humans can transform their environment, but the environment itself shapes human subjectivity.

2 *Parasite Parking*, Guerilla Intervention, Chicago, 2021, Alexander Sacharow and Jakob Wirth www.parasite-parking.net

Questions arise: When will those streets become revolutionary and how? One answer could be that infrastructure becomes revolutionary when it transforms into a threshold, becoming open and an opening for something new – a space where oppressed subjects can articulate themselves and the streets themselves no longer simply serve power, but not yet a tool for freedom. This is the moment created by a parasitic practice, as a form of intervention, as in Jakob Wirth's and Alexander Sacharow's artistic pro-

ject *Parasite Parking*, where an object, namely "a multifunctional platform camouflaged as a parking space"² gains the ability to change our urban environment by disturbing the seemingly clear differentiation between private and public space; public and private property. There is power in the non-human entities of which our society and our public space is built. Parasites, as Michel Serres and Bruno Latour elaborate, become tokens of agency, empowering objects and disarming subjects, transforming networks of power.

Therefore, I would like to consider the non-human agents involved in the parasitic transformation. When an ambiguous object was able to create the threshold space of the parasite, it claimed itself a form of agency. What is more, it did so because it entered into relation with other agent infrastructures that prevail in the city: the parking space itself, and the hybrid car subjects that engage with parking spaces. Understanding the potential of the parking space, as provoked by *Parasite Parking*, entails understanding it as a more than human space.

With the lockdowns during the Covid-19 pandemic, the shortage of parking space in residential areas of bigger German cities became obvious. There are more cars than parking spaces. This is not an exciting statement, but it shows that, while everyone had to go to work,

cars were circulating and the parking spaces were frequently used by different cars in alternation.

Things changed as people could not go to work anymore and cars had to stay at home with them. Parking spaces in residential areas became a rare good and showed social and economic differences. Meanwhile, near office buildings, prisons, cinemas, or wherever so-called normal people are not at night or during lockdown, vast empty spaces appeared.

Most German cities' infrastructure after World War II was not designed for humans, but for cars, even though humans drive cars. Cars became objects of a specific modern understanding of subjectivity, and thus they were driven by specific modern subjects. We live in cities built for modern subjects which could be described as hybrids of humans and cars. Those human-cars make politics and form hard material urban landscapes. But while people can change their subjectivity quite quickly, in a matter of generations, cities cannot change their infrastructure as fast as people transform. Younger generations in big cities often do not even have a driver's license anymore.

Therefore, those parking spaces are nothing more to human-cars than ... parking spaces. The mentioned entities park their cars in those marked spaces, to transform themselves into "only humans," leaving their car-part behind, and producing, in that, an object, a car, which at the moment has no use. It disappears. Who would think constantly of their cars if they go for a shopping trip into the city or to meet some friends in a different town, remembering their parked cars all the time? This is not how we work – and that is what Martin Heidegger implies in his tool-use analysis: we only think of things when we are using them if they malfunction. Moreover, for the car, we become car-humans when we drive, and we remain car-humans when we plan a new city quarter, a hotel, etc. because we think about our better part – the car – so much, and at the same time ignore it so strongly, that it becomes invisible. In fact they are very visible indeed. Namely on the streets.

The same goes for the parking space. We do not think about the hundreds and hundreds of spaces in the city, in the streets where we walk,

shop or work, not until we need a parking space when arriving (late) to an appointment, a job interview or a date. Then parking spaces, as a rare good, become visible to us car-humans who recognize our entanglement with and dependence on them, while simultaneously repressing that feeling: we are subject to parking spaces. We do not want to see them dominate us. Instead, we get angry about the city's politics' making planning decisions that are not suitable for us car-humans.

Parking spaces are two-fold material-semiotic signifiers: they firstly signify the space for the car, showing us if we (our car) will fit or not. In doing so, we become car-humans as the car is an extension of our body and mind. Secondly, they signify the subject plus or minus that extension. They remind us that humans are not enough, rekindling the old philosophical question: what is a human? A chicken without feathers? An animal with or without a car?

Finally, we cannot imagine what else to do with those parking spaces, once we aren't car-humans anymore. And as usual, we forget that we humans aren't the only entities in the game. The world, even if we build it that way, is not only for us. We have to share the public space.

So the question arises: what would other species and entities do with the parking space? What is such a parking space to others?

In most cities parking spaces are built on public space and for the public. But who is the public? You guessed it: car-humans. In a world where cars aren't subjectivizing anymore, that public space could be shared with non-human and other human entities, not only with cars and their owners. Those parking spaces could become spaces for creativity, social engagement and unpredictable encounters with the other.

In advancing precisely such other uses, "Parasite Parking" reveals the parking space as a space beyond its car-human inflection. The project used a platform the size of a parking space, slightly larger than a car. But on that same surface, a dinner happened, or a game, a talk with an audience; the same space became a bedroom and kitchen. The space could lay flat or be populated by a topography of modular furniture, surfaces offering opportunities of use

5 Paul B. Preciado beschreibt auch das Einnehmen von Testosteron als ‚hacking‘: „Some are taking hormones as part of a protocol to change sex, and others are fooling with it, self-medicating without trying to change their gender legally or going through any psychiatric follow-up. They don't identify with the term gender dysphorics and declare themselves „gender pirates,“ or „gender hackers“ (2008, 55). Testosteron wird zu einem Code, der die Materie des Körpers von innen verändert.

3 Lembcke 2019

4 Lembcke 2019,
34

6 Braidotti 2014





Parasite Parking,
Alexander Sacharow and Jakob Wirth,
Berlin 2021.

(intended primarily for humans); it densified the strip between the sidewalk and the active road, in cases, it extended the sidewalk— with its own complex meaning— or created a new private wedge between them, making the spaciousness of this poorly signified area emerge. There were power relations too, that the object shifted or exposed just by dodging the fixed relation of use prescribed between car-humans and parking. As it opens up the visible possibilities of the parking space, this intervention may help us see the features we naturalize or ignore as car-humans.

Imagine plants and insects: the space could feel like a vast space to inhabit. A whole world to live in. As humans transform their surroundings it depends on their form of subjectivity to which extent they include (or exclude) other humans and non-humans.

Every entity has its own view and entanglement with their environment. The environment for car-humans is different from the environment of ants, even if they share the same space, the parking space. They do not even have to meet each other, so different are their environments. Their worldview is shaped by their ant-being and car-human-being. When we understand parking spaces this way, we may see them as ecological urban spaces.

Parking spaces are not only environments for other entities but ecological objects in themselves. In a philosophical approach focused on relations we must understand subjectivity, in this case, not only as car-humans but as car-humans-parking-space. The subject consists of three parts, all related through domination, production, and ideology.

In this complex, the ideology of the parking space is capitalistic in the sense that everyone has an equal chance to conquer that space with their car. The ideology of the car is that it can bring you anywhere and be positioned on hold for your next ride. And finally, the human's ideology is that they can control and use cars and parking spaces without becoming any different in their subjective essence.

What is lost in translation is the response-ability between human and non-human entities. In that case, parasites come in handy: they help us to understand to which gods we are sub-

jected. As the Serresian parasite docks into the existing language of the parking space to open it up for its own different action, it displaces the car-god. Through undermining, we understand in which ideological and therefore symbolic orders we are entangled and with whom we are entangled: non-human entities, most of the time. This also means that we humans are hosts for parasites like the car but can use that parasitic agency against our own exploitation of public space.

Reclaiming public space with a platform camouflaged as a parking space is at least two fold: it uses the symbolic structure of the parking space against the car-human as well as against that same symbolic meaning. *Parasite Parking* reclaims rare space in densely built cities and deconstructs the car-human-subject by giving it the opportunity to become something or someone else: maybe a plant-human growing flowers in that space, or any other subject, or even a form of society integrating human and non-human actants and objects.

To rethink the parking space as an ecological urban space, we have to deconstruct the gods and the symbolic orders of our subjectivity, not in order to purify the object "parking space," but to force us to think again, to think about what surrounds us and with whom we engage in subjectivity. *Parasite Parking*, understood as a strategy, is a way to pry open the box of significations/relations between car-humans and parking space. Whatever will make us see this space as a room full of other entities and relations in which we position ourselves as humans. Becoming parasites in our own cities helps to develop a symbiotic public. The key is phrased by Donna Haraway and truly democratic: a symbiotic public rises through "making-with"³, getting involved with others, as in those emerging spaces through *Parasite Parking*.

The following political practice to rethink the parking space as an ecological urban space, is to deconstruct the gods and the symbolic orders of our subjectivity, not in order to purify the object "parking space," but to force us to think again, to think about what surrounds us and with whom we engage in subjectivity. To transform our urban environment, we need to be ready to transform our subjectivity.

3 Haraway, Donna. *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham/London: Duke UP 2016.



Ruhender Verkerh,
Wolf Vostell, 1969

THE PARASITE PARADOX: COLLECTIVITY AND THE NICHE

1 Like described in: Ross, Toni. "Aesthetic Autonomy and Interdisciplinarity: a Response to Nicolas Bourriaud's 'Relational Aesthetics.'" *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 5.3 (2006): 167–181. Web.

2 Adorno, Theodor W. 2003. *Ästhetische Theorie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

3 After Lawton, 2019, the question of activists is: "how democracy looks when rights are deprived or upheld, demanding distinctions between right and wrong". But that's far from my approach to my artistic or activist practice. Similarly, Bishop (2012) says: Social practice artists working within an activist framework view art as a form of protest and resistance with "people [comprising] the central artistic medium and material. Social practice art repositions the viewer or audience of a work of art as collaborators or participants cooperating in partnership with the artist."

4 Therefore, it can only be partly experienced in Baumgartens way of aesthetic as the science of senses.

5 Referring to Spencer Brown (1979), describing the black box as a container for unknown processes, where one can only observe in and output, but not know about the system of the black box itself.

In biology, a parasite is an organism that lives on and depends on another. The term describes what at first sight appears to be a one-sided relationship. In ancient Greece, the parasite was still a respected temple servant, who, with the secularization of ancient society, gradually lost their functional role and thus their legitimacy. The parasite as a term became a commensal at the table, until it reappeared in modernity as a botanical term for a relationship between two plants that is beneficial to only one of them.

The philosopher and communication theorist Michel Serres introduces the parasite in his communication theory and speaks of the parasite-host relationship as a „relationship that knows only one direction.“ It is this one-sidedness of the relationship that made a socially pejorative term from this biological concept.

THE TEMPORALITY OF PARASITISM

I propose that the parasite appears as one-sided and exploitative in large part because it is viewed in relation to the life cycle of an organism. The term parasite is informed by a human moral perspective of temporality. This perspective asks about the advantages and disadvantages that occur in the timespan of one life cycle, and in relation to the individual life. Already in this there is a moral bias. If we were to abstract in time, away from the concrete individual life, I would argue, we would have to introduce a new evaluation of the term. If we consider the parasitic in a larger time span, the arrow that „knows only one direction“ might even be reversed.

THE PARASITE IN INDIVIDUAL CRITICISM

In the overall evolution of a species, a parasite exerts mutation and adaptation forces over the host species. According to this biological argument, the parasite contributes to the survival of the host in the long run. Parasites create pressure on other organisms to constantly adapt to their environment and to new conditions. This creates a coevolution of host and parasite that evolves over millions of years.

Serres translates this phenomenon into systemic thinking and speaks of the fact that, without the parasite (understood by him as disturbance and irritation) the system stagnates. Thus, without the parasite, every species, every network, every entropy would also be heading towards its own end. For the parasite is not only an irritation, which takes without giving. The parasite is a moment of innovation, introducing new information into a system. It is the moment which tests system boundaries and thereby expands them, which creates irritation and thereby requires adaptation or, speaking from the perspective of thermodynamic law, which maintains the level of entropy in a system.

