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Three Spaces

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We register a need for novel ways of collaborative artistic work beyond solitary authorship or functional differentiation, on one hand, and unified, synchronised collective production, on the other hand. We propose that a transversal understanding of different kinds of spaces—spaces of thought, aesthetic spaces, and physical spaces—leads to a method for this envisioned new collaborative approach, and to include a horizontal nexus between spatial functions (workspace, exhibition space). We present three study cases and experiences that informed our approach, suggesting particular techniques that facilitated a “singular plural” perspective on artistic creation. We finally ask how this may help addressing the limitations of artistic online work.

1. Evacuation

One of the most pronounced transformations induced by the measures of controlling the pandemic was the way we could access and use spaces. Like many of the other effects, this transformation amplified differences between groups of people: Those that lived in nursing homes and those that did not, those that lived in houses and those that lived on the street, those that could move their work “home” and those that could not. Artists both in the performing arts and in the fine arts were affected by suddenly losing common spaces for showing their work such as concert venues, clubs, museums and galleries. There are different opinions on whether we will ever return to these spaces in the same way, or to what degree the transformation will create permanent change to art spaces. In many regards, the digital or virtual space of the Internet was used as a new “place” to which activities shifted. Although one may disagree to what extent this shift was rather a loss or a win, showing work online was certainly radically different from doing so in physical venues, and the same goes for the experience as a member of audience.

1. The backdrop problem was conveniently solved in software so that you were soon conversing with people who presented themselves in front of imaginary beaches.

Taking a step back, many artists moved from the question of how to show their work to the question of how to make the work in the first place. The permeability between workspace and exhibition space was suspended. What was the purpose of building something if it would not be translated into an exhibition venue? And if everything was just virtualised, what use is a studio space other than a backdrop to video calls and providing a desk for a computer to sit on?¹

Some artists were literally evacuated from their studios, when that space was shared among different people who had to quarantine and could no longer enter their common spaces. The notable exception to isolation was the “common household”. Another exception during lockdown was to be allowed outside to reach your workplace. We found ourselves in the luxury situation of both having a studio space separate from our apartment, and sharing it between us as members of a household. Being able every day to take the walk to the studio, and at overlapping times sharing that “same” space *for* work, even though not working *on* the same thing, amplified the defining qualities of spaces: a sociality that still permits everyone in the space to take a distance to one another.

2. Instantiating Spaces for Making-With

An unshared space is impoverished in terms of relationality, it can become solitary confinement or at best hermitage. As we are now plotting the strategies to return to prior spaces or to create new spaces, it is with regard to how it becomes possible to meet and cross paths. This awareness has the potential to alter the fabric of art-making itself, if we develop a deeper understanding how the different kinds of spaces and different functions of spaces are interconnected. While some policymakers, especially in the cultural sector, have welcomed the opportunity to raise the flag of regionalism against what they perceive as a dominance of globalism and disrooted global elites, such deepening of space/place understanding is not meant to attribute higher value to some types of space—local over global, physical over virtual—but to advocate for a transversal approach that addresses one of the most pressing issues: How to live and work together, despite an increasing societal fragmentation and segmentation.

Collaboration is driven by different objectives in different realms, for instance productivity in the economical sphere. Yet, across the board, a positive effect is usually acknowledged when collaborative practices are enabled—in research, for example, interdisciplinary collaboration is located at the heart of innovation (Löwy 1992). However, there is often a gap between ideal and practice, when facing failures of working together, stemming from difficulties to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries and from the resources needed (Nowotny 2017). In the arts, the challenging boundaries are between artists and audience—what has been attempted to cross in the form of “relational aesthetics” (Bourriaud 2002) or under the umbrella term of participatory art (Bishop 2012)—or among artists when it comes to authorship and control over aesthetic decisions. Traditionally, democratic principles such as finding compromise run against ideals of perfection, rigour, radicality and intransigence. The solutions to maintain uncompromising aesthetic command include taking complementary positions within an art project (e.g. composer vs. musician or choreographer, director vs. producer or writer), developing carefully balanced long-term relationships (often duos), or forming collectives that assemble under a common programme or manifesto.

