INTERRUPTION

Writing a Dissident Architecture

Sepideh Karami

KTH Royal Institute of Technology
Critical Studies
School of Architecture and Built Environment
SE-100 44 Stockholm, Sweden
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KTH School of Architecture and Built Environment
Critical Studies in Architecture
Royal Institute of Technology
SE-100 44 Stockholm
Sweden

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There were plants growing in the darkness. Their leaves were blue, were white, were grey. Their leaves were looking for the particles of black darkness and grey dust that were sliding down the column of light, penetrating through the gaps in the brick walls. The plants were growing to the whispers, to the rustle, to those humming noises on the cusp of falling into silence.
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A device for troubling routines

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- **Franz Kafka**
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- **Standing Man**
  - 2013 - Turkey

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  - 2013 - Turkey

- **Woman in White**

- **Part 01: Pause**

- **Tehran**
  - 1979

- **Rome**
  - REDACTED

- **Prague**
  - REDACTED

- **New York**
  - 1853

- **Istanbul**

- **Lyon - France**
  - REDACTED
He was deep in such thoughts while looking over the roof, the orange sky, the antennae, the blackened chimneys and the laundry moving slightly in the warm late afternoon breeze. He took off his earring, which she had made for him from an almost finished black pencil, with which he wrote these words on the margin of a newspaper page; cut it out using his fingers, folded it and put it in his pocket.
We can already recognize that today time is split between a present that is already dead and a future that is already living – and the yawning abyss between them is becoming enormous. In time, an event will thrust us like an arrow into that living future. This will be the real political act of love.

Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri
Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire.
She tore a square of newspaper and folded it deftly, all the while reading the news on it, which vanished with every fold she made. Complete sentences disappeared, lost their meaning, and became open to interpretations. She unfurled her fingers and put the elephant on the edge of the roof. Whilst she studied the orange light passing through between the words and folds, a gust of wind flipped the elephant off the edge…. 
The Political Act of Love

This book is made as a performing ground by those who have not yet given up their hopes of change, who enquire into ways of interrupting oppressive powers and their major operating structures. This book is a performing ground constructed, little by little, by its characters, who have been performing their dissent by critically engaging with different architectural sites and the dominant power relations situated in those sites. These architectural sites are initially stages themselves, and they expose an ongoing performance played by the dominant and major political systems that have shaped our time with the politics of fear, xenophobia, hate, creeping authoritarianism, conservatism, mass production of borders, and impermeable interiors. These stages, as Reinhold Martin writes, are designed to come to act “ahead of the performers, preparing the ground, laying things out, positioning speakers and addressees and establishing the basis for the reality that they will enact together”.¹ Through the design of these stages, the fiction of the dominant power is performed as reality.

In the cacophony of major performances, there are moments when minor characters, silently, stealthily and delicately take over the major stages, even momentarily, and interrupt the major performances, opening up spaces of dissent and constructing their own performing grounds. Observing the acts of such characters, the focus of this thesis has started from architectural sites characterised by those moments. These sites – ranging from public spaces, to institutions, to domestic spaces – are looked at through a performative aspect of architecture that is how these sites are inhabited and transformed by these characters.

A performative lens such as this one suggests an ethos of the criticality from within that eliminates the critical distance while performing the alternative. In this thesis, I formulate this performative mode of political engagement as *dissidence*. Situated in these politically charged sites, and viewed through the lens of performativity, the thesis has evolved around the research question of developing dissident architecture through experimental and performative writing practices, where writing is an act of making. The thesis is thus a contribution to the fields of dissident architecture and writing architecture.

Architecture in this thesis is understood both as a material structure and as a disciplinary framework. Both are understood as sites, where the play of power becomes hegemonic. Through the lens of performativity, they are sites of action, where writing architecture as a practice acts upon their major power relations. To introduce the characters into the sites as a key methodological approach and to follow their acts within those sites, through various forms of writing, is to develop dissident architecture.

Dissident architecture starts from the performative aspect of dissidence; i.e. how dissidents inhabit spaces and change the spatial relations through their inhabitation. In moments of political struggle, a performative reading of architecture such as this complicates architectural sites, as well as proposes an understanding of architecture that goes beyond the disciplinary limits. To engage in what I call dissident architecture, I construct various characters that critically inhabit architectural sites, interrupt the existing established relations of those sites, construct performing grounds, and thereby become dissidents. The existing real and imaginary characters and their initial sites of action are my material for constructing the dissident practices. I follow the characters’ actions, transformations, movements, and inhabitations by writing them, making them, inventing them. As I write them and their acts, they come into existence. As I write their acts in the sites they inhabit, their performing ground is constructed. As I write the characters, through their acts situated in the sites, we become involved in the construction of a “plural I”\(^2\) that does not reduce the many voices to one, but complicates one’s own voice by including the voices of others. In this way, while the characters exist in the site, they are changed through their actions and become dissidents. The construction of such characters through actions that engage with the spatial elements of

various architectural sites complicates those sites through performance. The complicated architectural site creates more planes and niches for dissenting actions.

In order to construct the figure of dissident, I ask the character(s) to move through three different political sites: 1) spaces of appearance or the spectacle, 2) disciplined spaces understood as sites of impossibilities, 3) domestic spaces as displaced loci of subversive political actions. As a character inhabits and moves through these sites, she becomes more and more of a dissident, taking distance from explicit ways of expressing and staging discontent and opposition that are common in activism. She tries to expose that dissidence would be the most practical method, given the present status of the world. The character performs the dissidence, through the very act of living, as a stealth political struggle, and while pretending to work with the dominant power, she in fact works against it.

This thesis is formulated through a journey that goes through these sites. The journey does not really start with dissidence, but it arrives at dissidence. The character, who is an uninvited practitioner forcing herself into a system of existing power relations, responds tactically to every specific site. While her tactics originate from the politics of each site, she uses amateurism and love to construct her interrupting tactics. She is an amateur who by nature questions the disciplinary norms and limits, a lover who puts love before the institutional loyalty, an interrupter who interrupts the existing relations of the dominant power and thereby constructs new grounds of action by doing things differently.

The sites that the character(s) inhabit are sequenced from public spaces to spaces of institutions and further to the spaces of domesticity. Examining how the character moves through this sequence indicates how dissidence could happen, and could be significant, in various scales and situations. In other words, moving from public to private sequences the construction of the concept of dissidence in this thesis; it stands for moving from explicit and overt gestures to the more implicit and covert ways of dissent and radicalising the struggle by taking root in the details of everyday life.

In each of these sites, there is a major structure that ignores the minor one – those subjects that don’t conform to the major identities and reside in the
“cramped spaces”\textsuperscript{3} created by the major as constraining social environments.\textsuperscript{4} In these sites, the major excludes the minor from the hegemonic play of power relations and forcibly silences it through various major political operations. In response, instead of focusing on the major and victimising the minor, in this thesis I focus on the minor and its cramped spaces of inhabitation and give the minor the floor to perform. I focus on how the minor takes over the stages of major performances rather than giving a critical analysis of the major. When the character moves between these sites, s/he invents various \textit{methods of dissidence} to \textit{dissent} from those major power structures by constructing a political, critical and creative relation with, and in response to, every specific site. In this way, the character practices a “situated”\textsuperscript{5} practice, where her methods and tools do not confine her to any predefined discipline, but open up possibilities to perform differently in every context and to break free from the existing limits. She does this by means of \textit{amateurism}, \textit{fiction}, \textit{performativity}, and by engaging with \textit{minor} forms of architectural space making. This specificity and situatedness of the act of dissidence is at the core of the minor politics.

In her practice, interruption and dissidence work together. Through dissidence, she \textit{interrupts} the dominant power relations, and thereby opens up a space for herself within the power structure that weakens the consistency of the major structures. She further practices dissidence in the spaces created by interruption. Interrupting tactics facilitate the oscillation of being in and out of the dominant system through which dissident methodologies are constructed.

In order to construct the “plural I” that writes through these architecture sites while the characters critically inhabit the physical sites, I critically inhabit the

\textsuperscript{3} “Cramped spaces” is a concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and it is integral to their “minor politics”. Nicholas Thoburn discusses this concept thus: “Against social and political theories that seek the source of political practice in a collective identity, the theory of cramped space contends that politics arises among those who lack and refuse coherent identity, in their encounter with the impasses, limits, or impossibilities of individual and collective subjectivity. Cramped space, as Deleuze puts it, is a condition where ‘the people are missing’.”


\textsuperscript{5} I have borrowed the concept of “situatedness” from Peta Hinton’s text “Situated Knowledges and New Materialism(s): Rethinking a Politics of Location”. Hinton discusses the term by referring to Donna Haraway’s ‘Situated Knowledge’, and brings forth “a politics of location”. Through the politics of location, she insists on the “primary locus of the body as the site from which one’s partial perspective can be enunciated”: A politics of location therefore clears a space for the minor to speak not in fullness of identities, but as a partial response to a situation.

dominant discourses, the site of fiction, writing architecture and narrations of people’s lost hopes. These characters push me to speak the unspeakable. In response, I struggle to invent a language of dissidence, a dissident methodology, to tell the stories we cannot tell, to be involved in the “art of the impossible”\(^6\). By inventing this language, I construct the characters further and speak through them. This language is stealthy, indirect, humorous, minor and critical, and comes into existence by moving the characters through the sites and interrogating the sites through experimentation with various stories and plays. Together, we try to construct a new field in the field of writing architecture that is called *writing dissident architecture*; they do it by critically inhabiting physical spaces, I do it through the practices of (performative) writing. A collective act such as the one that I undertake together with the characters is the contribution to writing architecture, dissident architecture and critical approaches to architectural sites through performative experimental writing.

Through such activities and methods, and driven by those moments when love moves one beyond daily routines, this research insists on securing a radical position of being *actively present* in the emergence of new worlds. It aims to transgress limits, borders, rules, territories, disciplines and grand narratives not by leaving them, but by inhabiting them, by acknowledging them and interrogating them and ignoring them, by making them interflow, or humiliating them until they melt down, by cutting them, standing on them, and perpetuating them, by dissenting from them. The character is involved in such activities, as I am, by becoming dissident.

**Writing a Dissident Architecture**

The concept of dissidence is constructed little by little, parallel to the characters becoming dissidents, all the way through this thesis. Nevertheless, dissidence is an unfinished concept and under construction, a work that is continued beyond this thesis; it’s a lifetime occupation. Without an intention of describing what dissidence is, in this text I invite you to join me on the journey through which the dissident is constructed. I do however give you some words about my understanding of dissidence to help you navigate the journey better. The more detailed discussion of dissidence emerges gradually, through the parts and chapters, and finally becomes a clearer picture in Part

I present the dissident as a complex hybrid character, difficult to grasp; as soon as she is about to come into the picture, she disappears. A combination of many concepts is needed in order to construct such a character. Instead of clarifying and simplifying situations and concepts, the dissident enjoys the complexity of the situations and contexts. This might have created tensions in the work; paradoxically, these tensions are required for such political character to take shape. At the same time, as Nathaniel Coleman writes in his “Architecture and Dissidence: Utopia as Method”: “the association of “architecture” with “dissidence” reveals an oxymoronic conceptual structure.” This oxymoron in fact creates grounds where a new form of political engagement and struggle could be developed. The impossibility of the combination of dissidence and architecture as a ground for formulating and performing critique is what makes the figure of the dissident essential in the discussion of the critical potential of practices of architecture. However, the performative approach to dissident architecture – by constructing the characters of dissidents – is one way to overcome such impossibility and use the tension and complexity as a potential with which to develop dissident architecture.

The journey in this thesis departs from the established and disciplinary boundaries of what is called (major) architecture, but it stretches the tools, discourses, details, elements and methods of architecture beyond those boundaries with the aim of constructing the practice of writing dissident architecture. In this thesis, architecture as a site for the development of dissidence is understood both as material structures, where major power relations organise the movements and the use of the space and control the inhabitants – such as a public square, a prison, a public unfinished building and a house – as well as a discipline that stages disciplinary knowledge and professionalism as major power positions. The latter is used as a site of inquiry to develop transdisciplinary and minor modes of practice of architecture and amateurism as a political response to disciplinary knowledge and professionalism, and thereby develop dissident methodologies. The former is understood through the lens of performativity as a site to practice and experiment with a minor practice of writing of this kind. While both represent the major power relations,
they could, paradoxically, stage the act of dissent. Dissident architecture then acts upon such sites. Formulated here as a minor practice of writing, it is to write on already-finished architectural sites, complicate the spatial relations and turn them into unfinished structures, indicating the continuity of the process of architecture through the inhabitation of those sites, and thereby producing new subjectivities, new spatial relations and questioning the major ones that exist. Performative writing is one way of critically inhabiting these sites. Writing transforms the characters from the mere inhabitants of the space into its makers, its architects. Through writing, the characters’ acts are understood as architectural work, and their performance as what produces the space.

**Contribution to the Field**

Writing dissident architecture is a contribution to two main fields: writing architecture and dissident architecture. This introductory section sets the scene for the performative and experimental work and discussions in the thesis, while the chapters “Writing with Unwelcome Co-authors” and “Fugue: On Writing a Dissident Architecture” discuss the detailed contribution of this research to the fields of dissident architecture and writing architecture. In the following, I will briefly situate this thesis in the previously undertaken work in the two fields.

In my contribution to dissident architecture, a field developed mainly by the work of Ines Weizman, I have investigated the question of how to turn dissidence into a closer engagement with dominant power relations. The conference *Architecture and the Paradox of Dissidence*, organized by Weizman in 2012, aimed to “reflect on the relevance of the concept of dissidence for architectural practice today”. The driving question was “can the assemblage of gestures and techniques of past struggles and ‘dilemmas’ of working in politically suppressive regimes help to inform those of today?” The conference resulted in rich scholarly work around the subject, mainly the two publications: “Dissidence”, Issue 01, 2014 *Architecture and Culture*, and the book *Architecture and the Paradox of Dissidence*. Regarding urgencies developed by Weizman, while I follow her reading of dissidence as a sort of political position that doesn’t

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aim to capture power, I argue that this might risk the political as a critical engagement with the dominant power, to use Chantal Mouffe’s terminology.\textsuperscript{9} Weizman’s work, which originated from historical research on the work of dissident architects from the former Soviet Union and theoretical discussions situated in that context, considers dissidence “a mode of retreat from”\textsuperscript{10} the hegemonic play of power and “into the imaginary, ironic, dreamlike and the impossible.”\textsuperscript{11} My effort, however, has been to introduce a more critically engaging mode of dissidence by taking examples of oppressed situations that were not limited to that historical context, but instead found in broader geopolitical contexts with both horizontal and vertical oppressive power structures. I also develop dissidence in close relation to the imagination and the impossible – not as a parallel to the reality of dominant power, but as what acts upon it; an impossibility that turns dissidence into an “art of the impossible”\textsuperscript{12} without falling into explicit gestures of activism. To do so, I have combined dissidence with the minor politics and performativity of political engagement.

As I discuss further in the chapter “Setting the Scene”, this combination brings dissidence into a close encounter with power and reduces the critical distance in a manner that I describe through oscillation. The formation of dissidence as oscillating in and out of a power position, a simultaneous and tactical approach of engagement and withdrawal through a performative approach, originated from the various explored sites in this thesis, is the contribution to the field of dissident architecture.

At the same time, dissidence is a practice that is undertaken through the development of a hidden and stealth language; it aims to fool the oppressive power by pretending to be loyal to it while gradually opening up a ground of dissent within and against it. Following such an intention in dissidence, I work toward bringing such language into the field of writing architecture. One contribution to the field of writing architecture is the performativity of dissidence through developing such language. By building on the field of writing architecture developed by e.g. Jane Rendell’s site-writing, Hélène Frichot’s fictocriticism, and Katja Grillner’s writing architecture, I have situated my writing in the architectural sites characterised by political events and

\begin{itemize}
\item[11.] Ibid. p.38.
\end{itemize}
conditions of oppression, where the act of dissent is “impossible”, and I have posed the question: how to tell the stories we cannot tell? For me, architecture writing is performed as a kind of dissident writing. While Rendell develops the performativity of writing in her concept of site-writing, in dissident writing I develop it by focusing on fiction as a political device and construction of the characters as dissidents while they engage with architectural sites. This mode of architectural writing works through the materialisation and the performativity of writing, and cuts through where it is impossible to perform the dissent. It is to write with multiple voices and many authors—not all of whom are welcome. To develop a tactic of writing with unwelcome co-authors; i.e. writing with the dominant power, but against it, is what dissidence could bring into writing architecture. By means of a performative approach to architecture, and by complicating architectural sites, the development of such a method of dissidence becomes possible. By combining different sorts of writing, building on each other, the narration is constructed and the character is relayed from one site to another. This writing dissident architecture deals with two main questions. One is how to tell a story we cannot tell? And the other: how can this struggle with an impossible narration create a dissident architecture?

Writing Dissident Architecture is significant in sense of its potential to make architecture, politically and critically.

Dissident architecture through writing extends architecture to reach for other practices/fields, and embraces architecture’s vulnerability, weakness and fragility; it is a political practice in its encounter with the others. Understanding the limits of the architectural discipline allows us to pass through those limits. This could be done only by traversing those limits and looking at the discipline from a distance, then coming back with what has been achieved from that distance and testing if the limits still exist. Recognition of those limits of architecture is also the political work of architecture. In order to practice a dissident mode of architecture, I propose an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practice, where these terms do not simply refer to the application of tools and methods from other fields, but the ability and endurance of inhabiting the worlds of the others. In this research, these terms pertain to radical moments of encountering different ways of being in the world and various ways of doing and thinking about things.

Following this discussion, another contribution of this thesis is also to the field of artistic research. Building on the discussions of writing as practice
by e.g. Rolf Hughes’ “research writing”, where “hybrid” forms of “creative and critical writing” are discussed in relation to practice-based research, I have developed dissident writing as the practice of architecture, in the field of artistic research and practice-based research. I have used artistic research as a field to expand amateurism, and by challenging the limits of the discipline as well as the issue of power in conforming to established knowledge production, I transform it into dissident research and develop a dissident methodology. This contribution is described in greater detail in the chapter “Stories and Plays: On Methodology”.

With this brief introduction to writing dissident architecture, instead of describing various genres and methods of writing here, I invite you to experience these modes and join the journey of the character(s) in various sites. I will disclose the various experimental and performative writing modes after you experience the journey, in the last section, “Fugue: Writing Dissident Architecture”.

**The Book**

This thesis consists of three main sections: 1. Introduction 2. Interrupting Tactics 3. Fugue. The first and the last sections of this thesis work in parallel, and together they describe the research question, methods and structure, the practice and the field, and the contribution to the field. Therefore, as its title indicates, the chapter Fugue does not provide a summary of what has already been told, but re-narrates the thesis through the lens of the practice of writing or writing dissident architecture, in order to bring the experiments forward as platforms for continuing or starting other experiments. The section Introduction consists of this text, “Stories and Plays: On Methodology”, and “Setting The Scene”, which discusses some major theoretical concepts used in this thesis. While the text “Stories and Plays” discusses the general methods, inspirations and the politics of research methodology, the fugue chapter “On Writing Dissident Architecture” discusses more specifically the politics of writing and the methods of writing applied and/or invented in this thesis. Furthermore, the fugue becomes a door that opens onto possible future routes for this thesis and possible connections to other fields, instead of wrapping it up and closing it down as a finished project. It is written as an unfinished

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text, indicating the infrastructural aspects of writing architecture as well as the politics of unfinishedness in relation to dissident methodology to facilitate possible exit routes. The possible “Routes” are formulated as questions that appear along the fugue, but an attentive reader will also spot them throughout the thesis.

The second section, “Interrupting Tactics”, deals with three different tactics of interruption and consists of three parts: 1. Pause; 2. CUT; and 3. Fo(o) L+D. These tactics have their origin in street politics and the micro-politics of everyday life, and they are extracted from three different modes of questioning the dominant power in three different conditions, namely: 1) spaces of appearance or the spectacle, 2) disciplined spaces understood as sites of impossibilities, 3) domestic spaces as displaced loci of subversive political actions. In each chapter, each tactic is developed through three components: 1. a site, 2. a formula and 3. a fiction. The performing ground is constructed from the interaction between the site and the formula. Below, I will further explain how these three components operate on the three main parts of the thesis, and how the three interrupting tactics are constructed and put into an experiment.

In addition to these parts and sections, there is an important element that does not feature in the table of contents, but has the important role of connecting all the various parts. This element is the character(s). The character is the moving element of this thesis that links various parts and sections and experiments with interrupting devices. The character, as I explain in greater detail in the concluding chapter “On Writing Dissident Architecture”, is a changing character that does not exist yet, but is constructed through her/his actions. It is why – as you, the reader will notice – s/he is constantly changing from one identity to another while s/he performs. In fact, s/he is many characters in one.


Michel de Certeau distinguishes tactics from strategies by appointing the latter to a ‘proper place’ and the former to “time”. He explains, “I call a ‘tactic,’ […] a calculus which cannot count on a ‘proper’ (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The ‘proper’ is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing.’ Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into ‘opportunities.’ The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements […] the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is ‘seized’.”
Site, Formula, Fiction

Sites are not a given entity, but the outcome of various planned and unexpected forces, matters, movements, resistance, breaks and connections. They are constructed over time and continue to become anew. Sites are not objective either. They produce stories. They are living beings; organisms that produce lives, deaths, love, revolution. They change themselves whilst changing the others and whilst being changed by the others. Each chapter in this book starts with one or two main sites with their own political stories, already hosting events, the initial characters, and their performative political action of dissent. All of these sites are in a moment of falling apart, failure, losing hope, oppression and impossibility – such as an unfinished building occupied by people in the last days of a revolution, a prison, or a house that remains forever unfinished. The sites are thus the host of political events, or they are constructed in a moment of interruption. This interrupted moment is inhabited or activated by a character – an interrupter, an amateur, a lover, a dissident – who critically inhabits the site and constructs the interrupting tactics as a political response to the site. The story, however, pushes the character to perform the alternatives and to distort the historically documented failures of human hopes. The performative paradigm of the character’s inhabitation of the site complicates the site.

By means of writing through the site, following the character, the theoretical framing or formula is extracted. The formulae are constructed through longer or shorter texts, experiments, performative writing/reading and micro-making, or side projects. I undertake the side projects to experiment with creating various creative relations with the site and its politics. Their aim is not exclusively to create relations between the site and the characters, but also to experiment with the theoretical discussions and translate them to formulae in relation to every specific site. By moving backwards and forwards between the formula and the site, and by moving the character in the site through writing/making, the site becomes a performing ground where interrupting tactics are produced.

The term ‘performing ground’ is borrowed from Laura Levin in her eponymous book, where she explores its political potentials and defines it as: “… a performance strategy in which the human body commingles with or is
presented as a direct extension of its setting.”

Levin has applied this term as a critique of “stage as picture”, where performance is “an image experienced frontally and by anonymous viewers within a darkened auditorium”. Criticising the stage as a singular image, she discusses the act of performing in various forms of performances, such as ‘environmental’, ‘immersive’, ‘relational’ and ‘site-specific’, where the borders between the stage and the viewer disappear, and s/he becomes part of the performance. In this research, I have used the term performing ground to accentuate not only the political agency and subjectivity of the inhabitant/character as the maker of the space, but also the continuity of the work of architecture as an unfinished work. As soon as the character is introduced to the site, she changes it, twists it, destructs it, and projects a story on it that is different from what is planned by the major structures. Performing ground refers to the continuity of the work of architecture when inhabited by a character, and turns the architecture into an event.

While the characters act and inhabit the physical sites and create events by performing their political engagement, turning them into the performing ground, I critically inhabit their stories, the theoretical discourses and spaces of academia. In this way, the section Performing Ground is not only the characters’ ground of action, but also my performing ground as a researcher. I also use the interaction between the sites and formulae to extend my performing ground to other fields and disciplines and perform as an amateur there. I discuss such roles further in the following chapter, “Stories and Plays”. Therefore, by inhabiting these sites, the characters, as well as myself, turn the sites into performing grounds through writing and making. Within these grounds, I also try to perform as a dissident, an amateur, and a lover – as does the character.

The character performs dissidence by experimenting with the (interrupting) tactics that she has derived from the urgencies of the site. Following the characters’ experiments, I test the interrupting tactics by making fiction. Through fiction, the interrupting tactic is put into a story, and how it works and how it keeps on transforming when put into that very story is explored.

16. Ibid. p. 67.
17. Ibid. p. 67.
It is through the fiction that *writing dissident architecture* takes shape as it reframes the given reality.

Fiction in this thesis not only refers to the literary form; it is also a project of making with political ramifications. In the words of Jacques Rancière, fiction acts to “visualize an encounter of incompatibilities”.\(^{18}\) In opposition to the false understanding of fiction vs. reality, he explains that the configurations of what is presented as real are in fact “a matter of construction, a matter of fiction”, and what is imposed on us as “real” is in fact the constructed fiction of the police order. He puts forth fiction as “the reframing of the ‘real’, or the framing of dissensus”.\(^{19}\) Following Rancière’s political understanding of fiction as an act of dissensus, I put forth fiction as a political project of interrupting the “police order”. Fiction then is making; it does not describe imaginary worlds, but tries to make them realised. The creation of the imaginary worlds in fiction is not in contrast to the real world. It always has one foot in reality, and its close connection with reality is what makes it an effective tool for change.

Fiction is an effective tool in the construction of the figure of dissident and dissident methodology, when the covert methods of dissent are at work, and when the politics of minor play an important role. As I develop it further in Part 03: FO(O)+D, dissidence itself takes a fictional position that disrupts the fiction of police order by very living of that fictional life – playing fictional identities and roles. In other words, dissidence is performing fiction. The politics of making fiction is also discussed in the chapter “Stories and Plays”.

**Section 02: Interrupting Tactics**

Dissident methodology and practice is experimented with and constructed through three different interrupting tactics in the second section of this thesis. I have borrowed the term *interruption* from the field of fictocriticism, or critical fiction. In *The Material Word*, David Silverman and Brian Torode write that: “the practice of interruption seeks not to impose a language of its own but to enter critically into existing linguistic configurations, and to re-open the closed structures into which they have ossified.”\(^{20}\) Anna Gibbs writes how interruption as a practice could work by referring to Luce Irigaray’s re-reading

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19. Ibid. p. 149.
of philosophers. She writes:

[…] she rereads the work of Freud and of various philosophers in order to undo it from the inside, interrupting it not only with comments and asides, but above all with questions, which come to form the basis of an interrogative mode of writing which aims to open up spaces of debate rather than to close them down with assertions.21

In this way, interruption is a practice of opening up spaces, even momentarily, for one and for the others, in order to constantly construct space again and again and again. This space is a platform for alternative acts to be practiced to ultimately subvert the oppressive power relation in a specific context. It differs from the exodus practices in that it aims to change the dominant system from within. The space created by interruption is a temporal one that comes to an end. Yet its temporary nature prevents it from becoming an established space with its own power relations. In the introduction to Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitution of the Public Sphere, Sander Bax et al. write about interruption as “one way of forcing the public sphere to renew itself; or if not renew then at least to rehash itself.”22 When interruption comes to an end, the previous system might be resumed. But what could prevent interruption from being an inconsequent pause is its repetition. It is the performative paradigm of the act of interruption that, through repetition and oscillation, induces radicality in the act of interruption itself. The repetition and insistence of interruption is what makes it a subversive act. In this thesis, the characters are involved in interrupting a dominant condition, by pausing, cutting through it, or folding it in and out.

On the other hand, interruption as a performative tactic acts on the site in the manner of an event. Dorita Hannah, in finding a route out of the post-political malady of architectural discourse, suggests a “performance paradigm” to “re-politicize the field through the notion of spatial performativity.”23 She describes this re-politicization of architecture by proposing the “architecture as event”

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and focusing on the “complexities” it will bring to architecture. This would expose architecture to the forces of event and confront “architecture’s will to be fixed and durable” with a temporal and unstable condition. It is along with Hannah’s argument that I propose that interruption is what activates architecture to become a performing ground for the act of dissidence.

In this way, interruption as an instrument of change stops the dominant flow, preparing the ground for other things to happen. The three acts of interruption in this thesis prepare that ground through three different forms of action. The pause uses stillness and refusal as a mode of interruption. The cut interrupts the material continuity and the structural continuity of established institutions and creates cracks in those systems. The fold interrupts the constant surveillance and control by folding the private and public spaces in and out. Through these three acts of interruption, a performing ground is constructed. By critically inhabiting a context, one could invent interrupting tools; by critical inhabiting that moment of interruption, one could construct a performing ground that could re-interrupt the dominant power, or perhaps disrupt it. Through constructing and reconstructing such grounds and performing on them, dissident comes to existence.

**Pause**

In Part 01: *Pause*, the sites are public spaces at the moment of political events. They are constructed as sites of performing passive forms of protest and refusal, where characters stand solitary and fragile against an oppressive power. While the first site, 110 Freedom Building – an unfinished building in Tehran – in 1979 exposes many singular characters as demonstrators, perching on the building and held together by the infrastructure of an unfinished building, the second site takes us to a square and public park during the Gezi Park movement in Istanbul in 2013 that is formed around two main characters: The Woman in Red and The Standing Man. 110 Freedom Building becomes a site to drag out the lost minor and opposing voices of an exhausted revolution, and thereby reconstruct it as an unfinished infrastructural architecture through an experiment of performative writing. The site of Gezi Park Movement focuses on the performative aspects of the act of protest by the application of subtle gestures rather than overt, activist ones.

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24. Ibid.
These sites and characters are developed by furthering the discussions of spatial aspects of the act of refusal, stillness as a form of political action, and infrastructure as a concept to develop unfinished subjectivities and alternative forms of collective in “Formula 01”. Such key concepts, derived from the sites, are discussed in the chapters: 1) “Dot, Dot, Dot…: On Constructing the Space of Refusal”, 2) “Fa(i)l(l)ing (Infra)structures”, 3) “Active Waiting”, 4) “Impossible Book: The Art of the Impossible”.

In the chapter “Dot, Dot, Dot…: On Constructing the Space of Refusal”, the performativity and spatiality of the act of refusal is discussed by bringing in the character of Bartleby and his utterance of the formula “I would prefer not to” in Herman Melville's short story “Bartleby: The Scrivener”, as a continuation of The Standing Man’s performance. Refusal in this text is not discussed as a negative withdrawal, but as a creative process of engagement, to produce a generative political space. The space of refusal would be constructed through insistence and critical inhabitation. I argue that the space of refusal should be continuously constructed and kept unfinished. A formula is needed to prevent the space of refusal from morphing into affirmation. The formula should allow for a longer period of critical inhabitation, while delaying an oppression. Both the Standing Man and Bartleby construct the space of refusal by means of a formula that leaves the oppressive power in confusion. Furthermore, I discuss how ‘I would prefer not to’ could be practiced by the practice of architecture. Calling such architecture the architecture of dot dot dot, I argue that refusing to make any change could be the biggest change that the material practice of architecture could bring to a site. Such a practice not only needs a formula, but that it also needs the construction of the character of architect, as a performer, who steps onto the stage of practice in a Bartlebian manner.

This renunciation of a conventional architectural role in completing the world is discussed further in the text “Fa(i)l(l)ing (Infra)structures: A Performing Ground for the Minor Collective”. The text as a performative writing is itself an infrastructural text, situated in the 110 Freedom Building. The concept of infrastructure that refers to what is in-between the elements of a collective, by AbdouMaliq Simone, and the repetitive characteristics of the infrastructure, by Reinhold Martin, advance the discussion in this text. The character is one of the people on the unfinished building, who becomes a dissident through eighteen rounds of ascending-inhabiting-descending the building, each time investigating the question “What is between us that keeps us together?”, which
is formulated in different ways. The text discusses infrastructural architecture as an unfinished and hence ever-changing structure that enhances the construction of a collective of dissidents as unfinished subjects through a minor politics.

The collective constructed through the infrastructural architecture of 110 Freedom Building moves into a linear infrastructure, an invisible tunnel, called “the queue” in the text “Active Waiting”. Starting from the act of love as an active waiting filled with hope and passion, the ins and outs of waiting both as a subversive and oppressive mechanism are investigated. The queue as a paramount example of waiting as a tool of social control and a mechanism to make people visible in a linear structure is discussed, mainly in an Iranian context during the 1980’s, in the time of war. Yet regardless of the design of such waiting, people always find ways of interrupting its rigid structure and turning it into a performing ground for encounters. They connect to the chaos that resides in all sorts of waiting through a performative way of inhabiting a space. The text furthermore investigates the role of architecture in this activation and questions if architecture is merely a silent stage in the chatter of people waiting, or whether it could actually do something to stimulate such subversive potential.

Parallel to these discussions, various modes of experiment are undertaken. One of them is the “Impossible Books”, which is an opening into experimentation with the materiality of the text and to approaching writing as making, using existing writings as sites of critical inhabitation, practicing the concept of interruption, and investigating of the scale of dissidence. In these experiments, pauses in time, read through the semicolon, are translated into a material space. Close reading, re-writing, materialising and playing with the text developed the idea of Pause as an interrupting tactic and helped the construction of the discussion and character in the Fiction 01, as well as resulting in more experiments and the development of ideas and tactics in Part Two: CUT and Part Three: FO(O)LD of this thesis.

The Fiction 01, “Pause: A Device for Troubling Routines” is experimented through writing a critical fiction. The character in this fiction moves between the Standing Man and an imaginary character standing on the unfinished 110 Freedom Building in Tehran. She is an architect who participated in the 1979 revolution, examining the pause of the Standing Man through
an architectural lens while watching a video of the event on YouTube. The argument is built up through a lecture on the subject, a discussion with a group of architecture students, and through snippets of nostalgic daydreaming and introverted contemplation. The flashbacks, the lecture, the movie and the train of thoughts interrupt each other, creating moments of pause in the narration. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the moment, pause is discussed as an event destined to fail. The inevitable failure of the pause makes it both intense and tragic at the moment of failure. In this sense, the duration of the pause matters. Could architecture contribute to this duration and expand it?

To further study how architecture can contribute to the idea of pause, the case of 110 Freedom Building in Tehran during the 1979 revolution is discussed in relation to the Standing Man. The discussion is built up around the infrastructure of the pause, the importance of a body politic and biopolitics to the idea of the pause as a device, and the post-production of space by means of occupation. In this regard, reflecting on the work of architecture, there might be a need for a pause in the architectural profession itself in terms of its project of attempting to complete the world, as though such a project would be possible.

This character, who stays on the building for a while when everyone else leaves, moves slowly to Chapter 02 and 03 and transforms to other characters.

**CUT**

In Part 02: **CUT**, the discussion is situated in the institution, namely the institution of prison as a disciplined space and a site of extreme impossibilities. Prison epitomises an architectural condition of control, confinement, restriction and exclusion that maximises the disciplining of the bodies through spatial organization. By situating the character in such impossible conditions, the possibility of subversive acts through the material interruption of prison is investigated. In the first site, “Prison: An Impossible Situation”, which is borrowed from Robert Bresson’s movie, *A Man Escaped*, I investigate the prisoner’s escape plan through an architectural lens. When executing his escape plan, the prisoner Fontaine becomes the architect of his own cell, opening it up to the world outside. His architecture is read as a minor architecture cutting through the major architecture of prison and questioning its oppressive structure.

The second site, a former prison in Tehran, also sets up a stage for investigating architecture role in dealing with disciplined spaces as such. The text “No Longer
A Prison: An Architecture Question”, is written as a review of an architectural project, Qasr Park-Museum, that turned a prison into a recreational centre and a museum of the history of political prisoners in Iran until the Revolution in 1979. The project of opening up a prison to the public could be read as a state propaganda, and it could be a difficult task to pull off for an architect from a critical point of view.


By assigning an architectural role to a prisoner who escapes from prison, the discipline of architecture and professionalism are questioned and the value of amateurism brought forth. Amateurism, which is discussed as part of the research methodology in “Stories and Plays”, is developed further in the text “Love vs. Loyalty: Amateurism and the De-professionalization of Reality”. In this text, love is discussed as a revolutionary force and as in opposition to loyalty, in relation to amateurism and disciplinary professionalism. By criticising the loyal conservative as a character who uncritically follows the terms and conditions of institutions, I argue for the character of lover, who embraces the risk of falling, in search of the unknown. Drawing on Edward Said, this character is “moved not by profit or reward but by love” and by “caring for ideas and values despite the restriction of a profession”.25 My discussion of amateurism then, does not lie in the separation between amateurism and professionalism, but it originates from their encounter. In this way, amateurism interrupts the professional world rather than being considered a pastime activity that risks such a political position as being limited to a small privileged group, who have sufficient income and the resulting access to free time.

Continuing on the concept of love, the Kafka’s paragraph from the “Impossible Books” comes back to this part. “Line & Cut” is another experiment with that text on an impossible love, where the combination of fragility and violence is exposed.

Fragility and violence are discussed and explored further in an experimental writing in the text “Fragile and Violent: Five Architectural Narrations”, where writing emerges in the tension of the incompatible combination of fragility and violence. By drawing on Michael Hard and Antonio Negri’s *Commonwealth*, I discuss how violence could be transformed into a force. Arbitrariness, as the modus operandi of violence, imposes destruction not only on its main target but also on its collateral areas. Its arbitrariness creates extreme fear, as anyone could be affected by the act of violence. This could be best experienced with the mechanism of war and how its instruments are designed to operate. In this text, I argue that what could turn violence into force is its combination with fragility. This combination with fragility is staged through five architectural narrations in which violence is implemented in one way or another.

The text “A Shadow that Left the Logic of its Own Existence” is an experiment with the materialisation of writing and reading. Here, reading as a performative act becomes writing. The text deals with writing as a device with which to cut through the confinement of a closed room.

In Fiction 02, I use a fictitious publication as a tool to ‘interrupt’ institutions. *Al-Croquis* is a fictitious journal borne from a proposal rejected by the editors of *El-Croquis*, but that nevertheless found a way to continue an institutional existence. This issue, dedicated to the prison, introduces the aforementioned Lieutenant Fontaine, the main character of Robert Bresson’s movie *A Man Escaped*, as a protagonist of interrupting architecture. The journal, itself about the critical engagement with institutions, became a document of institutional crisis and a journey in between institutions. It never leaves its institutional existence and lives onto its new format, ultimately finding its place at the KTH library.

**Fo(o)l+D**

Part 03: Fo(o)l+D deals with *dissidence* and those tactics that *fold in* the spaces of dissent and *fool* the dominant power. A play on the words *fold* and *fool* resonates with the image of a dissident whose act is not a direct act like that of an activist, but she tries to turn the system against itself through subtle tactics; she folds out and in interchangeably; she fools the dominant power. It is in this chapter that *dissident* becomes a clearer picture.

In this chapter, the structure of site, formula and fiction is different than in
the previous chapters. Site is constructed through fiction, and formula is extracted by situating the fiction in the site. The character in this chapter acts in domestic spaces as displaced loci of subversive political actions. The site, which is a real and imaginary house, is the house of dissidents. In the text “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident”, the house of dissidents is compared to the spaces of performance. By imagining the house as an assemblage of backstage, wings, and stage, I project a performative role onto the spaces of domestic life and propose the politics of a dissident life not as an oppressed status or inability to act, but as a performative political art of living.

The story in this text is real and imaginary and it resides in a plan, drawn by hand from memory by the inhabitants of a demolished house. The house is real, and its real architectural plans were lost after its demolition. The house was built in a critical time of war and revolution, and had gone through different phases of inhabitation. This text is written through layers of sketching on hand-drawn plans. The text consists of different layers that extend the spaces of the house, multiply it, mirror it, stretch it beyond its walls. It animates its elements, brings its demolished walls, windows and doors back to life, and revitalizes the stories embedded in each and every element. The text is constructed through various modes of writing such as playwriting, conversation, essay, manual, secrets, and lists, done in layers that interrupt each other. The layering of the text makes the house even more complex and the fiction spatial, but it also gives the reader the freedom to move through the space and create new sequences. Ultimately the house is not an isolated space, but it connects to the other sites through irony and humour – mainly to the 110 Freedom Building, in its present finished state. The finished building, which represents a social and political depression, is interrupted by dissident spaces of humour and hope, presented as Suddenroom. The Suddenroom interrupts an oppressive situation like a critical release of laughter, but also as spaces of hope or micro-revolutions.

Extracted from the fiction, the Formula in this chapter consists of: 1) “Writing with Unwelcome Co-Authors!” 2) “The Two Bottles of Milk”, and 3) “The Roof of the House: On Imagination”.

“Writing with Unwelcome Co-Authors!” deals with dissident methodology as a stealth way of dissent. By comparing dissidence to activism, this text renews the character of dissident from how it is represented in the Eastern European
context in the communist era and situates this character in the contemporary world. Therefore, despite how dissidence is represented as a survival method under authoritarian regimes and as escapism from reality in the Soviet Era, I put forward dissidence as subversive political engagement that through implicit and stealth methods circumvents the oppressive power and thereby opens up a performing ground for the act of dissent and an alternative way of living.

As I put it forth throughout this thesis, dissidence is a slow mode of action that simultaneously combines thinking, imagining and acting. The slow process and the research-like life style induce a radicality in dissident methods. In this way, the dissident is a necessary character in both authoritarian and semi-authoritarian power structures with their vertical and horizontal censorship mechanisms. To construct such a character, especially in more the complicated situation of “horizontal censorship”, I discuss tactics such as Ketman, Aesopian language and the use of fiction for enabling a dialogue with the censor. To transform the dissidence from a survival strategy to a subversive tactic, I argue for the necessity of the idea of ‘leakage’. When the houses are the main loci of constructing dissidence, there should be a way for dissidence to leak out, lest the house become a prison. Through such discussions, at the end of the text, I discuss the house as an Aesopian language, and a locus for the practice of such language. The house in the fictional “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident”, is re-constructed through such language.

In line with such tactics and to lighten the dissident life as a 24/7 political engagement, I discuss humour and irony in the text “The Two Bottles of Milk”. The dissident humour is discussed as dysfunctional comedy and crypto comedy, referring to Olav Westphalen, that creates conditions “to attract other, potentially more complex and layered, types of signification”26 despite the conventional forms of comedy and jokes.

In the text “The Roof of the House: On Imagination”, I discuss how imagination could help us break free from an oppressed situation. I discuss that the individual act of imagination becomes political when connected to others in an encounter. Imagination can create a political space or a performing ground where one could reach for, and encounter the other by inhabiting

the other’s world. It is a minor form of engaging with the other’s world. To develop the concept of political imagination, I draw on Arjun Appadurai’s concepts of “-scape” and introduce imagination-scape as a performing ground for dissidents at times of impossibilities.

As a metaphor for such a performing ground, as an imagination-scape for the dissident, and as a final chapter, the roof of the house is presented as a watchtower for looking into the future while being rooted in the here and now. The Fugue that will once more go through the thesis, but through the lens of dissident writing practices is metaphorically situated on the roof of the house. From the Fugue, the reader could read back through the thesis once more, this time starting from dissidence and writing architecture, but it is also – and more importantly – a plane of moving out, of cutting out of the thesis.
Unfolding the Story
From the research notebooks.
“Where I am makes a difference to who I can be and what I can know.”

Jane Rendell – *Site-Writing, Enigma and Embellishment*

If this research draws its concerns from critical historical moments of revolution and change situated in architectural sites charged with political events, and also from highly emotional and fragile moments of falling apart, oppression, and an insistence on holding on to hope, then it requires a much more sensitive approach in order to understand the situation and formulate the narrations that surround it to project the project of change. This is why I have chosen to start from fiction, poetry, humour and micronarratives before delving into established knowledge and theoretical frameworks. Starting from minor forms of knowledge is the politics of this research.

Having said that, the work is enriched by architectural theory, cultural political theory and previously undertaken work in related research areas of revolutionary and dissident thinking. After all, there has been no clear separation between the two *per se*, but it has always been a simultaneous process of thinking, imagining, making or acting. In this way, the cases are worked by means of the manipulation of many sources, materials and inspirations. This explains once more why I have chosen the term ‘performing ground’ for the cluster of

interface between sites and formulae. As I mentioned before, the term explains not only the performance of the characters and their engagement with the site, but also why that cluster is taken as the stage of research methodology. As described in the text “The Political Act of Love”, while the characters inhabit the sites and turn them into their performing grounds, my performing ground is produced by constructing these characters and creating connections between the sites and various forms of theoretical discussions, experimental writing and making, and the performative aspects of sharing my experience in the site of academia and its related events.

The theoretical framework of this thesis has also cut through various (perhaps sometimes opposing) Western philosophical strands, with a focus on critical theory and roots in discourses such as dissidence and minor politics. Although the work does not directly draw on feminist theory, it is influenced by feminist approaches to architecture, specifically when it comes to writing architecture, but again with the aim of understanding it through the minor politics, not from the gender perspective. Reflecting again on Jane Rendell’s quote in the beginning of this text, “Where I am makes a difference to who I can be and what I can know”, situating the work in European academia, I took the advantage of working with something to which I do not belong, i.e. Western philosophy and cultural theory, as well as its influence on the formation of Western institutions. The cases of study and the original characters in this thesis are thus from various sociopolitical contexts. Placing these various contexts in an encounter with each other and with the major theoretical discussions has been a way to minorise the major theoretical discourses, by not staying loyal to the labels and by injecting the others’ stories into it. This is done by making critical fiction and doing various experimental and performative writing, as well as engaging with such theoretical references, rigorously. This encounter and its translation to various writing practices are exposed all the way through this thesis, but specifically described in the final chapter, “Fugue: On Writing Dissident Architecture”.

Although this work has drawn its inspiration from literature – which is a more obvious connection, as writing architecture is the main practice in this thesis – it has also benefitted from performance studies, circus art, film studies,
photography as well as street politics. As a result of such a broad spectrum of inspirations and fields, I expect the thesis to speak not only to those who are interested in expanding architecture beyond its conventional definition, and who wish to work with critical potential of architecture (e.g. researchers, practitioners, or architects), but also—and perhaps more importantly for me—to those from other disciplines who seek to construct situated practices that break away from their disciplinary boundaries and respond to the urgencies of the context, the practices that are constructed in response to specific time and sociopolitical contexts.

In the introduction to Deleuze and Research Methodologies, Rebecca Coleman and Jessica Ringrose accentuate the performativity of methods compared to their descriptive and generative characteristics. Echoing this line of argument, if the research question in this PhD is concerned with constructing the field of writing dissident architecture as a new transdisciplinary and situated practice, through tactics of interruption, then the research methodology should contribute to the politics of this practice. If interruption is what this new practice does to advance dissidence, then what are the dissident methodologies and how have they taken shape through this research? If this research addresses writing as a practice of architecture, then how does writing dissident architecture create a new field that is able to interrupt the established forms of practices of architecture?

Let me start with a simple account of some major inspiring forms that have helped me to construct specific relationships with my research concerns. As mentioned earlier, the subjects of study hinge on literary texts in their various forms and genres. This is not only due to a personal interest in literature as an activity of space-making, but also to its political importance and subversive potential—something I have personally experienced in Iranian society—and its ability to create connections, similarly to architecture, between opposing elements, and turn them into stories. For me, research is basically crafting those stories by being attentive to a situation and sensitive to a problem; with a wish for those stories to be taken on to new lives by others, i.e. the readers.

2. There have been many various experiments and micro-making side projects that have helped me articulate my thoughts but which are not represented in this thesis. An experiment that I did over a long period time was “Photo Stories”, where a combination of texts and images was used to tell stories. I shared these on social media (Facebook and Instagram).

(Prose) Poem, (Critical) Fiction

Two literary forms have played important roles all through this thesis: prose poem and fiction. If a distinction should be made, the latter has served mostly as a making model, and the former mostly as a thinking model. Yet the application of these two literary forms has gone beyond the written forms and been undertaken in various forms of making and thinking. Éamonn Dunne, in his *The Pedagogics of Unlearning*, discusses the poem as an event that holds a disruptive and interruptive potential. He writes:

> It is the poem that teaches us how to read, to learn, to feel and to forget. [...] The experience of the event of the poem (the poem as event) exposes us to chance, to risk and to uncertainty, and to wonder, ignorance and stupidity.\(^4\)

Dunne emphasises the event of the poem, highlighting the experimental approach to language, as it exposes us to a “risk” of failure and “uncertainty” or an unexpected outcome. Understanding the poem as an event could help us to further develop the poetics of artistic research, not to romanticise art, but to develop it as a subversive force; this is a discussion to which I will return later in this text when writing about artistic research. But besides the subversive potential of the poem, Rolf Hughes puts forward not the poem but the prose poem as a literary example for transdisciplinary research methodology. In his “The Drowning Method: On Giving an Account in Practice-Based Research”, Hughes describes the prose poem as a site of encounter of “opposing terms” and “monstrous” fusion of genres; the (latter) term he suggests as an alternative to “transdisciplinary research form”, “as a strategy that spans conventions of scientific and artistic research traditions”.\(^5\) I therefore suggest that the prose poem as a form of writing/acting is a political site of minorisation of the language, by violating grammatical rules, or creating a tension that triggers the occurrence of a third thing that is different from the two in an encounter, but is at once an *and* combination of the two. In other words, the prose poem could be an artistic form exposing the politics of encounter and the process of subjectivation, which is again – as I discuss in the text “Fa(i)l(l)ing (Infra) Structures” – about the minor politics. Hughes illustrates the prose poem by staging a spatial anarchy, writing:

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[...] things happen, the centre does not hold, the conclusion slams shut one door even as several others fly open in different directions (or the house collapses altogether).\textsuperscript{6}

The tension that he has depicted through the spatial metaphors of a house portrays the risk and revolutionary potential of transdisciplinary research methodology very well. Such tension shows us the intensity of the encounter between the disciplines and fields rather than the simple application of tools and concepts from other disciplines. The transdisciplinary methods work through transformative, subversive and creative forces, and in this sense they are political. I have used the prose poem form not only as a transdisciplinary model, but also as a political metaphor of making, to think of it as a possible form for liberating oneself from the constraints of the “language of masters”\textsuperscript{7} when one has not mastered it. I discuss the application of this form in the final chapter “Fugue: On Writing Dissident Architecture” in reference to the writing experiments done in this thesis. I suggest that this form also allows for amateur use of language and could be applied to other areas of making, including architecture. In other words, prose poem is a site of practicing amateurism in one’s own language, or becoming an amateur by inhabiting others’ language (or field). I will return shortly to the discussion of amateurism in this text.