Taking the parasite beyond the time span of a life cycle, I would question Serres and the biological principle of the „one direction“ in which the parasite acts. For, in information theory, disturbance (noise) always generates information. Without disturbance, or in the logic of evolution, without mutation acting through disturbance and its adaptation to it, there is no development, no competition.

So the concept of the parasite, which takes without giving, implodes as soon as we decouple the idea of the parasite from the frame of a

life cycle.

Suddenly, disruption – or a parasitic „gnawing“ – becomes innovation. Just as every hack leads to the closing of the gap through which the hack entered the system, thereby contributing to the stabilization of the system. Irritation, therefore, is always only temporarily destructive. It is very unstable in its potential for irritation, as it ultimately contributes to the stabilization and survival of the system. Thus the parasite, in its function of evoking innovation, can unexpectedly become a beloved figure in the same structures that it penetrated and opposed. Another consequence of going beyond the time span of a life cycle is intergenerational collectivity – a temporal and vertical collectivism, as distinct from horizontal collectivity in the present. By looking at a longer time span, connections between different generations of a species are established as they deal with the same parasites, their genetic legacies and variations.

THE PARASITE AS START-UP – WAYS OF APPROPRIATION

Financial capitalism, deregulated capitalism, or even Accelerationism are all about acceleration, innovation, and constantly reinventing oneself.

Thus Nancy Fraser speaks of a dangerous liaison between emancipatory practices and neoliberalism; a liaison whereby deregulation and inequality are not only supported, but legitimized as emancipatory. Can it be that neoliberal strategies incorporate parasitic practices so that they ultimately strengthen the dominant system and accelerate its development? As described above, irritation leads to adaptation and change – that is, to innovation. In the neoliberal logic, surplus is generated by reinventing the old, as this is how an enterprise fights for an edge or competitive advantage over other market actors.

How could the parasite ultimately escape the snare of neoliberal appropriation?

Regardless of any appropriation, the moment of disruption remains, which first of all contains nothing productive. According to Serres, the parasite is and remains the „last in the chain“ and therefore, after every appropriation of an innovation (a parasitic action), another parasite lines up at the end to latch onto the new

system.

The notion of the parasite conceptually evades appropriation because it is understood relationally. Thus, the parasite is not the object, the actor itself, but instead a description of how actors in a system or network relate to each other. Thus, even if a parasite is appropriated i.e. becomes part of the system or mainstream, only the signified i.e. the object itself, is appropriated in the process, not the condition of being parasite, that is, the concept itself (signifier). As soon as the inflatable sleeping bags of Michael Rakowitz's paraSITE, which are heated inside by exhaust vents, no longer act as a niche instrument providing people with a warm place to sleep, but become part of an exhibition or official support strategies for the homeless, they are no longer a parasite. Instead, they become guests or hosts themselves. From that moment on, paraSITE is appropriated. The parasitic (signifier) of the paraSITE project leaves the object (signified), which mutates into a use value that serves a function but no longer generates irritation.

If the parasite is no longer considered to be a one-way relationship, then it remains to be asked what defines it at all. Wouldn't the parasite then be a neoliberal tool par excellence? For it is through irritation that the system ultimately reforms itself and can be maintained; this happens as the parasite generates tame irritations that lead to workable changes. We must then address the question of ideology and the extent to which the parasite is suitable as an ideological figure. Does the parasite mutate into a neoliberal concept, like diversity management or crowdfunding? It would then be a subversive guest - who is at once welcomed and abominated.

In this view, a Start-up could be considered a contemporary parasite. Start-ups seek a niche, usually appearing functionless at first, but then quickly mutate and move out of a counter-hegemonic position right into the center. They feed exclusively on the host called venture capital for the first few years, giving only a hope of success in return. They understand the camouflage or system language perfectly and usually act aggressively to prevail against competitors (e.g. grocery and meal delivery services, Uber, Lime, Gorillas) - these are all characteristics of a parasite. In doing so, they create disruption in an industry, they irritate, they gnaw at the

6 The Parasite, according to Michel Serres (1982), can be seen as an observer, because it is inside and outside all at once. That is another argument for a Parasite Aesthetic, because the aesthetic is not inducible through the sensorial approach.

7 Serres, Michael, 1982, *The Parasite*, the Johns Hopkins University press, London.

8 *ibid.* 194 (german version, translated by the author)

9 *ibid.* 7

10 Marchart, Oliver. 2019. *Confluctual Aesthetics: Artistic Activism and the Public Sphere*. Book, Whole. Berlin, Germany: Sternberg Press.

11 Spontaneous ideology is in the indecipherable, mystical distance between the work and the audience. It's the way how the art world defines the political which makes in his opinion the term interchangeable and useless for an analysis.

12 Mouffe, Chantal. 2014. *Agonistik. Die Welt Politisch Denken*. Berlin: Suhrkamp.

13 *ibid.* 24

14 look at the end of the text

15 Capitalist Aesthetic is, as Marchart calls it, the "tame" political art within the white cube and without involvement in real conflicts.

16 Here also Adorno's point is interesting, who says that for the art system the art, or the parasite, is important for its existence and therefore finally only confirming and sustaining its position.

paraSITE



How to build an inflatable shelter that attaches to the exhaust vent of a building's heating system, thereby creating warmth and space in winter.

Designed by Michael Rakowitz.

Materials: 20 garbage bags (1 with drawstring), roll of duct tape or weather-proof packing tape, plastic tarp, thin gage electrical wire, scissors.



Cut the tops and bottoms off ten garbage bags so that they're straight and open on both ends. (In the images, these bags are white.) Arrange in two rows of five each, cut end to cut end, and tape across. Do this bag after bag, creating two long plastic tubes. Be sure to tape both sides.



Cut six more bags in the same fashion and make three two-bag tubes. (In the images, these bags are gray.) Tape the sides of these tubes to one another to form a grid. Lay the grid between the two white tubes.



Cut the inside edges of the white tubes from top to bottom. Tape the newly cut edges of the white tubes to the open edges of the grid. Also tape closed one edge of each white tube.

orderly market shares and if they don't fail, as 90% of start-ups do, they situate themselves in the market and then change sides: they become the host, the market dominator. All other start-ups, on the other hand, squander the irritation and the venture capital, as well as themselves and others, and disappear again. They operate with strategies like sweat equity or growth hacking – forms that operate with unpaid labor and public platforms and exploit their own resources to gain advantage in the market. The start-up appears as a parasite whose demise is speculated on, indeed almost reckoned with. But speculation on a parasite is already a sign of its appropriation.

Spotify, for example, began as a start-up; it was irritating, operated in a niche and ,annoyed' the top dogs like iTunes, until it suddenly came out of the niche into the mainstream, lost the role of irritation and gained that of innovation, then dominant player in the market. So the recurring question is: where is the resistance in the parasite?

VIRUS AND PARASITE AS STARTING POINT FOR COLLECTIVITY

In what follows, I want to relate the parasitic and the viral. What interests us about the parasite is its relational, „exploitative“ relationship to the host, to the dominant or the hegemonic. And we can apply this to viruses, which also act parasitically in relation to an organism. They are an enhanced form of the parasitic, since only at the moment of interaction with a host are they capable of reproducing at all.

Most recently, viruses have also been described, in relation to the human organism, as a collective that, taken together, can be called an organ – the so-called virome. The collective of viruses or the virome performs functions in the production of enzymes and participates in the whole organism. At the same time it is difficult to localize.

The virus itself is located in the border area between life and death. They are located between matter and non-matter, so they remain on the border of the corporeal.

Like the parasite, viruses take on an elementary function in the system. Viruses are uncontrollable, hidden, and in addition to their destructive, sometimes lethal properties, they are also a productive alliance in the body.

When the virome steps out of invisibility into visibility, when we understand its functionality, then the uninvited guest mutates into an invited one, the parasite or the virus becomes a welcome guest and its way of acting, thus, calculable, tamed and system-supporting – and no longer irritating at all. At this moment, irritation gains entry into overall social functionality and is even financed (venture capital), included (feminist political content on Netflix) or institutionally connected (political art).

The boundaries of the virome remain unclear, as viruses enter and exit, shifting from a threat to the organism to a system-supporting function. Baudrillard's theory of the virus speaks of viruses in much the same way that Serres speaks of parasites, describing the virus' function as destabilizing the organism or system. Thus, beside the collectivity of the parasites and the virus, which arises over several generations, a second form of collectivity occurs, which takes form in the virome.

What does this collective form of the parasite mean in relation to art and social transformation?

In her article in Issue 1 of this magazine, Eliza T. Bertuzzo writes that the parasitic and the irritant represent an outdated singular form of critique which ultimately does not generate sufficient transformation. From her perspective, transformational strategies are much more about a sympoiesis, a worlding that includes different fields of action and actors and develops a new practice from them. Therefore, she rejects singular actions such as that of the parasite, which moreover resemble the outdated image of a hero. According to Bertuzzo, they do not have the potential for collective change or create a basis for solidarity and empowerment, let alone transformation.

However, the parasite's practice and its classification shift place when we see the parasitic not as a singular action but as a virome. i.e. as a strategy, or a diffuse practice which can be collectivized.

So what if Gaia (the complex totality of all organisms) is not literally understood as a unity, but equally understood from the individual elements of this unity. Then the parasitic can also be part of Gaia, i.e. the whole, without being

17 Viruses store parts of the DNA and can pass it to different generations of organisms, since viruses have a different lifespan and reproductive cycle. For more details look at: <https://jem.at/2020/expertenbericht/das-intestinale-virom/>

18 She speaks of precariousness as a shared experience that would make it possible to act in connectedness, or of performativity or corporeality as the basis of emancipatory mobilization and solidarity.

reduced as a mechanism of autopoiesis. By this I mean that if we understand a collective of the virome, this does not mean that every virus is uniquely assignable to the collective or even recognized as such. A virome is characterized just by the fact that it acts in chaos, possesses many unknowns, unites different temporalities (virus as gene database¹⁷) and mutates very quickly from friend to enemy. It works in a collective, but this becomes clear only from the outside and in relation to a much larger temporality, which, as mentioned above, exceeds the life span of an organism.

The resistance to privatization consists of singular acts of parasitic intervention such as the *Penthouse à la Parasite* or *Parasite Parking*. The resistance is not expressed through uniquely collective acts, rather, it is manifested in fragmented niche activities of different parasitic practices. These act with strategies of opaque adaptation, perversion and destruction of the given logics, as Tonia Andresen explains in her article. The virome is a collective which contains in the singular action a collectivity that becomes visible only through observation and over an extended time frame.

The parasite thus acts in the singular, though its effect is collective. For example, the coronavirus acts within the individual organism and mutates, transforming in the collective from one variant to the next. Furthermore, through its irritation, it produces a collective among the hosts. *paraSITE*, *Open Sheds* used for what?, and *Casa Parásito* can each be considered as a single phenomenon, a single parasite, but they can also show a commonality in their fragmented existence. They can act individually and are involved in a collective production of irritation; in this case, an irritation of private property.

The one-way relationship is thereby unstable, however, and the parasite is threatened with its demise at every stage of perpetuation. Thus, each moment of irritation remains temporally precarious and fluid.

CORONAVIRUS AS A BRIDGE TO COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE AND STARTING POINT FOR MOBILIZATION

How is it possible to generate collective mobilization through parasitic strategies? I dare to consider at this point the collective experience

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of the coronavirus as an opportunity for a new emancipatory practice. Judith Butler speaks of embodied communal experiences, such as a demonstration, as elemental to the experience of commonality.¹⁸ Thus, the experience of the pandemic could be a bodily experience which produced similar experiences across class, national, and discriminatory boundaries: fear, impossibility of control, unpredictability, loneliness, and material concerns (but these to highly unequal degrees). While there were new fault lines (e.g., vaccinated vs. unvaccinated people), rich and poor, global North and global South also shared some similar worlds of experience which could not be alleviated by wealth and privilege as in other crises. This shared experience could provide a basis for a common horizon of action.

