Freie Universität Berlin
Institut für Theaterwissenschaft

Master's Thesis:

Disruptive and healing socio-political potentialities of the contemporary ritualistic performative practices

An autoethnography based on four case studies

Author:
Ivana Ječmenica
ivaj85@zedat.fu-berlin.de

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Jan Lazardzig
Second Examiner: Prof. Dr. Matthias Warstat

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Reading Manual Proposal
sur votre volonté

Ante Thesim/Cum Thesi

°*What are your rituals?*[1] *How do you connect?*[2]

a forest, a park, a lake

cold water dip, if it is not too late

barefoot walking on moos

smell of earth

petrichor

wine

°*Meditation*

°*Conversation (interspecific talks)*

tree

°*Rice counting*

- perform like Marina Abramović - use her cards[3]

ATTENTION: no shopping enhancement

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[1] Additional perspective: shttp://somaticpoetryexercises.blogspot.com/2016/03/marfa-poetry-machine-in-36-things.html, accessed: March 2024

[2] "Recipes for Connecting
These "recipes" illustrate many different methods of connecting – offering practical social tools, humorous prompts, gentle reminders, alternative structures of communication, and scrumptious meals. Together this crowd-sourced modular publication creates a patchwork of insights into "connecting" on individual, interpersonal, human, non-human, and collective levels.
In the exhibition, over 60 different "recipes" pages are on display and available for purchase. Each visitor is invited to assemble chosen pages as they please, self-bind on-site, and create a personalised compendium. Visitors are also invited to contribute their own recipes."
https://a-z-presents.com/, accessed: December 2023

[3] https://www.laurenceking.com/products/the-marina-abramovic-method

I would gladly share mine

touch, listen, whisper, be slow

leave your phone

dance floor

jogging… swimming… sweating lodge

°*What is your favourite reading/working position? How about one you never took before?*

°*What is your body doing right now? How is it feeling?*

°*Where exactly?*

°*How's your breathing?*

°*Which nostril is the main air-road?*

°*Ask your skin about the clothing texture?*

°*Stand up for a non-privileged "stranger" on U-Bahn*

°*Read a poem. Read it to someone*

°*Take a break*

°*Be gentle to yourself*

°*Play your favourite music*

*"**Dance, dance, dance otherwise we're lost!"***

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“Quotations in my work are like bandits on the road that leap out, brandishing weapons, and rob the idler of his certainty. Killing the criminal may be moral - its justification, never.”[4]

Walter Benjamin

[4] Benjamin, Walter: One way street and other writings, Penguin, London, 2009, pp.104-105

PRE-INTRODUCTION

I would like to specify the following points:

- When referencing original non-English versions of books or other sources, the English translations provided are my own. Additionally, I occasionally retain the original, and oftentimes purposely incorporate German words for their comprehensive potency and (personal) symbolic value (such as Theaterwissenschaft).

- My approach to photography in this thesis as a distance-making medium certainly does not imply any odium towards the medium per se, or towards any other form of media or technology. I appreciate the role of photography in theatre, especially when it comes to archiving, and stage design. I do not oversee the performativity of photography, but staying with this phenomenon is of no use for the thesis.

- By this occasion, I will not differentiate terms theatre and performance/theatricality and perfromativity, instead will dominantly use performance[5]/performativity, especially with regard to my case studies, which I categorise collectively under the term cultural performances.[6]

- I have no interest to engage with the question of drugs[7] and psychedelics per se. I do acknowledge their relevance for some of my case studies and their impact on the certain development of the observed and experienced situations.

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[5] Diana Taylor lends credence to my perspective on the broader significance of performance claiming that it “is not, like theatre, weighed down by centuries of colonial evangelical or normalising activity. Its very undefinability and complexity I find reassuring. Performance carries the possibility of challenge, even self-challenge, within it. As a term simultaneously connoting a process, a praxis, an episteme, a mode of transmission, an accomplishment, and a means of intervening in the world, it far exceeds the possibilities of these other words offered in its place.” (p.15) Further on she underlines that unifying power of performance studies which “challenge[s] the disciplinary compartmentalisation of the arts—with dance assigned to one department, music to another, dramatic performance to yet another—as though many forms of artistic production have anything to do with those divides.” (p. 26)
Taylor, Diana: The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003

[6] Dwight Conquergood poignantly writes with a reference to Turner: “Cultural performances are not simple reflectors or expressions of culture or even of changing culture but may themselves be active agencies of change, representing the eye by which culture sees itself and the drawing board on which creative actors sketch out what they believe to be more apt or interesting ‘designs for living. Performative reflexivity is a condition in which a sociocultural group, or its most perceptive members acting representatively, turn, bend or reflect back upon themselves, upon the relations, actions, symbols, meanings, codes, roles, statuses, social structures, ethical and legal rules, and other sociocultural components which make up their public >>selves<<.' (Turner, 1986, p. 24).”
Conquergood, D.: Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics. Communication Monographs, v59, p.179-94, 1991, p.188

[7] "There is no culture without drug culture.” in Ronell, Avital: Crack Wars. Literature Addiction Mania, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 2004 (1992), https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=p071904 , accessed: December 2023

- There are various ritualistic gatherings taking place nowadays, some of which may have destructive aspects. However, they are not of the interest of my thesis. It is important to recognise the issue of abuse within ritualistic healing practices and spaces, which inherently involve vulnerability and good facilitation is crucial to prevent transgression. While I acknowledge that "communities can also be reactive and exclusionary, and belonging to them harmful"[8], I will not delve into this subject matter in my thesis.

- I do not exclude the possibility of better alternative approaches to achieving the same societal points I am addressing, but for this thesis, I am drawing upon my own experiences.

- I am certainly not advocating for random communes or isolated, happy hippie lifestyles, nor for the abolition of the individual or privacy. However, there must be some remnants of communism in my veins may influence my perspective, despite my family was not on that side.

- I acknowledge the potential for bias in my approach to the case studies, which may lead me to overlook some of their negative aspects and idealise them. Nevertheless, my critical gaze is not canceled.

INTRODUCTION

My perspective is theoretically and experientially informed by performing arts[9] and serves as the starting point for this autoethnography. Unfortunately, ever since coronavirus pandemic my faith in the institution of theater has undergone a transformation, prompting me to look elsewhere.
Intrigued by alternative and non-normative practices in our shared existence, I have chosen to explore how contemporary rituals are understood, where they occur, their performative and socio-political values, and whether they can be viewed as aesthetic acts of resistance—both disruptive and

[8] Taylor, Dan: Spinoza and the politics of freedom, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p.147

[9] The publisher's description in the introduction of Erika Fischer-Lichte's book The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics (2008) encapsulates accurately the way I tend to understand these arts: "The peculiar mode of experience that a performance provokes – blurring distinctions between artist and audience, body and mind, art and life – is here framed as the breeding ground for a new way of understanding performing arts, and through them even wider social and cultural processes."
https://www.routledge.com/The-Transformative-Power-of-Performance-A-New-Aesthetics/Fischer-Lichte/p/book/9780415458566#, accessed: September 2023

gentle. I aim to grasp their potential for healing and bonding, as well as their ability to facilitate the reclaim of self- and mutual trust and solidarity.

Could they be manifestations of radical intimacy (Rosa, 2023), examples of social magic (Bourdieu, 1991), forging interpersonal ties, moments of connectivity, and intensifying space and time? Do they enable atmospheric relations and give rise to transindividuals (Cvejić/Vujanović, 2022) enlarging the capacity of "'We'"[10]?

In this thesis, my objective is neither to draw definitive conclusions nor to provide any resolutions, but a "space" for practices that are individually and socially empowering, transformative, and even healing. Since one of the principal motivations for this research stems from their performative qualities (which I will highlight to some degree in subsequent sections), by acknowledging, practicing, and preserving these practices, we also acknowledge certain performativities and knowledges they embody, enable, and transmit. To my delight, many of my personal interests are converging as a result of this exploration. Initially disparate, these practices have more in common on a broader scale than previously imagined. Such capacity for interweaving is certainly comforting in the present day.

The non-isolated and real-time Body is the primary medium I will propose as a counterweight to the collective photo-vertigo, which adeptly manage the process of transforming the social body into social photography (Jurgenson, 2019). With that said, one of the crucial common denominators among my case studies is the absence of cameras (smartphones/iPhones), either due to their strict prohibition or their complete situational irrelevance. Even this phenomenon can be related to theater, a space where audience members traditionally refrain from using cameras during the show.[11]

Reiterating our inclination toward constant photo production as an already violent gesture, this thesis will investigate environments where our bodies and memories are the only archives, and as such destabilise the Memory Industry and someone else's profit. While this perspective on photography as a distancing medium does not inherently denounce the medium itself or any other form of media or technology, particularly because they cannot be viewed as separate or neutral (cf. Heidegger, 1954), it does recognise them as controlling "mode[s] of organising and perpetuating (or changing) social relationships" and "manifestations of prevalent thought and behaviour patterns

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[10] Vujanović, Ana / Cvejić, Bojana: Toward a Transindividual Self: A study in social dramaturgy, Archive Books, Berlin, 2022, p.13

[11] Why theatres ban photography, even before the show by Gordon Firemark, June 2011
https://firemark.com/2011/06/27/why-theatres-ban-photography-even-before-show/, accessed: September 2023

(Marcuse, 1941)[12].

In spite of many justification for such an insatiable craving towards turning everything into digital data (particularly photography), considering it as the current stage of social progress and reminding how people were once opposed to having electricity in their homes, I believe our collective consciousness managed to make a serious leap from that time until now. Therefore such a justifying comment is intellectually and spiritually insulting.

What I see is that we consume and watch more than we participate, especially after getting trained in Covid19-circumstances. The urge to accumulate everything possible and impossible turns us again into Homo Faber. Therefore, there is always less and less Homo Ludens who carries disruptive power. Our modus vivendi is getting commodified itself, and it blocks the potential for meaningful new (cf. W. Benjamin on Baudelaire and his concept of collective desire).

I want brave spaces where we can escape the logic of commercialisation and sense response-ability (cf. Barad, 2007 and Haraway, 2008/2016) in the hope that our desires will not become entirely digital. Spaces with a temporary suspension of everyday norms and mundane lives that encourage sense of togetherness and belonging. I want to privilege the space, the now and the body(ies), and reclaim other realities apart from one already turned into into trompe-l'oeil. Mass production lead towards mass photography and nowadays towards mass existence[13] whose aftermath cannot be far from a "sad, lonely, angry and mean society"[14].

In these circumstances we care more about how to communicate our experiences than to live them, while weakening our creative capacities for living and getting alienated from our own life (cf. Adornos, 1991). Referring to Brecht's V-Effekt, how one could engage critically and change anything in perception when busy with photo-production? I would argue that normalised performative practices that Judith Butler points out includes today photo-production, and publishing of our privacy. This is not normal - no matter how much I find this word always already problematic.

I believe I find all the mentioned in my case studies: Berghain (Berlin), Vipassana Course (Hungary/France), Ayahuasca Ceremony (Peru/Colombia), and Sisters Hope (Copenhagen).

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[12] Marcuse, Herbert: Some Social Implications of Modern Technology (1941) https://courses.cs.washington.edu/courses/cse490e/19wi/readings/marcuse_social_implications_1941.pdf, p.138-140, accessed: August 2023

[13] I assume that the camera, serving as a surrogate for our eye, has the potential to diminish our capacity for the gaze in the sense of Bataille's "Story of the Eye" (1928) consequently killing our imagination, which challenges prevailing societal norms.

[14] David Brooks: How to Save a Sad, Lonely, Angry and Mean Society, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/25/opinion/art-culture-politics.html?unlocked_article_code=1.SU0.HfJt.bFMAeiDbkmMP&bgrp=a&smid=url-share&utm_source=recorder.beehiiv.com&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=mita-la-varful-pnl&fbclid=IwAR0LzCj-JXdEtxgGQYt0fXPbHO0_bv9xhOIz-i-xfQ6OwoGFhcUSAUNoddU, accessed: January 2024

After careful consideration, I decided to include the Copenhagen-based performance group due to its significant resonance with the other three cases and its importance for my personal hope for the future social ecologies. Despite not having attended any of Sisters Hope's "rituals" (mainly due to Covid-19 restrictions), I managed to visit their Home in Hadehusene (2021) and conducted an interview last Autumn with the one of the founder, Gry Worre Hallberg.

I experience them as a counterbalance to dominant power structures, as hybrid spaces where we can do "Experiments in Imagining Otherwise", as Lola Olufemi named her book (2021), and generate a powerful positive charge for emancipatory collective action. They facilitate and inspire fostering of freedom, even in Spinozian sense, which "is necessarily collective, as this ability develops through our dependence on and interaction with many others, and the gradual cultivation of a clear and distinct understanding of the causes of these encounters."[15] Freedom could be thought "through desire and education of the imagination"[16]. And he continues that such freedom entails conjointly reaching our optimal version, "[a] becoming that is dynamic and open-ended, but which supplies enough information to ascertain and realise the good life, collectively"[17]. We need each others and shared situations to compose, decompose, and recompose ourselves.

These and related practices attract attention of another sciences, apart from the humanities.[18] On the other hand, the Muskesque future is not mine.[19] Techno-utopian future (not to be confused with techno-clubs) is more like utopian terror. Silvia Federici already diagnosed our encounters as "Begegnungen durch eine Techno-Sozialität, die nach eigenem Willen aktiviert und beendet werden kann. Alles dreht sich darum, mit der Maschine zu leben und wie sie zu werden. […] [S]chweislos".[20]

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[15] Taylor, Dan: Spinoza and the politics of freedom, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p.10

[16] Ibid, p.13

[17] Ibid, p. 15

[18] Two examples: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/pals/news/2017/nov/audience-members-hearts-beat-together-theatre
Psychedelia: The interplay of music and psychedelics https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nyas.15082, accessed: December 2023

[19] A gathering organised by disruptive network in September 2023 (https://www.disruptionlab.org/event/trolling-ai-doomerism-longtermism) made me reconsider the value of body for my meaningful existence. In stead of long-terminism, I would rather chose short-terminism and futureless experiences and spaces, where all what happens, happens in between past and future. Body remembers, anyhow. This way I would finally twist the short-term into my own favour, since contemporary neoliberal trends make all short-lasting.

[20] Federici, S.: Jenseits unserer Haut. Körper als umkämpfter Ort im Kapitalismus, Unrast, Münster, 2022, p.118

When I was reconsidering such spaces, events, experiences, and performances, I found many others similar to them, yet incomplete, often with no direct community-building orientation and most of them did not excluded cameras.[21]

METHODOLOGY

As previously indicated, the methodology I will employ is autoetnography, through which I also aim to offer a critique of the "society of the spectacle" (Debord, 1967) from the point of individual experience.

Although I am inclined to align with Feyerabend (1975) and be against the method, I will set aside my "epistemological anarchism" for another occasion, since I got enough space in this endeavour at the Institut für Theaterwissenschaft. The academic support and inspiration were found in three sources: "Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics" by Conquergood[22], Diana Taylor's book "Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas"[23] and the essay "Why Autoethnography?" from Bochner and Ellis[24].

I am aware of my tendency towards extra-academic thinking and am taking the risk of "being wrong". Ellis and Bochner wrote in the abstract for their paper that authoethnography is "writing in ways that are more poignant, touching, vulnerable, and heartfelt"[25] and that "craving for objectivity,

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[21] Concerts of Florence and The Machine, Laurie Anderson, Nick Cave ("As a musician, it is a true privilege to stand on stage and watch a crowd of disparate individuals lost to the common, inclusive vitality that music offers; to observe people transcend themselves, united by that innate spiritual sameness that is buried beneath the condition of identity. It is deeply moving to witness and fully understand that each of us is uniquely strange in our individual personage, yet under the sway of some greater enfolding force we are as one. That is music's great gift and revelation." https://www.theredhandfiles.com/how-do-you-feel/ accessed: August 2023)… Signa, She She Pop's "High" (which I find rather unsuccessful, since a ritual cannot be forced, nor short, https://sheshepop.de/en/high-2/), Alejandro Jodorovsky (psychomagic), Marina Abramovic (https://mubi.com/en/fr/films/the-space-in-between-marina-abramovic-and-brazil; http://www.lucianabritogaleria.com.br/exhibitions/104), Bärenwald Druiden - OBOD from Spandau, Sweathing lodge (Colombia), holotropic breathing, sound therapy, biodanza (Buenos Aires), Lina Gómez's perfromance "Vargarosas", (LA)HORDE, Choy Ka Fai. CosmicWander: Expedition (Tanz im August 2023), Vangelis Legakis (https://manoa.hawaii.edu/outreach/asiapacificdance/choreo-ritual/), Ensemble Dens-Tank (www.ensembledance.org), Laura Burns (www.lauraburns.co.uk/about), but also https://ismeta.org, Anne Halprin, Lisa Nilson (Tuning Scores) and so on, but I will not delve too much into the medium of dance, even though being relevant in many aspects.

[22] Conquergood, D.: Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics, Communication Monographs, 1991, v59, pp.179-194

[23] Taylor, Diana: The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003

[24] Bochner, Arthur P. / Ellis, Carolyn: Why Autoethnography?, Social Work and Social Sciences Review, 23(2), 8-18., 2022, https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v23i2.2027, accessed: August 2023

[25] Ibid, p.8

standardisation[26], and methodological conformity can feel alienating."[27] I refer to my writing as "[a] Methodology of the Heart," drawing inspiration from Pelias's book title.[28]

I might oversee many "facts", but most probably will not underfeel anything, I am telling this "story" this with the emotional authority.[29] My intention is to immerse myself fully, and even when I evaluate, it is from a personal standpoint rather than from the safe, distanced position of a researcher. This approach allows me to view this research as my own performance, situated this time on the "paper" named Master's Thesis.

If I am to call myself an (evocative) authoethnographer, then it is doubtlessly because I "want our [my, IJ] readers to get what many of us seek in our lives – whether young or old – a sense of connection and something we can feel deep in our guts and our souls."[30] According to Ellis and Bochner "[a]utoethnography not only permits but encourages a focus on self-understanding" and stands for "a way of life (Bochner, 2020)", "a genre of doubt, a vehicle for exercising, embodying, portraying, and enacting uncertainty", where you "lean into uncertainty rather than struggle against it."[31] I do not tend to bring the knowledge, but one of the knowledges articulated thanks to the investigation of coexistence (cf. Haraway, 1988), which is unstable, possibly contradictory and disordered "hunger after details", "meanings"[32], "less based on linguistic cognition and more on embodied, multi-sensual, multimodal, pre-objective, and carnal ways of knowing"[33], which are oftentimes untransmitable: body related knowledge stays with the body, changes and develops, unlike a written document. I hope this will contribute to the education of our joy.

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[26] One can say that social media posts are also a kind of authoethnography and this paragraph already explains why I prefer not to agree with that.

[27] Ibid, p.9

[28] Pelias, R. J.: A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life, AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, CA, 2004
What I learned from **shamans in South Americ**a, heart is all we have, anyway.
https://open.spotify.com/track/76xxvel636I8TdCM2arMeq?si=bd838483ef2a4fb7

[29] **This way of research "is not idle fantasy, but a disciplined attention to the true meaning of 'it feels right to me'. We can train ourselves to respect our feelings and to transpose them into a language so they can be shared.**"
Lorde, Audre: Poetry is not luxury, pp.36-39 in Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches Copyright, 1984
https://rhinehartibenglish.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/1/0/22108252/sister_outsider_audrey_lorde_ib_pdf_packet.pdf, accessed: October, 2023, p. 37

[30] Bochner, A. P., Ellis, C.: Why Autoethnography?, Social Work and Social Sciences Review, 23(2), 8-18., 2022, https://doi.org/10.1921/swssr.v23i2.2027 accessed: August 2023, p.15

[31] Ibid, p.15

[32] Ibid, p.15

[33] Waskul, Dennis D. / Vannini, Phillip / Gottschalk, Simon: The Senses in Self, Society, and Culture. A Sociology of the Senses, Routledge, London/New York, 2012, p.15

Upon perusing Conquergood's essay I felt understood and supported, therefore I decided to go through his five suggested intersecting planes of analyses[34] in relation to my own cases.

#1

I understand my case studies as an open changeable system, not a product, but a process that provides us all a sense of agency. I am seeking for the answer what would happen when our culture would resist becoming data in its core, photo-overflow, theory, and economic wealth, but instead prioritise the quality process of being together in its total intensity and transformative power.

#2

The employment of such methodology will certainly bring an amount of auto-fiction, world-fiction. I am utopian-centric in a way, but it is not only my utopia (possibly better wording: eutopia). During the research, I have encountered a way many scholars having very similar starting and ending points as myself. Moreover, my "fiction" is influenced by the others, by our bodies, auras… Motivated by Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception (1945), it would probably not be erroneous to frame it as a crowd-founded auto-bodygraphy/auto-somatography. My position is among the other participants, I am one of them, only differently informed, experienced, educated, encultured, and even motivated, but we always make the shared experience unique for each other. My body is my main advisor. I love theory (obviously), and (co-)thinking gives me goose bumps, but it usually requires writing for long-term remembering. Body knowledge is always already archived and accessible.

#3

As I Already mentioned, in this method body knowledge is in a way privileged, yet unstable and not

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[34] "Rethinking the 'world as text' to the 'world as performance' opens up new questions that can be clustered around five intersecting planes of analyses:
1. *Performance and Cultural Process.* What are the conceptual consequences of thinking about culture as a verb instead of a noun, process instead of product? Culture as unfolding performative invention instead of refied system, structure, or variable? What happens to our thinking about performance when we move it outside of Aesthetics and situate it at the centre of lived experience?
2. *Performance and Ethnographic Praxis.* What are the methodological implications of thinking about fieldwork as the collaborative performance of an enabling fiction between observer and observed, knower and known? How does thinking about fieldwork as performance differ from thinking about fieldwork as the collection of data? Reading of texts? How does the performance model shape the conduct of fieldwork? Relationship with the people? Choices made in the field? Positionality of the researcher?
3. *Performance and Hermeneutics.* What kinds of knowledge are privileged or displaced when performed experience becomes a way of knowing, a method of critical inquiry, a mode of understanding? What are the epistemological and ethical entailments of performing ethnographic texts and field-notes? What are the range and varieties of performance modes and styles that can enable interpretation and understanding?
4. *Performance and Scholarly Representation.* What are the rhetorical problematics of performance as a complementary or alternative form of 'publishing" research? What are the differences between reading an analysis of fieldwork data, and hearing the voices from the field interpretively filtered through the voice of the researcher? For the listening audience of peers? For the performing ethnographer? For the people whose lived experience is the subject matter of the ethnography? What about enabling the people themselves to perform their own experience? What are the epistemological underpinnings and institutional practices that would legitimate performance as a complementary form of research publication?
5. *The Politics of Performance.* What is the relationship between performance and power? How does performance reproduce, enable, sustain, challenge, subvert, critique, and naturalise ideology? How do performances simultaneously reproduce and resist hegemony? How does performance accommodate and contest domination?
Conquergood, D.: Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics, Communication Monographs, 1991, v59, pp.179-194, p. 190

universal. Such way of knowing produces different knowledges, not of a different kind, but of a different content, different insights, different keywords, and focusses.[35] Furthermore, my interpretation and understanding is oftentimes filtered through the optics of Theaterwissenschaft, which is an added value, but sometimes manages my displacement, thus I need to go back to my and other bodies, canceling my critical gaze (gf. Worre Hallberg, 2021)[36] and leaving the space for other, untouched, surprising, and even scary knowledges[37]. I am certain, all the places of knowledge are necessary and usually equal in their relevance since they permanently educate each other. From this methodological position, the knowledge production is "sowohl als auch", not "entweder oder". No one has the last word, no one is The Knower, no one is here to (man)splain, pardon, explain anything. One of the problems might be the situated in the overly long paper, since a very personal writing is a difficult place to kill one's darlings and I would like to take a reader to the meanders, not only to the main stem of this "river".

#4

However, such knowledge is not paper friendly, nor it is fixed, akin to the exclusiveness of each performance/theatre play. The positive aspect of it lies in its ability to propel others researchers to engage with the same topic, to question/modify their methods. "I read it, therefore I know it" is not applicable here. Reading delivers a lot, but it must be experienced and sensed. The alternative is to remain with the awareness of the unknown. Since the time Conquergood published this essay, we must be now taking a much better position in the domain of epistemology[38], with our emancipated bodies, not only ideas. In Germany, at least.

#5

As the thesis title states, the political potential of my case studies is among the main reasons for this engagement, especially for my desire to examine the role of neoliberal capitalism as a dominant, if not the general, decision maker in the ways we live our lives. On the other hand, if I am to consider the relationship between these performances and power, I would start by claiming its horizontality,

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[35] Valéry's understanding of anarchy not only supports my stance on the unmediated visual perception, as evidenced by his assertion that "'Anarchist' ist ein Beobachter, der das sieht, was er sieht, und nicht das, was man gemeinhin sieht. Und er denkt darüber nach", but also inspires my conception of an anarchist as someone who feels and contemplates her/his/their own senses.
Valéry Paul: Prinzipien aufgerklärter An-archie, Matthes & Seitz, Berlin, 2019, p.14

[36] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/E-book-Gry-Worre-Hallberg-Sensuous-Society-E-book.pdf, accessed: August 2023

[37] There could be some accidental knowledge. Referring to Timofeeva I will try to sabotage my reason to work as a policeman.
Timofeeva, Oxana: Solar politics, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2022, p.50

[38] During the conversation with Maggie Nelson, Kishik said that **personal is not only political but theoretical. That can sometimes bring to life "a Dionysian hero of unfettered creativity, subverting rational thought, common sense, and civilised behaviour" as he suggests in his book Self Study. Nelson also proposed to add "affect, pace, tone, voice, shape, and sound to writing".**
https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/self-study/ Accessed: July 2023
Kishik, D.: Self Study. Notes on the Schizoid Condition, ICI Berlin Press, 2023, p.64

even though there is a teacher, a shaman, a dj, a facilitator. None of them makes me feel inferior, but gives the sense of security and trust, someone is there for me. If I get "lost", someone will still be holding me and taking care of me. I am not alone. Even though the accent is on my personal experience, that experience is possible thanks to all the others surrounding me.[39]

The last author to whom I will refer my research methodology is Diana Taylor, who suggests that "[t]he methodology we associate with performance studies can and should be revised constantly through engagement with other regional, political, and linguistic realities"[40], and I had already begun this approach prior to reading her, but her book prompted me to rethink my own roads to different cultures and their ritualistic and performative practises. I believe I did not colonise anything. My observation was based on the level of equality. My curiosity was not looking for the exotic. I was interested in all of them, mostly in myself with them, because of them. As if I my hunger for the otherness[41] made me implement a conscious and gentle "antropofagia" (Andrade, 1928), but from a different direction: I was a visitor.[42] Furthermore, I am also not from the West, although Western thought crucially impacted my own (most of my theorists are from the 1st World), and significantly influenced my self-esteem[43].

She writes about cultural memory as "a practice, an act of imagination and interconnection. The Intermediary begins to imagine her heart— her memory. Memory is embodied and sensual, that is, conjured through the senses; it links the deeply private with social, even official, practices. Sometimes memory is difficult to evoke, yet it's highly efficient; it's always operating in conjunction with other memories, 'all of them pulsing regularly, in order'. Memory, like the heart, beats beyond our capacity to control it, a lifeline between past and future."[44] This makes me realise the body-memory contribution to the cultural memory, and how great impact it can and should have on the shape of our present time.