2. As noted by a reviewer, the idea of an originary being as being-with can already be found in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1967, §25–27). To be clear, Nancy develops his text, which was in response to the Bosnian War, partly in relation to Heidegger, but is often critical, for instance of the almost cultural pessimist undertones of the everyday distancing towards averageness without polymorphy and polyphony, where the “theme of existential ‘distantiality’ immediately reverts back to competition and domination, in order to open onto the indistinct domination of the ‘one’ [‘Das Man’].” (Nancy 2000, p. 82).

The article proposes to develop artistic processes of collaboration that take a third position beyond constructing unified collective works of art or mimicking social interaction, on the one hand, and beyond returning to an evidently obsolete production by the isolated artist, on the other hand. How is it possible to allow mutual contaminations, without succumbing to the standard proceeding of collective action?

Space and spatiality can play a crucial role for such endeavour, both in terms how instantiating space and operating in spaces form a tacit experiential layer and knowledge that is already shared among us. This fundamental spatiality has been compellingly described by Jean-Luc Nancy using the preposition with (Nancy 2000). There is a genuinely “singularly plural coexistence” in which everything that matters happens in the between of beings that are incomparable or inassimilable, strange to each other, as a positive affirmation that does not attempt at undoing this incomparability. It is spatial because there is no individual or origin that could claim to be at a centre, instead the originary action is *distancing* in order to be-among. Nancy calls this distancing or spacing “curious”, since the fundamental alterity around us is never obtainable. Violence begins with the attempt to appropriate the other origin (individual’s position), and what must be imagined instead is a community “without common origin”, instantiated by circulation which is the form of being-with (according to Nancy the *only* form of being itself, which would simply implode if it were not shared).² The important aspect of this conception is that the positions of the individuals never coincide, which is why it is immune to the totalisation usually implied by processes of collectivisation.

How would being-with be further specified and operationalised as a working-with? It seems one has to build on the element of curiosity without appropriation. One other thinker that develops a fitting concept of transformative practice is Isabelle Stengers. Also sceptical of consensus-forming, she borrows the term *relaying* from Deleuze and Guattari to describe a form of sharing that avoids appropriation and collapse of positions (Stengers 2017). More than simply passing on, relaying is understood as a practice that alters what is passed around. Similar to Donna Haraway’s response-ability, it is never a “general” technique abstracted from what is handled, it is not a hollow container concept of communication channels, but the act of relaying is specific and bidirectional, indeed it poses more responsibility on the one who receives the offer than the one who offers. The one who offers must endow the offer merely with a concern which “must be such that it is liable to be shared with those who arouse it, liable to add new dimensions to the issue”, whereas the receiver should “never ideal-

ize, ... never demand or even hope that what one relays will be true to one's ideal". The receiver / relay is not meant to be indifferent, they should be, to use Nancy's words, curious about what is received, and to stay faithful to the concern, it transforms to become a shared concern, it now must concern the relay as well, they have to "inherit the trouble" (Haraway 2015).

In the following we will argue that the different kinds of spaces interacting in art-making practice form a suitable substrate for operations of relaying, and support the curious distancing more abstractly proposed by Nancy. This will be exemplified by multiple installations carried out using some of the ideas presented here.

3. Kinds of Spaces

Although it is of course possible to draw different categorisations or names, we want to focus on three kinds or principal modalities of space: Thought space, aesthetic space, physical space. They are spaces in the sense that despite their heterogeneity, they be defined through common descriptions such as boundaries, distances, and movement, and they can be researched based on distribution of different positions, isolation and boundary-drawing, and differentiation and intersection among them (Weinfurter and Seidl 2019, 2).