Political theory has long wondered how to generate a commonality (or mobilization) that would lead to collective action and ultimately to the overthrow of a hegemony. In Marxist theory, the collective experience of working-class exploitation and precarity was foregrounded; in Western, near-sighted humanism, male-white universalism was seen, and still is, as the common paradigm under which unity could be achieved.

The parasitic or viral, however, will probably not be known to produce a real upheaval. Instead, the parasite is generally interested in long-term coexistence with the host due to its own dependence on it. This leads to the thesis, indeed the logic, that the parasite pursues a strategy of transformation through reformation, since a revolution i.e. a new beginning through total death of the system, would destroy its own survival niche.

Still open is the question of how to connect to this collective viral experience. How can this become the basis of an emancipatory common practice – a basis of solidarity which does not take place through abstract ideals (as is too often attempted via theories, ideologies or political convictions), but through the physically shared (viral) experience? And how would this materialize? How can such a precarious experience be transformed into a political moment?

CONCLUSION: TEMPORALITY, COLLECTIVITY, MOBILIZATION – LINKING THROUGH PARASITE ART

The question of the collective is elementary,

if parasitic action is to be understood as a common art movement, and equally so if the parasite is to support a social transformation, or to be considered as a political strategy.

In this article, I have presented different forms of collectivization through parasitism.

Firstly, via a shift in temporality, which provokes not only a reversal of the relationship accomplished from a one-way to a two-way relationship; but also opens the question of collectivity, by creating one across generations – that is, vertically, through a temporally extended perspective or an abstraction of experienced time. Just as parasites across generations can be seen as a factor driving change, not only that of their own species, but also that of other species.

Secondly, we have attested collectivity by linking parasite and virus: the collective formed by comparable actions of all viruses involved in the virome (irritations); and the commonality which emerges as a consequence when the parasite itself is present in any host. This is a commonality which may not be experienced individually, but can be observed analytically; as during the COVID pandemic, when a collectivity between viruses was observed. They developed a common strategy, ultimately transforming themselves as a collective virus, generating new variants to always inhabit new niches.

Thirdly, collectivity is generated externally. Thus, this occurs between the hosts themselves, as a parasite (for example, the COVID-19 virus) becomes a common enemy. This collective experience also creates a basis for collective action, for example, when Corona deniers gather together to protest on the streets, regardless of their very different political backgrounds; or as in the artworks collected in this volume, which work on similar themes without internal agreement or a defined sense of belonging.

With the question of collectivity comes that of the possibility of mobilization. I would like to locate the possibility of collective mobilization through the virus or parasite. How can a parasite be taken up as a collective experience of the pandemic and played back as a social critique?

One example of how the Corona pandemic generates collectivity is the Mutual Aid movement in the United States. There, the pandemic led to civil society alliances to mitigate negative

consequences and provide mutual support, independently from employers or from the state. Boundaries along the lines of class, race and gender were overcome in an unprecedented way.

I would like to return to the initial question of how parasites act collectively and link this to Parasitic Art. Collectivity in art manifests itself mainly in collectively executed parasitic strategies.

Parasitic art uses the energy of systems for its own actions, flawedly reproducing their logic to avoid attracting attention and to find a niche. Thus paraSITE uses and alienates the exhaust air of subway shafts or restaurant heaters, *Penthaus à la Parasit* sells other people's property, *Parasite Parking* uses the private space of parking spots for public concerns, and *Open Sheds used for what?* occupies brownfields by different artists*.

All of these interventions perform different small-scale reinterpretations of public space, acting on the one hand with the system and its logic (camouflage) and on the other hand resisting it (irritation).

While inhabiting the niche, Parasitic Art must remain aware of how temporary its stay is, and that its own lifespan, or the parasite itself, has a short temporality. Every stay is in constant danger of being taken over by the host. And perhaps this very knowledge of their own limit-ness, the knowledge of the singularity of their niche, is what unites them and generates a collectivity; just as the coronavirus generates new variants which continually resist the defense mechanisms of the system. Just as Baudrillard's virus theory speaks of destabilization through the virus, Parasite Art cannot create a new vision, cannot achieve mobilization. However, Parasite Art can collectively destabilize, and in doing so, motivate further parasitic strategies, and make forms of interpretation and social critiques tangible.

The question to what extent the parasite is a collective being must therefore be answered with yes and no - and here again we find are again at the paradox which has always surrounded the parasite, indeed which it incorporates. Ultimately, the parasite in individual critique also unites precisely this paradox. The parasite is isolated and yet collective – but always remains only individually criticizable.

THE PARASITE: COPING AS TROU- BLEMAKING.

Michael Rakowitz is a US American-Iraqi artist who gained recognition for his project "paraSITE" in the early 2000s. The editorial team at Parasite Art reached out to him, as one of the first artists in our knowledge to use the concept of the parasite in his work.

Jakob Wirth (JW): Hello, it's nice to meet you, even if just online. I would like to talk to you today about your connection to the concept of the parasite. What led you to use it in your work?

Michael Rakowitz (MR): I worked with that idea in the project "paraSITE", which I continue to do every winter. This work has its roots in Jordan. That was as close as I was getting to Iraq, and I came out with a real self-awareness about my own embodiment as somebody of the second generation of diaspora from people who were forced to leave a place, who became nomads.

In Jordan, I was looking at the tents and the equipment that the Bedouins use to set up each night, according to the wind patterns that move through the desert. So every single night, the shape of the tent was different. And when I came back to the States I saw a homeless person setting up underneath a vent. The warm air that's leaving the building was keeping this person alive for the night. These nomadic people, by tradition or by consequence, were using air to provide structural and thermal sustenance. So the connection that I did in my mind was, how do you harness that wind as

a structural element? I imagined using inflatables as a way to capture this air. And I heard the word parasite being used to describe unhoused people. And I thought about the prefix "para," used for rescue or emergency equipment. You have a parachute, which, with the French word "chute", means to guard against falling. So "para-site" to me meant to guard against becoming a site, to guard against becoming a permanent situation.

And when I think about parasitism, I quote Dr. Kazimir Tarmon in his "Notes on Parasitism". He describes in this very concise text the way in which a host defends itself against a parasite and then a parasite evolves to then continue to attach itself to the host and survive.

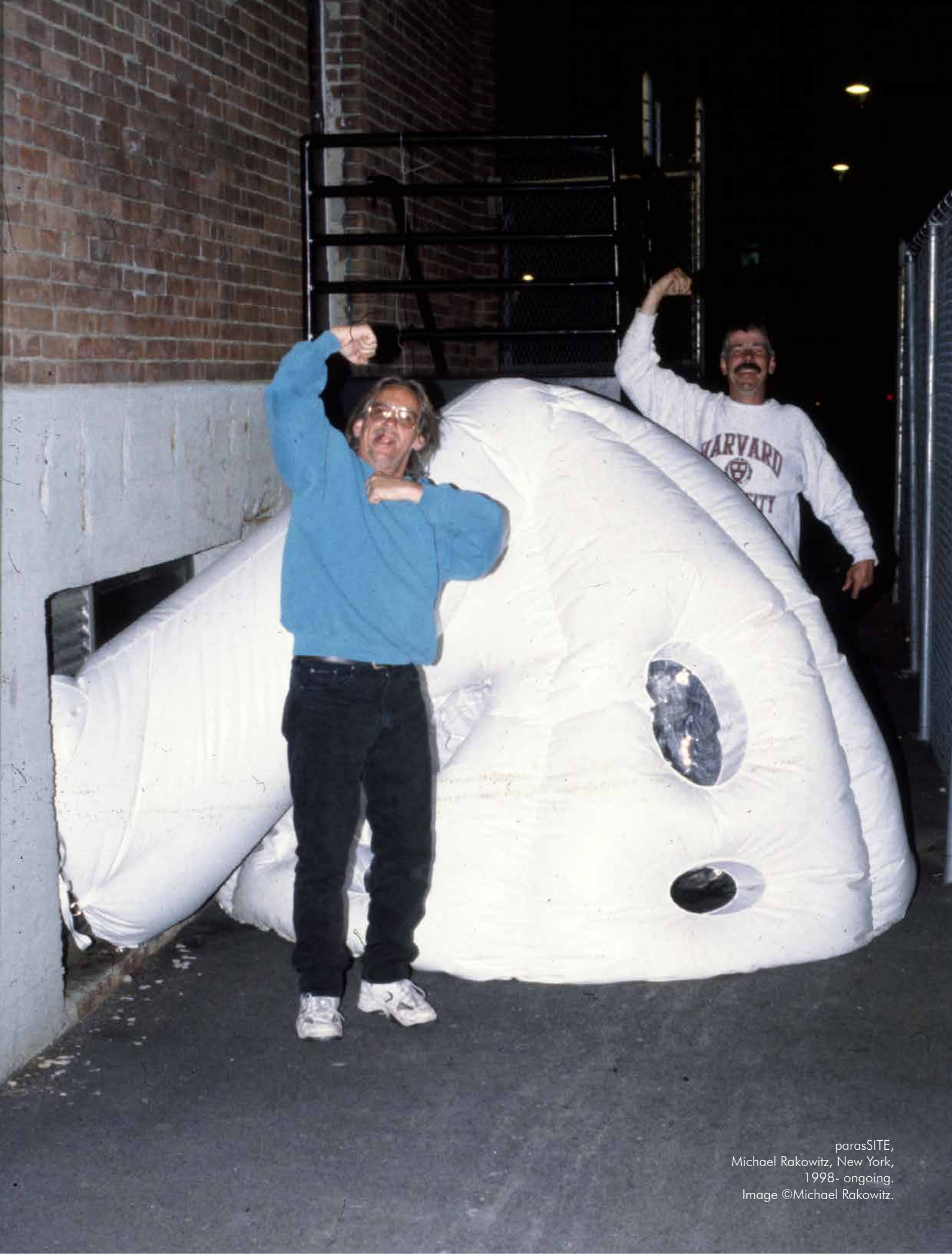
JW: The question of perspective is always present in this kind of engagement. How did you actually work with the unhoused people in the street? As artists, do we use the people in the street for our conceptual work? I sense a lot of sensitivity in your work. But from the outside, you can see it very quickly as abusive, since you can't see how the relationship is built up, in terms of trust and hierarchy. As artists, do we abuse precarity? This word comes up fast when we use the conceptual framework of the parasite.

MR: From the very beginning, I was always very uncomfortable with this idea. That I would just go and talk about this to somebody that I didn't know, who lives on the street. Especially considering the ecosystem I was

existing in then, attending grad school at MIT.

One day, when I was developing this work, as I was walking back to my studio from one of those critiques at MIT, I passed by a group of unhoused people that I had become familiar with. I asked them, "Hey, can you look at these drawings and tell me if this is just bullshit?" And they looked at them and said, "OK, this is a really interesting idea. Make a prototype. And we'll come talk to you about it." And then I made my prototype and I made it out of black trash bags. They asked "Why did you use black trash bags?" And I say, "well, I figured you'd want privacy," and he said, "that's the big thing. We don't have privacy issues, we have security issues, we want to see people and we want to be seen." And at this point, I was reading Hannah Arendt, and she's talking about visibility being on the road to equality. And you're like, holy shit, these things really do make sense.

There's familiarity that happens in a city. It's a very hyperlocal project. It's always based on consent and codevelopment with the people who use the shelters. This project is introduced as a series of strategies of survival that are actually simultaneously symbolic and useful. It's a really interesting place to exist, to come up with something that is useful and to deal with potential discomfort. We can say that in an ideal society, people should not have bandages because they should not have wounds. What I am doing is troublemaking. So if we create conditions where the vocabu-



parasITE,
Michael Rakowitz, New York,
1998- ongoing.
Image ©Michael Rakowitz.