Taylor differentiates archive and repertoire, the former is "'immunised against alterity' (Certeau,

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[39] Our complex social life is to be comprehend as "lived experience, his/hers as well as, and in relation to, theirs" as Victor Turner points out in the chapter "Dramatic Ritual/Ritual Drama. Performative and Reflexive Anthropology".
Turner, Victor: From Rituals to Theatre. The Human Seriousness of Play, Performing Arts Journals, New York, 1982, p.89

[40] Taylor, Diana: The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003, p. XVIII

[41] **Or maybe this all is just my greed for cultural capital.**

[42] **A woman conducting the sweating lodge ceremony in Colombia said that we all go to the places where we once lived in our past lives, we travel, to come back home(s).**

[43] An African choreographer Serge Aimé Coulibaly said in a conversation after his performance in Berlin (Tanz im August, 2023) that "only if you come from Europe you don't need to explain anything", but I would also geographically specify that Europe. He suggested to "alert ourselves to Burkina Faso, its knowledge, without saying anything, but listening."
https://www.tanzimaugust.de/produktion/detail/serge-aime-coulibaly-c-la-vie, accessed: September 2023

[44] Taylor, Diana: The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003, p. 82

216)" and "separates the source of 'knowledge' from the knower—in time and/or space"[45], which are certainly not the qualities of my archive - my own body which I mostly rely on in bringing the past into the present. This resonates with her interpretation of the repertoire "which enacts embodied memory[46]: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge."[47] It "requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there', being a part of the transmission".[48] I would add that such knowledge is connecting, knowledge of solidarity and joy and, after her, "is generated, recorded, and transmitted via embodied and performed acts."[49]

Taylor mentions that "[a]s laws have increasingly come into place to protect intellectual and artistic property, people have also considered ways to protect 'intangible' property"[50] and rises an important question that I share with her and will aim to arrive at certain answers before reaching the conclusion of the thesis: "How do we protect the performances, behaviours, and expressions that constitute the repertoire?"[51]

"Ethnography not only studies performance (the rituals and social dramas commentators habitually refer to); it is a kind of performance."[52] I assume therefore I find pleasure in such research (cf. Slager, 2015), and aspire to see myself even as an ethnodramaturg with the intention to bridge ethnography and theatre/performance.

After all, I might be simply trying to academically perform like Preciado (2008) - autotheoretically - blending biography, theory and philosophy, poeticising my knowledge, or I am merely writing in hope to develop a Technology of the Self (Foucault, 1982).

In terms of theoretical background, I cannot adhere to a singular discipline, as my framework is constructed through a multifaceted approach spanning performance studies, philosophy, social media studies, political theory, and cultural theory. This interdisciplinary perspective is reflected in the segmentation of theoretical discourse across five distinct chapters: Ritual, Body, Social Photography, Space and Neoliberal Imaginary. Furthermore, instead of specifically addressing

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[45] Ibid, p.19

[46] "Embodied memory, because it is live, exceeds the archive's ability to capture it. But that does not mean that performance—as ritualised, formalised, or reiterative behaviour—disappears. Performances also replicate themselves through their own structures and codes." Ibid, pp.20-21

[47] Ibid, p.20

[48] Ibid, p.20

[49] Ibid, p.21

[50] Ibid, p.23

[51] Ibid, p.23

My body knowledge pushes me to write immediately: protect their spaces first! Then acknowledge their relevance and significance.

[52] Ibid, p.75

performance/performativity, I have chosen to focus on the concept of ritual, as I understand these phenomena as intricately intertwined aspects of cultural practice (cf. Fischer-Lichte, 2005)[53].

THEORY

RITUAL

Concerning ritual, I will delineate the aspects that resonate with my case studies.

In one of my essays, which I also reference in this thesis, I have engaged with Han's notion of the disappearance of rituals. He perceives them as something that stabilises life itself, "[s]ie verwandeln das In-der-Welt-Sein in ein Zu-Hause-Sein"[54]. This sentiment of homeliness is the essence of my case studies.

Sennett (2012) asserts that we have gone through a ritual deprivation due to the Enlightenment, and luckily some theorists offer a contrasting viewpoint to Han, such as Barry Stephensons who wrote that "[f]or people raised in the modern and postmodern industrial West, ritual has been significantly marginalised from cultural and intellectual landscape", but recently "ritual is making something of a comeback, and there is a newfound popular interest in the creative, critical, transformative potential of ritual."[55] His perspective finds support in the much older works of Maffessoli who noticed a trend towards ritual revival. In an interview[56] from 2010 on his book "L'ombre de Dionysos" (1991), he explains it through the idea of Dionysos who brings horizontality, not verticality; there is no father, all is about brotherhood and sharing ("la partage"). He is the God of Orgy - defined as

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[53] "The aim of this study is to reflect on the role and meaning accorded to the topos of sacrifice in twentieth-century Western cultures as mirrored in theatrical performances which fuse theatre and ritual in order to deal with the problem of community-building in societies characterised by loss of solidarity and disintegration. The hart of my study is the provocative connection between the utopian visions of community which such performances devised and tried to realise and the idea of sacrifice."
Fischer-Lichte, E.: "Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre, Routledge, London/New York, 2005, p.viii

[54] Han, Byung-Chul: "Vom Verschwenden der Rituale, Eine Topologie der Gegenwart", Ullstein, Berlin, 2019, p.10

[55] Stephenson, Barry: Ritual. A very short introduction, Oxford University Press, 2015, p.2

[56] Interview Michel Maffesoli : L'Ombre de Dionysos, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zt_2VRiJPm4&t=1217s, accessed: August 2023

“spontaneous, not calculated plaisir d’être” through which we can become intense, imperceptible and animal (gf. Deleuze /Guattari, 1980), therefore dangerous for the controlled status quo[57].

Furthermore, after James Hollis, an American Jungian psychologist, “the tribal linkage that were connecting people to each other and the universe is now replaced with tangible objects[58] of desire”[59] and I would argue that the situation is further exacerbated, since tangible turned into digital. He also said “we live in a digital world which stands for a sensory overload, sensory overstimulation, world of selfies, it’s all about me, not about the community, not about the tribe anymore”, what explains in a way my wish to point out the places and practices which still enable so to say “contemporary tribalism”, in the most positive sense.

Another aspect of our society is its prolonged cultivation of toxicity towards emotions as something difficult, “too much”, irrelevant, disturbing, and a private affair. Certain exceptions occur in case of pleasant emotions. I doubt we can build any sustainable, real and nourishing community without the safe place for all emotions, which resonates with Knotternus who argues in his paper “Collective events, rituals, and emotions”[60] that “special collective ritual events operate and influence actors’ emotional states and commitment to a group”[61], concluding that “the greater the emotional intensity experienced by persons, the greater will be their commitment to and solidarity within the group”[62],

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[57] “Dans ces conditions, bien sûr, l'orgiasme apparaît forcément aux yeux de la Raison dominante comme une manifestation dangereuse, l’anomie sociale. Et, certes, si cet orgiasme est bien facteur de désordre, c'est cependant au sens où, en perturbant (et en détruisant même) un ordre ancien, usé et mortifère, il rend possible le surgissement d'un ordre neuf, rajeuni, qui régénère la vie sociale. (…) Dans l'orgiasme, c'est d'abord une logique passionnelle qui s'exprime. Toute une gamme de passions, de sentiments et d'émotions, le plus souvent réprimés par la logique rationnelle du social, y sont pris en compte, mis en scène, ritualisés. (L'orgiasme, en ce sens, a quelque chose de profondément religieux et Maffesoli se réfère de fait ici au thème durkheimien du « divin social ».) **L'orgiasme (qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec l'orgasme — celui-ci étant loin d'épuiser celui-là!), tel qu'il prend forme de manière paroxystique dans la fête, le carnaval, l'effervescence d'un samedi soir de discothèque, ou ce qu'on appelle — en fronçant les sourcils — la « débauche », opère une condensation de la communion ; il rappelle et réactualise, ce faisant, la prééminence vitale du groupe sur l'individu. L'orgie — qu'il s'agisse d'un repas de fête, d'une conversation animée de bistro, d'un concert rock ou d'une partouze — réunit périodiquement, un moment, ces individus que les « pesanteurs du social » dispersent, isolent et atomisent.** Contrairement à certaines analyses sévères qui tendraient à ne voir là que soupape ou défoulement, «distraction» dans laquelle l'énergie s'épuiserait et se « gaspillerait » (laissant par la suite l'«animal triste» et prostré, à la merci du Pouvoir), l'orgie et ses moments de paroxysme sont, pour Maffesoli, cela même qui permet de nourrir et de vivifier la banalité subséquente du quotidien.”
Ménard, G. (1984). Compte rendu de [Michel Maffesoli, L’Ombre de Dionysos. Contribution à une sociologie de l’orgie, Paris, Méridien/ Anthropos (Sociologies au quotidien), 1982, 212 p.] International Review of Community Development / Revue internationale d’action communautaire, (11), 198–200. https://doi.org/10.7202/1034640ar, accessed: August 2023

[58] Worth mentioning is Han’s framing of a smartphone: “Das Smartphone ist kein Ding im Sinne von Hannah Arendt. Ihm fehlt gerade die Selbigkeit, die das Leben stabilisiert. Besonders haltbar ist es auch nicht. Es unterscheidet sich von Dingen wie einem Tisch, die in ihrer Selbigkeit mir gegenüberstehen. Alles andere als selbig sind seine medialen Inhale, die unsere Aufmerksamkeit ständig in Beschlag nehmen. Ihr rascher Wechsel lässt kin Verweilen zu. Die dem Apparat innewohnende Unruhe macht ihn zu einem Un-Ding. Zwingend ist außerdem der Griff nach ihm. Vom Ding aber sollte kein Zwang ausgehen.”
Han, Byung-Chul: "Vom Verschwenden der Rituale, Eine Topologie der Gegenwart", Ullstein, Berlin, 2019, p.12

[59] James Hollis - The Personal Myth in Turbulent Times - Jung Society of Atlanta, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6jUtoO7ysI&t=2143s, accessed: August 2023

[60] Knottnerus, D.J.: Collective events, rituals, and emotions in Advances in Group Processes, V27:39-61, Emerald Publishing, Bradford, 2010

[61] Ibid, p.2

[62] Ibid, p.2

and all this is influenced by the following factors: “focus of attention, interactional pace, interdependence, and resources”[63].

A choreographer and dancer, Anna Halprin connected “affective behaviours and psychological states of the body“[64]. She was employing ritual, that after her “refers to an artistic process by which people gather and unify themselves in order to confront the challenges of their existence”[65], in her practice and saw dance’s healing and corrective power on a personal and social level. Her work was participatory and community-based and she believed that “dance could be simultaneously expressive to the spectator and healing to the performer”, resulting in the invention of “urban ritual as a path for emotional and physical repair”, based in her conclusion that “emotional distress and psychological turmoil became mapped on the body”[66]. She systematised “her experience as an emotional methodology”[67].

Another relevant reference in this context is Victor Turner and his distinction between liminal and liminoid, his definition of communitas and perspective on the flow.

Liminal is inseparable element of ritual, a place in between, a transitional phase characterised by ambiguity and suspensions of norms, where distinctions are blurred and merged and one can defamiliarise the familiar and turn it into novelty and can experience “total confrontations of human identities”[68]. According to Turner, liminality is, on one hand, more creative, and on the other, more destructive than the structural norm[69]. Liminoid is to a certain extent all this and “takes place in ‘neutral spaces’, on the margins or privileged areas […] set aside from the mainstream of productive events”[70], but outside of the formal rituals and is to be found in leisure and artistic activities enabling experiment and social interaction. Liminal is usually collective, liminoid may be also individual with a collective effect and “often part[s] of social critiques or even revolutionary manifestoes-books, plays, paintings, films, etc,, exposing the injustices, inefficiencies, and immoralities of the mainstream economic and political structures and organisations”[71]. He also acknowledges permanent “liminoid” settings and spaces: bars, pubs, some cafés, social clubs, etc.

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[63] Ibid, p.2

[64] Ross, Janice: Illness as danced urban ritual, pp.138-158 in Franko, Mark (ed.): Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Routledge, London/New York, 2007, p.138

[65] Ibid, pp.145-146

[66] Ibid, p.138

[67] Ibid, p.146

[68] Turner, Victor: "Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbology." Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies, 60, no. 3 (1974), https://repository.rice.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/ede1dfa5-f46d-4f2c-b552-7b501bda2afe/content, accessed: September 2023, p. 77

[69] Ibid, p.78

[70] Ibid, p.60

[71] Ibid, p.85

One interesting remark is that when some of them “become exclusivist they tend to generate rites of passage, with the liminal condition of entrance into the ‘liminoid' realm”[72] (certainly, Berghain).
Both can be playful, and subversive, but liminal is also a time-space of work, such is the case with shamanism. He associated Leisure-time with a “freedom-from” and “freedom-to” referring to Isiah Berlin. The former is a self-removal from “institutional obligations prescribed by the basic forms of social, particularly technological and bureaucratic, organization […], as much as from the forced, chronologically regulated rhythms of factory and office and a chance to recuperate and enjoy natural, biological rhythms again,”[73] which are phenomena noticed in all my case-studies, with an addition of idiosyncratic rhythms.
“Freedom-to” after him stands for the creation on new symbolic worlds where one can “transcend social structural limitations […] and play with social relationships”[74], which is particularly obvious in the case of Berghain and Sisters Hope. Leisure is time-space “capable to criticise or buttress the dominant social structural values”[75], which is again one of the most important values I recognise in my case studies, as much as his point that “exchange is more ‘liminal’ than production.”[76]
When it comes to “communitas”, Turner relates them to “anti-structure”, akin to liminality. What he means by this is “not a structural reversal, a mirror-imaging of ‘profane’ workaday socioeconomic structure, or a fantasy-rejection of structural ‘necessities’, but the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate group such as a family, lineage, clan, tribe, or nation, or of affiliation with some pervasive social category such as a class, caste, sex- or age-division. Sociocultural systems drive so steadily towards consistency that human individuals only get off these normative hooks in rare situations in small-scale societies, and not very frequently in large-scale ones.”[77] Within such “anti-structure", individual distinctiveness is preserved, further affirming my conviction that my case studies embody "communitas," particularly considering that it “does not represent the erasure of structural norms from the consciousness of those participating in it; rather its own style, in a given community, might be said to depend upon the way in which it symbolises the abrogation, negation, or inversion of the normative structure in which its participants are

[72] Ibid, p.86
[73] Ibid, p.68
[74] Ibid, p.67
[75] Ibid, p.69
[76] Ibid, p.71
[77] Ibid, p.71

quotidianly involved."[78] Remarkably enough, he sees in the "readiness to convert into normative structure […] its vulnerability to the structural environment."[79] Structure is also one of the important aspects of my case studies, albeit it is not oppressive, perfidious, or exploitative.

He continues with the positive sides of such togetherness saying that "when the mood, style, or 'fit' of spontaneous communitas is upon us, we place a high value on personal honesty, openness, and lack of pretensions or pretentiousness. We feel that it is important to relate directly to another person as he presents himself in the here-and-now, to understand him in a sympathetic (not an empathetic-which implies some withholding, some non-giving of the self) way, free from the culturally defined encumbrances of his role, status, reputation, class, caste, sex, or other structural niche"[80], which is yet something I cannot fully imply on Vipassana Course since certain withholding is expected, even required.

However, flow is, something what I was able to sense in each case, and my understanding of it aligns with Csikszentmihalyi (1972), quoted by Turner: "'Flow denotes the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement', is 'a state in which action follows action according to an internal logic which seems to need no conscious intervention on our part… we experience it as a unified flowing from one moment to the next, in which we feel in control of our actions, and in which there is little distinction between self and environment[81]; between stimulus and response; or between past, present, and future'"[82]. Additionally, in the context of Vipassana, one experiences this flow internally, as an embodied sensation. It isn't about exerting control but rather the absence of the need for control, which serves to enhance the sensation of flow. I would argue that control is irrelevant in the other cases likewise, trust in oneself and the others takes its place. Regrettably, we find ourselves unable to enter a state of flow "due to the multiplicity of stimuli and cultural tasks"[83], exacerbated by the "complex social and technical division of labour."[84] Permanent taking photos and rest of the action around them is a flow killer, while "'flow" is 'autotelic'," i.e., it seems to need no goals or rewards outside itself: To flow is to be as happy as a human can bee"[85]. I could not

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[78] Ibid, p.78

[79] Ibid, p.78

[80] Ibid. p.78

[81] "Not only that we have never been modern, we have never never been absolutely humans, for our idea that we are cut off from the fluidity of the world", Bayo Akomolafe, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GGdhIiMEyA&t=7s, accessed: March 2023

[82] Ibid, p.86

[83] Ibid, p.87

[84] Ibid, p.87

[85] Ibid, p.88

agree more with this! For Turner flow is a means to liquify structure and even if it can be experienced individually it leads toward "direct, unmediated communion with one another"[86].

In pursuit of interdisciplinary insights, I turn to another book, where Franko describes ritual as multilayered activity in "the articulation of doing and seeing, being and seeming, beholding and participating"[87], and Johansson concluded within African framework that rites of passage are an excellent example of "changes in personal status […] instantiated through communal events", while ritual is not there to demonstrate or narrate, "it makes things happen in the local and cosmic world."[88] Although my case studies are not deliberately challenging and purposely given as rite of passages, they nonetheless achieve a similar outcome or offer such potential.

Moreover, Wegley considers ritual "effective because it provides a container for the expression of repressed, socially hostile or anxious feelings. By expressing these emotions while allowing change to occur, everyone can return to society anew"[89], whereas I consider my case studies effective for the same reasons.

In her essay "What Is The New Ritual Space For The 21st Century?"[90] Hantelmann writes that ritualistic practices "assist the community in binding itself culturally, socially, and spiritually" and "the members of the community commit to what they perform", what "stand in stark contrast to the self-conception of modern Western societies, which put all focus on the individual citizen." She assumes that we today perceive gathering as "disembodied, virtual modes of interlinked computer and cellular networks rather than in the physical, conventional sense", but luckily not all of us. Her question "[h]ow can highly individualised, fragmented, heterogeneous societies produce moments and experiences of connectivity" I would answer with my case studies.

She observed here different cultural practices, theatre as well, noticing its distance from the ritual since it is "no longer aimed at celebrating the ecstatic, interconnected collective but instead strived to cultivate a rather reflectively cool, rational, and, in a sense, Apollonian moment. In theater, a person is no longer immersively absorbed in the ritually celebrated collective". Henceforth, I diverted my focus from theater, finding this immersive quality in my case studies, even the Dionysian (except for most aspects of Vipassana). She also does not sees the main difficulty of

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[86] Ibid, p.88

[87] Franko, Mark: Introduction: eventful knowledge and the post-ritual turn, pp.1-10 in Franko, Mark (ed.): Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Routledge, London/New York, 2007, p.6

[88] Johansson, Ola: Performative interventions. African community theatre in the age of AIDS, pp. 31-55 in Franko, Mark (ed.): Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Routledge, London/New York, 2007, p.35

[89] Wegley, Andrew C.: Ritually failing. Turner's theatrical communitas, pp. 56-74 in the age of AIDS, pp. 31-55 in Franko, Mark (ed.): Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Routledge, London/New York, 2007, pp.57-58

[90] https://theshed.org/program/series/2-a-prelude-to-the-shed/new-ritual-space-21st-century, accessed: August 2023

today in freeing “oneself from existing ties, but, despite all the flexibility that has been achieved, to be able to establish and shape longer-term connections”, and questions again “[h]ow to create a format that temporarily brings people together in non-rigid ways; that introduces moments of connectivity without falling back on inherited and calcified conceptions of the collective”, that I will answer in the same manner.

Having introduced him at the onset of the chapter, I will now return to Stephenson who refers in his book to Jonathan Z. Smith for whom ritual is “special cultural space where life can be imagined, staged, watched, practiced, done right, and then, hopefully, recollected in daily life - but always with the understanding of a gap or distance between ritual and ordinary life. Ritual is in part a model for action, but even more profoundly ritual discloses and enacts the experience of distance and tension between what is and what is hoped for, between the real and the unattainable, actuality and possibility.”[91] Such a gap was always to mind after experiencing my case studies. He mentioned Durkheim who “emphasised the role of ritual in producing solidarity”[92], explained society as “solidarity and effervescence, and these are the outcome of ritual enactment”[93], underlying Durkheim’s thought: “no ritual, no society.”[94]

He also mentions the healing potential of “rites of the world's religions”[95] and regards them as performance since they “variously make use of dance, music, song, chant, stylised movement, utterance, and dramatic action”[96]. Furthermore, “[p]erformance approaches to healing often emphasise the importance of process, embodiment, enactment, the senses, and aesthetics in creating or evoking ‘presence’”.[97] He sees another parallel in saying that “[j]ust as theater takes the drama of everyday life, condenses it, formalises it, and puts it on stage for view, ritual is cobbled together out of ordinary acts and gestures made extraordinary; this cobbling together is the process of ritualisation. […] An action is more like ritual the more it is formalised, stylised, and aesthetically elevated through gesture, music, art, and performance; the more it receives spatial and temporal framing; the more it is associated with sacred powers, founding figures, or historical or mythic events.”[98] This was the most evident in the case of Vipassana Meditation, wherein routine activities such as walking and brushing one's teeth assumed an extraordinary significance, usually overlooked

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[91] Stephenson, Barry: Ritual. A very short introduction, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 26

[92] Ibid, p.39

[93] Ibid, p.40

[94] Ibid, p.40

[95] Ibid, p.67

[96] Ibid, p.67

[97] Ibid, p.67

[98] Ibid, p.76

“on this side”.

An important point that I would not agree with Stephensons is his claim that “[s]hamanism is rooted in the enactment of a convincing, theatrical-like performance, before an audience that needs in some fashion to be convinced by the the performance. Liturgy, in contrast, entails doing things in precisely the right fashion, in a setting where everyone is a participant.”[99] I would posit that the inverse holds truer true. The liturgies I ever attended were generally representing something mimetic, not poietic, ant to participate for me is to have an agency, if not related to the others, then towards yourself (Vipassana). But I do agree when he says that “[l]iturgy has a digital quality to it; you either do it or not”[100], while in the case of ritual “[t]he actions are non-intentional in the sense that they come to us from outside ourselves, inherited, received, elemental, archetypal”[101] which to a certain degree is accurate, since one still has the agency. Further on in his book he asks: “But what if ritual action itself has the potential and power to impact one's intentions, emotions, feelings, and beliefs?”[102], and I respond: Here we go!

He refers to Leach and writes that “the more the action heads in the direction of saying something, the more easily we recognise the workings of ritual; the more an action is associated with doing, the farther we move away from ritual”[103], which definitely resonates with me since it means no production, and it supports my thesis that the labour of taking photos, posing and posting them disable the possibility for ritual. Then he continues with Michael Houseman who “emphasises that in ritual ‘before and after are not the same’”[104] and “ritual is identifiable precisely because it is a ‘doing’ action, not a ‘saying’ action”[105], what again resonates with my viewpoint, and I would only add that it is doing, not just saying, and certainly not only looking (at photos).

Related to embodiment “[r]itual, as bodily action, is a way of knowing the world, and the kinds of ways the body is used is constitutive of our subjectivity and ideas”[106]. This is one of the reasons wha I see ritualistic practices so relevant for the constitution of individual and collective subjectivity.

“Ritual traditions and performance traditions often influence one another”[107], and me myself came

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[99] Ibid, p.83

[100] Ibid, p.83

[101] Ibid, p.84

[102] Ibid, p.85

[103] Ibid, p.86

[104] Ibid, p.86

[105] Ibid, p.86

[106] Ibid, p.87

[107] Ibid, p.88

from the works of performance to explore ritual. He gives ritual more gravity, “it is not a mere performance, not mere play”[108], and I assume that to engage in a ritual, given my cultural background, is a deliberate choice one makes, for the sake of oneself and the ritual itself, anticipating insights and unveilings, while being focussed on both self and others.

Stephenson mentions Schechner who “speaks of ‘transformance’, a coinage meant to emphasise the role of performance (whether ritual or dramatic) in processes of social, psychological, or spiritual transformation”[109]. My case studies most probably belong to this “genre”, since they do transform - my mind and my body know.

Something very accurate today that he also mentions is “the luck of social bonding, poor communication, escalation of conflict, mass killing in protracted wars and ineffectual ritualisation in society”[110]. How could I bomb ~~censored~~ after Ayahuasca/Vipassana?!?

Stephenson references Eliade (1958) whose insight was that the cosmos of a modern man is desacralised for the "disappearance of meaningful rites of passage” considering that "initiation lies at the core of any genuine human life”, and concludes that a society without it can be “inauthentic and shallow”[111]. He also points out an important Eliade’s conclusion that rites are a means of renewal, since “[s]ocial energies necessarily flag and falter; for this reason, ritual reconnects participants with the original energies and actors "in the beginning.” That must have been “generated a good deal of ritualising […] to distinguish formal and traditionally accepted rites from the practice of deliberately cultivating new ones.”[112] Upon examination of Berghain and Sisters Hope, I could not agree that the new ritualistic practices are a mere ritualisation, but rather a contemporary manifestation/interpretation/establishment of the very similar if not event the same steps. On the other hand I agree that “the modern Western world relies on a good deal of ritual ‘borrowing’ from other cultures”[113], but in the case of my examples they are not appropriated, rather always brought back safely, with the multitude of footnotes, like professional academics do.

Later in his book Stephenson refers to Simmel’s perspective of the society “becoming less sociable, less convivial”[114] with the ”decline of embodied, public life, what Richard Sennett sees as The Fall of Public Man and Charles Taylor as the great ‘excarnation’”[115]. He interprets Sennet’s viewpoint

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[108] Ibid, p.88

[109] Ibid, p. 93

[110] Ibid, p.108

[111] Ibid, p.108

[112] Ibid, p.109

[113] Ibid, p.110

[114] Ibid., p.111

[115] Ibid, p.111

(2012) over our "rituals of citizenship and sociability"[116] as something "turned into spectacles, with participants reduced to mere observers and consumers"[117] what ultimately leads towards "the pervasive erosion of our ability to cooperate in the modern world."[118] These are again circumstances I aim to evade, at least through sociability within the framework facilitated by the practices advocated herein.

He mentions festivals as places where rituals are to be re-found which can be crucial in our contemporary society since "in the absence of periodic festive gathering, social values and solidarity are likely to falter" as they stand for a "fundamental, bedrock, a foundation of social life […][where, IJ] festivalgoers are part of the production […], unlike [to, IJ] proscenium theater, where an audience-performer boundary is demarcated and maintained throughout the performance"[119], which is a factor that determines the success of a festival[120]. In consideration of the thesis' scope, I did not include any festival[121], but assume that the same can be applied to all my case studies, particularly to Berghain.