Thought space captures the spatiality of developing, navigating, connecting thought, the movement between ideas, the circulation of "thinkables" (Frichot 2019, 174), a distribution of related things which one tries to tie together, but also the tension of isolation—the privacy of our thoughts, resistance to communication—and intersection, the thinking-with, embodiment and encounter that is needed to produce thoughts in the first place. With notation and utterance, it becomes a discursive space, a space that can be established ad hoc between humans as they act and speak, finding a "proper location almost any time and anywhere" (Arendt 1998, 198). It is not necessarily a verbalised space, but the play of various senses in our imagination, enactments and reenactments for our mind's eye and ear, the tentative space created by speculation—what if?

Aesthetic space refers to the spatialities composed and articulated through artworks or the non-functional surplus of design. These spatialities can be sensual or atmospheric as is almost the defining quality of installation art (Bishop 2005) and sound art (Ouzounian 2013), but also abstract as the poetic concept-space or the computational space of a new media art piece. It is the artist's positioning of elements relative to each other, it is opening the cleft

between them, it is the play of foreground and background, opaque and transparent, what is said and what is not said. It is the offering of possible traversals for the audience. It is also the space created *by* the audiences as they allow themselves to get involved with a piece, it is the space opened between the artist and the audience.

Physical space may seem trivial. The space in which one works, the space in which one performs or exhibits. But physical spaces are of course always imbued with historical conditions and political implications, and the art history is ripe with disputes over the appropriateness of dedicated spaces for showing art and performing music. The same goes for the spaces in which art is produced or research is being conducted before it is shown or published. For example, in her look “behind” phenomenology, Sara Ahmed begins at the site of Edmund Husserl’s elaborations—his own writing room that conditions the way he can even begin to formulate his philosophy (Ahmed 2006). Extending the ordinary notions of position and background, she notes the co-presence of another *type of background*, relegating the unheeded and familiar of Husserl’s surroundings to the background while singling out elements that he orients his direction towards. Who cleared or prepared his working table? Something “must take place in order for something to appear”. By turning the focus around from “bracketed” or pure foreground to facing the back, Ahmed proposes a meta- or ethno-phenomenology, including the historical trace of the body that eventually arrives at the table to begin the work of writing. We want to call the work that has been done to prepare and make actionable the artists’ workspace an investment, following Hans-Jörg Rheinberger’s observation that a lab or studio is also “an epistemic work-space with a lot of intellectual as well as material investment, an investment that tends to disappear in the product” (Rheinberger 2013, 217). We propose that studying the form of joint investments by multiple artists working together, and making the traces of these investments perceivable in the artistic “product”, are critical components in the development of new ways of making-art-with.

4. Spatial Operations and Transversality

It should have become clear that there is inherent complexions when conceiving spaces. For analytical purposes, they can be separated by kind, but when beginning to describe what happens in these spaces, one quickly moves horizontally to include other criteria such as function—workspace, exhibition space, discursive space, refuge. In the examples of Husserl’s writing table, or the artist’s studio investments, spaces are not made by static positions inside containers,

but dynamically created by traversals, arrivals, disappearances. The different kinds have affinities to one another. When you enter an art installation, do you not ask: How did all that you notice come here? Is there evidence of the space the artist worked in when making the piece? Were there several spaces and several artists involved? How can we understand prior doings and selections that gave importance to what is among the things to be found? What happened in the spaces of creation? The working space “figures” in the work itself, it con-figures the work. The notions of agency or the variable extent of “context and scope” could be used to describe this horizontal blurring (Gunnarsson 2021).

