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another war is possible // publiXtheatre

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This essay deals with journeys. Traveling between political activism and artivist practice, artistic and social spaces, across the edges of the border regime of Europe. In 2001 the publiXtheatre was on a six-week tour, geographically conjoining locations of political resistance. The journey ended with what became known as the Italian state's staging of violence in Genoa.[1] In 2002 the group set out for Strasbourg, to a camp organized by the international noborder network[2], traveling on from there to documenta 11 in Kassel[3]. In 2003 the journey went from the Austrian Social Forum in Hallein to a border camp organized by young activists in Rumania, from there to the art events of the Upper Austrian Festival of the Regions and the stately spectacle of the European Cultural Capital, Graz 2003.
From the beginning, the idea of the PublixTheatreCaravan was to find new forms of political activism, articulation and aesthetics. The constant movement, fiddling with the most modern tools of communication, provocation and intervention are the expression of a constant attempt to apply practices that are capable of participating in the staging of public space and intervening to shape it. The staging of the public sphere and the power and violence

associated with it is, in addition to the nomadism, the expression of movement, the central aspect of the caravan. On its tours, the project is equipped with an old English double-decker bus that serves as bar, media zone, chill-out, stage and eye-catcher at demonstrations and other interventions. In all these definitions, the object works as a communicative factor in the public sphere.
The image of the public sphere in various discourses has changed. Established power relations were long presumed, monuments of violence as objects that can be unequivocally identified defining public space. Today, however, we speak of a flow, in which everything is subject to constant change. The territorial agreements of the nation-states are losing their force. Internalized identities that can be fixed to categories such as nation and gender, social hierarchies and a neurotically fascist corporeality, are subject to change.
Whereas on the one side there is much that is in motion and escaping from the sedentary, on the other side the barricades, the boundaries of this diversity are becoming visible in a new form. Power's resistance against these kinds of shifts can be recognized here. Migration is sketched out as a threat, and the "stream of refugees" runs into the outer wall of the Fortress Europe. Under the auspices of the war against terror, channeling, surveilling, detaining and protocoling are carried out. Camouflaged as a practice serving the safety of western civilization, people are measured and the racist stereotype, physical attributions, are imbued with a new scientificalness. It is still fascist methods being used, when hair root x-rays and facial measurements are used to determine the age of adolescent migrants.
For the PublixTheatreCaravan traveling, nomadism, is an essential expression to counter these developments: a life *after* urbanization, subservience to the economy and thus ultimately one's own subjugation. According to the ideas of Deleuze/Guattari, the

caravan is a war machine that will not subjugate itself to the conditions, seeking to dissolve geographical anchors and identitary attributions[4]. In its methodology, the caravan thus breaks through the dichotomies of art and politics, sitting between two chairs, so to speak, and is viewed skeptically by both sides. Criticized in the field of art as "activist autonomists" and depicted as "stupid artists" in the space of political activism, the caravan attempts to thwart the respectively dominant logic.

strasbourg dsec // 2002 [http://dsec.info/]

Embedded in the preparations of the first jointly organized camp of the noboder network[5], Database Systems to Enforce Control (dsec) in collaboration with the media project of the PublixTheatreCaravan were to call attention to the necessity of a technologization of the movement and simultaneously destroy the myths that have emerged around the terms of surveillance, control and technology. Workshops and discussions were held at the Strasbourg camp on SIS (Schengen Information System), technological media practice, the relationships of gender, technology and empowerment. There were also discussions on approaches of using technologies to influence public spaces produced through communication. If we presume that communication produces space, then every communication has repercussions in the space: virtual as well as so-called real space. As soon as virtual space exists, it is immediately and simultaneously depicted in the real.
dsec functioned at the camp as a kind of interface to a world defined as "outside". Using radio streams, text and picture reports, the Strasbourg actions were made accessible to a broader public. The PublixTheatreCaravan bus was a satellite, which was found,

