

From flâneur to co-producer

The performative spectator

IMANUEL SCHIPPER

In the 1842 drawing, *Le Flâneur*, we see modern man¹ – well dressed, standing² with his hands in the pockets of the long, baggy but still elegant trousers, shirt and coat, a stick under his left arm, a hat on his head, his face tilted towards the sun. Much ink has been spilled over this strolling figure, this aimless walker of 19th-century Parisian streets, as he was a central figure in literary works by Poe, Joyce, Baudelaire, Döblin, and Proust. This romantic figure takes us – the readers – by the hand for a stroll into the city and shares all that he discovers with us. But the flâneur does much more than just discover secrets in the arcades of early modernity and cultivate his idleness. He is the prototype of the modern urbanist, a new sort of city goer as there were and are many types around. The flâneur dwells in the streets with “cool but curious eyes” (Rignall 1989: 112); he is the constant observer of the ever-changing spectacle that emerges around him. “Have we seen enough of the flâneur, the Parisian idler who sampled the sights and sounds of the city as he strolled with no destination in mind?” asks Gregory Shaya (2004: 46) in his essay:

-
- 1 In most images and stories, flâneurs are male, as is echoed by the male form adopted or cited in this text. Most theories on flâneurship are in this sense problematic; see the feminist critique on this discourse (cf. Wolff 1985; Van Godsendthoven 2005; Scalway et al. 2006).
 - 2 Paul Gavarni: *Le Flâneur*, 1842.

“He was a common figure of the nineteenth century, essential to any picture of the streets of Paris. The flâneur was the man of leisure who went into the street in search of some satisfaction for his overdeveloped sensibilities. He was, by various accounts, a gastronome, a connoisseur, an idler, an artist [...]” (Shaya 2004: 47)

The later attribution is the one that might be interesting in contemporary discourses: the flâneur as an artist, an actor, and a writer. Let us go back to Garvin’s little image.

Figure 1: Le Flâneur



© Paul Garvarni, 1842

The elegant man with his stick, standing still for a moment and looking up in the air – where is he looking and what is he seeing? A bird, a tree in blossom, a lady behind a window? Or is he just enjoying the sun as hinted at by the shadow behind him? We do not know and actually it is not of importance WHAT he is looking at but how that looking-at-whatever-it-is constitutes his specific experience and makes him important enough to become a *sujet* for the painter. In other words: this flâneur is both a spectator and an actor in a play called ‘the flâneur’.

As Cees Noteboom notes (1995), flâneurs are artists even if they do not write, because they are witnessing that what is going on in the city, “they are the eye, the protocol, the memory, the judgement, the archive, in flâneurs the city becomes aware of itself” (Noteboom 1995: n. pag.; my translation).

It is this double action of flâneurship that is of interest. By walking through the streets and collecting impressions, the flâneur is constantly producing a story

of his lived experiences while being an *acteur* in the play he is currently watching. Although Rancière is not voting for theatrical actions that force the audience to become physically active, he describes the constant activity of the spectator even in a classical setting of theater:

“The spectator also acts [...]. She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host or other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her. She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way – by drawing back, for example, from the vital energy that it is supposed to transmit in order to make it a pure image and associate this image with a story which she has read or dreamt, experienced or invented. [...] This is a crucial point: spectators see, feel and understand something in as much as they compose their own poem, as, in their way, do actors or playwrights, directors, dancers or performers.” (Rancière 2009: 13)