In addition to the prose poem, fiction has empowered me to move transversally through architectural theory – again, that of ‘the masters’. Similar to prose poetry, I would argue, critical fiction could form a political project to lighten critical theory and relate it to wider ranges of issues and subjects. If the prose poem is a site of liberation from the constraints of language, critical fiction is the site of minorisation of critical theory, a form of inhabitation of the world of grand narratives to construct new relations within the existing dominant relations. In her book \textit{Architectural Flirtations: A Love Storey}, Brady Burroughs proposes the pairing of critical and fiction, writing:

\begin{quote}
By using elements of fiction and theory, telling stories while formulating critical arguments, this method borrows from many writing practices, in order to get at areas of resistance out of reach
\end{quote}


Through such a description, Burroughs suggests an expansion of not only academic writing, but also methods of formulating theoretical arguments that I suggest is another way of minorisation of the two fields. Fiction inherently has potential to be critical. Yet the pairing of the terms ‘critical’ or ‘criticism’ in ‘critical fiction’ or ‘fictocriticism’, opens up scientific academic writing to multiple voices, imagination, minor, unfamiliar worlds, monstrous voices, and otherness. The experiments with critical fiction as one form of writing architecture also relate to the question of interruption, which is one technique used in critical fiction, to interrupt the singular, and major voice of critical theory. Critical fiction creates a different relation with critical theory and thereby transforms it into a performing ground, to perform minor modes of argument and practice. As I re-narrate the stories of the sites by writing critical fiction, the critical theory is also re-narrated.

Understanding critical fiction as a tool for construction of performing grounds has assisted me in expanding my application of fiction beyond creating different relations with critical theory and turning the existing literary texts, stories, events and established narrations to material and sites of experiment and action. In these sites, I interrupt their dominant relations, major voices and stories by injecting new voices, characters and ideas. In this way, while the characters’ sites of actions are physical spaces that they inhabit and through which they move, my site of action is the combination of their stories, fiction and critical theory.

**From Artistic Research to Dissident Research**

Only at this final stage of this PhD work can I read back and explain how the research has been undertaken and where it is situated, if one is urged to relate it to the categorisation of scientific research versus other forms of research methodologies such as artistic research, practice-based research, and research by design. Although I have felt uncomfortable conforming to an academic categorisation of this kind, I situate my research with conviction in the area of artistic research and practice-based research, to claim the political and – hopefully – subversive and dissident potential of both art(istic) and practice – both of which I argue are in crisis due to their dwindling radical critical potential.

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My interest in artistic research relates to its unfinished, undefined and still under construction character, which makes it a challenging, yet promising platform for introducing other ways of doing things in academia and experimental approaches to research. In this way, I understand artistic research as a possibility to introduce dissidence and amateurism to academia and its uncompromising ways of conventional academic knowledge production. I believe that research, whether it is being called artistic or scientific, should transgress the already established knowledge; it should go beyond the sole activity of knowledge production into an activity that questions and blurs boundaries, always starts from unknowing and being an amateur and radically rethinking the subject under investigation. The term *art* in combination with *research* further accentuates the nature of such research.

For me, the term art in artistic research is about how art could question established boundaries and resist becoming an establishment itself. In their book *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public*, Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta and Tere Vadén refer to ‘artistic process’ as “‘acts done inside the practice’ that ‘question the conditions of that practice’”. These acts, as they argue, are still “in some relevant relationship with that practice”9, but could push its limits. They also describe the act of artistic research in a manner that I call *oscillation*; oscillating constantly between “intensive (insider) engagement” and more “reflective (outsider distance-taking)”10. In this way, the term art in artistic research does not refer to the “modernist idea” of the work of “the heroic artist as genius”11, in Barbara Bolt’s words, but instead to what art could do. It refers to the performativity of the activity of art. Bolt proposes a performative paradigm to artistic research by basing her argument in Judith Butler’s description of performativity as “the iterative and citational practice that brings into being that which it names.”12 Comparing artistic and scientific research, Bolt puts the performativity of artistic research against the “veracity” of science, writing: “The performative act doesn’t describe something, but rather it does something in the world. This “something” has the power to transform the world.”13

10. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid. p.137.
Following this argument, when I situate my research in the field of artistic research, it is to accentuate the performativity of art as well as how it influences the practice. Furthermore, to be more specific about artistic research in this thesis and transform it into a dissident research, I accentuate the politics of the minor and applying art in its minor performativity when combined with research. Simon O’Sullivan, in his “Notes Towards a Minor Art Practice”, states that “art begins with a deterritorialization of forms that have become fixed”. In explaining the minor forms of art as a political practice, he promotes an art that takes distance from the representational mode and moves “towards its extremities or its limits”. The distance from the representational mode draws it toward the performative mode. In line with O’Sullivan’s argument about the minor practice of art, I forward it as a dissident activity. I suggest that the combination of art in its minor form with research could create a productive tension that, with its introduction to academia, could dissent from the conformist logic of institutions and major knowledge production. Art is also about pushing one somewhere one doesn’t know; that is the revolutionary aspect of art, as well as a force that could advance research. One never knows what comes after revolution, and what revolution might bring. And this is the risky nature of art. Approaching research by taking the risk of experimentation, by situating it in tension, in obscurity, and creating fragile relations prone to failure instead of knowledge production, is how artistic research could make a difference. Or as Katja Grillner says in her dialogue with Klaske Havik, the knowledge produced is “not as a tangible ‘result’, but remains situated, produced through a performative process, a writing and reading process, a making, drawing and experiencing process.”

The Amateur

Artistic research could open up the professional academic world to the presence of the amateur by questioning the limits of the disciplines, in the manner of a


dissident. By definition, artistic research is not a discipline, but indiscipline. It is based on composing connections, or in Hughes’ words, “productive interplay between differing” – here, I add opposing – “ways of thinking”. 

I have added ‘opposing’ because I believe that it is through the conflict and dissensus and through encounters with that to which we do not belong that thoughts and ideas could take shape. This again indicates the necessity of existence of the other for the political to emerge in research as well. According to Hito Steyerl, the problem with disciplinary approaches is that a disciplinary approach:

[…] normalizes, generalizes and regulates; it rehearses a set of responses, and in this case, trains people to function in an environment of symbolic labor, permanent design and streamlined creativity. 

Unlike disciplinary approaches, artistic research as an unrehearsed activity relies greatly on contingency. Paradoxically however, it can play well through the mechanisms of discipline: as Steyerl further suggests, there is always a potential or an “immobilized” conflict within a discipline; the conflict is exactly what the discipline tries to restrain in order to retain its territorial power, and the very act of oppression implies this as a result. I propose that the suppressed elements of conflict could become the elements of dissent, mobilised through artistic research and practice. How, and by whom, could this be undertaken?

According to Edward Said, amateurism is one way to mobilize that conflict. A profession and its related discipline reinforce one another. An amateur, on the other hand, undermines a profession and its adjoining discipline. Advocating amateurism in lieu of professionalism, Said says:

[…] I shall call amateurism, the desire to be moved not by profit or reward but by love for an unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values despite the restrictions of a profession. 

A professional remains loyal to discipline and in turn receives instructions for


“speaking the right language, citing the right authorities, holding down the right territory”. On the contrary, the amateur questions the disciplinary norms and limits by nature. Amateurism not only questions the mechanisms at work, but also constructs new territories of action by doing things differently. An amateur is driven – as is apparent in the etymology of the word – by love, rather than by the rules of a profession. I discuss the character of amateur in relation with love further in the chapter “Love vs. Loyalty: Amateur and the De-professionalization of Reality”. In this thesis, amateurism is different from a pastime activity; it is a dissenting practice. An amateur tries to liberate her/himself from “being employed” by power. By dissenting from the terms and conditions of employment, the amateur maps those disciplined-out elements and attempts to understand why they are outside, and what would happen if they were brought back in. Art as a dissenting activity transforms artistic research to dissident research. A dissident can thus be understood as an amateur, driven by love rather than by rewards of employment.

In undertaking this PhD research, the question of how to become an amateur in one’s own profession has always been part of the process. Being an amateur in one’s own profession is a matter of oscillation; it is about being in and out. As mentioned earlier when referring to Hannula et al.’s discussion of periodically being an outsider and an insider in the process of artistic research, being an amateur is an intrinsic part of artistic research. It is also a performative process of repeating this oscillation between inside and outside, i.e. becoming an amateur and performing as one means pushing oneself out as soon as one feels at home with what one does.

I have performed and practiced amateurism in the architectural discipline using two approaches: a) by going to other disciplines and encountering the others, or becoming an outsider b) then returning and doing architecture using tools that one has not mastered. The two approaches represent oscillation as described earlier. Through the former, the methods one has mastered are questioned when relocated in another context with its own disciplinary ins and outs. The latter questions the limits of a discipline. In this way, for me becoming an outsider is not only getting into a reflective mode, as Hannula et al. write, but engaging with something to which one does not belong.

21. Ibid. p. 77.
22. Ibid. p. 80.
An important context in this thesis that has provided me with the ground of performing as an outsider has been the performing arts and circus arts. Stepping into these fields is not about translating their tools and methods into architecture, but acting there without knowing the rules of the discipline. There were three main occasions where I imagined myself as a character dislocated from the field of architecture into other fields: a) participation in LAB performing arts workshop as part of the International Symposium: Translate, Intertwine, Transgress, on choreography, philosophy, art and poetry, b) The international conference CARD 2: Circus on the Edge, where I presented the piece of writing “Getting out of Balance: An Encounter Between Architecture and Circus”, c) participation in the workshop “Intuition in Action”, led by Stephen Rappaport. These three were not solely events, but they were also contexts where I was present as an absolute amateur. They were the contexts in which many of my ideas surrounding performative writing took shape. The last chapter of this thesis, “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident”, was specifically written with the help of these three events and the possibilities they opened up for me to explore more aspects of performativity in relation to architecture.

On the other hand, besides belonging to a minor practice of architecture and having its own political connotations when it comes to dissidence, practicing writing architecture was also an opportunity for me to practice amateurism, dissidence, minor politics and methods of interruption. The act of writing fiction, experimental and creative writing in a language that one has not mastered is not only an amateur act, but is also the practicing of a minor practice. It is the act of dissent when one plays with a foreign language that has become the major language of academia and knowledge production. The greater part of this research has been written through the freedom of being an amateur, as well as the love for the unknown of the language. I have also developed the aesthetics of this thesis in relation to amateur aesthetics in the text on “Love vs. Loyalty: Amateur and the De-professionalization of Reality”.

**Stories We Can’t Tell**

When James Wood writes about novelists’ struggle getting their characters in and out of rooms, he draws our attention to another possibility: what if the characters “weren’t allowed to be in those rooms in the first place?”

question points at the impossibility of telling stories under certain circumstances, when it is necessary for those stories to be told; and it is the beginning of the story of dissidents.

When undertaking a research concerning dissidence, there is always the question of how much should be told or revealed, and how much should remain untold. There is also a question of how to tell those stories when we decide to reveal them. These are the leading questions of constructing the dissident methodologies. Understanding what to tell also relates to research ethics, raising the question of agency as well as the right to speak on behalf of the others. To what extent could one speak on behalf of the others, a community, a group of people or a sensitive situation addressed in the research? “Ethnographic refusal”\(^\text{24}\) as one way of dealing with such difficulties concerns the question of how much a researcher should reveal. As Alex Zahara writes in his “Refusal as Research Method in Discard Studies”:

> An ethnographic refusal is intended to redirect academic analysis away from harmful pain-based narratives that obscure slow violence, and toward the structures and institutions that engender those narratives. It is a method centrally concerned with a community’s right to self-representation.\(^\text{25}\)

Although this research is not an ethnographic one, refusing representation is of shared value. However, dissidence as it is exposed in this thesis is not about total refusal, but rather about how to tell stories one ‘would prefer not to’ tell, in a Bartlebian manner; or how to critically engage through a stealth language. In this thesis, this stealth language is explored through fiction and various forms of experimental writing and making that are performed throughout the entirety of this thesis and exposed in greater detail in the chapter “Fugue: On Writing Dissident Architecture”. I have also explored questions of this kind in the chapter “Writing with Unwelcome Co-authors”, when speaking about censorship and leakage.

In this way, a great deal of information around case studies in this thesis is not represented, to an extent that does not disturb the performativity of research and how it contributes to the field. The effort has been to perform, rather


\(^{25}\) Ibid.
than to inform. The struggle of not disclosing information has been part of the development of dissident research and hence a contribution to the field of artistic research as performative research. In other words, a research about dissidence is attempted through dissidence.

A Dissident in an Institution

Understanding artistic research as dissident research not only involves the research methodology, but also the role of the researcher in an institution, here academia. I put forward dissident research not as a walking stick, but as an axe to break through the uncompromising walls of institutions and disciplines. It cuts through the problems of eradication of politics of dissent in the mistaken belief in institutional loyalty.

As institutions generally work toward the politics of consensus, they resist changes that come from dissenting approaches. This might be better explained by what Peter de Graeve refers to as the “relative failure” in the relationship between art and art institutions: The latter resists change, and the former is unable to bring about any changes, although we all endeavour to contribute to the culture of “high performance”.

“We work hard,” he writes. “We’ refers to the institution itself, while he defines ‘work’ as a “narrow game of forming and reforming” the institution; a loyalty to an institutional consensus that is at odds with what art as a dissensual activity should do. Jacques Rancière considers the work of art as strategies aimed at changing the given frames through which the visible and invisible are configured. The intention is not to swap the places of visible and invisible, but to create heterogeneous apparatuses where the encounter of visible and invisible produces new meanings or transvalues the “self-evidence of the visible”. If we agree on this definition of how art works, and also in continuation of minor art practices and the performative paradigm of artistic processes, then art should rescue itself from the “narrow game of forming and reforming” institutions.

26. This part of the text, discussing loyalty in relation to institutions, is borrowed from my exhibition “Interruption as Dissenting Gesture”, previously published in RUUKKU: Studies in Artistic Research.


To claim to be a dissident is to practice dissidence. Yet undertaking a PhD in an institution requires following some certain rules in order for the work done to be accepted for evaluation as a PhD thesis. As I have argued in this text, and as I will continue to develop further throughout this thesis, being a dissident requires oscillation between being an insider and outsider; it is in this manner that dissidence is constructed. This is not only valid when speaking of discipline and in the discussion of transdisciplinary methods and artistic research, but also in the realm of institutions. I have already touched on when I have been an outsider and when an insider at different points in this text, but the question of institution has been an interesting and challenging task to pull off.

Ironically, this PhD research has gone through two different experiences of institutions, one of them disrupting, and one of them supportive and facilitating. Many thoughts around the subject matter have taken shape in response to the disrupting experience of this PhD. I tell the story through the small project of the journal Al-Croquis, presented in Parts 02: CUT, Fiction 02. The fictitious journal has become a document of institutional crisis while thematically written around the institution of prison, and at the same time it has become a tool for interrupting a mainstream journal of architecture as another form of institution.

I leave you here with this book on dissidence in hand that has itself been made through a gesture of dissidence and tried to find its own minor and singular way of being by not totally leaving the institution, but by finding ways to circumvent its regulations. The book sits stealthily in the dust jacket of the institution.
Research Notebooks as Performing grounds for research. I have been using the notebooks not only for documenting thoughts, ideas, reflections, etc. but also as in-process material for making and writing further. In this way I have been returning to these notebooks at various points, and have been working with them, through layering, adding, subtracting and re-reading as, new “writing” on them.
**Setting the Scene**

In this chapter, I discuss some key concepts that play important roles in the development of the three main parts of this thesis and to which the discussion will occasionally return in various chapters. *Minor politics* and its formation in relation to major politics is the political operation of dissident practices as well as writing practices. *Critical inhabitation* and *performative criticality*, which are also discussed through minor politics, both refer to the relation between the characters and the architectural sites and the performative approach of developing a criticality from within.

**Cramped Spaces**

Major or molar politics as described by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari produces identities formed by the dominant social relations. Such dominant social relations do not emanate from a single source or a concentrated power, but drawing on Michael Foucault’s concept of “governmentality”, are [...] “an ongoing process in which finely dispersed structural forces regulate everyone’s behaviour, including those who exercise considerable power over others, in a continuous concatenation of actions and reactions.”¹ Major defines established norms that eliminate or delegitimise *other* identities that break from those very major categories. In this sense, major does not refer to the quantity, but is related to power hierarchy; it “assumes a state of power and domination”². In this thesis, every architectural site is the locus of a major power structure of this kind, such as a square and a public park affected by the politics of neo-liberal urbanism in case of the Standing Man – or the site of the discipline of architecture itself,

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affected by the major forms of power and its established rules.

However, in opposition to major politics, there is the concept of “minor politics” that, as Nicholas Thoburn writes in his reading of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept, “is a breach with such identities, when the social environment is experienced as constraint, as perception is opened to what is ‘intolerable’ in social relations.” Minor, likewise, doesn’t refer to the quantity, but takes shape in response to the domination and subordination as “subsystems or outsystems” in Deleuze and Guattari’s words in *A Thousand Plateaus*.

These subsystems or outsystems emerge within the major structure of power relations, and are experienced as “cramped spaces” and “impossible” situations. Yet such impossible and cramped spaces are not spaces of oppression, but spaces of the creation and construction of minor forms of political engagements. The characters in this thesis originate from such cramped spaces and impossible situations, and begin engaging with the major power through those spaces. Minor politics is experienced and practiced as “a productive engagement with the cramped conditions of life and the social relations therein”. It is where unfinished identities could emerge as a form of dissent in response to the oppressions. The real politics can be practiced in such spaces of impossibilities, as the creation of novel relations with the condition of oppression. As Nicholas Thoburn writes in his “Minor Politics, Territory, and Occupy”:

(…) politics arises not in the fullness of an identity – a nation, a people, a collective subject – but, rather, in ‘cramped spaces,’ ‘choked passages,’ and ‘impossible’ positions; on the condition, that is, that ‘the people are missing’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 15–16; Deleuze 1989: 216; Deleuze 1999: 133). To understand how this anti-identitarian formulation works, we need to consider their concepts of the majoritarian and minoritarian.

Minor does not refer to a pre-existing identity, but is a political process of constructing and performing positions against oppressive major structures

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situated in specific situations. Dissidence as a form of political engagement is derived from such an understanding of minor politics, of unfinished subjects, under construction, acting in impossible situations, places where any overt oppositional movement and major dissenting political organisation is far from possible. And this is how the characters in this thesis, as unfinished subjects, are constructed through a minor politics. Such ‘cramped spaces’ and ‘choked passages’ are the spaces in which the play of hegemonic power becomes possible through oscillating between constantly taking power and giving it away. The intention in the politics of minor, however, is not to become major, but to stay in the minor position as a performative critique against the major structures. By insisting on re-constructing and performing in the cramped spaces, and intensifying them, the characters interrupt the major structures. In other words, minor politics works by making “one’s own major language minor”.7 Cramped spaces are where the dissidents start constructing their sites of action, their performing grounds, and thereby come into existence. In this thesis, such spaces are either found-spaces, or they are created through the acts of interruption. To interrupt is to open up those cramped spaces, expand them momentarily, so the minor forms of dissent act upon the vast spaces of major. Although this expansion is momentary, its repetition makes it a radically critical act from within that over time might disrupt the major relations of oppressive systems. In this way, the dissidents do not perceive those cramped spaces as spaces of oppression, but as spaces of construction; they are performing grounds constructed through the politics of minor by the dissidents themselves. The constant impossibility of actions is a motivation to practice the “arts of the impossible”8 rather than being silenced and oppressed. The act of construction of such grounds through performing on those grounds is what can be described as the act of minor architecture.

Minor Architecture

The minor architecture first developed by Jennifer Bloomer is driven by Deleuze and Guattari’s book Kafka, Toward A Minor Literature, where they discuss “minor literature” not as “specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature.”9

In contemplating how this minor language could be realized, they state: “How to become a nomad and an immigrant and a gypsy in relation to one’s own language? Kafka answers: steal the baby from its crib, walk the tightrope.”

In line with minor literature, Bloomer puts forth a minor architecture as what “operates in the interstices” of the mainstream. She characterises such practice not as “opposed” to the major architecture but “upon/within/among” it. She describes minor as “[a]n other writing upon the body of architecture”, and continues: “Architecture becomes the ground, or stone, on which its [MAPPING] is inscribed – on which its processes bleed. Kafka.”

In addition to Bloomer’s concept of minor architecture, there is a definition by Jill Stoner in her book Toward a Minor Architecture as those practices that “operate both upon architecture’s grammatical construction of (virtual) power and within its physical, material form”. In her text “Architectural (S)crypts: In Search of A Minor Architecture”, Janet McGaw has suggested a dislocating architecture and its subversive potential by drawing on Bloomer’s concept of minor architecture. She criticises Bloomer’s work however – as well as Peter Eisenman’s – as limited to the architectural orthodoxy, instead of acting in broader social and political contexts. She deems Bloomer’s agenda of minor architecture not ‘heroic’ enough, as it seeks only “to subvert the privileges which usually prevail in architecture”. Instead, she calls for a minor architecture whose political domain of influence is beyond architecture.

In line with McGaw’s extension of the minor architecture beyond the architecture discipline, I put forward a minor architecture through the discussion of dissidence and its performative aspects. I propose a minor architecture through the activation of the ‘cramped spaces’ and ‘choked passages’ – found for instance in a house, in an unfinished building, in a prison cell – by introducing a character – a dissident as minor political performer – who would perform in those spaces, but also pushing her/himself into the major spaces through the act of dissidence. In this way, dissident architecture as a minor architecture

10. Ibid. p. 19.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
builds oscillating performing grounds that cut through and interrupt the stages of major performances. Oscillating, because it is not supposed to become major – as soon as it achieves power, it oscillates back into the cramped spaces.

The extension of architecture through minor politics can create dissident methodologies in architectural research, where dislocating subjectivity, tools, methods, concepts, form and material, from where it belongs to where it is not (always) welcomed, can interrupt the dogmatism, professionalism, established norms, and existing power relations of a disciplinary thinking (that is the logic of the major). By appointing a performative paradigm to architectural sites, I minorise spaces of major such as public squares, or a prison, or the architecture discipline itself. The presence and activation of minor performers in those cramped spaces is a criticality toward the major. Minorising the spaces of major through the performative lens enables a criticality from within. The terms performativity and performing both refer to the active inhabitation of a site by political performers that critically engage with its power relations. At the same time, performativity also refers to the repetition of difference, in Judith Butler’s sense, as a process of constructing subjects.

**Dissidence: Performative Criticality**

The performative paradigm that puts dissidence in an approximate relation to that from which it dissents and what it criticizes induces radicality in the act of criticality by performing the alternative rather than giving a distant critique of a situation. The need for the development of such a position in this thesis has originated from observing the operations of architectural practices amidst power relations. Various strands of discussion under the titles of activist architecture, participatory practices that are supposed to be critical of the status

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17. The binary discussion of criticality and projective in architecture, which I discussed in my text “Critical Inhabitation: Interruption and Performative Criticality” in *After Effects: Theories and Methodologies in Architectural Research*, has been helpful for developing dissidence as a performative critical approach. In the discussion between the critical and projective, while critical architecture is accused of distancing itself from the “real” work of architecture – i.e. buildings – becoming saturated instead in theory and merely questioning the status quo rather than suggesting pragmatic alternatives, post-critical stances have turned their back on the challenge of questioning the status quo in favour of “projecting” the new with the slogan of “solving not problematizing”. The former is accused of becoming a dominant institution and the latter of being complicit with a dominant power hierarchy without questioning its relations. Given the present status of the world, the oscillating trends between critical and post-critical or projective suggest the inefficiency of both approaches. However, thinking beyond the clear-cut division between these trends might open a new ground for constructing alternatives while still performing critically.

are mostly shaped through the politics of consensus and take place where the major power is relatively absent, or in places that the dominant power has left there to act as a safety valve. This characteristic could be understood in terms of a relative conservatism, or to use Roemer van Toorn’s term, they risk simply expressing a “Fresh Conservatism”. van Toorn describes this tendency as one that “presents the normally discreet character of conservatism in a spectacularly fresh fashion, as a work of art”\textsuperscript{18}. Through this fresh fashion, many practices of this kind entertain themselves, making a different façade for the same dominant power structure. In contrast to how Fresh Conservatism operates, Slavoj Žižek discusses the need for “authentic politics” as “the art of the impossible”, that is, how to go about “changing the very parameters of what is considered “possible” in the existing constellation.”\textsuperscript{19}

Dissident architecture, developed through a minor politics, is put forward in response to the lack of radical critical potentials claimed to be at the core of contemporary practices with the ethos of activism. Criticality developed by writing dissident architecture could be understood as performative criticality, a term I have borrowed from Irit Rogoff’s text “Looking Away”. In the move from “criticism to critique to criticality”, Rogoff suggests that performative criticality is a critical act that “while building on critique”, operates “from an uncertain ground”, but “wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis”.\textsuperscript{20} Writing architecture as dissident writing in this thesis is developed through the performativity of writing and as a minor practice of architecture. While the characters critically inhabit the sites, writing performatively through/on/ against the architectural sites is one way of inhabiting those sites critically, and thereby constructing performing grounds through the further construction of the characters and performing an alternative as a critique to the existing dominant relations of the site.

In her essay “Setting Out”, Jane Rendell writes: “Rather than write about the work, I am interested in how the critic constructs his or her writing in relation to and in dialogue with the work.”\textsuperscript{21} In this thesis, this ‘dialogue’, as a form

of critique with the work, is performed through tactics of interruption and interrogation of the site. The architectural site is both a physical site, where writing enables the characters to construct and perform in their critique, and the discipline of architecture to develop a dissident language and to construct a field – as a performing ground – where a critique of the discipline could be performed. In this way, writing dissident architecture is a performative critical practice that acts upon the sites where major power relations are embedded, and thereby criticises them.

But how do dissidents performatively criticise their sites of action? In his “Minor Politics, Territory, and Occupy”, Thoburn discusses minor politics as “the critical engagement with the social relations that traverse each particularity, the relations through which life is experienced as cramped and intolerable.”

In her “Artistic Strategies in Politics and Political Strategies in Art”, Chantal Mouffe also proposes “critically engaging” with institutions as an alternative to Exodus as political strategies in art. Exodus strategies, Mouffe explains, are in favour of ignoring existing dominant powers and constructing alternative social forms outside the state power network. Simon O’Sullivan, in the discussion of a dissenting paradigm of a minor practice, describes it as “strategic withdrawal” or “strategic engagement”. He writes:

It is then as if there must be two moments, or movements, to a minor practice: one of dissent (either a strategic withdrawal as a form of engagement, or strategic engagement itself), and one of creativity (the production of new forms). Art is a name for each of these strategies. We might reformulate this as a question of moving at different speeds to various institutional apparatus of capture, of moving faster, but also, if we take Henri Bergson’s thesis into account, of sometimes moving slower (and sometimes even standing still).

Through such oscillating characteristics of engagement and withdrawal in minor politics, I have proposed dissidence as a performative critical engagement

24. Ibid. p. 66.
with major power structures. Minor politics and performativity, combined with
dissidence, is a way to forward dissidence as a performative critical practice.
This has been also the contribution of this thesis to the field of dissident
architecture, as I discussed in the introductory chapter “The Political Act of
Love”. Performativity, as I suggest, is not only about what architecture does, but
also how the inhabitants act through, in, and against architectural sites. This
sort of approach to architectural performativity, undertaken by constructing
the characters in this thesis, is to develop a performative criticality, where the
character (dissident) inhabits the object of critique. By performing in those
cramped spaces and activating them as performing grounds, the dissident in
this thesis performs her/his criticality by inhabiting the object of critique.

Performative criticality, then, is characterised by oscillation, when it comes to
dissidence, alternatively being in and out. A dissident performs within the major,
but hides herself in those cramped spaces of minor. She will reveal herself in
the moments of interruption, but oscillates back to those narrow spaces of
minor before she is captured. This is how you, the reader, will experience the
figure of the dissident in this thesis: constantly appearing and disappearing
by performing through such cramped spaces. Throughout the entirety of this
thesis, we see moments of such critical engagements: from The Standing Man
of Gezi Park to Bartleby in Part 01, from Fontaine the prisoner in Part 02,
to the inhabitants of the House in Part 03. The presence of the dissident in
space is in fact an indication of the possibility of criticality from within, and at
the same time, of performing an alternative. However, unlike Ole W. Fischer’s
description of criticism as a clash between the “dominant status quo of culture
and society and divergent possibilities”, dissidence constructs a smooth change
that is achieved through constant oscillation. It is performing an oppositional
life under the guise of obedience, constantly interrupting the major structure,
but withdrawing just before it is about to be oppressed. This mode of criticality
from within is performative as it is achieved through the immediate presence
of the dissident and her/his performance within the subject of critique, as well
as continuity and insistence in repeating the act of criticality. I describe such
presence through the concept of critical inhabitation.

Critical Inhabitation

In this thesis, the invention of interrupting tactics and the construction of performing grounds are achieved through critical inhabitation. Different from the concepts of *use* and *user*, inhabitation is a political engagement with the existing power relations of a specific context that is constructed by being actively present in a context over a course of time. I would argue here that inhabitation is not related to utility. In the introduction of Kenny Cuper’s *Use Matters: An Alternative History of Architecture*, inhabitation is put together with consumption, usage, lived or neglecting the space. These other states of being in space, I argue, suggest a normative subjectivity, a highly passive mode of being in space rather than challenging its relations. Tim Ingold also places the concepts of *occupant* and *inhabitant* at odds. An occupant, Ingold states, has prior knowledge of the politics of space, of its borders, limits, and boundaries, achieved “by viewing (or drawing) space from above without inhabiting it”. On the contrary, an inhabitant achieves knowledge over the space, its limits, boundaries, borders, and possibilities over the course of time, by being in the place and interacting with its material and immaterial orders and relations. Ingold writes of the inhabitant as “the one who participates from within in the very process of the world’s continual coming into being”.

Out of the economy of occupant and inhabitant and in line with Ingold’s description of the two terms, the spatial existence of a dissident – who neither occupies nor merely inhabits, but critically inhabits a space – gives the inhabitant the agency of not only understanding the politics of space but also questioning it, interrupting it and changing it. The pairing of criticality and inhabitation suggests the elimination of the critical distance and argues for the possibility of criticality from within. Critical inhabitation is performative; it is a way to expand the architectural site from a finished project to a political, continuous practice of making spaces.

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Drunken spiders have brilliant ideas about how to walk. They combine writing and walking; they write as they walk or they walk as they write. Some would call it drawing, others dance, and some would consider the movements trivial and inconsequential. However, I suggest that drunken spiders are the best examples of practitioners of non-discipline, or what the academics would call transdisciplinary practitioners. They could also be considered artists, whose practice is addressed by artistic researchers as the art of living. There might be serious critique about the drunken spiders as their method might suggest frequent alcohol consumption as a tool for going places in their practice; obviously, this might conclude with a bad habit. But one should remember that vast, in-depth investigations and days of scientific studies in laboratories have proven that there is no alcohol in ink. Scientists have also proven that there are no other addictive substances in ink as such that might plausibly lead to a bad habit. Yet the question has remained unresolved. What is it that inebriates the spiders? Or in other words: why on earth do they step into the ink jar - is it by accident, or is there some purpose behind it?

The humanist scientists, who believe in the unique intelligence of human beings, insist on the accidental nature of this event. They believe that when the spiders happen to fall into a jar of ink, the fuzz on their bodies absorbs ink, and as a result they become heavier. As their body structure is built to bear only the normal weight of an average spider’s body, their legs receive a shock from the sudden burden when they absorb ink. This is basically why they can’t walk as nimbly and lightly as before. “Spiders have no intelligence”, the scientists insist on stating, and continue: “they would not be able to understand what would happen to them if they stepped into the ink jar. So their drunken-like movements are the result of an accident and a simple fact of not being able to cope with this sudden burden”.  

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Beside this very logical and scientific argument, there is another line of reasoning that might help us understand such an event in a better way. Most spiders like ink, and this has been proven by the frequency with which spiders are found in inkwells. One reason for their interest is that they consider ink to be a material that can wear, something they can use to express themselves just by moving around and living their daily lives. Despite scientists’ belief that spiders have no intelligence, they distinguish the ink from similar liquids such as soya sauce, red vinegar and black oil. Their lust for ink arises from the fantasy of wearing it and playing with their liquid dress. This thrill gives them a sense of drunkenness.

The experiments with 250 spiders and two jars of soya sauce and ink showed that 248 of spiders chose ink over soya sauce. The two jars were of the same size and colour. Ironically, the only two spiders that chose the different jar were diagnosed with a very rare lung disorder.¹ Of the 248 who fell into the ink, only one never made its way out - the reasons for this are not yet clear. The other 247 spiders made (creative) works of various forms. In 4 cases, immediately upon stepping out of ink, they avoided walking on the experiment table and cast their web onto the neighbouring wall and ascended from the table. What they left on the paper could be counted as minimal art, if one wishes to adhere to established art history terms. These 4 works consist of some dots spread over an area of no more than two centimetres. The other 243 spiders made various forms of writing that are currently under study in various departments of the University, e.g. the Department of Literature, the Department of Dance and Choreography, the Department of Music, the Department of Fine Arts, and the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning.

After all, which of these two approaches would be more helpful for our understanding of the phenomenon of drunken spiders? Maybe looking into a spider’s eyes would give us an answer.

¹. These two cases were sent to the Centre for Curative Liquid for further investigation.
Part O1:

PAUSE

Site O1
(A performative Writing of) 110 Freedom Building
Standing Still + Standing Man’s Backpack

Formula O1
Dot, Dot, Dot: On Constructing the Space of Refusal
Fa(i)(l)ing (Infra)structures: A Performing Ground for a Minor Collective
Active Waiting
Impossible books

Fiction O1
Pause: A device for troubling routines
Unfinished Building. Azadi (Freedom) Street, Tehran, Iran, 1979 Revolution
Still from A Dialogue with Revolution, 2013 [Film] Directed by Robert Safarian
A Performative Writing of the

110 Freedom Building

The building you see in this image is from the 1979 Iranian Revolution. It is located in Tehran on Freedom Street, no. 110. Freedom Street connects Freedom Square to Revolution Square, from which it then continues as Revolution Street. This street has always been the locus of demonstrations and unrest. These names — Revolution and Freedom — were assigned to these streets and squares after the 1979 Revolution. This building, unfinished at the time, was occupied by people and was part of the production of what became one of the prominent images of Iranian Revolution. The building is now finished and has turned into an ordinary building similar to many other multifunctional buildings in the city.¹

The following text-image experiment, “110 (tokens of) Freedom” was written through an experiment of performative writing. The performative writing in this experiment refers to the activity of writing that is undertaken in a specific context and within a given time frame. I discuss this mode of writing further in the chapter “Fugue: On Writing Dissident Architecture”. In this experiment, to construct the site of 100 Freedom Building, I have written continuously on/through this building in an eight-hour time frame.²

The experiment was undertaken in the final year of my PhD studies, by which time I had collected a great deal of material about the building through archive studies, visits to the existing building, and interviews, and I had also written shorter and longer texts about it. I undertook this experiment to access

¹. I have translated the names of these streets and squares instead of using their original names. The original names are Azadi, which stands for Freedom, and Enghelab, which stands for Revolution.
². The time frame refers to the duration of the Standing Man’s standing still in Taksim Square during the Gezi Park Movement as a mode of protest. You will read more about him in the text “Standing Still”.


deeper layers of the building – not to represent it in further detail but to take it into another level, where the building could perform as a new site, and where new stories, concepts and subjects could be staged, dragged out, and put into action. The building, which no longer exists in its original, unfinished status, still holds many untold stories – the stories of those standing on it, or who experienced it during the event, different from the dominant narration of state propaganda, are somehow lost, or forgotten even by those who hold them.

The writing is situated in a photographic image that represents an event that is already finished. The activity of writing does not represent the image, but re-situates it in a different context that opens up new possibilities, concepts and discussions. It moves the image beyond a representation to act upon (its own fixed) reality, or to paraphrase Susan Sontag, to turn the reality into a “shadow”\(^3\). Judith Butler describes this re-situating as how images and contexts could influence each other. She writes:

> Although the image surely lands in new contexts, it also creates new contexts by virtue of that landing, becoming a part of the very process through which new contexts are delimited and formed.\(^4\)

The performative writing of 110 Freedom Building is a revitalisation of the building, rescuing it from a finished image in the past and radicalising its unfinished status as a site for an ongoing project of change. To do so, the method of *exhaustion* is used, i.e. to exhaust all of the possible stories, and at that point of exhaustion, arrive at new potentials and latencies. Hélène Frichot writes about this point of exhaustion as a possibility:

> It is extremely difficult to make an image (of thought) that can make a difference and reorganize our ways of thinking and acting together, and sometimes this only becomes possible once a point of exhaustion has been reached.\(^5\)

As an exhausted image that has been reproduced many times as propaganda since the Revolution, and that has lost its subversive potential, 110 Freedom

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Building could be a good example for experimenting with the idea of exhaustion as a revitalising method. Following such a method, through writing, the exhausted image/building is to be broken down into an unfinished status. This is done through situating ‘one’s own position’ in an existing story that is itself exhausted in order to “discover a small (discursive) space that has not yet been exhausted”6, a method Frichot describes by referring to Gilles Deleuze in her “Exhausting (Architectural) Theory, Noopolitics, and the Image of Thought”. By imagining oneself inhabiting the building, writing gives the building an unfinished and inexhaustible status. Writing performatively and exhaustively does not exhaust the building of its stories, but it knocks its walls down into an unfinished site, where exhaustion is exuberating.

Jan Verwoert writes about exhaustion in his text “Exhaustion and Exuberance”, where he refers to Babak Afrassiabi and his take on post-revolutionary exhaustion in contexts such as Iranian society, where “the inherent promise of revolutionary rhetoric is gradually eroded through routine repetition until, at the point of its exhaustion, the discourse of the revolution is seized again by a new herald of change who promises to rejuvenate its meaning”7. At this point of exhaustion, a new force is needed to exuberate the revolutionary ‘meaning’.8 In the case of the 110 Freedom Building, arriving at the point of its exhaustion, to re-write the building is to set it up for a new ‘meaning’. Yet the exhaustive mechanism of performative writing is to constantly drive the building into a site of exuberance, into an unfinished site. This unfinished site becomes a stage for a multiplicity of voices and stories that, while they are components of a single image, could be different, opposing or antagonistic. Writing through the building not only activates the multiplicity of micronarratives hidden in a fixed historical image; it also manifests that a once-finished revolution is still an unfinished project of change. By retelling the (hi)stories, new concepts, sites, performers and further stories come into being. This way of storytelling is projective.

8. Ibid.
(tokens of)

Freedom

Story 01

Unfinished Building, Azadi (Freedom) Street, Tehran, Iran, 1979 - Photo by Mahmoud Kalari.
Story 02 - Where the Characters Are Hiding - (Photo by Mahmoud Kalari)
She was called Woman in White. She embroidered a story on a white piece of cloth and tied it to the column.
Story 07: Hands

Story 08: “Looking Away”

Story 09: Taking Risk
That day I couldn’t manage to get on top of the building. It was too crowded. I climbed the traffic light and looked into the cameras instead. Look at this photo. At the person sitting on the traffic light. A photographer, holding a camera in hand, with his back toward the 110 Freedom Building. He looks away from the building and looks into another camera that is taking a photo of the unfinished building. Zooming in further, everyone, both those in the street and those on the building, is looking in the same direction, as if they are all spectators of something else that is not in the picture. What are they looking at?

Story 11

I had recently graduated from architecture school. I was one of the demonstrators. Passing by the building, I looked up and saw the semi-finished building occupied by many people. The calculation sheets of columns and beams passed through my mind. A bad thought flashed through my architect mind for a second: what if the building collapses!

Story 12

I had graduated from architecture school then. I was one of the demonstrators, but today, I was on top of the building, looking at the demonstrators beneath, marching in the street. “This is a space, a structure, that we as architects should design or leave vacant along the routes, streets and roads so that they could be occupied and taken by people when the time arrives”, I thought.

9. Route 01: Write the story of the photographer perching on the traffic light. What has he seen? What is he looking at? What is his experience of 110 Freedom Building?

Story 13
I assume I had ascended the stairs. Otherwise, how on earth I could get to the top of the building and perch on its edge? There were semi-finished stairs, hanging without handrails, without even proper treads and risers. The string was already there; two metal carriage beams, filled in with bricks and cement, or maybe concrete. The treads and risers were wide enough for one person to ascend the steps at a time. The staircase was around thirty centimetres wide, built roughly to assist the construction workers ascend the buildings. But the rest was just a slope, which was probably a smart solution for the wheelbarrows. And it made me understand why they always finish the stairs during the last stage of the construction process.

I always loved stairs the most of all the architectural elements. I still do. It’s why I entered the unfinished building. One of my hobbies was getting to the unfinished buildings and watching the stairs being constructed. And that day, I was trapped there. I couldn’t leave the building through the crowd that was rushing up into the building. I stood in the back and watched.

Story 14
Who was the first person to enter this unfinished building? Were they the construction site workers who stopped working and watched the crowd demonstrating? Or did the construction come to a halt due to the unstable political situation and ongoing unrest? How did they become part of the revolutionary crowd?

Story 15
How could the structural elements of this building become the stages for storytelling? One story would be ascending. How did people ascend the building? Where were the stairs? What did the stairs look like? Did they climb the columns?
Story 16: Enthusiastic Pessimist

Story 17: Tripod Revolutionary

Story 18: Dreaming to be a leader

Story 19: Optimist Revolutionary

Story 20: Staggered Revolutionary

Route 02: Write the story of the Revolution from the point of view of each of these characters.
Route 03: What happens if the Explosive Dreamer explodes?

Story 21: Explosive Dreamer
Story 22
On the 30th anniversary of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a huge printed photo is mounted on a massive building at Revolution Square in Tehran. The image depicts a semi-finished building occupied by people. It seems like the crowd is part of the building structure and has constructed its façades. The building itself has faded in the presence of hundreds of bodies. It simply holds them together, humbly.

This image has been depoliticised and exhausted through reproduction in different scales since the victory of the 1979 Revolution, and has become propaganda in the hands of the dominant power to fixate the meaning of revolution as a finished event. However, this image holds thousands and thousands of stories. If one zooms in and studies each individual body, the gestures, the faces, the hands, the gazes, and on a fundamental level how they have perched on the building, one starts to hear the multiple narratives of that Revolution.

Story 23
On the 30th anniversary of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a huge printed photo is mounted on a massive building at Revolution Square in Tehran. It is claimed that the building on which the image is mounted is the building in the image. Many people in the neighbourhood to whom I spoke claimed that it was the building and that they stood on it in those days. This building in Revolution Square is very often mistaken for the 110 Freedom Building in the photo, because of its similar proportions and form.

Story 24
On the 30th anniversary of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a huge printed photo is mounted on a massive building at ‘Revolution Square’ in Tehran. But the real building in the image is located in several kilometres west of this square, on Freedom Street. By assigning such a historical story and image to the wrong building on Revolution Square, the whole narrative of revolution is gathered in one place in the city. Deliberately or not, such fiction turns Revolution Square into a stage for the State, as “the” stage, to set its elements and to stage its own narration of revolution in one single place. Fictionalising such a historical urban setup in a spot that is more of a roundabout than a square is to represent revolution through repetition of the same; it invites the spectators to just look at an event that is finished and belongs to the past, and ask them to move on with the ordinary routines of their everyday lives.
Story 25
On the 30th anniversary of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the image of the unfinished building is framed and mounted on a tripod as part of a public photo exhibition of the 1979 Revolution. The exhibition is held in a metro station in the capital city of Tehran. The frame closes the picture even more. It rescales it. It controls its size. It reduces its weight, its layers. It is now a finished event, frozen in the past, a memento of a lost event. Once, everyone was concerned about the building’s strength and whether it could withstand the weight of the crowd on top of it; it is now lighter; as light as a picture on a tripod. This is how representation reduces the multiple stories to a flat image. How to bring the heaviness of the real event back to an image reduced through representation?

One way would be to reimagine and rewrite the microstories. One way is to zoom in on every singular subject on the building. One could imagine, if the stories of every single person were mounted on this frame, what tripod could ever bear the weight of those (hi)stories? What structure could bear the multiplicity of voices and differences?
An interview with the architect and urban designer, Mohsen Mirdamadi (August 2012).

small the space, seek the space

And it was extremely strong and stable.

It’s like people

It was amazing that it did not collapse with huge population on top of it!
and appropriate it for their own action

for their own performance

when we were going up we weren't afraid of anything
- It should allow for an everlasting revolution!
- Yes it should let people change the space themselves!

Those days, there was always the fear and the anxiety of what if the building collapses?
And this feeling, this anxiety and this excitement was something revolutionary.

I don’t know, maybe we should have left it all open in a way!
And we should leave it to people!
Story 27
An interview with the architect and urban designer, Said Sadatnia (August 2012).
Not on the anniversary of the Revolution, but on an ordinary day, another banner is mounted on that wrong building on Revolution Square, showing an examination hall where students are seated in ordered rows of chairs, taking an exam. Abbas Kazemi, a sociologist whose work is dedicated mainly to Iranian society, also takes this wrong building in the square for the 110 Freedom Building. But his mistake results in an interesting comparison between the two images, which represent two different sorts of collective within 35 years; one as a spontaneous occupation of an unfinished building that shows the individuals as revolutionary, carefree, brave, joyful and looking to the future while connected to each other freely through a vertical structure to form a collective body. The other – a commercial banner for a private educational institution, exhibiting an entrance examination for universities – representing the successful youth as sitting on pre-organised chairs, heads down, separated by distances, inside a building, under control and connected by competition rather than a collective vision.  

I revisited the building in August 2012. After talking to people and shopkeepers around Revolution Square and Freedom Street, I found out that many do not agree on where 110 Freedom is located. Many thought it was located on the west side of Revolution Square. But others believed that the building on Revolution Square is not the original building, and the original building is located on Freedom Street. Through archive studies and interviews with a couple of architects who happened to be on the building at the time of the Revolution, I found the building. It was located on the northern side of Freedom Street.
Story 30
A Photo Exhibition
مردم درون ساختمان نیمه کاره، در حال استقبال از امام خمینی (ره)
Story 31

I revisited the building in August 2012. Warm summer afternoon. The floor tiles were emanating heat. He looked at me through the small window. He came out and climbed the steps to the upper level of the courtyard. He stood over the stage he had set up in the courtyard. And said:

- I have been here since the victory of the Revolution.

While he spoke, he took the snow shovel and continued to wash the carpet laid in the courtyard, surrounded by plants and wooden armchairs and sofas.

- I have been here since the building was finished. Each year many students come in and take photos.

- When was it finished?

- It was finished before the Revolution.

Story 32

Go to Part 03, ‘The House, The Balcony…’, Marriage and Divorce Office.
During the Gezi Park Movement in Istanbul in 2013, many people took to the streets, gathering in the Park to express dissent against the government’s decision to destroy a public park and the privatisation of public spaces. Many figures came to the stage of the street politics and made the images of the demonstrations in Turkey. But only two became the prominent characters of the story: The Woman in Red and The Standing Man. These two characters showed us the importance of the performativity of the act of public protest and how one appears on the stage of the public spaces. They exposed how a protestors as a performer in public spaces takes over the stage of the dominant power and constructs her/his own stage as a response to the political situation. They showed us the importance of the context of action, where one constructs that immediate stage, and the importance of the time, the point when they commence and conclude their performance. The two characters exposed that the act of protest is an *anchoreographed* performance that responds spontaneously and tactically to a specific socio-political context.

The two characters staged the importance of the individual characters, who stand out and stand up against the oppression *singularly*; not heroes, but the humble characters that could be multiplied and could be extended beyond an individual. But they also showed us how a singular act triggers the formation of an alternative collective. They showed us how these characters disappear through their acts, lose their identities and become many. It is their acts that become the force of spurring a movement, not their names; they have gone beyond the self and are named by their acts and performative gestures.

The two characters showed us that clamour is not always the best solution, the
crowd will not always do, moving does not always correspond to action, an overt gesture of revolt is not always subversive. The two characters performed for us a different mode of revolt by standing still, by appearing as fragile as possible in the face of pure violence, and pushed back the violent system to reopen a stage for politics, for antagonism, for dissent.

The Woman in Red, a researcher from Istanbul Technical University, unwittingly arrived at Gezi Park at exactly the same time that the scene turned violent. Her casual dress, the red colour of the dress, her body language, how she stepped in, how she stood against the police and how she stepped out and left the scene; altogether, this turned her into the most fragile individual in that moment of conflict. Her performance was a very short one: she stepped in, in a red summer dress, stood against the police, was attacked with tear gas, turned her head and left the scene. This confrontation of violence and fragility condemned the police violence. The contrast between her innocent, yet strong performative presence and the brutality of the police of firing tear gas into her face at close range turned her into an image of the protest in Turkey. After her act, she hid herself from the media; she didn’t consider herself a particular figure or a heroine; she believed she was just one among many who were attacked by the police. Yet the performativity of her act and how the stage of her performance took shape, mostly by chance, turned this character into a specific figure and a prominent image of the Gezi Park Movement that went viral and was reproduced as a symbol of passive protest.

The policeman who had fired the tear gas from close by was later summoned to court.

Reading such event through the lens of performativity could develop an aspect of political engagement as performance, or in Jenny Hughes’ words, as “politics by means of performance”. Politics by means of performance, I suggest, not only accentuates the importance of performativity in the performing arts field, as Hughes discusses as a political instrument, but also exposes the importance of using one’s body performatively to challenge the dominant power in events.


of political struggles and protests. To perform in such situations requires that one is present and attentive to the event and situation in order to recognise which aspects of performativity make the political engagement effective. In other words, my reading of “politics by means of performance” in this discussion refers to an unchoreographed and amateur aspect of performing; i.e. being actively present, fully engaged and spontaneously responsive.

In the case of the Woman in Red, the power of the body and its performance lie in their fragility. The fragility is the strength in her political performance. Standing in the face of power, disarmed, delicate, fragile, and humble rather than using overt activist gestures is what makes her performance strong. She is a visible, yet disguised character. This ambiguity of being both visible and in disguise plays an important role in such political performances that could delay the oppression.