(p)LOT: Proposition I
2004 - ongoing, customized weatherproof auto-
mobile covers, PVC pipe, tent poles
Ludwig Museum, Vienna.
Image ©Michael Rakowitz.



paraSITE
1998 - ongoing,
©Michael Rakowitz.

lary of what it means to be unhoused becomes, in a way, more uncomfortable or more unsettling, that can accelerate conditions where people start to do their own thinking about how to design to solve this problem.

Marina Resende Santos (MRS): Why do you think it is more troubling for you to make a structure that traps heat, than for people to just make their own tents near exhaust vents the way they used to? Do you think that has to do with the fact that it's appropriating heat that was going to be exhausted? I think that's also where the more biological parasitic relationship appears.

MR: Hmm. I hadn't thought about the actual trapping of the air being part of the trouble, but this comes up in the discussion about whether it was public space or actually private space that I was introducing the work into. Suddenly people start to become territorial about the air. But I think that the troublemaking aspect of it happens in a lot of other places. Does it prolong life on the street? Well, in a way it's meant to be more troublesome than people setting up their own living conditions. It's meant to kind of accelerate those moments, because it shows a new strategy, that is not just taking a piece of cardboard here, a piece of wood here, a discarded sleeping bag here; instead it introduces the visual language of actual design, but a design that can actually happen from the same improvisation that allows somebody to come up with a makeshift shelter.

It's meant to raise this possibility: could we one day wake up and find these encampments taking over buildings like ivy? The discomfort about what it means to enlist precarity in an artwork is interesting for me to explore.

So the troublemaking, I think, is the fact that it's disobeying laws. There are all of these murky laws against unhoused people that were implemented in that time in New York City and that are not actually easy to

enforce.

Michael, an unhoused person I was in contact with, actually documented the juridical conditions of these laws and what was allowed and what not. He set up this shelter that I made for him according to his own design. And when the police came and gave him a ticket, he went to court. And they said to him, "what is it? Is it a tent?" And he said, "no, it's an inflatable sleeping bag." And the judge saw the measurement of the shelter and dismissed the case, due to the law which defines tents as higher than one meter. So all of a sudden, you create these agents in the city that have to actually react to this.

JW: Some people in the tiny house movement talk about creating a solution for homeless people. Personally I think it is quite problematic to claim things as a solution. So I really like how your work acts pragmatically. It's really on the ground. You meet the needs of the people and it's not about claiming this way of working with them as a solution, as a way to navigate through a crisis. But still, I am wondering how an object can be a troublemaker, how it can still avoid confirming the current situation and thus accepting the status quo. I think that's always the danger if we work with a problem.

I was wondering how the use of the word "parasite," was received, considering those who call unhoused people parasites. When does it work and does it not work to reframe a term that has such negative connotations?

MR: I think the idea from the radical left that there shouldn't be a coping with a situation like houselessness is a valid form of thinking. But I'm interested as an artist in creating tensions. I'm definitely not interested in the solution. This is not a solution. It is a pragmatic, but also symbolic form of survival that amplifies the tension that exists between people who have homes and those who don't. And home ownership is one of those things that

is constantly threatening to collapse capitalism.

The shelters themselves don't have the title listed on them, it is only called that when I speak about and I have a title for this project. And in fact, there's been a lot of humor around it. The people who get offended by the term parasite are not the people that I'm working with. The people who get the most offended are the people who are in positions of wealth. I find that really interesting from a pathological standpoint.

MRS: I think it almost speaks to a certain respect to the system to think that a parasite is something bad. Because for this person to be abusing a system without working for it, is what's really bad.

JW: I refer a lot to Michel Serres, who defines the term parasite and uses the concept of the niche to describe its habitat. Your one meter tent is a perfect example of finding the niche, the in-between spaces. The parasite opens up a space on the edge, somewhere between legal and illegal, between public and private, between all these dualisms that define what is allowed and what isn't. Michel Serres uses the parasite as a figure for irritation, who points out situations which are full of trouble. I was also wondering if you have a reference to this notion of the parasite? Or do you play more with the negative social connotation of the term?

MR: The point that Marina made really resonates with me. It is about understanding the limitations of our embodiment and moving beyond our own embodiments and imagining others. What does the virus call itself? What does the parasite call itself? Recognizing that these are life forms that exist in their own kind of social order and are looking to survive and reproduce. And about the irritant—absolutely. I want to explore the ways in which this discomfort is felt, to stay with the trouble as Donna Haraway says.

JW: I wanted to bring up the "(p) lot" project, which you realized a couple of years later, where you used a parking space with a car-like tent structure to occupy the space and create a possibility of housing there. I was wondering if you also see or describe it as a parasitic work? Or was it inspired by the other work in any way? As I see it you were also looking for the niche and working with this boundary between legal and illegal, with camouflage, and all these concepts that also use in my work as parasitic strategies.

MR: I am looking at the city and its structures and seeing what can be enlisted to be used in a different way. "paraSITE" has led me to think about the ways in which you have these systems that exist in a city: OK, you pay for parking, but there isn't necessarily a law that says what you can do there. And so I started to do this analysis of what it would mean to continuously pay for parking in midtown Manhattan and set up a space there that one could live in. And it ended up being, you know, ridiculously cheap. So this was a way of thinking about what it means to hold space in the city in a way that is considered legal.

JW: With the magazine, I am also trying to find the common ground of different artists or people who work with the concept of the parasite. For this reason I would like to ask the conceptualizing question: if you think about parasitic strategies or parasitic ways of working, is there something that comes to your mind? Or if you would conceptualize your own strategies within your artwork?

MR: I think what brought me to a kind of parasitic strategy was my interest in being a site specific artist. I was interested in dislocating and presenting in the world, so that things maybe don't so quickly become art. When I think about "parasite" as a word, I think about the definition where "para" means "at" or "to the side of", as in, say, "para-archaeo-

logy"cycle. And parasites add to the side of a site, like that very physical relationship of the shelter next to this building.

Parasitic strategies do a lot to create ways for us to not only understand power, but also to understand how it is that somebody can impact it, even with movements that seem small and somehow decentralized. They don't need to see themselves as powerless in the face of a bigger organism. And I think about a lot of the artists that I love and admire. They intervene in the system and then somewhat detach themselves. You know, you deterritorialize yourself, but the impact is there.

MRS: I've always asked myself, what's the difference between parasite art and interventionist art? Sometimes you can just describe them as interventions, but they do have a certain logic that can be described through the metaphor of the parasite. Maybe there are ways of intervening that don't necessarily have the same relationship to a system, the same relationship of survival where the parasite also sustains itself on the system as it is. That is one of the things that makes it controversial, and that's what makes it successful as well. There's always intentional embrace in the parasitic process, from what I've seen from your work and what we've been talking about today.

JW: Interventionist art is for me a very broad and carved out term. And it doesn't have to have an intentionally irritational moment in it. You can make an intervention totally in cooperation with all the different norms and systems we perceive outside in the street, for example. For me, the concept of intervention doesn't work so much with this kind of friction, or disruption or even with camouflage. Parasite Art, on the other hand, deals with the border position as well. It's not mainstream, it can't be in the focus of the art scene or the public. It has to use the resources of a host and subvert it, and it has to use the

niche - if not it either wouldn't be able to survive, - or it would be able to be called a parasite, but instead a guest or even the host.








































MR: I think that there's something wonderfully precise about Parasite Art. I think that it's crucial to be able to say, "OK, we have enough examples of this kind of work that delineates this condition or this relationship, that we should call it that." And I agree with you, I don't know that I'm ready to just call it interventionist art. But as you're talking, I'm actually thinking about something you said, Marina, that the parasite still needs the system that it exists within to survive. That's the paradox, right? And there it is that prefix again, para, you know, from the Greek para, "distinct from" and then doxa, "opinion." These actions are so refreshing when they get to the point where they become contradictory, because it shows some of the things that are just not clean.

MRS: I think what makes the radical left uncomfortable is that it exists in the now of the system, of the mess of layered relationships that are given, instead of pretending that you are already living in the post-revolutionary world where capitalism doesn't exist. That's maybe what you describe as pragmatic. In some ways, you all's works are all like hinging upon and creating dependent structures within a late capitalist, bankrupt world. I think what bothers there is that, when you're challenging social norms with these works, you're not challenging just the big bad mayor, the big corporation or the conservative sector. You're also challenging mores that are shared more widely than that— and those are the ones that might be more important to question. It's more widespread, for example, to protect private property than to be fiscally conservative or believe in meritocracy—even a cool leftie living in Berlin might be uncomfortable with a parasite on their building, and claim, "I pay rent, I have a right to this space and you don't."

paraSITE
1998 - ongoing
Plastic bags, polyethylene tubing, hooks,
tapelimage ©Michael Rakowitz.



Parasite Preventatives

Preventative	Species		External		
Revolution					
Advantage					
Advantage II					
Advantage Multi					
Sentinel Spectrum					
Sentinel Flavor Tabs					
Simparica					
Dolpac					
Drontal					
Milbemax					
	<i>Canine</i>	<i>Feline</i>	<i>Fleas & Eggs</i>	<i>Ticks</i>	<i>Ear</i>

s & Coverage



Hemlock
Animal Hospital

Internal

Type

Ear Mites

Heartworm

Ringworm

Hookworm

Whipworm

Tapeworm

Oral

Topical

MY OWN DUMMY SITTING ON MY OWN KNEE

There is a kind of artistic freedom in dying without ever having an audience for your work. In one of his many unpublished manuscripts, my grandfather wrote: "His ship foundered, a delicate craft named, tentatively, *Intelligence*, in a sea that bubbled, like a seething and stinking cesspool, heated to a slow simmer, and kept heated, incessantly from the subterranean fires of suspicion, hate and fear—the sea of public opinion." Now, what remains of his work are these inanimate brittle pages sitting in his granddaughter's lap. He wrote „Sometimes I wish I could be my own dummy sitting on my own knee." My knees are pale and round, unlike his dark and immobile knees, as I remember him sitting in his wheelchair. But my knees and I come from him, his progeny. Could I be the ventriloquist he once needed? Giving voice to the inanimate?

1 Serres, Michel. *The Parasite*. University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p.185.

2 Silverman, Kaja. *Flesh of My Flesh*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.

Image right side:
©O'Neill

These are reckonings with what it means to be in relation to or with—specifically as an artist, writer, thinker, and descendant. I have recently considered parasitism as a kind of artistic strategy. Is 'being in relation' merely life as a parasite? Michel Serres wrote: "The theory of being, ontology, brings us to atoms. The theory of relations brings us to the parasite."¹ In this sense, is relationality an inevitability, or does true relationality require a sort of active reconciliation, an exchange with the other?

Horst Julius Emil Berman, or as he was known in the U.S., Howard J. Burnham, was „uprooted from his home and family" when he was twenty

years old. He „spent the next ten years—ten important...formative years...—being shoved back and forth over half of the globe."

1955, typewritten:

„Today, more than fifteen years later, I am finally beginning to get my bearings. I am still an optimist—even more so than ever. I still have great trouble believing in myself. (...) but I have managed to somehow keep myself clear of entanglements, and still remain a part of society—how useful only the future will tell."

To some extent, this is central to my query as his descendant—how 'useful' was he? The ‚freedom' he experienced after fleeing Nazi Germany permitted him to write, paint, procreate, and survive. Shortly after meeting my grandmother, they had three daughters, one of whom is my mother. My mother has had piles of his writing in her basement, which I recently retrieved.

I am collaborating with the deceased. In her book *Flesh of My Flesh*², Kaja Silverman argues that analogy is the basis of human relation. Through reckoning with our own mortality, one can recognize what Silverman calls their "ontological kinship" with another human.