due to its inherent mobility, not only in the camp, but also everyday at the train station in Strasbourg. A connection to the camp was created through the bus in virtual space by means of technologies and through its physical presence in real space, while the virtual and the real communication spaces were linked together at the same time.
The publiXtheatre was concurrently roving the city, attempting to achieve an impact with provocations and theatrical productions in the urban space. A bus from the airline Lufthansa, infamous for deportation flights from Germany, stops at the train station and waits for passengers to take them to the airport: a concept of mobility for all that can pay for it and are not being deported. Activists from the caravan span a red and white ribbon in front of the bus, indicating that driving away is impossible. The bus driver is obviously confused. The activists are dressed in white overalls and wearing face masks, and it is only at a second glance that they look like a group of amateurs doing sociological field research. Their appearance and the form of communication actually moves the bus driver to stop. The police are called in, the red and white ribbon is cut through in the end. Finally the passengers' journey can continue on its course.[6]

provocative and non-locatable

Equipped with a computer, cables, measuring instruments, cameras and a shovel, a small group of activists leaves the camp in Strasbourg. The destination is the Schengen Information System. The group reaches the building, a small modest estate, only conspicuous because of the high fence, and they start digging at the edge of the fence. A suitable network cable is freed from the hole and coupled to the computer they have brought along. The

police intervene. It appears as though data were quickly transfered from SIS to the laptop, mixed up at the same time and thus removed from the relational logics of database systems. A policeman demands that the device be handed over and that the filming of the whole situation should be stopped. The group is able to leave the site a few minutes later and return to the camp. There the story is told to a journalist in roughly this chronology. An article is subsequently published in Le Monde, mentioning that activists from the camp have hacked the SIS. That this deed is unimaginable ultimately results in a mystification. A rumor circulates within the camp as well: it worked. The question of where the perpetrators wanted to communicate to, in which social structure they intended to intervene, remains open. In the practices of the camp itself and in the discourses of reflection on the project, dsec was depicted as a "silicon valley" at the edge of the camp, the imagined border assigning the activists to alien territory.[7]

documenta11 // non-representation in public space

Following their participation in the Strasbourg camp, the caravan traveled on to Kassel for documenta11: "accepting an invitation", according to the press release distributed through the media. When they arrived in Kassel, the square in front of the Fridericianum was occupied. A group of Roma families demanded their right to remain and their right of self-determination in a 24-hour noborder camp[8], the documenta Platform6. Tents were set up in the meadow in front of the Fridericianum and arranged in the shape of a star. The info-point by Fridericianum was the meeting place, discussion zone, and often platform for conflicts with the documenta security guards, with the press and visitors.

timisoara .ro

At the noborder meeting in Vienna in December 2002, activists from Rumania attended for the first time. They had come to Vienna with the idea of setting up a bordercamp near the Hungarian-Rumanian border. Together with many other people, they wanted to address the situation in Rumania that is characterized by the breakdown of the Communist regime, the "major revolt" of the people in Rumania, and finally the expansion of the EU. The next meeting of the noborder network accordingly took place in May in Timisoara and was also planned as a preparation meeting for the camp.
In June 2003 about seventy people traveled to Timisoara to take part in the camp. This is where the paths of the "freedom of movement tour" and the PublixTheatreCaravan crossed geographically. They intended to set up a media lab together that could work independently from the state organized connections to the net. To this end, a satellite connection was set up by the noborder camp. The caravan's bus served as a kind of Internet cafe permanently operating in the bar. At the camp, though, there were primarily discussions, and forms of networking and collaborating were exchanged and developed. It was possible to link events in the camp with other events taking place simultaneously via the media lounge. After a few days, the experiment failed: the setup broke down.
On the last day of the camp there was a demonstration in Timisoara focusing on the demand: "freedom of movement // globalisation now // freedom of communication".[9]