Unlike The Woman in Red, Erdem Gündüz, known as The Standing Man, has talked extensively about his political engagement in the Gezi Park Movement in Istanbul. After the demonstrators were evacuated from Gezi Park, and the curfew law that banned gatherings of more than eight people was imposed, Erdem Gündüz walked toward the park, but stopped in Taksim Square, adjacent to the park, and stood still in front of Ataturk Cultural Centre for eight hours. Through this act, he became The Standing Man. Gündüz, who is a dancer and an independent choreographer, took action not as a professional but as an ordinary, concerned individual who felt the responsibility to engage with the movement. However, he used his skills and experience to perform without acting as a professional.

Thinking of The Standing Man as an artist – a performer and a choreographer – could also bring his political engagement to the discussion of amateurism in one’s own practice that I develop in the text “Love vs. Loyalty: Amateur and the ‘De-professionalization of Reality’”. Taking a backpack and appearing in a square where the government has imposed a curfew law – and where days of demonstrations have been witnessed, is in fact leaving one’s own safe haven, i.e. the performance space, and facing the threats and violence of the highly controlled public spaces in a time of crisis. By stepping into the square and constructing a performing ground of his own, and performing by solely standing still, he blurs the border between his professional life and his political engagement. In the square, he is not a professional performer and
choreographer, and yet he performs and choreographs an unchoreographed movement – he invites many others to join him in standing still. He is both a professional and an amateur; his profession equips him to act covertly, and his amateurism pushes him out of the performance spaces to take risks, to stand for change and to reject a situation of oppression.

As a professional performer, one of his main general concerns in his performing arts practice has been how much one can say with one’s body. He extended such concern beyond the walls of his discipline and used his body to speak to the oppressive power and to confront the police violence. As Gündüz said in one of his lectures at the Oslo Freedom Forum in 2015 – two years after the infamous performance where he became The Standing Man – he didn’t think of his standing still as a performance, but as an act of political engagement.

This statement brings the story to a very interesting point, where the border between working and living, between profession and life disappears; it is when work becomes life; when one becomes an amateur professional. This mode of working through living brings him closer to the concept of dissidence, that – different from activism – is a constant political struggle through tiny, everyday acts.

Both The Woman in Red and The Standing Man stand defenceless, without any weapons, confronting the oppressive power with their bodies; it is a biopolitical act through which they expose the power of singular performers by showing that they are “only human”. They are both involved in a performance where fragility of their bodies is the most powerful device on the stage of the political struggle. They both stand alone, as specific individuals, yet they become invisible behind their actions; these characters’ monikers are drawn from their actions and the gestures of their performance: Standing Man and Woman in Red.

4. Ibid.
What is in his backpack.....?
Standing Man’s Backpack

What does one need to bring along when going to perform a protest in public spaces?

1. Safety glasses
2. A bottle of water
3. His keys
4. A piece of paper
5. A mirror


7. Route 04: Find the mirror in this book. How could a mirror be used in dissident methods of political engagement?
6. A Manual for Standing Still

This book shows us how we could stand still in public spaces as a mode of protest. Here is one set of instructions from the book:

A Manual for Standing Still

Q & A

Q: How to Stand Still in a Public Space

A: Wear a pair of tin shoes and silk skirt with a row of big roses on its lower margin and a silver guipure Polo shirt, tight across the belly. Hold five ripe pears, two in each hand. Put one foot in front of the other and lean on the front foot. Bow your head a bit, while keeping your eyes fixed on one point. Stay still for as long as you can.

7. A Copy of Bartleby The Scrivener.

The copy was not only a simple copy however, but also a list of devices and concepts needed for the act of standing still. The Standing Man had found these words in between the lines of the story of Bartleby. He had read it several times, closely, to understand how Bartleby’s formula could create a space of refusal.

8. Route 05: Write a manual for standing still as applied as a political gesture of refusal and dissent by situating the act in various specific situations.

9. Route 06: Look at the pear you dropped. Follow it as it rolls out of the story. Look for this pear in the book. Try to roll it further out of the book.

10. I have borrowed the idea of locating the Bartleby book in the Standing Man’s backpack from Kaya Genç’s article in The Guardian, “The Standing Man of Taksim Square: A Latterday Bartleby”. In this article, Genç writes about the relation between the story of Bartleby and the Standing Man of Gezi Park Movement in their application of inactivity as a sort of resistance. He refers to the presence of translated copies of the book in the Gezi Park library, writing that people were reading it “as a way of protest, metres away from the riot police.” He writes: “I wouldn’t have been surprised to see the book in the original standing man’s backpack. In fact, I am surprised it wasn’t there.”


11. Route 07: What else could be found in the backpack?
The (imaginary) Copy of Bartleby The Scrivener in the Standing Man’s Backpack. An experiment of performative reading.
Formula O1

- Dot, Dot, Dot: On Constructing The Space of Refusal
- Fa(i)(l)ing (Infra)structure: A Performing Ground for a Minor Collective
- Active Waiting
- Impossible Books
Dot,
Dot,
Dot …

On Constructing the Space of Refusal

Bartleby couldn’t even hurt a fly – that’s what makes his presence so unbearable.¹

Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View*

In my haste and natural expectancy of instant compliance, I sat with my head bent over the original on my desk, and my right hand sideways, and somewhat nervously extended with the copy, so that immediately upon emerging from his retreat, Bartleby might snatch it and proceed to business without the least delay.

In this very attitude did I sit when I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do – namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when without moving from his privacy, Bartleby in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, “I would prefer not to.”²

Herman Melville,
*Bartleby the Scrivener*

Calm and taciturn, Bartleby denied his responsibilities by *preferring not to*…. This singular and particular *preference* over the homogenising forces of the modern world is a political engagement through being *minor*, i.e. standing out as a singular performer in the face of dominant power. Bartleby, the protagonist of Herman Melville’s short story, *Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of*

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Wall-Street, is widely discussed in relation to Occupy movements and passive modes of protest, as a movement of passively and calmly saying “No” to the status quo by not directly saying No. During the Gezi Park Movement and the Standing Man event, many standing women and men were reading Melville’s book while standing still as a gesture of refusal and as part of their performative act of political struggle. Perhaps Bartleby’s formulation, “I would prefer not to…” has been spelled many times, each time filling in the ellipsis with imagined alternative phrases responding to each moment of conflict.

In my reading of Bartleby, I propose that the story of refusal is both a spatial and a performative act. By being situated in a closed interior space, and with Melville’s accent on the spatial elements of the office, the choreography of the characters’ movements through various corners, the play of light, voice and silence, the gestures of every character, the way that they appear in the scene and their encounters with one other, the office can be imagined as a performance space. Furthermore, the performativity of the act of refusal in the story of Bartleby is assisted by the utterance of the formula, “I would prefer not to…” as a line in a play that advances the story of refusal and prevents it from coming to an end or being oppressed. The formula shows us an insistence on the act of refusal that prolongs the inhabitation of the office as the site of action, and the act of refusal itself.

I would like to investigate how the space of refusal can be constructed by looking at Bartleby’s act of refusal through a performative lens. I situate the construction of the space of refusal in the three dots that follow the phrase “I would prefer not to…” . The three dots, or the ellipsis, indicate the unfinished sentence that, as Julian Murphet writes in his “On Refusal”, could be “filled in indifferently by every imperative proposed to him”. It is in these three dots that the space of refusal could be constructed and re-constructed by every single utterance. This unfinished sentence ending with the ellipsis becomes Bartleby’s performing ground for the formation of the act of refusal. The space of the ellipsis absorbs and defeats the command and leaves the commander disarmed.


**Insisting on Refusal**

Refusal could be understood as a negative form of action that contributes to withdrawing from a system that we consider unethical. Yet understanding refusal as a generative force that could open up spaces for dissent deals with political engagement in a different way, mostly as a tactical way of engagement and disengagement or simultaneous engagement and withdrawal. As mentioned earlier, in the discussion of dissenting paradigm of a minor practice, Simon O’Sullivan describes this as “strategic withdrawal” or “strategic engagement”.

Understanding refusal through the minor politics is to move from refusal as a negative form of action and withdrawal into the formation of an alternative and generative political struggle that, as O’Sullivan writes, could be described as moving at various speeds of engagement that sometimes could end up ‘standing still’. Refusal in such mode of action is *not a no*; it is not a negative reaction, but a *yes* to what an unethical system renders as impossible. For example, to defy ideologies such as the infamous Margaret Thatcher’s “There is no alternative”, and to say *No* to them is in fact to utter *Yes* to alternatives, and it is indeed a positive and optimistic starting point for constructing those very alternatives.

In this way, I put forward spaces of refusal as forged by the forces of affirmation of alternatives and negations of no-alternatives. This mode of refusal creates alternative political spaces that are not supposed to be formed in parallel to the dominant systems, but that are produced within them, in order to challenge them or *interrupt* them. When the dominant power and its institutions represent the status quo as the only possible alternative in a specific context, practices of refusal become the *arts of the impossible*; they stage multiplicities of alternatives.

Following such an understanding of refusal as a generative political space also allows us to surpass the act of mere resistance by moving toward insistence and performing the alternative, because resistance legitimises the dominant power relations against which one resists. Although resistance arises from disagreement with the existing dominancy, it still submits to its very hierarchy as an inevitable power structure. However, refusal condemns such *fictional* legitimacy by forging alternatives. This distinction by no means puts the two at odds, as resistance is undeniably a part of refusal. Yet I suggest that understanding resistance in the

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form of *insistence* helps us to consider the term a force of creation. Insistence combined with refusal refers to the performativity of the act of refusal. Spaces of refusal can be constructed through *insistence* on the act of refusal.

In the example of Bartleby, insistence is practiced through the repetitive application of the formula ‘I would prefer not to…’ in response to every single command. However, the formula is rendered in such a way that its repetition is not the repetition of the same. Its unfinished structure makes it different when filled in differently in response to every specific command. In this way, with every single utterance of the formula, the act of refusal is expanded further; each time, it produces a new line of refusal through the same structure. Its repetition takes over more areas of the existing relations in the office. Bartleby thereby critically inhabits the office space through the act of refusal. This repetition of the difference also shows the performativity of the act of refusal in Bartleby’s case; Bartleby *becomes* a dissenting figure through the repeated utterance of the formula. Therefore, insistence makes the act of refusal performative and turns it into a process, a movement, through which spaces of refusal are constructed and reconstructed insistently.

The intrinsic nature of refusal is to reject the establishment and domination, even when this is achieved through the act of refusal. Spaces of refusal are temporary, as they are always under construction; they refuse their own established relations. Spaces of refusal should come to an end, and they come to an end either because of their internal intrinsic conflict or because of an external force. However, insistence on the act of refusal creates a paradox: while the act of refusal refuses its own establishment and drives it into an end, the insistence tries to delay such an end and resists the limits of existing possibilities and the inevitable end. The spaces of refusal are constructed in this tension and a formula assists in inhabiting such tension in the act of refusal. This formula keeps the space of refusal under construction, first by refusing to be stabilised, and secondly by refusing to come to an end before all of its potentials have been exhausted.

In order to further develop the spaces of refusal constructed in such tension, I would like to put emphasis on the performer of the act of refusal while situating...
her/him in a specific context, and study the ins and outs of this tension through the discussion of biopolitical aspects of refusal. This situatedness could also help us articulate the formula needed in the act of refusal.

**Exhaustion and Biopolitical Performativity**

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt write that the act of refusal by itself is empty and inconsequential as it “continuously tread[s] on the verge of suicide”. They argue that the exodus should lead into a real alternative. In line with this argument, when the act of refusal threatens or challenges the dominant power relations in a context, then it goes beyond what Hardt and Negri depict as ‘suicide’. To do this, as I argue, the act of refusal should inhabit what it refuses or refuse what one is part of. The example of a hunger strike, as an extreme act of refusal, situated in a prison, can assist my discussion further. If the prisoner who goes on a hunger strike weren’t a prisoner – i.e., if she wasn’t in the prison and inside the law – her act would be politically inconsequential. But the poetics of refusal in the hunger strike become political precisely because they are situated within the realm of control and performed inside the realm of law. The hunger strike thus creates a space of refusal within the space of the institution (the prison) and thereby inhabits what it refuses and refuses what it inhabits. The individual who goes on a hunger strike inhabits what she refuses by pushing her body to the edge of total failure and death, and thereby refuses what she inhabits.

The individual on a hunger strike, who refuses and insists on the act of refusal, performs by exhausting her body. She is prone to both biological limits and the external oppressive elements of the context. The one refusing needs to survive, but is also pushing the limits of survival. It is a double-edged sword. She works through the politics of exhaustion. The poetics of exhaustion in the act of the hunger strike are reminiscent of the gypsy flamenco dancer La Chana, who said: “Between the body and the soul there is a struggle” while her knees gave out from dancing vigorously, passionately and to the point of exhaustion. Exhaustion differs from tiredness. It is to reach to the point of impossibility and then try to continue beyond it. On that point, we fail, and quite often; that proximity to failure is the poetics of exhaustion. Exhaustion as a struggle to go beyond the impossible is to perform through the poetics of the biological body when it becomes political. It is the poetics of biopolitics that exposes the fragility of our

bodies when we try to stand against an oppressive force and refuse to be defeated. Exhaustion in this context becomes a biopolitical act. In the act of a hunger strike, the body becomes a biopolitical performing ground, cutting through the site of the prison. It becomes a biopolitical device.

The prisoner who goes on a hunger strike is performing his biopolitical act. Biopolitical performativity exposes the poetics of the act of refusal. The biopolitical act of the hunger strike manifests the power of the bodies as fragile beings, facing the unethical systems of oppression; the fragility of the body stages its paradoxical strength. In her “Biopolitical Ecological Poetics”, Peg Rawes writes about “biopolitical poetics” as constituting “affirmative subjectivities, social relations and ecological wellbeing” to promote “transversal poetics and politics”. Unlike Giorgio Agamben’s negative interpretation of life in a “state of exception” and “bare life”, where the body is dehumanised and located outside of the realm of law, Rawes – starting from Michel Foucault’s take on biopolitics – puts her discussion in line with Rosi Braidotti, Félix Guattari and Donna Haraway, and by situating it in feminist philosophies, defines it as “not just characterized by its study of the negative ontological formation of the individual but also refer[ing] to the positive aesthetic ontological of the individual.” She describes poetic biopolitics in forms of “political imaginaries” that, as she writes, “are carried through generations of ecological inquiry for protecting and cultivating future social and environmental health.”

Besides Rawes’ understanding of biopolitics, in their Multitude, War and Democracy in the Age of Empire Hardt and Negri accentuate the precedence of “biopolitical production” over “biopower”. They describe biopower as what “stands above society, transcendent, as a sovereign authority and imposes its order.” But biopolitical production, as they write, “is immanent to society and creates social relationships and forms through collaborative forms of labor” that could assist the formation of new forms of life and work that are liberated from domination and in forms of the “multitude” – a concept they proposed to resist the Empire.

13. Ibid. pp.94, 95.
As Thomas Lemke writes in his reading of Hardt and Negri’s concept of biopolitics, while biopower is always external to what it tries to regulate, i.e. the body, biopolitics always arises from that very body and its forces. Therefore its power rises from where it is situated, and is internal to its source.

While connecting to this affirmative understanding of biopolitics as read through the works of Rawes and Hardt and Negri, I develop my discussion through the performative aspects of biopolitics. I argue that the biological bodies become stages for exposing the power of fragility of their biological beings and threatening the unethical power that violently oppresses them. Exhaustion of body through the act of a hunger strike exposes such a power of fragility through the poetic biopolitics. The person on strike would prefer not to eat as a symbolic escape from a pure control, read biopower, but is also threatening the very law that has allowed for that full control. The prisoner who goes on a hunger strike performs the act of refusal through exhaustion; I would prefer not to eat exhausts all other possible negotiations. It is to violate one’s own body by pushing it into its maximum fragility, thereby turning it into a powerful weapon that threatens the very oppressive power that, whilst controlling it, also adheres to the general laws of protecting the prisoners, even in the most brutal systems.

While the poetics of biopolitics is, in Rawes’ words, the “active political imaginaries”, the pure refusal in a hunger strike is to perform in the freedom created in the tension between biological needs and the political imaginaries, i.e. freedom, but also to subvert an oppressive system. Like the dancer who danced until her knees gave out, the striker dances her imaginary freedom until… . Ellipsis. This ellipsis in the act of the hunger strike exposes the extension of the biopolitical body over the space of prison. These three dots, like in Bartleby’s formula, refer to a space created by the act of the strike. This ellipsis is a space between the prisoner and the oppressive power as a biopolitical space. The oppressive power and the prisoner encounter one another in this space of three dots. On one hand, the oppressive power claims to take back its control over the prisoner’s body. On the other hand, the prisoner liberates herself from that control by claiming back her body. In the tension between the two, a political space takes shape that I would call a biopolitical performing ground. This ground is


both the body and the space of prison as the extension of the body on a hunger strike. The three dots as the extension of the prisoner’s body and the biopolitical performing ground absorb the oppressive power to defeat it, just as Bartleby did with his formula.

But how long could one exhaust her/his body effectively and creatively before its potential comes to a point where it has no function, no imagination, no dreaming, no creation, no invention, no resistance against its own failure? It is in the intense process of exhaustion and in the tension between not wanting to fail and the inevitable moment of failure that visions take shape, movements are ignited with a spark, dreams are materialised, imaginary worlds are imagined, changes become possible. Stéphane Hessel calls that point of ignition or spark an “outrage”, and calling on us “to have a reason to be outraged”\(^\text{16}\); I’d rather call it a passion that includes the force of outrage as well as love\(^\text{17}\) for doing something that is subversive and emancipatory.

**Formula of Refusal**

The space of refusal is always vulnerable to becoming established, as Julian Murphet writes in his “On Occupation”:

> So, indeed, every merely “symbolic” act of negation is refused in its refusal by a mode of production that thrives vampirically on the immediate value of the new, however “negative.” In this way, “refusal” morphs ceaselessly into “affirmation” on the Möbius strip of consumer capitalism.\(^\text{18}\)

To prevent the space of refusal from morphing into affirmation, I suggest that a formula is needed to prolong the construction of the space of refusal, or the condition of ellipsis, as in the story of Bartleby, and thereby keep it unfinished. The formulas should let the refusal create a space of inhabitation that delays its termination and exhausts all of its potentials. This formula itself is constructed through this inhabitation and in response to the relations of the context. The formula should not act through explicit rejection or saying no, but it should be constructed and should respond tactically to the context over time.


\(^{17}\) For more on this subject, see the text “Love vs. Loyalty: Amateur and the ‘De-professionalization of Reality’” in PART 02 of this thesis.

For Herman Melville’s Bartleby, the formula is *I would prefer not to*. His performative (dis)engagement is *situated* in the office. Bartleby’s formula as a confusing and ambiguous one assisted Bartleby in inhabiting the office space and turning it into a space of refusal. His enunciation was a trick; a magic trick that cast a spell on the boss and became spatial. He inhabited his small corner of the office, preferring not to leave. Starting with the formula as the refusal of refusing, he refuses everything in a constellation of relations and elements that all together constructs the space of refusal he inhabits. He himself is one element of that constellation and he therefore refuses to be part of it, not by a simple act of withdrawal, but by staying and claiming his biopolitical existence and its space. The example of Bartleby is significant in the sense of how the construction of a formula is capable of exhausting all possible risks of falling into affirmation and acceptance. Bartleby’s performance is not an overt refusal, yet it refuses everything. He resides between the binary of yes and no, and this is how he delays the end of the act of refusal and becomes capable of exhausting all its possible potentials.

The formula is of course significant as a sentence with its grammatical play and its unspecific ending, which in itself creates a complex structure, or an invisible trap in response to the one who makes a command; in his formula, the three dots work as a trap. However, there are more elements and relations around the utterance of such a phrase that makes it an affective formula of refusal. Bartleby’s formula is not a linear statement, but a multilayered and spatial one; it is sequential and tactical.

The construction of the space of refusal in Bartleby’s case did not start with the utterance of the phrase; it started in the moment when he accepted the job and commenced the work of copyediting. One should first be part of something in order to be wrong. One cannot stand external to a system and then be wrong within the judgment criteria of that system. In this way, the act of Bartleby’s refusal started with an absolute and excellent obedience in doing his responsibilities as a clerk “silently, palely, mechanically” that confirmed him as part of the system from the outset. The refusal commenced with an affirmation.

20. This is borrowed from a conversation I had with Ines Weizman in my midway seminar on 28th of October 2014, when discussing the politics of dissidence in relation to dominant power systems. Weizman’s statement in this regard was: “One should be wrong to be part of something.”
In this way, “I would prefer not to” effectively becomes a strong refusal phrase. The phrase itself puts the listener in a complex and confusing situation. It abruptly ends with ‘not to’, which, as Deleuze writes, “leaves what it rejects undetermined.” It leaves the listener in the space of three dots; the space of ellipsis. Furthermore, its ‘repetition and insistence’ makes it stronger still and opens up a space for it. The “agrammatical” function of the phrase, not structurally incorrect but performatively wrong, creates an interruption in the language as a system of referencing and as a result ends up in silence, as Deleuze says, “as if he had said everything and exhausted language at the same time”. Neither an affirmation nor a negation, it is a new “logic of preference” that, while undermining the presuppositions of language as a whole, becomes “ravaging” and “devastating”.

The utterance of the formula “I would prefer not to” takes place in a whole performative set-up. The way it is uttered, in an “anomalous tone”, and by a character who is “pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn”, makes all the difference; he is not a provocative character, a fighter who explicitly says NO, but a pitiable character who disarms the authority. At the outset, he was perhaps the last imaginable clerk to reject his task or to disturb the office work.

In their Empire, Negri and Hardt briefly investigate the act of refusal in the humble characters of Bartleby as well as of Michael K of J. M. Coetzee’s The Life and Times of Michael K. As simple men, these characters reach a level of “a human soul above and beneath classification” by means of their “absolute refusal”. I also see the Woman in Red and the Standing Man of Gezi Park Movement characterised with such innocence and fragility. As Žižek writes in the opening quote of this text, it is the apparent innocence of these characters that make them powerful. Such characteristics make these characters closer to dissidents, a hybrid of violence and fragility and rebellious character hidden behind a mask of innocence and obedience.

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid. p. 70.
25. Ibid. p. 73.
26. Ibid. p. 70.
29. The combination of fragility and violence as an incompatible hybrid is discussed in the chapter: “Fragile and Violent: Five Architectural Narrations” in PART 02. It is also discussed further as a characteristic of dissidence in PART 03.
Situated Formula

The office is a place of voices, language, correction, perfection, utterance, all done in a performative reading aloud from the copies, similar to the backstage of theatres where performers practice their lines. And in this space of language and reading, editing, writing, copying for the purpose of being perfectly correct, what could be stronger than using the language against itself? Bartleby uses an “agrammatical” phrase to be wrong and to interrupt the rules of being correct, but in a murmuring, soft and flat voice, all in “a single breath”\(^{30}\). This is how he directs and puts on his own performance within the ongoing one – that is, the routine work at the office.

Bartleby, “a quiet man”, is seated not with other scriveners but on his “boss’ side”, separated only by a green folding screen that could entirely isolate him from his boss visually, but does not remove him from his voice.\(^{31}\) His mini office, his desk space behind the green folding screen, is his micro-stage and works as a space that is both backstage and the main stage. By performing in his own performance space, he is both a part of the main performance and outside of it. He stays behind the folding screen until the next command is made. It is as if the command is a call to action for stepping from the wings – the backstage, his working corner – onto the macro-stage that is the larger space of the office. To this command he responds: “I would prefer not to…” As Deleuze writes:

Bartleby himself had no other escape than to remain silent and withdraw behind his partition every time he uttered the formula, all the way up until his final silence in prison. After the formula there is nothing left to say: it functions as a procedure, overcoming its appearance of particularity.\(^{32}\)

When there is nothing left to say, he disappears behind the green screen. The partitioning system makes Bartleby audible. The green folding screen is a flexible element that both separates him from and connects him to the others. He is part of the working clerks while singularly distinct from them through his insistence on preferring not to do what he is asked to do. The repetition and the insistence on refusing makes his micro-stage behind the green screen more powerful, as it takes over the space of the office. His being audible expands his micro-stage


further beyond the partitions around him. Therefore, his repetition of the formula interrupts the office space and the routine of the work. As Hélène Frichot writes:

“I prefer not to” becomes a trait of expression that contaminates everything, escaping recognisable linguistic forms, as well as the symbolic order of the workplace and its demand for the ever more furious production of new world.33

As Deleuze writes, Bartleby’s successive refusals are about everything engulfing the act of copying. And by refusing all these things around it, the act of copying itself becomes impossible. This aspect of the formula is a covert way of refusing that could be analysed through Irit Rogoff’s concept of “looking away”34 as a performative critical engagement with the aimed objects or situations. Instead of directly addressing the object of critique by looking away, one targets its ground and the relations that have brought the object into being, and thereby ungrounds it radically. Bartleby’s performance in the office could be read through such a method. In fact, the looking away creates a logic of its own that distracts the authority and disables it from reacting immediately; it makes the act of refusal hard to block.

Far from the fictional spaces of the office in the streets of New York, where Bartleby performs his refusal act by repeating his formula, the Standing Man of Gezi Park Movement performs in a similar manner, but in real life, in a square in Istanbul. These two stories could be connected in many ways, and one strong mutual element of the two is the articulation of a formula and its enactment. The Standing Man’s formula of silent protest could also be read as ‘I would prefer not to’. Yet he performs the formula without uttering it; he would prefer not to speak. The Standing Man is performing in a context restricted by curfew law, where the gathering of more than eight people in a public space is forbidden. He pushes the curfew law to its extreme limits and stages it through the aesthetics of silence and singularity. He performs the curfew law. In other words, he conforms to the law and obeys it by standing alone, and through an extreme obedience and by acting it out, he challenges that very law. He acts out the impossibility of speaking and the impossibility of gathering to express his opposition. While Bartleby as a


scrivener in an office uses language, voice and silence to construct his formula, the Standing Man as a choreographer and dancer uses his body as a device to repeat his formula. In the Standing Man’s act of standing still, the formula is expanded through insistence and the duration of the act instead of the repetition in Bartleby’s formula.

Bartleby’s formula is contagious, as is the Standing Man’s immobility. The former “ties the tongues of others” and makes others use the word ‘prefer’ more often. The latter encourages others to stand still in their own specific locations in various parts of the city and country. The Standing Man’s formula works toward the creation of the collective; Bartleby’s formula isolates him while he insists on its utterance. The Standing Man’s act of standing still is connected to the Woman in Red mentioned earlier, who stood against the tear gas in the early days of Gezi Park. Then, by his act of standing still for eight hours, he passed it on to many others who stood singularly but together in public spaces all over Turkey as an alternative mode of collective action. He ridicules the curfew law by his extreme obedience. He exhausts it. The confusion he causes is similarly of great importance. Much the same as Bartleby’s, the story of refusal in this case also started days before the standing still. All the prior sequences prepared the ground for such a performance: the occupation of Gezi Park, the Standing Woman in Red, the evacuation of the park and finally the curfew law, but also the creation of the formula that encouraged the others to join.

The two formulae are complex in the sense that they confuse the dominant power. Bartleby’s formula ‘I would prefer not to’, when repeated in a pitiable manner, confuses his boss. The Standing Man’s formula, which is formed against the curfew law, threatens it without breaking it; standing alone in a public space is not against the curfew law, but somehow problematises it. The Standing Man’s formula, like Bartleby’s, suggests a position between acceptance and refusal. Therefore, as an ambiguous position, it becomes a strong act of protest that neither says yes nor no, but enacts a third possibility that in becomes spatial in both spaces. They delay any oppression or dismissal and can thereby gradually construct a space of refusal by inhabiting that refusing mode. The two characters are unostentatious and could turn the most ordinary being into a revolutionary.

The Architecture of Dot Dot Dot

How could the formula ‘I would prefer not to’, be practiced through architectural practices? Refusal as a performative (dis)engagement requires tactical development of the role and the character. The term suggests theatricality and performativity. The use of a formula that constantly introduces wrongness to an established judgment and controlling system without explicitly negating it is what is needed in the practices of architecture; a formula with potential to be applied in and adapted to various situations.

Discussing the modern subjects who react to “systems” in order to change them, Boris Groys writes of the possibility in the existing entropy underneath the surface of the world. He posits that all controlling systems are subject to forces of entropy. Creative practices that could work with such entropy are the ones that do not represent it but that connect to its flow. In the world of active production, then, that entropy could bring the fast systems to a halt.

The practices engaged with such political agenda are not about the aestheticisation of entropy, as it would be soon stabilised and controlled by the dominant systems, but about connecting to that flow of entropy. The concepts of change and revolution are always accompanied by action, and they are applied both by leftist utopian concepts and neoliberal ones. The pressure to perform in high-speed society has become the sine qua non of the modern world. The 24/7 culture is steered by dominant factors through regulated intervals, decided speed, pauses, waiting and so forth through designed spaces and infrastructure. However, inactivity, stillness and slowness could become an effective tactic in the high-speed sociopolitical context. Jonathan Crary, in his *24/7: Late Capitalism and the End of Sleep*, promotes such inactivity in the form of sleep, and writes: “Sleep is an uncompromising interruption of the theft of time from us by capitalism.” This would also bring a biopolitical dimension to the act of refusal. Sleeping also plays on the verge of necessity and disobedience. On one hand, it is necessary for better performance in the high-speed society. On the other hand, it interrupts the productive time.


Through their respective formulae, Bartleby and the Standing Man both connected to the flow and entropy about which Groys writes. Their formulae worked as an anchor, reaching deep beneath the system and annihilating the ideology of the dominant system. In the former, the formula annihilated the capitalist system of non-stop production, and in the latter, the urban control of a neoliberal political system. Both cases apply inactivity; in high performance society, activity and production are expected.

In the same article, Groys writes about the art of Mladen Stilinović, who taps into the entropy and anarchy flowing underneath the high-speed, over-productive and over-consuming society through his art. Stilinović himself cites laziness as the essence of his art, describing it as “futile concentration”, “non-activity”, “impotence” and “indifference”. He believes that “[a]rtists in the West are not lazy and therefore they are not artists but producers of something.” With his critical art, Stilinović does not substitute the ideology of the dominant or official system with his own; he annihilates that official language. His laziness as a tactic interrupts those systems and creates spaces similar to the spaces of ellipsis in Bartleby. His famous sentence, “Just as money is paper, so a gallery is a room”, refers to such annihilation. He brings the clamour of the official language down to silence and meaninglessness, or new meanings. As Groys writes about the work of Stilinović:

> The party slogans were simply combinations of words—and words can be combined with other words. Written words are simply combinations of lines—and can be combined with other combinations of lines.\(^3\)

This method of thinking by no means underestimates the ideological power that exists at the core of these dominant systems, but it exposes their vulnerability before the entropy of the world.

Hélène Frichot stages this Bartlebian mode of (non)acting in her “A Postscript from Bartlebess: How to perform creative resistance in the workplace”. The

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40. Ibid.
imaginary character of Bartlebess, an architect constructed by Frichot, is carved out of the character Bartleby. The construction of the character of Bartlebess directs our attention to a “perplexing figure of the architect without a project”. Frichot describes this situation as an unrealised potentiality of creating as a form of architecture practice. She writes:

She is the architect who retains her potential to build even when she does not actualise it, expressing a perfect potentiality. The perilous power of passivity presents the potential not to be, and Bartlebess is the last, exhausted figure of the architect who refuses to design, to build, to propose new material forms and who, as such, expresses a very particular relationship to the interstices between creation and decreation.

Such relationship between ‘creation’ and ‘decreation’ could be read, in a different way, in an architectural example with Lacaton & Vassal and their project from 1996. They were not architects without a project; they were commissioned to do the renovation of the Place Leon Aucoc, a public square in Bordeaux. Similar to the Standing Man’s context of performance, the performing ground of these architects was also a public square. They responded to the call by proposing that to do nothing in order to make the square better: doing nothing would be the best change. Their refusal to add anything or change any structure of the public square was an interruption to the neoliberal urban machine, where the constant, violent process of construction and destruction allows for the flow of profit and keeps the building market on high activity. The refusal to make changes, and the proposal to instead maintain the existing structure, questioned the conviction of work of architecture that is mostly undertaken through the activities of adding to or subtracting from the world. As Miloš Kosec writes in his “The Bartlebian Act”, the architects’ “acknowledgement of the building as it exists becomes the radical act”. He describes this project as Bartlebian, as the architects ‘would prefer not to’ choose from among the infinite alternative future potentials for this square, when one is always forced to choose. In this sense, inactivity is supposed

43. Ibid. p. 201.
to force a change. Preferring not to make an active intervention lets go of the intrinsic control in the act of design and hence facilitates the release of the flow of entropy and anarchy of which Groys speaks.

A practice of architecture articulating such a formula of simultaneous negation and affirmation, like Bartleby’s formula, does not resign from the practice of architecture, but finds methods of mixing the affirming methods – i.e. what is conventionally expected from an architect – with negation, i.e. working with different methods compared to the conventional ones. A Bartlebian practice of architecture does not concede the floor to the most commercial or violent ways of space-making, but violently – violent in the Bartlebian manner – holds that floor continuously, while working differently. As Anne Lacaton stated in an interview about the Place Leon Aucoc project:

At first they said, “ok, we’ll find someone else if you don’t want to do it.” Our response was, “We do want to do the project, and our project is to do nothing.”

A Bartlebian mode of practicing architecture then is a performance; an utterance of a line such as ‘We do want to do the project, and our project is to do nothing’ when stepping onstage. A mode of architecture such as this requires not only the design of the spaces, but also the design of the architects as characters playing their roles on the stage of negotiations, commissions, design and execution of the work. It is about how that play is written, and how it is uttered.


Fa(i)l(l)ing (Infra)structures

A Performing Ground for a Minor Collective

The question, “what is that we can do together?” — whoever and wherever that “we” may exist — is largely a question of what is in-between us; what enables us to reach toward or withdraw from each other. What is the materiality of this in-between — the composition and intensity of its durability, viscosity, visibility, and so forth? What is it that enables us to be held in place, to be witnessed, touched, avoided, scrutinized or secured? Infrastructure is about this in-between.¹

AbdouMaliq Simone

[...] infrastructures are fundamentally repetitive, in that they repeatedly enact relations, such as connection and disconnection, on and off, here and there, this and that, and inside and outside.²

Reinhold Martin

Infrastructure is a stage that, while supporting certain activities, stages the (in) efficiency of a system that finances and controls its function and use. It is a stage for power. Failed infrastructures are stages that either expose the inefficiency of the system behind them or become the stages of discontent.

This text is an infrastructural text that has been written as a performative writing experiment originating from the 110 Freedom Building. The unfinished

building became an infrastructure, offering a ground for public dissent in a time of revolution and producing an image of a revolutionary collective. On the other hand, the building has become an infrastructure for the characters of this thesis, from which they have embarked on their journey in the construction of dissidence.

In this text, I have experimented with writing an infrastructural text by taking the concepts of infrastructure from AbdouMaliq Simone and Reinhold Martin. Simone discusses infrastructure as what is in between the elements of a collective, and Martin emphasises the repetitive characteristics of the infrastructure. I have also understood the repetitive characteristic of infrastructure through the concept of performativity that, in Judith Butler’s words, “involves repetition” of an act “rather than singularity”. Yet such repetition is not repetition of the same, but of “difference”.

The text is imagined as a repeated cycle of ascending, inhabiting and descending from the 110 Freedom Building during the days of revolution. The characters who ascend the building are imagined as spectators at the outset, but become dissidents through the evolution of the text and the repetitive inhabitation of the building. This refers to oscillation as one characteristic of dissidence, as a method of political engagement and withdrawal; here, it is also performed through the entering and exiting of the building. The text evolves through the repetition of questions that address “What is between us that keeps us together?”, formulated in various ways.

The image of the 110 Freedom Building that triggered the discussion is complicated through this performative writing, and it can no longer be reduced to a framed picture mounted on a tripod as a fragile infrastructure. Therefore, the tripod collapses under the burden of the multiplicity of minor voices and raises the question “what could hold all these minor voices together?”

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4. Ibid.
5. The concept of oscillation is developed and exposed in various parts in this thesis, for example in the chapter “Prison: An Impossible Situation”, where the prisoner makes a section through the prison by oscillating between inside and outside, imprisonment and freedom, destruction and construction. Later in the thesis, this concept is also discussed in the chapter “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident”. The dissident constructs her performing ground by oscillating between inside and outside, appearance and disappearance.
Round 01

Q: What was between us that kept us together in the image?

A: It was the unfinished building, its emptiness, its columns and slabs. But it was also the proximity of such a structure to the main locus of the demonstrations: the street. We, on top of the building, hesitated to join the movement. And our doubt connected us, pushed us up the structure to watch the crowd moving beneath. We were simply spectators of the revolution. Every day, we stayed on top of the building as long as there were demonstrators in the street. Then we descended and left. But we returned the next day to watch them again.

Round 02:

Q: What caused us to be on top of this building together?

A: There was an event, an interruption, a sudden unexpected pause in all routines that we recall as revolution. The event re-politicises architecture, it introduces complexities. It exposes architecture to the unexpected forces and confronts “architecture’s will to be fixed and durable”6 with a temporal and unstable condition. When various circumstances during the events of revolution led the building process to come to a stop, the labour ceased, the flow of material and goods came to a halt. Cranes deposited their loads, swung back and squeaked to a halt. Workers descended from the scaffolding, dropped their wrenches, shovels, saws, hammers, nails, screws, welding equipment. Trucks left. Cement bags, concrete bags, planks, beams, columns, bricks, remained still. Dust settled. The capital was blocked. Ownership was suspended: it became a structure exposed to occupation, to unplanned inhabitation. In this failure, the life of the building took another route of development.

It failed to be a finished building. The failure of finishing the building turned it into an infrastructure, for us to be both part of the demonstrations and outside of them. When the building is under construction, the building structure itself is an infrastructure to underpin its own construction process, which gradually becomes invisible while it supports the flow of material and labour toward finishing

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the building. Yet when the construction is interrupted and fails to finish the building, this infrastructure becomes visible. And this is what happened to the 110 Freedom Building. The building that we ascended, inhabited, and descended from repeatedly for many days was an infrastructure. It was an unfinished structure that became a stage. But it was an ambiguous stage: Who was the performer? Who was the spectator? Were we the ones performing, or was it the demonstrators in the street?

Round 03:

Q: Is infrastructure what keeps us together?

A: The infrastructure is what connects and disconnects us. There is always something that keeps us together. We are either excluded from the infrastructural connections or included in them. We are either privileged to receive the infrastructural services or we are the underprivileged. In his book *The Urban Apparatus: Mediapolitics and the City*, Reinhold Martin describes infrastructures as repetitive operating systems that repeatedly connect and disconnect. In the audible and inaudible rhythm that ticks the cities and our environments, we too are being repeated, until the moment it fails. Martin writes that “the work of infrastructure remains invisible until it fails”. When it fails, we suddenly catch sight of it. Yet, when we lack infrastructural services, infrastructure is visible to us even when it has not failed. But what happens when it fails?

Round 04:

Q: What happens when infrastructure fails? What would hold us together then?

A: The failure of infrastructures renders them visible. We spot them because their repetitive manner is disrupted. Their hum, which has become the background noise of our lives, falls silent. They sometimes leak without losing their repetitive manner. In other words, the failure could be a spectacular one – an explosion, a total collapse – or a gradual one, such as leakage that still lets the “repetitive hum of its engines […] continue”, or even when it fails to be what it was supposed to be, like “an unfinished, waterless dam”. When they

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8. Ibid.
9. Ibid. p. 152.
have failed, they are no longer the background, but a performing ground. The moment of failure could be experienced as waste, gases, noises, explosions, clicks, drips, smog, smells, occupiers, minor voices, mud, dust, deterioration, roots, plants, dried leaves, winds, or just emptiness, void, ruin. Through the arrival of these new performing elements, the ground transforms, and new potential might be revealed. I see failed infrastructures as new performing grounds or the producers of new ones. Like the unfinished building we ascended – the 110 Freedom Building – and used as a stage, as a ground for our performances.

When the infrastructural connection fails, we start to make different sorts of connections in its absence. And we become something else in the process of that making. For example, the failure of city infrastructure such as sewage systems or drinking water supply may cause civil unrest, political movements that bring precarious individuals together through a political bond. As new performing grounds, the failed infrastructure becomes a stage and invites us to imagine what could create a togetherness now in this ground of failure.

**Round 05:**

**Q:** What is between us that keeps us together when we perform through failed infrastructures?

**A:** The fragility of singular bodies when confronting the violence of a brutal system turns the bodies into strong biopolitical devices. When the fragile bodies join each other, like we did on top of the 110 Freedom Building, they create a collective that resonates with the biopolitical power of every single body. In her text “Rethinking Vulnerability in Resistance”, Judith Butler discusses vulnerability in lieu of fragility. She situates the vulnerable bodies demonstrating in public spaces, where they are exposed to the risks of violence of an oppressive power, and suggests that it is the assembly that enhances vulnerability. Togetherness, then, could protect those vulnerable bodies.

Butler situates her discussion of “vulnerability in resistance” in failing infrastructure, where resistance takes shape as a dissent to that failure, such as failing of housing, water, or sewage systems. She writes: “The dependency on

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infrastructure for a liveable life seems clear, but when infrastructure fails, and fails consistently, how do we understand that condition of life?"\(^{12}\) In other words, there is an increased vulnerability in the lack of infrastructure that should be dealt with, while protesting against that failure. When such dissent takes shape, streets themselves become more than a “platform for a political demand, but an infrastructural good”. Butler writes:

> We have to assume the infrastructural goods for which we are fighting, but if the infrastructural conditions for politics are themselves decimated, so too are the assemblies that depend on them. At such a point, the condition of the political is one of the goods for which political assembly takes place—this might be the double meaning of “the infrastructural” under conditions in which public goods are increasingly dismantled by privatization, neoliberalism (the United States), accelerating forms of economic inequality (Greece), the antidemocratic tactics of authoritarian rule (Turkey), or the violent combination of government and cartel interests (Mexico).\(^{13}\)

It is exactly at this point, when the infrastructure for the formation of assembly – in Butler’s term – fails, that another sort of connection should and could take shape. And infrastructure becomes the political bonds between the singular dissenting bodies appearing in failed public spaces or in response to failed infrastructure.

When I use fragility instead of vulnerability, I would like to arrive at another point besides what Butler discusses through vulnerability and togetherness as an enhancement. I suggest fragility not as something to be supported through what Butler calls assembly, but as a powerful condition that should be exposed; furthermore, if it should break, metaphorically speaking, its fragments could cut through the oppressive power. Every dissenting single body is itself a micro-stage. The collective of the fragile bodies multiplies this power, rather than protecting them. While the singularity of the fragile body standing against an oppressive power in a specific situation matters, the multiplicity of these singular bodies exposes the many micro-stages that the oppressive power should overcome, one by one. The example of the Standing Man of the Gezi Park Movement, who stood alone but resonated through other individual

\(^{12}\) Ibid. p. 45.

\(^{13}\) Ibid. p. 47.
performers who joined him, is an example of sorts. As I discussed in the text “Standing Still’”, fragility is one weapon in the hands of those standing still in streets and squares. An infrastructure takes form in between those fragile single performers that turns them into a powerful collective without reducing them to a homogenous group.

Round 06:

Q: Is the unfinished status of failed infrastructure what could keep us together?

A: 110 Freedom Building also experienced a failure in its construction. The failure turned it into a sort of infrastructure that staged us as those actively attending the revolutionary moments and produced a unique image. When it failed to become a building, we noticed it. And when we ascended it and stayed there, it became an infrastructure. Then it is our presence that turns a failed infrastructure to another sort of infrastructure. In response, it kept us together.

Round 07:

Q: How would the unfinished trigger togetherness?

A: It could be the permeability of unfinished buildings, the possibility of getting in and out, that triggers togetherness. In unfinished buildings, the binary of inside and outside is challenged.

Unfinished buildings are strangely alive. They are frozen in a moment, staggered, looking into a future that might never come. Unfinished buildings are not relaxed; in the tension between the bare material and the ultimate image of the building to come, they present an aesthetic that confuses the logic of their existence. When unfinished, buildings arouse our curiosity, uncertainty and somehow our pity; for the unfinished sometimes looks like ruins. One wonders if the building in this status is deteriorating or in the process of being born? But unfinished buildings also stimulate our imaginations. From every bare detail, material, dust, piles, open ducts, voids, scaffolds – a new world could emerge that glances at the blueprints, shrugs and goes beyond the fixed definitions of the drawn lines.

Round 08:

Q: What is in the unfinished that could keep us together?
A: There is an indication of the work in progress in unfinished buildings. The unfinished aesthetics as a celebration of the work in process, laboratory and postproduction of space, have been parts of the art and architecture debate under the title “relational aesthetics” and participatory practices. The term relational aesthetics that accompanies such modes of art and architecture is highlighted by Nicolas Bourriaud and refers to the artistic activities that have their roots in social context and the creation of human relations, rather than the production of objects of spectacle. In postproduction, which is originally a term from film and video production but applied in other fields such as arts and architecture, instead of the “production of raw material”, the activities are generally centred around recycling, montage, and voiceover. Although postproduction is always possible in assembling things in myriad ways, the unfinished encourages more such activity to occur. In other words, unfinished and incomplete structures can catalyse such human relations with things and/or each other by triggering a sense of completion and the continuation of the existing structures, activities or ideas.

By shifting the focus from the form to the relational, the unfinished building as a site for creation rather than consumption considers the inhabitants as political subjects rather than users who gaze and consume. They are invited to continue the work of architecture. Such a tendency in a work of architecture that works towards the politics of empowerment, inclusion, construction of community, togetherness and participation, is usually expressed through the aesthetics of unfinishedness and incompleteness as formless or a form yet to come. They instead create grounds for the participants to take over the space. This interest is practiced either as making architecture from/through/within unfinished sites, such as evacuated buildings, leftover spaces, liminal spaces, interrupted construction sites or ruins, or as aesthetic quality in architecture work – designing buildings as if they are unfinished. Both tendencies regard a shift in architects’ role, from having maximum control over space and its users to handing it over to the inhabitants to engage with the activity of space-making. This approach also refers to a kind of shift in architectural thinking that denies the domination of form as the sole dimension of spatial design, and forwards the question of

territorial, political, and the interrelation between things.  

Round 09:

Q: What is the politics of togetherness within the discussion of ‘relational’?

A: Although the term relational aesthetics came into focus in the 1990s, it was not the first time that the social and political aspects of art became the driving force for creating active communities. The utopian thinking of the 1960s and ‘70s was the predecessor of such an attitude to art and architecture. However, there are differences between these two prominent periods. In her “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”, Claire Bishop compares art with such intentions in the ‘90s with the utopian attitude of its predecessors through Bourriaud’s relational aesthetics. She discusses that besides the DIY approach common to the two periods, there is the “microtopian ethos” that has taken the place of the utopianism of the ‘60s and ‘70s. Instead of struggling to radically change the context and thinking in a utopian manner, as it was in the art of the ‘60s and the ‘70s in Western society, relational art aims at finding microtopian ways of being able to live in the now and create a community by inventing “possible relations with our neighbors”, to paraphrase Bourriaud.

As we look at works of art and architecture with the relational and the participatory approach, the emphasis on collectivity and the creation of community are at the core of these practices. And yet, the political relevancies of those communities and how they are supposed to change the state of affairs by means of microtopian ethos has remained a vague realm of debate. In other words, we should ask ourselves why – and how – we should form a collective at all. It appears to me that the formation of such communities in the discussed approaches has become an end in itself, rather than producing a collective of critical performers with the potential to induce change or challenge the status quo.

For example, in participatory practices that are concerned with injustice,
segregation and the exclusion of less empowered members of society, the collective is usually formed through consensus. I usually visualise such practices through the metaphor of a table, with the participants gathered and looking inward around the table, with their backs to the risk of the outside. Markus Meissen, who has criticised participatory practices in his work, suggests that the core problem of these practices concerns the politics of consensus. He maintains that these practices circulate within a closed and conforming system: Eyal Weizman in the introduction to Meissen’s book, *The Nightmare of Participation*, writes: “The dilemma of participation/collaboration implies a closed system in which the options available for choice, and those who present them, cannot be challenged.”

The work of architect in these cases is in fact the design of a connection; however, the politics of such connections are based on consensus and a closed system. This closed system, I suggest, is usually represented through an object, a metaphoric or literal table, a square that from time to time becomes a dining table, a discussion table, a gardening plot or a flowerbox. This table is the object of design in the hands of the architect who curates the gathering of people, plans the agenda and directs the group activities based on consensus or the vote of majority. It entertains a tamed collective by means of familiar and safe activities, such as cooking, eating, and gardening, to minimise the risk of the unexpected conflict that might interrupt the planned process of participation. These tamed communities evolve around a sort of sameness in the absence of the other. Members of the community are either invited or pushed to become part of that group, far from conflict or disagreement. But do these forms of the collective address “the inequalities that give rise” to such practices?

**Round 10:**

**Q:** Is the unfinished and incompleteness what could keep us together, and who or what are ‘we’?

**A:** If the unfinished structures could potentially create chances of encounter and togetherness, what should the politics of that togetherness be? Are such structures capable of pursuing a radical position in the realm of the political,

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or do they enjoy an open end and an apolitical agenda, as the term ‘open-ended’
might suggest? Bishop criticises many works of art associated with open-endedness
as works “whose identity is wilfully unstable”, and such spaces, which are largely
called “laboratory”, “construction site”, “art factory”, are prone to becoming
“marketable as a space of leisure and entertainment”\textsuperscript{20}. She writes:

One could argue that in this context, project-based works-in-progress and artists-in-residence begin to dovetail with an
“experience economy,” the marketing strategy that seeks to
replace goods and services with scripted and staged personal
experiences. Yet what the viewer is supposed to garner from such
an “experience” of creativity, which is essentially institutionalized
studio activity, is often unclear.\textsuperscript{21}

Bishop’s argument, which is developed in response to galleries and art museums
with such agendas in their design, could be a valid critique in a wider context.
The open-ended, ‘anything goes’ attitude is the favourite pattern of neoliberal
politics in the sense that it is easily hijacked and turned into a marketable product.
This could happen in the lack of a clear critical position when setting up such
open-endedness as a performing ground for change and dissent. My question is
whether the ultimate aim of such works is entertaining groups of people, or if
those gathered are there for an immediate or a potential radical, critical reason?
Is that group of people there for an encounter, or simply to collectively consume
and gaze? And who are those people? The lack of a clear position, radicality and
subversive potential in such modes of togetherness is perhaps the Achilles heel of
such practices.