I agree with Rancière that bringing the audience out of theater buildings would not necessarily mean an emancipation of the spectator, but I would argue that a specific mode of walking in the city (the flâneur-mode) comes very close to what Rancière would call emancipated spectatorship. The flâneur is not just an observer or passive spectator of a finished play, he is more a coproducer of that very city life. He is in a mode that is described as “a historically specific mode of experiencing the spectacle of the city in which the viewer assumes the position of being able to observe, command, and participate in this spectacle all at the same time” (Schwartz 2001: 1733). It was Walter Benjamin who introduced the concept of the flâneur into academia in 1929 with *Die Wiederkehr des Flâneur* (1991[1929]: 194-199), reviewing Hessel’s *Spazieren in Berlin* and later in 1935 sketches of *The Arcades Project* (1999[1935]), where he pointed out that the flâneur is an active producer of the urban scenery he lives in: “It [the city] opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room” (Benjamin 1999[1935]: 417). For Benjamin, the city not a fixed thing anymore but a space that changes its appearance and functionality constantly depending on the action and choices of its visitor, user, inhabitant, actor. And the city even becomes a strange and unknown place: “To the flâneur, his city is – even if [...] he happened to be born here – no longer native ground. It represents for him a theatrical display, an arena” (Benjamin 1999[1935]: 347). Benjamin, reflecting Baudelaire here, propose to see the city as theater that is set up and used by actors, which in this case are flâneurs, but are increasingly all members of urban society in general.

In other words: in the city that works here as a medium (cf. Kittler 1996) it is the citygoer, the passant, the active and emancipated spectator (cf. Rancière 2009) that turns the urban landscape into a “theatre of social action” (Mumford 2015: 93), a “theatre whose setting is the street” (Brecht 1987[1930]: 176)³ or a performance (cf. Schipper 2014a). The assemblage of collected impressions are merged into a texture of experiences, a storyboard of the film that we live at the same time. Or more generally and in the words of the human geographer Doreen Massey: “We are constantly making and re-making the time-spaces through which we live our lives” (Massey 1999: 23). Massey not only discusses the inseparable relations of space and time but in her core argument points to the production of identities through the concept of relational aspects of space: “We cannot ‘become’, in other words, without others. And it is space that provides the necessary condition for that possibility” (Massey 2005: 56). The very performative notion of space – that it is not a fixed thing to walk through but more a mean or medium in which things and settings become possible – has been discussed by many scholars such as Lefebvre (1974), Certeau (1980), Merleau-Ponty (1945), Deleuze and Guattari (1980). I do not intend to dig deeper into relational space theories or the politics of space. However, it is obvious that these approaches to space and space production have an effect not only on how we receive space as such, but actually form the way we behave in that space and even what and how we see and understand things, objects, situations and actions in that space. In other words – the space we produce will structure the life-time we spend in it.

This is a highly performative approach to describing space and its narrative – the relational space production gets a kind of dramaturgical agency for the play that is called “my life”. Recalling our flâneur as a starting point and heading to questions of theatrical performances that use digital technologies and urban space, it seems to be useful to remember the dramaturgical importance that space production has. (cf. Schmidt 2010, Schipper 2014, Fischer-Lichte/Wihstutz 2013 and Merx this volume) Now – I do agree that the flâneurs, the dwellers, the strolling figures, are not in completely the same role as a member of a classic theater audience, as this is mostly sitting on a given seat in a dark indoor space, staring at the illuminated stage. Theater producers have employed these conditions to concentrate the attention of spectators towards hot spots of action and debate since the late 18th century. This primacy of emphasizing the event may

3 In his 1930 poem “On Everyday Theatre”, Brecht invites the actors (“[...] you artists who perform plays / In great houses under electric suns [...]”) to step down from the stage and visit the city and its theater in the streets. (cf. Brecht 1987: 176–179, Rokem 2010: 158-160)

be the crucial point that has changed in contemporary performances investing in the use of digital technologies.

DIGITALITY

What makes a theater production that belongs to digital culture different from one that does not? Of course, that raises the question of what digital cultures are at all, and engenders many possible answers⁴. In this essay, I closely follow the concept of Felix Stalder in his recent publication on the culture of digitality, where he proposes three quite general qualities that together constitute together of what could be called digital culture: referentiality – the use of existing cultural material that has to be selected and merged, communality – the autonomous or heteronomous collective actions in networks, and algorithmicity – automatic processes that make data sets visible and usable for human beings. Stalder's tryptichon is very helpful for the analysis of performances as it addresses questions of materiality (text, actors), structure (dramaturgy), and reception (audience), yet it lacks one important aspect of the latter: the multiple, strong and completely changed position and responsibility of the individual member of the audience.