Silverman:

"analogy is the correspondence of two or more things *with each other*, and it structures every aspect of Being"

"What distinguishes us from other creatures is our capacity to affirm these

Howard J. Buraham

Marquette
QUALITY

NO. 1-126

MADE IN U. S. A.

~~25/8/1951~~

Additional

Fillers may be obtained

at Woolworth

Stores

ASK FOR

NO. 1-126FR RULED

NO. 1-126FP PLAIN

Howard J. Burnham
105 Belnel Road
Mattapan 26, Mass.

WORLD
WITHOUT
END

~~A Symposium of~~
~~3 Novels~~
by

Howard J. Burnham

correspondences. Since we cannot affirm the analogies linking us to other people without acknowledging that we are bound by the same limits, we are reluctant to do so.”

As in, we avoid relationality because we are attempting to avoid reckoning with our own finitude.

Ovid:

“anxious in case his wife’s strength be failing and eager to see her, the lover looked behind him.”³

Silverman:

“Orpheus tries to ward off death by transforming Eurydice into a freakish member of another species; when he turns toward her, he therefore ‘sees’ not a fellow human being”

Once Orpheus himself dies he is able to truly see Eurydice as analogous to him—no longer looking back in fear, difference, or heroic ego. Only in death can they “celebrate their ontological kinship through a shifting but consistently transformative reenactment of what happened during their journey back to earth.”⁴

Silverman:

“When we turn away from someone, we cast her away. If we want to undo this destructive act, we must consequently not just turn around to face her but also behold her—embrace her with our look.”⁵ Is it possible for me to behold my grandfather through an analytical process?

My grandfather has been dead since I was eight years old. The single memory I have of him is of sitting at his kitchen table, playing a game where he would transform a scribble I’d draw into an identifiable image. While reading through stacks of his written work, I am myself concerned that I unfairly form an image of him based on his writings only, some of which are

only scribbles in notebooks that he may have never wanted anyone to read.

Papa:

“At heart, I believe I am a rather “free spirit,” with a good artistic temperament. But the environmental restraints that were imposed on me, at an early age, and that brought the element of strict discipline and circumscription into my life, had a predominantly stifling effect on my natural artistic and emotional tendencies. It confined me always after.”

Silverman:

“As soon as the mirror asserts its exteriority, the infant self begins to disintegrate. Only by overcoming the otherness of its newly emergent rival [the mirror] can the child reassemble the pieces. (...) This rivalry makes similarity even harder to tolerate than alterity, since the more an external object resembles the subject, the more it undercuts the latter’s claim to be unique and autonomous.”⁶

Is the co-option of his writing the artist’s equivalent of a child continuing to run the family business after the loss of a parent? Or is it simply the typical referentiality of any making—the ongoing and inevitable artistic practice of parasitic influence and appropriation? Is it different when the content I am scavenging through is my grandfather’s?

The amazing thing about reading someone else’s writing, curated mostly by time and chance, is that one gets to witness opinions change, to see how they constantly contradict themselves.

In a letter from 1955: I am “in fact an optimist”.

Typed and compiled in 1963: “I am not a man of unfettered optimism”

And in a binder of typed aphorisms and reflections, embracing change:

4 Silverman, Kaja. *Flesh of My Flesh*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2009. p 50. Print.

5 *ibid.* p.46

6 *ibid.* p.4

"We need ideas more than facts, for facts are here today and gone tomorrow, but ideas may outlast generations, indeed grow stronger as time goes on."

While Papa writes mostly about ideas, they often read as facts. I find that my style can exude a sense of certainty while the content revolves around relativity and groundlessness. Perhaps I inherit this stylistic quirk from him. I also have his hands, ridged thumbnails, and short arms, his smile (I think) and perhaps an intense feeling of self-doubt, that both my mother and I carry forth.

"Even in prosperity, I don't believe it, and I am a rich man but I am a man of innate doubts. (...) I am jittery, especially as I buy my second car. I am moved to action by advertising slogans, for there is only the morrow—and no millennium in sight. Therefore I shall have to admit that I am a failure... a rich failure."

Does my mortal perspective on the deceased's work allow me to bestow value upon it and furthermore, value it as it becomes useful? If he were still alive, could I do this same thing? I often think about writing about my own father, and decide that I can not do so while he is still alive.

Photons are annihilated in our eyes when they hit our retina, in turn giving us sight—in the same way perhaps death enables life.

In an essay on 'The Origins of Sex', Conner Habib writes about the earliest life on earth, bacteria called prokaryotes who lived on an ozoneless earth:

"In the gaze of the Sun, the tiny prokaryotic innards were often too damaged to recombine on their own. So these beings reached, in the [pri]mordial soup, for the ejected DNA of their dead kin, the floating pieces of bodies amongst them. They used their own enzymes in conjunction with the dead to repair themselves. This was the beginning of sex for living organisms."

And for the controversial Lynn Margulis, who taught Habib:

"Sex began when unfavorable seasonal changes in the environment caused our protocist predecessors to engage in attempts at cannibalism that were only partially successful. The result was a monster bearing the cells and genes of at least two individuals (as does the fertilized egg today). The return of more favorable environmental conditions selected for survival those monsters able to regain their simpler, normal identity. To do so, each had to slough off half or more of the 'extra' cell remains. (...) Cannibalistic fusion and its thwarting by programmed death became inextricably linked to seasonal survival and to individuality."

From the 1950's until he retired, Papa was an artist for the "adbusiness." Simultaneously, he wrote infuriated tirades about the industry.

"The salesman is the gravedigger of our commercial civilization."

"A wholly ephemeral institution... Ad agencies are in charge of promoting and merchandising our throw-away civilisation (...) professional hacks, make it their job to inflate language, deflate truth and sell cheap and expensive junk."

My grandfather flagellates himself, but was it the trauma of losing everything in his youth that made him feel bound to a career that made him "rich?" Though he doesn't mention that his wife, my grandmother, worked as a hairdresser, he certainly provided for his family. So perhaps it was his family, and by extension, I, who made it impossible for him to quit a career that didn't align with his own ideals. So am I the parasite, two generations later, benefitting from his work without offering anything in return?

Did his "nervous caution" come from being an immigrant?

"I am a man apart from the mob, an alien among the indigenous, a lone traveler on

the sidelines of life who sees the people march in step on the broad highway—but unable, or perhaps even unwilling, to join in

Is this a better way to understand the parasitism of all things? If we can imagine any parasite as ‘feeling’ guilty for not fully integrating and assimilating, Or a parasite who worries that they will never truly be an insider. A tape-worm who just wants to be one of the family with the probiotic stomach flora...Poor thing!

I called him Papa, while my mother called him Dad and my grandmother called him Howard. As an immigrant, I am told, he insisted on assimilating to use English as the primary language at home. Even when his own mother lived with them, for a time he refused to speak German. My mother laments the fact that his mother tongue was not passed down. However, I wonder about how erasure might function as it applies to epigenetic memory—as in, is the German language written into my genetic code as opposed to the German language? A sort of epigenetic Derridean erasure?

I have what I call a “porous dream-life.” It is relational. I attribute this ability to my grandmother and Papa’s wife, ‘Baba.’ She dreamt of his death at the very moment that it occurred miles away in a hospital bed. I have woken up and reflected on a dream where I was with someone, holding their hand, to later find out that what I was witnessing was their dream. Perhaps this is less “porous” and more invasive. When I bring my grandfather’s writings into my work, am I a host to him, or am I invading? Who is parasite and who is host?

This word, “porous,” feels right. It describes the boundaries as they truly are—navigable even as some things may be lost in filtration. In collaboration, inter-course, or exchange there is always some degree of loss. In order to truly collaborate one has to accept that their individuality must die to merge and become relational. So, since my grandfather is dead, what

then? Is it a free-for-all? Or a ‘free-for-me’? Does true exchange require that I too have to die in some way? Whether it be in the giving of space to him, or perhaps in reckoning with his flawed ideas. The realization that while some of his writings are of interest to me, there is a lot of less-than-exciting content—bringing forth the inevitable truth that your (my) shit, too, does in fact, stink.

The term parasite comes from the Greek word parasitos meaning “person eating at another’s table.” Perhaps it is because I believe we always are in relation, “eating from another’s table.” I feel a meal is better when it is shared, when you greet and sit with the other. Or “behold” them as Silverman puts it. Of course, my grandfather can no longer sit with me at this table, but he set the table. And so from his table, I eat.

Papa:
“Recognition for a man’s knowledge should not be sought in mere tangible returns, nor in its rare, and momentary, flashes of awe-inspiring genius, but in its living continuity beyond the grave.” So I suppose, this in some way is my responsibility. I do not have the luxury of not reading his work. But luckily, since I am not a “man,” maybe I don’t need to worry about my life beyond the grave. I can be the ventriloquist making his little papier-mache dummy speak. This is much less daunting than pretending that my work stems from some miraculously unique place inside of me. The dummy has always been speaking. But a ventriloquist on stage alone is just a bad comedian and a dummy without a ventriloquist is just an inanimate doll.



6013



Parasite Parking in front of
6018 | North, Chicago.

WHICH PARASITE?

Parasite Parking was presented in conjunction with *RAISIN*, an exhibition curated by Asha Iman Veal at 6018North, an experimental art space within a former mansion in Chicago. *RAISIN* presented local and global perspectives on themes of home and struggles against injustice, drawing from Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, a 1959 play that has been produced across the world. The exhibition was also a partner project of the 4th Chicago Architecture Biennial, which, under the title *The Available City*, provided a framework for a community-led design approach to identify new forms of shared, collective space in urban areas.

A few weeks after the opening of *RAISIN*, two pallets and two artists – the parasites – arrived at 6018North. Over the course of the next week, they moved throughout the city with a car-sized, multifunctional platform made of wood, mirror, and concrete – a parasite disguised as a parking spot. Popping up in spaces for cars, and unfolding into a shared table, stage, and home, the mobile space became a site of wonderment. *Parasite Parking* initiated intimate encounters among strangers that sparked relationships and speculation about old ideas and new possibilities.

For French philosopher Michel Serres, a parasite exists in the interstices between private and public, individual and collective. As it moves and messages in between these spheres, the parasite can encourage innovation and change through disruption or exchange. Consequently, a parasite can create or loosen connections between and among the mechanisms, systems, and forms of ordering which often protect ownership, capital, and power. If we view a parasite as an uninvited guest of its host, an interference, and a threat that conveys and extracts information and knowledge, which one of these is the parasite exploiting public property:

1. Morgan Stanley: The City sold its public property – 35,000 parking meters – to a private entity, Morgan Stanley's infrastructure investment group. The group created Chicago Parking Meters LLC (CPM) which was subsequently sold to the Sovereign Wealth fund of Abu Dhabi and Germany's Allianz Capital Partners, paying twice Morgan Stanley's original \$1.16 billion purchase price. This parasite conveyed, or more precisely, privatized the informational advantages from controlling and commercially exploiting non-public information (a secret City sale of public land). Ironically since *Parasite Parking* turns into a home, Morgan Stanley's compensation from Chicago's public parking deal indirectly went to fund private housing.

2. *Parasite Parking*: Inserting itself into a Chicago parking space, *Parasite Parking* sequestered public land to sleep, eat, and host events. These events publicly discussed the above informational advantage and challenged distinctions between public and private ownership, property rights, and usage. Instead of neighbors walking by a parked car, they stopped to think and talk about the status of property and rights materialized in a parking lot.

6018North's work often challenges notions of public vs. private. What is a private home when it is made public? What is the role of community in creating and receiving individual artworks? *Parasite Parking* initially infiltrated a parking spot, then 6018North itself, then neighbors...