This doesn’t mean that such modes of work are without any radical potential. On
the contrary, the open-endedness and the indeterminacy associated with it can
break from the fixed and established ideas, concepts and institutions and can give
the floor to the readers or inhabitants of the work to engage with it in different
and conceivably novel ways. Yet if it becomes a form in itself with its established
aesthetics, it will simply repeat itself and become a mere gesture of such
potentials. The unfinished can motivate an ongoing process of radical changes.
If we consider the work in progress as a tactical inhabitation of a problem that
responds politically to the limits and impossibilities at each point, then it does not

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
necessarily fit into anything goes ethics. Radicality does not need to be realised in totality or in grand forms of dissent such as revolutions, but in micro-actions. However, a stronger and more specific position is required in the politics of the collective and how it sets its constituent elements, i.e. the individuals and singular performers, in a constellation.

Round 11:

Q: What is between us that keeps us together?

A: It is the differences. It is the encounter. It is being unfinished subjects. Encounter is an active connection that requires differences and disagreement to create conditions for the two or more to influence each other not through consensus, but through disagreement, dissensus, differences without the aim of becoming similar. In an encounter, as Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt discuss in their Commonwealth, ‘both sides are changed in the relation’. Although they discuss the notion of encounter in relation to the project of Modernity – “the two-ness of power relation and the processes of mixture and transformation”, it could also be extended to other contexts. Therefore, essential to any encounter are firstly the existing differences, and secondly the notion of unfinished subjects or subjects in transformation. Every encounter produces new subjectivities that are not fixed and that are particular to that very encounter. In this sense, a group of people held together momentarily through encounter produces an active collectivity, a changing togetherness that has not taken shape through consensus and mutual identity but through the differences. Encounter happens through the negation of fixed identities.

Round 12:

Q: What is between us that keeps us together?

A: It is interrupting the self. It is the presence of the other. It is encountering the other. A real encounter in this sense occurs through the presence of the other, or in Claire Colebrook’s words, through “what is not one’s own”. In their Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe write:

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23. Ibid.
Following Laclau and Mouffe, then, subjects in an encounter are in transformation. They are constructed through the encounter with ‘the other’. The presence of the other smashes the fixed identity of the self. And through the encounter, that smashed identity is reconstructed. Also in *Occupy, a People Yet to Come*, Andrew Conio places the “becoming-collective at the heart of the process of undoing subjectivation”. Therefore, I suggest, the work of formation a collective becomes political when it takes shape through the process of approaching the other and in the space where the other is actively present.

For such a construction of the collective, there needs to be a performing ground that is in the process of construction itself, unfinished and incomplete. In his “Encounter, Living Lexicon for the Environmental Humanities”, Maan Barua writes:

> Encounters are thus spatial; encounters spatialize. Not space as container, but an interweaving of trails, tracks and paths. Like Klee’s drawings, spaces produced through encounters are knotted by the movements of a heterogeneous array of beings.

In the multiplicity of trails, tracks and paths taken by singular minor actors, this performing ground could be constructed and make a space for the collective. The encounter between the individuals and in/with a place makes the collective spatial. Those paths connect us. They become infrastructure.

Following the politics of the encounter as constructing new subjectivities and the necessity of the existence of the other, the unfinished could be the performing ground for such politics to take shape. If the work in process is an unfinished entity

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and a platform for the individuals to create a collective, then those participants
should also be framed as incomplete subjects who create the condition of real
encounter. If individuals as unfinished subjectivities are supposed to form a
political and critical collective that steers the subversion of established norms
and borders and contributes to the constant re-partitioning of the political
boundaries and limits, what would be the bond that keeps that togetherness?

Round 13:

Q: What is between us that keeps us together?

A: We were all different, each with our own stories, different views, different
ages, different genders. But the repeated inhabitation of the unfinished building
made it possible for us to create, in Jeffrey C. Goldfarb’s words, small “bonds of
connection, which proved to be the micro-infrastructure”. The politics of minor
has to do with micro-politics, which views differences as a strength rather than
weakening factor. These differences cannot be summarised and represented by
a single representational regime. On the contrary, the differences could be the
starting point for the multiplicities of micronarratives and a proliferation of much
more complex systems of narrations that go beyond identity politics. We were
all part of that story, but with various and sometimes opposing voices. Minor
politics is a way of intensification of various forces that cannot be reduced to
any homogenising institution. Nicholas Thoburn writes:

[...] minor politics is the critical engagement with the social
relations that traverse each particularity, the relations through
which life is experienced as cramped and intolerable. By social
relations I mean the whole gamut of economic structures, urban
architectures, gendered divisions of labor, personal and sovereign
debt, national borders, housing, policing, workfare – whatever
combination it might be in any particular situation.

The critical engagement that Thoburn associates with minor politics is the key
notion in the formation of the community of dissidents and minor political

30. Ibid.
actors. Following Thoburn, this engagement places individuals in a collectivity to participate in the struggle against domination and oppression. However, this collective engagement doesn’t follow one single political agenda, but approaches using a multiplicity of methods. If such critical and radical togetherness cannot take form, constructing a collective, as an end in itself, has no point.

Minor politics, then, consists of particularities and differences manifested in individuals standing up or opening space for themselves in what Thorburn calls a “cramped space”.\(^{32}\) According to Hannah Arendt, politics is “the interaction and composition of singularities in a common world.”\(^{33}\) This formation of politics requires singular positioning in the face of dominant power, individually, but also encountering the other who stands singularly and particularly against the same dominancy, but in myriads of different ways. This is how minor politics summons collectivity without turning the collective of differences into a grey mass.

In “Notes Towards Minor Practice”, Simon O’Sullivan describes the minor practices as the “production of new subjectivities” and at the same time “turning away from those already in place”.\(^{34}\) The minor form of collective could be read from example in the story of the Standing (Wo)Men of Gezi Park Movement, when many people stood together, but alone in the face of the oppressive power; highly particular, stripped of identity, but collectively.

**Round 14:**

Q: What is between us that keeps us together and turns us into a “plural I”?\(^{35}\)

A: It is the multitude of unfinished subjects. Hardt and Negri, in their book *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, suggest the term multitude as “the living alternative that grows within Empire.”\(^{36}\) They suggest that multitude as a concept of political collectivity has advantages over the terms ‘the people’, ‘the masses’ and ‘the working class’. Hardt and Negri describe the people as a “unitary

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32. Ibid. p. 174.
35. This refers to Trinh Min-ha’s concept of “plural I”, an I that could potentially stand for many without reducing many voices to one. I discuss this concept in the chapter “Fugue: On Writing Dissident Architecture”, when writing about dissident characterisation.
concept” that reduces diversity to a single identity.\(^{37}\) The masses on the other hand – although they are composed of all sorts of differences, in contrast to the people – end up in undifferentiated; “[A]ll the colors of the population fade to gray.”\(^{38}\) However, the multitude, unlike the people and the mass, is irreducible to a unity or a single identity. They write:

\[\text{The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity – different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires. Multitude is a multiplicity of all these singular differences.}^{39}\]

In addition to Negri and Hardt’s concept of multitude as a different mode of togetherness, Rodrigo Nunes formulates another concept of active togetherness as a “pack”, compared to “crowd” in his text “Pack of Leaders: Linking Organization and Spontaneity with Deleuze and Guattari”. He explains the concept of the pack in the context of the Occupy Movements and presents it as a more democratic way of pragmatic politics that challenges the ‘consensus’ associated with the notion of crowd. In the concept of pack, leaders emerge and provoke and even “force issues through”.\(^{40}\) In the introduction to the anthology *Occupy, A People Yet To Come*, Andrew Conio describes Nunes’ concept of pack thus:

\[\text{Packs are not secondary groupings emerging from the crowd; they are the elemental ground of the mass and are formed out of alogical orders, consistencies and compatibilities. As was seen first-hand at Occupy, packs or multiplicities continually transform themselves into each other, and cross over into each other, through processes of alliance or contagion.}^{41}\]

The concept of pack, similar to multitude, has roots in minor politics and refers to singularity and particularity that are momentarily assembled in a collective form. What connects all these singular differences, Hardt and Negri suggest, is the “common”. This common changes in different contextual struggles. What

\(37\) Ibid. p. xiv.
\(38\) Ibid.
\(39\) Ibid.
\(41\) Ibid. p. 34.
they argue here is in fact an interesting and productive concept: they suggest the common is not discovered, but constantly being produced.

This constant production of the common transforms the singular fixed identities into changing political subjects. The singular subjects perform and change roles while producing the common. In this sense, togetherness of this kind is also performative, performing different roles in different situations and in encountering different others. In other words, the political subjects are always unfinished and under construction in the encounter with the other, and by inhabiting a situation and production of the common. In fact, what becomes an important political concept is no longer what each singularity contains, but what emerges from that encounter.

What connects us then is the common as infrastructure. Reinhold Martin criticises Negri and Hardt’s take on infrastructure in the discussion of the common, however. He maintains that they understand infrastructure as what acts as a fixed and inert structure. Yet if we understand infrastructure as what connects people, then, as Martin writes, it is a “verb form”, and “politically active in and of itself”. Along with Martin’s argument, I describe infrastructure within the discussion of multitude as changing connections between different political subjects that momentarily create a collective. Yet that collective is destined for change, as the involved subjects are always under construction. When the subjects change, the infrastructure between them as what keeps them together also changes.

**Round 15:**

**Q:** What is between us that keeps us together?

**A:** It is a comradely trust. It is what keeps us on the edge of the building without the fear of falling down or the fear that the building will collapse.

**Round 16:**

**Q:** What could hold all of these minor voices together?

**A:** .................................................................


43. Ibid.
Round 17:

Q: What is between us that keeps us together?

A: It is a fragile tripod. It trembles.

Round 18:

Q: What was between us that kept us together in an image?

A: It was the unfinished building, its emptiness, its columns and slabs. But it was also the proximity of such a structure to the main locus of demonstrations: the street. We, on top of the building, invented a different sort of demonstration. We invented a different sort of street, a folded street, as the performing ground for the act of dissent. We were the minor narrators of the Revolution. Every day, we stood on top of the building and continued the work of architecture by performing our dissents. Then we descended and left. But the next day, we returned.
Active Waiting

If waiting absorbs the person who waits, stories in turn absorb waiting, making the person emerge from his temporary absence in the enchantment of waiting to take his place in his story and thus in memory and expectation.¹

*Harold Schweizer, Penelope Waiting*

Sometimes I want to play the part of the one who doesn’t wait; I try to busy myself elsewhere, to arrive late; but I always lose at this game. Whatever I do, I find myself there, with nothing to do, punctual, even ahead of time. The lover’s fatal identity is precisely this: I am the one who waits.²

*Roland Barthes, A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*

When filled with hope and passion, waiting becomes a mission; it becomes spatial, it creates a site, it produces a story. It becomes fast and thin, it becomes active; paradoxically bearable and unbearable, longing to come to an end yet inhabiting every second. For someone in love, as in Roland Barthes’ quote, waiting is projecting a hopeful moment; the lover looks forward to an event that approaches both quickly and slowly. But when the lover actively inhabits the duration of waiting, it becomes an act of constructing a ground for the encounter, for the act of love. The one who actively waits becomes the performer of that construction. In this way, the ‘fatal identity’ of Barthes’ lover transforms into an active role of a maker, a dreamer, who attains agency over time by inhabiting it and by constructing the performing ground for the act of waiting. The active waiting transforms the passively spent time into a story that, in Harold Schweizer’s words, “absorbs waiting”. In the story of active

waiting, the one who waits is the one who transforms the time and pushes it out of passivity.

When empty of hope and passion, waiting becomes long; as Schweizer describes it, “Time must suddenly be endured rather than traversed, felt rather than thought. In waiting, time is slow and thick.”3 When time becomes thick and viscous, it becomes difficult for one to move out, to act, to attain one’s agency over it. This viscous time “absorbs the person who waits”,4 and she disappears in that passive time of waiting. Without a story in which the person could reappear, it becomes difficult to imagine a different alternative for what the waiting could bring or how the time could be experienced.

It is very often said that the limbo-time of waiting impedes the velocity of profit-making in the capitalist world. Nevertheless, most waiting rooms in contemporary society are oriented toward consumerism. Proliferating vending machines, shops, mighty advertising banners and screens, people distributing flyers and selling goods in waiting spaces – together they set a stage that could interfere with the spaces of waiting and invite those in that space to participate in waiting as a commercial performance. In this way, the waiting space itself becomes a space for consumption.

The design of waiting spaces is not only oriented toward consumerism and the commercialization of public spaces, but also applies other restricting criteria that, as Peter Bishop writes in his text “Surveying “The Waiting Room””, is designed “to reduce frustration, to distract attention, and, whenever possible, to use waiting spaces as opportunities for a restricted cultural pedagogy, controlled consumption, and regulation”5. To achieve such criteria, architecture and design play an important role of directing the space towards homogeneity that, according to Bishop, orchestrates heterogeneous spatial/temporalities into a “limited range of possibilities”.6 The restricting design of waiting rooms aims to prevent unexpected happenings that the duration of waiting might trigger, and that could as a result disturb the programme of the space.

6. Ibid. p. 145.
The restriction and control of waiting spaces and waiting behaviours by those in power manifests the subversive potential in the act of waiting. Although this potential depends on situation and context, to some extent waiting always has potential to produce chance encounters, disruptive acts or chaotic events. In their “Waiting Places as Temporal Interstices and Agents of Change”, Mattias Kärrholm and Gunnar Sandin investigate different sorts of “waiting modes” and spaces associated with them. They describe “waiting situations” as a form of “in between time-space” and argue that they can be given a “transformative role”. While arguing that there is a level of contingency in any sort of waiting, they categorize waiting into four modes: settled, pre-settled, unsettled, and non-settled or chaotic. These modes are ordered “according to diminishing degree of stabilisation” that varies according to level of control and contingency.

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8. Ibid.
In the fourth mode of waiting – the non-settled or chaotic – they describe waiting as a time-space agency out of everyday life, where waiting is “part of an uncontrolled series of events without any pre-programmed or even spontaneous action in sight at all”. They suggest that the characteristic of this mode of waiting are the “abrupt shifts-of-context” that introduce “extraordinary events”.

Waiting in its chaotic mode, I argue, can undermine the stabilisation intrinsic to other modes of waiting. I suggest that this mode of waiting is an active waiting that instead of tolerating the dullness of the time turns every second of waiting into an act. For example, in Part 02: CUT, where the escape plan of Lieutenant Fontaine – a prisoner sentenced to death – is investigated, the active waiting is situated in the space of prison. The prisoner turns every second of waiting for his sentence into an effort to get away from it by working on his escape plan. If time is imagined as a line leading toward his execution, he is following that same line, but moving in the opposite direction by constructing an escape route out of prison. By inhabiting the waiting time differently and critically, he ultimately changes what the prisoner has to wait for; he breaks free instead of being executed.

**Active Waiting**

The concept of active waiting could be approached in two different modes: one is of compulsory waiting, and one is of creating a situation of waiting as a subversive act. The former is a situation that is imposed to control and the latter follows a pause, a rupture and interruption in an imposed movement and continuity. According to Kärrholm and Sandin, the two can be discussed as interstices that occur in the rupture, or between two planned programmes or activities. Nevertheless, these interstices could be turned into dissenting activities, even when imposed compulsorily. When the duration of waiting is not taken as an obedient act but as the one enriched by, as David Bissell states, an awareness of “the relationality between activity and inactivity”, it could be turned into a duration through which subversive activity could take shape. In his “Animating Suspension: Waiting for Mobilities”, Bissell argues that this awareness transforms the event of waiting from a dead event to a

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9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
live one with “the potential of being other than this”. Bissell’s description of the awareness between an activity and non-activity is what I call inhabiting and being actively present in this duration, looking for potentials hidden in the elements of the context. In this way, the active presence in the time of waiting can project a change while inhabiting an apparently immobile and inactive state. Waiting, in this sense, is transformed from passively killing time and merely bearing its tediousness into actively (and critically) inhabiting a situation. This sort of inhabitation, which I have described as critical inhabitation in the text “Setting the Scene”, is the act of criticality through being present in the existing relations of a context over a period of time and thereby challenging or changing those very dominant relations. By inhabiting the duration of waiting, waiting transforms from a passive mode of being in interstices into an act.

Attempting to formulate a universal definition of waiting, Harold Schweizer renders it as unlikable: “nobody likes to wait”. Yet, waiting in its active mode could be experienced differently. For example, when the Standing Man of Gezi Park Movement in Istanbul stands still for eight hours, he inhabits a situation of waiting in which he is waiting for its end – either imposed by the police or by his own biological limit for standing still – whilst also trying to delay it and extend the duration of waiting as long as possible. He enjoys performing in this time of waiting and suggests, through his act, that the longer he waits, the more chances there are for alternatives to be made. The Standing Man’s waiting, however, is not an imposed waiting as a means of control; it is an insistence on standing still and inactivity that follows a pause, an interruption, and is performed in the form of an act of waiting.

Queue: An Interruption of Underground Life
The paradoxical characteristics of waiting makes the controlling power promote it in some circumstances and ban it in others – mostly when waiting cannot be fully controlled. After all, waiting is favourable when it is controlled in regulated zones and as a means of defining intervals to introduce rhythms to the flow of everyday life. At the same time, making people wait can be used as a controlling device and an oppressive tool that positions those waiting in a state of powerlessness, as Abbas Kazemi states in his text “Life in Queue”,

12. Ibid.
it is a way of annihilating the specificity of each individual. Kazemi situates the discussion of waiting in the context of queues and investigates how the queue was applied as a mechanism of control in Iran in the 1980s, during the war between Iran and Iraq. At the time, waiting in queues had become an inexorable part of life, essential for survival and for providing and buying the basic necessities of life in the time of war. The country was subjected to economic austerity and the government had to apply mechanisms for the fair distribution of the subsidised basic commodities. Because the war had broken out right after the 1979 Revolution and society was still dealing with a sort of post-revolutionary instability, the new regime needed pervasive control over various aspects of life. As Kazemi writes, for people accustomed to being out in the streets, who had their spent days and nights there for making their dreams come true during the Revolution, the queue was a good transient device in the hands of those in power; letting them being out in the streets whilst controlling them in invisible, orchestrated tunnels.

Kazemi argues that the queue as a device of control worked by keeping people under surveillance, militarily organized, predictable, distracted and unified. In this way, the queue was a façade of the social body, exposing its constituents, making the individuals visible, locating them in a linear geometry not as a group, but as separate individuals who do not look at each other, but instead look toward what they were queuing for. The queue had created a different form of togetherness without being together, a “distracted” group of people, so to speak, that substituted the revolutionary collective. The people in the queue were once the façade of the 110 Freedom Building. Waiting in a spatial structure, though, was turned into waiting in a linear one.

Furthermore, the queue was not only limited to the time spent waiting in line, but it had also cast a pervasive shadow over life; it had become a ritual forming other aspects of life to the extent that one could call that era in-queue life, as Kazemi writes. As a ‘ritual’, queuing had its own series of actions and orders and had both added new orders to everyday life and introduced its own material objects, spaces and organisations. It had influenced the urban environment and transformed the existing buildings and urban spaces into

15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
infrastructures for queuing. Sidewalks had become places for standing in the queue; mosques had become the centres for distributing coupons; big stores and supermarkets had been transformed into storages. Around the spaces of waiting, small vending activities had emerged.

In his text, Kazemi pictures the extension of the queue from the public spaces to domestic spaces. The small booklets of coupons handed to people had become important objects of survival that regulated families’ lives. They were not only the documents making people eligible for waiting in the queue, but also tools of accessing people’s personal information and keeping records of their lives. To be able to survive, one had to be visible through applying for those coupons. Furthermore, the special TV and radio programmes that announced the coupon numbers each night represented another time frame that made people wait – not in queues, but in their houses; one waited in the living room in preparation for waiting in the queue. It was a ritual that everyone had to perform.

The ritual of queuing periodically suspended underground life – the dissidence life that was going on inside the houses and private spaces – by dragging people to the surface, to specific places at specific times, and making them visible. But on the other hand, the queues were the only possibility for public social gathering free from any dominant ideology or major political connotation at the time. Queuing time was also a time when the dissidents could find each other and connect.

It is in this way that the queue (or other imposed waiting conditions) could become a stage for the stealth forms of dissent (dissidence) to take shape; as Bishop says: “it becomes an entrance into imaginative and experiential depth.”

The queue had become a maze, a tunnel leading all over the city and into the living rooms. As mazes, they went into the living rooms and came up to the public spaces again, flavoured by the underground’s lively and messy lives, jokes, stories and various forms of dissent. Although the queue was a unifying mechanism to make people similar and visible, one could paradoxically hide oneself, shift roles and perform differently under such masks of similarity. Thus, from the midst of this rigid ritual as a tool of social control and its supportive infrastructure, more chaotic gestures and disruptive tiny acts were

sparked. Despite the apparent passive nature of such togetherness, there is a high potential of disruptive actions: jokes, sharing stories, spontaneous conversations, unexpected encounters always happen because people seek to liberate themselves from the pressure of waiting in stagnated social conditions; to lighten life.

In two literary works, both entitled “The Queue” (one by Vladimir Sorokin and the other by Basma Abdel Aziz), the queue is used as a narrative element of the story, and as a structure that makes spontaneous conversations happen between people. Abdel Aziz’ novel, published in 2016, takes place in an unspecified Middle Eastern city, and the queue is formed behind an ever-closed gate after what the writer calls, “disgraceful events”. The queue that never moves forward is a dystopian structure through which Abdel Aziz lets the characters wait, connect to each other and unravel their stories. As Carmen Maria Machado writes in a review of the book, “A whole community springs up around the queue: systems of barter and trade, gossip and deals.”

Sorokin on the other hand, finds a liberating potential in such a restricted structure as the queue. The story, which takes place in the late Soviet “years of stagnation”, depicts life through the narrations occurring in a queue; a queue in which no one knows what s/he is waiting for. The whole story unfolds through conversations, jokes, and curses exchanged between those waiting in the queue. In Sorokin’s comedy of the queue, the rigid linearity of the queue is disrupted, decomposed and deconstructed through the voice of people, their chatter, laughter and various plays on language. While waiting in the queue, a foundation for a collective social life and chance encounters is created. A compulsory and ordered waiting acts upon itself and changes from a passive togetherness into an active one and a critical inhabitation of a situation. It is through the voice of people, their various exchanges, the plays on language, and what happens between them in all these exchanges that the queue – as a rigid and consumerism-oriented structure – is interrupted. And it is the duration of waiting that could trigger such disruption.

20. Ibid.
Connecting to the chaos that resides in all sorts of waiting requires a critical inhabitation of the space. But what could architecture do to stimulate such subversive potential in the act of waiting? In the various cases of waiting discussed in this text, architecture appears to be silent, a mere observer of what occurs in its spaces. In other words, it is silenced by the chatter of people waiting within it, despite its restricting and distracting design strategies. Yet in its silent status, it plays a strong role in staging such actions. In such situations, architecture design solutions could work to add additional layers to the waiting spaces that could increase the chances of unexpected encounters or events in waiting spaces. One example could be the “Perfume” project, or ‘Whatever you want it to be’, by IF (International Festival) architects. The project, performed on 26th of February 2005 at the Longue Nuit de la Danse at the Kaaitheater in Brussels – which consisted of works by over fifty choreographers – sought to produce space by means of fragrance. One thousands bottles of IF perfume, which had been designed as a gender-neutral perfume, were offered to the audience – no further information was provided. In the intervals, while waiting for the performances to start, the audience was creating another space within the theatre by the tiny act of taking the lid off of the perfume bottle; they created many intangible spaces of perfume. The architects describe the project thus:

The perfume IF proposed a process of subjectification independent on if the individual desired to operate within a community or as singular (sic). [...] the fragrance was spread and used by the audience, the use created an intense sense of space, community and intimacy.22

In this context, the architect has become the designer of both the event and the object that enacts it in the in-between times of performances. The perfume project is a temporal, yet limitless event. It has neither a specific starting time nor a scheduled end. There is no spatial specification or spatial limit at work; as the bodies move around, they carry the perfume and expand the vectors of space. The perfume creates connections between the project’s participants. Yet despite many other forms of participatory practices that take place in a limited time-frame and among a specific group of people and usually with a

known outcome, this project is beyond the limits of time and at the same time questions the predictability of the results and outcomes.

In a totally different context and at a politically charged site, this sort of connection between individuals related to the act of waiting also exists in the example of the Standing Man of Gezi Park Movement; an invisible bond is created in the duration of the act of waiting that holds people together without representing a crowd or breaking the curfew law. The bond is initiated by the Standing Man and develops to encompass more people. When the end of waiting is delayed, such a bond is expanded to more people and places.

The perfume as a connecting element in the IF project could be investigated as a sort of dissident, an invisible and uncontrollable material that could challenge the boundaries of space and time. This is not to suggest that the IF project is a subversive performative design, but the concept applied in this simple work as the application of an ephemeral bond, connecting to the hidden chaos in the act of waiting and stimulating it, could be elaborated more politically and in the more demanding political struggles. On the other hand, elements that push waiting to its extreme could increase the chances of unexpected events.

Besides such an approach to the waiting spaces and adding more layers to stimulate its hidden chaos, it would be interesting to imagine waiting spaces as a bare stage for the act of waiting. Instead of staging another activity and inviting those waiting to participate, gaze or consume, what would happen if the waiting room became the stage of waiting as an act in itself? Without distraction and with the thickness of waiting, what could be triggered? After all, perhaps the absolute silence of design could be the best stage for turning the waiting into an act: an act of waiting.
Making in this thesis has been a way of thinking about and experimenting with concepts and ideas, developing them, and finding various ways of creating connections to the subject of study and the case studies, and turning them into sites of action. As I explain in the text “Stories and Plays”, the various experiments that have been undertaken along this thesis started with the following experiments with “Impossible Books”.

Impossible Books is an opening into the experimentation with the materiality of the text and to approaching writing as making, using existing writings as sites of critical inhabitation, practicing the concept of interruption, and investigating the scale of dissidence. Using paper to produce these conceptual models deliberates the politics of fragile material and exposes the importance of working through small-scale and apparently trivial things that could become a dangerous and effective tool of dissent. Folded papers, letters, and rolled maps come back occasionally to this thesis and play important roles in the stories of the dissidents.

The text in this experiment, borrowed from Franz Kafka’s The Castle, has been a thinking model for forwarding some driving concepts such as the ‘art of the impossible’ and the force of love. Close reading, re-writing, materializing and playing with the text helped develop the idea of Pause as an interrupting tactic, as well as the construction of the character in the Fiction One. In addition to the Impossible Books, at different points during the PhD research, I did further experiments with this text through various installations and conceptual models.
Punctuations organise and clarify the meaning of the written language; they create intonation and pauses that come naturally in spoken language. They are the translation of time in oral language to symbols, forms and material in the written text. Punctuation’s contribution is, therefore, related to time; it indicates stops and starts. When it comes to the politics of pause as an interruption, it is the semicolon that best approximates the idea of pause, the gap in speech. It is neither a comma nor a full stop; it represents a stop and a turn or shift, as made evident in its form as a symbol – a full stop and a comma.

The following experiments with Impossible Books work with the semicolon as a pause in literary texts. In these experiments, pauses in time, read through the semicolon, are translated into a material space. They are therefore about both identification of pauses in a text and the expansion of these pauses into a space of imagination that, ultimately, affects the spine of the book, and opens the book up to an alternative space. In this way, the semicolon becomes the dominant part of the book; it transforms the physical form of the book, preventing it from closing in the same way it used to.
“I can’t think of any greater happiness than to be with you all the time, without interruption, endlessly, even though I feel that here in this world there’s no undisturbed place for our love, neither in the village nor anywhere else; and I dream of a grave, deep and narrow, where we could clasp each other in our arms as with clamps, and I would hide my face in you and you would hide your face in me, and nobody would ever see us any more.”

Franz Kafka - The Castle
The semicolon as a dream, a space of imagination, connects an ampossible love on the ground to a possible love underground. This impossibility turns to possibility through the mediation of death. Semicolon functions here, in imagining death as an interruption to life which opens up the world to the perfection of an eternal embrace. The gap or connecting link that the semicolon creates in the text is a chance for expanding and building imagination further, thinking differently and finding alternatives to overcome impossibility. As one expands this chance, death, as the only solution, is delayed, to the extent that the space of imagination and the contemplative moment take more space than either the impossible condition or desperate situation.
Following the experiment with Kafka’s text, in this experiment with the text by Rolf Hughes, I have identified the turning point in the story – the moment before a catastrophe strikes – and I have intervened, adding my own text to expand this moment, to delay the inevitable clash and crash. A semicolon is added to the existing text; a space is created, a space in which another voice speaks. The other voice, here mine, creates a pause, an interruption, in the evolvement of the story, and at the same time affects the spine of the book, doesn’t let it close.

On the perils of connecting inside to outside

Jan, a young scientist from Amsterdam, having discovered the existence in the universe of at least six planes in addition to the four we already know, was leaning for a smoke out of the carriage window as his train sped from Den Haag to Gent, when a train, passing – à toute vitesse – from Gent to Den Haag, took off his head. Part of his face remained on its windscreen, for wind, wet and speed will do like a watery glue. Some days later it was power-blasted onto the discarded tickets, fast food wrappings, dust and dog ends on the shingle between the tracks of the terminus, then encircled in the fleeting halo of an industrial detergent.

It is not possible to calculate what else Jan’s fertile brain might have discovered had he actually understood the danger stated clearly by the Dutch transport authorities on the carriage window concerning the danger of leaning out, of connecting inside to outside. Niet naar buiten leunen! – or, as the more philosophical Italian authorities observe, È pericoloso sporgersi.

Rolf Hughes
Jan, a young scientist from Amsterdam, having discovered the existence in the universe of at least six planes in addition to the four we already know, was leaning for a smoke out of the carriage window.

The violent wind touched the first curls of his hair as his head passed the window frame. He inhaled the smoke deeply into his lungs. While the nicotine was circulating in his veins, he was pondering his newly-found universe, which could only exist at an extraordinarily high speed; he kept the smoke one or two seconds more than usual and thought further that this universe is demolished as soon as it emerges. He stretched his head a bit further to exhale the smoke. Wind flattened his hair over his head and narrowed down his eyes; almost closed. His ears heard the roar of an emerging universe, the one that was about to be demolished.

as his train sped from Den Haag to Gent, when a train, passing – à toute vitesse – from Gent to Den Haag, took off his head. Part of his face remained on its windscreen, for wind, wet and speed will do like a watery glue. Some days later it was powder-blasted onto the discarded tickets, fast food wrappings, dust and dog ends on the shingle between the tracks of the terminus, then encircled in the fleeting halo of an industrial detergent.

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Pause: A device for troubling routines

It’s June 2013.
I’m fiddling with my phone, scrolling up and down the pages.

The Occupy Gezi movement is still underway in Turkey, despite the park being evacuated by police and the imposition of a curfew banning the gathering of more than eight people. That an urban planning project – the takeover and demolition of the Gezi public park – has triggered such a movement demonstrates the on-going social resistance to the commercialisation of urban spaces, a resistance that is part of the constant struggle over the right to the city, or, in David Harvey’s terms, “a right to change ourselves by changing the city” as “the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization.”¹ However, while it is this resistance that is made manifest by the emergence of the Occupy Gezi movement, what I find fascinating is the offspring of the curfew: the new waves of passive protests that suggest that the movement has entered a new phase.

The marker of this new phase is the appearance of the Standing Man.

On The Guardian blog on 20th June Kaya Genç (under the alluring title The standing man of Taksim Square: a latterday Bartleby) writes:

(…) a young man wearing a white shirt and grey trousers appeared in Istanbul’s Taksim Square. He walked towards Ataturk Cultural Centre, adjacent to the Gezi Park, which had turned into a battleground. But the young man didn’t go inside the park. Instead he stopped in front of the Cultural Centre, placed his backpack on the ground, put his hands in his pockets and stared at the building for eight hours.²

A clear message:

2. Genç, K. (2013). ‘The standing man of Taksim Square: a latterday Bartleby’ in The Guardian, Thursday 20th June, 2013. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/jun/20/standing-man-istanbul-bartleby-melville> Accessed 25.06.2013. In Herman Melville’s Bartleby the Scrivener, Bartleby refuses to work and simply restates the phrase ‘I would prefer not to’. As Genç notes in his blog post, it would not have been surprising if the security officers searching the Standing Man’s backpack uncovered a copy of Bartleby, the Scrivener.
instead of going to the park, which had turned into a battleground, this young man had come to the ‘wrong’ place but found it the ‘right’ site for expressing disobedience or resistance.

His body, fragile and vulnerable,

standing alone

in the middle of the square in front of the massive Ataturk Cultural Centre\(^3\), unsettled what had until then been called the “Occupy Gezi movement”.

As civilian security officers search him it is clear that standing still has become a crime in Turkey, and simultaneously that a disarmed body standing in a public space can be threatening. While it seems unimaginable that silence or inactivity could be used as a weapon in an increasingly mobile, integrated, high-speed society, the standing man causes us to pause.

\(^3\) The Ataturk Cultural Centre represents the history of secularisation of Turkey by Ataturk.
... standing still for eight hours in a public square ...
I clear my throat, lean on the podium and say:

- Pause is a technique for troubling routines, a tactical device for change capable of disturbing established flows. What comes out of this disturbance is, of course, contingent and unexpected, but it is critical to have an image of it. Metaphorically, it enhances the “stammering” moment, in Deleuze’s terms, the moment of dysfunction. Pause interrupts, but it also connects through new and undefined connections; this is the ‘infrastructural behaviour’ of the pause.

- An interruption from the left corner of the lecture hall:
  What do you consider ‘routines’?

I continue:

- Routines are established sequences of actions that allow the normal flow of everyday life to continue; they guarantee the familiar. By routines I mean the processes through which the wheel of capitalist production operates; through which commoditised everyday life moves; through which dominant systems, whether economic or ideological, are optimised; through which the dominant power is stabilised. Where urban public spaces are concerned, routines become the sum of all the flows and circulations of life that protect the order of those public spaces. In this context a pause is a device, an act, however tiny, that unsettles this balance or order, bringing about a moment of dysfunction where an individual is liberated for an unspecified duration. While the dominant power is busy ‘fixing’ this pause, alternatives can emerge.

At the push of a button an image of an Israeli checkpoint emerges on screen. I continue:

- There are always moments of compulsory pause in our everyday life: checkpoints, people waiting at traffic lights, traffic jams and queues. Needless to say, the liberating potential of pause cannot be found in these moments. On the

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contrary, these are pauses of control that belong to our daily routines. Similarly, there are pauses for consumption that favour the spectacular gaze. I differentiate these routine pauses from pauses of opposition and resistance, or pauses of transgression.

Turning from my phone I try to come to terms with the standing man’s action, his pause.

In elucidating his theory of the ‘moment’ Henri Lefebvre likens the moment to the ‘festival’ as an ‘intense’ and ‘tragic’ part of everyday life. For Lefebvre these festivals, seemingly paradoxically, are both outwith and part of everyday life; they are two parts of the whole with the former contrasting violently with the latter. Observing life in public spaces one sees that pauses are similarly ever-present moments, however the effectivity of the pause cannot be described through festivity, but through a sort of intensity that violates normalcy. Once extended, intensified and accumulated, once located where and when they are not supposed to be, pauses become a tool of opposition and resistance; they become a symbolic form of resistance challenging routine that, in the case of the standing man, absorb and focus the energy and politics of a movement in a single standing body. In this particular instance, as with Lefebvre’s festive moments, the pause of the Standing Man is indeed

\[
\text{tragic:}
\]

[T]he moment has its specific negativity. It is destined to fail, it runs headlong towards failure.

I read a few pages further and come to the conclusion that the pause of the Standing Man is likewise

\[
\text{destined to fail,}
\]

either as a result of the suppressive force of a dominant power or the biological limitations of the body. In either case it is the resistance to an inevitable failure that fascinates me, the tension between moving and standing. In this tension we might come to understand the efficacy of the pause, even as it is destined to fail.

As Lefebvre notes:

“This if we are to understand and make a judgement, we must start not from the failure itself, but from the endeavour which leads to it.”

The pause, as an act of inevitable failure, must be understood as both moment and endeavour, and it is the moment of the failure of the pause, the liberation of an intense energy at the tragic moment when the pause ends, that is key. While the endeavour of the standing man as protest is clear, the aftereffect of the pause is less readily grasped, but it is at this point that those dominant flows that existed prior to the pause are inexorably changed.

- Then surely duration is significant? The longer the duration, the better the chance that an alternative be developed?

he asks from the dark end of the hall.

- It definitely is,” I reply. “I believe one of the fundamental characteristics of pause as a device for change is duration. Pause disturbs power, but in such a way that it does not provoke an immediate reaction. It is an interruption rather than a disruption, and in this interruption there exist chances for an alternative to emerge. In fact, one of the contributions that architectural practice could make in working with pause would be to work with this duration and to expand it.

It was a summer night. I was lying down on the rooftop with my younger sister and older brother. We experienced the night in intervals. Twenty seconds of night then came twenty seconds of neon light from the roof opposite. For twenty seconds, you could see the moon and stars; all this seen in great haste, every detail you dwell on was something of the whole that you lost, because the twenty seconds quickly ended and the neon light took over; obliterating everything, pink light cast on white sheets. As on other nights, during those twenty seconds of darkness we played a game connecting stars into familiar shapes. Frustrated, we sought to extend the night curtailed by the eruption of pink neon. A stone thrown... eighteen, nineteen, twenty, breath held, twenty-one, twenty-two, the sky rose, infinitely starry above us. A real night, free from intervals even if only for one night, created by the absence of neon light.  

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I sit back gazing at the video on screen through my architect’s glasses; more people have joined the Standing Man. I notice the distance between the bodies. This distance, I surmise, is what protects them; there is no definition in the curfew law of the distance between bodies that delimits a ‘gathering’ or ‘crowd’. These protestors have not broken the curfew as they are individuals, standing apart and alone. I recall the deplorable image of the crowd in Don DeLillo’s *Mao II*, conjured by his description of the faces of individuals being pressed into fences:

> They show the fence from a distance, bodies piling up behind it, smothered, sometimes only fingers moving, and it is like a fresco in an old dark church, a crowded twisted vision of a rush to death as only a master of the age could paint it.¹¹

I begin to see how the spaces between those surrounding the Standing Man create an expanded tissue of bodies that spreads over a territory. I feel an urge to zoom out and see the landscape created: the bodies as fixed points, the spaces as active connections, intensity present in the gaps, an infrastructure of bodies appended to the city. This landscape of connected but dispersed bodies threatens those in power.

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Grandfather drew the newspaper close to his eyes.
“What are you looking for?” I asked
“Trying to find myself dear, I was there every single day. I was one of the standing bodies there. And it matters that ‘I’ was there.” He replied.
An image of an unfinished building in Freedom Street in Tehran is projected onto the wall of the lecture hall, taken in 1979 during the revolution. At the time people, myself included, had climbed this building, watching as beneath a flowing tissue of crowded bodies replaced the street itself with moving, shouting individuals.
I begin:

In this instance the building has become a static point that has absorbed the crowd and, at the same time, produced a new sort of street; a vertically folded street that provides a space for standing and sitting as an alternative form of demonstration. Verticality intensifies the existing energy, accumulates it and turns it into a 'tragic' moment. Similar to Standing Man, the building is the materialised Lefebvre’s ‘moment’. But another paramount point in both cases is the adjacency of vessels of movement and stillness. This adjacency makes the pause more effective.

- Are sit-down strikes a sort of pause? another student asked from the first row.

- Definitely

I answered.

They are a pause in the capitalist production instigated by factory owners; by refusing to work while being present productivity decreases and profits are reduced. So pause as a collective action is hugely detrimental to the proprietor."

“I suspect what lies behind your question is that you are, in fact, wondering what the difference between these two forms of pause is?

Or,

what in particular the standing bodies produce that the strike does not?

I would argue that the two both come from a politics of refusal and disobedience. They are similar in many ways:

they are a way of claiming your rights by not participating, by not being part of a system, and they both act through
the momentary appropriation of space, be it public space or the space of factory (production). Crucially both the strike and the standing man question routines.

However the particular political situation within which the standing man ‘stands out’ (stands outside the norms of a public space) is key, this act concerns the politics of public space as a medium allowing for the contestation of power.12

For eight hours the standing man occupied Taksim Square, the main transportation hub in Istanbul and a historically and strategically important urban site. Today this square is a typical modern public space – a de-politicised neoliberal space of commerce, consumption and control; a “representation of space” in Lefebvre’s terms.13 However, this is also a ‘representational space’. A ‘space of appearance’14 in Hana Arendt’s term, where people through their actions, become visible. ‘While visibility is central to public space, theatricality is also required because whenever people gather, the space of appearance is not just ‘there’, but is actively (re)produced through recurring performances’.15 Public space, provides visibility to political action16 and motivates participation. The standing bodies physically occupied public space and introduced a new infrastructure of bodies into the existing material urban infrastructure.

I resume the video of the Standing Man, thinking architecturally: what is it that creates the links between the bodies?

AbdouMaliq Simon describes infrastructure as the politics of together-ness.

13. In Lefebvre’s term, public space that is controlled by government or other institutions, or whose use is regulated, is referred to as “representation of space”, whereas public space as it is actually used by social groups is called “representational space”. Springer, S. (2011). p. 537.
15. Ibid. p. 537.
16. Ibid. p. 538.
He states:

“The question, ’what is [it] that we can do together?’ – whoever and wherever that ‘we’ may exist – is largely a question of what is in-between us; what enables us to reach toward or withdraw from each other. What is the materiality of this in-between – the composition and intensity of its durability, viscosity, visibility, and so forth? What is it that enables us to be held in place, to be witnessed, touched, avoided, scrutinised or secured? Infrastructure is about this in-between.”

The infrastructural pose of the bodies is what keeps the crowd from being disbanded. The bodies connect and flow through infrastructures, but also perform as an infrastructure themselves. They make connections, fill in the in-between spaces, activate interstices, and transform the behaviour of the existing material infrastructure. Just as a material infrastructure they fix and distinguish points and spaces, but as they are in constant motion this fixity is more fluid. This infrastructural character is essential to the effective potential of pause to create change. Fragmented pauses can only perform as safety valves, creating critical moments instead of nurturing emergent politics, whereas an infrastructure of pauses, a connection of bodies across extended territories rather than a single standing man, takes on immediate political effectivity.
Another question:

- You just talked about infrastructural architecture. As architects, how do we deal with the idea of pause? How do we design spaces of pause? Or how can the idea be applied in architecture? Is architecture as infrastructure a clue to the problem?

- Firstly I would like to stress the importance of body politics to the idea of pause as a device. Describing the role of the body in disturbing the purity of architectural order, Bernard Tschumi notes that:

  [T]here is the violence that all individuals inflict on spaces by their very presence, by their intrusion into the controlled order of architecture. Entering a building may be a delicate act, but it violates the balance of a precisely ordered geometry.18

So where pause as a device is concerned, perhaps it is primarily in the sense of a post-production of space by means of occupation. This is visible in the examples of the Standing Man and likewise in the building in Tehran in 1979. Therefore, to enhance the effectivity of a pause as a device for change and liberation we must consider the possible post-production occupation of space. It is therefore crucial to think further about what architecture can do to enhance the potential for pause.

Secondly, a pause is an event. Architecture should facilitate this event, creating spaces that can absorb and intensify those forces and elements that break with existing or routine flows. Here the architect’s ability to identify chances, to read the existing gaps in any system, and develop those gaps to the point where alternatives could emerge becomes key. Maurizio Lazzarato describes the event as follows:

The event gives us an open, unfinished, and incomplete world, and in so doing calls upon subjectivity because we can inscribe our actions and exercise our responsibility in this incompleteness, in this non-finitude.  

The unfinished and incomplete; this describes the very aesthetics of infrastructural architecture; the infrastructure of pauses.

I continue:

By way of an example we might consider how existing spaces already work as spaces of pause. Mohsen Mirdamadi, an architect and researcher working with urban issues within large cities in Iran, notes that in the high-speed spaces that we move through daily there is a need to stop. His term ‘Rahvand’, meaning ‘spaces attached to a route’, mimics an infrastructure of pauses. He likens cities to the Silk Road, arguing that spaces like caravanserais or water reservoirs are not only spaces for resting, eating, trading, etc., rather they are, more importantly, social spaces where spontaneous encounters produce new conditions along the road. Rahvands are spaces of speculation and reflection after moving and traveling; a pause that is not an end to the moving, but a point of departure enriched by encounter. Similarly, a city consists of spaces of moving and pausing. What enriches the political and social life of the city is not the roads but the “pause spaces” that make up the sequences of social life. At political and social turning points where large numbers of people gather, they do so in pause spaces, either found or invented by their own action. This means that many of these spaces are not designed as pause spaces but are capable of being inhabited and activated through different sorts of occupation.

Perhaps Bernard Tschumi’s term “expanded sequences” best describes pause spaces. For Tschumi an “expanded sequence” makes:

a solid of a gap between spaces. The gap thus becomes a space of its own, a corridor, threshold, or doorstep – a proper symbol inserted between each event.

Thinking of pause spaces in this way means that as well as those ‘un-designed’ spaces of event, we might consider architecture’s role as identifying chances or in-between sequences, expanding them and creating new alternative inter-sequences. The revelation of a previously undefined space along a familiar and defined space of flow could stimulate a pause in that flow. How to reveal it, however, cannot be done always and solely by architecture in its established meaning. This is perhaps where architecture should make a pause in constant meddling with space; a pause in a fetish of completing the world.

21. Bernard Tschumi in his Architecture and Disjunctions explains ‘expanded sequences’ in contrast to ‘contracted sequences’, which he defines as follows: “we might see the beginning of a use in space followed immediately by the beginning of another in a further space. Contracted sequences have occasionally reduced architecture’s three dimensions into one.”

I am still perching on the building in Tehran, looking through the gap between my feet. The building is empty, so is the street. If he had seen me on top of the building... I had red sneakers matched my red lips... but we lost each other forever. I am holding Franz Kafka’s *The Castle* in my hand. I read:

“I can’t think of any greater happiness than to be with you all the time, without interruption, endlessly, even though I feel that here in this world there’s no undisturbed place for our love, neither in the village nor anywhere else.”

I sway back;

“;

I pause.

I sway forth,

“and I dream of a grave, deep and narrow, where we could clasp each other in our arms as with iron bars, and I would hide my face in you and you would hide your face in me, and nobody would ever see us any more.”

I can stand up, 
go down the stairs, walking the streets without you, surrendering the city that swallowed you.

I can sway forth

and drop into the emptiness of a vast grave.

There..., 

I might find you.

I would hide my face in your hands forever in the absence of life.

But...

I still sit where I am sitting;

in the semicolon,

between the impossibility of embracing you in the place where life is,
and the possibility of embracing you where life is absent.

How far I can push back these two parts of the whole. How long I can stay on the edge of the building, watching it disappearing among thousands of similar ones?

I gaze at the semicolon;

the words are blurring;
the book is falling apart.

What is left is

me
and
the empty street,
the working cranes:

it’s my lingering, my pause,

my ____.
Impossible Love
An Installation of Kafka’s text - used in the project Impossible Books - as part of my midway evaluation PhD seminar.
Umeå School of Architecture - October 2014.
Part O2:

CUT

Site O2
Prison: An Impossible Institution
No Longer A Prison: An Architectural Question

Formula O2
On Love vs. Loyalty:
Amateurism and the ‘De-professionalization of the Reality’
Line & Cut
Fragile & Violent: Five Architectural Narrations
A Shadow that Left the Logic of Its Own Existence

Fiction O2
Al-Croquis: Lieutenant Fontaine
Prison
An Impossible Institution

If architecture is an art, then its minor mode is an essentially politicized art of escape – challenging our fundamental understanding of container and of being contained.¹

Jill Stoner (2012), Toward A Minor Architecture

I think it can never be inherent in the structure of things to guarantee the exercise of freedom. The guarantee of freedom is freedom.²

Michael Foucault

Prison epitomises an architectural condition of control, confinement, restriction and exclusion that maximises the disciplining of the bodies in it through spatial organisation. It could therefore be a performing ground for the investigation of subversive actions in a context where the mechanism of control and oppression is present in its extreme state and the possibilities for such actions are very few. As a symbolic space of impossibilities, it could be a paradoxical site where tactics of escaping, emancipation, breaking free – and thereby interrupting the dominant system – could still be played out. In the present text, prison is taken not as a space of punishment, but as a site to construct a minor architecture and political act of space-making that I call here “Interrupting Architecture.”

Interrupting architecture is acted and constructed in response to and with political engagement with the material and spatial relations of an institution

and its existing oppressive structure. Interrupting architecture is performed through immediate engagement rather than through mediums. Through this political engagement, this sort of architectural practice tries to interrupt the continuity of a dominant and oppressive power and disassemble its stage. In this interruption, even momentarily, the stage of the dominant power is “disassembled” and rebuilt through the critical inhabitation of a context. In line with such a discussion, prison becomes the prisoner’s performing ground. In this context, prison is no longer a stage for the oppressive power, but one for those oppressed by that very power; the prisoner disassembles and rebuilds the prison through the critical inhabitation of her cell and her (amateur) ways of creating an interrupting architecture.

**Cutting**

Breaking free could be read as forcing something to detach from what is usually the cause of restriction. Breaking in this sense has a violent connotation of material destruction. Breaking free from a material confinement requires an act; it suggests cutting, breaking, exploding, demolishing, burning, grinding. It suggests interaction with something rigid, inflexible, solid. The act of breaking becomes visible in fractures, cracks, dry noise, dust, irregular edges, unspecified shapes and forms. Yet cutting could suggest a stealthier, slower, and more architectural way of breaking (free). Cutting requires an extra object, a tool, an instrument, perhaps sharp enough to excavate, to destruct – to cut. Cutting is a slow encounter between two different materials, an antagonistic dialogue between them that creates change. Cutting suggests making; it could be understood as radical making, as it changes a rigid and inflexible structure.