Interestingly enough Stephenson mentions Illich's definition of a convivial tools as "those ones which give each person who uses them the greatest opportunity to enrich the environment with the fruits of his or her vision", and he sees embodied in festivals "this convivial ethos, (which is) promoting broad participation and encouraging self-expression"[122], which is one of the main qualities I see in the practice of my case studies. Stephensons ends his book with a perspective on ritual that "may acquire strength by virtue of being a hallowed, time honoured, ancestral practice", or by being "embraced because it is effective at achieving certain goals, or simply because it is enjoyable."[123] Each of these outcomes renew the individual and therefore social energy which is ultimately important "for a culture desperately in need of a revived public sphere"[124] which notably

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[116] Ibid, p.112

[117] Ibid, p.112

[118] Ibid, p.112

[119] Ibid, p.113

[120] "The degree of separation between performers and audience is one the feature often used to distinguish ritual from theater. Where a high degree of separation exists, we have formal **theater**: at the other end of the continuum, where spectator becomes participant, is **ritual. Play** is also characterised by the absence of a performer-audience boundary: if you are watching, you are not playing, where the audience is passive, though, we have a cultural performance, looked upon and consumed by spectators. […] A festival is about as sociable an occasion as one can imagine, precisely because one can disappear in the crowd. A festivalgoer engages with, interacts with, one's fellow citizens; a **festival**, on the whole, gathers people together, not on the level of personal intimacy and/acquaintance but **community and sociability**."
Ibid, p.113-114

"NOWHERE is an experiment in creative freedom, participation and cash-free community, conceived, built, experienced and returned to nothing by YOU. Created by a diverse, artistic global community, Nowhere is a unique event held in the hot, dusty desert of northern Spain", https://www.goingnowhere.org/event/, accessed: August, 2023

[122] Ibid, p.114-115

[123] Ibid, p.116

[124] Ibid, p.115-116

tends to move online. Likewise Han sees rituals as something that "carries community"[125], even a whole society, particularly thorough the possibility of symbolic communication and perception.

I will (finally) end this chapter with a subaltern, pardon, Serbian voice:

Ivana Vujić is a theatre director, professor at FDA and former director of The National Theatre in Belgrade. During the interview[126] she was prompted to draw connections between theatre and ritual and the interviewer began by citing her own words: "Theatre is like a shamanic ritual where not only an individual but the community get changed via initiation and this is how a new energetic space emerges." She followed up saying that "a person going through a shamanic ritual (Siberia, Latin America…) is transitioning towards a higher state. In such ritual everybody is connected, it is a ritual of mutual revelation. A new persona is getting born in the work between a director and an actor, a character. That is where people are entering each others guts… That is why acting is a hard job. Furthermore actors have that holly task to do the same with the spectators, to pull out of them their inner hidden strength. So they also changed their own positions and leave theatre as different people. It does not happen always. And if you go afterwards to some profanity such as eating ćevapčići, it is not going to be ordinary, you are acting differently towards the environment, your fellows, something has moved. This is also why actors cannot go home after a play, they are still in the "movement" and are slowly coming down. Then the awareness, cognition, new aerodynamics happens. You and your bodies get some other abilities, just like after a shamanic ritual."

I fully concur, especially concerning my case studies.

P.S. In our language-determined realities, rituals can be compared with metaphors. Layoff and Johnson explain "[m]etaphors as out-of-the-ordinary imaginative or poetic linguistic expressions"[127], and I would describe ritual in the same manner, replacing linguistic with bodily, or simply as a metaphor in the language called Human Life. They also write that "metaphor is (thus) imaginative rationality". Ritual as well.

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[125] "Rituale sind symbolische Handlungen. Sie tradieren und repräsentieren jene Werte und Ordnungen, die eine Gemeinschaft tragen. Sie bringen eine Gemeinschaft ohne Kommunikation hervor, während heute eine Kommunikation one Gemeinschaft vorherrscht. Konstitutiv für die Rituale ist die symbolische Wahrnehmung."
Han, Byung-Chul: "Vom Verschwenden der Rituale, Eine Topologie der Gegenwart", Ullstein, Berlin, 2019, p.106.

[126] Agape - Ivana Vujić (10.12.23), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTEQKuZyEvY, accessed: January 2024

[127] Layoff, G., Johnson, M.: Metaphors We Live By, University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 193

BODY

My body is (no)body's business!

"I believe in the Body" - Ismael Ivo[128]

"Body is the absolute place."[129]

"[D]ream of life a night-mare, bodies turned to stone as heavy as the moon"[130]…

"Holy! Ours! bodies!"[131]

"For me to be utopia it is enough to be a body."[132]

«They dance and leave the brain aside. They dance to feel vertical.
They do not celebrate anything.
They do not sell anything.
They do it because we can do it.
And because those nights something happens.»

Vernon Subutex II, Virginie Despentes (2017)[133]

[128] Odenthal, J. (Hg.): Ismael Ivo: I Believe in the Body, Spector, Leipzig/AdK, Berlin, 2022

[129] https://monoskop.org/images/d/d9/Foucault_Michel_1966_2006_Utopian_Body.pdf, accessed: July 2023

[130] Ginsberg, A: "Howl, Kaddish and Other Poems", Penguin, London, 2009, Howl, p.7

[131] Ibid, Footnote to Howl!, p.13

[132] https://monoskop.org/images/d/d9/Foucault_Michel_1966_2006_Utopian_Body.pdf, accessed: July 2023

[133] Rojo, P.: "To Dance in the Age of No-Future", Circadian Book, Berlin 2002, epigraph

In her analysis of Terzopoulos' The Bacchae in Delphi (1986), Fisher Lichte writes that "the body is considered equally important as words when it comes to individual and collective memory"[134] and "the real source of our energy and knowledge comes from the interior of the body, from memories which have been printed inside us from long ago. There exists an inner energy which carries images and repressed memories of other lives and of other eras. Namely, there exists all the knowledge of the world inside our very bodies, and there is no need for us to refer to a hundred books in order to extract this (McDonald 1992: 163)."[135]

Coming to his The Bacchae, she mentions Suzuki's essay "Culture is the Body!" where he "proceeds from the assumption that 'one of the resulting evils' of the modernising process in theatre, which in Europe and Japan tended 'to use non-animal energy in every facet of its activities instead of the animal energy of the human body', is to be found in the fact that the faculties of the human body and physical sensibility have been over-specialised to the point of separation."[136]

To extend the argument I am referring to Rojo, who quotes Susan Sontag: "[w]hat matters now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more"[137], and concludes that it "is not about dancing the body of the dancer, nor the movement's self, but rather about asking what it means —politically, somatically and kinetically— to dance *a body of dance*."[138], and adds that "the goal of the dancer is to come into contact with something not yet said, therefore not anticipated, not-related or (pre)seen beforehand."[139] He describe a specific type of attention needed and cites Jaime Llopis: "'Paying attention" does not coincide with 'looking at things'. To look at things I must get out of things. Paying attention here is more similar to *siding with things*. To be with things, among things, to be a thing with, to be a part of, to be a sensitive thing, to be a sensitive body. To be something before a person, flesh before a person. The figure of the lover comes here to eclipse that of the policeman. The body welcomes everything that goes through it. Everything there is, but nothing more than what there is.'"[140] Following this Rojo argues that "we need to poietically radicalise the link between dance and body's materiality, that is: the possibility of «bringing us body» instead of escaping from it (gf. excarnation, C.Taylor, 2007). The body is a living instrument

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[134] Fischer-Lichte, E.: Dionysus Resurrected. Performances of Euripides' The Bacchae in a Globalizing World, Wiley-Blackwell, UK, 2014, p.127

[135] Ibid, p.127

[136] Ibid, p.166

[137] Rojo, P.: "To Dance in the Age of No-Future", Circadian Book, Berlin 2002, pp.137-138

[138] Ibid, p.138

[139] Ibid, p.140-141

[140] Ibid, p.165

that, despite being more or less obliged to know what it should serve, chooses to serve itself."[141]

Butler extends this perspective to encompass other bodies, conceiving of the body as "to some extent its relation to other bodies, and that relationality is to be thought as an ontological status that cannot be rightly understood through considering the body as substance; rather, relationality establishes and undoes the individual subject in the same stroke."[142]

In the introduction of the book about senses, Waskul writes that "Leder (1990) has observed, most of our daily experience of our body is marked by lack of reflection, and it is only when routines and habits are interrupted (…) that our own body 'awakens' our consciousness of it."[143] After him "[a] sociology of the senses must thus be understood as a reaction to the theoretical excesses of a sociology of the body in which the body has morphed from an absent presence (cf. Shilling 1993) to a presence silenced by theoretical noise. A sociology of the senses attempts therefore, in large part, to rediscover humans' sensuous, erotic, and aesthetic transactions with one another and their environments."[144] I posit that my case studies facilitate this process, with Vipassana offering a slightly divergent approach. (He also recognises the hierarchy of the visual cultures of the West - believed to be superior, as sight was taken to be a more objective mode of perception of the world—and the more 'animal-like' sensory cultures of the rest of the world"[145]. However, I contend that significant efforts have already been made to dismantle such hierarchies, at least in my West.)

This is where Taylor's question resurfaces: "How can we think about the invisibilised body online?"[146] And I would assert that our only recourse with that body is to contemplate its existence, which is distant from the body we truly embody. She reminds that "[e]mbodied expression has participated and will probably continue to participate in the transmission of social knowledge, memory, and identity pre- and post-writing. Thus we need to feed that body with some knowledge, not to proclaim it technically irrelevant"[147] My case studies feed our bodies. She also underlines the relevance of such knowledge, since "[t]he space of written culture then, as now, seemed easier to control than embodied culture".[148]

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[141] Ibid, p.182-183

[142] Butler, Judith: What World is this? A pandemic Phenomenology, Columbia University press, New York, 2022, p. 75

[143] Vannini, P, Waskul D., Gottschalk S.: The Senses in Self, Society, and Culture. A Sociology of the Senses, Routledge, London/New York, 2012, p.8 https://www.academia.edu/1424734/Sociology_of_the_body_sociology_of_the_senses_symbolic_interactionism?auto=download&email_work_card=download-paper, accessed: December 2023

[144] Ibid, p.15

[145] Ibid, p.16

[146] Taylor, Diana: The Archive and the Repertoire. Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003, p. XVIII

[147] Ibid, p.16

[148] Ibid, p.17

Conquergood wrote that "[v]ulnerability and self-disclosure are enabled through conversation. Closure on the other hand is constituted by the gaze. The return of the body as a recognised method for attaining 'vividly felt insight into the life of other people' (Trinity, 1989, p.123) shifts the emphasis from the space to time, from sight and vision to sound and voice, from text to performance, from authority to vulnerability"[149]. He also refers to Jackson (1989) saying that the way we create and transmit meanings is "connected to political, moral, and aesthetic interests"[150], and emancipates body to "hermeneutical agency"[151], as an equal medium for academic knowing.

Taking a similar line, Federici suggests the reclaim of our bodies and their realities, their "Kraft und Weisheit, die der Kapitalismus heute zerstören will"[152], particularly by turning the body into "Arbeitsmaschine"[153], behind which stand "Disziplienierungsregime und -institutionen" that exercise "Terror und Rituale der Erniedrigung"[154] upon our bodies - yes , these are also contemporary rituals.

The title of the fourth section of the aforementioned book is highly explicit: "Gepriesen sei der tanzende Körper"[155]. Here she sees Body as **"**Grundlage des Widerstands, Grenze der Ausbeutung und performatives, soziales Konstrukt". She argues that one of the main social tasks of capitalism from the beginning until today is the transformation of our energy and body strength into labour force (Arbeitskraft)[156]. On the other hand, when we dance, when we meditate, take ayahuasca, or aesthetically experience our everyday routines we simply are! We feel our energy entangled with the other's energies into something greater, more beautiful and connecting, we feel the energy of home full of people and other beings. Federici inspires to stop and question who defines our materiality that we usually easy go along with, as much as with the neoliberal plan for our life, where the dominance of market is not only against the solidarity within a group, but also within ourselves[157], while on the contrary "[z]um Feind erklärt wurden die Streuung von Energie, Entropie,

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[149] Conquergood, D.: Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics, Communication Monographs, 1991, v59, pp.179-194 , p. 183

[150] Ibid, p. 184

[151] Ibid, p.187

[152] Federici, S.: Jenseits unserer Haut. Körper als umkämpfter Ort im Kapitalismus, Unrast, Münster, 2022, p.13

[153] Federici quoted Guattari (Soft Subversions, 1996) who describes accurately what is being done to the body: "Unermüdlich setzt es [das kapitalistische System] seine schmutzige Arbeit fort […], unterdrückt, foltert und zerteilt unsere Körper, um seine Gesetze in unser Fleisch zu schreiben […]. Es nutzt jeden verfügbaren Zugang zu unserem Organismus, um den Tod in den Tiefen unseres Inneren einzupflanzen."
Ibid, p.81

[154] Ibid, p.18

[155] Ibid. p.123

[156] Ibid. p.124

[157] Ibid, p.126

Verschwendung und Unordnung"[158]. She goes even further claiming that the body is not anymore whole, but fragmented into images that transmit no essence[159]. What is even worse, "[w]ir haben regelrecht Angst vor unserem Körper und hören nicht mehr auf ihn"[160], suggesting, with the regard to the importance of dance, that "[u]nser Kampf muss […] damit beginnen, uns unseren Körper individuell wie kollektiv wiederzueignend, sein Widerstandsvermögen wiederzuentdecken und schätzen zu lernen und seine Kräfte auszuweiten und zu preisen. Der Tanz spielt bei dieser Wiederanegnung eine zentrale Rolle.[161] […] Unsere Körper besitzen Weisheiten, die wir lernen, wiederentdeckten, neuerfunden müssen." Her pivotal positioning of the body regarding the changes in the world is very empowering: "Da sich der Körper durch sein Vermögen auszeichnet, berührt zu werden und zu berühren, bewegt zu werden und zu bewegen - eine Fähigkeit, die unerschöpflich ist bis zum Tod, erhält er eine immanente Politik: die Fähigkeit, sich selbst, andere und die ganze Welt zu verändern."[162] Concerning this I am interested in practices that enable our bodies to sense "Wärme der Solidarität" and thus strengthen the perception of us as a collective subject ("Vertrauen aufbauen lassen"), especially in times when we tend to replace bodily interaction with images and videos, and about to accept a new social Ideal: "die Erschaffung einer körperlosen Menschheit"[163] (cf. Thomas Fuchs, 2021). She adds that "[p]hysische sowie emotionelle Isolation durch die Kommunikation über Computer und Handys verstärkt die wesentliche Inhalt und die Neue Form der kapitalistischen Kooperation. Diese Tendenz zur Entmaterialisierung aller Aspekte unseres Lebens gipfelt in den imaginären Bewohner*innen der Weltraumkolonien"[164]. I assume we still want to live lively on this planet, not only in the offices, storages and at the assembly lines of Amazon. This prompts me to reassess the identical approach within the framework of warfare, where a human body is nothing but a dot, that can emotionally and ethically safely be shot at. Do we also "kill" each other by nonsensical likes, unlikes, and mean comments?

Finally Federici wrote about joy as more important than happiness since feeling it leads towards

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[158] Ibid, p.126

[159] Ibid, p.126

[160] Ibid, p.127

[161] "Im Wesentlichen stellt der Akt des Tanzes eine Erforschung und Erfindung dessen dar, was der Körper vermag: seiner Fähigkeiten, seiner Sprachen, seines Ausdrucks dessen, wonach das Dasein strebt. Ich bin zu der Ansicht gelangt, dass der Tanz eine Philosophie beinhaltet, denn er ahmt die Prozesse nach, durch die wir mit der Welt interagieren, uns mit anderen Körper verbinden, uns selbst und unsere Umgebung verändern (**Berghain**). Der Tanz lehrt uns, dass die Materie nicht dumm, nicht blind, nicht mechanisch ist, sondern ihren eigenen Rhythmus, Ihre Sprache besitzt, sich selbst aktiviert und organisiert."
Ibid, p. 127

[162] Ibid, p.127

[163] Ibid, p.66

[164] Ibid, p.117

growth, change.[165] During and subsequent to my case studies, I experienced profound joy, which facilitated a sense of ease in confronting whatever challenges lay ahead.

Amidst the discourse on disempowerment and the (mis)use of the body, I will introduce a divergent perspective with Audre Lorde's exploration of The Erotic as Power that "rises from our deepest and non-rational knowledge"[166] and can "provide energy for change"[167]. After her "erotic is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing"[168], and Berghain is a space where one can experience this potency, subsequently harnessing and channeling it for different objectives.

She claims that "[i]n touch with the erotic, I [one, IJ] become[s] less willing to accept powerlessness, […] resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial"[169]. I wholeheartedly concur with this perspective, as after my visits to Berghain's dance floors I consistently feel empowered to address challenges with heightened awareness of self-care and concern for others. This sensation was doubtlessly evoked in the practice of Vipassna and Ayahuasca Ceremony, notwithstanding the disparate role my body had in that context.

She not only associates the erotic with the body, but perceives it as a life force, a source of creativity and knowledge that can be reclaimed "in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives"[170] (cf. Han, 2012). That energy "comes from sharing deeply any pursuit with another person. The sharing of joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic, or intellectual, forms a bridge between the sharers which can be the basis for understanding much of what is not shared between them, and lessens the threat of their difference. And it is not about sex, erotically satisfying experience can be "dancing, building a bookcase, writing a poem, examining an idea"[171].

She explicitly distinguishes it from pornography, which she views as "a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasises sensation

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[165] "Ich spreche lieber von Freude, als von Glück. Ich ziehe Freude vor, weil sie eine aktive Gefühlsregung ist, kein stagnierender Daseinszustand, nicht die Zufriedenheit mit den Dingen, wie sie sind. Freude bedeutet, dass wir unsere Kräfte spüren, sehen, wie unsere Fähigkeiten in uns selbst und den Menschen um uns heranwachsen. Dieses Gefühl geht aus einem Veränderungsprozess hervor. Um es mit Spinoza zu sagen - Freude bedeutet, dass wir die Situation, in der wir uns befinden, erkennen und wir im Einklang mit dem, was von uns in diesem Moment erfordert wird, handeln. So haben wir das Gefühl, dass wir die Macht haben, etwas zu verändern, und dass wir uns gemeinsam mit anderen Menschen verändern. Das ist nicht gleichbedeutend mit der Zustimmung zum Gegebenen." Ibid, p. 131

[166] Lorde, Audre: The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power, pp.53-59 in Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches Copyright, 1984 https://rhinehartibenglish.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/1/0/22108252/sister_outsider_audrey_lorde_ib_pdf_packet.pdf, accessed: December, 2023, p.53

[167] Ibid, p.53

[168] Ibid, p.54

[169] Ibid, p.58

[170] Ibid, p.54

[171] Ibid, p.56

without feeling“[172]. Based on my observations, I would posit that life online is a pornographic mode of “coexistence”. Furthermore, she articulates adeptly that there “is an internal sense of satisfaction to which, once we have experienced it, we know we can aspire. For having experienced the fullness of this depth of feeling and recognising its power, in honour and self-respect we can require no less of ourselves“ [173], which I find to be the the pivotal juncture that resonates with all of my case studies - territories sovereign from the mediocrity of existence.

What she rightfully concludes is that ”we use rather than share the feelings of those others who participate in the experience with us. And use without consent of the used is abuse”, which is never the scenario in the practices under my examination, “we share our joy […] [we, IJ] make connection with our similarities and our differences”, we “have a particular feeling, knowledge, and understanding for those sisters [and brothers, IJ] with whom I [we, IJ] have danced hard, played, or even fought.“[174]

Reflecting Covid-19, it becomes evident that our learning was rather poor, except methods for the further body alienation. For that reason making our own body joyous and alive, “in the face of a racist, patriarchal, and anti-erotic society”[175] is a political gesture par excellence.

Ultimately, it is imperative to address the concept of the body in conjunction with the body of the Earth. However, my discussion will not extend beyond referencing the work of Thomas Fuchs who said in an interview that only ”wenn wir unseren Leib wirklich bewohnen, werden wir auch die Erde als bewohnbar erhalten können”[176], and I assume that Ayahuasca Ceremony introduces a strong sense of a non-anthropocentric, or better said, a non-androcentric conviviality.

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[172] Ibid, p.54

[173] Ibid, p.54

[174] Ibid, p.59

[175] Ibid, p.59

[176] Angst, Depression: Warum nehmen psychische Erkrankungen zu? | Sternstunde Philosophie | SRF Kultur, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOPl3SqYLmk&t=2036s accessed: January 2024

I have already articulated that I do not oppose technology, nor photography per se, on the contrary. The photography I am referring here to is not constituted as aesthetical practice, journalism, nor serves social documentarism (not yet)[177]. It is a medium of instant and rather platitudinous and oversaturated communication.[178] Such a way of communicating (via vernacular images, via inauthentic[179] selves, where self-expression became selfie-expression) is colonising our intrinsic, pre-institutionalized, organic ways of interaction, our whole Lebenswelt (cf. Habermas, 1981). As Mark Fisher writes "the interpassive simulation of participation in postmodern media, the network narcissism of MySpace and Facebook, has, in the main, generated content that is repetitive, parasitic and conformist"[180]. Compounding the matter, this includes the (not so) invisible labour for someone else's profit[181] during our leisure time[182]. Olufemi calls for "no more performance for surveillance capital and friends"[183] believing that "this cannot be all there is"[184]. It must be rather a will to "be truly present. So that the lived moment belongs to us and we to it and 'Stay awhile' could be said to it. Man wants at last to enter into the Here and Now as himself, wants to enter his full life without postponement and distance. The genuine utopian will is definitely not endless striving, rather: it

[177]Furthermore, we are in the developed age of Pixelrealism (cf. Jacob Birken, 2023), or maybe even Trompe-l'œilism.

[178] The artistic director of Transmediale 2024, Nóra Ó Murchú, said in an interview, that "[t]he limitless production, which usually is attributed to the banalisation of photography and its exploitation is of particular importance with regard to mining technologies that are so pervasive in today's computing."
https://www.exberliner.com/art/transmediale-2024-you-re-doing-amazing-sweetie-nora-o-murchu-horrors-of-content/?mc_cid=ffe073b78c&mc_eid=1bae96556a, accessed: January 2024

[179] The authentic I employ belongs to the context of performativity and therefore is related to my case studies. On the other hand **"performative authentism"** (beside the "neoliberal authentic"), term(s) introduced by Taylor, which encapsulates "the stylistic concerns of appearing authentic on social media as differentiated from the achievement of authenticity" is one of the reasons for my longing for the camera-less realities.
Taylor, Allan S.: Authenticity as Performativity on Social Media, Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2022,
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-12148-7_2, accessed: October 2023

[180] Fisher, Mark: Capitalist Realism, Zero Books, UK, 2022 (2008), p.75

[181] This topic was approached from a particular angle in the Exhibition "Capital image" in whose introductory note was to be read: "While the market for press images and stock photography has been in continuous decline since the 2000s, image data and metadata have become a new commodity in data capitalism, in which images are exploited for a variety of purposes: to influence search results, to customise advertising, to contribute to scientific research, or as a surveillance tool. Social media services, in particular, have little interest in the images that accumulate on their servers, except for training image-recognition algorithms. However, they do have a vested interest in monetising the data they collect through the vast amounts of uploaded visual material. The data generated by an image, one may argue, has become as valuable as the image"
https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/program/calendar/event/5izz936, accessed: January 2024

[182] Federici designates this phenomenon as a **capitalistic utopia:** "Arbeit ohne Lohn. Das ist die ultimative kapitalistische Utopie - die Arbeit selbst wird zum Lohn und alle Querulant*innen werden in die kalte Sternnacht hinausgeschleudert. Endlich hat der Kapitalismus sein Ziel und seine Grenze erreicht."
Federici, S.: Jenseits unserer Haut. Körper als umkämpfter Ort im Kapitalismus, Unrast, Münster, 2022, p.119

[183] Olufemi, Lola: Experiments in Imagining Otherwise, Hajar Press, London, 2021, p.12

[184] Ibid, p.12

wants to see the merely immediate and thus so unpossessed nature of self-location and being-here finally mediated, illuminated and fulfilled, fulfilled happily and adequately."[185] This is precisely what I am able to find in my case studies.

A highly pertinent viewpoint on this topic is to be found in Jurgenson's book[186] on social media[187] photography, where he describes social photography "as a way of being, talking, learning"[188] whose logic "organises our minds in new ways" and we experience life "as increasingly documentable, and perhaps also experienced in the service of its documentation, always with the newly accessible audience in mind"[189]. He argues that the photography "changed the possibilities of time and space, privacy and visibility, truth and falsity, [t]he fact of the camera changed (…) vision itself" and determined the "ways people make themselves visible to the world, and make the world visible to them", meaning that the entirety of this task is to be accomplished "with respect to new devices that capture and share".[190] The medium of social photography "atomises the infinity of life into discrete, manageable elements to be collected, shared, and saved"[191].

Jurgenson quotes Svetlana Boym (2007) who said that "[t]echnology and nostalgia have become co-dependent", we feel an "anticipatory nostalgia"[192], so we are never here and now. This goes even further through already developed tendency to see "our everyday moments […] pregnant with photographic potential"[193], while forgetting their community-potential and turning them into society-less social photos and ourselves into "constant tourists". Making and browsing social photos became the main daily choreography, which could be described as a "museal gesture", i.e. "seizing and reversing of experience's ephemerality - to possess the present moment as an object"[194] as Jurgenson wrote referring to Andreas Kitzmann. We are permanently photographically documenting our lives, which is, as Jurgenson referred to Sonntag[195], "a kind of invasive objectifying process", leading him to the conclusion that "[w]hat is real is only what is photographable"[196], therefore I aim

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[185] Fisher, Mark: Capitalist Realism, Zero Books, UK, 2022 (2008), p.73

[186] Jurgenson, Nathan: The Social Photo. On photography and Social Media, Verso London, 2019

[187] Social media, introduced as alternative, is longer time already the "inescapable" mainstream.

[188] Ibid, p.10

[189] Both ibid, p.12

[190] Ibid. p.2

[191] Ibid, p.38

[192] Ibid, p.3

[193] Ibid, p.12

[194] Both Ibid, p.38

[195] "**There is something predatory in the act of taking a picture**. To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves [nowadays, others and we ourselves see us the way we are not, IJ], by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed."
Jurgenson, Nathan: The Social Photo. On photography and Social Media, Verso, London, 2019, p. 25

[196] Ibid, p.25

with my case studies to give space to an alternative realness, to space for subjectification beyond Instagram&Co Imaginary which "demands identity that is its pure performative fiction"[197], to "less matrix, more ephemerality" in order to, in stead of witnessing our lives, "start to value us in sense how much humane[198] are we", as Jurgenson suggested in an interview[199].

One of the issues to be considered about is that "[h]anging out with family and friends means also hanging out with their technology"[200], and we trade "the real for the simulated"[201]. Jurgenson mentions Sherry Turkle's (2015) book Reclaiming Conversation who claims that the digital connection limited people's capacity (especially the young ones[202]) for "solitude, sadness, creativity, empathy, deep relationships, conversation, expression, sustained attention, and deep reading."[203] He also considers photographing "as addiction that kills awareness"[204], and writes through the lenses of Fromm that "to be in the moment is to be fundamentally more alive, to extract a greater quantity of experience out of life's limited potential. To be more in the moment isn't just to exist better but to exist more"[205]. Jurgenson is aware that "we may never fully log off, the camera is never fully absent, but this in no way implies the loss of the face-to-face conversation, the slow, the analog, the deep introspection, the long walks, or the subtle appreciation of life we supposedly enjoy without the device[206]. Real life can be enjoyed more than before by not making a fetish out of it"[207], which is precisely the point I aim to make in this paper.