One neighbor, Jermel Clark recently moved onto the block of 6018 N Kenmore Avenue. While Jermel missed the opening transformation, when the modular mirrored cubes that resembled a piece of the ground in the parking spot unfolded into tables with benches and a bar with soup and prosecco, he quickly recognized the project as a provocation on Chicago's privatized parking, a quest for the commons, and the breakout of a parasite.

Here is Jermel's interpretation of the project.

While walking down the street in the swirl of thoughts of mirth and mortification, I happened to meet two new neighbors in the Edgewater neighborhood. As we gathered and talked, engaging in the ancient German custom of eating and beer drinking, I sat lost in the somber haze of midsummers night's eve, the amber radiance was fading beneath the horizon. These two intriguing newcomers were the Berlin-based artificers Jakob Wirth and Alexander Sacharow, and right there on the street, on the parking spot they had seized.

Parasite Parking, as a political manifesto, pits the spirit of anarchy against the "amorphous mass" of consumption, that totalitarian view of capitalist exploitation. It stages the epic battle against the establishment to liberate resources from the cruel clutches of the dominant socio-economic forces of tyranny. A tale of fantastic proportions with two swashbucklers for justice. The issue at hand being the reclamation of public space for the purpose of reinforcing social networks within a community. Jakob and Alexander took advantage of the platform they created to further conversations concerning the equitable distribution of resources.

Parasite Parking is the contribution of two artists to a greater discourse that was sparked by the epic *Raisin in the Sun*. 6018North had been hosting a show with different expressions of themes inspired by this work of drama: home, hearth, community moorings, social-economic stressors and the equitable distribution of resources and how we squabble about these paltry trifles, instead of larger issues.

I was able to take part in and contribute to

the efforts that brought Alexander and Jakob across the ocean to debut their dynamic art installation. A great deal of thought went into the modularity of the "building blocks" that they configured and reconfigured as necessity dictated. In one of its iterations, it served as a lounge from which to observe the world in repose. In another iteration, it became a platform to display and discuss community concerns. Their installation continued to morph in a dynamic and organic manner, like that of a living being. I helped in the move from their first iteration at 6018North. Working alongside German engineering genius, I was able to see the simple yet elegant composition of the community building blocks. Having battened all hatches, we secured the stacks of building blocks to push them down the street, and then boarded the CTA with them for their next iteration in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood.

Their final iteration would take place in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, and I again joined the conversation. This finale was a makeshift stage and seating area that worked as a platform to continue the discussion presented by *Parasite Parking*. Members of different community-oriented non-profit organizations, discussing their successes and lesser successes, did begin to meander on. After the discussion, Jakob and Alex were bid a fond valedictory with beer and reverie in ancient German fashion, amidst discussions of German history and policy, and speaking of the travails of Luxembourg royals that penned the history of the Western world. And with their work, I am reminded of another story. Let us not forget the campaign and battles of Robin Hood against the Sheriff of Nottingham's fleecing of the poor, in order to faithfully restore the wealth of the people to the hands of the people.

Molt (2020) at Open sheds used for what?
Graham Livingston
©Marina Resende Santos





VISITING OPEN SHEDS: PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS

¹ Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 2-6.

Open Sheds Used for What? The phrase is drawn from the journal of a mining inspector in an United States-owned mine in Peru, once confronted with open structures whose use he could not immediately determine. "Arsenic maybe in barrels", he proposed. To the imaginative reader, the question, breaking the inspector's usually methodical and assured style, brims with the promise of uncertainty. The ambivalence of the open sheds represented an importunate remainder signalling the limits of the standardisation of remote mining operations, of the inspector's knowledge. And did it not reflect the appealing irreducibility of the shed as an architectural form, the primitive hut? We—me, my twin sister Marina, and later many collaborators—appropriated the stray sentence to name a project that would become a series of installations, performances, and interventions employing a found metal frame placed on various locations in Chicago: empty lots, backyards, a community garden, an abandoned industrial park; sites which sparked the same feeling of provocative possibility we read in the inspector's notes.

What was the "Open Shed"? By being "open", did it invite participation? Can a thing by itself "invite", "propose", "gesture"? Or did it sneak in into the open, invited or not? It started out from the pleasure and the performance of construction: the sudden emergence of a "thing", a place, a relief cut out from a plane of possibilities. Once opened, it could be articulated, moulded, visited, abandoned, closed. Crafting this thing involved at every moment a practical knowledge of where we were, a testing of boundaries. It was situational and independent, concerned with the spatial and visual relations that appear from this very moment of emergence. It always held, on the one hand, a relationship with the human body as frame and

shelter, and on the other, the occasional gaze of the passer-by. A little curiosity in the city. The shed was curious about its surroundings, and remaining in place for weeks at a time, most of the time on its own, it certainly had encounters that we cannot know.

We can attach to the shed the vocabulary of the parasite, as described by Michel Serres: that which takes and doesn't give, but also that which gives without taking, and perhaps most often that which shares what isn't its own, not unlike the fabled city mouse who, feasting on the tax-farmer's rug, invites the country mouse to join.¹ Sometimes, it knocked on the door and was invited to join the host at the table; or it was invited to stop by on its journey; at other times, it took advantage of the moment when its unwitting hosts had turned their backs. Occasionally, it overstayed its welcome. But it also played host; its purpose was always to invite others to come, to add, and to make changes. Where did its nourishment and the parasitic friction come from? This was a world of absentee property owners, gardener-stewards, private security, construction workers, curious and cautious neighbours, the police, contributing artists, homeowners, friends with cars—just to mention its human providers. When custody and care are unclear, who is the host and who is the parasite?

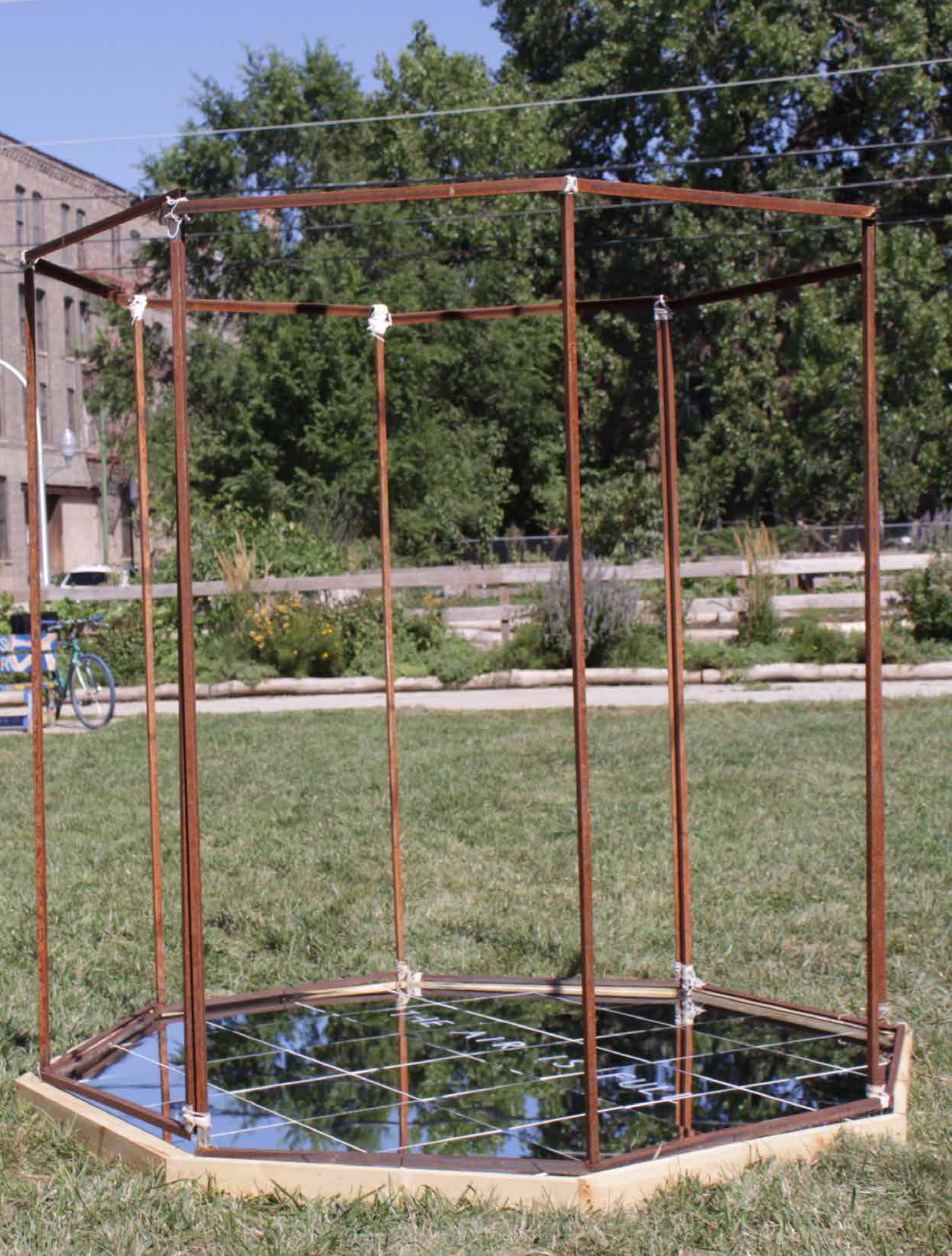
A sign with a phone number?
A liability?
A heartfelt memory?
The papers, always beyond sight?
A practice of inhabitation?
An assigned duty?

Instead of attempting a theory of Open Sheds according to *The Parasite*, I offer a few encounters that trouble the question of giving and taking.

Image right side: Assemblage at the Damen Silos, summer 2021. Photo: Elissa Osterland.

VISITING OPEN SHEDS: PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS





1. The empty lot near Morgan Street and 34th Place

It was a beautiful empty lot, overgrown with grasses, wild flowers, vines, and strawberries. The shed was placed between two buildings, a new three-flat under construction and a two-flat with a backyard. For weeks, we left the structure untouched, discreetly inhabiting the space. Quickly, it became a meeting place and a stage, which we used to rehearse movement sequences that reenacted its proportions. In that sense, it was a medium for the body. Not until our last month in the lot, as we started making changes to the structure, becoming hosts to others who came to make installations, did we attract the attention of humans who might be watching the space. One day, the neighbour popped his head over the backyard fence, through which a short and wide fruiting tree poked its branches. We made friends; it is good to be friends with one's neighbours, when one's over uninvited. The next time, we came by to find the structure trampled over. We put it back together, securing it with rubble from the construction next door. It wasn't long before it was about to happen again. Workers from the site next door spoke on the phone with a concerned expression, making arrangements to take the structure away. Offering some flatbread we had just cooked by the shed, we made friends for the day and avoided eviction. In the following days, the shed became more visible as installations increasingly enclosed the structure. The more it looked like a shelter, the more interesting and threatening it appeared to our watchers. The next weekend we received a visit from the property owner, who had hired those men to remove the structure. Finding that the shed was no home but an art project ("Used for what?" Who is a threat, and who is a guest?), he had no issue with it. On the fourth of July, our last weekend, the mounting tensions surrounding the shed's intermittent occupation came to a head. During a performance whose sounds blended with the fireworks all across the neighbourhood, we were approached by the police, who had been called by a neighbour. We were let go once we asserted the property owner's acquiescence and assured them we would remove all traces of our stay. The following Monday, the lot was fenced in.

2. The three lots on Sangamon Street and Cullerton Street

The shed danced around the boundaries of its agreement: not so much the host's hospitality, but their ability to invite. We speak, of course, of the invisible and permeable boundaries of property. The partial permission by a community garden---itself a space for hosting---emboldened us to invite others not only to intervene, but to watch, to "attend". At times, the shed moved beyond the perimeter presided by the garden, extending to the other two vacant lots on the intersection with a self-confidence borrowed from the permitted occupation. But we were well within our bounds in the leftover land among the mulch, bark, and the stump of an old tree when we returned to find that the shed had received a visitor in our absence. The visitor had built a top cover with bark and straw. Was this an intrusion? Or a welcome gesture? Upon close inspection, it was clear that it had been a loving encounter. The pieces of bark were carefully layered to provide security without fastening, affectionately tied only at the frame's eight vertices with ribbon-like straw. The centre was left open as if to draw the eyes to the blue autumn sky. Materials from around the shed reorganised into a lyrical, ephemeral cover.