Cutting stands for the material interruption. It can be understood as the act of architected when situated in a built space that creates another way of moving in space and engaging with the material world around us. Jill Stoner describes the minor architecture as an architecture created within the major architecture. In line with Stoner’s description, cutting is one method of executing this minor architecture carved out of an existing major architecture. Situating the act of cutting in a prison is to carve out a spatial narrative of emancipation within

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3. Martin, R. (2017). "The Demagogue Takes the Stage". Places. <https://placesjournal.org/article/the-demagogue-takes-the-stage/> Accessed 5 July 2017. In this text, Reinhold Martin discusses the politics of staging in Trump’s political speech act, he writing: "This circle, the call-and-response of executive speech acts performed upon an enchanted stage, cannot be broken simply by revealing the actors for who they are or by turning off the cameras. The stage itself must be disassembled and rebuilt in a democratic fashion."

the established and dominant rules of institutions whilst engaging with them. By cutting through the prison, the prisoner creates a minor architecture within the major architecture of the institution (prison).

Cutting, in the hands of a prisoner, is a death-and-life gamble to break free; a patient dialogue with the material prison; a negotiation, a research that engages the imagination; applies deep listening, touching, observing and looking at surrounding objects. It requires a long investigation of the active elements of the institution called prison. The prisoner imagines the relations between spaces and between spaces and people. She adds layers and layers of observation to her imagination. She listens constantly. Doors, windows or any opening that compromises the perfection of the containment beckons her to the world outside, to freedom. She eavesdrops, listening for words of hollowness, she longs to discover the hidden ones in the walls and ceiling and floor. “Escape modes include tapping, scratching, reading, writing, gazing, and pacing.” Thus taps becomes her words of greeting for the material around her, and cutting becomes the dialogue and the ultimate language of freedom: a whispering language.

Once the prisoner devises an escape plan, the world suddenly, paradoxically, becomes open and restrictive for her; she feels more imprisoned as she discovers the possibility of the impossible. This paradoxical perception of the world makes the act of cutting the only way to continue with life. Her active life shrinks into the periods of cutting; the rest becomes unbearable waiting.

The prisoner cuts her own world out of the prison that no one could arrest, break down, or destroy. She writes her own fiction that cancels out the fiction of the warder. She finds her characters in the walls, in the doors, in the windows and corridors. She finds voices that escape the objects; voices that arise from the dialogues among the elements and the things surrounding her. The prisoner writes his freedom. His cell is his page of writing; his imprisonment is his site of writing. Here, writing opens up a dream. When the prisoner draws lines on the wall to record the days of her imprisonment, she is in fact writing towards a future to come; a future that she is constructing.

The prisoner who starts executing her escape plan cuts out voids in an

apparently solid system. She turns those voids into her own stage of performing freedom.

**Loose Elements**

The film director Robert Bresson says: “When one is in prison, the most important thing is the door.”\(^6\) Thus a perfect prison has no door; it offers no way out. This, however, is instead a grave, in which the existence of a prisoner would be impossible. For a prisoner to exist there must be windows and doors. For a prison to be, it must, paradoxically, be permeable. Michael Foucault writes that “power is exercised only over free subjects.”\(^7\) As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri explain, that means that:

> all subjects have access to a margin of freedom, no matter how narrow that may be, which grounds their capacity to resist.\(^8\)

Thus, any sort of architecture that represents power is paradoxically permeable to that against which it is sealed. And those points of permeability are the chances of breaking free, of subversive actions. In other words, there are *loose elements* even in the most rigid and closed systems, and those loose elements are where subversive acts could start. In architecture, doors and windows are the legal elements of escape. They are *cut* in walls, where the architect dreams of leading the inhabitants – read prisoners, in the case of a prison – to enter and to exit the container, but only when they are allowed. Doors are not always open. Locked doors are a condition that guarantees the continuity of the containment. The architect cuts the wall, but she adds a plate (door) afterward to reconstruct an element that guarantees the continuity of the wall and its excluding and including function. On that wall, the door is a paradoxical element. On one hand, it is a device of control for the one in a position of control. On the other hand, that very device of control is an open-able element for the one who is under control; she imagines her escape through that door.

The door to Bresson’s prison in his movie *A Man Escaped* is, like in any other prison, a door of control, but paradoxically, it is the *weak* material element

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8. Ibid.
of prison. For Lieutenant Fontaine – the prisoner and the main character in the movie – the door is a promise to the world outside. Bresson introduces Fontaine to us as a natural-born escapee who is constantly checking the *loose elements* of the system to find a way out. The movie starts with the image of Fontaine captive in a car, being taken to the Nazi Montluc Prison during the occupation of France in the Second World War. The camera lingers on his hands, then on the door handle: a possibility for running away, an escape plan in the outset; alas, unsuccessful. The story unfolds in this failure, and dreaming of escape becomes his *impossible* mission to overcome. When he arrives in his cell, he soon identifies the door as the loose element and the starting point for the execution of his escape plan, to start his interrupting architecture.

When the interrupting architecture is practiced in an impossible site such as a prison, it involves the risky activity of hope for freedom. In a gamble between death and life, risk-taking in this context is accompanied with hope. As Rebecca Solnit says, hope is “to bet on the future, on your desires, on the possibility that an open heart and uncertainty is better than gloom and
safety; it is a ‘gamble’. To hope is dangerous,” she says, “for to live is to risk.”

Interrupting architecture practiced by Fontaine, the prisoner who escaped Montluc prison, is that gamble; it is to take a risk to be able to live. He constructs that hope through and with the material elements of a prison that has sentenced him to death.

Fontaine studies the door, its material and details before taking it apart. Stills from the movie A Man Escaped, Robert Bresson, 1954

Stoner writes in her Toward a Minor Architecture: “Architecture can no longer limit itself to the aesthetic pursuit of making buildings; it must now commit to a politics of selectively taking them apart.” ‘Selectively taking apart’ becomes a political decision; when, where and what to take apart? The answer could be found only by the duration of inhabiting a place. It could be found by being imminent to the moment and the existing relations, and discovering its latent urgencies, the potentials existing in the loose elements, by critically inhabiting the situation.

Describing the act of emancipation, Ernesto Laclau writes: “Emancipation is not, in this sense, an act of creation but instead of liberation of something which precedes the liberating act.” In Laclau’s term, on one hand, there is no emancipation without oppression, and on the other hand there should be

10. Ibid.
Fontaine is drawing a Section of the Existing Building in order to Build the Hooks. Stills from the movie *A Man Escaped*, Robert Bresson, 1954

Tests showed that both the hooks and loops would withstand my pulling.

Fontaine is Testing the Hook in His Cell. Stills from the movie *A Man Escaped*, Robert Bresson, 1954

The edge of the roof of our building had to be in line with the outer walls.
a free subject for the oppression to be inflicted upon. Following him then, a prisoner is a free subject, and that is why she could be imprisoned. On the other hand, the existence of the oppression, the prison, the closed cell, the warder’s gaze and the punishment, paradoxically create the ground for the act of liberation and emancipation. For a prisoner, there is no other choice but the act of emancipation.

Interrupting architecture enhances emancipation. It becomes the act of liberation, the act of taking apart, and Fontaine becomes a master of this architecture. He becomes the architect of his cell by taking its elements apart. He uses what is at hand – or what arbitrarily and accidentally arrives in his cell – to cut his environment. His language with surrounding objects is cutting: he either transforms the objects into devices for cutting or objects to be cut. Upon arriving in his cell, he determined that the door was the starting point for his plan. He commenced to remove door planks using a spoon. His tools of action are thus what Jean Genet called “humble objects”; artefacts that are generally not associated with mischief in the prison everyday, which allows him to work stealthily. His tools of action are simple: a spoon, a pen, a piece of paper, clothes, safety pins, and all such similar objects.

While working on various parts of his cell, he inscribes a different story inside the objects. Objects become something else, dangerous, revolutionary, destructive. But he tries to keep the appearance of those objects intact; retaining their humble appearance. He transforms the humble objects into rebellious and dissident things; dissident things do not look like what they really are. He disassembles the few items in his cell: the bed and the lamp casing. He shreds the blanket, the pillowcase, the clothes that he receives from the outside to make a makeshift rope that will assist his escape; he shreds the world around him to break into freedom. Simultaneously, he documents the process, drawing details of his escape plan, his failures. And when he leaves, he leaves the details behind for other prisoners to use as a manual for escape. This manual however is written not only on paper, but also by leaving a (hi)story for others to encourage them to embark on the same journey toward freedom.

**Oscillation and Section**

Fontaine’s work is a simultaneous act of destruction and construction; he

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constantly conceals what he destructs until the very last moment before freedom. His method of working is oscillation. He is mapping, drawing, measuring, negotiating and documenting his failures and successes. As the work of cutting proceeds, Fontaine needs to mask it and to restore the elements to their initial state to protect his escape plan. In this sense, the combination of destruction and construction is a fragile process, oscillating between freedom and death. Through this oscillation, the route to freedom is constructed.

The process of escaping is similar to making sections in architecture. When a prisoner cuts a door, a wall, a channel out, she is in fact making a section into the material and immaterial architecture of prison. She imagines the layers of walls, doors and spatial sequences of what has confined her; wall by wall, door by door, corridor by corridor, warder by warder. She draws her way out based on imagination, collected observations and her tapping on the material world that surrounds her. She makes an imaginary section to see herself both inside and outside, to be able to cut through the prison. Yet she always comes back to the cell before the section is entirely realised. She oscillates between imprisonment and liberation. Her cell both imprisons her and protects her against the risks of her escape plan. When she rehearses her escape plan, it’s a simultaneous experience of being outside and inside, free and captive. At every moment of her cutting, she is both out and in. As soon as the section is performed to its end, she is freed.
Cutting through an imagined building or site produces plans and sections in architectural drawing. Architects draw sections to render the relation between the adjacent spaces; the connection between the building and earth and sky, the building and the site. A section is an archaeological excavation to the future; giving an account of how the building is built and how the plot unfolds in it. A section offers a view that will never be experienced in the real life of a building. A section is an instrument for studying the experience of simultaneity. Simultaneity helps us discover and understand subtle and hidden relations between events and things, which we usually perceive as irrelevant and separated realities or binaries. A section in this sense could help us imagine alternatives for breaking free from the rigid and established forms of life and making different sense of the world.

Fontaine’s sections are not only an instrument of investigation, but also a literal cut, detaching the elements from their original function and institutional control. He performs the section by omitting the mediation of drawing and representation. By making a literal section in the material elements of the prison, Fontaine claims those elements and achieves control over them instead of being controlled by them. When he cuts the door, he decides when the door is open to him and when it is closed.

The artist and filmmaker Bill Viola describes the painting *The Dream of Pope Sergius* by Rogier van der Weyden as an example of simultaneity. In this painting, several stories that are actually sequential are coming about simultaneously. To achieve this, the painter has used a representational language of opening up the room (an interior) and juxtaposed it with what is happening out of the room (the exterior). The main character in the painting is both inside and outside the room. This reiteration makes it possible to observe inside a special moment and to see what happens afterwards at the same time. Two sequential plots are rendered simultaneous in one reference frame. Viola applies the same method in his video *Going Forth By Day*. He exposes the artificial staging of various separate scenes that makes a plot work sequentially, all in one single frame. Yet by opening up the interior in the manner of an architectural section, he lets time unfold in a continuous process and creates

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15. Ibid.
the condition of simultaneity. Divulging interiority while being exposed to exteriority locates the observer in between worlds.

The prisoner who is cutting out a door or digging a channel out is in this simultaneity: being in and out at the same time, free and captive. A prisoner cutting her way out, however, does not represent, but perform. Her architecture is performative. She experiences simultaneity through oscillation. Fontaine performs the section by moving through and over the doors, the walls, the courtyards, the corridors and the warders. His escape is a performative section. In Laclau’s words, in the process of emancipation there is a “chasm” or “a radical discontinuity” between the moment of emancipation and its prior domination.16 The prisoner who is escaping or constructing her way out is within this radical discontinuity. Even if she fails, her escape plan points to the imperfection of the dominant system. In any case, an authority will repair the escaping section; the destruction that the escape has left behind. Her material architecture is ephemeral. Her architecture disappears after her freedom. Yet it yields a priceless harvest; and its eternal materiality is the narrative of breaking free. That narrative remains forever in the stories we tell each other.


In this painting, several stories that are actually sequential are coming about simultaneously.

The Dream of Pope Sergius
Rogier van der Weyden, 1437-40
I walk in. A piano is playing amid the cheers; one takes over the other. The espresso machine hisses. Within a few seconds Adele’s voice prevails, filling the space:
‘I let it fall,
my heart,
And as it fell you rose to claim it,
It was dark
and I…’
The lyrics fade into the clink of spoons stirring in teacups, voices chatting, footsteps, chairs being pushed back and forth, strangers, familiar faces, sounds, gazes, smells, noises, words; then memories emerge: metal doors roaring, voices dropping in the middle of a cabin visit, fingers completing the last sentences on the glass. A history: This used to be a prison.
It is Café Markov – also known as Café Architect – which is only one part of the huge complex of Qasr Museum-Garden in Tehran, which was a prison not so long ago. It was only in 2003 that the prison was shut down, and in 2008 a decision was made to transform it into a museum and a recreational center for the public.\(^1\) Back in 1790, the original site was a royal palace; later Qasr Prison – meaning Palace Prison – was named after that palace.\(^2\) In 1927, when the numbers of political dissidents increased, the then-king Reza Shah Pahlavi ordered the construction of the first civil prison in Iran, and the Russian-Iranian architect Nikolai Markov designed it. Later, in 1953, a new building was added, needed at the prison site due to the increasing number of political prisoners.\(^3\) This building, which was constructed of concrete, is aesthetically different from the older brick buildings; it was constructed in concrete with a brutal form that corresponded materially to its function. It was located at a distance from the old prison on the north-east part of the site. Following the completion of the building, all of the political prisoners who had been exiled to different parts of the country were relocated to this prison. The building is still a reminder of the many big names – political activists and thinkers – who were imprisoned there until the 1979 Revolution.


Whilst the central watchtower and the original main door of the prison – which almost every Tehraner or former visitor to the prison remembers – are still standing now, the prison yard has been opened to the city, becoming an extension of it and acting as a lung for the densely built surrounding neighborhood. The cells that have been opened to the public exhibit a history of political prisoners who were imprisoned before the 1979 Revolution. After the revolution, both parts of Qasr Prison were used only for non-political prisoners.

Today, the carefully renovated prison with its old ochre brick walls and pointed arch windows that have been retrofitted with glass walls in dark brown coated metal frames and thin bracings and surrounded by sycamore and cypress trees, has become a hub for artists and thinkers and a city park and museum for a larger public to stroll around. The halls and corridors have become calm and relaxing spaces amidst columns of light and shadow. It is still silent, and the footsteps on the brick floor echo through space. The design and renovation of Qasr Park Museum was done by the architecture office Experimental Branch of Architecture, with the lead architect Arash Mozafari, in Tehran. The project, which has mainly dealt with the older parts of the prison – namely the brick buildings and the garden – makes an effort to play with the materials and aesthetics to produce a liberating space borne out of a state proposal and a building that was originally built to confine. The application of layers of light and transparent walls, light bracings, light hanging stairs, open spaces, offers

a contrast to the massive walls of the former prison, which was a solid and closed architectural structure. It is a humble approach to the renovation of the materials and spaces of a historical building with its brick walls, arches and wooden doors. The renovation has effectively lightened this heavy building, burdened as it was with a hefty history of fear and imprisonment, by means of delicate architectural design and renovation.

The building hosts various cultural activities, concerts, exhibitions, seminars and discussions in its different galleries, library, conference halls and cafés. It has achieved success, as it has attracted a wide range of the public since its inauguration. This complex is doubtless an asset to a highly populated and densely built city like Tehran, which suffers from a lack of open public spaces. And yet one cannot ignore the instrumentality of the whole project of transformation of a prison in this sociopolitical context. In other words, what does opening up a prison symbolically mean as a political performance, turning its spaces into a stage for strong political statements and even propaganda? These spaces hold a silent performance that simply says: There is no prisoner. The opened-up prison becomes a stage upon which the absence of prisoners could be a symbolic performance of a politically open society.

Opening up a prison that was originally designed to confine, hide, control and punish is a complicated task for architecture. In this project, turning the prison corridors into galleries and exhibition spaces mixed with various cultural and recreational activities while some of the cells of well-known political figures are kept intact detaches the prison from its present context and represents it as historical heritage. But how does the project operate politically? Does bringing light into the space of a prison with architectural means enable a hope for change even in the most restricting structure? Does it present possibilities for inducing liberating potential into a very closed space and its relations? Or does it carry a risk of depoliticization of the prison as an architectural example of control and the execution of power by aestheticizing its material, by situating it in the past and detaching it from its present political context?

If prison architecture as a modern institution is to move “beyond constructing the image of power to becoming an active power in itself,”\(^5\) in Keller Easterling’s terms, then what does an architectural commission that opens up

a prison to a public entail politically? Should it reverse the process of control and surveillance? Or does it maintain something of the architecture of the prison as a controlling factor, organizing human behavior through different activities – namely cultural and recreational? When a building stops serving its initial function and is planned to become a representation of its own story, exhibiting its own history, how can architecture continue contributing to this process? The modern prison became “an organizer of human behavior” and “an active power in itself” instead of representing the power.\(^6\) Based on the modern concept of prison, the State organizes human behavior not by punishment but by instruction, as Adrià Carbonell writes in his “Walls, Bars, Open Space.”\(^7\) This instruction is done by institutions that are organized around “the idea of discipline as a structuring force for morality.”\(^8\) Following such an argument, spatial instruments of modern institutions are powerful tools assisting the instruction for morality and reform. As Roger Paez writes in *Critical Prison Design*, such instruction, or such a correcting mechanism, became a new role for modern architecture that started with the prison project and continued on to hospitals, housing, factories and public space.\(^9\)

Prison is a place in which modern techniques of control are revealed in their unbridled operation. The architecture of prisons, then, is the most exemplary form of an architecture that maximizes control and normalizes human behavior. The instruction towards normalization and reform effectuated through architecture reveals the role of architecture in the reinforcement of a political agenda within a context by way of design. Looking at prisons as modern institutions that are oriented toward reform rather than punishment\(^10\) suggests that the transformation of Qasr Prison into a cultural and recreational center could also be read through the concept of reform. Regarding this transformation through design, one could ask how a museum and a cultural center constructed as the continuation or reform of a prison could perform; how does such a transformation instruct the public? How could the political meaning of such a transformation become part of the represented history.

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8. Ibid.
of this prison? The prison is itself re-formed into a cultural center and a museum of the history of political prisoners; a museum of the history of itself. Symbolically, the re-formed prison could stand for a reformed society, where the need for a prison has become something that existed in the past, as history.

Of the different parts of the prison complex, the concrete building that historically held political prisoners suggests a different story. The building is located far from the main entrance and seems somehow separate from the rest of the complex and the cultural activities take place there now. In the process of renovation and transformation of the whole complex, this prison building has been left almost fully intact. The cells, the torture rooms, the yard, and the visiting spaces are open to the public. Sound installations, historical documentation of the prisoners and the dark and empty cells with doors left ajar create the illusion that it is still a prison. Walking in the space is frightening; it feels like the function of the building as a prison has just been temporarily interrupted; as if the space could resume serving as a prison at any moment. Despite the older brick prison that tries to represent itself as a historical building and strongly assert what it is not, i.e. that it is no longer a prison, this building stands there, creating a moment of pause, a silence that triggers uncertainty. The Political Prison is still somehow a prison, the function of which is on hold. Rather than accentuating its change of use, it is exposed in this moment of emptiness, as though the prisoners have only just left.
The juxtaposition of the two buildings, with their almost contrasting qualities on a single site could lead us into another phase of this project that I would like to use to expand the discussion of architecture. It could be interesting to appropriate this project as a platform for expanding architectural work beyond the act of design and construction. In other words, that phase of the process when the architect is still absent and the architecture design in its disciplinary connotation has not yet started is not necessarily external to architectural work. The preparation phase of the prison site, dealing with various factors, relations, elements of the site in order to host a new function, could be understood as a work of architecture, although not undertaken by architects. This phase could be read as preparing the stage for architecture work, and thereby – in this very project – the construction of a political statement. I would like to discuss this preparation phase, which is mostly absent from the architectural design narratives, in order to arrive at the performative aspects of the work of architecture.

Prior to opening up the prison site for architectural design commission, there is the hidden process of evacuation, which is itself a spatial question of organization and design. It involves the design of infrastructure and sequences of movement. The call for an architectural proposal for an evacuated prison immediately summons an image of an in-between phase: an empty prison with unlocked doors, empty cells, no prisoner, no warder. In the moment of
evacuation, architecture becomes a stage that gradually arrives at a moment of silence. Suddenly, the prison becomes a point of departure. Doors open – not to freedom, but to another prison. After the dislocation, what is left is an empty container that has lost the bodies upon which control and confinement was once imposed. At this moment, architecture is suddenly unburdened from its controlling and disciplining mechanism. It suddenly becomes a container that could host any other activity. It manifests a chasm.

The transformation of the prison from a closed and controlled space into a public space obviously requires detailed planning and decision making for relocation, transportation, and evacuation, or more generally, the design of an infrastructural process for this transformation. In this context, understanding architectural work as an act of performance brings the design of the sequences of actions – besides designing the spaces in which those actions happen – into the core of the work of architecture. All of this happens in the spaces of the prison, in its corridors, cells, yards and administrative offices. The sequences through which all this work is carried out are spatial performances that happen behind the scenes of the real performance; i.e. architectural design and renovation of the building in the project of Qasr Museum-Garden.

Similar to architecture that designs sequences of movements and pauses in space, this dislocation could also be understood as an architecture that forces, controls, captivates and moves in different sequences. The story itself, the moving of the disciplined bodies from one prison to another, could be an act of architecture through evacuation. If architecture creates sequences of movements in space and creates connections or disconnections between humans and nonhuman things, then the act of evacuation could be read as an architectural act that transforms a space of control into an empty space or a moment of total silence. This silence could be filled with various voices, sounds, noises, or it can be kept intact. Each architectural decision in this context directs the project toward a different political statement that tells us what it could mean when a prison is no longer a prison.
Formula O2

- On Love vs. Loyalty: Amateurism and the ‘De-professionalization of the Reality’
- Line & Cut
- Fragile & Violent: Five Architectural Narrations
- A Shadow that Left the Logic of Its Own Existence
On Love vs. Loyalty

Amateurism and the ‘De-professionalization of the Reality’¹

To reconnect with the “radicality of love”² is to cherish its complexity, to risk enduring its pain of falling, and to inhabit its risk of unknowingness. It is to encounter it as a “fatal and unexpected crack in the world”³ and to make a decision as to how to pass through that crack. Despite what institutional forms of love do to simplify its complexity, to ease its creative hardship, to normalise and regulate it, to tame it through stabilisation, the political concept of love is an unfinished work, a continuous construction that holds ambiguity as a potential at its core. A political concept of love turns it into something that cannot be regulated or controlled by institutional systems of morality, regulations, or instructions, because it is what makes a crack in those systems; it problematises them, it cuts through them violently. The political concept of love puts forth the force of invention; to love radically is to reinvent life violently and delicately. And by living that life, to reinvent the world where this life is being lived. As Rosanna Warren writes, “As Rimbaud sought to reinvent love, he reinvented writing – and violently”.⁴

The one in love is an inventor, a constructor, a composer who always works towards the outside of the institution, towards the other, “the stranger”, “the farthest”, and “the alterity”. In contrast to love, loyalty – a concept required by institutions – is to guarantee the stability of their terms and conditions, and to

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form ethics that constantly feed and protect that stability. The loyal character, favoured by such institutional ethics, is a conservative that indisputably follows the fixed values of institutions and as a reward, avoids the risk of exile, dismissal and failure. The antidote to this institutional character is the one in love. The one in love embraces the risk of falling, in search of the unknown. As Ronald J. Pelias writes in his *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic and Daily Life*, “The heart pushes the self forward to places it does not belong.” Despite loyalty that contains the exhausted or “corrupt” form of institutional love, love as an ontological concept and a revolutionary force questions conventions, criticises the establishment and constructs new relations. To understand love in this manner is to understand it as a political work, a political act.

In this text, the two characters of the lover and the loyal represent the amateur and the professional. The reason I insist on putting loyalty and love at odds with one another is to arrive at this slippery, unstable and ambiguous ground, where love could work as a political and dissenting force instead of conforming to the existing power relations; where it could construct other ways of acting within institutions and dealing with issues such as disciplines and professionalism. As is apparent in its etymology, the *amateur*, as a lover in the professional world, examines love as a critical force that challenges that world. To replace loyalty with love then is to valorise criticality over conformism. It is to “de-professionalize” the professional world.

**Love as the Act of Falling and the Act of Construction**

The concept of love in the construction of the amateur has its significance in two terms: in one, as a revolutionary force and a violent force of rupture, and in the other, as relating to the responsibility and taking the risk of stepping out of where one feels at home into “exile” and inhabiting that exile. The former is the event of falling in love, and the latter is the inhabitation of love. To inhabit love is to continue to construct the subject of lover and the space of encounter with the other. One is an event, and the other is the construction of the ground achieved from that event. It is both an interruption – a cut in an existing structure – and the inhabitation of that cut. It is a process of breaking down and constructing anew. The two constantly work together. In the construction of the amateur character,

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falling in love is as important as reconstructing the moment of falling again and again and again, and thereby constructing a performing ground for amateurism.

The event of love is accompanied by the act of falling: a break from the stability of the ground on which one stands, the risk of letting go of a closed subject, a fixed identity, and of becoming an subject that is unfinished, broken and under construction. To understand love as a force of rupture, as what cuts through the isolated closed worlds, is to reconnect to its radicality as a revolutionary force. It is the radicality of love that makes it different from habits of care. Although caring is part of the act of love, I prefer to distinguish between them to arrive at the revolutionary and violent force of love. Understanding love as the act of falling prevents love from becoming a habit and keeps it as an event. As Srećko Horvat says in his *Radicality of Love*, “The worst thing that can happen to love is habit”. Because when it becomes a habit, it concedes to the sameness, repetition and stops “reinventing”. The understanding of love as habit eradicates its critical potential in subjectivation of the lover as an unfinished subject. As an event, falling in love is singular and specific to that encounter, and its revolutionary potential lays in the intensity of that unique moment. Its specificity and singularity, together with its force of rupture and its criticality as it transforms the lover into a new subject, is what makes it political.

The act of falling in the formation of the amateur is the moment at which one steps out of the routine of work, or when one stands up “to speak to power”, as Edward Said puts it. It is a moment when the safe ground of everyday habit is suddenly shaken, and from then on every step is accompanied with taking risk. The amateur who steps out of that comfort zone suddenly lets go of her power position, as a professional and as an expert, and falls into becoming a beginner, encountering an other world.

The event of falling in love cuts the lover’s internal and isolated world open to the outside. When this closed world is cut open, she starts inhabiting the space between herself and the other. It is in this space that the one in love reconstructs herself through the act of love. She takes the risk of encountering the other and constructs the space of the encounter by moving toward the other. She thereby

9. The discussion of violence and fragility exposes how caring is part of love. I prefer to use fragility in lieu of care, as there is risk in fragility that is absent from care.
becomes an amateur maker of the new, strange, ungraspable worlds that were once unimaginable, impossible, or the most distant and invisible. While constructing the new world, she becomes anew; she becomes a new subject. In this way, the amateur is the unfinished subject; a disloyal character who takes the risk of letting go of her professional closed and finished subject. Yet she remains in the world of professionals. She still performs on the chatty stage of professionals. However, after falling from the power position of being a professional, she utters her role in a stuttering language on that stage. Her stutter echoes in the neat professional world. It interrupts the polished language of experts. She stutters like a lover.

In the world of the professionals, there are loyal characters who follow instructions, who speak the language of experts, who are rewarded for staying loyal to the institution, to the profession, to confirm its power relations. The conditions of loyalty are predefined; loyalty comes before the subject. As a predefined and closed condition, loyalty is based on a compulsory commitment. Furthermore, as loyalty depends on certain subjectivities and roles, it works towards the formation of fixed identities, subjects and its consequent exclusive institutions, such as profession, family, race and nation, that seek out similarity and sameness instead of reaching for the other.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri situate their discussion of love in the “common” to problematise the image of love advocated by the contemporary ideology of neoliberal capitalism, in isolated, commercial and institutional forms limited to closed and exclusive circles of family, couples, and embracing the similar. They write:

In fact what passes for love today in ordinary discourse and popular culture is predominantly its corrupt forms. The primary locus of this corruption is the shift in love from the common to the same, that is from the production of the common to a repetition of the same or a process of unification. What distinguishes the beneficial forms of love instead is the constant interplay between the common and singularities.12

While professionals stay loyal to their profession and its institutions and thereby produce a group of similar people using similar language, the amateur stands out

as a lover, singularly questioning loyalty and stepping out toward the unknown. Love for the amateur is labour; it is “work”, as Rainer Maria Rilke puts it.\(^{13}\) However, it is work not limited to a profession, but formed through apprenticeship, learned by practicing, by making, by experimentation that is accompanied by the risk of failure, the joy of discovery and the invention without mandate. For Edward Said, amateurism is “an activity that is fuelled by care and affection rather than by profit and selfish, narrow specialization.”\(^{14}\) The amateur thus puts care and affection at the heart of what she experiments with. In his discussion of amateur and professional, Said appoints the intellectual the responsibility of becoming an amateur. This intellectual amateur could “transform the merely professional routine most of us go through into something much more lively and radical.”\(^{15}\)

**Amateur Poets, Professional Lovers**

In one of her poems, the Chinese migrant worker poet Wu Xia translates her “brutalizing experience of modernity”, her 14 hours of factory work, into poetry. Through this poem she talks to the “beneficiaries of her labour”\(^{16}\), writing:

I want to press the straps flat
so they won’t dig into your shoulders when you wear it
and then press up from the waist
a lovely waist
where someone can lay a fine hand
and on the tree-shaded lane
caress a quiet kind of love
last I’ll smooth the dress out
to iron the pleats to equal widths
so you can sit by a lake or on a grassy lawn
and wait for a breeze
like a flower.\(^{17}\)

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The poem, which is written in a benevolent tone, also points to the insensitivity as well as the complicity of the world with the workers’ inhumane situation in China. Wu Xia is one of many migrant worker poets, who, as Megan Walsh writes, “sublimate 14-hour shifts on assembly lines into lines of poetry.” These workers – who spend more than half of their lifetimes inside factories, mines or other harsh working environments, are deprived of many human rights and receive meagre wages – use their exploited work conditions to produce something else that not only has the potential to make their voices heard, but also gives them power over their lives and deprivation, through poetry. As simple workers who engage in a highly cultural activity such as poetry, they also question the division between cultured and non-cultured – a social division common in Chinese society – and bring forth a serious position of the amateur as poet into the dry noise and homogenising structure of a factory. Their poetry is a stutter that interrupts the repetitive flow of capitalist production. It interrupts the flow of the assembly line.

Their poetry is a mixture of a very brutal system and the fragile language of poetry, an “amalgam of extremes”, in Eleanor Goodman’s words. By publishing their poems online via their phones in between shifts, they stage themselves as amateur poets through this amalgam of extremes. Their amateurism derives from a lost hope for a better life, yet a love for poetry that makes them stand against a brutal capitalist economy. While their poetry might not effectuate an immediate change, it exposes the fragility of being a human in an extremely brutal environment and the paradoxical power of that fragility. Their language of poetry cuts the long hours of harsh labour.

The example of Chinese worker poets exposes the importance of the amateur as a serious and political occupation, undertaken not as a hobby or a pastime, but as what could cut through violent working conditions. Amateurism could be understood as a fictional occupation that helps one make ruptures in the tedious work that one performs, even in the most restrictive of environments. It is a liberating activity that one might undertake to give oneself some spaces of freedom within a highly demanding situation where there are only the fewest possibilities of doing things differently. It is in this way that I would like to promote

19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
amateurism for arriving at a more dissenting and at the same time empowering mode of performing differently within the professional world.

Professional work originates from institutions of control, training and regulations, and is based on a body of theoretical knowledge. Amateur is a challenge of professional, and common alternative formulations are unprofessional, non-professional, dilettante, dabbler, as well as the vernacular pastime and hobby. These terms, used in various contexts as a critical response to professionalism, somehow point to the outside of profession and its limits, and in one way or another breaks from its disciplinary boundaries. These terms are usually assigned to the work done by untrained individuals, who “lack attachment to a specific practice” and are not committed to any specific field. They are also associated with traditional or popular culture and/or pastimes, unpaid hobbies that are undertaken in spare time. The politics of these activities are about turning consumers into producers through the attainment of agency.

I argue that such an understanding of amateurism is not enough. Without devaluing such a perception of amateurism, assigning amateurism merely to pastime activities, denies its subversive potential, and at the same time limits it to a small, privileged group with sufficient income and the resulting access to free time. Amateurism as the political work of love, however, is what should be undertaken within the work one does as an occupation, and within one’s profession. Promoting amateurism in such a way brings it along with the risk of dismissal, exile, letting go of safety, stability, and rewards in search of the unknown. It is accompanied with the risk of falling.

My discussion of amateurism, then, does not lie in the separation between amateurism and professionalism, but it originates from their encounter, where the professional breaks from the limits and regulations of her profession and becomes an amateur within that profession. This is what turns an amateur into a political performer. It is an occupation that brings back the fragility of being human to the mostly dry and apathetic ethics of professionalism – the fragility of being prone to failure. Amateurism as I use it arises from the constraints of the profession. Therefore, as a liberating and subversive practice, it should address

22. Ibid. p. 309.
those very constraints by acting within and upon the limits and established rules of a profession. Perhaps one should become a professional amateur who, as Said says, is:

“[…] moved not by profit or reward but by love for and unquenchable interest in the larger picture, in making connections across lines and barriers, in refusing to be tied down to a specialty, in caring for ideas and values despite the restriction of a profession.”

In his very inspiring discussion about the formation of the intellectual, Said describes the intellectual as an amateur rather than a professional. For him, an intellectual should be relatively independent and pursue the attitude of an amateur. In criticising modern professionalism, however, Said does not propose a naïve denial of the influence of professionalism in advancing different fields, but attempts to recognise the character of an intellectual within the world of professionalism who does not stay loyal to its terms and conditions, but pushes herself into a condition of exile. He argues that the amateur should “represent” – and I add construct – “different values and prerogatives” within the world of professionalism. These values are different from the required loyalty and conformism to profession and disciplinary knowledge.

In his “In Defense of Amateur”, Stan Brakhage describes the amateur as “at home” anywhere he works, while Said describes the amateur as an intellectual who is always in exile – even in her own “home” – and hence struggling with joyful difficulties to make sense of the new world of exile. Being in exile retains the notion of the distance from “home”, and of the struggle of making sense of that distance while inhabiting it. For Rilke, this distance is the necessary dimension for arriving at togetherness, as he says one should love the distance between. Rilke describes this distance as being alone. Concerning amateurism, this distance could be defined as a distance from our certainty and comfort zone – Said’s constant state of exile.

Danilo Dolci, the Italian sociologist and trained architect “whose critical practice

24. Ibid. p. 82.
took the form of making community by resisting the government and mafia alike”, could be understood as one such position of being an amateur in one’s own profession. In the introduction to Dolci’s Report from Palermo, Aldous Huxley describes the author in a manner similar to how Said presents the intellectual and the amateur. For Huxley, he is:

“capable of surpassing the limited domain of his own specialized knowledge, and able to turn his capacity for dialogue with other disciplines into a program of social action and benefit, while simultaneously putting his technical knowledge to work in partnership with empathy and compassion.”

Huxley describes such a character as someone who can make the best of “the world of the head no less than the world of the heart”. Such an opening up of the professional world of achievements and success into a space of encounter that is more challenging than a “dialogue” is the work of the amateur in one’s own profession. As Andy Merrifield writes in his The Amateur: The Pleasure of Doing What You Love, “the amateur is both a real and an imagined category – somebody who does exist today, but also someone who ought to exist.” Amateurs ought to exist within the professional world and risk doing things with their professions that would open it up to the unknown.

As I discuss in the text “Standing Still”, one example of such practice of amateurism in one’s own profession is the Standing Man of Gezi Park movement. The original standing man, who was a choreographer, doesn’t perform or choreograph professionally in the square; what he does is a part of his political engagement. By blurring the borders between professionalism and amateurism, he uses the skills of his profession outside of performance spaces and becomes an amateur performer by standing still in the square. He risks his life by stepping out of his safe professional space.

The Politics of Amateur Aesthetics

In the professional disciplinary world, where things are made by experts, the high quality, precision, and responding to the ins and outs of a discipline
define the quality of a work and its aesthetics. This criterion of quality is itself determined by the professional world and the language of experts. The aesthetics of amateurism as the counterpart of the professional, as I advocate here, are not synonymous with low quality and haste, but work through the politics of questioning the expert quality tick box. I suggest that amateur aesthetics should question the established professional world by bringing in voices and ways of doing things that are excluded from the language of experts. In his discussion of the amateur, Merrifield mentions thinkers such as Franz Kafka, Edward Said, Hanna Arendt and Dostoevsky, among others, describing them as thinkers, who “de-professionalized reality” through their works. Their work, however, is not associated with low quality, but with minor modes of performing. One way of de-professionalizing reality is by activating the minor modes of practice. Rather than low quality, amateur aesthetics should be low-resolution; instead of staging an expert way of doing things, it should expose the many other possibilities of doing things with love, crowding the neat aesthetics of professionalism with many voices and noises.

In this thesis, amateurism has been one of the main characteristics of making to respond to the research questions. One way of experimenting with the amateur aesthetics in this thesis has been by working with the risk and fragility of the concept of amateur. Among many experiments in this thesis, the production of the book PAUSE, CUTE, FO(O)LD, FLY for my midway evaluation PhD seminar in October 2014, could describe such an approach to amateurism. The book was made to experiment with the aesthetics of amateurism, a performing ground through which amateurism could be performed. Richard Sennett describes craftsmanship as the labour of love. He describes the craftsman as someone who is “dedicated to good work for its own sake” and who “exemplifies the special human condition of being engaged” instead of going about life without dedication. Such an approach to craft was at the core when the book was made.

The book consisted of papers with various textures, colours, materials, and thicknesses, bound or sewn together with a red thread. The cover of the book was closed; in order to read the book, the reader had to cut it open. Each book took me one and a half days to make, and it was sent to the readers in a package.

that included a pair of scissors, with which the reader could cut it open. In this way, the book became a performing ground where the encounter with the reader became possible; it was made to connect to the reader not only through the act of reading, but also through the act of making.\footnote{Gauntlett, D. (2011). \textit{Making is Connecting: The social meaning of creativity, from DIY and knitting to YouTube and Web 2.0.} Cambridge & Malden: Polity Press.} Paying attention to the details, working with fragile material, careful binding, was a comprehensive effort not only to print a book, but also to craft it. While it was made with care and through a fragile process, the reader was asked to cut it, destroy it, to be able to read it. Through this experiment, the aesthetics of amateurism were performed through the combination of fragility and violence, creation and rupture.

The aesthetic of amateurism could be a field for further investigation, especially relating to the shift of architects to social and political activists. In these sorts of practices of architecture, the effort is to resist the language of spectacular and major architecture, but it might risk falling into a mere gesture of amateurism, of looking “cheap”, to express that the work has arisen from grassroots movements, with the amateur, non-architect community members as the main actors in the formation of architectural spaces. But do such aesthetics really have the potential to make the language of major architecture stutter? Do cheap aesthetics speak the language of love in amateurism, or do we need to develop a different language that, whilst retaining the fragility of being an amateur, stands against the establishment of major architecture and turns that fragility into a stuttering force – to craft a “well-made” architecture that holds chaos inside?

\footnote{On page 2 of this book, Gauntlett discusses that making things in the world is a way of connecting to others. He explains this in three principles: “Making is connecting because you have to connect things together (materials, ideas, or both) to make something new. Making is connecting because acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people. And making is connecting because through making things and sharing them in the world we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environments.”}
Making the Book Pause, CUTЄ, FO(0)L+D, FLY - 2014.
Instruction for how to read the Book Pause, CUTE, FO(O)L+D, FLY - 2014.

The Book Pause, CUTE, FO(O)L+D, FLY - A closed book- in order to read the book, the reader has to cut it open.
“Line and Cut” exposes the necessity of acting with delicacy when we destruct, cut, or demolish things. How do we support and protect the things in vicinity of our target when we apply violent tools?

In this experiment with Franz Kafka’s text, used before in “The Impossible Books”, the semicolon between the impossible love on the ground and possible love under the ground is turned into a line, cut between the two worlds. The line cuts open a new world, a plane for performing beyond the existing impossibilities, a performing ground that in its fragile materiality shows us the fragility of constructing such worlds and acting on them.
I can't think of any greater happiness than to be with you all the time, without interruption, endlessly, even though I feel that here in this world there's no undisturbed place for our love, neither in the village nor anywhere else;

and I dream of a grave, deep and narrow, where we could clasp each other in our arms as with clamps, and I would hide my face in you and you would hide your face in me, and nobody would ever see us any more.
Violence can also be a crucial, necessary response, often as a kind of boomerang effect, redirecting the violence of domination that has been deposited in our bones to strike back at the power that originated it. But such violence too is merely reactive and creates nothing. We need to educate these spontaneous reactions, transforming refusal into resistance and violence into the use of force. The former in each case is an immediate response, whereas the latter results from a confrontation with reality and training of our political instincts and habits, our imaginations and desires.¹

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, Commonwealth

The question of violence is a difficult one, and it requires thorough and in-depth investigation in relation to various fields and sociopolitical contexts. Given the contemporary status of the world, violence could be studied through a broad spectrum of political views as well as their instruments, which are becoming increasingly complicated with the advance of science and technology, and paradoxically, increasingly easier to be inflicted. Additionally, the implementation of pure violence as a method of expressing one’s dissent and the transformation of everyday devices into instruments of war and terror have also become commonplace. The devices of violence vary from high-tech robots and remote-controlled weapons to the use of simple vehicles for mass murder. Regardless of whether they are high- or low-tech, there is one thing common to all various forms of violence: imprecision, arbitrariness and the use of both to generate chaos and fear.

As the modus operandi of violence, arbitrariness imposes destruction not only on its target, but also on the target’s collateral areas. As a result, anyone could become a random victim of a planned act of violence, regardless of whether s/he was the target. The effective target usually extends beyond what was planned. This is why violence can create extreme fear. Yet, as Negri and Hardt write in the opening quote of this text, the application of violence becomes crucial in various situations. The important question is how we could remove the arbitrary operation of violence that distinguishes it from the political and turn it into a generative political force?

One important issue in the discussion of violence is its relation to power, which I also would like to relate to the question of the political. Hannah Arendt not only makes a distinction between power and violence, but also puts them at odds. She writes: “Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy”. Following Arendt’s view, I argue that when the stability of the dominant power is threatened, it uses violence to create a condition of fear and chaos, to deter any further threats to the power. This violence arises from insecurity and the risk of losing that very power. Therefore, the application of violence as a flagrant manifestation of power creates a chaos that ironically exposes its instability.

In this sense, inflicted violence as a means of terror or a potential tool of deterrence cancels out any possibility for the political to take shape. Although the decision to implement violence is a political one, during its implementation the project of the political is frozen. The moment of violence, as a rupture in the political, social and cultural, could be conceptualised, imagined and materialised in forms of blast wave, explosion, dust, and fire. In this moment, even fear – which is the “side-effect” of violence – is removed due to the extreme emotional and material shock. After the moment of inflicted violence, fear is experienced in forms of loss, debris, ruin, mess, mass and blood.

In his “Benjamin’s Divine Violence: Unjustifiable Justice”, Luis Guzmán writes:

3. Ibid. p. 08.
If one believes that violence is necessary to overcome certain situations of oppression and injustice on Earth, and yet that it is never justifiable (since as a means to an end its justification is dependent on a specific end that cannot avoid, to preserve itself, reproducing the conditions that were to be eliminated), then one finds oneself in a paradox. Walter Benjamin’s concept of divine violence is an attempt at working through this paradox.4

In his “Critique of Violence”, Walter Benjamin situates violence in relation to law and justice, discussing violence as a means to a just or an unjust end.5 As he explains, the “divine violence” as “a nonviolent, pure or unalloyed violence”6, is a sort of violence to bring justice in the face of an unjust system that could interrupt the violence of “law-preserving” and “law-constituting”7 violence, or police violence. Divine violence, as Sami Khatib explains in his “Towards a Politics of ‘Pure Means’: Walter Benjamin and the Question of Violence”, could be understood in the context of revolutionary politics that acts “outside and beyond of the law” and that could create justice by means of “non-legal violence”.8 Divine violence understood as an interrupting violence can suspend the institutional use of violence.9

In relation to Benjamin’s concept of “divine violence” and in line with Negri and Hardt’s discussion of turning violence to force, what I suggest here is the combination of violence with fragility. I suggest this hybrid to avoid arbitrariness in violence on one hand and to remain a force for overcoming oppression on the other. Fragility, when applied in an action, operates in

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. In his reading of Walter Benjamin’s Critique of Violence, Sami Khatib writes: “For Benjamin, it was clear that there was something fundamentally “rotten in the law” (SW 1, 242) – be it the law of monarchy, western democracy or autocratic regimes. The violence inherent to the law contradicts itself since law enforcement – e.g. the police – always blurs the line between law-preserving and law-making or law-constituting (rechtsetzende) violence. And vice versa, most attempts to break the law and its supporting powers lead to the establishment of a new law.”
8. Ibid.
contrast to the arbitrary operation of violence. Despite violence, fragility is not a spontaneous reaction, but is associated with the inhabitation of a situation and the duration of struggling and experimenting with that situation. In this sense, I suggest that the application of fragility in combination with violence creates an incompatible hybrid that, while maintaining the potential force in violence, could eliminate its arbitrariness. On the other hand, in this hybrid, fragility that is usually associated with weakness, vulnerability and inferiority could paradoxically work as a strong force. The example of the human shield in street politics and in revolts could be read as the best example of such discussion, where fragile human bodies confronting police violence become a powerful tool that blocks or delays the execution of violence. At the same time, exposing one’s body to pure violence is a violent act itself, as in the story of the Woman in Red in the Gezi Park Movement, discussed in the chapter “Standing Still”. She stood fragiley against the teargas, and this also exposed the power of fragility in confronting and exposing police violence.

In the development of CUT as one of the interrupting tactics, violence is a necessary concept to be investigated. As in the example of Fontaine and the execution of his escape plan in the prison, violence, or material violence, has been at the core of cutting through the impermeable prison walls and its controlling system. However, his application of violence has been intertwined with a fragile process, acting at various paces, paying close attention, and remaining sensitive to the implications of violence.

Architecture is the simultaneous act of destruction and construction. It is a violent act of imposing a structure – and thereby new relations – on a site and dismantling the existing ones. Material architecture takes place by digging the ground, introducing new material to the site, changing its ecology and the lives of its inhabitants by implementing new infrastructure. The violence is not only inflicted through material manipulation of the site, but also through political and social structures; partitioning the social context and imposing rules of exclusion and inclusion. Leopold Lambert argues that architecture creates an inside and an outside and that is how it enacts violence; it includes
some and protects those who have access to the interior. Furthermore, as a built structure, it could also become an instrument for inflicting violence. In the introduction to the *Assemblage 20 on Violence Space*, Mark Wigley writes that: “there is no space without violence and no violence that is not spatial.” Teresa Stoppani also discusses violence as the nature of design and architecture, writing: “Architecture, as a perturbation of spatial conditions, is an intrinsically violent act. Its violence is the product of a design (a project).” Yet perhaps the question is whether such an intrinsic element and the act of violence in architecture – both in the act of design and the execution of such a design – can be transformed into a constructive force? A force through which other forms of performing grounds could be prepared and where minor voices could speak, or the opposing elements such as insiders and outsiders – referring to Lambert’s description of architecture violence – could encounter one another, rather than being separated?

In an effort to investigate such questions and expose the incompatible combination of fragility and violence, as well as stage its tensions as political force, I have experimented with various forms of writing and narration in the following texts. The following texts are all situated in architectural sites, or they address a work of architecture that is associated with violence in one way or another. They are written in the tension and the encounter of fragility and violence.

13. **Route 08: Could the violent act of partitioning, turn the partitions into grounds for encountering the opposing forces?**
One- War


Antonio Negri & Michael Hardt

It was all due to war. Those dressings over the not-yet-wounded parts of the city. That strange architectural narrative that staged the war to whisper its told and untold violent stories in every corner. War had blown a new narrative over the city, a white dust over our imagination. War had given us a new compass for navigating our lives, and a new guidebook by which to reorganise our life sequences. The omnipresent stories of concrete arches, sandbags, window tape, undergrounds, basements, sirens and constant diggings were there to warn us of a looming wound, a looming loss, and thereby keep that wound at bay, protecting the fragile human bodies by retrofitting the fragile material world around them. The parable of the stories of war was how violence and fragility intermingled, residing side by side in every element around us. And the dressing architecture was to stop those fragile elements from violating lives of people when manipulated by the operation of war.

War reconstructed the whole city, as well as us. It invited us to appreciate the underground, the basements and their seemingly safe corners, the darkness soothing our fears, the cramped rooms keeping us close to each other. It changed how we viewed material value. Glass was one thing to avoid for its violent response to violence, for its fragility and hypersensitivity to any blast wave – it shrieks and explodes. In contrast to glass, the heavy massive concrete columns deep under the ground, with their coarse yet tender texture, were the last guardians of our fragile bodies. Or we naively wanted to trust their engineering to perform efficiently against tension.

War was telling us stories through its sudden or gradual appearance in our surrounding sites. One site of war’s narratives was the school, where childhood, future, play, hope, and at the same time the fear of losing them all, had created a complicated plot. The story of war was materialised in sandbags blocking
the ground floor windows, tapes crossing over glasses, and the two huge metal horizontal doors, leading to a labyrinthine underground. The construction of the underground, under the yard, started when war was drawing nearer to us with the passing of hours. When the underground was finally there, with its two huge horizontal metal doors, war was close enough; even too close.