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[197] Ibid, p.70

[198] Frantz Fanon advocated more humanity many decades ago.

[199] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOg4Ocptjyw, accessed: October 2023

[200] Jurgenson, Nathan: The Social Photo. On photography and Social Media, Verso London, 2019, p. 68

[201] Ibid, p.72

[202]"My advice too young people is to put down their phones. […] **Don't think that's ok to live in your phone,** you have a lot more to say than just Instagram and lot to experience in the real world, and the most important thing is standing in front of another person and feeling empathy for them and that can't be done on the phone. I hope young people will take some power also going to the streets and fight what they're believing in. Good luck! I'm sorry for young people there are these existential disasters looming."
Nan Goldin's advice Nan Goldin's Advice to the Young | Louisiana Channel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RlC3ym4-YaQ, accessed: October 2023

[203] Ibid, p.74

[204] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOg4Ocptjyw, accessed: October 2023

[205] Jurgenson, Nathan: The Social Photo. On photography and Social Media, Verso London, 2019, p. 78

[206] But for this we need a better "management of connectivity" as Aleena Chia et al. write in the book on social media detoxication, which I again see in my case studies.
Aleena Chia A., Jorge, A., Karppi T. (Eds.): Reckoning with Social Media, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, London, 2001, p.4

[207] Ibid, p.70

A camera eye, eyes of the Instagram Followers do not turn any space into a theatre; they want a deadly, I want other three theatres (cf. Peter Brook, 1968), and after Merleau-Ponty, there is "intentionalité du corps. Les corps n'est pas dans l'espace, il habite l'espace"[208], and this is something notorious in case of Berghain, but also all other practices. When I observe Maloca, or Dhamma Hall, but then also Sisters Hope Home and Berghain, all of them cherish and amplify the experience of simply being alive, they are away from the consumerist architecture, the enable the sensation of the altered normative spatio-temporal conditions. They are also places where we do not reproduce the social order, but produce our subjectivities[209]. These places a simply friendly, "we invent them, they invent us", just like the friendship does after Lagasnerie[210], and we already have enough places for the Disziplinierung des Körpers (cf. Foucault, 1975), which does not mean that I am talking about anarchic bodies, especially regarding Vippasana Course, but such discipline is not oppressive, but beneficial.

Miller suggests "exploring […] situations as spaces in which one can try out and learn exemplary modes of anarchist sociability", where he refers to that "what Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) has called a 'social interstice', a special, temporal site in the 'arena of representational commerce' and a duration 'whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the 'communication zones' that are imposed upon (Bourriaud 2002, 16)."[211] Relational spaces (cf. Löw, 2000) for relational aesthetics. Since mentioning aesthetics and space, bell hooks brought them poignantly together in a statement that "(a)esthetics (then) is more than a philosophy or theory of art and beauty; it is a way of inhabiting space, a particular location, a way of looking and becoming"[212].

According to Habermas (2011)[213], ritual stands for pleasure of the simultaneous socialisation and has secret power from the space which changes consciousness and mood (even though he was

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[208] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice: Phénoménologie de la perception, Gallimard, Paris, 2009, p.127

[209] "Such places of exception can produce exceptional subjects."
Fisher, Tony: The aesthetic exception. Essays on art, theatre, and politics, Manchester University, 2023, p.37

[210] Lagasnerie, Geoffroy de: 3 : une aspiration au dehors, Flammarion, Paris, 2023, p.18

[211] Miller, Tyrus: Situation and event: the destinations of sense, pp. 75-91 in Franko, Mark (ed.): Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Routledge, London/New York, 2007, p.88

[212]hooks, bell: An Aesthetic of Blackness: Strange and Oppositional, p.65 in Lenox Avenue: A Journal of Interarts Inquiry, Vol. 1 (1995), pp. 65-72, https://doi.org/10.2307/4177045 accessed: November 2023

[213] Jürgen Habermas Lecture: Myth and Ritual, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qA4iw3V0o1c, accessed: December 2023

referring to church which I perceive as an absolute space (cf. Löw, 2000). A very simple support for his statement is a very different experience of practicing Vipassana at home, then in a self-organised Vipassana Apartment in Berlin, or the rather industrial aesthetics of Berghain, in comparison to glitter and wonderlandness of some other night clubs. Löw points out that spaces are enabling "nicht nur sehen, sondern auch riechen, hören oder fühlen"[214], and she mentions music a s an example, which is very obvious in the case of Berghain. Staying on the same page, Riedel referred to anthropologist and ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1987) saying that "music could provide 'unique ways of feeling' as it would generate 'waves of feelings' not just in the body but 'between bodies'"[215], and she continues claiming that "the sonic holds some kind of affective power to penetrate situations, collectives and selves, and manifests as environmental atmosphere among them"[216]. On the other hand, Sabine Thabe (1997) is mentioned in the same Löw's book arguing that "Techno-Kultur, als digitalisierte Lebenswelt in einem Raum der Simulationen, verweist zudem auf neue Vorstellungen von Leiblichkeit und ein In-der-Welt-Sein, das Ideen vom Cyberspace und Hyperraum auch sinnlich real werden läßt"[217], but I would not agree with, since this would be more applicable to the world of VR gaming, and even though she considers drugs usage, Berghain is not to be interpreted as space of simulation, but amplification.

Another reason to find such places important is that they have the capacity to "'force' us think harder how to keep the process of instituting live and alive as a process of transindividuation, within which we form ourselves on the basis of interdependence, sharing, commonality, as well as indispensability of the individual as the agent of creativity/knowledge, freedom, and change, who 'possibilises' their own conditions of formation"[218]., which is certainly important in a much wider sense, having in mind that "transindividuality encompasses collaboration and cooperation at work, in artistic creation, at the core of social movements and political activity. 'I' is here constituted at the same time as 'we'".[219]

Each of my case studies can be marked as places for separatism of the main-stream and control modes of everyday reproduction, that motivates further changes (cf. Susan Hawthorne, 1976).

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[214] Löw, Martina: Raumsoziologie, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 2000, p.195

[215] Riedel, Friedlind: Atmospheric Relations. Theorising Music and Sound as Atmosphere, pp. 1-42 in Riedel, F; Torvinen, J. (ed.): Music as Atmosphere.Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds, Routledge, London/New York, 2019, p.2

[216] Ibid, p.3

[217] Löw, Martina: Raumsoziologie, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 2000, p.124

[218] Vujanović, Ana / Cvejić, Bojana: Toward a Transindividual Self: A study in social dramaturgy, Archive Books, Berlin, 2022, p.261

[219] Ibid, p.182

"I am. We are.
That is enough. Now we have to start."[220]

Dionysian is always already resistance.

Since she dealt with the body in Body in Contemporary Capitalism (German translation is even more poignant), there is no better option, than to start this chapter with Silvia Federici, according to who capitalist class is on the way to develop a new human kind whose behaviour is normative, predictable and controllable[221], which seems to be even more suffocating option than Marcuse's one-dimensional man (1964).

Similar conclusion comes from Richard Sennet, who wrote that "[m]odern society is producing a new character type", a "sort of person bent on reducing the anxieties which differences can inspire, whether these be political, racial, religious, ethnic or erotic in character. The person's goal is to avoid arousal, to feel as little stimulated by deep differences as possible." He also claims that "modern times are ill-equipped to meet the challenges posed by the demanding sort of cooperation", and even worse, it is "'de-skilling' people in practising cooperation."[222] Furthermore Rojo underlines that "[i]n neoliberalism 'free' is someone who dominates: body, future, time; and this can be applied to the dancer as well"[223]. (I would say that Berghain's dancer can feel Paz's definition of freedom.) Sadly enough "we are performing and selling ourselves online, already voluntarily embodying capitalism"[224] For Vujanović and Cvejić "[n]eoliberalism has a capacity to pervade different kinds of human activity, from the economy via culture to everyday life, by transforming

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[220] Bloch, Ernst: The Spirit of Utopia, Stanford University Press, 2000 (1918)

[221] Federici, Silvia: Jenseits unserer Haut. Körper als umkämpfter Ort im Kapitalismus, Unrast, Münster, 2022, p.113

[222] Sennett, Richard: Together : The Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation, Yale University Press, 2012, pp.9-10 https://archive.org/details/togetherritualsp0000senn accessed: May 2023

[223] Rojo, Paz: To Dance in the Age of No-Future, Circadian Book, Berlin, 2002, p.25

[224] In the same interview, the artistic director of Transmediale 2024, Nóra Ó Murchú also underscored a significant observation that there are "two sides of how we can think about this technology: there's this material military surveillance side, and then there's this Hollywood entertainment side. And they're both interlinked. And at the festival and in the exhibitions, we're looking at how the Hollywood side is normalising these forms of surveillance, propagandising forms of power and control."
https://www.exberliner.com/art/transmediale-2024-you-re-doing-amazing-sweetie-nora-o-murchu-horrors-of-content/?mc_cid=ffe073b78c&mc_eid=1bae96556a, accessed: 29.01.2024

them into commodities"[225], whereas "team building in the office is a parody of collectivity"[226]. Another similar interpretation of the same issues comes from Han who writes about Infokratie and "upgrades" the system we live in to Informationskapitalismus which is already developing into Überwachungskapitalismus degrading people to "Daten- und Konsumvieh"[227]. Such destructiveness of capitalism does not only results in ecological and social but also mental catastrophes.[228] Furthermore Barbara Stiegler (2022) claims that the new political imperative is to get adapted, and to get closer the power of the ritualistic, Fisher-Lichte reminds that "[r]evolutionary times – including those of a cultural revolution – are liminal times", and continues with Turner's observation that "'in liminality, new ways of acting, new combinations of symbols are tried out, to be discarded or accepted (Turner 1977: 40)'", and according to him "the changes brought about by the liminal phase usually affect the social status of the participants in the ritual and extends to the entire society"[229]. Friederike Beier writes that certain community oriented practices[230] enable free spaces for "Nachdenken über Utopisches"[231], and Graham reminds that "in East-Germany clubs were the bastions of resistance"[232]. It seems like we are forgetting the need for the utopian, and in her book on intimacy, Rosa mentions "Fromm's concept of 'the marketing character' - 'experiencing oneself as a commodity, and one's value not as 'use value' but as 'exchange value' - which serves as a source of alienation, spiritual depletion and suffering"[233] and she suggests that "[w]e must imagine life beyond the lonely slog and find utopian moments of living otherwise that help us know it is possible"[234]. Even worse is that the dominant perception has no issues with this, which I can support with Cynthia Cruz referring to Gramsci's view over the hegemonic culture which "utilises public discourse to make some forms of experience seem natural while ignoring

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[225] Vujanović, Ana / Cvejić, Bojana: Toward a Transindividual Self: A study in social dramaturgy, Archive Books, Berlin, 2022, p.172

[226] Timofeeva, Oxana: Solar Politics, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 2022, p.90

[227] Han, Byung-Chul: Infokratie. Digitaliesierung und die Krise der Demokratie, Matthes & Seitz, Berlin, 2021, p. 7

[228] Ibid, p.7.
I can also draw a parallel from Han to Bernie Sanders who claims that we need to step away from banal and commercial media systems (s p.339) in order to enable intensive culture of discussion.
Sanders, Bernie: Es ist okay, wütend auf den Kapitalismus zu sein, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 2023

[229] Fischer-Lichte, Erika: Dionysus Resurrected. Performances of Euripides' The Bacchae in a Globalising World, Wiley-Blackwell, UK, 2014

[230] "Einküchenhäuser, sorgende Städte, Kommunen, Kibbuzim, Hausprojekte, Kinderläden, Community Kitchens, Commons, Küfas (Küchen für alle), Ballroom-Szene"
Beier, Friederike: Gesellschaft ohne Geschlecht? Grundrisse einer geschlechtslosen und sorgenzentrierten Gesellschaft, pp.207-224 in Beier, Friederike (Hg.): Materialistischer Queerfeminismus. Theorien zu Geschlecht und Sexualität im Kapitalismus, Unrast, Münster, 2023, p.220

[231] Ibid, p.220

[232] John, Graham St.: Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures, Equinox, Sheffield, 2009, p.12

[233] Rosa, Sophie K: Radical Intimacy, Pluto Press, Las Vegas, 2023, p.18

[234] Ibid, p.40

others."[235] I assume this is what is happening with the normalcy of instagramable life[236], while my case studies could be seen as something "strange". In her other book[237], Cruz writes writes that our bodies are also those who reject the ideologies of neoliberal culture referring to a more radical rebellion such as anorexia. I think that dancing, meditating, non-productivity, (shared) joy, excess of pleasure, bodily and spiritual ecstasy, purposeful uselessness resulting in an exhausted body do this, as well. This align with Olufemi's notion that "[r]elational solidarities, even in their failure, reveal the plurality of the future-present"[238], which pave the way out[239] from the malignant status quo and awakens the "Not-Yet-Conscious" (Bloch, 1959), before the total "hegemony of the smartphone"[240], while "[t]he alternative, as Mark so passionately argued, is to deceive yourself that there is no alternative"[241], when we can instead start conceiving utopia "not only as a way of imagining a better future but also as a way of intervening in the present by addressing the past", as it was suggested at the Symposium "Coding Utopias"[242] asking if "utopia [can, IJ] welcome ambivalence, disquietude, paradox, opacity, and uncertainty?"

Our desires are regulated, repressed and exploited in order to conserve certain way of life, writes Fisher[243], and agrees with Adam Curtis' attack against the internet which "facilitates communities of solipsists, interpassive networks of like-minds who confirm, rather than challenge, each others' assumptions and prejudices. Instead of having to confront other points of view in a contested public space, these communities retreat into closed circuits"[244], disinterested in any abolition of the world wide "virtual slavery"[245].

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[235] Cruz, Cynthia: The Melancholia of Class. A Manifesto for the Working Class, Watkins Media, London, 2021, p. 45

[236] Yanis Varoufakis said in an interview that the kind of the self people create on social media is to appeal to Google or Facebook or the employer, which doubtlessly means the **end of liberal individual**.
American Big Tech Has Enslaved Us | Aaron Bastani Meets Yanis Varoufakis, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VatYrw0uqjU, accessed: October 2023

[237] Cruz, Cynthias: Disquieting: Essays on Silence, Bookhug Press, Canada, 2019

[238] Ibid, p.35

[239]"'liberated future' is a misnomer
better maybe to say:
a place where the body is shared and social
a place where literature is not for oneself
we know nothing of scarcity
we have retired lack
my having is your having
a place with no need for catharsis
or the treadmill of public opinion
no more bad dreams
joy in the form best suited to the joy-seeker"
Olufemi, Lola: Experiments in Imagining Otherwise, Hajar Press, London, 2021, p.12

[240] Niven, Alex's Introduction in: Fisher, Mark: Capitalist Realism, Mark Fisher, Zero Books, UK, 2022 (2008), p.XXIII

[241] Ibid, p. XXVIII

[242] https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/coding-utopias/, accessed: September 2023

[243] Fisher, Mark: Capitalist Realism, Mark Fisher, Zero Books, UK, 2022 (2008), p.60

[244] Ibid, p.74

[245] Layoff, George; Johnson, Mark: Metaphors we live by George Layoff and Mark Johnson, University of Chicago Press, 2003, p.237

Regarding performativity, which they see through the optics of theorists of prefiguration as "collective experimentation", and performance as "synonymous with a collective action *here-and-now*"[246], Vujanović and Cvejić write in the introduction of their book that "the modes and techniques in which people perform themselves […] flesh out the strains of individualism characteristic of neoliberal society today"[247], and they see "transindividual performing of the self as a process of collective and individual co-individuation in which […] [we see, IJ] a path for combating the intense individualism at the core of the social crisis"[248]. Their theory is based in Simondon's work and relate it to Virno's interpretation of collective individuation "which explains the life in and of the group, not as the space of disappearance of individuals, but as a space of an even more radical individuation"[249]. They assume that "life in a hyper individualist perspective will become less and less sustainable" and ask: "[i]s it possible to wrest performance from its current individualist meanings and practices and reclaim it as a powerful concept for a transindividual formation of the self?"[250] Following involvement in my case studies, I would respond affirmatively, bearing in mind that those places are neither magical nor unequivocally paradigmatic; rather, it necessitates the active engagement of each of us and the unlearning of preoccupation with oneself […] foregrounded as a currency of freedom.[251] Furthermore, with the reference to Andrew Hewitt and Victor Turner the authors wrote that "social choreography shows how social order is aesthetically produced, instilled, and rehearsed through a material practice of aesthetic ideology", while "social drama addresses the situation in which social order collapses in conflict and goes through dramatic stages to constitute a new order or restore the old one"[252]. So, we do need more drama!

I would additionally contend that in my case studies social choreography does not represent the "aesthetics" of the dominant social order and is not a result of a social drama, but of personal "dramas" for the sake of the intrinsic need for a new (dis)order, at least temporarily, which once more demonstrate the emergence of bottom-up induced alternatives - they exist!, and they are partially realised, surpassing the mere conceptualisation; they are not merely suggested, predicted, or anticipated as few eventual steps away from the "hyper-individualist order of the day"[253], they

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[246] Vujanović, Ana / Cvejić, Bojana: Towards a Transindividual Self. A Study In Social Dramaturgy, Archive Books, Berlin, 2022, p.27

[247] Ibid, p.11

[248] Ibid, p.11

[249] Ibid, p. 242

[250] Ibid, p.263

[251] Ibid. p.14

[252] Ibid, p.24

[253] Ibid, p.27

have, just like art, the ”applicability in resolving social problems and mending social wounds”[254]. This could be “perfect place for new social imaginations to emerge”[255], reclaiming “[h]uman relationships […] appropriated for profit by corporations like Facebook”[256], since in order “[t]o transform the world, we’re gonna need strong links between us.”[257]

ANALYSYS

CASE STUDIES - INTRO

I rather collect atmospheres than images*

(*Grammars are likeable for their exceptions)

“Dionysus is present!”[258]

In the context of presenting alternatives that foster greater interconnectedness, interdependence, solidarity, and friendship, the case studies examined in my research have potential for social, political, cultural, and educational provocation. Rooted in experiential embodiment, they all provide the sensation of of not being alone, nor impotent, nor irrelevant. They challenge the notion of solitary existence, the expectation of political non-disruptiveness, self-sufficiency, and socio-economic functionality.

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[254] Ibid, p.25

[255] Ibid, p.26

[256] Olufemi, Lola: Experiments in Imagining Otherwise, Hajar Press, London, 2021, p.164

[257] Ibid, p.166

[258] Fischer-Lichte, Erika: Dionysus Resurrected. Performances of Euripides’ The Bacchae in a Globalising World, Wiley-Blackwell, UK, 2014, p.230

While Conquergood[259] mentions that his proposed ethnographic methodology centres around dialogue and communication, I opted to base this research solely on my own experiences. This approach does not involve comparison with the perspectives of other individuals who have undergone something similar, nor does it engage with directly related theory. In the same matter, my case studies are contingent upon greater constellations and the participants, as I cannot respond from the perspective of someone culturally closer to Ayahuasca, nor as a dedicated meditator. Consequently I cannot assert anything beyond my personal experience, largely influenced by the pedagogy of the event (cf. Badiou, 1988). Should someone wish to challenge my assertions, they must first embody the entirety of the experience themselves. In addition, I am about to produce the text for another time and place (akin photography), but will probably find my way of the performative in the content.

In spite of holding different cosmologies, my case studies deliver universal truths and values, certainly in varied degrees. I perceive them as cultural performances with a polysemic nature (cf. Turner, 1986), the parallels that already met in my infinitude. According to Taylor "the late 1960s epitomise epitomise the period's self-conscious obsession with the new, as it forgot or ignored what was already there there,"[260] whereas my case studies do not tend to invent any sensational novelty, but to make room for what has always already been there (body, ritual, dance, senses, community, cultures…). They remind us to reconsider the human condition even in the sense of "anthropocosmic theatre" (cf. Nuñes, 1987), to self-speculate and produce (self-)knowledge(s), which leads me to reflect spirituality, still perceived as a "crime against reason" (Barbara Ehrenreich, 2014)[261] due to its subversive power and non-energising nature of rationality as Sennet put it in an interview[262]. Therefore it manage to permeates various facets of human experience, even only symbolically, such is the case of Berghain, the "church" where we go for a Sunday Mass. The Ayahuasca Ceremony is fundamentally centred on the exploration of spiritual dimensions and encounters with spiritual entities, and after realising certain similarities with Vipassana, I discovered that the Sisters Hope's practice is, to some extent, rooted in Zen Buddhism. At this point it seems just to acknowledge a closer correspondence between Berghain and Ayahuasca, certainly not for the matter of spirituality, but in terms of pace, the overall intensity of ecstasy and even the substance

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[259] Conquergood, D.: Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics, Communication Monographs, 1991, v59, pp.179-194, p. 190

[260] Taylor, Diana: The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Duke University Press, Durham, 2003, p.10

[261] Barbara Ehrenreich in an interview on her book "Living with a Wild God: A Nonbeliever's Search for the Truth about Everything",https://www.c-span.org/video/?319065-1/living-wild-god, accessed: December 2023

[262] The great fear: the politics of performing: Sociologist Richard Sennett speaks about his new book, The Performer: art, life, politics, https://www.lse.ac.uk/lse-player?id=b6683e1b-52f9-42d1-9f54-3cd333e022f1, accessed: February 2024

usage. Indeed, such practices entail certain risking of oneself, just as in the case of public protesting, whistler blowing, etc. It is always good to practice some risk taking, firstly pertaining to the self, then extending to society.

What I discern foremost, is that they all have in the ritualistic in common (even though teacher Goenka frequently underlined that Vipassana Course has no connection with a ritual. I assume his intention is to detach this meditative practice from anything that could be seen as exclusionary or tied to a specific religion, and to steer clear of any association with ritualistic elements, while overseeing the possibility of social rituals; this is a ritual corporeal in a rather symbolic than physical sense, what is a divergent point from the other cases.) They all encompass the three principle stages: pre-liminal (separation), liminal (transition) and post-liminal (reintegration) (cf. Gennep, 1909). Rituals are there to educate our bodies, our senses, our abilities for connecting and belonging, just the way we are, and precisely for that reason. They are also integrated "with a much wider array of cultural practices than was previously conceivable"[263] and "'one-in-spirit', or 'connecting-in-like-ness' […] are observed to be evident in ritual performance"[264], what is an evident aspect of my case studies. Franko's "post-ritual turn"[265] allows me read my case studies, particularly Berghain and Sisters Hope as secularised post-ritual spaces of cultural exchange:

You depart from normative socialisation and the conventional world, you take time and engage in a ritual where you encounter both yourself and others. Vulnerable, without the refuge of a phone to shield or evade your inner struggles, the difficult you, you embrace the risks of the unknown and unpredictable, yet within this environment, you feel safe. Upon emerging from this transformative experience, you undergo a change akin to that typically induced by a rite of passage.

Another element, just mentioned, that holds significant importance for my case studies is time - perceived and valued differently than in ordinary circumstances, thus allowing for heterochrony.: Berghain enables me to be contemporaneous with time, like comrades; thanks to Vipassana I see time, I become time, subsequently even slower than time; Sisters Hope reveals aesthetic time, while Ayahuasca allows the experience that there is no time.

Certainly, the crucial element or even a medium is body, as a "frame of experience"[266]. Robin sees Berghain as "ein Generator für körperliche Experimente"[267], and I see all my cases this way. We

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[263] Franko, Mark: Introduction: eventful knowledge and the post-ritual turn, pp.1-10 in Franko, Mark (ed.): Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Routledge, London/New York, 2007, p.14

[264] Ibid, p. 14

[265] Ibid, p.1

[266] Lisa Nelson - Video 1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qA1ui4m0sUI, accessed: January 2024

[267] Robin, Guillaume: Berghain, Techno und die Körperfabrik. Ethnographie eines Stammpublikums, Büchner-Verlag, Marburg, 2021, p.16

exist energetically, aesthetically, ethically… and very often through each other. The most unexpected experiment was related to Vipassana Course, since it revealed the side of my own embodiment, I thought was not existing. Robin also assumes that utopian body needs to disappear in the times of Selfiesm[268] and Hypervisibility[269], what was so easily experienced during Vipassana Course and Ayahuasca Ceremony.

Fischer-Lichte regards Dionysos as "a liberating and community oriented god".[270] The Dionysian is something I see in my case studies, even in Vipassana for her insight that "[t]he sacrifice has the power to strengthen or renew the communal bond between the different members of a society"[271]. In the practices I am about to describe body is always "sacrificed"[272], and we also willingly sacrifice our already organic urge for phone connection with the world and ourselves (even in the case of Berghain)."The boundaries of the ego are lifted and any kind of identity of the self is extinguished. Its place is taken by a collective identity", and "[t]he ritual […] and the common meal[273] […] affirms the community as such and enhances on its members the sense of communitas."[274] She continues that "[o]n one hand Dionysus 'releases from everything', while on the other, he has the power to unite people in an ecstatic community" and he stands for "liberation from all kinds of barriers and pressures, be they political, social, moral, or psychological, and either the affirmation of an existing community or the uniting of the participants into a new one"[275]. Vipassana operates distinctively, maintaining certain barriers and omitting shared ecstasy, yet facilitating a profound sense of the ecstatic within my calm, static body. Moreover, this practice made me befriended with established rules, what always happens, when they align with my essential principles and lead to something significant. Fischer-Lichte concludes that Dionysos "transgressed or even dissolved the boundaries between male and female, man and god, man and beast, life and death. Thus, he destabilised given identities and initiated radical transformations."[276]

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[268] Ibid, p.68

[269] Ibid, p.71

[270] Fischer-Lichte, Erika: Dionysus Resurrected. Performances of Euripides' The Bacchae in a Globalising World, Wiley-Blackwell, UK, 2014, p.22

[271] Ibid, p.14

[272] Franko refers to Derrida and sees dance as self-donation.
Franko, Mark: Given movement. Dance and the event, pp. 125-138 in Franko, Mark (ed.): Ritual and Event: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Routledge, London/New York, 2007, p. 132

[273] After the Ayahuasca Ceremony we eat together in the morning, we share, someone has cooked for us, similar to the experience during Vipassana Course, where someone also came to do the service and take care of our meals… The meal is ritualised in the practice of Sisters Hope. We eat fruit, drink milkshakes at Berghain…

[274] Fischer-Lichte, Erika: Dionysus Resurrected. Performances of Euripides' The Bacchae in a Globalising World, Wiley-Blackwell, UK, 2014, p.10

[275] Ibid, p.26

[276] Ibid. p.226

In particular manners, Vipassana stands again as different, there are certain hierarchies that need to be recognised and obvious spacial boundaries between male and female, upholding a binary perspective, the issue I will address separately, but I still assume that these borders are dissolved de facto, as they have no discernible relevance for the meditative process.

It is worth noting that performance after Fisher-Lichte “over its course [a performance, IJ] creates the possibility for all participants to experience themselves as a subject that can co-determine the actions and behaviour of others and whose own actions and behaviour are similarly determined by others. The individual participants – be they performers or spectators – experience themselves as subjects that are neither fully autonomous nor fully determined by others; subjects that accept responsibility for a situation which not all of them have created but which all participate in. This demonstrates that any performance is also to be regarded as a social process, in which different groups encounter, negotiate, and regulate their relationships in different ways”. Thus any performance is also a social process, wherein different groups encounter, negotiate, and regulate their relationships in various ways, which aligns with what I have noticed in my case studies.