For the vertical movement between thoughts, aesthetics, and architecture, we propose spatial operations that aim not at treating these spaces as interchangeable, not at bringing them into congruence, but that can be applied transversally to them. In a similar scenario, describing the interlinkage of different kinds of ecologies, Félix Guattari called for a strategy of heterogenesis, which can be read as a sort of spatialisation in Nancy’s terms of curious spacing, a “continuous resingularization” in which individuals “must become both more united and increasingly different” (Guattari 2000, 69). Spaces allow for the assembly of heterogeneous things (artists, tools, thoughts, artefacts) in no particular order, order is established by traversal, not once but again and again, constituting such continuous resingularisation, and by this ongoing traversals the spaces are made and remade.

We want to describe some examples of spatial operations. Coming from a background of architecture, and departing again from togetherness and being-with as the foundation of space, Franziska Hederer proposes an action of “enspacing” oneself, which presupposes continuously being within and beside oneself, an interplay of taking part and distancing. One works equally with what one encounters by chance and what is brought along, causing “unforeseen yet nonetheless intimate moments of varying density to arise. Those moments—in the form of objects, actions, images, installations, words or sentences and things, all capable of shifting, abolishing or newly constructing spatial borders in places one would not have expected them—put a new complexion upon the space itself” (Hederer 2010). Hederer is interested in how one inhabits a space, becomes familiar with it or questions its familiarity. She proposes to go beyond conventional codes and push oneself to the limits, moving to “the fringes of a system, towards its boundaries, where the inscribed ordering principles start to oscillate and threaten to slip into chaos; failing every-day rules, so to speak; moments of wonder, of uncertainty, exceptional situations.” It is noteworthy that it is those marginal positions that she calls *neutral* and that set something new

3. Alvin Lucier begins workshops searching with his students for particular points in space, a practice also used by other sound artists.

into motion without coming to a rest. What is set into motion includes *thought models*, and accordingly the neutral points can be understood as locations for moving transversally from architectural space to thought space, and this operation can be expanded, for example in the case of sound art, to perform the space looking for the neutral points that lead to aesthetic events and decisions.³

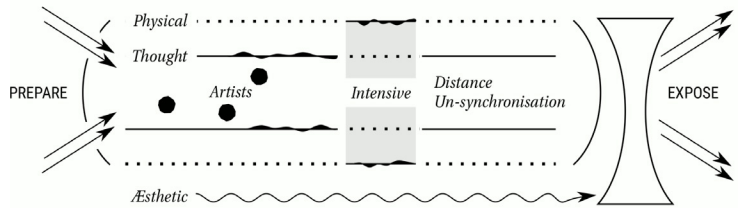
While the description of enspacing is implicit about the multiplicity of bodies, we want to focus more directly on what happens when artists share thought spaces, aesthetic spaces, and physical spaces. The terms that best describe how heterogenesis can be spatially supported, are *simultaneity* and *un-synchronisation*. By simultaneity, one usually understands the co-occurrence of elements at the same time—Latin *simul* means ‘together, at the same time’—a togetherness but in independence from one another; not one has caused the other, not one is in a hierarchically distinguished position. If one removed the independence, elements would become temporally aligned or synchronised. Yuk Hui describes our general technological condition as increasingly synchronising towards a universal episteme, against which he posits a radical alterity (Hui 2016, p. 30). The active measures taken in this direction, we want to call un-synchronisation. It is somehow difficult to think un-synchronising in terms of digital objects, because the domain of the digital and computation is usually thought of in the regimes of connectedness, networking, interlocking. However, one can nevertheless create models of un-synchronisation or simultaneity *with* computational processes (approaching them in a different way), and the humans / artists irreducible from such models.