festival of the regions // the art of enmity

After Timisoara the PublixTheatreCaravan traveled on to the Festival of the Regions in Upper Austria. Five days time to travel along the B1 and present the project and working methods with an exhibition, videos and stories. That was the agreement between the art festival and the caravan. Especially the task of being able to present their own working methods within the festival proved to be a challenge that the caravan was happy to take up. By the way, the theme of the festival was "The Art of Enmity".
The Upper Austrian Provincial Governor Josef Pühringer is an especially suitable enemy. He had been invited to hold the opening speech for the festival. The caravan invited themselves to welcome "their Peppi, their great role model" as fan club. This led to the first commotion. While the festival guests listened to the words, dozens of police were hidden in the woods, probably to be prepared for impending terrorist attacks. The festival director, who appeared quite pale during the event, was congratulated on the successful staging of enmity and Governor Pühringer was unable to hold his speech. He was out-sung by his fans, who could not resist expressing their affection. Josef was exuberantly referred to as a "geile Sau" ("hot sow") with a pretty banner. That was the last straw. The governor could not really deal with this sexualization of his person and concluded: "If that's art, then it went right past me."[10]
A few days later the caravan took up biometrics, entered the college preparatory school at the Lambach Monastery as a biological measurement office and started measuring the children. The way authority and identitary thinking function became visible at the same time. Up to the end, the director of the school could not understand that this was a theater action that had chosen his school as stage. Teachers instructed the children, who could

already sense which way the wind was blowing, to meekly follow instructions and be measured. The action was disbanded after a short time and a discussion with the pupils ensued. The group left the school again and returned to the bus that was parked in the town center of Lambach. Shortly thereafter, the mayor, the school director and several concerned parents arrived. Following protracted discussions with the persons responsible, finally even the director was able to get his feet on the ground again and understand simple things like the fact that he had been an actor in a play, where he didn't understand the script. Communication was continued via Internet. The honorable director wrote letters and expressed his fury about the representation of his role.[11]
State security and the festival direction, already confronted with tremendous agitation and permanent questions, achieved best performances in executing their tasks. While the caravan stopped in Wels, allowing themselves a day off and declaring war on the Secretary of State via Internet, another panic-like situation was set off elsewhere. Due to the speed of communication, the image of the caravan escalated to fantasies of omnipotence. The game only became transparent when the festival director, sitting with the caravan in Wels, was informed by the police that the same publiXtheatre was just preparing an action in Linz.
In Donna Haraway's writing, the communication game is to be understood against the background of the transformation of an "organic industrial society" to "informatics of dominance": gliding smoothly from familiar hierarchizations and identitary logics to a network that cannot be comprehended in its complexity. This "informatics of dominance" translates everything into a language, into code. When this language is applied, when attempts are made to affect public space through communication at this level, then the advantages of virtuality can be exploited to influence the staging of the public sphere. It was at this level that the Festival of

the Regions also attempted to banish the perception of the publiXtheatre from the public sphere. Immediately following the declaration of war against the Secretary of State, the operators removed the link on the their web site to the publiXtheatre from the net. Only after it was expressly declared that this action was not connected to the festival, could the relationships be normalized again. Following long discussions about the contract and the scope of the work, it was finally possible to virtually establish a public sphere again concerning the connection between the Festival of the Regions and the publiXtheatre.
The journey will continue in this sense, always establishing a relation to reality and moving freely at the same time in a virtual and real public sphere: moving freely also in considering actions outside the realm of the wishes of festival directions ("Art, too, must respect the barriers of law"), actions that do not accept the barriers of laws nor acknowledge the differences between art and politics, between activism and theorism. *the caravan goes on* ...

http://no-racism.net/noborderlab
http://zone.noborder.org
http://no-racism.net/noborderzone
http://no-racism.net/nobordertour
http://noborder.org/

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[1] http://no-racism.net/nobordertour/

[2] http://www.eipcp.net/transversal/0902/kuemmer/en

[3] http://www.eipcp.net/transversal/0902/mueller/en

[4] http://www.eipcp.net/transversal/0902/raunig/en

[5] http://www.eipcp.net/transversal/1203/hamm/en

[6] http://no-racism.net/tourpics/tuesday2307/

[7] http://no-racism.net/tourpics/research_sis/

[8] http://krit.de/roma/

[9] http://no-racism.net/tourpics/timisoara/100603/

[10] http://no-racism.net/tourpics/fdr/eroeffnung/

[11] http://no-racism.net/tourpics/fdr/schule/