After her, theatre “can create communities, however temporary. It plays with identities, and it brings about transformations. It incorporates elements from the most diverse performance cultures, interweaving or making them collide.”[277] Unfortunately, the theater scene to which I am regularly exposed (Berlin, mostly German-speaking productions), does not fully embody such a role, even in its earnest attempts, as seen in She She Pop's piece “High"[278]. Such discrepancy is the primary motivator for the displacement of my focus. However, in alignment with her conclusion, I perceive myself as a bearer of a distinct culture, notably different from Ayahuasca and Vipassana practices. At the same time, precisely within this context I have faced new and greater diversity within myself which unexpectedly resulted in peace, particularly in the latter case. Furthermore, unlike the institutional framework of theater, such environments offered a radical equality and a sense of "être-avec" (Nancy, 1996) with "familiar strangers”[279], engaging in osmosis rather than immersion. This must be a juncture where theater can get inspired to consider being a home, not a guest house.

Doing theses practices, we make no money, no tangible goods, but identity, trust, respect, joy, solidarity, community, personal archives… We accumulate the sensation of being connected and belonging. We are not afraid of introspection and intraspection. We crave for no control, no power. We are not rivals, but collaborators, even comrades. We preserve the skills of being social in person.

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[277] Ibid, p.230

[278] https://sheshepop.de/en/high-2/, accessed: October 2023

[279] Stuart Hall on Cosmopolitanism, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcaGhyYvMl0 accessed January 2024

We care. We dream. We hope. And sometimes we simply “dance our way home”[280]. This might be interpreted as an act of escapism, which is something “used to describe the dance. That's an outsider's view. Solidarity is what it really offers,” as DJ Theo Parrish said and Emma Warren opened her book with. I cannot agree more! A dance floor for her is “where you don't have to learn steps to take part”[281], “[w]e absorb or reject each other's movement in order to signify that we're part of a community or to indicate that we're not. It shapes us, as we make shapes”[282], we train our confidence to spread it later on the other floors. Politicality of dance. “Dancing[283] is a process of homecoming to their [our, IJ] bodies.”[284]

In structuring my academic paper, I opted to introduce the case studies in a manner that resonated most authentically with me, often assuming the role of a storyteller. Namely, I have chosen to begin the Vipassana Course. Despite occurring chronologically after both Berghain and the Ayahuasca Ceremony, this experience holds particular significance as it extended over the longest time. I found it to be the most ritualistic, and therefore, I feel compelled to provide a more detailed description of the daily structures.

I will proceed with the other two "rituals" subsequently and conclude with an examination of Sisters Hope, the only practice that I did not approach bodily. Each of the case studies invites various comparisons with the others, ranging from more to less apparent connections, and allowing for a considerable research-pleasure. Additionally, I will introduce every chapter with the offering of a soundscape.

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[280] Warren, Emma: Dance Your Way Home: A Journey Through the Dancefloor, Faber and Faber, London, 2023

[281] Ibid, p.1

[282] Ibid, p.16

[283] There is one more Warren’s standpoint related to the utopian and reparatory power if dance I would like to mention: “Perhaps ordinary dancing, collectively, is one way of developing new stories that more people can believe in. 'I am not naive enough to think that dancers can single-handedly get us out of our present troubles,' wrote choreographer and educator Gill Clarke, in her 2007 essay 'Mind as in Motion'. But I do believe their concerns, expertise and knowledge are ever more vital in connecting us back into our living, moving organisms, to a sense of relationship within ourselves and with the world’ You might think it's not that deep, it's just dancing. You can think what you like, but I believe that moving to music is an effective way to see ourselves and each other, and to resynchronise and rebuild, regardless of what has been demolished - hopes and dreams, an economy, the future. To dance you must let go of self-consciousness, embarrassment, pride and prejudice, and embrace what you actually have. The more we improvise movement, together, the better chance we have of thickening our relationships, building the necessary connections we need for a future that looks increasingly low-resource and local. Motion is tidal, flowing around obstacles like water round wood, wearing them down with repetition. It reshapes the environment and it reshapes us. We're all dancers, I think, regardless of where we come from or where we're going. We're dancers because we're human, and we're more human - or perhaps more humane - if we dance together, especially when we make it up on the spot”, Ibid, p.346

[284] Ibid, p.164

S. N. Goenka - 10 Day Morning Chanting-Day 1[285]

https://open.spotify.com/track/1psjLgLoJEHsCz8V8oLjVB?si=7e0b042089a24b71

Vipassana (literally: seeing things as they really are) is an Indian meditation technique based in self-observation "rediscovered" by Gotama the Buddha. Satya Narayana Goenka was a teacher who reinitiated this method in the '60s. I will dedicate limited space to the general description[286] of the very technique, focusing instead on my personal experience and insights, already a self-establishing approach for each case study.

The only unmissable passage is the following:

"What Vipassana is not:

- It is not a rite or ritual based on blind faith
- It is neither an intellectual nor a philosophical entertainment
- It is not a rest cure, a holiday or an opportunity for socialising
- t is not an escape from the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

What Vipassana is:

- It is a technique that will eradicate suffering
- It is a method of mental purification which allows one to face life's tensions and problems in a calm, balanced way
- It is an art of living that one can use to make positive contributions to society."[287]

As stated earlier, Goenka used to repeatedly emphasise that Vipassana courses do not intersect with rituals in any regard. I assume his intention was simply to remove this meditative practice from anything perceived as exclusionary, discriminatory, or associated with specific religions, while overseeing the option of social ritual.

On the other hand, my experience revealed the opposite, albeit more symbolic than (ecstatically) corporeal ritual, especially when compared to the other cases.

Another important assertion that somewhat justifies my inclusion of this practice among the other

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[285] I need to acknowledge my own initial struggle with such chanting, but I transitioned from finding it aesthetically disturbing to vibrationally elevating.

[286] https://www.dhamma.org/en/about/vipassana, accessed: September 2023

[287] https://www.dhamma.org/en/about/code, accessed: September 2023

three is that, even though not an opportunity for socialising as we know it, one of its purposes is to impart the skills necessary for the betterment of our society[288].

Staying with the methodology, I will begin with the ritualistic aspects of this course, namely with the preliminal phase.

Applications for specific courses worldwide are open on designated dates. While the call may remain open longer, the high demand often results in a waiting list for both old and new male/ female students or servers. Applicants are required to complete a specific questionnaire, based on which further selection is made. Additional subquestions may be communicated via email in a friendly and trustworthy manner. Consequent to acceptance, an invitation mail with additional information is following. Organisers facilitate connections among participants willing to coordinate their travel to the meditation centre. This is the inaugural moment of mutual care.

Diverging from other case studies, a significant feature of this one is its cost-free nature, based on donation[289]: accommodation, food, and the services of teachers are all provided without charge, with no salaries allocated to anyone within the organization. Servers, former Vipassana students, support the sustainability of the courses by overseeing facility management, food preparation, and other essential tasks. They oftentimes join our meditations. A notable distinction is their practice of Metta (meditation of loving kindness towards all beings[290]), later each evening.

Upon arrival, males and females are separated (I will address this later on). We eventually verbally engage with some of the people with whom we will spend the next 10 days (in my experience, it must be easier to attend alone, what is usually encouraged, since it may be additionally challenging and even bizarre to ignore someone who is normally close to you). We get accommodated (ranging from single or double rooms to dormitories) and are permitted to explore the surrounding area, typically a forest or natural setting designated for walking (other physical activities are prohibited). The centre I visited in France[291] was situated in a peaceful countryside, which I preferred over the one in Hungary[292] due to the supportive nature of the environment throughout the course. According to me, one of the crucial ritualistic gestures involves surrendering our phones, earphones, books,

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[288] https://www.vridhamma.org/Vipassana-in-Society, accessed: January 2024

[289] https://mahi.dhamma.org/reference/code-of-discipline/, accessed: January 2024

[290] https://pamoda.dhamma.org/he/the-practice-of-metta-bhavana/, accessed: January 2024

[291] https://www.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schmahi, accessed: February 2024

[292] https://hu.dhamma.org/en/courses/the-location/, accessed: February 2024

notebooks, pens, and any other objects of attachment that we may have brought with us.[293] The time devoid of devices, internet, media, and the outer world was about to commence, representing a form of sacrifice in its own right. Personally, I welcomed this change, particularly during my second experience, as such opportunities are rare and yield significant benefits. I recall packing these objects into a cloth bag labeled with a number, akin to facing a lion in the bushes like a young Masai boy. One concern I had in France was missing the Australian Open 2024, yet I swiftly managed to detach from this thought. In France, we were assigned chairs in the Dining Hall, unlike in Hungary. My seat was in the corner, facing the wall. Since I hoped for being seated next to a window with a view of the garden, this was not pleasant. Another old student mentioned that my seating arrangement was actually beneficial for achieving successful isolation. I responded by stating that I did not consider myself a nerdy Vipassana practitioner and that I still wished for some beautiful moments of "solitude" under the sunlight, as one of my coping mechanisms for the entire "ritual".

After a light dinner together, the "noble silence" was initiated, and for the next 10 days, we were to follow the Code of Discipline.[294] This meant no verbal or gestural communication with each other, no touching of animals, and preferably avoiding interaction with plants. I obediently refrained from speaking with anyone. Other aspects were challenging to me, since expressions such as smiles can be very supportive in moments of difficulty. My roommate in France strictly adhered to the rules, maintaining a super-serious and indifferent expression, which sometimes felt burdensome. The only persons we were permitted to communicate with were the teacher, course manager, and, if necessary, dining room servers.

Each day we woke up at 4:00 a.m. to the sound of a gong, which served as a signal for main daily "events". The meditation started at 4:30 a.m. lasting until 6:00 or 6:30 a.m., depending on the course progression, followed by breakfast. The subsequent meditation block spanned from 8:00-11:00 a.m when the lunch was being served. Until 1:00 p.m., students had free time and could also schedule a private conversation with the Teacher lasting 10-15 minutes. The afternoon meditation stretched to four hours ending at 5 p.m. with an hour-long break during which fruit or only tea (old

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[293] from the confirmation email I received:
"Please do not bring any unnecessary items to the course. If you arrive at the centre with any of the following you will be asked to surrender them for safe keeping for the duration of the course.
- Reading or writing materials
- Intoxicants
- Non-prescription drugs
- Tobacco in any form
- Religious objects
- Musical instruments
- Mobile phones or any other electronic devices"

[294] https://mahi.dhamma.org/reference/code-of-discipline/, accessed: January 2024

students) was served. Participants then gathered in the Dhamma Hall for a collective meditation session (some of which exclusively took place in the hall, while others occurred in individual rooms or meditation cells). At 7:00 p.m. the Discourse[295] begun (about 1 hour and 15-minute video presentation by Goenka addressing various aspects of each specific day). Afterwards we would all meditate in the Dhamma Hall until 9:00 p.m. with the option to discuss with the Teacher anything relevant to the technique until 9:30 p.m. Although lights should have been officially off at 9:30 p.m., strict adherence to this rule was not enforced. This meant that each of us meditated approximately 100 hours during the 10-day course.

In the context of my daily routine, the Discourse was a pivotal highlight. Despite the availability of a local language version, I assume it to be a loss, given Goenka's exceptional rhetoric and performative skills. He explicitly stated that Vipassana should not be construed as any form of entertainment, particularly of a philosophical or intellectual nature. However, I allowed myself to view it as such during the evening sessions. Furthermore, Goenka's adept storytelling and occasional comedian flair prompted me to liken these moments to a cinematic experience, if not a theatrical one. His wife, IIlaichidevi Deva Goenka, a Vipassana teacher herself, sat beside him in silent observance, as a mere decoration, a dynamic I initially perceived as unfair and patriarchal. Nevertheless, I soon recognised it as something to let go, acknowledging that her presence warranted respect and recognition, and my attention quickly shifted elsewhere, as this designated time was intended for different concerns. With his ample experience, Goenka adeptly addressed the challenges we likely encountered each day, providing precise guidance and encouragement. His engaging storytelling, replete with vivid examples, elicited laughter and a sense of vitality within me, a motivation to persist with meditation practice, particularly following the discourse, which consistently marked the zenith of my daily experience.

The evening conversations with the Teacher held significant importance during my initial course, as I had great curiosity and little prior knowledge. During the second course, I posed questions several times, including one about whether our Teacher could perceive the vibrational/energetic variances of each course and observe our auras. She affirmed this capability adding that it was not the question to be asked there. Personally, I viewed this inquiry as pertinent, reflecting my interest in the collective experience of the group, which varied with each course depending on current individual states. The private talks with the Teacher proved to be supportive, providing a sense of being heard and cared for, with no option for attachment, despite all kindness.

[295] https://www.vridhamma.org/Discourses-by-Mr-S-N-Goenka, accessed: January 2024

The presence of two teachers, one male and one female, each overseeing their respective genders, has been a longstanding practice that I still find questionable. Gender-segregated seating in the Dhamma Hall, with women on the right and men on the left, was apparently internally discussed lately, but I do hold it discriminatory, particularly in light of the evolving understanding of gender diversity, including non-binary and transgender identities. The Teachers had a certain authority, obviously due to the asymmetrical spatial arrangement, with participants seated on the floor while they occupied elevated positions, resembling a "pedestal", refraining from any interaction beyond the prescribed to prevent attachment and ensure that the focus remains on the technique rather than any individual (which is already challenging regarding the figure of Goenka, himself). They solely spent time with us in the Dhamma Hall.

During the initial three days we were only practicing the Anapana technique ("observation of natural, normal respiration, as it comes in and as it goes out"[296]) which I would categorise as part of the pre-liminal preparatory phase. Vipassana was gradually introduced the fourth days being slowly introduced on the day 4, marking the beginning of the liminal phase. Even if a meditator, especially inexperienced, could not reach the liminal (a sublime sensation, distinct yet reminiscent of that described in the chapter about the Ayahuasca ceremony) rapidly, her/his/their mind and body were already attuned to it for the established expectations and curiosity about the unknown.

The every-day choreography was very ritualistic. Its extremely slow pace and emphasis on awareness (a term I prefer over mind-fullness) reminded me of Butoh and certain choreographers/ theatre makers like Crystal Pite, Robert Wilson, Angela Woodhouse, and even Gisèle Vienne.

There were many challenging moments (particularly on the 3rd and 6th day during the first, and the 2nd and 5th day during the second course). In general, the most difficult was giving up physical activities, which are integral to my daily life, and simply reside in my body, observing it from within and without, noticing even the subtlest sensations that would otherwise remain ignored forever, yet are "permanently arising and passing away". Surprisingly, despite Vipassana Meditation seemed vastly divergent from the aspects of myself I was familiar with and starkly contrasted the conventional way of life we are conditioned to live, I swiftly adapted and begun to appreciate that heightened embodiment, leading to a very new perception of my own matter and energy. I walked differently, aware of how my body moved and functioned. Typically, I shied away from stillness and non-motion, but the structured environment and rigorous training empowered me to approach such

[296] https://www.vridhamma.org/What-is-Anapana, accessed: January 2024

situations differently. Without the option to write anything, I needed to adjust again and rely on my cognitive faculties and my bodily memory, especially.

In various instances, I questioned my decision to participate, particularly when I perceived myself as an obedient animal devoid of autonomy. Both the Teachers and Goenka himself, through the recorded materials, frequently retold the instructions, especially in the opening and closing segments of each meditation session. Initially, I found this repetition irritating, almost as if it underestimated our intellectual capacities. However, as I began to view it as an integral aspect of the ritualistic practice I came to accept it without reservation.

We communicated through means other than verbal. Certain "noises" like coughing or loud breathing occasionally proved challenging to manage, disrupting our focus and causing imbalance. In a conversation after the course, we confessed that each of us had specific descriptions for one another, especially concerning audio-visual characteristics. It was beautiful to be aware of every sound and movement in a rather big space while deeply appreciating the silence and sensing compassion devoid of any inclination toward judgment or exclusion.

Experiencing significant positive change in just 10 days without the aid of any substances, but through a focus on oneself in tranquility and silence is highly encouraging. Given the current state of the world we live in, the ability for genuine, compassionate feelings and thoughts toward others always offers comfort. This experience was a glimpse into a potentially different and more fulfilling way of coexistence.

On the 10th day, following breakfast, we collectively practiced Metta for the first time. It underscores why I view this "ritual" as essential for community building, in spite of the strict physical separation that we probably never experienced before. Nevertheless, I never felt alone, nor invisible there. Rather, it served as a demanding rite of passage initiating into the depth and power of Metta. The end of the Noble Silence (except within the Dhamma Hall) introduced the post-liminal phase. It was an uncanny feeling. I had no urge to begin speaking. We exchanged smiles as if signalling an invitation for verbal interaction. However, after some time, I felt overwhelmed. Some voices seemed too loud, and certain conversations irrelevant. I found myself yearning to retreat back to the silent self in our small forest. But soon enough I was for more words. Additionally, we had the opportunity to interact with the male students, although our meals remained separate. Later that afternoon, we engaged in some organisational tasks. The discourse session resumed infused with levity, as Goenka proclaimed our liberation from the “prison”.

The last evening of each course brought a lot, since I experienced deep and memorable exchanges with persons I multifacetedly resonated with. Following the first course, I had a desire to prolong

my stay, for the quality of existence had not been as pleasant for quite some time and the sense of belonging was incredible. This was strikingly similar to post-liminal phase of Ayahuasca Ceremony. However, during the second course, I felt it was the right moment to “go back”, seeking to integrate the acquired experience into my “mundane life”.

On the departure day we attended the last discourse instead of the usual early meditation followed by silenceless breakfast. I was delaying the moment of reclaiming my tech-belongings, sensing certain angst about the influx of information and communication that undoubtedly awaited me. However, the second time I had the agency knowing exactly what to expect and how to manage the input. Some of us remained to assist with the cleaning, followed by a final meditation session with the teachers before leaving. The moment of switching on my iPhone was the symbolic end of this “ritual” throughout which someone was taking care of my basic needs, affording me the opportunity to focus on broader aspects of existence and calmly observe my life at all times.

We looked after each other. Those with cars offered rides to those without. The journey back to Budapest/Paris was pleasant and even felt somewhat like an excursion. I still perceive these moments as space in between - I was neither fully "that" nor entirely "this" world. However, I was very much present, imbued with an incredible amount of patience and kindness. Some days later, we also received an email granting us access to certain online materials as old students.

It is worth mentioning that, since both Vipassana Course and Ayahuasca Ceremony are my case studies, I had a few episodes of their comparison (even though it was absolutely not recommended). I experienced a certain aversion towards Vipassana, as my affinity lies in people, nature, light, dancing, music, colours, etc., all of which inherently joyous in spite of some difficult moments. In contrast, Vipassana involves the practice of sitting and breathing with closed eyes, where all external stimuli (including food and clothing), were to be mild and neutral. Joy vs. Misery (as Goenka reiterated numerous times - we were there to deal with out misery and liberate ourselves from it). Ultimately, both paths proved beneficial, converging toward a similar, if not identical, outcome.

Another aspect I would like to emphasise is my observation regarding the suitability of Buddhism for the perpetuation of neoliberal capitalism. Delving deeply into the philosophical underpinnings of Buddhism is beyond the scope of this paper. However, Buddhism is evidently rooted in the concept of the present moment and may cancel the culture of (oppressive and exploitative) memory, as well as Die Zukunftsmusik which is highly pertinent and requires extensive planning and systemic change if we are seeking to spare ourselves from future misery on a larger scale. Additionally, it advocates for the ultimate individual responsibility and unconditional acceptance of

all phenomena as they are, recognising the impermanent nature of existence (Anicca[297]). In order to achieve its utmost functionality and applicability, this teaching would need a vastly improved, perhaps even utopian societal context. There are still governments, bureaucracies, passports, (dis)privileges, etc. to hinder the corresponding ideal. Nonetheless, engaging in such "performative and ritualistic" practice could contribute to the emergence of utopian elements within our current society.

It may appear to some extent incongruous to apply Audre Lorde's thoughts on The Uses of Erotics to the erotic-ignorant practice of Vipassana. However, her message aptly resonates:

"When we live outside ourselves, (…) our lives are limited by external and alien forms, and we conform to the needs of a structure that is not based on human need, let alone an individual's. But when we begin to live from within outward (…) then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense. For as we begin to recognise our deepest feelings, we begin to give up, of necessity, being satisfied with suffering and self-negation, and with the numbness which so often seems like their only alternative in our society."[298]

BERGHAIN

Ben Klock - Subzero (Original Mix)

https://open.spotify.com/track/7p6oXzBSPAXXz8Xb8gBPki?si=151de49d17f04ed2

"Dancing till the outside is inside her

At last, no one else is intervening.

Her body is just sound. Without meaning."[299]

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[297] https://www.vridhamma.org/node/2489, accessed: January 2024

[298] Lorde, Audre: The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power, pp.53-59 in Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches Copyright, 1984 https://rhinehartibenglish.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/1/0/22108252/sister_outsider_audrey_lorde_ib_pdf_packet.pdf, accessed: October, 2023, p.58

[299]Tempest, Kae: Divisible by Itself and One / Teilbar durch sich selbst und eins, Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin, 2023, p.100

The inclusion of Berghain, a Night Club acknowledged as a cultural institution since 2021, amidst the other three case studies may evoke perplexity among my readers. However, recent decision by UNESCO[300] could eventually bring some academic and spiritual peace.

In my thesis, I deliberately seek for disruption, a crack with a different horizon. This decision stems from a personal inclination, as I do not see myself as an exclusive devotee of any of the paths under investigation. Rather, my interest lies in exploring practices that may appear blasphemous when juxtaposed. I am drawn to the dramaturgy of such a quest, closer to theatre and arts than to the socio-economically prescribed linearity. Nothing spectacular for boasting, spectacular enough for myself.

Many people are not drawn to Vipassana Meditation[301] or eco-feminist durational performing art, to describe it in such terms. Ayahuasca could be easier to relate, I assume,[302] particularly considering the ecstatic[303] they both offer, which is obviously embedded in the collective aura and mutual exchange.[304] Doubtlessly, substance consumption[305] carries profound implications, a sine qua non in the context of Ayahuasca. In my perspective the crucial difference is that the former involves escaping something troubling, while the latter entails facing and addressing all what might come through deep self and world-digging. Then again, the practice of "substance intake" is not so far from many prominent worlds and could be somewhat related to ritual as sacrifice of one's body in

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[300] Bereich: darstellende Künste, gesellschaftliche Bräuche, Feste und **Rituale**, 13/03/2024
https://www.unesco.de/kultur-und-natur/immaterielles-kulturerbe/immaterielles-kulturerbe-deutschland/bundesweites-3?fbclid=IwAR0FsFe8ueZpLfz_ERHTZupEXs3f8ycwRWRxiUe9MoNQR2y344NG9qebglY, accessed: March 2024
https://www.ravetheplanet.com/en/techno-culture-in-berlin-unesco-heritage/?fbclid=IwAR01gK58BUv3Rvhh85-GbKn3YlQ0OXYtrYdM6UcjXHXvbhfA-85ncRPDpsI, accessed: March 2024

[301] I was once even sure about staying among them, but transformation happened, the power of the ritualistic, the will to go through "a rite of passage" showed generous results.

[302] Through this autoethnography, as I have already mentioned, I came to recognise the possibly sensical formation of subgroups:
- **Berghain + Ayahuasca,**
- **Vipassana + Sisters Hope.**

A **Reader** should also reconsider this option.
Nevertheless, the moments of deepest research pleasure are bounded to the unexpected overlapping of three, or even all them four.

[303] Last couple of years there is evident proliferation of ecstatic dance events in Berlin, one organisation calls themselves conscious:
"This group is about conscious clubs taking place in Berlin. Conscious clubs are **drug free, smoke free parties**. We believe that ecstasy and trance like states are an important human need. In tribal cultures people have always come together in ritual and dance to reconnect with source. This need is often fulfilled in the „normal" clubbing scene in Berlin. Still, for more and more of us it becomes impossible to go there anymore, because we feel that the environment is harming us. It is our wish to offer an alternative to the regular Berlin club landscape. Let's join together and let the conscious club scene grow and evolve! Aho.
Conscious clubbing is a form of clubbing that is done in a ritualistic way. This group is about conscious clubs. So an element of dance or clubbing needs to be contained in order to be relevant for this group. For example: a yoga workshop is not related to conscious clubbing or dance unless it entails a dj set/ ecstatic dance session.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/2295645017421327, accessed: November 2023

[304] This could be also true for **Sisters Hope** that offers another quality of interrelatedness and ecstasy, but then again it could be applicable for **Vipassana** as well, since the ecstatic sensed thanks to that practice, was one of the most profound ever, and depended mostly on myself and my inner world shaped by those never-ending meditative hours for days. Precisely for this reason I found **futile any kind of clustering.**

[305] To touch this topic accurately would require a lot of space and I will not delve into it, since it would not significantly contribute for my research based in ritualistic performativity, community building and the consequential socio-political impact. I **give them credits,** nevertheless. Only in short, I am certain that no alcohol and drugs are involved in **Sisters Hope** practices. **Vipassana Course** is very strict in this regard (no alcohol, drugs, tobacco). **Ayahuasca Ceremony** requires in general a very specific preparation (among them: no alcohol, no "recreational drugs", whereas tobacco they use has a very elevated purpose).

order to "withstand something overpowering in life […], to perceive something-too-huge" to refer to Deleuze[306].

An indicator of the importance of such place were the restrictions during the peaks of Covid-19 which underlined anew its significance beyond mere going out and social interaction that encompasses the sensation of the power of excessive, fully embodied coexistence. Drawing upon Han's insights[307], in the almost ritualless world, having an opportunity to practice a ritual that allows otherworldliness, incompatible with work and production, prioritising play and enabling the sense of community provides an environment reminiscent of home, shared with Eros and Thanatos. When I started contemplating its value, I lacked knowledge about other practices, particularly Vipassana. Therefore the impossibility of Berghain had a greater impact, since the skills I possessed that time (primarily centred around sports and occasional mountaineering, time in nature in general) were insufficient to provide the support I needed. The sense of community joined in corporeal excess and joy, albeit ephemeral, was missing, what I could describe through the concept of "liquidarity", coined by Luis Garcia (2023). It is a fusion of instability and solidarity holding "an important utopian element"[308] as it "imagines what an intimate society of strangers would feel like, even if such a thing doesn't exist (yet)."[309] I would argue that all of my case studies share this characteristic, which I read their socio-political value.

Anyhow, for my objective to analyse each of the case studies through a similar optics, primarily that of the ritualistic, it is time to commence with the pre-liminal, which I identify in the decision to visit Berghain that weekend. Much depends on the mood of being auratically[310] *cool* enough. Furthermore, the attire carries an immense weight in this context.

Although I have my "Berghain people", going alone is also enjoyable, as it opens the door for new encounters and gives ample time-space for a focussed dance, which is my main motivation for attending. This usually happens on Sunday afternoons, around 2-3 p.m. The atmosphere is different when waiting for a Monday compared to other days due to the constellation of people and, as I have already interpreted in my essay, to the "deviation from the norm or the disruption of the usual functioning, contrasting with bodies that may be deemed 'wasted' or spending time in

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306 Gilles Deleuze's alphabet book: B for Boisson (English: Drink)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPPcJA0wSOM&t=494s, accessed: February 2024.