5. Method of Collaborative Work

Our work method proceeds through multiple phases, as depicted in Fig. 1. The group forms in a preparatory phase; heterogeneity among the artists with respect to their media and practices is advantageous, also the need to getting to know each other (there are always included constellations where artists have no ongoing long-term work relation, there is an intrinsic curiosity among them). They agree on the implementation of the method and a code of conduct to avoid conflict and misunderstanding on the intended process. Other than that, the process guarantees a high degree of independence, individual tempo and rhythm. For the principle work, physical exchange is essential, although the members of the group may work in separate studios or labs and only come together or visit each other in intervals. The different kinds of spaces are depicted as surfaces or boundaries, interpreting the overall situation as a sort of “cloud chamber” that makes the different artists’ trajectories visible (audi-

ble, readable ...) through condensation on these surfaces. In the beginning, this surface is initially formed by the thought space, while the working spaces remain “open” and more distant in the background. The ideas developed are spun into threads that are negotiated, explicated and presented in gatherings. This is inverted in a subsequent intensive phase: The group installs itself in a particular architectural space; now the physical space, its particularity, and the coinstantaneous occupancy become the surface that structures and aligns the group’s process, whereas conceptual constraints are lifted. After this intensive phase, the group members return to their respective labs and studios, enacting a form of distancing and decorrelation. Only after this movement away from each other, are the artistic products (exhibition, workshop, publication) brought together. Here, the different aesthetic spaces that were evolving over time in parallel now intersect in a public display. This display is not a “group exhibition” or show of “group residency artefacts”, but makes visible what has been circulated and relayed in the process.

Fig. 1. Method for collaborative work through transversal spatial practice.



To structure the work, we have deployed and we are suggesting to deploy a variety of techniques, for example: *Framing the Inquiry*—elaborating questions that can be useful for others. *Circulation*—the capacity to come and react towards what others are doing, leaving behind a trace of the reaction, and giving the element reacted on possibilities for expansion, shaping the reaction so that it can eventually return to the others. *Continuous Notation*—the expedience of verbalisation methods (text production) differs largely across the individuals within a group process, so other forms of narration are mandatory. The “import” of each artist’s form of notation can reorder the group process. Also collecting and prompting material among others is an important way to construct a significant analysis. *Temporary Bridging*—to come together and establish ephemeral bridges among artists. There are different scales of these rendezvous, some are mini-condensations, some more involved, creating a connection between different artefacts, e.g. exchanging data, sending pings, creating a physical contact between elements. *Distancing*—traces may develop in the form of “canopy shyness”, a mutual distancing to produce gaps between the artists. It

is also a common undertaking in most art media to repeatedly dissociate from the process and observe it from distance.

A certain fuzziness in the interpretation of these concepts is not disadvantageous, since rudimentary concepts can integrate heterogeneous actors and techniques, facilitate interactions and the circulation of thoughts among a group of people without threatening the individual identities, making them partially negotiable and “adaptable to local sites”, improving communication and cooperation (Löwy 1992, 374f).

6. Study Cases

4. https://www.sciss.de/texts/med_chainreaction.html
(accessed 12-Apr-2021)

The work method is based on experiences from prior projects, a selection of which we briefly present here. To begin with, *Chain Reaction* (2016)⁴ was a series of loosely connected interventions in the public space of a small Styrian town. The in-situ working phase of five artists produced something similar to the thought space condensation of Fig. 1, and is an early validation of the hypothesis that the working environment—here a small workshop studio / project space as “home base”—plays a crucial role in facilitating the circulation of materials and concepts without making “unified pieces”. We were curious in what the others were doing, but there was no direct interference. An example of two elements created simultaneously were an analogue pinhole camera series and a digital exposure process using a peculiar “development” algorithm. Each existed in their own individuality, but they shared interest in a way of observing that was never verbally exchanged (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. *Chain Reaction*. Top: un-synchronously created artefacts, a digital long-term exposure process and analogue pin-hole photography. Bottom: work- and project space, sound installation in a cellar.