In this paper, I discuss this issue by arguing that a focus on audience experience is of utmost importance. More specifically, I will look at the mode of participation and coproduction the audience is given and how much this will transform the simple spectator to a coproducer of the performance that he/she is attending. Following the example of the flâneur in the city, I will discuss two examples of how digital technologies emphasize the changed concept of spectatorship. Both examples need an audience that works as a coproducer; both move the spectators around and ask them to perform actions. And although in neither example is the audience seated in a theater, but has to move around in space, nor is the plot presented by actors, but the content delivered by an audio stream over headphones, the kinds of approach to spectatorship are quite different in each of the two performances. *Walking the City by LIGNA* is a site-specific audio-guided tour in an urban landscape and *Situation Rooms* is more a multiplayer video game in a labyrinth-like installation. In both performances the compositions of the experiences are related to the choices of the spectator, although there

4 See the video interviews *DCRL Questions: What are digital cultures?:* <http://www.leuphana.de/en/research-centers/cdc/digital-cultures-researchlab/projects/dcrl-questions.html>

does exist a stream of rules and hints delivered to the audience through an audio voice or video clips. In these cases, the digital devices do not mainly replace the stage or deliver the content but serve as a hand that guides the user through the experience. I chose these examples in order to discuss the ways the role of the audience is formed by the specific use of digital devices.

In an essay on new media dramaturgy, the authors ask the question: “What job can or does the spectator do?” (Eckersall/Grehan/Scheer 2015: 376), stating that the digital cultures are not just an additive to that which happens on stage but are a radical change to every aspect of performance, and especially the spectator. They argue that performances working under the paradigm of new media dramaturgy change “everything for the spectator. The landscapes of production and reception are unrecognizable in the sense that the use of space and the demands on our attention as spectators are radically different than they have been up until now.” (ibid.) Even while a huge change has been brought about, there remains a situation where there is an attention produced by the production and demanded of the spectator. But what about performances where the demand is not produced by the artistic team but by the users-spectators, or the attention has to be given by the so called actors and not the audience? What about productions that will only take place if the audience is much more active than the production team? There are performances that evoke computer games more strongly than dramatic plays, and sometimes, there is literally nothing more for an audience to see than what you would see as a flâneur. The state of coproduction is already beyond that what Bishop discusses in her conclusion of *Artificial Hells*:

“From the audience’s perspective, we can chart this as a shift from an audience that demands a role [...], to an audience that enjoys its subordination to strange experiences devised for them by an artist, to an audience that is encouraged to be a co-producer of the work.” (Bishop 2012: 277)

WALKING THE CITY

In 2013-14, the Hamburg-based performance collective, LIGNA, invited the audience to an audio-guided stroll through eight different cities in *Walking the City*. LIGNA consists of three media- and performance artists who describe their work as “creating temporary situations that employ their audience as a collective of producers” (LIGNA n.d.), they are the inventors of the *RadioBallet* (2002), that “provides radio listeners with a choreography of excluded and forbidden gestures in formerly public, now controlled spaces like train stations or shopping

malls. [...] More recent works like *Secret Radio* (2014) or *The Great Refusal* invite the participants to stage a complex interaction in public space or on stage, which discloses itself to them only gradually.” With *Walking the City* LIGNA asks different questions about walking, inspired by the one strong question from Balzac (2011 [1833]: 33):

“Is it not truly extraordinary to realise that ever since men have walked, no-one has ever asked why they walk, how they walk, whether they walk, whether they might walk better, what they achieve by walking, whether they might not have the means to regulate, change or analyse their walk: questions that bear on all the systems of philosophy, psychology and politics with which the world is preoccupied?”