307 Han, Byung-Chul: "Vom Verschwenden der Rituale, Eine Topologie der Gegenwart", Ullstein, Berlin, 2019

308 Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/
The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.36

309 Ibid, p.36

310 Aura is "[a] gossamer fabric woven of space and time: a unique manifestation of a remoteness, however close at hand."
Benjamin, Walter: One way street and other writings, Penguin, London, 2009, p.184

unconventional ways, such as sleeping on a Monday afternoon what suggests that Berghain's '[ritualistic, IJ] performance events' may challenge traditional notions of time and break away from societal norms or expectations, creating a unique experience for the attendees and adding more to its politicality"[311].

In this phase a clubgoer is always prepared for any length of the waiting line, hoping for the good timing of arrival, ideally less than two hours of waiting. On one Easter, just before leaving Berlin for a few months, I found myself queuing for the excessively lengthy duration, related to an unusually long reentry/guest list line. Now certain that I will never repeat this, I questioned that day multiple times my own clubbing and general values, but chose to stay. After waiting for two hours, it usually seems "unreasonable" to leave. During these waits, I encountered very kind people, with whom I even engaged in conversation about Sara Ahmed (I completed reading her book "On Being Included" there!?!), and another co-queuer was introduced to her work. On such occasion, one engages in "pre-liminal games", attempting to assess the likelihood of gaining entry based on outfit - usually black, attitude and "radiation". This is also when I can discern persons who I would like to be surrounded by on the dance floor, as my entire liminal phase hinges upon that. Anyhow, the bouncer, also known as a "dance audience curator", is ultimately trustful in this regard. Berghain's curatorial policy, which I briefly used to questioned, plays a pivotal role in shaping the pre-liminal phase. The adrenaline rush experienced before being "scanned" must be akin to the state of young boys and girls in the anticipation of their rite of passage. Therefore, I believe that any possibility for ritualistic experiences are important nowadays in our contemporary Western society. An individual experiences a sense of fear and yet needs to rely on him/her/themselves. Self-trust and self-control that simply cannot be feigned, but carried within. This sensation is reminiscent of the moments preceding the drinking of Ayahuasca or the self-commitment made to endure the first 10-day Vipassana Course and give away world-connecting devices in anticipation of the onset of the Noble Silence.

Speaking relaxed German is like uttering magic words before The Gate. This must be the only occasion I love to speak German. Hearing YES must be akin to the experience of the religious Christians at the Heaven's door. It's the moment when you get the first dopamine kick. Having said that, Berghain goers often talk about going to the Sunday mess, church[312], or a temple.

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311 Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.30

312 "For this weekend's Klubnacht, the Detroit DJ/producer holds service at Panorama Bar, joined by the founder of the Black Artist Database (B.A.D.) NIKS as well as NYC duo The Carry Nation, who bring their city's nightlife traditions into the present with their lush, vocal-heavy sets."
https://www.berghain.berlin/en/event/76050/, accessed: November 2023

Nevertheless, the seemingly nonsensically long wait brings so much clubber's joy and pure ecstasy. Still remaining with the Christian iconography, the protracted waiting can stand for the secular "suffering" one is expected to endure during each pilgrimage.

At this juncture, he final affirmation is not yet granted, as everyone must undergo a body and "luggage" inspection and pay the entrance fee. It is apparent that Berghain's orientation is not dominantly profit-driven, as the entrance was denied to numerous individuals who would willingly pay for admission, such as the Mars-oriented X human. I interpreted this in my essay, after Andersson, as Berghain's ethos in prioritising "subcultural and queer capital, not monetary or social capital, and in most of the cases one becomes a persona after changing clothes /costume/ inside"[313]. However, it is obvious that the price got Corona+other-contemporary-atrocities-related higher, potentially affecting the diversity of the audience and consequently the quality of the overall experience. This is followed by the insignia of the liminal phase, which I consider the most significant: stickers placed over the phone cameras.[314] Such a strict camera ban[315] I have never experienced before Berghain (2009) made so much sense[316]. It gives one of the last "camera-free aspect[s] of reality"[317]. If something is to be in any way otherworldly, it does not "broadcast" itself into the world. The only way to grasp the essence of a club night (from Saturday to Monday) at Berghain is through active participation, rather than passive observation or photography, since a photo is just a comment of life, not life. As Benjamin suggested "the aura is bounded to here and now; it has no replica"[318]. Reflecting on other case studies I argue that auratic is essential to profound experiences and transformations, which can be embodied not only in natural settings like the Peruvian selva or a Colombian village but also in urban spaces like former industrial buildings. Andersson wrote in his article I mentioned in my essay that "[i]n the era of mass digital

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313 Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.33

314 "The smartphone has come to be, as researcher Jason Farman put it, 'the perfect symbol' of leaving the here and now for something digital, some other, virtual space."
Jurgenson, Nathan: The Social Photo. On photography and Social Media, Verso London, 2019, p. 68

315In certain instances, the prohibition of cameras can carry even greater socio-political implications, as evidenced by the renowned Georgian nightclub, Bassiani. This internal policy serves to safeguard visitors from potential persecution by state or similar authorities. "The venue has been subject to smear campaigns from right-wing groups and police hostility in the past that led to citizens protesting on the streets of Tbilisi for its reopening, much of which goes a long way to explain why the club is cautious about its attendee's privacy."
https://mixmag.net/feature/photos-videos-banned-dancefloor-nightclubs, accessed: November 2023

316 Barthes wrote: "But very often (too often, to my taste) I have been photographed and knew it. Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of "posing, I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. This transformation is an active one: I feel that the Photograph creates my body or mortifies it, according to its caprice"…
Barthes, Roland: Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography, Hill & Wang, New York, 1981, pp.10-11

317 Benjamin, Walter: One way street and other writings, Penguin, London, 2009, p.247

318 Ibid, p.243

reproduction, Berghain has protected its 'aura' by a strictly enforced photo ban inside the building. [...]. This mystique or 'aura' was aided and preserved by the club's notoriously selective door policy and long queue."[319] This also evokes my sensuous experience contained in the smell of sweat, smoke, fog, alcohol, in light and sound, creating a distinct raw and simply real atmosphere which might be a connecting line with Sisters Hope, but also Ayahuasca Ceremony (that distinctive smell of mapacho's and ayahuasca, especially its taste. On the other hand, the Vipassana Course heightens sensory perception, enabling individuals to discern subtleties, particularly in relation to food and beverages.

The subsequent phase entails outfit change/adjustment, shedding of the superfluous "paraphernalia" and dancing. "Nothing is planned; it all happens spontaneously with the tools I already carry within me. I do not exhibit myself; I simply am and I dance."[320] My body does me. The uniqueness of Berghain lies doubtlessly in the amalgamation of all our energies. Although officially no longer, it is a power house (plant), just as we all are there. It is a space of respect, where individuals freely exchange compliments (not so common in Germany), a space of trust, for the assurance that if something goes in wrong direction, someone will take care of you. (Analogously reflected in other case studies: at Ayahuasca Ceremony there is a shaman and his assistants; at Vipassana Course a teacher, a course manager, servers… This culture of care and sharing extends to simple gestures of courtesy such as holding doors open for one another and yielding precedence. Here is safe to be vulnerable, and people cry during Vipassana Courses; at Ayahuasca Ceremony one is exposed to the big unknown, where collective empathy and trust are the only coping mechanisms.)

The essence of the dance floor lies in the perception of a shared vibe, in the alignment of energy among a group of people and their ability for a spontaneous, committed, and durational improvised choreography. They stay together, protect themselves from those who do not harmonise with their dynamics and would like to walk through this little enclave. This marks the initiation into a groove, that intangible object of desire (cf. J. Hollis)[321], a collective experience generated together: the DJ and the dancers, that gives the "sense of belonging to the group through mimesis, imitation, reproduction, and variation", to refer again to Mathias[322]. Such collectivity is "synchronised,

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[319] Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.33

[320] Ibid, p.23

[321] James Hollis - The Personal Myth in Turbulent Times - Jung Society of Atlanta, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x6jUtoO7ysI&t=2143s, accessed: August 2023

[322] Ibid, p.35

holding aesthetic, artistic, and political value"[323]. It gives the feeling of a flow that I consider one of the camera-ban consequences[324], as well as the influence of the ambiance itself, which, as I have previously noted, "involves a specific mode of propagation proceeding from one neighbouring body to the next, by contagion and imitation"[325]. The role of the DJ(s) can easily be likened to that of shamans, teachers, or evokers. They cultivate "interrelationality, fostering community, intensifying the atmosphere and the ability to sense the dancers and their energies. It is beautiful when we can communicate with a DJ and give him/her/them a sign what is (not yet) in the air"[326]. This atmosphere further evolves when, as Miller observed, "DJs and singers, ritual specialists and composers, listeners, dancers, instrumentalists, designers, dramaturges or sound engineers all actively engage in mobilising music and sounds to atmospheric ends, they cultivate atmospheric relations through what Mikkel Bille calls atmospheric practices (Bille 2019)"[327]. Particularly in the absence of verbal or even physical communication and often solely through the exchange of energy and vibrations, which is already very akin to Vipassana Course.

Returning to the ritualistic, Berghain "gives a weekly opportunity to engage in orgiastic living [cf. Maffesoli, 1982, IJ], which leads to both a decline and a resurrection that occurs at the latest on the following Friday."[328]

Berghain not only promotes body positivity[329], but also amplifies its visibility. It is a sex positive place, a crucial distinction from the other case studies. I opt to relate this to its characteristic as a safe space for exhibiting of the socially repressed[330], to its Dionysian and the ritualistic. Here,

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[323] Ibid., p.35

[324] Ibid, p.35

[325] Thibaud, JP: The Lesser Existence of Ambiance, pp. 175-187 in Griffero, Tonino / Tedeschini, Marco (eds): Atmosphere and Aesthetics: A Plural Perspective, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24942-7_10, abstract, accessed: August 2023

[326] Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.29

[327] Riedel, Friedlind: Atmospheric Relations. Theorising Music and Sound as Atmosphere, pp. 1-42 in Riedel, F; Torvinen, J. (ed.): Music as Atmosphere.Collective Feelings and Affective Sounds, Routledge, London/New York, 2019, p.5

[328] Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.46

[329] I will incorporate the theme of **age positivity** observed in each case study, highlighting its utmost significance within the context of Berghain. The conventional perception of clubbing typically excludes individuals with greater life experience, making this inclusion a powerful political statement gesture.

[330] A very accurate description of that what a Night Club like Berghain offers is contained in the publisher's description of Graham's book Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures (2009):
"Seeking freedom from moral prohibitions and standards, pleasure in rebellion, refuge from sexual and gender prejudice, exile from oppression, rupturing aesthetic boundaries, re-enchanting the world, reclaiming space, fighting for "the right to party," and responding to a host of critical concerns, electronic dance music cultures are multivalent sites of resistance."
https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/technomad/ accessed August 2023
Rosa writes in her book Radical Intimacy that"[t]oday's **queer spaces** - essential sources of joy, refuge, solidarity and resistance - have their genealogy in sexual dissidence."(p.68) and referring to Chitty, "'**queer' is less an identity or practice, and more about dissent against the state and capital**." (p.72)
Rosa, Sophie K: Radical Intimacy, Pluto Press, London, 2023

discussions may range from notions of "sin" to pathways to the divine. Unlike in Vipassana, where sexually connoted body parts are not mentioned during the body scan, Berghain celebrates the erotic as a source of power, echoing Audre Lorde's sentiments[331]. And with that I conclude this topic.

To refer to myself again, Berghain is a "Spielraum (space of play) […], not predetermined, […] [that] emerges organically depending on the present individuals, as exemplified by the practice of contact improvisation. This form of joyous dance [is, IJ] guided by intuitive movement and body intelligence […]. In Berghain, the body is responsive and able to interact with others and oneself."[332] I believe intuition is closely tied to the conscious, and body intelligence is evident to its extreme in the practice of Vipassana. It serves as the primary medium for Ayahuasca Ceremony and is central to the practice of Sisters Hope. I will argue once more that the possibility of such body relevance is related to the cameralessness, bodies happen bodily, one exists as a subject and a substance.

Berghain gives the opportunity for horizontal togetherness. "Dj booth and the dance floor are on the same level […]. The whole space turns into the stage, toilets as well - yes, indeed".[333] Despite the shaman in Ayahuasca Ceremony holds greater agency, there is never a sense of hierarchical order, particularly not in spatial terms. In contrast, the setting of a the main Vipassana meditation hall exhibits a more pronounced hierarchy, with students seated closely to the floor on mats while teachers occupy their pedestals, albeit modest ones. Although I find this hierarchy unnecessary, reinforced, conservative and even amusing, I respect it.

Nonetheless, Berghain requires many rules to be followed, yet they do not convey a sense of oppression and control for the sake of control. All the other case studies perform the same. Furthermore, the equivalent correlates with ritualistic practices in general. People usually do not object to rules per se, only to the nonsensical and undignifying. Conversely, certain regulations and structures offer glimpses into the utopian. They transform the liminal, space in between, from the place of not-belonging and perpetual exhausting transitioning[334] into a place to be. Vipassana Course could serve as an example. According to me this also resonates with Malabous's interpretation of Levina's ethical anarchy: "I am free when I obey some order that does not

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[331] Lorde, Audre: The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power, pp.53-59 in Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches Copyright, 1984 https://rhinehartibenglish.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/1/0/22108252/sister_outsider_audrey_lorde_ib_pdf_packet.pdf, accessed: October, 2023

[332] Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.26

[333] Ibid, p.33

[334] The transition that may happen here bear no resemblance to the tenets of neoliberal capitalism and the world order.

[officially, IJ] exist”[335].

It is worth mentioning that Berghain unquestionably did not “commence as a ritual, but has gradually evolved into a ritualised practice over time”[336], and in line with Fisher-Lichte[337] the enhanced community feeling, where the usual borders between individuals are dissolved, is a fundamental condition for a ritual. (“She mentions **rituals** in this book as well as the enhanced community feeling, where the usual borders between individuals are dissolved”[338]). Evidently, the duration is crucial in each case, here in an even greater degree including the agency to attune to one’s own body and mood, determining the length of the stay accordingly. Another similarity is the uneasy decision to depart, a state possibly provoked by the comparison between the inner and outer world, accentuating the ritualistic nature of the experience. Reflecting the effort invested in gaining entry fosters a heightened sense of presence and a temporary rootedness grounding - a hallmark of ritual. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the case of of Vipassana, where thoughts of giving up or sabotaging one's own participation in any way possible arise. Yet, the commitment to persevere, fuelled by the awareness of investment made thus far and the anticipation of the benefits the 10th day might bring, prevails. Similarly, some passages in Ayahuasca Ceremony are hard[339] and prompt questions about the purpose of such experience and its seeming neverendness. Nevertheless, the desire to remain and embrace whatever unfolds persists. I do not equate the the experiences across these case studies as they differ in nature and objectives, some of which involve unpleasant work (cf. Turner, 1974), and yet they have a common ground in the sense of belonging and mutual appreciation for oneself and others who makes this all possible. This stands in dissonance with the instant, fragmented living through digital images.

When you engage in a self-dialogue to determine whether it is time to depart and decides to do so, you are entering the post-liminal phase. You choose to depart when you have what you have come for. You change the clothes, collect the “luggage”, and exit the space with a sense of ease, contrasting with the complexity of entering. The moment you face daylight marks your return to this side, akin to the stages observed in the Ayahuasca Ceremony, where the colour of the sky

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[335] Catherine Malabou on Philosophy and Anarchism: Alternative or Dilemma?, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dtXh9t4H1Bw&t=2744s, accessed: December, 2023

[336] Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.26

[337] Fischer-Lichte, Erika: Ästhetik des Performativen, Suhrkamp, 2004, p.204

[338] Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.33

[339] cf. Bewusstseinserweiternde Methoden als gefährlicher Trend? | Sternstunde Philosophie | SRF Kultur, https://youtu.be/tBZQZbvHWEw?si=QieGbZ4_aDvaqnA1, accessed: August, 2023

indicates the ritual's progression.

The post-Berghain mode of being (especially on sunny days) is something I cherish and use immediately in the outer world. I carry an abundant vita elan and enthusiasm, since my body was itself, a choreographer, a self-surpriser, an integrative medium facilitating the pure embodied joy, often solely sustained by water, almonds, an apple, a banana (yes, entirely possible!). This reemphasises the significance of such spaces for reconnection and allowing individuals to tap into their own inner ecstasy in the supportive environment. The role of personal agency in enabling others to undergo similar experiences highlights the importance of relationality devoid of any other specific interest, but mutual upholding. Moreover, in reverence to the "integrational phase," I am consistently dedicated to caring for my body, so it never gets wasted. Oftentimes I do the sport “the day after”, and derive great enjoyment from intellectually stimulating tasks. This must be the reason to feel complete, a precious consequence of the even short fully sensuous living, to echo Worre Hallberg’s words from the interview. While the quality of this sense of completeness may vary across different practices, the anchoring of oneself in time and space remains of utmost importance.

I keep the stickers on my cameras for a while, symbolically extending my connection to what has de facto passed. Similarly, I make efforts to preserve longer the Berghain stamps on my wrist’s skin for the same purpose. The Sisters Hope Technique recommends finding totems and other kind of objects as a means of repeated reconnecting with one's Poetic Self. Therefore, I safeguard some wristbands from Berghain and still have my own “homemade” Lego Panorama Bar from the time of Corona's Rule. In the case of Vipassana, an analogous symbolic lies in a cousin, a blanket, and a designated meditation spot in my room. The materiality of my Ayahuasca experiences includes a piece of caapi liana and an embroidery. Additionally, regarding the architectural embodiment of Berghain, each time I pass by, even if just on a train, I instantly reconnect with my ecstatic.

Such materiality of experience is not a gesture of kitsch, but a gentle anarchism in the age of Uberisation (cf. Malabou, 2023), an embodied symbolism that enhances my own embodiment.

Heberto Garcia Ramirez - Jacoma Niwebo Picoi

https://open.spotify.com/track/71ILtCRwlkpeqX0pqqy7Mb?si=d260a0fd360f4678

As I have already indicated, I will not present here any scientific or related research about shamanism, ayahuasca ceremony and indigenous culture from South America (Shipibo-Conibo, Ucayali Basin and Inga, Putumayo). Instead I will autoethnographically rely on my personal experience and knowledge gathered in Summer 2022.

When I hear an icaro, I sense the presence of my Shaman. He said that la medicina, madre ayahuasca, is effective long after ingestion, I am sure it is. Perhaps, the connection I feel now with him embodies a never-ending relationship between myself and the medicine[340]. When one decides to undergo something of this kind, despite the extensive preparatory work, one is never truly prepared for that what might come. This holds true for each case study, for the Vipassana Course, particularly, which is something I value greatly, since there is a little room for risk in our predictable today, where "[o]ne is confronted by [the] difference between the technical homogenisation of all into a worldless planet"[341].

It is for this reason I have chosen to look into camera-less directions, since, as already concluded in my essay, I have no "need for places supplying [us] with the sameness, but rather those that enable distinct experiences and facilitate varied perceptions"[342], which is inherently political. This applies to my expectation within theatre world.

My decision was not to plan anything. I traveled to South America with this intention, and as I had heard from some people I respect in this matter, such journeys are not for prearrangements, but openness to go where the road leads. I was in Iquitos, engaging in conversations with various locals on the streets, in bars, and at the city's market, allowing my intuition to guide me. Additionally, I consulted with my gracious local host (whose spouse, averse to participating in such ceremonies, believes that enduring something so tormenting and challenging is unnecessary since she has no interest in deep self-exploration), he recommended a Maima, but I ultimately chose Maestro

340 After writing this chapter and revisiting time-space from Peru and Colombia, I can definitely claim this.

341 https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/disruption-technique-world/. Accessed: March 2024

342 Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.50

Heberto Garcia. Indeed, I consulted his website to inform my decision. I found the option "book now" somewhat off-putting initially, as it seemed incongruent with my perception of the ethical principles of Shipibo shamanism and indigenous wisdom, but I gained later a more nuanced understanding of the overall concept and the possibilities unlisted online. My stay was brief, lasting two days (the retreat prices has surged significantly in recent time). In this regard, the Vipassana Course is the most distant from the neoliberal frame of living, offering glimpses of a classless society.

A unique aspect of the preliminal phase in this case is its establishment in flâneurism and modification of dietary habits in alignment with general recommendation, long before one is certain about the participation in Ayahuasca Ceremony. Upon meeting Heberto, I was instantly in a good place and recognised anew the advantages of prioritising Instituto Cervantes over the Faculty of Pharmacy. Among the first objects I noticed after entering his centre were several books in Serbian (Cyrillic), since the administration was surprisingly managed remotely by a woman from Belgrade. I was at home in Peruvian selva[343].

Before the arrival, I completed a questionnaire, as it is essential for the shaman understand my rmotivation for being there, a bit of my history, my current state, and my expectations, in order to provide me with the most effective guidance and cure possible. The preparatory process[344] resembles to that of Vipassana, and in both cases one is looking for healing and transformation, pardon, in all four cases. The Shaman, also known as Curandero (healer), is accompanied by helpers who lead me through various preparatory steps which included a tour of the property (spatially and functionally very similar to Vipassana Course), and the stories it tells (particularly Maloca), a lunch (last meal that day, echoing a correlation with Vipassana), a purifying mud bath[345]

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[343] My poem written in Puerto Nariño, few days before reaching Iquitos:

Pachamama

It wasn't my Forest
This is Amazonia
Mine are in the Balkans
Mine is when I call it Home
And here I was at Home
It took some Time
And Time is where the Spirits live
They waited for the Sun to be gone
They came when the Moon took care
And I trusted
I trusted into something I had no control over
And I realised this must be The Trust
And my inner child whispered:
Home is Trust
And this is why.

[344] https://yosiocha.com/preparation/, accessed: December 2023

[345] https://yosiocha.com/plant-and-flower-baths/, accessed: December 2023

(serving for the preceremonial aura-cleansing, which strangely enough reminds me of the significance of aura in the case of Berghain, where one might ponder wether the initiation of a bouncer requires a certain shamanic wisdom), and instructions for the “conversation” with three teacher threes that is to be ritualistically performed individually before the Ayahuasca Ceremony begins. The grounding nature of the location instilled in me an immense sense of trust, particularly evident during the ceremony itself, where I perceived the Shaman as a materialised idea of Trust. The same afternoon I had a private consultation with Maestro Heberto for a more thorough diagnostic assessment.

We awaited the twilight. I felt a surge of adrenaline, a sensation resonant with my experiences in other case studies. The Shaman was dressed for a ritual and my attire was white. I deeply appreciate the involvement in non-anthropocentrically determined reverence, awe and reliance, particularly before the ingestion of ayahuasca. Throughout the Ceremony, I received continuous care devoid of pampering and indulgence, since guided along the path of healing and transformation. Certain segments of the journey proved very challenging, even daunting, yet I was heard by the Shaman and found solace in his support, once in the form of a flower bath prepared by his assistant. Ayahuasca was offered to me three times. This aspect of the ritual is very resonating, as it underscores that the significance lies not in the quantity consumed, nor in material means (the awareness of my own privilege to arrive here from Europe is present), but in adhering to another, more profound law. The Shaman’s voice, chants, glossolalia (I venture to assert), mapacho, rapé, the interplay of darkness and candlelight, sound of the nature enveloped with silence (it is important to abstain from the verbal communication during the Ceremony; in case of a longer retreat “silence diet” is included, which prompts a comparison not only with Vipassana Course, but Sisters Hope, and even Berghain - my preference for solitary attendance allows for communication through alternative means, excluding verbal discourse; when conversation does occur, it is my deliberate choice made to enhance the experience of the ritualistic) belong to the register of liminal phase, that took me through numerous sub-stages (the Shaman navigates us through the spiritual and energetic dimensions, while in case of Berghain, to make this peculiar connection, we access and stay for a while in the “space” of high energetic charge on our own responsibility) ending in a sensation akin to catharsis, reminiscent, albeit to a lesser extent, of the transformative effect of a sublime theatre play. The insights gained during this process, regarding the perception of my time, my own geography, nature and my position within it, constitute valuable knowledge, even wisdom, applicable across disparate contexts.

The most beautifully radiant sky ever, not that far from the dawn, lead toward the gate of the post-liminal. The dreams I had thereafter also played an integrational role. Before leaving the Maloca, Heberto asked again about my well-being, and his assistant escorted me back to my cabin - simple and pure care.

The following day I spent in communal engagement with the fellow inhabitants, during which we exchanged our respective experiences. Since on that occasion no members of Heberto's family was visiting, a girl from Spain gifted me one of her embroideries (kené[346]), which was a beautiful gesture of care, something rather typical, then an exception in all of my case studies (sharing raspberries in Berghain, for example). I engaged in couple of other shorter rituals and had an extensive conversation with the Shaman wherein we touched our experiences and perceptions from the previous night. He provided me with additional integrational tools. Since then, I have remained in contact with Heberto's assistant from Serbia.

Peruvian Ayahuasca Ceremony was in some aspects similar to Vipassana. It was conducted exclusively for me (due to specific circumstance), which underscored a focus on myself, my inner world.

The other one, I will describe, took place in a village near Medellin, differed significantly from the previous one (my second Vipassana Course was also notably different from the initial experience). First of all, it was organised for the local people, mostly from Medellin, while I was the sole foreign participant. This posed a disadvantage as many of the attendees were well-versed in the practice, necessitating a greater need for inquiry and engagement on my part, if I may phrase it as such.

Grupo Putumayo - Madre Selva

https://open.spotify.com/track/2xee3Km9pjaMdet94lpJbL?si=e71765b47f1a4469

This time we had Maima and I was genuinely pleased about it. Her sons were her assistants, primarily responsible for the music[347], which was more dynamic overall. At one point around dawn, it seemed somewhat discordant to me - excessively loud and brisk, given the internal states many of us were navigating. I sensed the need for more tranquil, spiritually attuned music for a gentle

[346] https://yosiocha.com/shipibo-art/, accessed: December 2023

[347] They performed on acoustic guitars, prompting my own reflection on Spanish colonisation (or invasion, as preferred by a member of the Inca I talked with) and successful "integration" into various aspects of South American music.

conclusion of our “work”. Nevertheless, their music , especially the lyrics, brought significant joy and power that night, and we periodically engaged in communal singing, that fostered a profoundly uplifting and cohesive atmosphere.

We were offered to drink either cooked or fresh ayahuasca, usually called Yagé in Colombia. I chose the former. Attendees were invited to consume the “wine” multiple times as long as it was done respectfully. The Maloca was filled with people. Prior to the Ceremony, I formed a meaningful connection with a young man from Medellin and we decided to sit/lay beside each other. Our interaction, mostly rooted in smiles, provided mutual support and grounding later on.

In the centre of Maloca was a big fire place, luckily, since nights are cold there. Some important segments of the ceremony, such as Maima’s conduction of cleansing on each participant, accompanied by her specific chanting, were performed while we were sitting around the fire with our (semi-)naked torsos (this was the pinnacle of nudity encountered throughout my participatory engagements in ceremonial practices within South America, which I found surprising. particularly in case of sweating lodge, considering their strong connection to nature and the body, that I could attribute to the enduring influence of Catholicism.