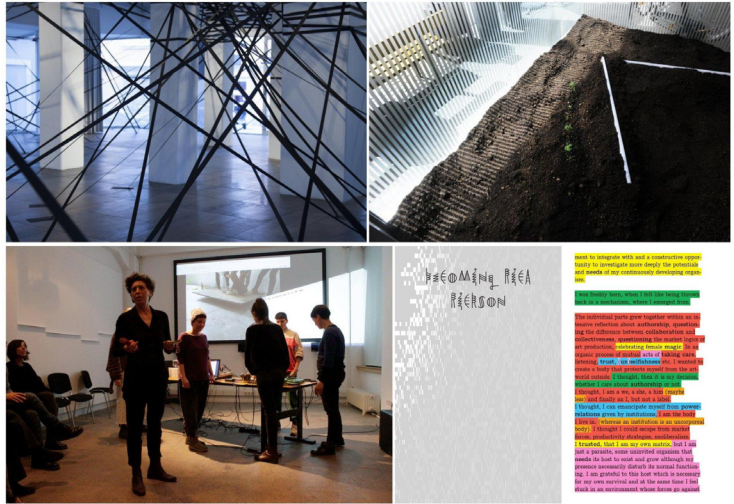


5. <https://iterations.space>
(accessed 12-Apr-2021)

A differently constructed project was *Iterations* (2017–2020)⁵, which attempted to understand moments of collaboration by enabling artists to come together in residency and exhibition processes in multiple countries, and focusing on digitally networked contexts to create speculative works around collective operation modes (Fig. 3). Open source methodologies originating from the digital realm were translated into analogue art-practices. Seeking a common production, the experiments demanded particular group dynamics hard to isolate. Each institution that was in charge of a residency imprinted particularities on the creation process, beginning with the institution’s typical selection process for invited artists. The different spaces represented equally impacted the process of creation by articulating materialities, and ways of in-situ production and embedding in the local scenes and towns, resulting in variations from a large number of artists (around 40) engaged with theatre pieces and work in public space, to smaller groups (seven artists), engaged in a more intimate situation and strongly situated relation with the gallery space. This double agency of institutional strength and spatiality needs to be seen necessarily as a political influence over the artistic product—coming together by decision stipulates then a form of arrival with less freedom, at least than would be the case in the

conditions of a self-directed collective formation. As Stavros Stavrides writes, common space “is both a concrete product of collectively developed institutions of sharing and one of the crucial means through which these institutions take shape and shape those who shape them” (Stavrides 2016, p. 7).

Fig. 3. *Iterations*. Top: Two collaborative installations *Net of Iterations* and *Collaboration Contamination*. Bottom: Handover event and collaborative publication.



During the different stages of *Iterations*, it was possible to distinguish some conditions of the collective process. The contact or synopsis is the first approach that occurs among the artists, getting to know each other through activities of leisure (cooking, eating, smoking), and it seems to be fundamental to establish a minimal base of trust to start the co-creation process. This process is not a complete dilution of one in another, it seems to happen as a sort of membrane by which information is being filtered. It was interesting to see the use of resources of communication, e.g. the “padding”, the traces of which could be seen as a form of positive *contamination*. It requires the flexibility to understand the other and, at the same time, the strength to keep individuality, even if in the end we find a form that does not belong to one or another. A process that partly centred around dialogical argumentation proved contradictory to the collective process intended, which is not dual but multiple, and varies in intensity and form depending greatly on the group. As any experiment, *Iterations* revealed some problems, originating in this case in the group consolidation form. For each residency the group came together through an artificial situation, where the previous experience as a collective was inexistent. This led to focus on daily subsistence and internal dynamics, rather than on the common production. The

artificial dynamics also arose discomfort among some artists, who felt the incursion of a laboratory test. The tension between the common product, mostly in the realm of ideas, and the ownership opened a question that seems to be the initial preposition for the institutions—a common process will lead to a common produce. But there is really no unique product born out of the residencies, even if in some cases the artists became a unified acting group, a collective with new a body and the personality of “Rica Rickson”, a fictive collective persona that represented the voice of the group. Despite placing the results under commons licenses, it still remains unclear how it is possible to distribute or further use this new compound work and the material at hand. A form of separation is needed, also to balance the dominance of strong personalities, common in a group of artists, that can override the experience of the quiet ones.