Those two doors drastically changed the rules of our play and the sound of our footsteps while running in the yard. The doors were openings into a mysterious space, below the playground, a counter-story of the upper playground. At the time of red sirens, upon the opening of metal doors, when the daylight suddenly poured down the concrete stairs, those stories were revealing themselves. In those moments the world flipped, and we suddenly found ourselves in an under-playground.

There under the ground was a transition world, and you never knew what the upper-ground would look like when you returned to the yard. And on that morning, like the previous times, when the siren roared, and the doors were unlatched, and the whole school poured into the air-raid shelter, and we waited for that pow while giggling and whispering. I suddenly noticed her under the gleam of a spotlight in oversized, loose clothes; hollow eyes looking nowhere.

The night before, an airstrike had struck the neighbourhood where she lived. Her house had been partially destroyed, while she and her family had been taking refuge at the end of the yard. War had cut the house into two pieces, making a section of their house before their eyes. Only ten metres from death, they had survived, unlike others who were inadvertently closer to the target area. That very night, I – living in the same neighbourhood – had felt the same bombardment as a blast wave that blew back my clothes on my body; it had shook the house strongly, and a piece of glittering glass had dropped from the chandelier. Perhaps those in more remote areas just heard a pow and those further away, only silence.

That morning she had to come to school in whatever clothes they had found in the debris of their house. The looseness of her clothes has stayed in my mind since; the gap between her body and clothes was actually a representation of the fragile space in between life and death in the time of war. And how might a bomb, the most clumsily violent instrument of war, recognise such a delicate distance? The target that night was a nearby military field. It resonated far and afflicted many ordinary citizens; the military field remained intact.
In the frame above is our house; a war-affected house. It manifests the interior of the apartment block, exactly the way a section does in architectural drawing. The tiny colourful pieces of life that survived are covered with dust from the violent destruction of the house. Mixed pieces of grey and colourful material and objects, jagged openings and hanging armatures stage the aesthetic of architecture produced by war. Very much like architecture, war produces new landscapes, but war does it through destruction. Its destructive character operates in an arbitrary system of violence. And its arbitrariness is an inherent part of designing its instruments and strategies, to maximise the violence and to terrorise not only its target, but also its laterals. Despite its advanced technology that can act fragilely, fragility has no place in war’s destructive operations, and as a result, the domain of its terror expands clumsily.
Once upon a time, there was a lemon tree. A lemon tree requires lots and lots of water. If you forget to water it, it will still stand on that corner, beautiful and fresh. But as soon as you remember and water it, it starts to shed leaves. And it started to shed leaves. Day after day, night after night. My days were ruined by the sound of leaves hitting the ground. It was deafening. I asked her to stop. She never did and it took almost two weeks until she lost all her leaves and then stopped there – naked in the sun, studying her shadow.
To cushion a site of demolition is to protect its surroundings from the violence of a built structure about to be demolished. It is a way of responding to the material violence when the structure is destroyed, blown up, falls into pieces, becomes pieces of arbitrary and random mediums of violence, of hurt. To cushion a building is to protect it from the violence of the outside; it is to reinforce it against its own vulnerability. To protect a building with sandbags during the war is to respond to the violence with softness, with resilience, with flexibility, with bouncing back. To cushion a building, a site, and its inhabitants is to make another architecture fragilely within what exists. Fragility is about sensitivity, attention, engagement. It is about the responsibility to respond to violence. A fragile architecture then is a sort of minor architecture, a softness applied to the strict and brittle material architecture. To cushion architecture is to make it resilient, yet fragile. A fragile architecture emerges in response to violence; it challenges its own intrinsic violence. Fragile architecture does not break down immediately in response to violence, but it absorbs it, and turns it into a force.

When the members of the Commune de Paris decided in 1871 to demolish the Vendôme Column as a symbol of empire, militarism, war and conquest, they built a mound prior to the demolition. The mound would protect the neighbouring buildings from the impact of the demolition when the column hit the ground; it would reduce vibrations, or prevent the column’s fragments from bouncing. The mound, which consisted of straw, sand and manure, had cushioned the square by providing a soft, more absorbent and resilient ground.

The story of the mound didn’t stop there, however. When the column was reconstructed in 1873, there was a political proposal from various groups to re-destruct the column not by demolishing it, but by reconstructing the mound, which, as David Gissen writes, would commemorate the radical events of 1871. As part of his studies on radical history and radical reconstruction, Gissen himself also proposed an art project of reconstructing the mound in 2012. Gissen’s proposal as an architectural and art project highlights a secondary...
element in a historical monument and sheds light on the performance of a minor infrastructure rather than the monument itself. The construction of the mound points toward the work of architecture as a *choreography of destruction*. Constructing the mound is constructing a performing ground, a stage that would expose the destruction as a performative act of architecture.

In terms of materiality, the mound was itself a summary of the city’s ecology,\(^\text{17}\) the minor parts of the city bits, forgotten or taken for debris, that suddenly became the protection of the city itself. As Gissen writes:

> In many ways the mound was part of the everyday ecology of Paris at this particular time — dirt from excavation sites of the city’s many construction sites, straw and manure from the city’s numerous stables, and “fascines” or bundles of sticks that were used in the city’s defense during the siege. \(^\text{18}\)

These are all the silent particles that suddenly become the main performers in a city square. The preparation of such ground and softening the stage of destruction is a good example of what I suggest as fragile architecture, where the fragility lies not only in the performance of architecture, but also in the minor elements of which this architecture consists.

The mound as a monument or, in Gissen’s words, a “counter-monument”\(^\text{19}\), also creates an assemblage where the combination of violence and fragility is staged in an urban square. A monument of war that has connotations of violence and destruction is combined with a counter-monument that also points toward destruction and violence, but from a different point of view; i.e. caring for its fragile surroundings. They both stand there, in a public square, in an everlasting tension and an agonistic dialogue. Such combination reminds me of the Standing Man of the Gezi Park Movement, standing against the violence of the police, with his soft, fragile and human body.

\(^\text{18}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{19}\) Ibid.
The huge double highway in the north of Tehran was still under construction in 2012. It was planned as a solution to the problem of heavy traffic in the city. The gigantic concrete structure had taken up too much space, blocking the view for the houses along the road, and it had pushed the existing traffic to its limits. The harsh and loud noise of the construction was the complement to its outsized concrete body. Like a giant with clumsy movements, scaring away whoever moves in its domain, it was extremely violating to those moving slowly in the traffic jam along this gigantic construction site.

Besides the visual violence it inflicted on the city, Sadr double highway is a paradigm story of neoliberal urban planning cutting brutally through the city, providing infrastructure for privileged citizens – moving around in their private cars – while shovelling aside those highly dependent on public transportation.
As an instrument for making a city for profit, not for people, the project has solely focused selectively on the fragile matters in favour of that very profit. The construction details, engineering calculations, financial matters and many other technical aspects have surely been taken into consideration in a fragile manner. However, the project as a violent structure has no regard for the fragility of the citizens’ rights to the urban infrastructure. In a manner opposite to that of a cushion, the concrete double highway deflects any attempt by those not armed with private cars to infiltrate the city or to cross it. In its cruel, invisible violence, similar to the mechanism of war, this outsized infrastructure afflicts the lives of many and their performance in the city by depriving them of their right to access the city.

A Shadow that Left the Logic of Its Own Existance

How could writing be materialised to lead a performative reading? How could performative reading be materialised? How could reading become writing? How could reading be materialised as writing on the site of action?

This experiment was undertaken in two events. One was at “Writing as Practice, Practice as Writing”, organised by the Society for Artistic Research, in 2016, and the other was at the symposium “Creative Resistance: Architecture, Art, Writing, a Life …” at the University College of London, in 2017. The performative reading/writing involved a paper model, folded papers that were unfolded throughout a 10-minute presentation. Parts of the text were borrowed from the chapter “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident”.

The first part of the presentation was to read from folded papers in my pockets. The second part was to pull strips of paper from a box while reading. After being read, each folded paper was placed on the table. And each strip pulled out of the box while reading was left hanging from the box on the table. At the end, there were layers of read texts and red strips hanging from the box. The whole stage of the presentation was changed after the act of reading. The reading of the written text wrote on the stage and changed it.
Everything started from a room. The room had shut its windows to the outside. It had locked its doors to the corridors and halls. In an absolute state of isolation, the room was still part of a bigger constellation. Yet it was imagining itself as the most independent unit in the universe; it claimed to be the universe itself.

I am out. The room says “you are there”. I know you have left the lights on and the room is silent. I still enjoy deceiving myself, imagining you on that sofa, your enlarged shadow, the shadow of your arms on the wall, stretched to the ceiling while you move your hands in your hair. Your shadow is confined to the room, it moves wildly around the corners with a strong desire to spill over the confinements of the room. I write my words to your shadow piercing through the imperfection of joints, where engineering has not been able to insulate the room completely. Your shadow sniffs the scent of freedom, leaks out from those imperfections, with a fear of leaving the logic of its existence that is its dependency on a source of light. It connects to my words and continues to exist in darkness. It becomes a shadow-word*.

*Shadoword is an architectural element, a building material that always leaks out. It is known as a subversive element that questions the logic of its own existence. Scientists are now researching what happens if they use a shadoword in a designed leaking system, and are studying its behaviour in systems where leaking is the desired performance. Does it stop leaking, as it is a dissenting material?

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Experiment of Performative Reading as Writing. Folded Papers and the Black Box.
Experiment of Performative Reading as Writing

I re-performed this experiment after the two initial events, to document the performance.

KTH School of Architecture, 2018.
Experiment of Performative Reading as Writing - Reading as Writing on the Site - 2018
Embracing a pillow could be as revolutionary as throwing a stone. Hiding all night long behind a tree in the front garden could be as important as marching in a demonstration. A joke could be more influential than a thousand pages on the theory of revolutions. It is a characteristic of the dissident life that political and domestic activities are integrated.

For a dissident after all, it is important to laugh, sometimes out loud, all day long. But a dissident should also be able to sidendron fear, when he hides his face in the pillow or waits in the eternal queues at bus stops or at the laundromat.

I am out. The room says “you are there.” I know you have left the room. The room is silent. I still enjoy deceiving myself, imagining that your shadow, your larged shadow, the shadow of your arms on the wall, stays with me in this room completely. Your shadow sniffs the scent of freedom, leaks fear of leaving the logic of its existence that is its dependency any words and continues to exist in darkness.
Fiction O2

- Al-Croquis: Lieutenant Fontaine
Al-Croquis is a parody of the mainstream architectural journal El Croquis, which is usually focused on starchitects. The idea for this journal emerged in response to the question of how to engage critically with institutions via various methods of interruption. It is a fictitious journal born out of a proposal that was rejected by the editors of El Croquis, but that nevertheless found a way to continue an institutional existence. This issue of Al-Croquis is mainly dedicated to the prison. It introduces Lieutenant Fontaine, the prisoner and the main character of Robert Bresson’s movie *A Man Escaped*, as a protagonist of Interrupting Architecture, a practice of architecture that he develops in the process of his escape plan. Fontaine escapes from the Nazi Montluc Prison, and his escape plan is investigated as a work of architecture that interrupts the institution of the prison. Appointing an escaped prisoner to the role of architect and studying his applied tools and methods through the lens of architectural work is a way to expand architecture beyond its disciplinary limits and to develop minor modes of architectural practice. Fontaine, in the execution of his escape plan, has applied cutting in various ways and made different tools thereby. The investigation of these tools and the way they are made and put into action is also a way to expand our understanding of architectural work. His ephemeral architecture does not exist today as a building, but it exists as a narrative of freedom. His architectural work of escaping is the main body of this issue of Al-Croquis.

I started working on this journal by corresponding with the editors of the architecture journal El Croquis on the proposal to produce an issue on Fontaine as an imaginary starchitect, with the idea of interrupting the line of the journal issues. As the editors of the journal rejected the proposal, I produced
the issue with the name Al-Croquis and introduced it to the librarians at Umeå University, Art Campus, where I was pursuing my PhD at the time. After some discussion and thanks to Lenita Berggren, the librarian at Art Campus Library, they agreed to include Al-Croquis in the library’s collection. We tested its location in the shelves together with other El Croquis issues and we planned to hold a book launch at the library to introduce the journal and the project.

At this point, turbulence at Umeå School of Architecture ironically ‘interrupted’ the project. While writing this part of the thesis on the politics of institutions, the PhD work and this section in particular were affected by the academic politics themselves. With the arrival of the new head of the school in 2015 and the subsequent series of conflicts, which disturbed UMA PhD School and impeded this research, the Al-Croquis project also ceased in
the Art Campus Library. However, the project was published in *RUUKKU: Studies in Artistic Research*, no. 05, in the exposition “Interrupting Gesture”.¹

As the situation at Umeå School of Architecture declined, my PhD work was transferred to the KTH School of Architecture, but Al-Croquis, which itself became a document of institutional violence, never left the institutions and lived onto its new format. With support from “Architecture in the Making”² and the KTH School of Architecture, I reworked, reproduced and edited the journal, this time with contributions from Rolf Hughes, Hélène Frichot, Adrià Carbonell and Roemer van Toorn. The journal was exhibited at the Making Effect Exhibition at ArkDes, Architecture Museum, in Stockholm 14-17ᵗʰ of September 2017.

After the exhibition, I introduced the journal at KTH’s Main Library, and with the help of the librarian Piah Carlsson, the Al-Croquis journal found its place in the library collection.

This issue of Al-Croquis consists of three parts: 1) Architect 2) Voices, and 3) Views.

In the first part of this issue, “Architect,” Interrupting Architecture is discussed through a visual and textual investigation of Fontaine’s architectural escape plan from Montluc Prison. What is called *Interrupting Architecture* in this project is in fact a material interruption through the prison to construct a way out of the confinement. As an effort to expand architecture beyond its discipline, this architecture needs a different method of representation that is not only through traditional architectural drawings of plans, sections and façades, but also stories presented through various forms of writing, drawing and storytelling.

In the second part, “Voices,” the invited contributors look at the issue of prison from various perspectives. The first three authors, Rolf Hughes, Hélène

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Frichot and Adrià Carbonell, look for spaces of freedom within the spaces of prison. Hughes and Frichot, each through their texts and from different angles, make a connection between this space of freedom and the potential of practice of writing. In his text “Pro Forma,” Hughes gives an account of his experience as a writer-in-residency at HMP Wayland, a Category C prison for adult males in Norfolk, UK. With “an ethical resistance to speaking on behalf” of the prisoners who have “first-hand experience of crime and punishment,” he helps them to develop their own stories. In this residency set by Norwich Arts Center, he uses various media such as Film Studies, Creative Writing and Drama to give the prisoners different tools for creating spaces of freedom within the confinement of prison. In a connection based on mutual trust and respect, Hughes enters the prisoners’ world while letting them enter his world throughout the duration of their co-inhabitation of the space and collectively undertaking creative activities, and thus constructs a new subject out of a writer-in-residency in a prison. The writer is no longer speaking on behalf of the others, but instead talking with them. Throughout this experience, both the writer and the prisoners are appointed new roles different from what they are identified with; they construct new subjectivities.

The construction of subjectivity is the core idea discussed by Hélène Frichot in her text “The Unfurling of Constrained Subjectivity: Jean Genet’s Our Lady of the Flowers” through Genet’s writing in prison. Frichot takes the site of prison as a site of subjectification. She discusses the importance of fiction in this process of subjectification and writes how Jean Genet creates a slippage between the real spaces of the cell and the fictional, and thereby breaches the walls of his cell and escapes. Through writing, and by the application of “episodic shocks” and “surprising juxtapositions,” Genet on one hand renders himself as monstrous, and celebrates the difference of being a monster, and on the other hand “unfurls a variety of other spaces” and “other situations” within the confinement of his cell. The “creative resistance” – a term used by Frichot – to what is imposed on a prisoner is projected through the juxtaposition of various worlds that confuses the real and the fictional and ultimately produces spaces of freedom, or as Frichot addresses it, “line of flight,” “leakage” or “line of escape.” I suggest that Genet’s line of escapes could be read as monstrous spaces escaping fixed definitions of imprisonment and freedom that, as Frichot writes, are those “whereby the segments that compose his imaginary constructions become smoothed over and he is enabled to breach the boundaries of his containment.”
In his contribution “Walls of Dust”, Adrià Carbonell takes the voice of a prisoner to talk to both the material architecture and the architect and the designer of his space of confinement. The disturbed and impulsive voice of the prisoner is represented through the fragmentation of the structure of the text. The prisoner’s voice and thoughts bounce within his cell and thereby defines the architecture of confinement. “A prison cell is a bouncing device,” he writes, where not only voices and thoughts bounce, but also hope. By writing how hope fades by bouncing against the rigid walls of a prison, the materiality of the cell is represented. Yet when the prisoner’s dreams “escape” and “sneak into a different world,” the harsh materiality of the architecture of the cell is immediately challenged.

While the first three authors have taken the reader into the interior of the prison and cells, Roemer van Toorn confronts the reader with a landscape of imprisonment. In his text-image contribution, “The Architecture of Occupation. The Israeli Apartheid Barriers,” he renders the Palestine occupation as an advanced form of imprisonment. Through a series of images of the Israeli apartheid barrier running between the Shuafat refugee camp and Pisgat Zeev, and Abu Dis and East Jerusalem, van Toorn depicts how refugee camps as contemporary prisons are spread over the landscape. The landscape is punctuated by walls, barriers and signs representing a fragmented prison, yet connected by the wall, the main element of imprisonment. In this context, one’s home is transformed into her/his prison.

In the third part of the journal, “Views,” the text “No Longer a Prison”, that is present in in ‘Site 02’, reviews the architectural design and renovation project Qasr Garden-Museum in Tehran, which is a prison that has been transformed into a museum, cultural center, and public garden. The text addresses the political connotation of opening up a prison and its transformation into a cultural centre as a political statement. It discusses the political role of architectural design when commissioned to deal with such projects and investigates whether the play of form and tectonic qualities to lighten the spaces of a former prison could present possibilities for inducing liberating potential into a very closed space and its relations? Or does it carry a risk of depoliticization of the prison as an architectural example of control and the execution of power by aestheticizing its material, by situating it in the past and detaching it from its present political context? In order to expand architecture beyond its discipline, the text not only investigates the architectural design of
the project, but it also focuses on the design of the infrastructural process of this transformation and discusses the evacuation of the prison prior to the architectural design as part of the architectural work. Throughout this issue of Al-Croquis, the intention is to expose how the project of change, subversion and emancipation should find its way even in the most restrictive and impossible conditions, such as imprisonment. By expanding and complicating the relation between architecture and prison, the issue seeks to expand architectural work beyond the constraints of the discipline.

In the following pages you will get an overview of the journal.
LIEUTENANT FONTAINE
interrupting architecture
Lieutenant Fontaine

Lieutenant Fontaine (1916-1999) was a schoolteacher and a member of the French Resistance who became an architect not through education, but through practice. During World War II and the German occupation of France, he was arrested by Nazis and sent to the formidable Montluçon Prison in Lyons in 1943. The prison, widely known as an escape-proof prison, became the site for one of his most successful architecture projects: performed through an escape plan, it was a project that made him the leading name of an architecture called “interrupting Architecture.” He did not consider escape merely an egotistic way of surviving; instead, he believed in escaping as a means of emancipation that could also interrupt or even disrupt the very system that was causing the oppression and confinement. He was a natural-born escaper who undertook several unsuccessful escape efforts when in Montluçon Prison. But ultimately, by designing and executing his architecture project of escaping, he constructed his way out of prison and transformed the prison from a site of despair into a site of hope.

From the early days of his imprisonment, he developed an architectural thinking of cutting through the oppressive structures in various contexts. He spoke of such architecture as an amateur practice of love for freedom and of hope as a risky activity, criticizing the material and immaterial structures of control and oppression by constructing an architecture that, in his words: “cuts narrow gaps of light in a solid and impermeable room.” He looked for architectural tools and devices in everyday objects. He believed in the subversive potential of those humble objects, and that the potential could be put into action and the objects transformed into tools for change. He never waited for architecture commissions, but he made his own architecture proposals by forcing himself into existing power relations. His clients, he argued, were the surrounding environments, the impermeable walls of a confinement – the exclusive systems that refused him entry, the systems into which he did not fit. In this way, his architectural work emerged through his forcing himself, as a practitioner, into oppressive and exclusive systems and using his practice to critically engage with them, to interrupt them.

After his escape from Montluçon Prison, Fontaine dedicated his life to teaching and practicing architecture that had criticality, emancipation and subversion at its core. He died in 1999.
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HOW TO UNLOCK HANDCUFFS WITH A SAFETY PIN IN A PRISON CELL
Architect: Lieutenant Fontaine
Montluc Prison, Lyon, France, 1943
His tools of action were thus what Jean Genet called ‘humble objects’,6 art generally not associated with mischief in the prison everyday, which allowed stealthily.
facts that are
and him to work

I often sat in front of my door with nothing
better to do than cast my eyes over it.

It was made of two panels
of six planks of oak

To get an iron spoon, pewter
and aluminium were too soft or too brittle -
Encouraging the front neighbor

Stay strong. I'll come back and see you tomorrow.

Inside, no patrol, no guards.

A month of hard work and my door was open.

Doors, windows or any opening that debilitates the perfect

Corridor

Cell
To take care of the fragile process of cutting the door he has to apply further methods and tools: wet paper or a basic method of papier-mâché to fill in the gaps between the planks that he has already scratched; and a pencil to color and camouflage the cracks created by the cuts.
Performing the Section through Montluc Prison
Architect: Lieutenant Fontaine
Montluc Prison, Lyon, France, 1943

Research and investigation through inhabiting the space
Performing the Section
PERFORMING THE SECTION THROUGH MONTLUC PRISON
Architect: Lieutenant Fontaine
Montluc Prison, Lyon, France, 1943
Part O3:

**FO(O)L+D**

**Site O3**
**Fiction O3**


**Formula O3**

Writing with Unwelcome Co-Authors
The Two Bottles of Milk
The Roof of the House: On Imagination
The House,
The invisible but ever so tangible line between backstage and on stage can be terrifying to cross, especially when you have to immediately say something like “To be or not to be”, or “Now is the winter of our discontent.”

Mark Rylance

… or when you are there to tell a story you cannot tell.

Radicality of a Pillow

Embracing a pillow could be as revolutionary as throwing a stone. Hiding all night long behind a tree in the front garden could be as important as marching in a demonstration. A joke could be more influential than a thousand pages on the theory of revolutions. It is a characteristic of the dissident life that political and domestic activities are integrated. For a dissident, sometimes, it is important to walk in silence all the way to work, and to sign piles of papers obediently all day long, without any explicit gesture of revolt. For a dissident, it is important to have a pocket, a drawer, an empty container, a piece of paper, a pencil, a spoon and sometimes a ladder. For a dissident, it is important to laugh, sometimes out loud, sometimes inwardly. But a dissident should also be able to cry, sometimes, in fear, when he hides his face in the pillow at night, when he waits in the eternal queues at bus stops or when chopping onions.
Dissidence is a paradoxical acceptance of the oppressive power, i.e. understanding its mechanisms with affection, while humiliating it by living an oppositional life in the heart of the tyranny, and thereby challenging it on every micro-level. Holding this mood, the loci of action for dissidents can in fact emerge in any kind of space; from the corners of a living room to a desk in an office; from a love letter to forms from the tax office; from a pavement to a bus stop; from a lecture to an informal talk; from the city to the body. Therefore, unlike activism, dissidence is not confined to certain events and specific places. Spaces of dissidence have one thing in common: they are not spaces historically assigned to demonstrations and public dissent, such as squares and streets. And this is why it can be difficult for the oppressive power to find dissidents and oppress them. Spaces of dissidence are composed of the incompatible combination of laughter and fear, of celebration and grief, of anticipation and action.

The dissident is a political figure who is both in and out; she oscillates between inside and outside, between appearance and disappearance. And through this oscillation, she constructs sites of resistance and subversions. A dissident, however, has to find out when she should be in and when she should be out. And it can be a difficult and risky task to pull off.

A dissident who oscillates in and out becomes a different character every time she appears. She goes out wearing red, comes in wearing yellow, goes back wearing yellow, comes back wearing wings, goes back with a pen, comes back with a hat, goes back with a moustache, comes back with a sack, goes back with a cat, comes back with a horse, goes back short-haired, comes back long-sleeved, goes back as a he, comes back as an it.
Messy

Drawings

Dissidence is an embodied political engagement, but stealthy and in disguise. The dissident’s plans are disguised. The plan doesn’t go into the details. The dissident’s drawings are messy. They erase parts. They remove traces while performing their plans. Like a one-off piece theatre that has played and finished, what remains of the dissidents’ plans is a story. So it would be impossible for others to execute the dissident drawings. But one can always remake them, rewrite them, redraw them from one’s own imagination. Yet only the dissidents themselves know the secret of the plan’s feasibility. Others read it as mess, as mass, as imprecision, as too fictional.
Now I ask you, dear reader, to take a leap into a house of dissidents, which we are going to explore together in the following folded pages and layers of stories. It is a house inhabited by dissidents, in a critical moment of political transformation in REDACTED. The house is located in a REDACTED, and the story is situated in the everyday struggle of dissidents over a long period of time. A house in such contexts is always a turning point between appearance and disappearance. The house is the place for an oppositional life being played, lived and practiced. When the dissidents moved into this house, little by little, it became the locus of the most radical political actions, where ideas took shape, alternative and oppositional life was lived and family was transformed from a closed, self-centred institution and survival unit to an infrastructure of resistance, change, and an encounter of differences. One play in this game of dissidence was life itself. And life itself struggled to resist what was waiting outside to catch the dissidents, to oppress them.
What’s That Shadow on the Landing?

The dissident is the inhabitant of the backstage, of the underground, of the closet, of storage, of landings, of hidden stairs, of darkness, of behind the edges of the roof. Dissidents embrace gravity, they descend, they fall into the darkness. They talk in silence; they write in darkness, they draw in darkness. The backstage and the house are both spaces of invisibility, of freedom from the assigned role, but they are also a space of rehearsal for an upcoming performance.

At special political moments, the house becomes the backstage, it becomes the space of waiting; waiting to perform.

The spaces of dissidence of which I speak are similar to the backstage of a theatre. The Backstage is a space of life performance, yet it is both imaginary and real. The backstage is at times the space of anticipation, and at other times an empty space. The house I will introduce to you can be understood as the backstage of street politics, when the stage, the street, the square, becomes an impossible place to perform, when the performers want to perform a role that is impossible to perform.

At a certain point in the story of this house, the backstage became more important to the dissidents – the performers – than the stage itself. And it was at this point that they began to understand the immense potential of the backstage and to consider a play that was not supposed to be performed; a play that they discovered they were paradoxically performing. The performers of this play, the dissidents, are not only the inhabitants of this house, but also the architects of its spaces, making space by living in it, by playing in the house, destroying and reconfiguring the spaces, hiding in niches and whispering through the cracks. They reconstructed the house, and thereby the meaning of the stage, the backstage, the wings.

A 10-Second Performance on the Concrete Rungs of a Lamppost

When the house became the backstage in support of political acts, the stage transformed from one single frame into fragments of micro-acts dispersed across the city: in a telephone booth, on a bench at a bus stop, under a tree, on the concrete rungs of a lamppost, along the passages of an office building, and in waiting rooms, but also in the entrances to houses, on the threshold, upon balconies, on the rooftops, at the windows, in the gaps, behind the open doors, under the blown-out lights, in the basements, in the storage. These elements, which make the house complicated and permeable, are critical spaces of dissent; they are safe and dangerous.

The house became many, fragmented, taken out by its inhabitants to the farthest and strangest points of the city. The house was what the dissidents were carrying with them wherever they were. And they were bringing back its fragments, changed, vitalised, intensified. The fragments were their micro-stages. These pieces of fragmented and evanescent micro-stages will come to light in this specific house. These micro-stages are a way for the dissidents’ performance to let the dissent leak out when the stages of street and square are impossible to perform.
This text is written in the encounter between architecture, theatre/performance and the politics of dissidence. In performance spaces, the areas on either side of the stage, out of sight of the audience, are called the wings. It is the space of anticipation, of waiting to appear on the stage. As Andrew Filmer states, the term backstage “is also used metaphorically to denote a particular situation where an individual or entity stands ‘ready to act or make an appearance.’”

From the performative point of view, the house of dissidents is the space of performance. It is not only a backstage for street politics, but also the stage itself. By defining the house as an assemblage of backstage, wings and stage, I project a performative role onto the spaces of domestic life and forward the politics of a dissident life not as an oppressed status or inability to act, but as a performative, political art of living. Domestic spaces have been considered political sites of resistance from a feminist point of view; sites of consumption and production, and sites of individual desire and expression. But houses have also played important roles in constructing revolutionary ideas by becoming hubs for gatherings and discussions, for the formation of political groups, underground publications, political rehearsals, and the production of necessary tools of dissidence.

The story in this text is real and imaginary, and it resides in a hand-drawn plan, drawn from memory by the inhabitants of a demolished house. The house is real, and its real architectural plans were lost following its demolition. The house was built in a critical time of war and revolution and had undergone different phases of inhabitation. As an investigation on writing architecture, this text is written through layers of writing as sketching on hand-drawn plans. The acts and stories have emerged through the re-writing of spaces and their relation to the contextual politics of the place. The text consists of different layers that extend the spaces of the house, multiply it, mirror it, stretch it beyond its walls, complicate its relations. They animate its elements, bring back to life its demolished walls, windows, and doors and revitalise the stories embedded in each and every element. The house thus


3. bell hook’s idea of “homeplace” for example is a rereading of private domesticity as a public act of resistance. She writes: “Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one’s homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist.” Hooks, B. (1999). Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics. Boston, MA: South End Press. p. 42.
creates a world in itself by going deeper and deeper into its spaces. This is not only enacted within the text, but also in the materiality of the text.

The following text includes fictional conversations, interrupted by the scenes, secrets and manuals that go on across the stages and in the wings of the (theatre-) house. The stages for the performance of dissidence include: 1. Balcony 2. Stairs 3. Ladder 4. Sudden Room 5. Rooftop. Wings include: 1. Kitchen 2. Storage 3. The underground/basement. Yet from time to time, they interchange their roles. For moments, the kitchen itself suddenly becomes a stage. The complexity and impossibility of exposing the details of a dissident life is exposed in the structure of the text through the method of narration and different modes of writing, thereby complicating a simple house. The text consists of conversations, stories, scenes, lists, manuals, secrets and puzzles.

The sequences of the text are architectural. The text, similar to the drawers of the cabinets in the kitchen, could be opened and reopened and could expose more stories, hidden ones, unknown ones, and mysteries, and the new ones imagined by you, dear reader. Each cabinet, each space, each corner, each detail holds a story, meaning that this written story is just one possible story among many.

You are watching this house from the outside. You are standing on a pavement looking through the iron bars around the house. But you have a map in your hand and several stories to read that help you navigate with your imagination. You are watching a performance that cannot be staged.
**Balcony, Storage, Kitchen, Roof**

Let’s think of the balcony as our stage. That would be the most obvious stage in the house. But it is a different balcony in the sense of its location and its use in this house. The balcony hangs over the parking ramp and faces onto the street through an iron bar that separates the ramp from the pavement and the street. The balcony has no railing; it is laid with cement tiles and covered in dust.

The storage, as you see in the plan, is a small space with two doors: one opens onto the balcony, the other to the kitchen. In order to get into the balcony from the kitchen, you need to pass through the storage, unless you want to jump through the window. The doors are wooden and unpainted. Let’s think of the storage as the wings of this (theatre) house.

The household’s kitchen is the grand narrative in the life of a dissident. Soviet kitchens, for example, were the hotbed of dissent culture. When all the public spaces were monitored by the Soviet regime, domestic spaces were the only option for social gatherings. Kitchen tables were therefore the locus of discussions, sharing music, reading books and not only preserving the culture, but also creating it. So “the kitchen became the place where Russian culture kept living, untouched by the regime.”

They say that people still did not feel totally secure there, always fearing a possible spy, a neighbour eavesdropping through the walls, or someone among them leaking sensitive or incriminating information. They were afraid of hidden microphones, of telephones, of all the gaps where words, voices, names, activities, images could leak through. They covered the phones with pillows, left the tap water running, and often whispered to prevent any leakage.

But in this house, although the kitchen is still there as a main site of action, the story tends to shift to the storage. We will find out more about it in the drama that unfolds below.

And we will get to the roof at some point.

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The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissidents

The Characters:
I: Who narrates
He: Who draws the plans
She: Who recalls the story
She: Who has the luggage
He: Who grows, who dreams, who falls

5. The characters throughout this thesis merge with each other, change gender and move from one place to another. This characterisation in transformation, is distinctive of the dissident character that, despite holding onto fixed identities, is masked and fluid. In this way, the main 'He' and 'She' stand for many dissidents who move around this house and other sites in this thesis. 'I' refers to the narrator, the author also transforms to she or he. The politics of characters in Writing Dissident Architecture are discussed further in the concluding chapter: "Fugue: On Writing Dissident Architecture."
He is looking at the orange trees. The oranges are still green and the all-night rain has washed them bright. Some are perfectly round. Some are distorted. Some have fallen under the tree, having failed to make their way to ripening, young yet rotten. Despite these tiny gestures of death and malfunction, the garden looks fresh and green. He adores the garden. His short grey hair moves slightly in the humid breeze.

The sliding glass door opens. Her perfume has a distinct floral edge and mixes with the scent of the wet garden as she steps onto the veranda. Her long flowered skirt touches the stone floor when she bends to sit down across the table. Steam rises from the teacups as their contents meet the air. He puts on his glasses and mumbles something while drawing the last bits of the house plan on a piece of graph paper.

When I ask how he still remembers all the measurements and details of that house, he takes off his glasses, leans back and says:

- I was there with the construction workers almost every day. Checking the construction, as architects would. So I knew the blueprints by heart. You know, I like architecture and construction work, although I never really did that work myself. It was the first project that was dear to me. And then… at some point we had to stop the construction because we ran out of money. War had broken out. And we were both about to lose our jobs. It was not great; a tough time indeed. But at least we could move into a house. It was habitable. There was the roof and walls and windows… and doors to be locked so the kids could feel safe.

He laughs and continues:

- Well… it wasn’t that bad. It was a great house even in its incomplete state, but just a tad rough.

She smiles and says:

- Even the walls were unpainted. The plaster was still a bit wet when we
moved in. So we had to wait before we began painting. And the cement floor was uncarpeted. We carpeted the house shortly after we moved in. That was another moment at which we had to be sure of the measurements. And later, for painting the walls, too.

He nods and continues:

- And it was winter. Sanctions. No gas. We could heat only one room. *The rest of the house was as cold as the street.*

She moves a long finger over the plan and says:

- I used to cook in the kitchen in my winter jacket. And the only oil heater we owned could only heat that one room.

She moves her finger to the top corner of the plan and continues:

- That was the only room we lived in during the winters. And at night the kids slept there, and we slept in our own room with hot water bottles. Earlier today I read Svetlana Alexievich’s Nobel Prize lecture, where she says: “We had become ‘people of war’; being at war or preparing for war”.⁶ We had also become people of war, of revolution, of scarcity, of waiting and waiting and waiting.

He makes a mischievous face:

- Aaaaand people of…?

She smiles with the same gesture:

- …jokes

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House Plan drawn by the inhabitants
Scene 01

The Kitchen

Shadows stretch to the ceiling, linger there a bit, tremble, move, slide back down the walls.
Shadows tremble, conjoin, move, flow, leak, tremble and disappear.
Shadows appear, conjoin, enlarge, diffuse, grow, grow, grow and abruptly shrink, disappear.
Shadows crawl back, slither down the walls.
Shadows conjoin, move around, break into fragments and slither down different walls.

Shadows, rustle, rustle, rustle.
Rustle, rustle, rustle, gurgle, rustle, rustle, cutlery tapping the plates, rustle, whooshing water, water running, footsteps, rustle, rustle…
doorbell…
Silence,

whisper, whisper, whisper, whisper, silence, silence, silence, silence, silence, silence, silence, silence, footsteps,
squeak,
crack,
silent darkness.
The kitchen can be seen as epitomizing the sacred sustenance of the family unit. But it can also be considered the most political space in the entire home— itself a microcosm of society—in its relevance to social function and its aesthetics of creation, preservation, and waste.\(^7\)

The kitchen was huge, with pale yellow metal cabinets covering only two sides of the room, brown plastic carpet, and pale yellow tiles on the walls. There was a wide window on the northern side. The window faced the street. Not directly, but there were sequences of other spaces along the way. First there was the balcony, hanging over the parking ramp. Then there was the parking ramp and, depending on your height, you could see part of it between the edge of the balcony and the pavement. Then there were the painted, rustproof bars, chained shut with a big dark lock. Then you could see the pavement and the street.

As with most ordinary kitchens, most of the time there is something cooking slowly on the stove. Steam condenses on the windows, gradually making them opaque. Just when the glass becomes hazy, drops begin to slide down and make irregular patterns. If you stand outside on the sidewalk, you see the faces and figures distorted through the misty window; the figures are masked. The house was not well insulated. The interior climate was not very well under control. And the vapour is the result of the encounter and interaction between the stove, the unfinished quality of the house and the climate outside. Together, the combination of all these dysfunctional elements produces the quality of this house, which allows our story to develop. Our story moves through and leaks through the unfinished joints, elements, poor insulation.

Scene 02

The Kitchen

(A 35-min performance)

It is quarter past 9 in the evening. The kitchen windows are gradually becoming hazy.

It is now ten to 10 in the evening. From the pavement outside, everything in the kitchen looks like a dream.
This kitchen was the producer of various sounds. The sounds were made to distract the passer-by from the main activities: running water, a boiling pan, a sewing machine, a steaming safety valve, chewing crispy rice, clacking pot lid, the opening and closing of drawers, rubbing a silver fork on an aluminium pot, a ticking clock, moving a brush in a can of yellow paint, slurping tea, tearing a paper, sneezing, and dropping a spoon in the kitchen sink every forty five minutes.

The sounds from this kitchen were curious; sometimes humorous, sometimes upsetting. It was impossible to connect the sounds with any specific, familiar activity. It sometimes sounded like a jazz concert by amateur musicians, sometimes like a quarrel while a wall was being knocked down, sometimes like the stirring of a spoon in a big metal pot while a very ordinary phrase, like *good morning*, was being uttered repeatedly. It was never exactly this or that sound, but a combination of several. And things became stranger at night, when you could actually see the shadows from the outside. From the pavement, a passer-by could only wonder what was going on when witnessing the shadows of two figures dancing to the sound of a sewing machine.

And on the stove, there was always something being cooked, to produce the vapour, to make the boiling sound, to spread a smell of life and as part of the pretence that: ‘It is an ordinary kitchen.’ But the kitchen was also a watchtower and an escape route. It had three openings: one door opened onto a hall, one window opened onto the balcony, one door opened into a storage room that itself opened onto the balcony.

I call the kitchen a workshop for *making* dreams. And the challenge for the workshop was: how to hold on to a *threshold between disguise and exposition, between withdrawal and leakage*?

To put it in a nutshell, it was a workshop for inhabiting a house at the time of few possibilities, and where imagining an alternative life was a great challenge. Instead of abandoning all hope and taking refuge in private spaces and staying silent, the inhabitants were inviting risk into the domestic spaces, to learn how to dance with it. They were transforming the fear of the time into play, dancing and laughter. So the family was constantly collecting tools and materials to make this possible, transforming the house constantly to let other imaginations happen.
The drawers and cabinets were full of different tools, from kitchen utensils to socks, from medicine to screwdrivers, from blankets to empty wine bottles, from bags of rice to toy trains, from blind dolls to half-empty whisky bottles, a violin bow, wrinkled shirts, plant seeds, passports, stationary, expired formula, broken glass bowls, a cracked sofa leg, a distorted wrench, bricks of different sizes next to a chandelier. There were gadgets of different forms, all stacked without a clear order. There were also many boxes named with strange names such as: letters from a brown shoe, postcards from the snail, bills to be paid by the horse, textbooks of the course: building the stairs, instructions for using a mirror, poems of ascending a ladder etc., etc. Every drawer was a fiction in itself. Every cabinet was an unrealized novel.  

Poem of Ascending a Ladder – 0263

The ladder starts from the edge of the roof and continues upward.  
In a state of suspension  
One wonders  
How to get to the edge of the roof  
To start ascending?

And this is a poem.

8. Route 09: Write a story that is situated in one of these cabinets.
Cabinet 09

Cabinet 09 is located on the northern wall under the window. It is big, 50 centimetres deep, 60 centimetres wide and 80 centimetres high. It opens and closes with a strong squeaking sound. It makes the loudest noise of all the drawers and cabinet doors of the kitchen. There is one removable shelf inside the cabinet that is hung in the middle.

Inside the cabinet, there is a radio, a bottle of water, some blank A4 papers, some A5 envelopes, a perfume, a wrench, a hammer, a folded old newspaper, a bottle of vinegar, some crooked nails in a dark blue round metal empty crème container, a blanket and a couple of rusted keys hung in a red key holder. The key holder is made of a compact glass with a thin paper inside advertising a Dutch cheese factory.

Puzzle 01
Take cabinet 09 as your site of action. How could you make an escape route through this cabinet?

Take _______. Remove _______. Open _______. You are freed to _______.

Secret 01

The secret of Cabinet 09

Secret 01
Conversation
Part 02

He continues:

- And we kept doing small things in the house, but it was always difficult with the situation… So the house stayed unfinished.

STORY 01

The house stayed unfinished forever and then it was demolished, and a five-storey apartment building took its place. Its basement was earth. Its swimming pool was of soil and brick, with a crumbling wall on its west side. The garden had pine trees, peach trees, blackberry, plum trees, and roses, lilies and jasmines. The two old vines had grown over the south and west walls. The dog strolled in the garden during the days and undertook her mischievous acts at night. The night sounds were the weeping willow sighing in the wind and the dog barking at the ghosts. And he, the youngest, was a skinny boy with big gazing eyes. He would stare at your eyes when you worked in the garden, and at your hands when you talked about how a peach tree stops bearing fruit after five years. On that summer afternoon, he stood on the long veranda, bid farewell to the dog and headed up to the grocery store. He never came back.
Rain has begun falling faster. The red geraniums are trembling under the raindrops. They look at each other. He says:

- I know what you just remembered. That night…

She stretches her hand to remove a dry leaf from the geraniums and says:

- It was the last time we saw her, wasn’t it?

He narrows his eyes while looking in the distance and says:

- I think it was. It was past midnight. She came with a luggage full of “stuff”… you know what I mean… I mean “the books”. Where else she could go?
The Stage

*The Stairs*, *The Ladder, The Balcony, The Sudden Room*

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**Scene 03**

*The Stairs*

As the door opens, the blue light slides down and enlarges over the first,
second,
third,
fourth,
fifth
step,
and drags along
a
silhouette of a body carrying a trash bag.

The silhouette leaves the blue light and is absorbed in the amorphous
darkness. Left at the front door, the bag deforms and rustles under its
own weight. The silhouette ascends the stairs and leaves the door ajar.
Stray cats creep towards the bag. The blue light casts a line of light on
the stairs. From the front garden, another silhouette skulks toward the
landing between the iron bars and the stairs and ascends the stairs. She
is carrying a suitcase. The door closes behind her.
Conversation
Part 04

She says:

- And as soon as he heard her voice, he jumped out of his bed and chased you in his pyjamas. I wonder if he remembers that night. He was five. So he should …

He continues:

- We both headed down the parking ramp and I unchained the iron door of the basement on the left end, while she was holding the oil lamp in one hand and the suitcase with the other. The door squeaked as I pushed it in. We stepped into the earthen basement. As always, her sense of humour broke the horror of the moment; she whispered: “You could never be a bourgeois, pal!”. We dug a hole. He asked her if the books were dead, if that was why we were burying them. And she said: “No ducky, we are making a treasure trove.” He said: “Do we make a map?” And she replied: “Yes. We’ll draw a map, and put it in a bottle and throw it to the seas. And maybe one day, a sailor will find it in his fishing net… or a storm will bring it back to the shore while you are making a sandcastle in the sun… But then you’ll have to throw it back in the sea, because you already know the treasure map, don’t you? So that someone else could find it…” And he really took it seriously. I wonder if they ever drew it?

She says:

- Probably yes. Who knows? I remember they were playing and drawing at the breakfast table the next morning, before she kissed us goodbye… It could be that map.
The Wings
The Kitchen, The Storage, The Underground

Scene 04
The Storage

The storage is dark. Its both doors are closed. A pot falls down and makes a loud noise. But only those in the kitchen would hear the sound.

You, standing on the pavement, would probably not hear anything.

Inside

Being a kind of pure permeability, infinitely transformable, inherently open to the specificities of whatever concrete it brings into existence, *chôra* can have no attributes, no features of its own. Steeped in paradox, its quality is to be quality-less, its defining characteristic that it lacks any defining feature. It functions primarily as the receptacle, the storage point, the locus of nurturance in the transition necessary for the emergence of matter, a kind of womb of material existence, the nurse of becoming, an incubator to ensure the transmission or rather the copying of Forms to produce matter that resembles them.  

The storage is a humble place in the story of the house. From an architectural point of view, it is a transitional space, both in the sense of spatial sequences of the house and its function. It is located between the kitchen

and the balcony. In order to get to the balcony one needs to pass through the storage. It is an in-between space that is becoming the main plot in this story. Philosophically speaking, one could call it a *chora*. But it is also a transitional space in the telling of this story. Perhaps I should reformulate my statement: the storage is the *humble main plot* in the story of the house.

The storage is always ignored in the story of the house. Its door is usually closed. People drop things in, pick stuff up, they pass through it to get to the balcony, but no one really stays there. No one talks about it. They talk about the kitchen, the living room, the veranda, the patio, the dining room, the garden, even the basement, but never about the storage. They go in, come out, shut the door. So the door is mostly closed and it is always dark inside. No one even fixes its blown-out light bulb. They keep on forgetting about its life, its problems, its hopes, its worries, its potential stories, its dreams and nightmares. But it contains everything within itself. It continues to live in darkness, inside itself, silent. It listens through its own doors. Looks to the light coming in from the gap under its door. And when the door opens, it collects and collects: food, medicine, dried bread, ladders, candles, toothbrushes, kitchen utensils, light, noise, voices, words, and smells.

The inhabitants do not include the storage in their conversations around the kitchen table, as if it doesn’t exist, until it starts to speak itself: CO-LI-A-PSING noise heard from behind the closed door. It is when the stack of stuff can no longer hold, and things fall down from the top of the pile, from the shelves or from the walls. The storage speaks by letting things fall.

The storage is the site of the encounter of incompatible things, where things of different and opposing characteristics are put together. They attract or repel each other, but through this process the site of action or the performing ground is produced. It is a site where not only things that will be necessary in the near or distant future are kept, but also those things that we are unsure of whether to keep or discard. They are somewhere in between useful and useless.

The storage simultaneously presents the past and future. It manifests the excess, the politics of scarcity. It is a site for saving the articles picked up in the time of war. It is a site manifesting fear and uncertainty, but also a hope for life. It is the political site of the house.
How to Move a Story from One Plot to Another?

The politics of grand narrative are that it casts light solely on its own importance. It renders what exists in its shadow as trivial or even non-existent. However, in the minor politics, the area in shadows is where stories are constantly constructed and grow from those “cramped spaces”. The question here is how to turn the story from the grand narratives to the ‘minor’ stories of refusal, of dissidence?

**Step 01**
Write a letter.

Dear Kitchen,
You have often been in the centre of attention in the stories of activism, organising collectives around your dining tables. People are obsessed with your cooking facilities, cooking, inviting guests, eating together. I don’t think the most revolutionary acts happen while chewing a meal or slurping a homemade drink. You are however an extraordinarily unique kitchen. We both know what was on the dinner table. We both know what was hidden in cabinet no REDACTED. We both know that you had hidden the REDACTED in REDACTED. But we don’t talk about it. You are a kitchen of dissidents. But please keep on pretending to be an ordinary kitchen, with lots of eating, while we are tiptoeing out, into the storage.

Sincerely yours
G. A.

* Blue light doesn’t produce shadows, and that is why it is used in the wings of theatres: so those waiting in the wings to appear onstage won’t cast any shadows, and the audience won’t see them. Remember to wear black whenever you want to go to the storage.

**Step 02**
In the story of the house, to move the story from the kitchen to the storage, one should first fix the lamp. You can find the new light bulbs in a box, on the second shelf, next to the oil lamp in the storage. Inside the box there are two bulbs. Pick the blue* one. Grab the aluminium ladder that is leaning against the left wall and place it under the lamp. Ascend the ladder and replace the blown-out bulb. Descend the ladder, fold it and lean it back to the wall. Switch on the lamp.

**Step 03**
Go to the kitchen and open cabinet 08. There is a red sack on the second shelf. Take it and unzip it. There is a pair of black gloves and a black spandex suit. Put them on and go back to the storage. Close the door.
The fall happened here, on a disappearing staircase that led down an infinite room. It was not more than a year after the Revolution, when we perched on the building 110 Freedom with all the others. After everyone descended the temporary stairs of the semi-finished building, I insisted on staying there. You were lost and I was filled with despair. Many things were lost, even that safety pin\textsuperscript{10} that we used to carry with us. I finally gave up too.

I was in the storage room, searching among the bottles of vinegar, oil, jams, cans of tuna, pasta, the bags of rice that were stacked on orange painted metal shelves. I was looking for that bottle, that, if I recalled correctly, was an ordinary empty bottle of olive oil on the breakfast table. We filled it with red vinegar though. We thought red vinegar was opaque, and that no one would guess there was something inside. We rolled up the map and put it in a plastic bag, sealed it, pushed it into the bottle and filled it with red vinegar. We labelled it: “Red Vinegar/1981” and put it in the deep corner of the shelves in the storage. Then we covered it with other stuff.