This time I was able to mentally distinguish between my body, mind and spirit, and then physically, when I desired to join the dance around the fireplace, yet found my body too exhausted to comply. Reflecting on this, I perceive my body's exhaustion as a form of sacrifice akin to experience at Berghain or Vipassana Course, which further underlines the importance of the body as a medium for profound spiritual and existential insights, absolutely removed from the camera’s objectification (no one ever used a phone during Ayahuasca ceremonies). At that precise moment, I came to realisation that any action was unnecessary, since I was that girl as well, and I could dance through her. I highlight this point specifically for its profound revelation of the beauty and potency inherent to the absolute connectedness, belonging, and self-dissolving, when one can say: “Soy todo y soy nada” and apprehend a different notion of identity. Hence, I posit such a practice is not only curing for an individual, but for the society she/he/they belong(s) to. That evening, our communication was imbued with kindness, care, and love. I attribute this atmosphere, in part, to the destabilisation of our identities, which allowed for the openness to their recomposition. Throughout the ceremony, we maintained a supportive presence for one another, readily offering assistance if needed. Certainly, Maima was the cornerstone.

Several of us marvelled at the breathtaking morning haze over the green hills and encircling the Maloca. (In that moment, I could not help but ponder how such a sight could be an aesthetically sublime stage design and during the ceremony itself, I perceived the setting as a form of

performance, akin to being situated at the origin of a theatrical branch, assumably enhanced by the costumes and insignia many of them had, not only Maima.) I sensed the absolute presence it time and space, weightlessness, (inter- and intra-)connectedness and joy. This sensation resembled aspects of Vipassana Course, but with a more direct relational quality, whether with fellow human beings (the embodied concept of transindividuality) or with the nature, or with simply everything. This marked the end of the liminal phase.

We gathered for breakfast around the fire, and afterwards, I slept, experiencing dreams that facilitated integration. Later that day we exchanged various forms of knowledge, during which I found particular value in learning about the symbolic and practical significance of various plants. Everything seemed purposeful in that environment. One man remarked on how white people had overlooked something that precious for centuries, and now are coming back for it. Nevertheless, my presence was not about obtaining tools for personal troubles; rather, my own cosmology is contingent on the other ones I manage to encounter and on the subsequent process of composting (Haraway, 2016).

The Ceremony in Colombia, very affordable, community-based and community-sustained, meets the concept of Vipassana Courses in the point farthest from neoliberal normalcy. Central to the experience was the ethos of sharing and mutual care which continued that afternoon through a sweating lodge ceremony, proving to be even more ritualistic, characterised by distinct procedural steps and specific roles assigned to each participant. Despite the communal orientation of the ceremony, the experience of "rebirth" was profoundly personal and introspective for each participant.

Ayahuasca Ceremony leads me back to Walter Benjamin's notion of a cosmic experience (1928) who wrote that "[n]othing so distinguishes ancient from modern man as the former's submission to a cosmic experience of which the latter is scarcely aware", concluding that "communicating ecstatically with the cosmos is something man can only do communally", while "[m]odern man is in danger of mistakenly dismissing such an experience as trivial, dispensable, and leaving it to the individual - a rush of enthusiasm on fine, starry nights"[348]. He further elaborates on education, conceptualising it as "the essential ordering of the relationship between the generations" which is in the end "control of generational relations"[349]. On the contrary, Ayahuasca Ceremony unveils distinct intergenerational relation, protective and guiding, where abuelas (old indigenous woman) come before abuelos, where Pachamama is Mother and Goddess, and the human body has agency that

[348] Benjamin, Walter: One way street and other writings, Penguin, London, 2009, p.113

[349] Ibid, p.114

transcends the role delegated by contemporary humanity. This departure from the socio-cultural norms may contribute against the formation of yet another historical circle in "attempt to make the new body obedient to its commands"[350], which also implies photographic exploitation.

SISTERS HOPE

Sisters Hope - Sisters Hope Soundscape #2

https://soundcloud.com/user-208979542/sisters-hope-soundscape-2

As previously mentioned, I have never attended any of Sisters Hope performances. Therefore, I will not be able to use embodied, but abstract knowledge and might be assuming things inaccurately, nevertheless based on Gry Worre Hallberg's doctoral dissertation[351], and the data from the informal interview[352] we had in October 2023.

In this regard, my intention is not to describe thoroughly the art(istic knowledge) performed by Sisters Hope[353], but to mention some crucial aspects of their practice that interfere with my observations and link with the other case studies, since "it is liberating to place yourself at the intersection of different logics"[354].

They built their identity as "a Copenhagen-based performance-group and movement with an associated international troupe of performers from various backgrounds. Sisters Hope operate in the

[350] Ibid, p.115

[351] Worre Hallberg, Gry: Sensuous Society – Carving the path towards a sustainable future through aesthetic inhabitation stimulating ecologic connectedness (PhD Dissertation), Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Copenhagen, 2021 https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023

[352] Full version in the Appendix, pp.102-111

[353] https://sistershope.dk/about/, accessed: February 2024

[354] Interview, Appendix, p.105

intersection of performance art, research, activism and pedagogy[355]. They draw on immersion and intervention when they manifest on the stages of everyday life and beyond aiming at democratising and unfolding the aesthetic dimension. Especially focusing on educational contexts as in the on-going large-scale project Sisters Academy. Sisters Hope is led by Gry Worre Hallberg who co-founded the group with her poetic twin sister Anna Lawaetz in 2007."[356] Meanwhile, I only managed to visit them in Summer 2021 in Hadehusene, during the preparation for the opening of Sisters Hope Home envisioned (or as they like to say "manifested") as "5-year-durational artwork and platform for artistic research (…) dedicated to poetic and sensuous modes of being and being together"[357], what is resonates my own research interest in and through all case studies.

Moreover, Sisters Hope manages to get its foot in the institutions, softly subverting and deepening the school knowledge. The other examples enable exclusively non-institutional knowledge and way of learning, especially in case of Vipassana (Vipassana-nana - Insight Knowledges) and Ayahuasaca (indigenous knowledge, the expansion of the consciousness), including even Berghain (expanded body knowledge, skills for better socialising, letting go of control, trust…). Such knowledges (for living, or as Goenka puts it: the art of living) are not a part of school curriculum, hence they must be accessible other way, this way. I would also posit that Vipassana Course serves as an educational tool, whereas Ayahuasca ceremony and Berghain can be rather construed as "laboratories" for self-research.

Their Manifesto[358] (Sensuous Society. Beyond economic rationality[359]. ALL*TOMORROWS*DREAMS) states the aim to evoke the sensuous and poetic in everyday life which would lead towards new societal structure rooted in aesthetics - Sensuous Society. This could be an alternative to the actual Western reality of "a fundamental disenchantment of the lifeworld of modern-day humans"[360] (cf. Die Wiederverzauberung der Welt, Fisher-Lichte, 2004, p.361), which could also "reshape[s] the role of art and artistic practice"[361], since "[t]he exclusive autonomous art

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[355] The Illustration of the four methodological approaches: https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, p.175

[356] https://sistersacademy.dk/about/, accessed: February 2024

[357] https://sistershope.dk/projects/sisters-hope-home/, accessed: February 2024

[358] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, pp.10-19, accessed: August 2023

[359] This is especially important today, when, as Worre Hallberg articulated,"our society is more aestheticised than ever and that the aesthetics are thus, ultimately, in service of capitalism", (Gade 2008; Alston 2016a; 2016b), Ibid, p. 57 , what luckily was not the case during **Vipassana Course**, when I was able to see the beauty in the "silver" dew drops on a spiderweb under the sun rays, or the dawn in a Colombian village after **Ayahuasca Ceremony**, or the sun entering through the metal blinds during the moments of music-dance climax at Panorama Bar in **Berghain.**

[360] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, p.12, accessed: August 2023

[361] Ibid, p.12

system is also a result of the dominance of the economic dimension"[362] and they believe this to be "a more common intelligence - simply, because we all have this creative potential within us, and if our beginnings and mode of being in the world are the sensuous, this potential will be released"[363]. Worre Hallberg points out that "Sensuous Society is no utopia", but "a framework to explore the radical idea of the aesthetic dimension, the sensuous and the poetic as the highest values of society"[364], that enables "a more balanced state of being, that draws wisdom from all the previous states of society (…), and creates sustainable trading systems between all members of society"[365]. This is precisely what I what I discern in all other case studies, even in the Dionysian of Berghain. Furthermore she suggests the how: "By donating our flesh to the idea. Embodying future visions to explore what it could be. While we explore, we carve the path"[366](p.15), and considers that such an endeavour requires a third space "interested in the way the human species and beyond are present and interconnect. Interconnectivity. (…) In-between. Diversity"[367], what I see as a common thread across all my case studies. is something I see in common for all my case studies. Sisters Hope's projects are an invitation "to an immersive and otherworldly journey into the governing structures of our society" where the poetic self can be explored by means of touching, sensing and feeling. Having read numerous papers/articles on Sisters Hope, their practice is consistently depicted as ritualistic. Worre Hallberg also explicitly states that their work is based on the three-phased ritual process of the preliminal, the liminal and the postliminal, in the sense of van Gennep and Turner, as well as on Guattari's three ecologies[368] of the mental, the social[369] and the environmental[370] aiming to investigate "how the potentially transformative processes of the participants in the sensuous and

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[362] Ibid, p.12

[363] Ibid, p.12

[364] Ibid, p.13

[365] Ibid, p.15

[366] Ibid, p.13

[367] Ibid, pp.13-14

[368] Worre Hallberg mentions Guattari's concept of Ecosophy which "is characterised by its ability to respect the differences between all living systems and an approach, viewed in the light of Bateson, that might support the training of an ecology of mind, and furthermore, the ethico-aesthetic paradigm. Here, the aesthetic is used as a model for ethics, and an affective, sensuous, creative consciousness and the sense of connectivity replace the current **techno-scientific paradigm, which is rooted in and aspires to the dominating capitalism defined by rationality and separation** (Guattari [1989] 2008, 15–45; [1992] 1995, 98–118; Gade 2008, 213–16)" (p.87) and his conclusion that in social ecology, mental ecology can evolve (p.91), therefore "[w]e need new social and aesthetic practices, new practices of the Self" (Guattari [1989] 2008, 45)" (p.92). This all resonates with my stand points and hopes exhibited in throughout this paper.

[369] Worre Hallberg answered positively in the interview (Appendix, p.106) that the end effect also depends on the people attending their ritualistic performances (just as evident in the other case studies, particularly **Berghain)**, and the way people affect each other within the space is how she understands the effects of social ecology. One important aspect of environmental ecology is "realising or remembering that everything is connected" (Ibid, p.106), which is the highest knowledge **Ayahuasca** delivers, but also **Vipassana.** In **Berghain** we certainly sense how much our bodies, our energies are inter- and intraconnected.

[370] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023, p.23

poetic practices (…) stimulate ecological awareness"[371]. She argue for connectedness beyond anthropocentrism (referring to Latour, Braidotti, Haraway), which is closely associated with Vipassana's philosophy of interconnectedness[372], and Ayahuasca related practices, for the centre in Peru is "active in the protection of the rainforest, and in safeguarding the rights and cultural integrity of the indigenous Amazon peoples to preserve this unique world's heritage"[373], where, even in the absence of this direct and official involvement (such was the case in Santa Elena, Colombia), one feels the position of Pachamama (Mother Earth) within the ceremony and in everyday life. Berlin's nightclubs also stands for green club culture[374].

Since ritual is "beyond or outside the time"[375], such "practice allows the creation of Temporary Autonomous Zones (T.A.Z) […] in which the dominating societal control mechanism can be escaped, and new modes of being and being together can be explored"[376] beyond the Capitalocene, which is specifically what I am looking for in and through all of my case studies. This leads to the next point of resonance epitomised in her references to Marcuse, to whom "freedom is liberation from the dominant suppressing premises of work and everyday life"[377] through the aesthetic dimension and the employment of play principle, both of which my case studies facilitate.

When addressing participation, she anchors it in interactivity (from Bourriaud's relational aesthetics to Fischer-Lichte's interactivity), immersion (De Oliveira sees it as "the sensation of putting everyday life behind – the participant is immersed in an otherworldly space that becomes an analogous level of reality based on the sensuous"[378]) and intervention.

Worre Hallberg refers to Massumi's interpretation of the intensified presence as the way "to be intensely present in the current moment, focusing on the next experimental step rather than potential future success or failure"[379]. I assume this is the manner one is present in each of my case studies, whereas nobody can be intensively present, nor affectively engaged[380] with each other while capturing and sharing photographs.

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[371] Ibid, p.23

[372] https://www.vridhamma.org/research/The-Relevance-of-Vipassana-for-the-Environmental-Crisis, accessed: February 2024

[373] https://yosiocha.com/, accessed: December 2023

[374] https://clubtopia.de/sustainable-clubbing/, accessed February 2024

[375] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, p.81, accessed: August 2023

[376] Ibid, pp. 46-47

[377] Ibid, (Marcuse [1977] 2003). P. 62

[378] Ibid, p.68

[379] Ibid, p.69

[380] "In a state of intensified presence, the entire body is, furthermore, instantly brought into the situation, and thus actions become based on an affective assessment of the situation rooted in every aspect of being. According to the affect theory of Massumi, the more affective, and thus intense, an encounter is, the deeper the release of its potentiality." Ibid, p.70

Returning to their art, methodologically it is an interventionist intersection between performance and pedagogy. The durational performances wary in length, spanning from 24 hours (such as in The Boarding School), to a weekend, three weeks (as seen in The Takeover), and even extending over years. Each of them carries the ritualistic (das Rituale).

Enrolment at Sisters Academy occurs with the purchase of a ticket, followed by the acceptance letter containing various information. Worre Hallberg said that upon receiving a letter "your mind and your body start to prepare for the experience somehow"[381]. Indeed, this pattern recurs across all the case studies. Typically, I plan my visit to Berghain at least a day in advance, since it is much more than a mere appearance in that queue. Prior to Ayahuasca Ceremony a specific diet for at least a week is customary, alongside contemplation on the direction la medicina would eventually take me. Regarding Vipassana Course, the essential was to prepare my body for ten days of inactivity which involved increased physical activity beforehand (in case of the first course); moreover, I prepared my ordinary world to be worlding without me during this period.

"The letter states that the students shall arrive individually, and each are therefore assigned a personal check-in time together with information about the place of arrival. The students are informed that personal belongings, such as phone and watch[382], cannot be used during the stay at Sisters Academy, and furthermore, they are instructed what to wear on their arrival and what to pack in their suitcase, plus that they shall debrand all belongings. All clothes must be black, white or matching their skin colour."[383] This again matches to a great extent with the other examples (Vipassana - preferably white, but certainly simply neutral and unattractive, so to say; in the case of Ayahuasca ceremony white is again a preferable option; Berghain wants it black, but allows exceptions, depending on our aura colour, to phrase it this way).

Besides the red neon sign (Sister Academy), the space in front of the building is dark, "as if the lights call out 'come on in', 'enter'"[384], but it reveals almost nothing about the interior. This primarily reminds me of Berghain, known for its rough, industrial, nameless, "well protected" entrance, but not much less of the other two: certainly unspectacular entrance at Vipassana Centre(s)

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[381] Interview, Appendix, p.110

[382] **The absence of camera/cellphones** enables "a space that's really, that feels tactically like it's separated from everyday life, whose markers today, I guess, is our phone, our watches and so on" (Interview, Appendix, p.107). I also got used to orient in time with the sound of a gong during the **Vipassana Course**, with no alarm clock (second course), and my body was awaking also during the daily breaks when I "asked" it to do so. During **Ayahuasca Ceremony**, the natural light was giving the time orientation. Even in **Berghain**, in the morning the shades of colourful vitrages give the sense of time, and also the body tells me what time it could be depending on my exhaustion, or in Case of Vipassana my ecstatic sensation marks the time after the Discourse. After all, we do not thing that much about time at all.

[383] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023, p.180

[384] Ibid, p.180

which already gives a hint of simplicity in the sense of monastic life, yet there is eagerness to immerse in an alternate reality; on the other hand, regarding the Ayahuasca Ceremony, the entrance of the Maloca in the twilight already gives a glimpse of the mystical. However, staying in the mood of previously described atmospheres, my body archive unpacks the dimmed light(ning design) accompanied by the sound of a gong or shaman's icaros, never focussing on the visual, always letting the interplay with other senses, in contrary to the photography[385] I am referring to in my thesis.

The space they use is "sense-stimulating and otherworldly [spaces, IJ] evoking and allowing mind and body to unfold and explore from the aesthetic dimension"[386] (I can comparatively relate this aesthetic to the ambiance of the Ayahuasca Ceremony, including aspects such as lighting, ceremonial items, music, fire, scent, plants, and patina). Such space is inhibited by "Sisters staff, students, visiting teachers/researchers/artists/activists and guests – they will all come or be guided there by Sisters staff"[387] - evokers[388]. In other case studies, there are shamans (taita, maima) and their helpers, djs, bouncers, dancers, servers, managers, stuff…

Warre Hallberg writes that "[a]ll the voices are soft, sometimes whispering, and contrast with the loudness of the outside. The people also move differently, much more slowly and more consciously. It is as entering another world; a Sensuous Society"[389], a concept strongly resonant with Vipassana Course (indeed, in alignment with Worre Hallberg's Buddhist practice with a Japanese mentor Daisaku Ikeda[390]), as well as with the Ayahuasca Ceremony.

Sisters Hope has its own numeral system[391] which must be a successful effort to generate a greater feeling of otherworldliness, where one needs to reprogram oneself, in order to read the time table, e.g. (in Berghain we do not count time, Ayahuasca's watch is the sky, and a gong is the Vipassana's time anchor.)

The space map is done in a very ritualistic manner[392] evoking slight similarities with the drawings

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385 As Worre Hallberg said in the interview (Appendix, p.6), the purpose of their rare **photo and video** recording is for the sake of **documentation.**

386 https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023, p. 159

387 Ibid, p.197

388 The Evokers are the ones who guide the students through the initiation on their arrival and the exist rituals when they leave, while the guests are artist researchers.

389 https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, p.183

390 Ibid, p.447

391 Ibid, p.312

392 Ibid, p.190

of Berghain's interior[393]. Confession booths[394], where one can share his/her/their thoughts, represent a parallel to the private conversation with the teacher (Vipassana), i.e. shaman (Ayahuasca). Could Berghain's dark room serve the purpose of this similarity!? In a rather symbolic sense, as Worre Hallberg said in the interview, such places enable the otherworldly to be accessible for longer time which enables our otherworldliness to evolve. They are usually on the border of society, especially when related to pioneering practices, which are "in a precarious situation because you are not protected by the society, because you are not included in what is being protected, you are at the edge of what is protected […], it requires patience and courage to stand there and be there, but from there we are moving to some cracks, and maybe sometime we end up from the periphery to the centre"[395], and we can at least protect that what we want to have in our centre(s) resisting the "techno-economic hegemony, [and] presenting a multiplicity of worlds", as it was referred to Jean-Luc Nancy in the description of a conference at ICI Berlin[396].

Usually, the meals are eaten in silence. The dinner is the first occasion in which everyone in The Boarding School is together at once, which again resonates in a way with the dramaturgy of the arrival day of Vipassana Course, except that Sisters Hope makes no gender segregation/ discrimination. On the day of Ayahuasca Ceremony we ate an early lunch together, as the last meal before the ceremonial beginning. The question about the significance of food, mainly in sense of the ritualistic I posed to Worre Hallberg might seems redundant, but in my cultural background, food holds a significance beyond mere energy for our sustenance. It matters where, how and who prepared the meal, when and what you are eating (taste, amount…), who with, for how long. Food for us is love and care, and I recognised something analogous in all these practices (except for Berghain, although that milk-shake and ice-cream can be otherworldly, especially when shared), as ritualistic gesture of care and connection.

All the mentioned elements serve to enhance the emergence/intensification and the awareness "of the potentiality of the more sensuous and poetic aspects of [their, IJ] being"- Poetic Self which once

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[393] Jecmenica, Ivana: https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, 2023, p.6

[394] Ibid, p.185

[395] Interview, Appendix, p.110

[396] https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/disruption-technique-world/, accessed: February 2024

found is owned[397] "as it lives within, and not outside"[398]. Worre Hallberg underlines that "The Poetic Self can also be perceived as a tool that provides access to inherent poetic potential which might not be unfolded in everyday life", where according to her The Self is "limited by the premises of a society based on economic rationality"[399]. This is also a way for our relationships to become poetic, with the self, others and the environment. (I will dare to claim that one dimension of The Poetic Self may be manifested visually, as exemplified by the act of dressing up in Berghain.) Nonetheless, such transformation starts with the individual, "which might ultimately lead to societal transformation"[400]. I posit that this aspect interlinks all of my case studies, you decide to do this, to go there, especially in case of Vipassana and Ayahuasca, even Berghain, since it is not like any nightclub where you just appear and there you go.[401] She points out that The Sisters Performance Method[402] after the unfolding of The Poetic Self aims towards its externalising and relating form[403], which is the potential I recognise in all participants of such practices; the rational me, which to a significant extent belongs to the matrix, is quieted, while The Poetic Me takes precedence after the exit. The Poetic Self is "the keeper of undisturbed thoughts"[404], and we become this thanks to Vipassana, at least for a while. We got reminded to listen to ourselves which is certainly not enhances by the socio-political mainstream. If there is an alternative me, there must be alternatives in general (not the alternative self-optimised me who fits into the current system, but the alternative non-exploiting, collaborative modus of co-existence that enables my expansion and "confronts the naturalisation of capitalism"[405]. Worre Hallberg prefers to set their practice in the domain of the activistic, rather than the political.[406] She aspires for an environment capable of transcending

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[397] It is worth mentioning I am capable of replicating the same style of dance performed in **Berghain** elsewhere. Particularly when I close my eyes, I remember, I briefly sense the energetic dynamics of bodies and space. However, this may not always be readily accessible, as it is contingent upon various circumstances. Then I feel certain nostalgia, body-nostalgia mostly. On the other hand it soothes me, since I know how that felt, and I can evoke the very feeling, even if it is not of the same intensity, the quality is same.

[398] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023, p.167

[399] Ibid, p.166

[400] Interview, Appendix, p.102

[401] People sometimes **give up** during such practices. Worre Hallberg said (Interview, Appendix, p.108) that it has happened 2-3 times in 2 decades. Once a young man was dealing with anxiety, and after a conversation they all decided he should leave. This reminds me of **Berghain** when once a friend of a friend very excited to be there for the first overestimated his own capacities, the stuff spotted him, gave him a chance to take a rest and some water, following what he needed to depart. In case of **Vipassana Course** is not uncommon that student themselves decide to leave, since certain days are very challenging.

[402] Worre Hallberg mentioned in the in Interview (Appendix, p.109) some Sisters Hope's key practices that resonates with other case studies such as **blindfolding** (during **Vipassana Course** I spent most of the time behind my eyelids; this is the way I love to dance in **Berghain**, since it allows total immersion; throughout much of the **Ayahuasca Ceremony,** particularly during visionary states, eyes are not to be open) and **slow walking** (definitely during **Vipassana**, but also during **Ayahuasca**, be it for the sake of being physically exhausted, tired, or you decide to grasp, sense, perceive everything around and within you, and that has nothing to do with velocity).

[403] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023, p.168

[404] Ibid, p.208

[405] Ibid, p.373

[406] Interview, Appendix, p.109

critique and fostering an alternative way of inhabiting the world, which is unfortunately something one cannot expect and hope from theatre. Their activism is poetic (just as poetry should be revolutionary) and the alternativeness they are arguing for is precisely what I believe these case studies enable, each in their manner, sometimes even intersecting in the most beautiful and encouraging convergences.

Named as Existing ("It is time to go and exist"[407]) is the last integrative and anchoring postliminal ritual they facilitate, "where exit points to an ending, exist points to a beginning, which resonates very well with the activist emphasis placed on anchoring and integrating the sensuous and poetic into everyday life independently of surroundings and beyond the performative framework that Sisters Academy offers"[408]. Before departure, students engage in the practice of preparing their beds for the incoming participants, a gesture shared with the Vipassana Course. Additionally, they contribute their notebooks to the Sisters Hope Archive, while Vipassana students can offer Dana[409], which bears resemblance to the acquisition of souvenirs crafted by members of indigenous tribes after Ayahuasca ceremony. I would contend that we all return from such ritualistic practices empowered and more grounded. Despite other examples are not framed by activism, in contrast to Sisters Hope, they instilled in us the notion and sense of the possibility to be an activist and highly political after departing from such environments.

Worre Hallberg asserts that their students must be asking themselves "what is on the other side? What will the so-called 'real life' be like now?"[410]These are also my question, particularly following experiences with Vipassana and Ayahuasca. At such junctures, while contemplating the possibility of prolonging my stay or even shortly delaying my departure, and feeling imbued with love, peace, and a sense of wholeness, I am compelled to channel these sentiments into actions beyond the immediate context. After Berghain I feel a heightened sense of determination, joy, and motivation. While the disparity between the inner and the outer world may not be as pronounced, especially when compared to other case studies, the fundamental transformation within myself is what holds the greatest significance. She also finds "so difficult to transition out", as she feels there "so rounded and the world has expanded, so it is like being very rooted and very expanded at the same time, it feels like everything is easy, relational things are very easy and sharp", while aware that such "state of mind after a while […] disappears… the realm of our economic everyday reality

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[407] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023, p.203

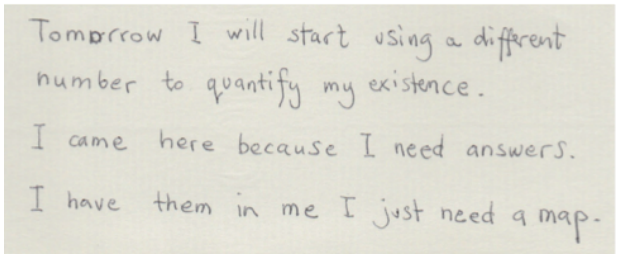
[408] Ibid. p.203

[409] https://pasanna.dhamma.org/httpspasannadhammaorgesdonaciones-dana/, accessed: February 2024

[410] https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, p.207

takes over again… but [she] know[s] it is there, and it is hard to recall it in everyday life. So [she] love[s| the time right after having inhabited the space for a longer time, that is precious to [her]", and I could assert absolutely the same for myself. Her strategy is to "establish practices to stay with this mood of being with the world, staying with [her] Poetic Self"[411] Regarding Vipassana I meditate, albeit not so frequently, usually attending group sittings regularly organised in Berlin. Shaman Heberto has "prescribed" small private rituals, which I still perform with the reduced occurrence. In summary, I assign significant value to these post-ritualistic practices. Furthermore, Worre Hallberg emphasises the importance of apprehending that "this can become a valid and integrated part of life, and not something that only lives in the underworld or the subconscious or in hidden desires, but that society as of now is structured from certain parameters, and it could be structured from completely different parameters"[412], and repeated taking time-space-outs of this kind or simply participating in a 5-year performance piece, could also aid in this endeavour.

More importantly, some of this poetic transplantation into the ordinary world occur through the connections we manage to establish with the people who participated at the same "gatherings" as us. This facet is particularly precious to me regarding those with whom I meditated and ingested ayahuasca.