Walking the City is a performance without actors that invites the audience to stroll through a pre-existing ready-made urban space and experiment with it in particular ways and, in doing so, read it afresh. Of course, there are constant, well-composed and registered acoustic invitations to perform actions. They are sent by a radio transmitter to a personal radio receiver, which are handed out at the beginning of the show. Nevertheless, the audience would only get half the experience if they didn’t set themselves into action and actually – walk:

“At the starting point, I am handed a small radio receiver with headphones. A voice tells me to walk toward the Spalenberg district in the old town. On the way, my acoustic guide repeatedly draws my attention to my gait, the steps my companions and I are taking. The voice instructs me to move closer to my fellow peripatetic researchers, link arms with them and walk down the alley in coordinated rhythm. Our steps echo off the narrow house fronts like those of marching soldiers; bemused passers-by stop and stare at our procession. You can see them asking themselves: what on earth are they up to? What’s the demonstration all about? Altered by the visual and acoustic intervention, the space becomes unsettling. For a brief moment, Spalenberg is transformed from a charming and sleepy little shopping street that can feel somewhat lonely even on the busiest days, into the walkway for a potentially violent corps of loudly marching people. The group takes possession of the space, pushing pedestrians towards its edge; and suddenly the street seems to close in. One is reminded of the Morgenstrach – the parade that forms part of Basel’s carnival celebrations – or a troop of soldiers returning to barracks after a march-past. I am right in the middle of it, part of it. I too am causing this change. Later I am alone once again with the voice in my ear instructing me to conduct various investigations into the act of walking. The scene changes yet again; the street is at once a laboratory and an object of inquiry. I read the asphalt and flagstones as a map for future paths, the holes and dirt in them as the traces of past activities. I walk on, staring down at the ground, then

gazing only at the sky and interpreting the clouds; finally, I advance with my eyes closed. As I walk, I link the locations I have passed through – the places of the past – into a network that potentially contains future places. I experience this space and the way the past flows through the present moment into a future. A space defined by temporal and social coordinates takes shape. Led and guided by the voice from the radio, my body and my movements, evidently less smooth and more halting than just a couple of years ago, become an instrument for measuring this space-time experience. Finally, the voice leads me zigzagging from one side of the road to another. I rebound through the streetscape marked out by my experience like a rubber ball, until I am instructed to bring my solitary excursion to an end. Filled with my newly-detailed knowledge of the streets of Spalenberg, I return the radio receiver.” (Schipper 2014b: 27)⁵

Figure 2: Walking the City, Poitiers



© Arthur Pequin for LIGNA, 2013

“The City Is a Medium” stated Kittler and Griffin in 1996, actually pointing to the functions of information, data and networks that the built infrastructure inhabits. But in *Walking the City*, it was exactly not the buildings, the streets or the pavement that was constructed there years ago. The essentials of that experience were the traces of past lives, the echo of walkers from many hours ago, the imagined possibilities of the multilayered spaces. These experiences were not told through the written text that was played directly into my ears. What was pre-produced had very little to do with what I, as one individual member of the audience, was producing during the show: dancing, standing, running, searching,

5 This quote and the one in the later section are borrowed from an article on scenography I wrote for the Swiss Culture Foundation Pro Helvetia (Schipper 2014b).

jumping, marching... and of course walking – these were actions that I was asked to do – but the text (or texture) of what I lived and lived through was not given to me. And obviously the own biography, the own taste, they own interests are strong guides of your individual experience. How does the experience of a spectator participating o the performance differ from that one could have if we would just walk through the city in a different manner? Or in other words: what is the distinction from a spectator to a flâneur?