Fundamental to *Iterations* was the *handover*—a self-directed action to pass over some of the knowledge of the previous iteration. These actions were very different: The first handover was a song in Sicilian language, given to a group of the participants of the next iteration; the second handover took place in Vienna, with the re-enactment of a performance conceived in Barcelona. A physical and third handover in Brussels contained different elements of an installation in Graz. Each time, other materials were also passed from hand to hand (code, photographs, recordings). The gift exchange can be seen as an anarchist element that assumes “that it is not when a part of the self is inhibited and restrained, but when a part of the self is given away, that community appears” (Hyde 2007).

The third experience was *Through Segments* (2020), a collaborative sound installation among four artists, each developing their own real-time algorithms that listen into the storeys of a staircase space, taking an acoustical image of the visitors’ movements, forming four individual reactions that intersect in the space (Fig. 4). It is a poetic attempt to think about the distributed, the fragmented, the parallel, thus reflecting within the work on ways of working together through transversal spatiality. The project was implemented during several months of documented online working sessions. The artists came together to think, sketch, code, compose independent layers of the installation.

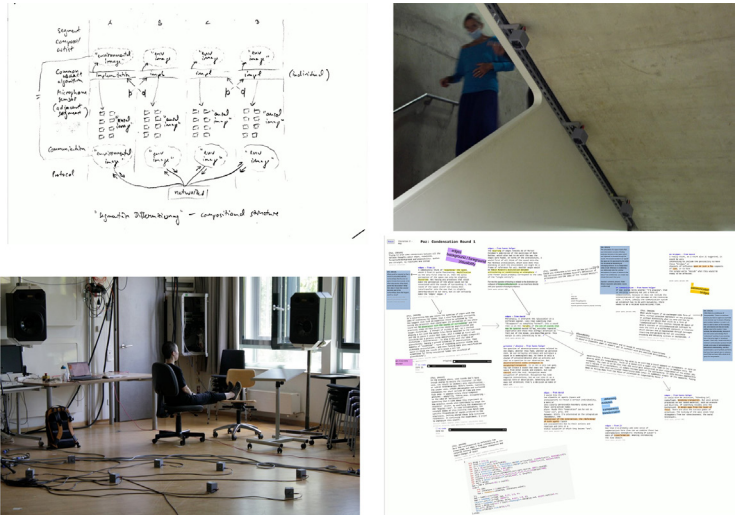
The initial attempt to depart from a “common algorithm” which would be differently interpreted by each artist failed, because once someone suggested an algorithmic idea, it already reflected a bias by their personal investment in it, while an intrinsic motivation for the others was missing. We then reversed the motion, in a form of simultaneous arrival, heading for a *common* site not as a starting point but as the eventual conjunction of our trajectories, by bringing

6. <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/711706/711707>
 (accessed 12-Apr-2021)

together our parallel work processes on the Research Catalogue online platform,⁶ while the particular exhibition site remained a force of condensation that united the individual approaches. Actions included formulating questions for the others to reflect their own doing, developing log books next to each other, interlacing ideas and statements. It was important to be able to move between textual production and showing sound experiments and non-verbal sketches to the others. The movement between thought space, aesthetic space, and eventual physical space, could be read in the set of questions.

Fig. 4. *Through Segments.*

Top left: Early sketch of the interleaving of the four artists / systems. Top right: Installation view. Bottom left: Meeting and prototyping in the lab (IEM CUBE). Bottom right: Research Catalogue page with one artist's (Daniele Pozzi) condensations from the first round of questions.