As the undamaged part of my memory remembers, there were two ladders in the storage, which had helped the family paint the whole house. One ladder was made of light aluminium, hence unstable and wobbly. The other was heavy, wooden and covered with splotches and splashes of paint, mostly white, but there were some pink spots too. They leant against a wall by a wooden door that opened to a balcony without a railing, which hung over the parking ramp and looked out on the street. The other door of this storage opened to the kitchen. Next to this door there was a rotted first aid kit hanging on the wall; inside there was penicillin powder kept in a saltshaker and a couple of rolled white bandages. The middle shelf of the box showed traces of Betadine that had been poured out; the smell remained in the box.

On the edge of the middle shelf there were a couple of oil lamps emitting a strong smell of oil and a box full of candles that had been lit, birthday candles, half-melted numbers hinting at the past birthdays and ages of each family member; a wish, a blow and applause.

In this room of strange mixture of odours, objects, memories, doubts, fears and hopes, something untimely happened: the event of disappearance. You fell, and while falling you recalled the sound of falling things from behind the storage closed door when you were sitting at the kitchen table.

\textsuperscript{10} Find the safety pin in the journal Al-Croquis, at KTH Library, Main Library, North Gallery, Architecture and Art 720 I.
The Wings
The Kitchen, The Storage, The Underground

Scene 05
The Underground

- Catch me!
  (The voice echoes along the vertical tunnel)

The vertical tunnel ended in an open space, a spacious crossroad, with five roads branching out.

The *ueue of the Queueueueueueueue*  

I never decided to wait in the queue, yet I ended up in this maze. I am not waiting for anything special, so she is last in the queue. There are also some in the middle of the queue who think they are first. And there are others just next to them who think they are the last. I am not the last, by the way. How many queues there are here, and who is the first and who is the last, I am not the last. I am not the last.
The queue

I never decided to wait in the queue, yet I ended up in this maze. I am not waiting for anything special, or anything at all. She says she has just arrived, so she is last in the queue. There are also some in the middle of the queue who think they are first. And there are others just next to them who think they are the last ones in the queue.

I arrived here half an hour ago and there are, as far as I can tell, five queues.

In a blink of an eye, the construction site resumed being a construction site again. I was still perching on the edge of the building, in a dilemma of either staying put or descending as everyone else had. The developer made this easier for me. I had to leave, as a wall was to be built where I had been sitting. The wall, I thought, consisted of layers of different material: bricks placed on top of each other with the mortar, the plaster inside, the cement outside and the white stone, the white façade. That bit of the wall replaced ‘I’ and ‘she’ and ‘he’. The ‘plural I’.

That wall was the outset of the city about to come.

Or is it only one maze where at each moment, at each turn, one feels she is the first or the last.

Break and Breach

(the 110 freedom building is becoming a finished building)

In a blink of an eye, the construction site resumed being a construction site again. I was still perching on the edge of the building, in a dilemma of either staying put or descending as everyone else had. The developer made this easier for me. I had to leave, as a wall was to be built where I had been sitting. The wall, I thought, consisted of layers of different material: bricks placed on top of each other with the mortar, the plaster inside, the cement outside and the white stone, the white façade. That bit of the wall replaced ‘I’ and ‘she’ and ‘he’. The ‘plural I’.

That wall was the outset of the city about to come.

I arrived here half an hour ago and there are, as far as I can tell, five queues.

He says he is the first in the queue, yet I thought he was the last. The other one says she has just arrived.

who think they are the last ones in the queue.

I am wondering how many queues there are here, where at each moment, at each turn, one feels she is the first or the last.

But if I wait in one of these queues as an experiment, I might be able to understand.

The underground was the extension of the garden. There was no wall between the basement and the garden, and the soil had extended into the furthermost interior walls of the basement. The trees had stretched their roots through the soil into the basement. The rusted metal columns of the house had grown from the earth. There were plants growing in the darkness. Their leaves were blue, were white, were grey. Their leaves were looking for the particles of black darkness and grey dust that were sliding down the column of light, penetrating through the gaps in the brick walls. The plants were growing to the whispers, to the rustle, to those humming noises on the cusp of falling into silence. Their roots were red. But they were not revealing that red; they were keeping it all to themselves. The plants were warm in their roots and cold in their leaves. Yet if you looked closely into their leaves, you could see that the midribs were a slightly pink – or pale red – shade that grew paler in the veins and the small netted veins.

*Warning!!
Don't break the bottle.
You might need it later.
Conversation
Part 05

He says:
- I held his hand as we walked back through the iron door. She went toward the yard and I asked her to wait until she saw that the bedroom light was on. He was jumping up and down saying: “I will turn the light on” (repeatedly), and then she could come up the ladder.

●

The Stage

*The Stairs, The Ladder, The Balcony, The Sudden Room*

There are four ladders in this house: three wooden and one aluminium. Of the three, two are straight ladders and one is foldable. The two straight ones are outside: one between the balcony and the garden, and the other between the balcony and the roof. This balcony is on the other side of the house, overlooking the garden. They are both wobbly, unstable and they shake and make noises when they are ascended or descended from. You could ask someone to hold it for you, or you could take the risk of ascending it by yourself.

There is this rule in the house that when you ascend the ladder from the garden to the balcony; if you are the last one, as soon as you get to the balcony you should push it down so no untrusted person can get to the balcony.

For the ladder between the balcony and the roof there is no such rule. It is always there, leaning against the edge of the roof.
The Ladder

Clouds appear when passing over the moon. The shadow of the window frame stretches to the furthest wall of the yard. The weeping willow whispers very slowly. The rungs creak under her feet. After the last rung she throws it away. The ladder hits the ground and bounces on its other end. The shadow of the window disappears. Silence.

Poem of Ascending a Ladder – 049
(Found in cabinet 03, in the box with the same name)

And next time come from the window,
Break the glass,
Ignore the doors,
Leave the mud inside
Stay
Laugh
Leave
As you leave, laugh.
As you laugh, break through the walls.
Let your laughter echo forever in the room interrupted by the collapse of the walls.

I close the door. Tape the windows. I caught it; your laughter is trapped!
“The room of laughter”, I write down and start to draw the plans, the sections, the façades, a perspective, where you are about to disappear in the focal point, but you don’t.
You never do.
Because your laughter is haunted in the room and has haunted the room.

See? Sometimes you don’t even need a ladder.

Secret of the Ladder

There is a secret about the ladder leaning against the wall of the roof. Can noise when you step on it make a soundly differ-

Scene 07
The Stage

The Stairs, The Ladder, The Balcony, The Sudden Room

The Balcony

[…] the balcony is actually something quite remarkable yet invisible. It is the means by which the façade is colonized and humans can float in the air while simply standing … They seem uncommon enough to be special.\textsuperscript{12}

The balcony is a space for exposition, for exhibition. In its political history, it has been a podium from which rulers, heroes, revolutionaries, kings, dictators and despot wave at masses from these protruded elements from various kinds of buildings; from palaces and institutional buildings to ordinary ones. Perhaps Rem Koolhaas was right when he said: “Without the balcony, the history of the world would have looked completely different.”\textsuperscript{13} This is how the balconies work in major politics. In the Venice Architecture Biennale 2014, the balcony was one of the architectural elements exhibited. It was exhibited through two major manifestations: one as a “micro-political balcony” representing “mass individualism” and used as a platform showing one’s identity. The other was the “macro-political” balcony for the manifestation of dominant power.\textsuperscript{14}

However, in minor politics and in the politics of dissidence, balconies perform differently. As an extension of the interior living, they could either expose the activities going on inside the houses or conceal them, depending on the situation. They could expose the excess of material objects or activities. They are \textit{micro-stages} for flash-performances, unchoreographed and spontaneous acts, when suddenly the life of the interior \textit{jumps} out into the public. But they could also distract surveillance by means of staging a parallel activity different from what is going on inside. Balconies could offer a platform to be closer to the


outside, yet with immediate access to the inside. They “balance safety and engagement with the world below”\textsuperscript{15}, providing the inhabitant a way to keep an eye on the outside. They thus also create a platform for connecting to others or being together while staying at a distance.\textsuperscript{16}

In the house of dissidents, the balcony is an architectural element that could assist in transforming the dissidence from resistance and withdrawal into a transformative and subversive force by making the appearance and disappearance. A balcony is a fooling element, a fooling space. In this house, when the real performance goes on in the wings and backstage (storage, basement and kitchen), the balcony partially exposes the performance of the dissidents in the house to the random passer-by, but only momentarily and tactically, to protect the dissidents.

\textbf{Insidē}

The balcony is the space on the cusp of visibility. It is usually empty, but it leaks the performance, stages it like a flash of light. You step onto the balcony, stand with your hands on the railing and look into the street (remember that there is no railing in this balcony, so you should just \textit{act} as if there is one). You stay there for some minutes and go back to the storage. After a couple of minutes, you step back onto the balcony and:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Scene 08}
\textit{The Leakage}
\end{itemize}

The iron bars open. The stray cat jumps through the bars. It is silent and a gleam of blue light shines onto the dark deep balcony. It means that the storage door is open. On the balcony the silhouette of a woman can be seen; she is carrying an orange chair with dark green legs. She puts the chair in the middle of the balcony close to the wall, sits cross-legged and rustles the newspaper open. The door on the left side of the balcony is slammed closed. The kitchen curtains close behind her.


\textsuperscript{16} See the “Falling (infra)Structures” in the section “Pause”, where the infrastructure as a model of creating collectivity through the politics of minor is discussed.
He peels an orange and says:
- When do these oranges ripen?

And then, with a sigh, continues:
- The house was under a spell methinks! We could never finish it. It happened several times. We were about to finish it. We managed to get a developer involved. But it never worked. And we had to demolish it. We did demolish it.

I wonder if the unfinished status, the cracks, the gaps that were letting the cold winds in, the chimney that let the mouse in, the crumbling plaster, the plants growing in the basement, were there as channels for the magic, for the spell to crawl in the house, to make it under a spell?

She says:

---

17. This refers to Rebecca Solnit’s text on hope in dark times, where she writes: “It is important to say what hope is not: it is not the belief that everything was, is or will be fine. The evidence is all around us of tremendous suffering and destruction. The hope I am interested in is about broad perspectives with specific possibilities, ones that invite or demand that we act. It is also not a sunny everything-is-getting-better narrative, though it may be a counter to the everything-is-getting-worse one. You could call it an account of complexities and uncertainties, with openings.” Frontpage (2016). ‘Rebecca Solnit on Hope in Dark Times.’ E-flux. <http://conversations.e-flux.com/t/rebecca-solnit-on-hope-in-dark-times/4127> Accessed 17 October 2016.
The Sudden Room

Inside

How could one describe a room that doesn’t exist, and about which no one knows when it comes to existence? Everyone knows that it surely appears, on one moment, on one day or one night. But wasn’t it already a description of the room? This room, which will be called a Suddenroom from now on, is a room of hopes, laughter, imagination. It is the materialisation of the humorous moments of life, the critical release of laughter, a micro-revolution in the midst of boredom and despair.

Scene 09

The courtyard is not part of the house, but it is part of the 110 Freedom Building, the unfinished building. It is a yard where he has stayed since. The unfinished building is finished now. He has watched the plants grow, waited for the sun to stretch to the far wall, and washed the carpets every year before the end of the winter. His carpet washing is a ritual. He first sets a whole living room in the courtyard, brings out the armchairs, sofa, plants, vases. Then he lays the carpet in the middle of this living room and starts washing it with a wooden snow shovel. He calls this ritual hospitality without guests.

Scene 10

It’s two in the afternoon. You try to make a piece of music in your head with all the ticking things, rhythms, beats etc. in this waiting room. The marriage didn’t work after all. You pretended to be happy for way too long. The air-conditioning unit rattles and leaks into a bucket; its dripping gives another rhythm to this room. You notice some familiar faces that you have encountered during the last days, hollow gazes, dozing, sinking in thoughts
or in intense soliloquy. The chairs and armchairs are fake brown leather, arranged around the hall. The four white doors open and close irregularly. Their handles are golden coloured steel. A clock ticks on the wall. The aluminium-sliding window opens to a backyard, onto which another building also looks. You feel something humorous in this Marriage & Divorce Office, and you soon discover that it is actually a drop of sweat rolling down your back that is tickling you. You don’t want to grab that newspaper on the glass table in the middle of the waiting room. But you read the headlines from afar while looking at the photo of an orange city: The Orange City Warns Us To Stay At Home Today. “Oxygen is orange” you think. It's a tad weird that you should wait all day long for an institution to recognise your falling-out-of-love. You hear the thump of stamps from next door. You make up a game for yourself, guessing which of the stamps are for falling in and which are for falling out. You randomly appoint a hesitation to the falling out. And you count: 74, 75, 76..., 82,... The stamp beats blend with the ticking of the clock, the rattling of the air-conditioning unit, the sound of water running in the backyard. The symphony of (dys)function, of leaking, of failing. You crane your neck and look down. A middle-aged man is washing a carpet. The carpet is flanked by a row of classic style armchairs that are arranged by the cement wall on your left side and in front of the row of armchairs, a row of plant pots on your right side. The man pushes a snow shovel on the surface of the carpet, which is covered with suds, and with each movement you get to see the blue and white flowers on its red background. You sniff at the smell of the dust mixed with water. You direct your attention back to the waiting room, where tens of others are sitting around glumly, and continue: 104, 105, 106. You are about to count the 107th when a room suddenly appears in the middle of the hall:

- Scene 11

The Sudden Room is cobalt blue from outside. And inside, no one knows what colour it is because no one can enter this room. You just watch it from outside.

- Scene 12

The Sudden Room has a door. The door is locked. You try to open the door. You can’t. Act ends here.
The Sudden Room has a door on its roof. But there is very little space between its roof and the ceiling of the office. You find a ladder in the courtyard, take it here and climb up it and arrive at the roof. You try to squeeze yourself in between the roof and the ceiling. There is no way that you could make it. And even if you could, there would be no chance of opening the door, because the door opens outward and there is almost no space for it to open. And if you could, I would eat my hat.

**Manual 03**

Forget about the institutionalisation of falling out of love and shake a leg. You’ll need a bit of elbow grease here. Go downstairs, knock on the nephrologist’s office door. Go in. Unfold your ladder and place it in the middle of the waiting room. Go up the ladder. Push on the ceiling. You get into a cobalt blue room. There is a door that you can open. It opens into a long corridor where you’ll be immersed in the city noise echoing around you. Keep on walking.

**Manual 04**

*Making a Sudden Room 01*

The Sudden Room works like a translating machine. It translates the tragedy to comedy. You can try one type of Sudden Room here while waiting in the Marriage and Divorce Office. First, cut the next page on the dashed-line and follow the instructions.

1. Cut out the red rectangle through the lines. You will have 192 squares. Keep them on one side of your desk.
2. Cut on the outermost line of the other shape. Then fold on the lines. Glue the surfaces 02 and 03. Make a cube.
3. Before gluing surface 01, put the 48 red squares inside the cube. Then glue the last surface.
4. Attach the thread to the side of your choice using the needle. You can remove the needle later or keep it if you wish.
5. Now hold the thread or the needle if you decided not to cut it and rotate the cube in the air.
Cut this red rectangle through the lines. You will have 192 squares.

Attach the thread to one side of the cube by means of that needle. You can remove the needle later.

Now hold the thread and rotate the cube in the air.

Cut on the outermost line of the other shape. Then fold on the lines. Glue the surfaces 02 and 03. Make a cube. Before gluing surface 01, put the red squares inside the cube. Then glue the last surface.

Attach the thread to one side of the cube by means of that needle. You can remove the needle later.
Formula O3

- Writing with Unwelcome Co-Authors
- The Two Bottles of Milk
- The Roof of the House: On Imagination
Writing with Unwelcome Co-Authors

Dissidence vs. Activism

As an implicit, slow, and minor mode of political struggle, dissidence takes shape not by making an appearance, but through low-key mechanisms and tools, methods and tactics that operate differently from the overt critical gestures applied in mainstream activism. Dissidence is the embodiment of political action; that is, turning the very act of living into a political act. Different and somehow contrary to dissidence, activism – as Alasdair discusses in his Do Something! A critique of activism – “can very easily lead to a ghettoization of “politics” into the meetings and actions”¹ separated from the daily lives “where politics should exist”.² In this sense, political engagement in its activist form becomes an occupation exercised on certain occasions and done together with a network of similar agents. In addition to ghettoization, today’s activism is also criticised as an inconsequential action, devoid of subversive and transformative potential. Erik Swyngedouw, in his “Designing the Post-Political City and the Insurgent Polis”, criticises many forms of contemporary activism as staging “performative gestures that do nothing but keep the state of the situation intact”.³ Mainstream activism has deviated from radical political action, an absolute exigency of subversive action, and is directed into a sort of fashion, representing a façade of activist aesthetics, looking cheap, and reproducing the image of once-revolutionary grassroots movements. Radical in gesture, it only acts in the possibilities that a dominant power leaves to sustain itself. In the absence of radicality, and only situated in these permitted spaces of

2. Ibid.
possibilities, this kind of activism can guarantee the continuity of the status quo by releasing the existing tension; it works as safety valve.

This might be the consequence of what many contemporary thinkers such as Slavoj Žižek discuss as the absence of clear thinking and modelling alternatives in the act of activism. These thinkers relate the failure of many of these global movements to this absence. In his short talk entitled “Don’t Act. Just Think”, Žižek relates the relative failure of global anti-capitalist movements to the lack of thinking about a possible alternative to the status quo. He argues that these movements, as forms of activism, simply express their deviation from the capitalist relations and rules, without arriving at an alternative. The lack of clear thinking in activism has also been discussed by Theodor Adorno in his “Resignation”. Although Adorno discusses it from another point of view, i.e. the rejection of the necessity of making critical thinking more applicable to activism, his critique is valid where activism becomes “an end in itself”. He writes:

Thought, enlightenment conscious of itself, threatens to disenchant the pseudo-reality within which, according to Habermas’ formulation, activism moves. This activism is tolerated only because it is viewed as pseudo-reality. Pseudo-activity is allied with pseudo-reality in the design of a subjective position: an activity that overplays itself and fires itself up for the sake of its own publicity without admitting to what degree it serves as a substitute for satisfaction, thus elevating itself to an end in itself.

With such criticism of activism, I argue that dissidence is a form of political struggle that tries to maintain its radicality by performing the alternatives as a way of criticising the status quo as a simultaneous act of thinking-imagining-acting. Based in the politics of minor, it starts from the “politics of small things” in Jeffrey C. Goldfarb’s term, but expands over all areas of life. But what can dissidence as a distinct mode of subversive political action enable us to do? Can

5. Ibid.
it atone for the defects of activism?

The subject of dissidence as a political engagement in the context of the Soviet Bloc during the communist era is and has been studied extensively. In her text “Dissident through Activism”, Ines Weizman compares dissidents in the Soviet Bloc with the Western activists of the time and also in contemporary practices. In this comparison, she describes dissidents as those who risked their lives by organising underground gatherings, lectures, exhibitions and performances, while Western activists had access to media for expressing their dissent. In this way, she renders the Western activists on one side of the Berlin Wall as those politically engaged in the world, and the Eastern dissidents as engaged in “a mode of retreat from it”. She writes:

Whereas the activist finds and takes action in the real world, constantly pushing the boundaries of the politics of the possible, dissident aesthetics represent quite often a retreat into the imaginary, ironic, dreamlike and the impossible. The sites of dissident architecture were the kitchens—private sites of social interaction and production behind a closed door—and the paper—the ultimate site of architectural fantasy—that needed not to be materialized. If the dissidents’ retreat and the work of fantasy and imagination was indeed a political gesture, for activists, engagement, potential co-option collaboration and subversion of norms were the modes of action.

However, despite such retreat from the oppressive power and withdrawal to underground activities, dissident architects, as Weizman argues, could challenge the “standardized language of Soviet architecture”, namely through “paper architecture” and thereby expand their influence on the politics and “ethical function of various forms of ‘creative practices’.”

On the other hand, in her text “From Escapism to Activism: Two Forms of Architectural Dissent in Romania”, Dana Vais discusses the difference between

10. Ibid.
11. Ibid. p.38.
the dissident architects of the communist era and the activist architects of the contemporary era in their relation to reality by criticising both as forms of escapist. The former “tried to escape undesirable realities around them”, and the latter considers undesirable realities just as “a resource that can be critically used”.\textsuperscript{13} She writes:

Architects under communism escaped reality by exploring wider ideas of architecture. Contemporary activists, on the other hand, totally immersed into a similarly overpowering real world, drive certain practices beyond architecture itself. Is this not another form of escapism?\textsuperscript{14}

Weizman argues that when the Soviet Bloc fell, the figure of the dissident also disappeared. In the contemporary forms of architectural practices, as she discusses, the two political engagements are undertaken mainly through one approach, that is activism and direct action, in the absence of dissidence.\textsuperscript{15} She goes on to argue that: “contemporary political action must fuse the spirit of the activist with the ghost of the dissident.”\textsuperscript{16}

The figure of dissident should be constructed in response to such a need. In my argument, such a figure still persists, albeit hidden, in various parts of the world, although unrecognised to a great extent due to the risks it imposes on dissidents. Perhaps being unrecognised belongs to the characteristics of a dissident at work. Without aiming to map the ongoing dissidence in various parts of the world, which will contradict the politics of dissidence as a stealth mode of political engagement, the study and development of their tactics is necessary in various contexts, be they open or closed, democratically governed or under more authoritarian systems.

In this way, dissidence in this thesis has not been discussed as a practice of the past or limited to a specific context. By positioning itself at odds with explicit activist gestures, dissidence is constructed as a form of oscillation between imagination, underground, impossible modes of being, and the reality of the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid. p.37.
dominant power. Despite what is being understood as dissidence from its origins in the Soviet Bloc, in my discussion dissidence is not a withdrawal, but a different kind of engagement. As discussed in the introductory part of this thesis, its combination with minor politics forwards it as a mode of political engagement with dominant power relations, a more layered, and more complicated form of engagement. The ongoing dissidence in various parts of the world proves that an explicit gesture of activism is not always the best way to challenge the status quo.

Dissidence seems to risk becoming complicit with power, as Weizman puts it. This apparent complicity is in fact also where the paradox of dissidence resides.\textsuperscript{17} Inhabiting this paradox, I would like to situate the figure of the dissident not as one who is complicit with power, but as one who fools it; that is to say, not one who retreats from a dominant power, but one who circumvents it. Weizman’s term “momentary complicities”\textsuperscript{18} could perhaps better explain this fooling operation of dissidence. This momentary complicity is what I prefer to describe – as I have earlier – as oscillation between being in and out, constantly, through which one fools an oppressive power, and creates a crack in the system. In this way, the dissident mode of political engagement, be it in architecture or other forms of practices or living styles, is not only about creating a safe haven, shielded from the violence of an authoritarian regime, but also making small and radical changes at a time.\textsuperscript{19}

This mode of articulation of dissidence allows us to develop a radical position that is critical from within, a position achieved by projecting an alternative that is examined exactly by living with it over an extended period of time. The figure of the dissident is proof of the possibility of criticality from within, but she is also a figure who is difficult to grasp, to describe, to imitate or to fully understand as she operates tactically in response to different situations, as well as performing under momentary complicities and taking paradoxical positions. It is in this way that being a dissident is a highly performative political engagement.


\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. p. 09.

\textsuperscript{19} This way of understanding dissidence could also overcome the worries that Ines Weizman writes about as the inefficiency of dissidence in changing the power relation that it tries to escape: “On the one hand they appear to be always part of a certain Faustian pact that embraces both dissident and agents of power in a complex relationship that requires momentary complicities that need to be carefully negotiated against the potential effectiveness of gestures of refusal and critique. On the other, dissident acts seem to reproduce the same power relation they had tried to escape.” Ibid. p. 09.
The tactics used by dissidents are not only applicable in extremely oppressive systems, but also within established institutions where certain values or rules have become immutable. An investigation of dissident tactics would be helpful in the consideration of alternative modes of subversive practices and for developing a critical practice that doesn’t necessarily suggest the exodus mode of action or escapism and take distance from what it opposes, but a mode of working with and against a dominant power. A dissident could be a figure who inevitably writes with an unwelcome co-author; that is, she writes with the oppressive power structure. At the same time, she writes against it, covertly or in a subversive manner that is difficult to recognise because its subversiveness is disguised. As it is disguised, it is less likely to be blocked, which means its practice can be prolonged.

In order to achieve such a precarious political engagement, dissidence becomes a slow process requiring a deep perception of the context, enabled through what I have called critical inhabitation earlier. It requires being ever-present in the play of hegemonic orders. The complexity of the context and the ever-present danger of being caught in such critical contexts necessitate a continuous attendance and slowness in action, but also a mode of oscillation. This mode of political engagement requires a lot of thinking and investigation, and a tireless process of trial and error on various scales and at various distances from the context. In other words, dissidence is a slow mode of action that simultaneously combines thinking, imagining and acting. The slow process and the research-like lifestyle is what induces radicality in dissident methods.

Complication and Unwelcome Co-Authors
Layered spaces, complex corridors, disguised spaces behind mirrors, hidden staircases, underground labyrinths, closets opening onto staircases, a roof without stairs or ladders, basements, dark storages could be the conceptual and real spaces of dissidence. These spaces are not unrealisable imaginary ones; they could actually exist, they could be built and inhabited through acts of critical inhabitation. Such hidden and stealth spaces emerge in response to oppression and restrictions that otherwise ban subversive modes of being. Banned modes of being do not cease to exist, but move to hidden spaces and continue growing in the shadows. They resist proscription by hiding behind themselves, behind their changing and unrecognised characteristics. The space behind a mirror represents such latency; in the mirror, figures of tyranny merely see themselves reflected, and all the while subversive modes of living continue to develop.
The potential for hiding exists in each and every space. When the necessity arises, these potentials can be enacted through different tactics of dissident architecture and through dissidents’ political performances of inhabiting those spaces. Writing through the house earlier in this section was one example of such an approach to a dissident architecture; writing through the house, its real and imaginary stories and characters, creates a different house with fictional spatial relations. By means of fiction as a political and subversive device, writing dissident architecture transforms the spaces of a house into a political performance ground, where dissident characters become the agents of this transformation. This writing method has created a new house within the original house by complicating its spatial relations. This complication is achieved through the retelling of its stories, the activation of its latent layers, cutting through the house, planting unusual plants, moving through the house, expanding some spaces vertically and others horizontally, animating objects, enlarging closets and cabinets, connecting certain spatial elements to the city outside, breaking the linearity of the history of the house and merging the characters with each other. By means of writing, the house is connected to the city through a political engagement of its inhabitants. The inhabitants, the dissidents move constantly between the spaces of the house and the city.

Writing dissident architecture deals with two main questions. One is: how to tell a story we cannot tell? And the other: how can this struggle with an impossible narration become materialised and create a dissident architecture? In the investigation of these two questions in relation to each is where dissident architecture comes into existence.

One approach to these questions is through methods of complicating spatial relations in (writing) dissident architecture that create complex, ambiguous and labyrinthine spatial qualities. This approach also produces a complex system of meanings, signs, language, tools, and modes of narration that takes shape in response to a dominant system that is obsessed with surveillance and control. Ironically, the system of control itself works with complexity in a multilayered mode; it works through a complex and obscure system of controlling, prohibiting, permitting, segregating, silencing, punishing and rewarding. The system itself has developed on the logic of concealing and stealth; it is an opaque and changing system, oscillating between the realm of law and out of it, in a “state
of exception”. In this opaque and confusing system, many political collisions would be undertaken in silence and darkness and end in that silence. It is in this darkness and silence that dissidents grope about, as does the oppressive power. Dissidence is also practiced in darkness.

The characteristics of an oppressive system that I describe above make oppressive systems difficult to challenge, even by way of subversive acts. The most difficult systems to oppose or challenge are the semi-authoritarian power systems, which have fluid and more ambiguous systems of permission and proscription. Whilst absolute authoritarian systems operate on a more linear and binary system of right/wrong, enemy or friend, inside or outside, prohibited or permitted, semi-authoritarian power systems have more fluid and slippery systems of judgment, and tactically dealing with, subverting or opposing them requires constant negotiations and careful attention. The relative freedom allowed by semi-authoritative systems might be real, or it might turn out to be a trap; they shift from one register to the other depending on the urgency of a given situation.

As the offspring of the neoliberal condition, these systems are more omnipresent in our contemporary world. From the so-called democratic institutions with their own covert authoritarian agendas in the West to the so-called dictator regimes with their more overt systems of restriction and control, both work – albeit on different levels – through this semi-authoritarian operation. They leave spaces of freedom that, as I have argued earlier, release mounting tensions in a body politic and thereby guarantee the maintenance of the status quo, or in other cases facilitate surveillance. It is in the ambiguous and fluctuating sociopolitical context in both of the political contexts that I describe that we are to act. No matter whether to take a subversive act or just follow its relations to survive, the dominant systems become our co-authors. Yet to create different and subversive relations to these co-authors, to change them and to simultaneously examine alternatives without risking our lives, dissidence can be applicable and effective.

**Censor: A Co-Author to Write With/Against**

One strategic instrument of control and prohibition in the hands of the dominant
power is censorship. In his text “The Geometry of Censorship and Satire”, Mark Ames discusses Sergei Dorkeno’s theory of “vertical censorship versus horizontal censorship”, where the former refers to a “tyrannical top-down force”, and the latter to the Western approach of “morality-policing” and censorship from within. He suggests that it is much easier to sneak around and oppose vertical censorship because in the continuous field of horizontal censorship “it comes from everyone and anyone”, which renders sneaking around difficult. Horizontal censorship is a response to what Foucault calls governmentality; an internalised system of control over individual bodies even in the absence of controlling power. Therefore, horizontal censorship – a sort of self-censorship growing from the economy of fear – conforms and forms the norms and dominant social, political and ethical modes and produces majoritarian identities. Although vertical censorship is related to the operation of the dominant powers to oppress undesired and politically provocative thoughts, horizontal censorship assists its operation by internalising the imposed oppression.

Beyond this comparison, what strikes me as interesting is the mechanism of censorship in itself and how, paradoxically, it invites the dissidents to participate whilst simultaneously excluding them from that participation. Censorship is not the total ban of a certain activity, but concerns how activities are regulated and curtailed by rules that have been determined. Censorship points to that ambiguous oscillation of the dominant power in and out of the realm of law, where the boundary between what is permitted and prohibited is vague and mutable. By breaking the rules of censorship, the work is automatically condemned to exclusion from public reception. Therefore, that boundary – the line between what is permitted and prohibited – is a performing ground for a dissident, on which she has to walk, like a tightrope walker.

When censorship inflicts its rules on a field, it turns it from a creative or intellectual field into a field of scrutiny. In this way, censorship creates a space of negotiation, especially when considered from a dissident’s point of view. And it would be a task for dissidents not only to negotiate with the censor, but also to invent a

22. Ibid.
language to circumvent censorship.

Censorship clearly demonstrates the might of a dominant power and its instruments of control. Nevertheless, it also has blind spots; its process cannot be exhaustive, and it is exactly in these blind spots – perhaps even where the censor has been won over – that dissidence discovers a small foothold. The dissidents not only discover such footholds, but also construct them by inventing a new language. In the moments in which freedom of expression is tolerated and yet curtailed, so that the status quo continues to be maintained, the dissident does not fool herself by enjoying that marginal freedom. She cuts through the unpermitted areas of politics by means of her invented language.

In the process of censorship, in the confrontation between the author of the work and the censor, there is an extra element applied as the instrument of scrutiny by the latter. Lev Losseff, in “On the Beneficence of Censorship: Aesopian Language in Modern Russian Literature”, writes about the censorship of literary texts and the conflict between the censor and the author by considering the text through two different phenomenological aspects. Where the author views her writing as a work of art, the censor reads it as a material object. He writes:

Yet because this text is one thing in the political structure and another in the artistic structure, the Censor and Author, while seemingly dealing with the same quantity, are actually dealing with two disparate quantities.

It is in the encounter of these two understandings of the work – in an unequal power relation – that the work necessarily becomes political. That extra element of scrutiny plays an important role in the creation of new methods of creative activity; in different fields, this extra element could be viewed as extra-literary, extra-architectural, extra-research, etc. It is by means of that extra element that a language could be created that could blur the distinction between the creative and the political. On the one hand, the censor uses it as a device of investigation and for ticking off a checklist that confirms adherence to the dominant values. On the other hand, the author as a dissident should understand how to turn that

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25. Ibid.
extra element of scrutiny against itself by inventing a new language that disrupts its logic. This extra element is thus the object of an encounter between the censor and the dissident; a conflict through which the two become co-authors, by writing a text together.26

In his essay “Love, Iranian Style” James Wood reviews Shahriar Mandanipour’s novel Censoring an Iranian Love Story and writes about how the instrument of scrutiny is materialised in the text and the plot to the extent that it affects the evolution of the story. He writes:

Novelists fret over how to get their characters into and out of rooms, but what if their characters weren’t allowed to be in those rooms in the first place?27

By thinking this way, Wood invites the terms and conditions of censorship into the story plot and portrays the bans spatially, as closed doors that prohibit entry. Characters, as such, are kept outside the rooms. But what happens next? Does a dissident author investigate how a character might find a way to enter the closed rooms? Could she find a way to force her characters inside? Or are those rooms left empty?

In his novel Censoring an Iranian Love Story, Shahriar Mandanipour plays with such an idea. As Wood writes, the novel “is not simply prohibited by censorship but made by it.”28 The book, which is about censorship, has also been censored by the author, in order to receive publishing permission. The story unravels in the impossibility of expressing the affection between two characters who are in love with each other. As Wood brings to our attention, the author’s figurative insistence on the impossibility of writing a love story through writing it is what delicately reveals the relationship between the censor and author, transforming a non-literary element into a literary one. In other words, he not only writes about the censorship, he also writes with it. In Mandanipour’s novel, the characters suddenly leap out of the fictional universe into the real world and have to deal with the rules of censorship. Thus, the border between the real and fiction is blurred, and fiction becomes a political instrument without losing its independent

26. Route 10: The extra element points toward the outside of the discipline, and could be thought through transdisciplinary thinking.
28. Ibid.
content and by resisting becoming propaganda. For Mandanipour, the rules of the censorship themselves become that “extra” element in the novel that makes the novel evolve.

Regarding blurring the border between the fiction and reality, in a less dissident approach, Mandanipour does another experiment with the materialisation of his novel in relation to censorship, yet one of representation. In a copy of his book published abroad, the words and sentences that might have prevented the book from being published are included, but crossed out with a line. As a more literal and formalist way of experimenting with censorship, the novel suddenly exits that field of encounter and conflict with the dominant power and becomes more of a device to represent a political situation rather than engaging with it and interrupting it. Wood nevertheless considers this an example of how fiction can become a material site of action and “real enough to strike lines through”.  

He continues:

> On the other hand, fiction becomes more fictional—multiple writers (the author and his censors) are making up a collective story as they go along, improvising, cutting, editing, bargaining with each other. One of the great successes of this book is how thoroughly it persuades the reader that a novel about censorship could not help also being a novel about fiction-making; and it thus brings a political gravity to a fictive self-consciousness sometimes abused by the more weightless postmodernism.

This demonstrates how dissidence can be deeply rooted in fiction. It is with the power of fiction that censorship restrictions can be circumvented, as Wood writes; for instance, by applying multi-layered characters that move between the fiction, its real context, and its associated politics. In this way, fiction is itself a performing ground for the dissidents, while being a dissident is a fictional occupation. Yet both could be completely real but represented as fiction. In this play between fiction and reality, dissidence could be constructed.

**Residing in the Shadow: Aesopian Language**

An author working under conditions of prohibition and restriction in any
field must keep the censor in mind. This, “at the expense of freedom”, does not necessarily harm the creative process, but as Leonidas Donskis writes in his “Power and Imagination: Studies in Politics and Literature”, it nurtures “[a]llegory, fable, political fantasy, or social satire”.31 Donskis suggests that “ideological censorship” causes Aesopian language to emerge in literature.32 Lev Loseff maintains that this genre works through elements such as “allegory, parody, periphrasis, ellipsis, quotation, shifts (“sdvigi”), reduction and absurdum, and non sequitur”,33 but can also emerge in “historical fiction, exotica, science fiction, nature writing, anecdotes, translations, and children’s literature.”34 Although “Aesopian language came to existence in ancient times”,35 it was first used by the Russian satirist M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin in his Letters to Auntie in the 19th century.36 In the words of Lioudmila Savinitch, Aesopian language holds a sort of ‘figurativeness’, which is different from that of the fable and parable.37 As she writes: “Aesopian ‘figurativeness’ serves to present thoughts that are illegal or in contradiction to official state policies or ideologies.”38 By differentiating the Aesopian figurativeness from fable and parable, she describes such language as:

[…] an utterance, used strategically, which, by means of various discursive devices, may generate a second semantic level of speech, i.e. a hidden layer, the content of which is officially undesirable or forbidden; in other words, with the implicit content, or subtext, that is officially undesirable or forbidden.39

Savinitch points to a shift in the operation of Aesopian language where the subtext carries the main content, rather than the explicit main text. In this way,

34. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
Aesopian language is a way of writing in between the lines, saying things without directly expressing them, and creating a situation from which multiple meanings could be understood. This is exactly how the figure of dissident is constructed: through the performativity of the Aesopian language.

Aesopian language could also be described in relation to Ketman, a concept through which people’s real thoughts are kept as a subtext rather than being expressed explicitly. Ketman, in Donskis’ words, is “a form of covert dissent.” Rooted in the Persian language and culture, it has historically worked against authoritarian regimes. Although it is of Islamic origin, emerging when and where people were forced to hide their faith in face of danger, it can be applied extensively. Initially a religious strategy used when a man of faith could not express his beliefs, it has been practiced in many other contexts under authoritarian regimes and is well documented in the Eastern European context. As Donskis writes, Ketman can be applied in any “trans-ideological and trans-civilizational idiom that operates equally well within religious and secular ideocracies.” The concept of Ketman can be deployed as a tactic that shares the characteristics of dissidence. As a tactic for living under oppressive regimes, it allows the dissident to reside in the cracks of those systems without deferring to their values and obeying their rules. Donskis writes:

Those who have internalized the way of being called “Ketman” can live with the contradictions of saying one thing and believing another, adapting freely to each new requirement of their rulers while believing that they have preserved somewhere within themselves the autonomy of a free thinker.

Referring to Czesław Miłosz’s book The Captive Mind, Donskis describes Ketman as “a world of concealed identity and mental acrobatics.” The term mental acrobatics combined with concealed identity once more recalls the performativ aspect of living a dissident life. As I mentioned earlier in this text, the dissident character herself is constructed through an Aesopian language. Yet that concealed

41. Ibid. p. 141.
identity and the character through which she conceals herself is practiced, performed, and constructed through the simultaneous thinking, imagining and acting. This mental acrobatics could be understood in terms of risk-taking activities and radical thinking – both characteristics of dissidents, but also of a long apprenticeship in political engagement, because dissidence is constant work.

In *The Captive Mind*, Miłosz describes the concept of Ketman – specifically in the context of the Soviet Bloc – in different categories, such as: National Ketman, the Ketman of Revolutionary Purity, Aesthetic Ketman, Professional Ketman, Skeptical Ketman, Metaphysical Ketman, and Ethical Ketman. Although he refers to the fascinating devices and techniques enabled by a Ketman approach – specifically to conceal the true political views of people under oppression – he mainly presents it as a protective façade rather than as a subversive concept. For example, in Aesthetic Ketman, he talks about “a man of taste” who applauds and writes supporting reviews of propaganda art exhibitions and the like in public, and “[h]e changes completely within the four walls of his home”44, listening to different music, collecting different art and writing differently. Although this reading of Ketman points to the individual freedom one could achieve in his/her private realm, I argue that this individual freedom must also be used toward the invention of an Aesopian language that could challenge the dominant power. Such an approach requires the use of subversive language even when one appears to write supportive propaganda. The practice of experimenting with Aesopian language – not only as a literary device, but as a method of making in other fields as well – is a necessary part of Ketman in the life of dissidents. Dissidence, I propose, is a constant expression of political engagement carried through all aspects of life; hence the need of Aesopian language in various situations.

In this way, Ketman becomes a tactic with the potential to open up a space for the dissident to speak to power without being oppressed or falling in danger, specifically by means of an Aesopian language. This is a quality that Miłosz does not emphasise in his book, as he mainly writes about it as a method of survival rather than subversion. If the dissident withdraws to the “four walls of home” and turns the home into a site of dissent, there should be a process that allows the dissent to retaliate against what has pushed him or her into that private realm; the dissident must be able to exit her house, or somehow let her thoughts leak out, perhaps as a political act, lest the house become a prison. In my reading of

Ketman, it is not a mode of retreating to a depoliticised private life, but a political tactic, which expands the scope of politics from the public sphere to the private and domestic spaces of life. The tactic of Ketman can prepare the conditions for an expansion of politics, whereby dissidence leaks through the ‘four walls of home’ into the public sphere. Aesopian language combined with Ketman holds the potential to do just this, albeit extremely slowly.

**Leakage**

The idea of leakage is an important aspect of the concept of Ketman. Otherwise, as discussed above, it risks remaining inconsequential, a mere expression of lifestyle, or worse: an apolitical and isolated individual life that turns the home into a prison. With that said, leakage is somehow inevitable. Tim Ingold considers the surfaces around things temporary and says: “things *leak*, forever”. He has also said that this very leakage is what makes things alive. In his essay “Being Alive to a World without Objects”, he refers to Joshua Pollard’s “The Art of Decay and the Transformation of Substance”, where he discusses that what we discover in the “life of things” is “the opposite of capture and containment, namely discharge and leakage”. This flow and leakage could also be the foundation of the creation of collective through a minor politics that, as discussed before, develops from an individual aspiration to participate in a collective political act.

A friend once told me a true story about a censor in a semi-authoritarian context whose job was to scrutinise novels and literary texts. His task was basically to read novels through the eyes of a censor, trying to find direct or indirect statements that could mean or hint at something oppositional or subversive, or “politically problematic”, if you like. Such a person must have a vivid imagination and the ambition to dig through layers of a text. Not only did the censor have to read the books, he also had to critically deliberate every single statement, and consider the other meanings that it might bear. His job required the close reading of literary texts – a familiar technique to those from the field of literature. Years of working with texts and practicing close reading made the censor a fan of literature. He gradually lost his power of scrutiny and went off-course in the world of fiction, among the words and in the flow of stories. Consequently, he became a bad censor. He lost his job, but became an expert and lover of literature. This is

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46. Ibid.
47. Ibid. p. 220.
one of the main powers of dissidence: it is contagious and can turn tyrants into dissidents. These literary texts had been written following the rules of censorship, in order to have a chance of being read by the censor. But the complexity of the applied language drew the censor into the narrative and absorbed him into its multiple layers.

The subtlety and complexity of dissident language creates a chance for dissident literature to be read. If the texts were written in an overt language of dissent, they would never have been considered from the outset. Yet through the use of allegorical language, the author gets the chance of being read by the censor, and as a result might even influence the censor to such a degree that he loses his job and discovers instead a love of literature. As a small success story for the dissident project, this story shows how the idea of leakage is central to dissidence. A dissident methodology can trap conservative minds and create more cracks in the oppressive power structure, but at the same time it can connect to those who might also be inspired to become critics of a political situation, and then dissidents.

**House: An Aesopian Architecture**

To translate the tactics of Ketman to material elements of architecture, I draw on Laura Levin’s concept of *camouflaging* in her *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In*. Camouflage, as she explains in the second chapter of the book ‘Camouflage Acts’, is not about being invisible, but about becoming visible differently. The process of camouflaging when it comes to a discussion of dissidence could be read as constructing an identity capable of fooling the dominant power, a fooling identity, or essentially, Ketman. In narrating political stories, the domestic spaces of the houses could work through Levin’s concept of camouflage. The house, understood as a performing ground for dissidents, both protects them and makes it possible for them to develop their dissident tactics. Furthermore however, the house could also work as in the above story of the censor, producing what could later make the others outside of the house dissidents. However, the domestic spaces of the house are not totally detached from the politics of the outside. Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, in his *The Politics of Small Things*, pictures the kitchen tables where “friends and relatives are relatively free to discuss narratives of their lives that are distinct from the official truth”. Yet

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they are aware that when they move away from this table, things are different. He writes: “while power does not directly intervene in these interactions among friends and family, it is present. It controls even what is articulated against the powers.”\textsuperscript{50} The presence of power, even in the domestic spaces of the house, trains the dissidents to articulate a language that could be later applied when speaking to that very power, in exactly the same manner as the writer writes with the censor as her or his co-author.

In his documentary \textit{A House that Pours}, Ahmad Mir Ehsan renders his childhood house as the locus of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and revolutionary thoughts. He describes spaces of the house to set up the context of his storytelling about the Revolution. Instead of narrating the story through the overt representation of ubiquitous signs and images of revolution, he situates such an important historical event in a minor space – his childhood home – and lets it unfold in the spaces of a house that is left undisturbed by the Revolution. He narrates:

\begin{quote}
In Lahijan, rains, fig trees and evacuation are enemies of the houses. When a house is evacuated, rains and fig trees take root in its walls; and the house gradually falls. In 1978, the west side of the house was still standing. It rained, fig trees took root and it collapsed. Since when has the revolution been on the house’s mind? When did the revolution start in our house? Was it the house that like a womb developed the revolutionary ideals in its inhabitants’ minds or was it the revolutionary ideals that devoured the house?\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

In \textit{A House That Pours}, the event of the 1979 Revolution is intensified amid the architecture of a house and its garden. The house is old, a paragon of traditional Iranian architecture. Upon entering each room, one is confronted with several routes through the house. Mir Ehsan compares the Revolution to a labyrinth. The garden, the labyrinthine spaces, the multiple doors opening and closing one after another, the continuity of movement through the space, the niches, the mysterious corners unfolding before the light that inches in – these are all elements that are set up as a performing ground for the revolutionary inhabitants of the house and the act of revolution; the elements that we usually take for granted, but which hold the potential to prepare the ground for dissent. He

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid. p. 13,14.
\textsuperscript{51} Translation by the author from \textit{A House that Pours}. Dir.Ahmad Mirehsan. Documentary. 2010.
shifts the ground of revolt from the street to the house and thereby invites us to see the house, a private space, as a performing ground where the most radical elements of a revolution are growing, making us wonder: What is it that makes us revolutionary?\(^{52}\)

The story of dissidents or dissident places can hardly be written at all; that is to say, if the real story were told, then the dissident would be exposed to danger, or it would not be dissidence anymore. Yet the house as the spatial manifestation of Ketman could be a ground for dissidents to perform, and for their stories to thereby be told by writing its architecture. The architecture of the house in the text “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissidents”, as a house of dissidents, is constructed through Aesopian language. Various methods are used to design and construct the house of dissidents through the Aesopian language, as I described earlier in this text, to complicate the space, create ambiguity, dysfunctional spaces, unreal relations and illogical movements in the spaces of the house and the city.

In order to construct such a language in architecture, I have used a writing method that operates between fiction, playwriting, conversation, poetry, essay and more experimental forms of writing. The aim with these genres is to write an architecture that is not a mute object, but the site of actions, voices, smells, and moving human and nonhuman elements. This architecture consists of parts and elements that are disappearing, falling and reappearing. It is an architecture that cannot be built based on a blueprint or a detailed drawing, but could be lived and acted by responding to various situations, especially in politically oppressed contexts. At the same time, leakage has also been practiced in the architecture of the house, by writing through the elements such as balconies, windows, the emergence of the Suddenroom, and through sounds, noises, shadows and activities such as falling. Spaces of leakage in this house are the fragmented and evanescent micro-stages that demonstrate small actions that disappear before being fully captured and somehow overcome the “tragedy of failing to start”.

But there is another thing that lightens the burden of 24/7 political engagement of this kind, and lets the dissident stories spill over the house.

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The Two Bottles of Milk

On his gravestone was carved:

1901-1996

A Cutter of the Queues

The queue was where he learnt all the jokes he used to tell us at the dinner table. He loved the queue; in the endless waiting, he learnt almost two languages, and in the end, he got two bottles of milk in his basket.

From whispered jokes under authoritarian regimes to tactics of clowning in activism and street politics, humour plays an important role in achieving victory – even an imaginary one – over a hopeless and tragic situation. “To be able to laugh at evil and error”, writes Wylie Sypher, “means that we have surmounted them.” It is why humour is a strong tool not only for surviving an oppressive situation, but also for finding a way to fight it back. The kind of humour that emerges from an oppressed situation might be understood as dark or black humour. Although black humour often devolves into hopelessness, at the same time it could inspire hope, as it empowers people to retain some

control over an oppressed situation. The laughter arises from the dark and hopeless times, ridicules the tragedy of the status quo. It lightens the burden of the tragedy and makes it possible to break the situation down. As Slavoj Žižek writes, there is revolutionary potential in laughter:

[…] the joke brings with it, simply by virtue of being a joke, the liberating implication that the situation described is no longer inherently legitimate or inevitable. Identifying it as something laughable gives us the impression that it is also something that can be left behind. Laughter is, in this sense, revolutionary.²

When it comes to dissidence, humour is an important tool as an indirect way of responding to an oppressive situation. The dissident language is itself a stealth language; what might a dissident form of humour be? Throughout this thesis, there have been experiments with humour and irony while the figure of the dissident has been constructed. Without any aim of theorising such humour, I argue that it is a field that could be developed further, where the mechanisms of dissident humour could be developed as methods that question the status quo and the establishment, both in (interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary) research methodology as well as in broader political contexts. Considering the politics of dissidence as pretending to be obedient while living an oppositional life, dissident humour could be the closest to irony, which, put simply, is “saying what is contrary to what is meant”.³ Donna Haraway writes:

Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true. Irony is about humor and serious play.⁴

This tension of holding the “incompatible things together” in irony is a concept within which dissident humour could be developed. But in this short text, I would like to complicate dissident humour by extending it beyond irony and into other mechanisms of jokes and humour, such as “dysfunctional comedy” and “crypto-comedy”. In the book Tools for Fools: Dysfunctional Comedy and Crypto-

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Comedy, Olav Westphalen develops a concept of humour whose primary goal is not to be funny, but – despite the conventional forms of comedy and jokes – instead to create conditions “to attract other, potentially more complex and layered, types of signification.” The dysfunctional or crypto-comedy that Westphalen develops in the book is not necessarily inclined to appear in some certain humorous forms, but could be, as he writes, “dysfunctional poetry or nonsense or accidents or tragedies or ruminations of the demented.” He makes a distinction between the two forms though, in the following way:

Crypto-comedy is comedy that lays low, that does not appear to be funny unless you are keyed in. Dysfunctional comedy, on the other hand, is comedy that may look and feel like comedy, but that fails at being funny. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two.