Both made the choice to walk through the city in a way that is not only dedicated to the fastest way to get your body from point A to point B. Both have the privilege to spend time to experience themselves in that specific mixture of spaces called the city and to collect and assemble impressions after their own rules. But besides to some similarities there is still some important differences: While the flâneur is completely driven by no specific interests and no specific aim to reach - the LIGNA-walker has a kind of a temporal and also spatial structure that works like a set of rules of a sport game or the invisible agenda of a wedding ceremony. And not unlike a sport game that looks every time completely different even though the rules are exactly the same, this performance is not only different on every show every single day and in every single city but also for every single audience member. The set of rules that we know from sports but of course even more from all games is the stable structure for all shows that incorporates as the two sides of a medal: stay exactly the same and allows only the multiplicity of experiences.

This is a fundamental shift in the history of theater and the concept of the theater audience: where an architecturally designed focus of a theater guided all senses to the stage, now there are radio receiver earphones, so close to your brain. Because they are stuck literally in your ears, earphones are no longer even visible; they are so light, awareness of the technical intervention fades after just a few minutes. A technical infrastructure is voluntarily adopted. This kind of ‘cyborg light’ makes auditory sense very sensitive to the messages that come out of the radio transmitter. But the optical sensorium and the infinite possibilities for movement are completely free of the limitations of theatrical infrastructures.

In other words: in this case the voice and the body of one actor (or many actors) is divided in this digital-spatial performative network into two actors (at least): One is the technological device that incorporates the set of rules of that interactive encounter by delivering acoustic invitations or framing actions in the given borders of time and space. This representative of the digital world also suggests at one moment to take an individual tour and at another to team up with some fellow city-walkers to march in formation. The voice is the leader and guide through the game. Dramaturgically, it is a structural voice but not a voice

that conveys content. It is voice that answers more the question of ‘how’ (the play looks) than the question of ‘what’ (the play is about).

Another aspect of normal theater that is played by the actor is that of providing the body for the performance. In *Walking the City*, this role completely delegated to the audience. Each participant embodies the actor that will act in the show he is attending. Theatrical events like this – walks, audio guided tours – often work with this theater-historical game-changer – there is no actor to do all the work; no audience to sit and passively witness. In this production there is nothing to see unless the spectator puts himself into action. This play goes a step further than just presenting an invitation to participate – it gives clear instructions to follow in order to see the play. Already in the title – *Walking the City* – it says what is expected from you. Some may decide not to follow the invitation or prefer not to accept the rules of the game. Their decision would only effect their own experience and would not have any impact on others who decide individually to follow the instructions.

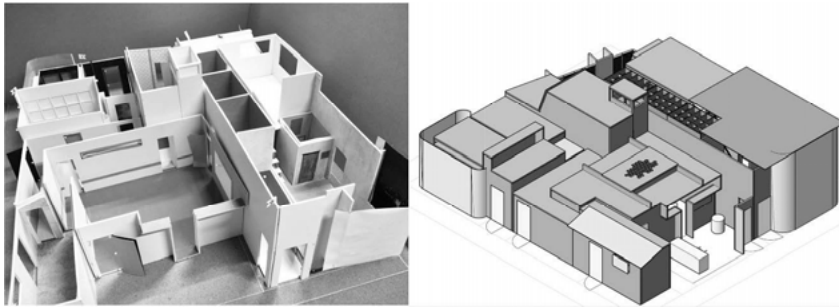
This radio play works in very sophisticated way with the possibilities of grouping and separating players as it starts with a collective body of walkers in the street, followed at some point by separation from the group to follow individual paths. And again: the actions that you decide to perform dictate what kind of experience you have. In addition to the rules and invitations from the device and the physical and sensual experiences derived from your actions, there is a third kind of agency in the game that is quite important: the unpredictable. Other people, action on the street, buildings, traces of previous city goers – these are all random elements that are neither in the hands of the production of theater pieces nor really selectable for the recipient. It is an *agency of chance* that is staged here along with a *technological agency* (that of the devices and the voices) and a *human agency* (that of individual choices).