7. This question was accompanied by two sound files.

A condensed version of one example from the first iteration of each artist: *Reverberation*—what is the role of reverberation, its causality versus an inner movement (radiation, vibration) of things, people. Is it a volume, a form, accidental, reflection or complement? Does that become part of the piece? *Deviation*—everything our works will inject into this space will change it, and cause the space's acoustic characteristics to deviate from their behaviour. Can these deviations be somehow subject to composition? How could it be possible to “compose” which “form” the deviations we will provoke have, and how big these are? *Edges*—the museum building has an outside media installation surface that is highly integrated into the architecture in a way that it does not feel like an addition, a separate entity, but rather a sort of skin that is part of the building itself. A text on the building talks about the absence of a recognisable boundary, and it could be interesting for us to include a similar reflection in our project. How can we create a situation where the environment and our work are perceived

as a single entity, rather than as two separate units (background / piece)? What would it mean for our installation to have (acoustic) “edges” that are not always perceptible? *Bridges*—can (a) bridge(s) be included in your segmentation networks? If so, do they have a direction? Are they (is it) supposed to be one directional, two, or more? If there are more than one bridge, do they look identical or not? Can they function to extend the whole network? Would they be recognisable, having their own duration and standing as a segment?

What is interesting is that this technique allows both very different ways of posing “questions” to appear, and at the same time one immediately senses points of contact between the different voices. The technique was elastic enough to allow a self-directed evolution, yielding for example a derived technique we called “pinning”, selectively copying and pasting materials from the other collaborators’ hyper-texts onto new personal subpages (pin boards). The necessity to meet physically in space was made possible during the summer of 2020 due to the short period of lockdown easing, and this allowed us to conduct sound experiments together in the same space, even though everyone was working in their own rhythm and focus most of the time. During setup of the installation in the exhibition space, the absence of one of the artists (Ji Youn Kang) due to new travel warnings was clearly felt, confirming the importance of the in-situ contact.

7. Irreducibility of the Spaces?

In the method described, and in the study cases presented, it is evident that the three spaces—of thoughts, of aesthetic propositions, and of physical work and exhibition—are indispensable. Each of them provides ways for moving into the other, and most importantly enables their own forms for curious spacing and enspacing of the artists, permitting a new type of collaborative work to emerge that is not subsumed in a unified collective work, but that preserves the individuality and otherness of all participants.

To return to the initial scenario, why is it not possible to satisfyingly contain these spaces “within” virtual and online, purely digital spaces? It is no coincidence that online platforms seem to work much better as workspaces than exhibition and performance spaces. The sketching and thinking, the thought space, has an affinity to the digital space whose evolution has optimised it for text and hyper-text. To assume that it can convey the richness of modalities through audio-visual “windows” and rectangles, may be a similar fallacy as mistaking “the brain” for the entire human being and the omission of the “unthought” throughout

periods of the history of cognition. We suspect, however, that the main reason for the frustration with art experiences online stems from the missing distance and detachment of the screen. This seems counter-intuitive, as spatio-temporal distances are at play between the art making and the audience—the artists have never been in your apartment—but the unconditionality of the way the screen-work requires attention could be seen as a particular form of synchronisation. “A barefoot hiker told me once that the reason we’re drawn to screens is that we’re looking for fire ...” (Braverman 2020) Unlike the real fire, the screen enforces a uniform technological regime which can result in disorientation (Hui 2019).

This is not to suggest that online spaces be written off, on the contrary, new strategies must be developed that address the lack of un-coupling and un-synchronisation with the screen. The digital online space in its affinity with text shares language’s problem that it “does not easily lend itself to showing the ‘with’ as such, for it is itself the address [unconditional coupling] and not what must be addressed [the multiplicity of not assimilable individuals]” (Nancy 2000, p. xvi, our additions in brackets). Perhaps we can neutralise this address, provide the neutral points of the enspacement of the one who sits in front of the screen, by thinking this space more radiophonically, as the superimposition or simultaneity of the aesthetic and sensual space with the private space of the audience. Perhaps we need to develop new forms of “instructions” for an alternative address, for ways that the audience can perform its own incompatible traversal.

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