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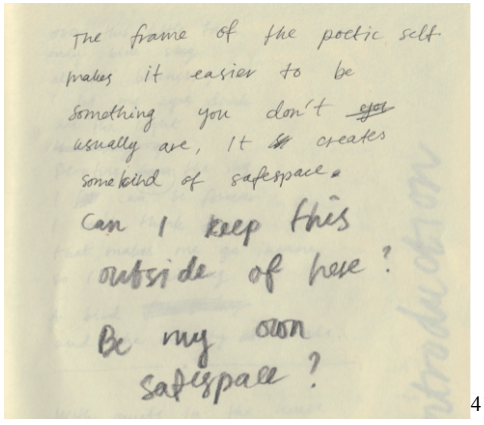

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411 Interview, Appendix, p.108

412 Interview, Appendix, p.103

413 https://sistershope.dk/website-2023/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/SensuousSociety_GryWorreHallberg_PhD_FINAL_LR-1.pdf, accessed: August 2023, p.315

414 Ibid, p.318

INCONCLUSIVE CONCLUSION

In this study, via analyses and comparisons of diverse case studies, pulling from different theoretical traditions and synthesising my insights, I have emphasised their interdisciplinarity alongside my own interdisciplinary methodology, which welcomed my Poetic Self. My aim was to present a method of pleasure research with the aspiration to evoke a certain reading pleasure akin to the joy I derived from the research and writing process. Rather than merely illustrating theories or concepts, I sought to inspire a deeper resonance with the transformative potential of ritualistic communal experiences.

Through the exploration of alternative spaces and practices, I have uncovered a counterbalance to the prevailing forces of neoliberal capitalism. These case studies, seemingly disparate and non-radical, share a common thread: heightened intensity of human connection, even if only temporarily. The feelings elicited within these spaces have the potential to be harnessed as political tools, serving as a catalyst for collective action and socio-political change.

It has become evident that my examples are not randomly gathered at all. Each offers a distinct perspective on the importance of prioritising the quality of our interactions over the accumulation of data or economic wealth. As I collaborate with my body in this exploration, I encourage readers to reassess their own experiences and to seek out analogous practices that challenge prevailing normative ideas of conviviality. In essence, this paper is an invitation to engage with the world in a more intentional and experiential manner, celebrating human interaction, promiscuous care and the power of solidarity.

However, considering the comprehensive scope of this paper, I will add a few reflections to this section to ensure balance.

Vujanović/Cvejić assert that individuals are “cut off from collective actions and achievements, and impulse[d] […] to turn to their personal realms”[415] while on the other hand “event is treating society with fragmentation”[416], which is particularly resonant as it is hard to truly dedicate yourself and sense the belonging in the ephemeral (cf. Han, 2009). Moreover, we already ”an accelerating social system of *organised loneliness* [emphasis in original]”, being “encouraged to feel and act like

[415] Vujanović, Ana / Cvejić, Bojana: Toward a Transindividual Self: A study in social dramaturgy, Archive Books, Berlin, 2022, p.156

[416] Ibid, p.226

hyper-individualised, competitive subjects who primarily look out for ourselves", forgetting the need for "caring communities" and "networks of belonging"[417]. Therefore, I contend that rituals and das Rituale, in general, hold significant relevance for the present moment.

Given its distinctiveness from the other case studies, where one could argue the questionability of some values presented in this thesis, I will revisit Berghain once again. It is undoubtedly a place where individualistic people meet in a city that is de facto one of the epicentres of individualism[418]. Yet, on its dance floors one feels community-bonded, usually more pronouncedly then in other Berliner Clubs[419] (occasional surprising exceptions do occur). Berghain is a locus of critical alienation from the quotidian rather than from each other, where "we can sense the power of community, solidarity, kindness, care, diversity, vulnerability, mutual healing and the meaning of non-productivity. This all serves a greater purpose in cultivating transformative power for broader societal change. An environment where like-minded, like-hearted, and like-auratised people are not afraid of out-of-the-ordinary"[420].

Throughout this paper, certain shortcomings have been identified and discussed. However, my self-aligned choice is to focus on the good practice, thereby transforming this research into a positive autoethnography… for a change! Ecstasy requires the erasure of the negative, to paraphrase Magun[421], and therein lies the rationale for this approach.

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[417] All: The Care Collective (Chatzidakis, Andreas / Hakim, Jamie / Littler, Jo / Rottenberg, Catherine / Segal, Lynne): The Care Manifesto, Verso, London/New York, 2020, p.45

[418] "Individual is fetishised product of white stability," Bayo Akomolafe. Spiritualität: Ein Ausweg aus der Krisenspirale? | Sternstunde Philosophie | SRF Kultur, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GGdhliMEyA&t=7s, accessed: March 2023

[419] One of my own poetic comparisons:

Sameheads

I shouldn't come back with a souvenir
Not only my expectations are
In the sphere
Where Icarus lost his wings
My memories go along,
The clubbing memories from Berlin

Dancing to the music of a soft random dj
Is a much lesser dream
Than feathers and wax
So I'll let Hermes keep
My winged-shoes deep
For the temples

One is between Kreuzberg and Friedrichshain.

[420] Jecmenica, Ivana (2023): https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, accessed: March, 2024, p.50

[421] Magun, Artemy: Disruptions and Fragments: Approaches to Negativity between the French Deconstruction and the German Critical Theory, https://www.ici-berlin.org/events/disruption-technique-world/, accessed: March 2024

Having prioritised the utopian, I resonate with Bayo Akomolafe's perspective is which he says that "we do miss today every utopia, we do not know in which direction to turn, how to get out of the techno-industrial situation that destroy our life space", and suggests to "build new alliances and solidarities and step out of the 'death spiral of ants'"[422], because the humanscape iluminated with phones and other screens is simply sad. We are banalising reality and own lives. Social photography captures our gaze, fatigues out attention, invites mind- and body-numbness and the inflation of decisive moments (Cartier Bresson, 1952). Conversely, its absence "allows more authentic and daring engagement with oneself, the surroundings, and non canonical construction of meaning"[423]. We do not share experiences, but photos - where should we ground our connections then? Even the verb to share started to be performed mostly in this context. We share our data with everyone, but luckily not our body. Thus, the re-embodiment could be a political act in reclaiming agency in the sharing economy. Furthermore, transitioning from disembodiment to embodiment is a shift from the third to the first person, and my case studies are practices that "bring our bodies back into our conversations"[424]. Interdependency is human condition, while "independence is just a myth"[425], and "[i]f we are truly committed to ending oppression and violence, then we must be committed to each other. Then we must live out of the simple truth that *we need each other*[426] [emphasis in original]"[427].

In accordance with my heterogeneous case studies, communal interdependency does not request unity, but rather resembles to theatre, as understood by Duška Radosavljević, "that let me [us, IJ] stay in peace among contradictions, where emotional, spiritual, rational and irrational are embodied and bring parts that do not fit without necessity to solve them"[428].

In summary, I assume that the future rituals will be entangled with technology, what I do not oppose as long as technology enhances the experience and does not usurp it for the benefit of someone's profit and control, nor negates our flesh. Additionally, I am very keen on those who employ social

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[422] Spiritualität: Ein Ausweg aus der Krisenspirale? | Sternstunde Philosophie | SRF Kultur, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7GGdhIiMEyA&t=7s, accessed: March 2023

[423] Jecmenica, Ivana (2023): https://www.academia.edu/114318222/The_impact_of_the_camera_absence_presence_on_the_development_and_experience_of_theatrical_performative_elements_in_non_theatrical_spaces_Case_Studies_Berghain_Berlin_Club_69_Buenos_Aires_?source=swp_share, accessed: March, 2024, p.51

[424] Mingus, Mia: "Changing the Framework: Disability Justice", https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/02/12/changing-the-framework-disability-justice/, accessed: August 2023

[425] Ibid

[426] From an etymological standpoint, the Serbian word for happiness, "sreća," traces its origins to the verb "sretati," which translates to "meeting" or "encountering".

[427] Mingus, Mia: On Collaboration: Starting With Each Other, https://leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2012/08/03/on-collaboration-starting-with-each-other/, accessed: August 2023

[428] Staging Sound. Reflecting theatre music and sound design: Book launch: Aural/Oral Dramaturgies: Theatre in the Digital Age, https://stagingsound.podigee.io/7-book-launch-auraloral-dramaturgies-theatre-in-the-digital-age?fbclid=IwAR2bJXjkDk3hhRPZ4jMamBohk5BWC6WCB_hl4RWfeC3X1odYCTLbPpbobls accessed: December 2023

media subversively, especially in the domain of performing arts, such as the Dance Company La (H)orde!. Nevertheless, we need to break the capitalist spell! (cf. Pignarre/Stengers, 2011), reject "compationate capitalism"[429], and embrace more exceptions[430]. It is anyhow known that the practices of resistance are intertwined with performing arts and rituals. Post-colonial theory tells us so. Then, let's do it again!

Rather than a conventional (in)conclusion, my Poetic Self wants to approach the end poetically:

"Why shouldn't the future
be a sprint toward
iridescence?
defiance, renewal, subterfuge
We are most frequently each other's
shelter and correction. Houses to hide
in and hold up, stuffed holes, places to
keep secrets, wells to whisper down.
Wrote it on the rope we tied ourselves
together with, squeezed tightly.[431]

and leave with Olufemi's inquiry I have no definite answer to: "How will we build coalitions that will not betray us?"[432]

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[429] The Care Collective (Chatzidakis, Andreas / Hakim, Jamie / Littler, Jo / Rottenberg, Catherine / Segal, Lynne): The Care Manifesto, Verso, London/New York, 2020, p.50

[430] Godard: Je Vous Salue, Sarajevo (1993)
"Everybody speaks the rule: cigarette, computer, t-shirt, tv, tourism, war. Nobody speaks the exception. It's not spoken, it's written: Flaubert, Dostoyevski. It's composed: Gershwin, Mozart. It's painted: Cezanne, Vermeer. It's filmed: Antonioni, Vigo. Or it's lived and then it's art of living."
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKbfu8rRrho, accessed: October, 2023

[431] Olufemi, Lola: Experiments in Imagining Otherwise, Hajar Press, London, 2021, p.116

[432] Ibid, p.85

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APPENDIX

Informal Interview with Gry Worre Hallberg

02/10/2023

I. I was just thinking, what kind of **contemporary rituals do we have? Can we have? Can we protect and somehow enable?** And, as I already mentioned, I even included a nightclub into this story. It is still something very ritualistic, yet of a different kind. Then I was also considering certain meditation technique and even thought about Nick Cave and what he's doing at his concerts. All of these other examples, I have already, so to say, experienced, but never attended any of your performances, rituals, ceremonies. Maybe it is still not that problematic because I believe that what you are doing is exactly what I am interested in. And somehow you seem to be, I do not know, willing to get your foot into some serious doors and make this a little bit more established since you also mentioned that activism and education are something very important for you. Can you position yourself as a space…, **can you see yourself as a pause, as a break or even a rapture that is very much necessary?**

G. Yeah, for sure. And yeah, it is very linked to everything you talk about, I think. And I think also, so the Sisters Hope Manifesto was written in 2008 as a response to the financial crisis and the ongoing ecological crisis. And it actually starts out by saying the end is a new beginning and elaborates further that it's in the in-betweens and the cracks, like you can weave your way in or wedge your way in and then, you know, you enter through the crack, but then, you know, you can, the wets can expand and then ultimately it can become the new reality. So I guess that is, like, what we are daring to manifest in a way is that vision of **entering through the crack**, but also talking about a completely different way of structuring society and education. Like, for me, it is also the individual person's process of transformation through the aesthetic, which might ultimately lead to societal transformation. So it starts with the individual and that is also why we emphasise pedagogical processes. I think also all our performances are deliberately structured from the three-phased ritual process of a pre-liminal, a liminal and a post-liminal process, because I think a lot of art overtook liminality when our part of the world became primarily secularised, but with very much focus on liminality only. And we are interested in also, like, working with a pre-liminal process of entering into the space and a post-liminal process of anchoring the experience into

everyday life. And that is also where activism comes in, that it is like, it is **poetic revolution**, but it is also, again, human transformation that enables societal transformation by each person carrying the poetic and the sensuous enabled through the otherworldly mysterious cracks. But learning that this can become a valid part of life, a valid and integrated part of life, and not something that only lives in the underworld or the subconscious or in hidden desires, but that society as of now is structured from certain parameters, and it could be structured from completely different parameters. And if it was the aesthetic dimension governing society, it would just be very different than right now, where it is economic rationality that is the governing principle. So, yes, yeah.

I. How would you, what needs to be done, that this finally becomes at least a part of reality? How do you see this?

G. I think, I mean, it is also because it is a very **slow process** when it is societal transformation through human transformations.
So I think we talk about a potential new artistic paradigm that we call inhabitation, or inhabitational art moving away from temporary participation into more permanent inhabitation of the arts. And inhabitation or inhabitational art requires spaces such as Sisters Hope Home, where the otherworldly is accessible for a longer duration of time than only like a concert, like you said, the Nick Cave concert, or only, or even like an ongoing durational piece that is four weeks, but then again, it is over after four weeks. So spaces where this sensuous and poetic other kind of mode is accessible over a longer period of time. So inhabitational art are spaces, maybe like Sisters Hope Home, that is five years. But also practices. And for Sisters Hope, that is the Sisters Performance Method where the poetic self is really central. So people find a poetic self, and they unfold it, and they go through these processes of externalising it and creating relations from their poetic self. And then they carry that, you know, so that it can ramifications into different contexts. So spaces and practices.
And then I do not, you know, when you talk about **rituals**… So ritual is very often like linked to religious practices like originally. And that is, of course, that is something that spreads from person to person, to person, to person, you know, so and but that is true practices. So I think that to have practices where you can integrate into your everyday life, different ways of being in the world is quite necessary. So it is not only the temples, you know, we go into the temple, but what if the temples are like 2000 miles away, you know, then it's not really accessible to you.

I. Because I think that for me, I went to this **Vipassana meditation,** this for example, one course is usually 10-day-long. And maybe you know about that.

G. I know a little bit, but please unfold your experience and the framework for this. Yeah.

I. Because it's like, yeah, usually you are 10 days there, you have no phone, you have no pen, no books, no paper, nothing. And you do not communicate with anyone and you do not even look at anyone. And there is no physical activities. And you can only ask your teacher if you have certain questions. So that is the only way of communicating. And you meditate 10 days, 11 hours per day. And I am not someone who mediates, I was not into any kind of meditation, maybe a little bit of shamanic trips, but that is another story. I decided to go there because some people that I admire said that they are practicing this. And I was always amazed how focused they are, about the way they think, how calm they are, the atmosphere around them is just so nice to be in. So I went there. After these 10 days, for me now to meditate one hour is no effort. And because the **body was the most important agency in all of this, everything was going on in my own body.** And I think because **I gathered that knowledge with my body, it just stayed with me. And this is what you are saying, it was not only happening there. I can so easily recall all of this now and help myself to be kinder, calmer, more insightful**, whatever.
And also when you, I think in your TED talk, when you were also saying how, how the aesthetic way of governing could happen, if we would only start from pleasure and not from duties. Because I know for myself, if I am, **if I can be creative, if I feel such empathy and if I am joyous, I am another person.** And nothing is impossible. And this was also, for example, **ayahuasca,** and even going to a nightclub when you simply c**onnect with each other and you just feel you care much more.** You care about so many things, people and everything. And because, again, it all goes through your body, and thanks to that, you are simply carrying it. But still it is not so easy to be so, since we live where we live, I feel like this battery is really getting wasted when you are dealing with totally inaesthetic circumstances and inter-human relationships. I am really considering leaving Berlin soon. Because somehow it is just too many things that I do not like and too little of this unconditional humane, more supportive, more sensuous interaction.
And what would be for you at all **performance**? How is it a performance? Is it what you are doing? Because for me this is a little bit tricky: What's performativity? What's theatricality? What's ritual?

G. So the starting point of the practice with the methodology is **performance art**, it draws on the immersion, its activity and intervention in the case of Sisters Hope. So that is the practice starting

point, but performance art has evolved in between the theatrical and visual arts. So again, there is another intersection and theatricality has, then is drawing on ritual. that is based in **ritual.** So, you know, we are then also at the **intersection of research, pedagogy and education.** So I think we kind of resist boundaries or try to resist silos too much. And it is liberating to place yourself at the intersection of different logics. And but I think performance art is very close connected to ritualistic practices and Sisters Hope's performance artistic practice is very ritualistic because it, as I said before, it kind of, it draws on the pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal phase very directly and one to one in our performance pieces. But then it is also when we talk about inhabitational art, it also transitions from performance art to a way of living, a life form, a way of being in the world. And that is again a link to the activist intention of evoking a more sensuous society. So I think Sisters Hope kind of escapes boundaries or it unfolds at the intersection of more things. And it is the practices we evolved, the performance artistic practices are also ritualistic practices that you embody in your everyday life, inhabit, you know. So I think also inhabitation art kind of pushes the boundaries of what art is again. And then it os relevant to talk about **art as a form of life**, you know.

I. And what do you say, what is post-liminal in your practice?

G. Post-liminal, so the ritualistic, so from getting kind of defined three phases of the ritual, there is a pre-liminal phase where you prepare the person who is about to enter the ritual, to prepare that person to enter into the liminal space. And the liminal space is where the actual transformation takes place. So understanding the ritual to be a place of transformation. And then the post-liminal phase is anchoring that experience into everyday life. So pre-liminal is preparing to enter into the liminal space, **liminal and potentially transformative space.**
The liminal space is where the actual transformation goes on in a place separated from everyday life. And then the post-liminal phase is returning and anchoring into everyday life, the potentially transformed new self that you are after you have gone through the experience of the three phase ritual process.

I. And then what would be the **poetic self**?

G. The poetic self, that's very central to the Sisters Performance Method. So the poetic self is maybe the potential self of a sensuous society. So it is not a character of fiction, but we call it inherent poetic potential. So the argument is that we all have a side of our being, a mode of being based that

takes its starting point in the poetic and the sensuous, but that has been under-prioritised, that mode of being in the world. So when you find your poetic self, which we offer people to find when they live inside the world or universe of Sisters Hope, then people kind of come in touch with the inherent poetic potential in their life through their poetic self. So the poetic self is very central to the Sisters Hope practice, and it is linked to inhabitational art because when people find their poetic self, they own it and it lives with them potentially forever.

I. What is the **body** for Sisters Hope? A human body?

G. I guess generally the sensuous and poetic is linked to more tactile knowledge processes. So if we just look at the aesthetic parameter of perception that Baumgarten talks about, that comes up as a response to the past. But yeah, body I think is like, I think aesthetic processes is very related to tactile knowledge and a tactile mode of being in the world where you perceive the world through your senses and the body carries the senses. The skin. The skin, the eyes, the nose, the mouth, the ears, like we sense the world through our body. So that's a very tactile process.

I. Have you seen any differences depending on the group of **people attending those performances**? How much do they, what kind of **impact do they have on each other**?

G. I think a lot as well, but also not, but also they work individually. But I think, again, in my PhD, I kind of draw on Guatarri's three ecologies: mental, social and environmental ecology. So mental ecology, and I apply that to understand the processes that people go through as an individual entity into the world and social ecology to look at how people affect each other within the space and the new social ecologies that are developed while people are inhabiting, inhabiting a sensual society. And then environmental ecology is very visible also in the notebooks in our archive where people talk about how they feel closer to the sun and the moon, how they remember that they remember they were one startle, dust, or a cobble. So this environmental ecology of realising or remembering that everything is connected is also very activated. So I think both the mental, the social and environmental ecology is very intertwined with people when they inhabit a sensual something.

I. But then what I was kind of trying to use as something that connects all these rituals that I am probably going to choose is the **camera ban, there is no photography, there is no phones.** But you still, of course, you have certain documentation, certain archive.

G. People get an analog notebook, and they get an analog notebook and they donate that to our archive when they leave Sisters Hope. So we have a huge analog archive of thousands of notebooks. It is extremely beautiful.

I. But I think, I guess I got it that all the participants are leaving their personal belongings, so to say.

G. Oh yeah, when you enter, you leave the belongings, but then they get a notebook. When they leave Sisters Hope Home, they donate their notebook to our archive. The archive has all these extremely beautiful in-situ reflections generated from people who have participated in our universes.

I. So what is **the role of photography** in all of this what you are doing? Or **videos**? Is it only a documentation?

G. Yeah, we primarily use that for documentation.

I. Because I am somehow also thinking that exactly this **absence of camera** production - that I again see as **the neoliberal urge to produce something, also enables this performativity and this another space and another way of connectedness.** And that in a way this **permanent production of photos and posting here and there is really disconnecting our bodies, as if we are just deleting our bodies and all that we can actually be and do, except for the surface of the body**. So I was, that is again one of the main reasons why I chose, I am choosing your case as well**, because there is no camera, there is almost no technological devices,** so to say.

G. And that has become very important for people as well, to actually, and the reason we decided to begin with is because we try to create a space that is really, that feels tactically like it is separated from everyday life. And so the markers of everyday life today, I guess, is our phone, our watches and so on. So, to take that away, to let people immerse into the space where they do not have a sense of time, of the outside world is important [all my case studies enable this]. We have sometimes people only for 24 h, it is not that long as it seems, it is a short time to evoke and unfold the sensuous society, and that becomes very important and a huge release… Of course, we document our work, you will find images, but it is rarely, usually there is no the outside gaze.

I. Do you have any **mirrors**?

G. We actually have, but very weird mirrors, not really mirrors, we actually have the sun side and there is a mirror, and the moon side. Usually you are allowed to have a computer in the back office [she showed me around the Sister Home a bit via camera]. There are mirrors in the dining room, it makes the room bigger, it makes it eternal, augmented usage of mirrors, the unending table.

I. And who are the people who are participating?

G. Very different, varied extremely [I would also say this is pretty much the case in all examples], but they kind of relate. [People also donate their objects, so this case study must be in a way mostly ritualistic.]

I. Was it ever the case that someone **gave up** if it was the longer staying?

G. Yes, not at Sisters Hope Home, but Boarding Academy which is kind of similar project. Rarely, 2-3 time in almost 2 decades. Once a very young man who had anxiety, was several times already, was sisters hope devotee, but then one time, it overwhelmed him. Then we had a conversation if it would be better for him to stay or to leave and in that case we decided - this time you should leave. But then he came back again a week later.

I. After the Vipassana Course, I did not want to come back to our ordinary world. How do you afterwards **reconnect with the world as we know** it after such an experience?

G. I love it, it is so difficult to transition out, but I love the state of being in and I want to keep it, I feel so rounded and the world has expanded, so it is like being very rooted and very expanded at the same time, it feels like everything is easy, relational things are very easy and sharp… I know what to do and when, when to withdraw, when to engage, I say and do right things at the right time, so I do not have to do all these cleanings after myself if that makes sense… that is state of mind, after a while it disappears… the realm of our economic everyday reality takes over again… but I know it is there, and it is hard to recall it in everyday life. So I love the time right after having inhabited the space for a longer time, that is precious to me. Then I also establish practices to stay with this mood of being with the world, staying with my poetic self.

I. People probably come back. What would you say, **how often** people should be doing this?

G. We have this new format actually, it is 5-year performance piece. We have that participatory level where people come for a year, once a month, then they get a home assignment in between:

write your poetic-self biography, find your poetic self **totem [I have my meditation pillow, a blanket, my meditation corner at home; I have a piece of a liana Banisteriopsis caapi - a key ingredient in the ayahuasca brew, and some other items from the Shipibo people, I still have some bracelets from Berghain, and the outfit items I only wear there, even some books with the marks inside, since I was reading them while queuing for a shorter eternity; I have some objects from the forest I found during the Vipassana retreats…],** share it, create a Moon ritual, all this things, I love that format, people **go so deep, because they know they're coming back every month a**nd then in between they stay with their poetic self… because they have these "home assignments". I recommend that. [It is also recommendable to repeat ayahuasca rituals, and to take Vipassana 10-day course optimally once per year; Berghain - you best listen to your own voice regarding the frequency.]

I. And the Moon ritual, is it something that you have established?

G. It is…not the Moon rituals, but the **Sisters Hope Performance Method**, there are 3 levels:

1. Find your poetic self
2. Externalise your poetic self, it is linked to finding your totem, building your wardrobe for poetic self, and creating a space
3. Relate with your poetic self, which is interactivity design, way to meet other people

That is the core of the Sisters Performance Method and yes, I developed that with the Sisters Hope… then in Sisters Hope, there are **some key practices**: blindfolding, slow walking, rope walking, which are common practices in many different fields, but then that has become so central in the way Sister Hope facilitates the experience. A lot of these is linked… People make their own performative framework and a method, but then people pool out from their own lives poetic practices that evolves in different ways.

I. Where do you see **politicality** in this what you are doing? What is the political part of this all?

G. It is more an **activist** part than a political. The activism is to continuously give voice to the importance of another way of being in the world. To be critical towards the ways society functions today, because it has lead to so many crisis and disfunctionalities, mentally, socially and environmentally, but then also to be a place that creates the alternative, so it is not only a critique,

but a place for alternative way of inhabiting the world. It is poetic activism, more than a political project, poetic activism with patience and courage to stand at the border of society, that continues to suggest another way of being based in the aesthetic.

I. Exactly! The border of society. Would you just say it is a border or maybe some space in between or else?

G. I think every time you work with pioneering practices [the other cases are not pioneering, nor they have a tendency towards activism per se, but they gave us the notion and sense of the possibility to be an activist and very political after leaving such environments] you are a little bit on the border and therefore you are in a precarious situation because you are not protected by the society, because you are not included in what is being protected, you are at the edge of what is protected, it is quiet precarious, that is why I said it requires patience and courage to stand there and be there, but from there we are moving to some cracks, and maybe sometime we end up from the periphery to the centre and you know because we move through the cracks and intervene into different contexts and then all of a sudden this thinking is at the centre of something.

I. Is there some kind of **preparation**, if someone wants to come, are there some things to be done?

G. Yes, there are different participatory levels, if you come as an inhabitant, you buy a ticket, you get a letter before hand, it asks you to prepare different things, your suitcase, all your belongings. The another participatory level to come as a visiting artists/researcher/teacher - then you get another letter, how to prepare for the staying and what it means to explore your own practice within the framework of an art piece (this is how they still see themselves, the whole setting they generously provide and share, which is very important to me, as someone from the theatre world, where we also still produce art as well) and overall framework of the Sensuous Society. So, there is, with these letters you receive beforehand your mind and your body start to prepare for the experience somehow.

I. Do the participants, are they also **communicating with each other**?

G. Not before hand, but I think afterwards, many people find each other, especially if they stay for a longer time, or you know, keep seeing each other, some creates bonds, but it is not planned by us.

I. So, all of them, so to say, a facilitator, an evoker form Sisters Hope, etc. are engaging with them?

G. Yes, Sisters Hope holds and hosts the space.

I. But do the participants do certain sensuous things with each other?

G. Yes, especially visiting artists. They facilitate sessions as well. It organically evolves, we take responsibility for the frame and people can go to their own journey within it, and their journey look very different.

I. Is the food important? In the sense of ritual?

G. Sisters Hope is a vegan house, because it suits to everyone. It is important, especially considering the dining space. Breakfast, lunch, dinner.