3. The Franklin's backyard by Franklin Boulevard and Central Park Avenue

Here, the shed was at home. It was invited, and was among friends. It spilled onto the garden and let its friends spill onto it too, as prop, stage, and frame. As autumn turned into winter and winter into spring, it became an excuse to visit and a meeting point. Since it could make itself so comfortable, it started to reminisce. We made a map and a book to tell its journey. One day, it turned itself inside out to assemble elements from its former and current host-places: wild grasses and flowers, bark and wood chips, borrowed pebbles, plastic roofing, and its own materials of cotton twine and canvas.

4. The Damen Silos

Following teenagers on a Sunday afternoon, we found the right spot and the right time to enter the hallowed land of the abandoned grain silos by Damen Avenue and the Sanitary and Ship Canal. We lifted it over to a clearing where it would be discrete enough to blend in, but

Image Right side:
at the three lots
on Sangamon
Street.

John Thomure,
Untitled (2020).
Photo: Cecília Re-
sende Santos

distinct enough to be found. Sitting amongst everything that defines the city, the sensation is of the collapse of time and space. The canal, the old silos, the blooming spring prairie (full of invasive species), the singing birds, the skyline, the warehouses, the data centre, the road, the park. It was easy to belong there, but we were also watched; surveilled by private security at one end of a chain of authority that ends at the State of Illinois. We learned from other interlopers the best times and places to come visit. The shed remained there for months, as if among its own kin, and received many guests who took in the surroundings and rearranged the abundance of its material world.

We visited the shed every week. Many times we were brought into close encounters with the patrolling guards. It is possible that the increased frequency of our group visits led to a corresponding increase in security. Unlike the spaces we had previously occupied, this was a place more easily visited alone: often the shed was unable to offer itself as a host to people or to material interventions due to the threat of security and the fear of being visible. Conversely, visitations in larger groups appeared more threatening to the guards. It was the end of the summer when we dared to host a feast, fire and table staged within the shed's accommodating frame. It was supposed to be a safe day. But our knowledge of that place was not enough; the host could also be unpredictable, and a guard came upon one of us. For a moment, we stood still. We looked at one another, no longer able to pretend to be anything else: neither of us could suspend disbelief. (Who was the host, who was the guest, and who was the parasite?). But this time, unexpectedly, we made friends, and invited the officer to join us: a move undoubtedly as risky for them as it was for us. It was beautiful, fraught, and brief; we collected ourselves before the changing of the guards.

Summer's end – a postscript from Marina

Open sheds used for what? became a way to know, and to speak about, the Damen Silos. On the day we were going to share our experience from the summer with the audience of the Chicago Architecture Biennial, in the fall, we decided to do a last intervention as a gesture of our presence on the site. In the morning, as we entered the site, we were nervous— the patrol car was there, and we did not sense that we could bargain today. Still, we

scurried up to the old factory hall with a bunch of white fabrics and began to hang them on charred beams, on the branches of trees grown on the second floor, and on the roof, on the shards on the windows that once gave light to the people who worked on the ground floor. We were quick, but not enough. The fabrics had a moment to billow in the wind before we were seen. A guard waved from the ground that we must come down (from the roof, for the first time, we were visible from the street, from the guard post, even from across the canal). When we got back to the park, the patrol car expected us on the other side of the fence. They told us to wait: the police were coming.

The officer arrived shortly after. She explained the consequences of breaching into Illinois state property. She noted our car's licence plate and advised us to disappear.

That afternoon, we did not enter the site with the visitors. It was too dangerous. Many more people came than we could have expected. We led them slowly from the other entrance to the park down the promenade, telling them about the Canal and about the properties of wild-grown plants on the site, pointing to the silos, where the octagonal frame was still standing, although we could not see it behind the tall grasses. We had overstepped and had to retreat. At least the shed survived unspoiled.

City mouse, country mouse

As Serres describes it, the parasitic relationship is always unidirectional, and thus enchained; yet, one may at once play the role of host and guest or parasite, as the shed always did with its sites and its collaborating artists. As organisers and conveners, our relationship with invited collaborators also wavered between the many registers of the artist-organised space: curator, collaborator, assistant, commissioner. This giving-and-taking was not without friction, and each occupation generated tension as well as enjoyment. Open sheds used for what? was always transitory and changeable. It sought out spaces where there was some "opening", in space, in time, and social organisation. In the frame of the parasite, the shed was for the most part a discrete interventor, the irritation it may have produced was not a manifesto, although its attitude rejected private property. Its challenge was always to preserve the fleeting, precarious moment of opening.





„DU NENNST DAS KOLLEKTIV, ICH NENNE ES STANDARDS“

Ich habe mit Van Bo Le-Mentzel in seinem Tiny house "Pick-up" gesprochen. Er ist einer der bekanntesten Namen der Tiny House Bewegung in Deutschland und denkt über die Spielräume nach, die uns Normen und Regeln geben, und interpretiert diese kreativ. Mit seinem Konzept des demokratischen Raumes versucht er mit Hilfe von Design und Architektur eine Maximierung des kollektiven Raumes und dessen Zugänglichkeit zu schaffen.

Jakob Wirth: Hallo Van Bo – Ganz zum Anfang gleich mal die erste Frage - Wer bist du eigentlich und wo sitzen wir denn gerade?

Van Bo Le-Mentzel: Ich bin Van Bo Le-Mentzel. Ich bin Architekt von der Ausbildung her. Ich habe aber in meinem Leben immer so viele verschiedene Sachen ausprobiert. Ich bin sehr viele Jahre in der Werbung hängengeblieben. Das heißt, ich weiß ziemlich genau Bescheid, wie man Geschichten erzählt, also vor allem wie man Aufmerksamkeit erzielt. Und im Moment interessiert mich soziale Nachbarschaft sehr und habe dazu verschiedene Projekte und Organisationen gegründet. Aktuell bin ich mit der Tiny Foundation sehr aktiv und wir sitzen auch gerade in einem dieser Projekte. Das Pick-up Haus

ist vor allem ein Projekt, um jetzt im Winter Kälte-Hilfe zu leisten, um zu schauen, wie Architektur, öffentlicher Raum und Mobilität mit Kälte-Hilfe und Obdachlosenhilfe zusammenkommen kann.

Jakob: Willst du noch was zu deiner künstlerischen beziehungsweise architektonische Praxis sagen?

Van Bo: Also viele bezeichnen mich als Künstler, manche bezeichnen mich aber auch als Sozialunternehmer, Designer oder Autor. Damit kann ich mich sehr identifizieren, denn ich schreibe auch. Ich selbst sehe mich nicht als Künstler, weil ich finde, wenn du wirklich Kunst machen willst, dann musst du unabhängig sein, und ich bin viel zu abhängig von so bestimmten Parametern.

Denn erstens habe ich eine sehr, sehr große Nähe auch zu Konzernen. Ich arbeite auch viel mit Firmen, zum Beispiel mit Ikea. Und ich glaube, eine gute Kunst muss wirklich so frei sein, dass sie all diese Akteure auch kritisieren kann. Mit der letzten Konsequenz, dass man mit ihnen gar nicht arbeitet. Mich interessiert, wie ich ein Haus entwerfen kann, was nicht breiter ist als 2,55 Meter. Weil es dann einfach auf einen PKW Anhänger passt. Das sind diese Parameter, sag ich mal, aus der Realität. Die sind total langweilig,

aber ich orientiere mich total daran. Ich brauche keine Häuser, die mehr wiegen als 3,5 Tonnen, weil es einfach die Straßenverkehrsordnung nicht mitmacht. Manche finden es doof, aber für mich ist es wie so ein Rätsel, dass ich im Rahmen dieser ganzen Gesetze, die es so gibt, versuche, mein Spiel zu machen.

Jakob: Ich verknüpfe deine Tiny Häuser mit dem Gedanken des Parasitären, da sie ohne eigenen Grund und Boden, also Besitz, konzipiert werden und sich dann parasitär zu öffentlichen oder privaten Flächen verhalten. Man könnte sagen, dass du damit Nischen im öffentlichen Raum bespielst? Oder wenn du Parkplätze für eine ungewöhnliche Nutzung: wie zum Wohnen, zum Kaffeetrinken, zum Interview führen, zum Relaxen oder Arbeiten nutzt? Du hast ja gerade schon die Nische innerhalb der Normen, also innerhalb der Regularien, die es erlauben, sich auf der Straße zu bewegen, wie Höhe, Breite, und Gewicht, angedeutet. Oder was ist für dich eine Nische?

Van Bo: Was ist das Gegenteil von Nische? Also das Gegenteil von Parasiten ist der Wirt. Aber was ist der Gegenspieler von Nische? Das ist wahrscheinlich der Mainstream. Und ja, die Nische, also die Park-

„DU NENNST DAS NICHE, ICH NENNE ES STANDARDS“



Pick-up house,
2,5 m2,
©Van Bo Le-Mentzel

Pickup house, interior,
©Van Bo Le-Mentzel



platz-Nische braucht die Straße. Und wenn wir jetzt mal die Straße als Metapher sehen für Gesellschaft, dann ist sozusagen der Parkplatz vielleicht so eine kleine Nischen-Position in der Gesellschaft, also eine Position, die nicht so Mainstream ist, die nicht mit dem Strom im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes des Verkehrs mit-fließt, sondern einfach für sich da ist.

Also was ist die Nische? Und wer ist der Wirt und wer ist der Parasit? Ein kleiner Schwenk, aber bei Care-Arbeit sagen Statistiker, dass die Hälfte aller gezählten Arbeitsstunden auf der Welt, die pro Tag verrichtet werden, unbezahlt ist, die meistens Care-Arbeit ist. Würde man bezahlen, wäre die Gesellschaft bankrott. Ich finde es gut, dass man diese Gedanken innehält und diese Nischenposition sich mal anhört und überlegt „Hey, vielleicht kann ich nur deswegen in diesem Mainstream schwimmen, weil es die Leute gibt, die diese Nischen ausfüllen, weil die die Care-Arbeit machen, die Kinder gebären, die sich um alte Leute kümmern, die Menschen pflegen und so weiter“. Es ist interessant, mal zu gucken, inwiefern denn diese Leute, die prekär arbeiten, das für selbstverständlich machen, ob die nicht vielleicht auch zu leise sind. Also vielleicht müssten die lauter sein, um auf diese Ungerechtigkeit letztendlich hinzuweisen. Und deswegen sind Projekte, wie du sie auch machst, so interessant, denn sie weisen auf bestimmte Ecken hin, wo man sonst nicht hinguckt.

Jakob: Ja, genau da sehe ich die Rolle des Parasiten. Dass er es vermag, Nischen sichtbar zu machen. Was auch interessant ist an dem Begriff, ist seine Relationalität. Also je nachdem, von wo aus du schaut, ändert sich der Wirt und der Parasit. Also das kleine Häuschen auf dem Dach[1] oder selbst das Tiny House ist ein Parasit vom öffentlichen Raum, vom Straßenraum, von dem, was uns allen gehört und du eignest es dir hier an, indem du hier stehst und plötzlich einen Wohnraum daraus machst. An-

dererseits bist du oder sind wir beide natürlich gerade Parasiten in dem kleinen Pick-up Haus und das Pick-up Haus wird zum Wirt.

Aber noch einmal kurz zur Nische. Warum jetzt der Parkplatz, oder was ist für dich das interessante Spannungsfeld daran?