The audio stream that is broadcast to the audience as a radio emission has the function of a master of ceremony, an ‘acteur’ that sets rules, decides and controls the timeframes and invites guests (the audience) to investigate the topic (walking the city) by proposing different actions. It also delivers some extra historical and site-specific information, plays music and reminds you to get back on time. Even while the hands of the users/players/spectators are free and the guiding voice sits in the ears, this set-up still produces a strange feeling of being taken by the hand.

SITUATION ROOMS

Let's change the scenery. We are going back into a closed venue, not really a theater space, but one of the many industrial-era factories repurposed into cultural spaces. In the middle of a hall stands a huge installation that looks like the back side of a film set, dark panels and a dozen yellow doors, each with a big number on it. It is the installation of *Situation Rooms* made by the German/Swiss collective *Rimini Protokoll* in collaboration with the scenographer Dominic Huber.

Figure 3: Model and draft for *Situation Rooms A & B*



© Dominic Huber, 2013

Situation Rooms is a production about war, the international network of arms trades, the uses of arms and the impact of what the use of arms could have. Viewers are led to consider what the content and the aesthetics of that play could have been. (cf: Schipper (2014), Oberender (2015), Birgfeld/Garde et al. (2015), Whistutz (2015) In this paper I am interested in the way the concept of augmented reality is used and how that impacts the mode of spectatorship. But first, another subjective impression:

“In the space of three short hours, I am twenty different people. On one occasion I am nine years old; on another I am in my late sixties. I hail from thirteen different countries and find myself in as many different theaters of action. Each time I follow my hand, which holds an iPad on which short film sequences are replayed. The films were made using the same device, carried by a protagonist in the arms and war trade. I watch the screen and attempt to replicate the movements previously made by the person behind the camera. When the film shows me a hand opening a door, I open that actual door in front of me. Every seven minutes the screen goes dark, and the journey into the world of the absent protagonist is interrupted. I am myself once again overwhelmed by the stranger's life in which I

was just immersed, and disconcerted by the momentary duplication of the present. I am aware that I am standing on a stage set made up of separate, interlinked rooms, all of which are depictions of a reality. As a former helicopter pilot in the Indian army, I ascend to a lookout point affording views over the wide expanses of Kashmir with unmanned drones keeping watch for terrorists. At the same time, this imaginary tactical lookout opens up a real view of the complex set design. Spotlights hang from the ceiling, flickering in choreographed pattern. Here I can make out the photographic mural of the oriental city, there the huddle of tents making up the field hospital, artfully illuminated from outside. I can also see the black stage wall sections, professionally assembled in sequence to divide up the space. I look down from above on the intermingled, superimposed spaces and worlds below: a sight that conveys peace and order but at the same time makes clear that this peace exists only outside the system. It is a glance behind the scenes of this machinery of war and weapons. I meet possible arms buyers, take aim at potential terrorists, shake hands with politicians, examine wounded patients and put on a bulletproof vest. I experience first hand how a weapon manufactured in peaceful Europe causes me life-threatening injuries in the space next door. With the voices of the absent protagonists in my ears and their fields of view on the iPad in my hand, I move in their stead through hyper-realistically recreated copies of their worlds. [...] I travel through countries, places, spaces and times, before finally I am disgorged once again into the auditorium. What remains are the stories, the images and the physical experiences such as a handshake, lying in the field hospital, the smell of borscht – and the disquieting feeling that so many things are linked to other things, and that behind local theaters of conflict there is a global space of responsibility and consequences.” (Schipper 2014b: 28)

There are a number of similarities in the way the audience is addressed in *Walking the City* and *Situation Rooms* – and some important differences. Here too, the visitor is equipped with a digital gear, in this case with headphones that are connected to an iPad mini that is installed in landscape mode on a wooden holder. This installation lets you hold the display in a way reminiscent of the use of selfie sticks, but actually the spectator is asked to use it in a way familiar from some augmented reality apps, where you hold the image of your device in visual coordination with the real world in front of you. It is a performative gesture that is broadly known from situations where we compare a materialized image (painting, photo prints, sketches, ...) with the original sujet.