Despite the difference that Westphalen highlights, the two forms have a mutual characteristic: the paradoxical nature that they encompass. This paradoxical nature makes them deny the conventional forms of jokes. Its complex mechanism works through a coded language; a minor language if you like. Following such forms of humour and comedy, a form of dissident humour that I propose here is one that creates a relation with the status quo, through which it makes it collapse or it pulls its leg. It pushes the status quo to its extreme, intensifies its tragedy and, by exposing its absurd relations, it stages it as what cannot sustain itself, and as a result falls apart. It arises from a moment when the logic of the status quo contradicts itself and renders itself illogical. Such a mechanism could work as both crypto-comedy that complicates such a relation by layering it, and as dysfunctional comedy that fails to create laughter just as it is about to become a joke. The latter could be understood through the oscillating characteristic of dissidence. The former could be understood as irony that, in Haraway’s words, produces “contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes”.

6. Ibid. p. 20.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid. p. 19.
In the chapter “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissidents”, there were several experiments with producing irony of this kind through writing architecture. But perhaps in the part “The Marriage and Divorce Office”, dissident humour – that pushes the absurdity of a situation to its extreme – is more at work. The office located in the unfinished building of 110 Freedom, which is now finished and has become an ordinary office building, is described as a space where falling in and out of love is becoming institutionalised and is visualised by the repeating sound of stamps. The space is oppressed, deprived of any potential event, and would remain in its passive status forever, in contrast to its unfinished status back in the time of revolution. Elements such as endless repetition expose the absurd logic of an institution, and intensifying the loss of time in the waiting room and the loss of love by reducing it to the thumps of stamps makes the whole situation bizarre to the extent that a critical burst of laughter interrupts the situation and is materialised in the Suddenroom; it is a radical and critical burst of laughter, produced not because something is funny, but because of a dysfunctional situation. The Suddenroom itself is dysfunctional according to the common logic of moving in space, yet it creates different relations with its context.

In this way, dissidence could create new relations between the existing elements of an oppressive situation, stimulate that tension between incompatible elements, arrange them in an order that exposes its dysfunction, its ridicule and its banality through a combination of “humour and serious play”. This brief take on humour aims to open up a new route for this research that could focus specifically on such mechanisms as a political device in architecture and art practices and research.
It’s a late night after a long workday, stamping hundreds of letters that arrived at my desk from dawn to dusk. The factory is located 10 kilometres from the outer borders of the city, and the house another 30 kilometres away, through the city toward the east. It is a metal factory, where all nature of metal plates are punched. The smell of the molten aluminium and the sound of my foot hitting the inner wall of this aluminium desk create the aura of my office. When the factory’s four o’clock bell rang, I stayed put, shrugged and kept on stamping, signing, circling the mistakes in ink, correcting the numbers, calculating the sums. The stairs thundered under the feet of the workers, white collars, blue collars. The bustle lasted for 15 minutes, then it was relatively silent, except for the occasional rustling sounds made by the few of us who needed some extra change that month moving in our chairs, signing more papers. In silence, the aluminium beats echoed better in the room. I could take the last bus, passing the unfinished brick walls of the backyard at 6.30 P.M. instead. Then I would be home by 10 P.M. Staying after-hours for another three days was worth the extra money on payday. The bills were overdue. At 10.30 I was home, and I started watching *A Special Day*.

On *one special day*, imagination rises from the freshly hung white clothes, flapping in the wind over the rooftops of Rome. It is the time of Benito Mussolini. On that day, a lonely and oppressed pro-fascist housewife and an anti-fascist gay ex-journalist meet, laugh, quarrel, hug, fall in love, and imagine their
impossible, yet realizable affection. This encounter takes place on the very day when fascism has vacuumed the laughter and life from the houses; people are pulled to a speech given by Mussolini and Hitler; the speech echoes over the city. In his movie *A Special Day*, Ettore Scola delicately depicts this event by staging a story on a rooftop that shows the strength, the power and the vigour of imagination. The two characters are among the few who stayed at home, each for different reasons: one to take care of the household tasks, the other as a gesture of political refusal. Yet when the lonely and desperate housewife and her neighbour meet and the woman falls in love on their first encounter, something else, new, emancipatory takes place. The lightness of their bodies and the white clothes hanging on the rooftop, fluttering in the wind prevails over the grand political narrative of the time; the sound of the fascist speech comes into focus, but soon disappears. The rooftop devours the city. They turn the roof into their performing ground, which is simultaneously part of that political context and outside of it. This ground makes the image of fascism disappear from the scene, even momentarily. The rooftop becomes a territory and an imagination-scape that gives birth to lightness, and opens up a limitless imaginary world before the eyes of the protagonists.

In an impossible situation, there is always a possibility to find a way to overcome the strict limits, to mock the images of impossibility. Imagination can always fly beyond the limits imposed on us in every context. In a context constrained by omnipresent impossibilities, imagination can break out of the political straitjacket. Milan Kundera defines imagination as one of humankind’s deepest needs: “a game that is a value in itself”. Imagination can transform from being an individual value and “escapism from normal life”\(^1\) into what Ariella Azoulay calls “political imagination”.\(^2\) In her book *Civil Imagination, A Political Ontology of Photography*, Azoulay forwards “political imagination” as “the ability to imagine a political state of being that deviates significantly from the prevailing state of affairs.”\(^3\) She suggests it not as an individual act of daydreaming, but operating as “images that have their source in the outside world and in other people.”\(^4\) She develops political imagination

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. p. 04.
as what “exists between individuals and is shared with them”, writing:

The political nature of this imagination is not a function of the field of reference in relation to which it is activated – that is to say, does not emanate from its positioning vis-à-vis what is identified as political. Rather its political status stems from the sheer fact that fruits of the imagination are exchanged between people, emerge into existence between them, take on different concrete forms and play a role in the shaping of their lives.

Following Azoulay, imagination understood as a collective act is a ground for reaching for and encountering the other, and it is in this sense political. It is a way of inhabiting the other’s world, a transformative tool, a practice in itself, or as Arjun Appadurai suggests, “a form of work” and “a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals)” and “fields of possibility”. Appadurai writes about the transformative potential of imagination in his “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination”:

The imagination is no longer a matter of individual genius, escapism from ordinary life, or just a dimension of aesthetics. It is a faculty that informs the daily lives of ordinary people in myriad ways: It allows people to consider migration, resist state violence, seek social redress, and design new forms of civic association and collaboration, often across national boundaries.

Besides situating the imagination as a faculty for “patterns of dissent and new design for collective life”, he also warns us about how it can become the instrument of discipline and control of the citizens. As a field of operation for dominant power, it could be used to produce a dominant image that gives specific direction to society, culture and politics by manipulating the public imagination through different sorts of media. In this context, it is exactly why imagination becomes the most significant tool in hands of a dissident, as it is

5. Ibid. p. 05.
6. Ibid.
8. Ibid. p. 06.
9. Ibid.
a shared territory between the dominant and dominated, between the minor and the major.

Working with imagination is part of dissidence, as dissidence itself is an imaginary and fictional way of being that could be realised through being performed. Such a political understanding of imagination could also be explained by Paul Ricoeur’s concept of “productive” imagination. Ricoeur discusses two modes of imagination as “reproductive” and “productive” imagination; in Katja Grillner’s reading of Ricoeur, the former “refers to the notion of “image as copy”” and the latter as shifting ‘reference from a copy to fiction”\(^\text{10}\). She writes:

> The productive imagination is, in Ricoeur’s thinking, linked directly to fictionality and storytelling. […] To him the ‘what if’ condition that the fictional frame unlocks is an absolutely essential component of a society where change is possible – fiction, then, is essential for the ‘shaping of reality’.\(^\text{11}\)

A dissident, who acts through the simultaneous process of *imagining-thinking-acting*, constructs grounds of imagination through a productive understanding of imagination. The not-yet-tested grounds as grounds of “fictionality” could be constructed through such a form of imagination. The ‘what if’, is in fact not only imagined, but performed by the dissidents. It is in the field of existing imposed images of fixed ideologies, imposed by the dominant power, or the fiction of police order, that the dissident casts her imagination. By inhabiting the ‘what if’, she imposes her own imagination and constructs a ground that I call imagination-scape. I have borrowed the suffix ‘scape’ from Appadurai’s application of it in his *Modernity at Large*. His five different categories of scapes are: *ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes* and *ideoscapes*. He applies the suffix ‘scape’ in order to “think about superstructure/infrastructure in a new way”\(^\text{12}\) and indicates the fluidity of the landscapes in which we live. He writes:

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11. Ibid.

I use terms with the common suffix -scape to indicate first of all that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as sub-national grouping and movements (whether religious, political or economic), and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods and families.\textsuperscript{13}

The suffix scape borrowed from Appadurai, in combination with imagination, causes the imagination to act upon the sites where dominant power relations and their images are located. The suffix also accentuates imagination as what is shared and exchanged between people, and could be developed as a sort of infrastructure for creating the collective. Creating an imagination-scape is to construct a performing ground, where dissidents could perform by joining their imaginations. In Scola's \textit{A Special Day}, the roof has become a ground of imagination, or an imagination-scape, a deterritorialized field where alternative relations and spaces can be nurtured. By \textit{inhabiting} an imagination-scape, and through the politics of minor, one becomes what one \textit{imagines} by carrying along, acting, and inhabiting that imagined world.

The roof of the house is an architectural metaphor for imagination-scape, where imagination – quite literally and spatially – could be expanded indefinitely. The roof is an architectural element that could facilitate looking from above, having a view over the surrounding city, looking into the streets. It could be a watchtower looking into the future, while being rooted in the here and now. In the life of a dissident, when staging dissent in streets and squares is not possible, rooftops become the second layer of the city that, while protecting the dissidents, stages them. It lets the dissidence leak out. It lets the dissidents connect to the others beyond the four walls of their house.
He sat reading the poem on the roof of the house. The poem, “I Looked Up from My Writing”, by Thomas Hardy, begins with “a staging of the scene of writing’s interruption”:

I looked up from my writing.
And gave a start to see,
As if rapt in my inditing,
The moon’s full gaze on me.¹

An interruption while writing a poem, in Hardy’s poem, produced a poem on the pages. Hardy writes “through the impediments of doing so”.²

The hesitation to write creates writing. The refusal to write, as a political act, and the engagement instead with other activities as forces of change in the time of crisis, produces writing itself. Writing has always been here, among us, from the small notes in a pocket notebook to the walls of the city. It has been a tool of revolutions, political movements, and has constructed minor forms of political engagement. When it comes to dissidence as a minor form of political engagement, every tiny act matters, even the written words on a small, folded piece of paper, pushed into a hole on a wall for a passer-by to find. And I think of those who never got a chance to write, those writings that never appeared on any surfaces. The silence.

He was deep in such thoughts while looking over the roof, the orange sky, the antennae, the blackened chimneys and the laundry moving slightly in the warm late afternoon breeze. He took off his earring, which she had made for him from an almost finished black pencil, with which he wrote these words on the margin of a newspaper page; cut it out using his fingers, folded it and put it in his pocket.

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² Ibid.
The temptation towards resolution, towards wrapping up the package, seems to me a terrible trap. Why not be more honest with the moment? The most authentic endings are the ones which are already revolving towards another beginning. That’s genius. Somebody told me once that fugue means to flee, so that Bach’s melody lines are like he’s running away.³

Sam Shepard

The journey of this PhD thesis pauses here in order to look back at what has been done so far, as well as to look into the future; to imagine ways in which the stories of dissidents in relation to architecture sites could be continued. This text is not a conclusion that wraps up the discussion, but a fugue: an infrastructure that opens it up onto possible continuations; an unfinished structure built upon what has been done in this thesis, and wishes to move on to further experiments and explorations, looking to connect to various existing and emerging works by providing escape routes and assisting the characters in continuing their journeys. So far, the experiments of writing, which...

have been developed mainly in the three parts of the thesis, have put together the pieces of the characters – a dissident, a lover, an interrupter – through architectural spaces. The characters that came as a whole only at some moments soon shattered into many. And here she is again; still trying to escape the confinement of this thesis. She continues to exist, as critically humorous, violently fragile, silently present, amateur as ever, and performs her multiple routes that cut this book out and let her move on from the back page of this book. This chapter, then, is a re-narration of what has been done through the lens of architecture writing, namely dissident writing.

Writing Dissident Architecture

To write is to perform. It is to make, to project a change. It is to refuse the existing major stories, the ones that never change, the ones whose characters are fixed. Writing is forming a person to find a shadow, to form light. Writing architecture is about this: creating new grounds, sites of actions, constructing characters who build these grounds and who change while moving through them, while inhabiting them critically and performatively. It is about constructing performers who make the grounds of encounter, grounds of action, where they encounter each other and change those grounds by making them their own performing grounds. The construction of such grounds is the work of writing architecture. In her “The New Prophets of Capital”, Nicole Aschoff calls us all storytellers. But most of the stories we tell, she says, “lack potency, though – they linger close to us and get lost in the cacophony of other people’s stories.”

Writing architecture is about opening up a space in that

4. This sentence is a reflection on and rewriting of Russel Edson’s poem that reads: “A woman saw the sunshine coming in a window looking through a memory to find a person to form a shadow.”


cacophony for the voices that are part of no part to speak, to imagine, and to tell their lost stories. It is to connect to other silenced stories.

Jane Rendell accentuates the importance of how we formulate writing in relation to architecture by articulating its name. She suggests that the order of the words architecture and writing, the use of the preposition, as she says, ‘for’, ‘to’, ‘with’, or even using a hyphen is the matter of design. According to Rendell, the design of addressing such a practice also adheres to the performativity of writing and the politics of writing as an act. Formulating this combination, Rendell applies a hyphen and articulates the practice as “Architecture-Writing”. She maintains that the hyphen “brings architecture and writing into close proximity [and] allows us to think of one in relation to the other, but it also creates a compound or hybrid form.” The attention to the articulation of the term and the politics of naming things suggests an architectural design method of thinking through words and terms. It suggests the politics of not only what we do, but also how we do it; it speaks of methods. On the other hand, Katja Grillner suggests the term “Writing Architecture”, which brings forward another connotation of writing that, as she says, “means [...] to write a background”. Concerning writing architecture, she borrows a photographic notion and calls the text a lens that should be “adjusted” and “refocused” on the activities taking place.

However, what I put forward as writing—rather than applying it as creation of background or a mode of understanding the site as a zooming lens—it is a mode of writing that creates ruptures in architectural sites, specifically those that are politically charged. Writing for me is a more present and

8. Ibid.
forceful activity; it is the architecting, the act, the work and a means of performative critique. With a performative approach and through the politics of dissidence, writing critically constructs alternatives and changes the existing architectural sites. Kafka’s oft-quoted description of a book that “must be the axe for the frozen sea within us” as well as Foucault’s description of knowledge “not for knowing” but for “cutting” are in accordance with what I forward here as writing architecture. Following this, I consider writing in this thesis to be powerful crafting devices such as an axe, a hammer a welding tool, a saw, a wrench that destructs, constructs, assembles and disassembles the material world, to shape and make new spaces from the existing ones. It drags out hidden performers from architectural sites, shapes them, and pushes them to keep on performing and changing the site.

To formulate such a practice, I call it writing dissident architecture, where the dissident should create a tension between the activity of writing and the work of architecture. The term dissidence brings the cutting characteristic of writing to architecture as it cuts in between the two. At the same time, dissidence accentuates the importance of performativity in the act of architecture writing. Writing in this thesis then is a force to create new spatial relations in an existing architecture site, by criticising – pausing, cutting, folding – the existing major ones, but also expanding the architecture discipline; to expand its political and critical potential – not only to influence and challenge the discipline, but also to become a practice for political engagement through dissidence.

Writing architecture is not writing about architecture, but writing it, making it, making “something emerge through writing”.  

light on the importance of writing practices in architecture that are usually undervalued only “as a passive after-effect of the built form and not an active force”. She writes:

Writing does not arrive after the fact, and reflection here is not a mere representation of a reality assumed to be framed and completed. Writing intervenes and disrupts, turns up the soil of material, the mixtures of bodies, just as it enlivens the incorporeal expressions of sense and nonsense making.

Along with Frichot’s take on writing architecture, in this thesis, I have situated writing architecture in specific political sites, not to explain what it was or what existed there, but what writing could enable in those sites. The sites through which you have read were all loci of events, political unrest, oppression and impossibilities. They have their own stories, told and untold, major and minor, fact or fiction. Yet writing through them was not about representing the already told and existing stories, but about injecting new stories, constructing new spaces, producing new material and thereby questioning the dominant relations in place. This act of writing can be explained through the performative potential of writing – and its consequent reading as re-writing – that can produce new spatial relations in architecture sites. Writing projects a change to an existing site to interrupt its dominant image and thus creates new stories. In her *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, Elizabeth Grosz writes:

After it is built, structure is still not a fixed entity. It moves and changes, depending on how it is used, what is done with and on it, and how open it is to even further change. What sorts of metamorphoses does structure

10. Ibid. p. 312.
11. Ibid. p. 313.
undergo when it’s already there? What sorts of becomings can it engender? These kinds of issues cannot simply be accommodated or dealt with by the plan or blueprint.\(^{12}\)

One task of writing architecture would be about bringing in these changes that Grosz describes and that cannot be dealt with through the conventional architecture representational methods, including representational writing that only describes what is there. Architecture work, from the spark of an idea to its final form, intermingles with various stories. These stories might cease, or transform into others. New stories might emerge through unexpected events. And this process continues after the architect and the construction team have finished their work. These stories go on and continue the work of architecture. Writing architecture can prompt these stories, change them or interrupt them. Therefore, as a practice of architecture, it is an ongoing work of space-making and what keeps architecture work unfinished and continuous.

An example from Gianni Celati’s short story “A Scholar’s Idea of Happy Endings” could expose how writing can transform the dominant fixed relations of a context and bring spaces of hope to people. In the story, Celati gives us an account of a character who writes inside the story. The character, who can’t “bear the tragic endings”\(^ {13}\) of stories, rewrites the endings by inserting strips of paper over the parts that trigger those tragedies and changes them radically, so that the story changes its route and moves on to a happy ending. This sort of performative writing that works with the materiality of the text and writing requires a thorough reading of the text in order to bring in changes; in other words, one must inhabit the text, as the context and space of action, to be able to transform it. This is


one mode of performative writing that refers to writing through critically inhabiting a (con)text and changing it. Such an application of materiality of the text has been at play in my experiments of “Impossible Books”, as well as the performative reading of “The Shadow that Left the Logic of its Own Existence”. In the former an existing text is transformed, whilst the latter transformation is of a site, both through inhabitation by means of the materiality of writing and reading.

This approach to writing could turn the text into material that, as Rolf Hughes describes, one could expose to various forces such as heat, cold, light etc. A text in this sense could also be exposed to encounters, to historical events and political tensions, and to revolutionary ruptures – similarly to how architecture would be exposed and affected by such forces. Writing architecture then is a materialisation of the encounters of various forces. At the same time, the text itself could also work as a force that acts upon and transforms the material world. Therefore, writing dissident architecture works with the text both as the material and the force that transforms the material world and produces new spatial relations in an architectural site. Architectural writers, as Marko Jobst writes, are “the visionaries of material becomings”, who write the elements of architecture as well as the relation of performative bodies to them. The dissident architecture writers, however, should write through a stealth language that circumvents the probable oppression or blockage and crosses the borders of impossibilities; they write an Aesopian architecture that has been discussed as the application of an indirect language of dissent, or saying things without directly saying them.

In this thesis, the stories in each chapter have started

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**Route 11**

What happens if we take fiction to a building destroyed by war?

Take Gianni Celati’s short story “A Scholar’s Idea of Happy Endings” to the building destroyed by war that is shown in the text Fragility and Violence from the chapter CUT. Write an architecture that emerges in the encounter of the building and the short story when.
from the sites that are characterised by certain political dimensions. These sites have their own narratives that also change through re-narration, representation and encounters with other narrations that happen all the while. The different modes of writing, partially connecting to those existing stories and at the same time questioning them or interrupting them by projecting a different story, have created an infrastructure for the character to move through these architectural sites. In other words, it was through writing that the character forced her/himself into these sites, for instance climbing and perching on the unfinished 110 Freedom Building, moving from a prison to an architecture journal, or changing the spatial relations of the house. Furthermore, writing dissident architecture has also created an infrastructural architecture that has enacted and combined different theoretical discussions, or formulae, in each site and situation.

Each mode of writing is derived from the politics of the context. However, the complexity of the context requires hybrids of genres and modes of writing. The multiplicity of applied genres and modes of writing in this work also refers to the complexity of dissident architecture. In his *Dark Writing*, Paul Carter discusses the necessity of a form of writing in opposition to what he calls light writing as a “writing of reason”, “straight line”, “definite conclusions” and “sharp distinctions”. Light writing does not correspond to the muddy, murky, dark, shadowy, messy world we live in. Dark writing on the other hand is “underwriting”, it is the page on which we write, which has its own texture; it is “many voices speaking at once”. This sort of writing

16. Nigel Coats writes in his *Narrative Architecture* that: “Buildings have their own narratives: from the first impulse to build, to their realization and prime, and to their decline. Like nature, architecture constantly dies and renews itself within the cultural ecosystem that makes up cities. So much can be read through buildings. As Edward Hollis says: “Buildings long outlive the purposes for which they were built, the technologies by which they were constructed, and their function have little to do with one another.”


is enriched by stories, rather than by placeless, marketable representing diagrams, as Carter refers to the corporate forms of design. As he writes: “Because it always exceeds what can be conventionally represented, dark writing is the discourse of the sublime.”

Similar to Dark Writing, writing dissident architecture enjoys complexity; it values ambiguity over clarity. Instead of drawing lines between ideas, it writes in between them; it connects them. It is in this ambiguity and complexity that dissidence becomes possible as a covert form of a political, subversive act. Writing is turned into a subversive and radical practice through the dissident methodology that, as it has been argued throughout the development of the discussions and experiments in this thesis, is a stealth, amateur, minor, and at the same time radical way of interrupting the oppressive dominant power relations situated in a site. The dissident practice of writing architecture is significant in terms of its potential to make architecture politically.

As discussed in the chapter “Stories and Plays”, the genre of the prose poem has been a thinking model and at the same time a working template for articulating writing as a practice of dissident architecture. The production of a prose poem, as a subversive genre, is a political act of writing itself, regardless of what it addresses. In his “Strange Tales and Bitter Emergencies”, Michel Delville refers to literary critics Margueritte Murphy and Jonathan Monroe, describing the genre “a self-consciously subversive genre existing mainly by reference to other genres, which it tends to include or exclude, subscribe to or subvert.”

Delville further speaks of two main categories of fabulist prose poem and language poetry. The former sets the logic of the fable against itself and questions the readers’

18. Ibid.
20. Ibid. p. 265.
logical expectations, while the latter parodies and disrupts the realistic relations and adheres to the ability of language to make sense of something that does not make sense in the real world.

In terms of writing architecture, these mechanisms of the prose poem turn the writing to a possible field of interrupting the logic of the space. The Suddenroom in the text “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident” in the chapter FO(O)LD is written through such a mechanism. The room appears as an interruption of the drab space of the institution “The Marriage and Divorce Office” imagined in the 110 Freedom Building. Its appearance through the text is not an element of surprise, but a consequence of the extremely boring and dull space of that institution; the existing space falls apart through the emergence of the Suddenroom. Once there, the Suddenroom’s access routes and its spatial and material relation to the site and to its lateral rooms are impossible if one thinks through norm architectural logic, but they become realisable through another understanding of moving in space; this is what writing architecture could make possible. Such an application of the prose poem as a concept for writing pushes writing architecture beyond what Gaston Bachelard proposes as to how it works in relation to architecture. Bachelard describes writing as an instrument for reading or writing a room or a house “as if they were a story.” But writing could actually find ways of acting upon the existing stories, it can cut routes through the stories, create a performing ground, so the story of the house acts upon itself. Not written as a prose poem, but working through its mechanism – i.e. using the ability of a language to make sense of something that doesn’t make sense – the writing of Suddenroom is an example of enacting dissidence in space through writing architecture.

Considering the politics and mechanism of the prose poem, could we imagine a prose-poem-architecture? What would be its politics? How would it work?
Performative Writing and Performativity of Writing Dissident Architecture

The performativity of writing in constructing the field of writing dissident architecture is significant in this thesis, and it is one of its contributions to the fields of both writing and dissident architecture. Performative writing has to do with the act of writing that is done in response to a specific context and time. The performativity of writing is also about how the text itself acts in the world and what it forwards, or what it does. It is about how it changes the context while engaging with it. Delia Pollock describes performative writing as “nervous” and “anxiously cross[ing] various stories, theories, texts, intertexts, and spheres of practice”.

In performative writing, writing is used as a tool to engage with the site: to speak to it, to critically inhabit it, to interrupt it and to extract its hidden stories and hidden performers. Through the performativity of writing, it also becomes possible to develop a critical position from within; the performative writing could criticise what it is performing through. Addressing critical writing about performances as compared to the art-historical object, Peggy Phelan describes the performative potential of writing as a crucial approach. This performative modality of criticism “does not reproduce the object or event it addresses but instead enacts it through the very practice of writing.”

Performative writing changes its context by turning it into a performing ground. It is why performative writing has been the only way to write through the sites; otherwise it would have remained in a representational mode, solely describing the sites.

When viewed through the lens of minor politics,


Performative writing creates a stage where one writes/performes not only through her/his voice, but also invites other voices. As Ronald J. Pelias writes, “it creates a space where others might see themselves”. In his *Performance: An Alphabet of Performative Writing*, Pelias refers to Trinh Minh-ha’s concept of the “plural I”, an ‘I’ that could potentially stand for many. The plural I does not reduce the many voices to one however, but complicates one’s own voice by including the voices of others. One could perform through the voice of the others when one experiments with taking up a different role than what one has. Such an aspect of performative writing has been a method for constructing the characters in this thesis and engaging in a collective writing with them.

There is an experimental aspect to performative writing that allows for other voices to enter the narrative. Rolf Hughes writes: “Writing not only permits, but demands experimentation – not merely formal experimentation, but also ethical investigations into alternative ways of seeing the world.” In this way, the experimental characteristic of performative writing could open the world; it could be undertaken as the process of reaching for the other, encountering the other, and becoming the other.

One important aspect of doing performative writing is how to perform concepts, theoretical discussions, not by describing, illustrating or representing them, but by putting them into action. As Kenneth Goldsmith writes: “The philosophy of the work is implicit in the work and it is not an illustration of any system of philosophy.” In the text “Failing Infrastructure”, for example, when

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25. Ibid.
the repetition and connection are two main concepts of discussion concerning infrastructure, the text itself performs as an infrastructure through various forms of repetition and connection, letting the meaning of infrastructure come to the fore through the procedure of the text. I will explain other modes of performative writing in the chapter-by-chapter recapitulation that follows in this text.

**Dissident Characters. Characters in Fragments**

Following the politics of the Minh-ha’s plural I, and writing through other voices as a means of complicating one’s voice in performative writing, dissident writing is to talk through those excluded voices or those that are parts of no part. Dissident modes of writing write with multiple voices, many authors, not all of whom are welcome. Of those co-authors, some are prohibitive, like the censor in the text “Writing with Unwelcome Co-Authors”; some are liberating, and the dissident architecture takes form in the tension of these opposing voices. As infrastructural architecture, the text connects all these opposing voices. In fact, this infrastructural architecture emerges when these multiple voices encounter one another.

The characters in writing dissident architecture are always changing and disappearing behind the architectural elements of the story. They transform from one to another by performing radical projects, becoming one and many, and create a multitude of minor political performers; they speak through each other’s voices. This is why dissident architecture itself is a changing performing ground, where new spatial relations take form while the voices change.

These characters are unfinished, incomplete, and in contrast to the supposed psychological complexity of the Western bourgeois characterisation, we don’t really get to know them as a complete picture, but in bits and pieces. They are fluid identities, shadowy and messy, that escape definitions and representations. We know a character through what s/he does rather than how s/he is. These
pieces invite us to put them together as in a jigsaw puzzle. Thus, in a performative mode of writing, the characters are not fixed phenomenological characters, but characters constructed through their actions.

For character development of this kind, Sergei Tret’iakov accentuates the role of literature in "The Biography of the Object" and suggests that it should provide us with "deed" and "act" rather than with "people". In the development of the biography of the object, he eliminates the role of the hero that is common in the traditional novel, and instead directs attention to the act undertaken by the characters.  

The dissident characters in this thesis are also constructed as such. For example, in the text "The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident", the characters are called:  
I: Who narrates  
He: Who draws the plans  
She: Who recalls the story  
She: Who has the luggage  
He: who grows, who dreams, who falls  
And the reader only gets to know who “She: Who recalls the story” is through what she does in the story or what happens in the house. Even then, she constantly transforms into other characters both in the house and in the previous chapters, into the prisoner, or into the person on the 110 Freedom Building.

The characters in this thesis have their origins in reality, but they change and become more complicated by means of fiction. They lose their original identities and transform from one to another while moving from one site to another. Thus, instead of representing the characters borrowed from the real events, I construct them by assigning them various acts and writing what they would do when assigned to such roles and performing in such contexts. For example in Part 02: CUT, Fontaine, who is a prisoner escaping

the Nazi prison, becomes an architect in an architecture journal. In Part 01: Pause, The Standing Man’s act is also extended through the expansion and fictionalisation of his backpack. Or the unknown characters on the unfinished 110 Freedom Building, who are just pixelated faces in the image of the building, suddenly become prominent characters in the text “110 (Tokens of) Freedom” and later author the text “Pause: A Device for Troubling Routines”.

Through dissident characterisation in Part 01: Pause, the character moves between The Standing Man, The Woman in Red, the unknown person on top of the 110 Freedom Building, the one who has made the Impossible Books, the one who has written the Fiction and who, at the very end of Fiction 01, is reading Kafka’s text from the Impossible Books.

This character then moves to Part 02: CUT and perhaps is imprisoned, or to Part 03: FO(O)L+D, and in the house. Suddenly, the character moves among (at least) three different geopolitical contexts: Istanbul Taksim Square, Tehran Freedom Street, and Lyon Montluc Prison. The character that becomes she and he alternatively moves between genders. In the chapter FO(O)L+D, characterisation becomes even more complex as we arrive in a space of dissidence. We know that there are five characters somehow involved in the story of the house: I: Who narrates; He: Who draws the plans; She: Who recalls the story; She: Who has the luggage; He: who grows, who dreams, who falls. However, the layers of the writing through the house could let the characters move from ‘I’ to ‘He’ to ‘She’ and back to ‘I’. We know that one of the characters – she: who has the luggage – could have gone back to Part 02: CUT and become the prisoner. But s/he could have also returned to the chapter FO(O)L+D and sat down in the Marriage and Divorce Office in the former unfinished 110 Freedom Building, and later entered the Suddenroom and commenced a new journey. This character could be the ‘I: Who narrates’, could be the ‘He: Who grows, who dreams,
who falls’, or the one perching on the unfinished building in the 1979 Iranian Revolution. They exchange roles, shift their performing grounds to build the story, complicate the site and thereby construct the dissident architecture. This method of dissident characterisation constructs the dissident as a complex character whom, as I wrote earlier, we don’t get to know through her identity, but through her acts.

**Fiction is Dissidence**

Fiction and fictional worlds are home to dissidents. In the world of fiction, dissidents could safely perform their political acts and views by adopting fictional identities and roles. In the words of Jacques Rancière, what is presented to us as reality is in fact not reality, but the fiction of police order. Fiction itself could be a powerful device for dissenting from such police order. In the field of literature, Terry Eagleton in his *The Event of Literature* discusses fiction not by simply limiting it to a genre, or “make-believe”, or by putting it in a binary opposition against fact, but by forwarding it as a “question of how texts behave, and of how we treat them.” He suggests that fiction is not about being true or false, but that it is – as he refers to Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *A Defense of Poetry* – “imagining that which we know.”

Imagining what we know could be understood as creating fictional worlds from the worlds in which we live. This paradox of imagining what we have already experienced is central to how fiction works. Following Eagleton, my application of fiction, practiced through different sorts of writing (as making), is mainly about blurring the boundary between what we are forced to accept as reality and what we project on that reality as fiction. Instead of accepting

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31. Ibid. p. 111.
fiction as unrealisable imaginary worlds, I forward it as a dissenting force that breaks down “the fiction of police order”. From the spatial point of view, this could be described as imagination-scape, which, as I wrote in the text “The Roof of the House: On Imagination”, is to project one’s imagination onto an existing condition and thereby create a performing ground for dissidents. Thereby, fiction could work not only as imagining the alternative, but also realising it. Regarding fiction’s power to blur, Eagleton writes:

You may also take up a fictional stance to a work which is meant to be purely factual or pragmatic. It is possible to treat a pragmatic work non-pragmatically, ‘refunctioning’ it by (for example searching it for some exemplary significance and thus detaching it from its intended function).  

Detaching, reshaping, and recasting the characters, events, sites through narration is what fiction could do as a political work of shifting the borders between what is represented as real and what is considered fiction. This is done in Part 02, when Fontaine is displaced from the film *A Man Escaped*. He becomes a fictional character when situated in the midst of architecture media and architectural discourse. Then he becomes real when used as the starting point for a negotiation with the editors of the architecture journal *El Croquis*. By shifting the ground of the story and assigning a fictional role to that original character, a new debate starts in this thesis that questions the role of architects, the disciplinary limits, the politics of media representation in architecture, and the engagement with or interruption of the established relations in institutions.

In this way, one important aspect of writing dissident architecture is the application of and experimentation with

32. Ibid. p. 114, 115.
fiction, not only as a literary form but also as a political and critical activity. Dissidence itself takes a fictional position, leads a fictional life, plays with fictional identities and imagines itself performing fictional roles, while inhabiting the fiction of police order. Dissidence is constantly generating new fictions in the cracks of a dominant system in the same manner as the character in Celati’s “A Scholar’s Idea of Happy Endings”, creating layers of fiction in an existing fiction represented as reality. In the case of Celati’s short story, fiction becomes the context from which another fiction emerges, and begins to act upon the first. This is reminiscent of Shariar Mandanipour’s novel, Censoring an Iranian Love Story – discussed in “Writing with Unwelcome Co-Authors” – where fiction becomes real, “real enough to strike lines through” and the physical violence of censorship on texts is exposed. Understanding fiction not as antithetical to reality but as creating a different frame for reality refers to the political and critical capacity of fiction.

**Modes of Writing/ Experiments of Writing**

Each part of this thesis deals with one interrupting tactic through the critical inhabitation of a site and by moving back and forth through formulae and crafting a fiction. The encounter between the site and formulae creates a performing ground in which fiction takes shape. The writing modes in each chapter are derived from the politics of the site and the associated interrupting tactics. These various modes of writing develop the interrupting tactics by means of fiction and thereby reconstruct the architectural sites. The experiments with various modes of writing aim to construct a language of dissidence. As I wrote earlier, the complexity of the context and the concept of dissidence require hybrid genres and modes of writing, and many of these genres are combined and mixed in the experiments.

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Introductory Section

Between the introductory section and the “Interrupting Tactics” is the text “On Ink and Its Transdisciplinary Application”, a passage that plays on transdisciplinary research methodology and a fictitious, pseudo-scientific writing that is written with the use of humour. What I forward as pseudo-scientific writing is the application of a sly logic that creates plausible argumentation for something imaginary and to a certain extent impossible. This logic is constructed through the process of writing, and it can stand both in reference to what we accept as scientific fact and dispute those very scientific facts. The text, as the continuation of the discussion on research methodology and artistic research, parodies the scientific argument surrounding facts and logic, and tries to test how to make sense of something that doesn’t make sense. Such fictitious writing is also at the core of the fictional journal Al-Croquis, where an escaped prisoner is seriously introduced as an architect.

PART 01: Pause

Part 01: Pause starts with a performative writing based on a time frame of eight-hours. In the text “110 (Tokens of) Freedom”, I inhabited the building by working with the collected stories, the interviews, archive studies, pictures and pieces of writings that I had written intermittently, and re-worked through them within this time frame. The eight-hour interval was taken from the story of the Standing Man of the Gezi Park Movement, who stood still for eight hours in Taksim Square. The question was: how one could exhaust a context through performative writing by extracting its told and untold existing or imaginary stories? It was an experiment in coaxing out the minor stories that were lost in the cacophony of state propaganda.

One interesting outcome of this performative writing was the discovery that the duration of the inhabitation of a site triggers different ways of telling stories. In this sense, writing was not only undertaken in the form of text, but also
through other mediums such as drawing and collage. In this performative writing, each story gave birth to another. The duration of inhabiting the building through writing assisted me in spotting the characters and extracting them from the image as the minor political figures who made the revolution. Each of these new characters could be the starting point of new trajectories for this building when they narrate their own stories of the Revolution. The site of the 110 Freedom Building then was (re)constructed through this eight hours of writing. What held all these stories together was the unfinished structure itself, and the duration of inhabiting it.

Moving from this building to the Standing Man, one item that became a tool to develop this site/event further was the Standing Man’s backpack, which was scrutinised by the state agents and the police while he was standing still. In the text “Standing Man’s Backpack”, the backpack is imagined to contain things needed for a public protest. The text is written in the form of a list, a genre that suggests diversity in lieu of hierarchy and simultaneity instead of narrative cause-and-effect, as David Lehman postulates about “list poem”.

Instead of giving detailed information of how things are organised in time and space, list writing provides a freedom of combining (incompatible) things in myriad ways. It is only at the end of the list writing that the whole picture is created; yet one could shake the list or drop it and it would immediately produce a different image: broken pieces, broken container, landscape of spread things, or things rolling down a slope.

A list valorises the singular elements over the whole, and through the lens of minor politics, list writing could

be understood as a minor form of writing. It can also be considered very architectural, as it involves a container. One could add to the list until the container is full, and then continue accumulating things until the container falls apart. The list is also an unfinished form whose lack of hierarchy and structure of simultaneity allow for addition, elimination and change; it is “an invitation to be expansive”, in Lehman’s words. Writing architecture then can challenge the logic of the container through list writing. One could always add to the list and thereby challenge the container’s capacity, the logic of its size, scale and limits. One could challenge the logic of exclusion and inclusion of a container, which could be extended to the discussion of architecture, territories, borders, etc. List writing can also interrupt the impermeable and rigid walls of a container; it can make the container explode, leak or break.

The backpack of the Standing Man is written through the politics of dissidence, i.e. how little one should take with her when heading off on the risky mission of confronting the oppressive power. The short list, the few objects, the empty container (the almost-empty backpack) speak of the dissidence: take only “humble objects”! While there is nothing of value in the backpack, one could find a secret list of things in between the lines of the copy of *Bartleby the Scrivener* in the Standing Man’s backpack. The copy of Bartleby is a hidden list of dissident tactics and objects. In other words, the book itself became a container of things and concepts needed for a passive mode of protest.

The list in Bartleby is constructed through a performative reading; I read through the book three times to underline the dissident concepts and things. The performative reading is materialised by drawing lines through the book. In this experiment of performative reading, the act of close

35. Ibid. p. 362.
reading is materialised in the book and has added a new
layer and meaning to an existing literary text.
In addition to Melville’s book, another booklet is also
imagined, entitled: “A Manual for Standing Still”, which
is a short text in instruction form. The instruction is for
performing the act of standing still; however, it introduces
an element that is of no use. The extra pear in the text
that drops from the hands of the performer rolls out of the
story and takes the story elsewhere to a *not-yet-known*.

Instructions for the not-yet-known, which arrive in
an ambiguous result or a question, challenge its own
“process-with-a-purpose”\(^{37}\) logic. Although instructions
are made to maximise the expected quality of the final
product and to control the process, achieving that quality
is never a guarantee, as it is a performance-based process.
But what if the purpose of an instruction was to arrive at
that unknown from the outset? Jena Osman introduces a
form of instruction as procedural poetry, and posits that
in this genre, the poet becomes a “‘mechanic’ creating
a language machine”, of which the reader could become
a writer.\(^ {38}\) To understand instruction through Osman’s
description of procedural poetry, one does not necessarily
need to think of it as a “process-with-a-purpose”, but an
instruction for arriving at further questions. The instruction
in the “Standing Man’s Backpack” creates a thing – a
pear that, as it rolls out of the list and text – could trigger
further stories. The pear is an element that interrupts the
instruction and opens it up to unexpected events.

An instruction could become a tool for arriving in the
unknown, the impossible, or it could be there just for the

future route for knowledge acquisition in architecture and the arts.” In F. Nilsson et
al. (eds), Perspectives on Research Assessment in Architecture, Music and the Arts, Oxon:

\(^{38}\) Osman, J. (2002). “Procedural Poetry: The Intentions of Nonintention”. In Finch,
A. & Varnes, K. (eds.), An Exaltation of Forms: Contemporary Poets Celebrate the Diversity
sake of the experiment. To practice the writing of such instructions, we could follow Maxine Chernoff’s advice on writing an absurdist prose poem by narrating “step by step something that is impossible to do.” Both list writing and instruction are also experimented with in the last part, FO(O)L+D too, as I will explain shortly.

Moving from Site 01 to Formula 01, the text “Fa[i]l(l)ing Infrastructure”, as I explained earlier in this text, is another moment of performative writing, where the text itself performs as infrastructure. Through the repetition of a question, the narrator who ascends and descends from the 110 Freedom Building during the days of Revolution becomes a dissident. In this way, three concepts involved in the discussion of infrastructure – repetition, connection and performativity – are performed through writing, while being situated in a specific case (the building). On each course of repetition, a new ground of discussion is constructed that also refers to the specificity and multiplicity of dissenting voices. We enter the building with a question formulated around the politics of connection and collective, inhabit it through a discussion, a concept, an act, a conversation, and we leave. Each turn discusses infrastructure through a different lens, with the focus on unfinished-ness, dissidence and the relation between individual dissidents as minor performers toward the creation of a collective. Through the repetition of the questions, the infrastructure evolves, and the text itself becomes an infrastructure for the dissidents.

As another experiment of performative writing/reading, the experiment of Impossible Books exposes the materialisation of reading as re-writing the text. Similar to the close, performative reading of the story of Bartleby, it is a method of inhabiting the text. By inhabiting the text and

recognising a moment of pause that could be expanded, a new performing ground is created. It becomes an act of interruption, interrupting an existing text, to generate a new voice in that text. This performing ground then is materialised in a book that doesn’t let the book be closed.

Arriving in Fiction 01, the text “Pause: A Device for Troubling Routines” is an experiment with critical fiction, a genre that combines critical theory and fictional writing. Through this form of writing, I put the two stories of the 110 Freedom Building and the Standing Man together. The character that is pulled out of the texts “110 (tokens of) Freedom”, “Standing Still”, and “Impossible Books” is put to further actions and is thereby developed through the experiment of critical fiction. The experiment with critical fiction is also a kind of performative reading of critical theory to re-narrate the already narrated and situate it in an imaginary/real story. In this text, while the narrator talks through the voice of one of the people on the 110 Freedom Building, she travels through various historical events (from the 1979 Iranian Revolution, to the 2013 Gezi Park Movement, to a seemingly distant location at an architecture school), and to literary texts such as Italo Calvino’s “Marcovaldo”. By inhabiting a paragraph from Marcovaldo, the narrator’s voice is suddenly speaking through an existing piece of fiction and its narrators.

PART 02: CUT

In this section, the making of Al-Croquis exposes the importance of writing when it comes to dissidence, as it has become a document of an institutional conflict. The fictitious journal is itself a stage for exposing fictional writing, critical fiction, architectural review, and letter writing. In addition to this main experiment of this section, there are two main experiments of performative reading/writing: “Line & Cut” and “A Shadow that Left the Logic of Its Own Existence.” In both, the experiment is done with the materiality of text and materialisation of reading and writing. In the first experiment, “Line & Cut”, the
Kafka text worked with in “Impossible Books” is reworked with through the act of cutting, playing with the concept of fragility and violence. This time, the semicolon has become a cut itself that opens the text onto a new plane.

The second performative experiment, “A Shadow that Left the Logic of Its Own Existence” was done as a performance in two events: one of them “Writing as Practice, Practice as Writing” organised by Society for Artistic Research, and the other at the symposium “Creative Resistance: Architecture, Art, Writing, a Life …” at the University College of London. I did a performative reading, reading the texts from pieces of folded paper taken out of my pockets and strips of papers from a box (a room). This performative reading was driven by the question: how reading could result in a new writing? How a written text could be re-written and re-narrated through reading? How could reading be materialised in writing? The reading in this sense produced a new writing materialised by papers left on the stage. Such an experiment could also be explained with Jane Rendell’s “site-writing”, where “lecturing (about) space” becomes “spacing” a lecture.40

PART 03: FO(O)L+D

In the text “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident”, various experiments of writing are practiced. Parts of the text are written through a dialogue. Each part of the dialogue opens up a memory, a space for re-writing the architecture of the house, a space in which a new character comes to the stage and starts performing while constructing the spaces of the house. With the appearance of the character in every single space, the space is re-constructed. In her dialogue with Klaske Havik, Katja Grillner says that dialogue could “bring characters from different places and

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times into a temporary fictional location.” In this way, the dialogue in the text sets up stages for the character. In this chapter however, the dialogue stops for the character to perform on that stage, reconstruct the space and then disappear into the space of dialogue, reappearing at a later point in the conversation.

List writing is another applied genre in this text that complicates the spaces, expands them, adds more layers, and creates different relations between the spaces. The cabinets and drawers in the kitchen are the containers of list writing. List writing transforms the cabinet from a mere storage space to a site of making, or a factory for producing stories and ideas. The accumulation of different and seemingly unrelated elements in a single cabinet creates a world, or could motivate the readers to create various worlds by those elements. As I wrote: “Every drawer was a fiction in itself. Every cabinet was an unrealised novel”. In this way, a cabinet – which is a physically limited space – expands beyond its limits through fiction that is written as a list in this section.

Instruction is also experimented with in this text. In “How to Move a Story from One Plot to Another”, instruction is used to make a turn inside the story itself. To shift the focus from the kitchen to the storage as a shift in the political ground of action in the house, the step-by-step instructions tell the reader how to move from one place to another, thereby introducing certain aspects of dissident performance such as: how to use a blue light to avoid shadows when the characters enters the storage. The instructions for turning the story act on various layers: as a move from one physical space to the other, as a shift in the

What happens if we shake the table of contents of this thesis? What other kinds of narration could it produce?

Route 16
Route 17

Choose a room. Make a list of its structural elements. Then make a list of the elements that would not cause the room to collapse if you removed them. Then make a list of elements/actions that could destroy the room. Then make a list of devices that would assist the destruction. Then make a list of things you would need to make a list of all the above lists.

locus of the story, and as a shift in the theoretical discussion of politics of activism to dissidence.

Later in the text, there are also several instructions that show us how the character is moving through the Suddenroom. The text ends with instructions for making a Suddenroom, where the result would be a performance, an action, without knowing the consequence or the product beforehand.

The writing of the house itself has created the structure of the Part 03: FO(O)L+D. As one reads, the house is extended beyond the chapter “The House, The Wings, The Balcony, The Dissident”, and its spatial elements have become the locus of other discussions. The chapter that you are reading now is located metaphorically on the roof of the house. The openness of the roof stands for the Fugue that is supposed to open up the thesis, and to project possible routes to the outside of this book.

**INTERRUPTION**

The spotlights went off and this short story flickered
In the dark...

...there is a city,
suffocating in dirt and crime, in cruelty and mercy. Cars rush on the highways. Wind tosses the laundry to and fro, letting rooftop lovemaking slip out. Cats tear open trash bags. Stray dogs cool off in narrow canals. Cranes swing in circles over the city; their unoiled joints send squeaks to the surrounding mountains. The roof of the house is one among many roofs in the city. It has some benches, antennae supports, the pigeon’s nests, the cats giving birth to kittens, the spiders softening the corners; the thieves take a rest, the revolutionaries scream their slogans; for looking at the moon and stars. The roof of the house has long wires stretching from the antennae to the patio. The roof of the house follows the raindrops into the hole that is covered with a stone. You remove the stone, and drop the folded paper into that tiny hole.
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**Films and Videos**


**Interviews**

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Swedish Abstract

Abstract på Svenska


**Interruption: Writing a Dissident Architecture** makes a contribution to the fields of writing architecture and dissident architecture. Concerned with developing an ethos of criticality from within, it presents a series of performative writing experiments that are situated in politically charged architectural sites, from public spaces, to institutions, to domestic spaces. My aim is to ask how a dissident architecture could be produced through the practice of writing, specifically by offering an account of the performative acts of various characters who are introduced in the thesis, and who critically inhabit existing architectural sites, interrupt the spatial power relations of those sites, and who thereby construct ‘performing grounds’.

Writing architecture is developed in this thesis not as writing about architecture, but aims instead to write it, to make it. Writing dissident architecture writes with multiple voices, with many authors, not all of whom are welcomed. It offers significant approaches to a political and critical understanding of architecture. Where architecture in this thesis is understood both as a material structure and as a disciplinary framework in which power can become oppressive, writing architecture, on the other hand, is developed as a ‘minor’ practice that can act upon existing sites, interrupting their ‘major’ power relations. Interruption, developed as a tactic, is what activates architecture to become a performing ground for the act of dissidence.

Formulated as a journey the three main parts of the thesis deal with three interrupting tactics: Pause, Cut and Fo(o)l+d, which are applied in relation to three different kinds of political site: 1) spaces of appearance or the spectacle; 2) disciplined spaces understood as sites of impossibility; 3) domestic spaces as displaced loci of subversive political actions. The Pause uses stillness and refusal as a mode of interruption. The Cut interrupts the material and structural continuity of established institutions and creates cracks in those systems. The Fo(o)l+d interrupts surveillance and control by folding in and out of private and public spaces. By introducing a quasi-fictional character to each site, who performs through one of the three tactics of interruption, a performing ground is constructed. Writing architecture forwards this journey across specific sites through which the figure of the dissident emerges.

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KTH School of Architecture and Built Environment
Critical Studies in Architecture
Royal Institute of Technology
SE-100 44 Stockholm
Sweden