Van Bo: Bei mir geht es vor allem um demokratische Fragen. Also wo ist der Raum, wo du die Demokratie spürst? Für mich ist das der öffentliche Raum, das heißt Straßen, Plätze, Parkbänke, Parks; das sind für mich hochspannende Räume. Da ist jeder erst einmal Mensch, egal welcher Nation er angehört, welche Papiere er hat, alle haben Zugriff. Und ich finde deswegen so einen Parkplatz, eine Straße oder einen Gehweg so demokratisch, weil da kannst du sowohl den Millionär antreffen, dem Curry 36 gehört, oder Mustafas Gemüse Kebab, aber auch Leute, die wirklich nichts mehr haben, die auf der Straße leben. Alle sind im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes auf Augenhöhe auf dieser Plattform Straße. Was die Sache jedoch verzerrt, ist die Nutzung und die ungleiche Verteilung von Raum.

Zwischen dem riesigen SUV, der über Nacht parkt, zu einer kleinen temporären Nutzung, wie mit einem Hund spazieren zu gehen oder auf einer Parkbank zu übernachten.

PKWs überbeanspruchen den gemeinschaftlichen Raum. Die Eigentümer wissen nicht, was sie mit dem Auto machen sollen, und deswegen stellen sie es im öffentlichen Raum ab und nehmen damit aber anderen diesen Raum. Das heißt, wenn du im öffentlichen Raum etwas machst, dann nimmst du immer jemanden etwas weg, das muss man wissen.

Du nennst die Suche nach diesen Zwischenräumen Nischen, die du parasitierst. Für mich ist es ein demokratisches Gleichgewichtsspiel. Das ist die einzige Möglichkeit für mich, um den demokratischen Kuchen größer zu machen und nicht zu einem Wettstreit zu machen.

Dies gelingt für mich nur über Gemeinschaft. So ist Gemeinschaft für

mich ein Hebel, um aus einer Fläche, die zehn Quadratmeter groß ist, die eigentlich nur für eine Person, für einen PKW-Besitzer gedacht ist, auf einmal eine Fläche zu machen, in denen zwei Leute oder drei, vier, fünf Personen sein können. Also der Kuchen wird größer, und die soziale Verwertbarkeit von Fläche wird effizienter. Also es ist eine soziale Dichte, die dichter wird. Und das ist eigentlich meine Strategie.

Ich frage mich dauernd: Wie können wir diese soziale Dichte besser machen? Und die ist total verkümmert in Deutschland. Kaum jemand weiß, wie man soziale Dichte im öffentlichen Raum macht. Und das Ordnungsamt ist ständig hinterher, die Leute, die es dann versuchen, zu verbieten.

Jakob: Ich verwende für das Produzieren von Störung, die auf das Fehlen von Dichte hinweisen soll, den Begriff des Parasiten. Er ist sehr normativ und negativ geprägt, aber wenn man den Parasiten als Irritations-Moment versteht oder als ein Wesen, dass nach diesen Nischen oder Räumen suchen und schaut, wie man diese Räume möglichst vielfältig und so lang als möglich gestalten kann, dann ergibt sich ein anderes Bild. Dabei bleiben die Parasiten eh meist nur so lange, bis der Wirt kommt und merkt, „hey hier dürfen keine zehn Leute auf dem Parkplatz sein“.

Van Bo: Naja, wenn du dir mal anguckst die Ursprünge von menschlichem Erleben oder überhaupt von Leben allgemein, von Säugetieren zumindest, dann wirst du sehen, das beginnt ja immer parasitär. Also es beginnt immer mit irgendeinem Säugling, einem Lebewesen, was total arglos ist, da es versorgt wird an einer Nabelschnur oder wie auch immer von einem anderem System, das es umhüllt. Letztendlich die Nische im Strom und das ist normal. Aber dieses Bild von einer Zecke, die sich so vollsaugt, oder von der Mücke, die sich von dem Blut anderer ernährt, hat sich jetzt so festgebrannt in unseren Köpfen. Aber wenn man

sich mal anschaut, zum Beispiel, Pilze: Das ist so ein hochkomplexes System, dass es als Wirte oder als Parasiten abzustempeln wird dem nicht gerecht.

Jakob: Selbst in der Biologie kann man beobachten, dass Parasiten immer eine Funktion innehaben. Der Parasit zwingt manchmal den Wirt, sich anzupassen, sich ständig zu verändern, weil eben der Wirt durch den Parasiten merkt, hier ist was los. Uppsala, ich muss mich hier verändern. Wenn man abstrahiert und rauszoomt aus der kleinen Wirt-Parasit-Beziehung und sich die ganze Stadt anschaut, kann dieses Verhalten dazu führen, dass sich eine ganze Stadt verändert oder man zum Beispiel anfängt, anders über Parkplätze nachzudenken. Und da ist auch die Frage: wie ist da das Verhältnis von kleinen Irritationen, kleinen Störungen, zu den großen Adaptionen eines Systems, einer Stadt?

Van Bo: Diese Idee, dass Systeme so aus zwei Parts bestehen, Wirt und Parasit, ist ja sehr dual. Das ist schon aus meiner Sicht eine sehr europäische Denkweise. Es gibt hier in Europa diese Vorstellung, aus religiösen Traditionen, dass es gibt so Gott und es gibt den Menschen; es gibt Jesus und es gibt dich. Stets diese Reduktion auf zwei. Wenn du dir aber einmal zwei Bäume anschaut, die dicht nebeneinander stehen, oft kannst du eigentlich nicht genau sagen, das es zwei sind – und das ist total interessant. Du kannst nicht sagen, es sind zwei getrennte Systeme, weil sie im Wurzelwerk miteinander verbunden sind. Ich meine, wo ist der Unterschied zwischen Wurzeln, Baum, Wurzelwerk und Baum-Werk? Das sind alles menschliche Definitionen. Und in nicht westlichen Kulturen gibt es schon ganz spannende Gedanken zum Thema Netzwerke. Diese Gedanken brauchen keine Aufteilung in: das ist der Wirt, der ist gut, und das ist der Parasit, der ist böse, so dieses Machtverhältnis.

Ohne diesen Dualismus kannst du weiterdenken. Wenn du jetzt über-

legst, wie könnte man den Parasiten auch in so ein Netzwerk denken? Es gibt im Buddhismus zum Beispiel die Idee von Reinkarnation. Das heißt, wenn du sagen wir mal jetzt als Zecke lebst und dann stirbst, und dann wirst wiedergeboren, dann als Wirt, als Mensch, dann bist du ja beides; also du bist mal Wirt, mal ein Parasit. Dann macht auch die Unterteilung zwischen Parasit und Wirt eigentlich nicht mehr so viel Sinn, weil jeder alles sein kann. Und diese Idee, dass jeder Mensch alles sein kann, ist so tief verankert.

Jakob: Ja, nun noch ein kleiner Wechsel. Und zwar hast du in einem Interview von Regeln brechen gesprochen und du hast es bezogen auf deine Jugend, wo du sprays warst. Und die Frage wäre, inwiefern es notwendig ist, Regeln zu brechen, um letztlich aus der Norm oder aus der Mainstream-Perspektive herauszukommen und neue Perspektiven zu eröffnen.

Der Parasit ist etwas, was ungefragt agiert. Der Parasit fragt den Wirt vorher nicht „darf ich mich auf den Parkplatz stellen oder darf ich dich beißen?“ Du hast da von einer Notwendigkeit gesprochen, also wir könnten übertragen sagen, es gibt eine Notwendigkeit auf eine Art und Weise parasitär zu handeln?

Van Bo: Ich hätte das heute, jetzt in Zeiten von Corona Leugner*innen, anders gesagt. Weil dieses „Du musst die Regeln brechen“ kann man natürlich auch als Aufforderung zum Widerstand benutzen. Das sind ja alles die Argumente, die auch von Trump genutzt wurden, als das Capitol gestürmt wurde, oder von Corona Leugner*innen.

Jakob: Hm

Van Bo: Wenn ich eine Regel breche, dann ist das nicht immer aus Notwendigkeit. Im Gegenteil, das kann total asozial sein. Also mir geht es schon darum, beim Regelbruch zu überlegen, was passiert, wenn das alle machen würden. Führt das zu einem Gemeinwohl für alle und würde dies

funktionieren? Naja, wenn alle bei Rot über die Ampel fahren würden, dann könnte man ja gar nicht mehr Auto fahren. Wäre supergefährlich. Also ich glaube, diesen Zusatz müsste man machen. Es muss halt eine soziale parasitäre Absicht herrschen und nicht eine rein egoistische.

Jakob: Ja und ich meine, das ist der Punkt, wo ich mich frage, wie kann ich aus solchen Momenten – ob man sie jetzt parasitäre Momente oder Regelbruch-Momente nennt – also wie kann man aus solchen Momenten eine Kollektivierung schaffen, also etwas erzeugen, was sich nicht reduziert auf den einen Parkplatz. Sich nicht reduziert auf das eine Problem, was man versucht, dadurch zu fokussieren, sondern wie kann daraus etwas werden, das sich letztlich aus der Nische in den Mainstream bewegt?

Van Bo: Du nennst das Kollektiv, ich nenne es Standards. Also etwas, was mich nicht so interessiert, ist, wie entwerfe ich das perfekte Haus, eine perfekte Wohnung oder eine perfekte Stadt oder eine perfekte Familie oder einen perfekten Lebensentwurf? Im Internet sieht man viele Sachen von mir, wo es um kleine Wohnungen geht und Tiny Häuser. Und die Leute denken, ich bin so ein Minimalismus Typ, der sich daran aufgeilt, dass die Dinge einfach sehr minimalistisch sind.

Aber ich mache die Dinge klein und minimal nicht wegen der Form, sondern immer wegen diesem demokratischen Anspruch. Was kann ich tun? Welche Standards kann ich etablieren oder diskutieren, damit es möglichst vielen Menschen damit gut geht? Und der kleine individuelle Raum ist ja nur ein Trick. Also das ist eine mathematische Sache. Wenn wir unsere individuellen Räume, zum Beispiel Wohnungen, wenn wir die kleiner machen, können wir die gemeinschaftlichen Räume größer machen. Und deswegen beschäftige ich mich so sehr mit kleinen Räumen, um den Außenraum sozusagen noch dichter und noch größer an die Menschen zu bringen.



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El Sindicato declares: "A 'Sindicato', in the dictionary definition is an 'x' number of persons united in defense and for the promotion of their laboral interests. That is what we are, a union of workers that uses architecture to do the things they like the most in and outside the profession. Composed by María Reinoso, Xavier Duque and Nicolás Viteri, we are currently working in architectural and furniture design, construction, construction management and administration, and developing cultural, artistic and educational projects, this almost always

within a personal project or pursue. So our practice is as varied as different are the members of our team. Architecture is not our life, but is a really useful tool for it."

Tricia Van Eck directs 6108|North, an experimental cultural space that challenges what art is, whom it's for, and where and how it is created. Named after its dilapidated mansion's address in Chicago, 6018North is also itinerant. Previously Van Eck worked 13 years as a MCA Chicago curator organizing more than 70 exhibitions and programs including Chicago artists Kerry James Marshall's and Theaster Gates' first solo museum exhibitions, Tino Sehgal's Kiss, and Mark Bradford's residency and exhibition.

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PARASITÄRER GENUSS

SweatX bietet Ihnen inmitten des hektischen Großstadttreibens einen Ort der Ruhe und Entspannung, an dem Körper, Seele und Geist in Einklang kommen. Die einmalige parasitäre Wellnessseinrichtung besteht dabei durch seine imposante Architektur, seine Inneneinrichtung aus erlesenen Materialien und eine eindrucksvolle Umgebung und verspricht auf wenigen Quadratmetern den paradiesischen Charme der Freiheit.

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