Once the user has understood this main rule of the game, he is taken into that multilayered installation of 20 characters and their stories and 15 highly real interiors. All the Spaces look like film settings, which is what they actually are. On the devices you see film clips that were shot with the camera of the very iPod

that the audience holds in their hands in that very film set / installation.⁶ This is an interesting transfer: Though the user only sees a pre-produced video clip on the screen of the iPad, he behaves as if it were an augmented reality application by constantly overlying the device's image with the real world. Using AR in urban surroundings you get an overlay of actual (and reproduced) information a live camera image that you have to transfer to the actual real world. In *Situation Rooms*, the medially material is all pre-produced – the image on the device, the information you get and even the 'real world' is only a pre-produced film set. Though some documentary material is included, the main function of the film clips is guiding visitors through the labyrinth of the installation, bringing them to a previously foreseen position in the room and directing their field of vision towards the director's proposition.

This complete set of visual instructions that moves bodies, faces and eyes is superimposed with the voice of the protagonist (which changes every seven minutes) that tells his/her story in a way that addresses you directly, like the beginning of the clip of Amir Yagel, Israel Defense Forces, 50th Battalion, 2007-2010:

"I just finished high school. I was 18. My dream in this age was to have sex already with a girl. I didn't know back then that the south, the north, the east and the west, the railways, the buses and the junctions of Israel will all look totally different to me from now on. [A video clip is showed on the] This is in Hebron 2009 five AM and the Muezzin is calling. This video was shot by soldiers I knew during the time I was in the army. How was the army for me? At first, I had to get used to speak with plural and not in singular form. We were always together. [...]" (Rimini Protokoll: 2013)

Or Andreas Geikowski's, a sport shooter in Germany:

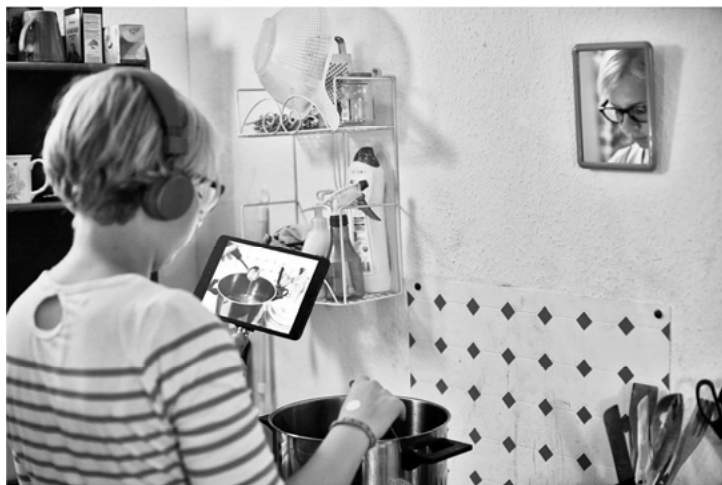
"This is the shooting range in Wannsee, Berlin. I work between 8-10 hours here every day. And train the police and competitive shooting athletes. That's me 22 years ago, training for the Berlin police force. That was the first time I came into contact with a live firearm. And that's me today: Andreas Geikowski, 45 years old, active shooting athlete for 23 years. I'm the sponsored marksman for the companies Heckler & Koch, H&N Geschosse and Triebel Berlin." (Rimini Protokoll: 2013)

In other words: the way the spoken text is written and spoken by the protagonist invites or actually forces the visitor to play the lives of the protagonists for seven

6 The filming was done simultaneously with all 20 protagonists.

minutes. This is supported with the visual field of a subjective camera that was shot by the protagonist and the hyper-realistic reconstructed copy of the protagonist's space. The combination of text, voice, film clip and physical space produces an immersive experience that visitors almost cannot escape from.

Figure 4: In the role of Irina Panibratowa, a Russian nutritional engineer in a weapons factory



© Jörg Baumann, 2013, for Ruhrtriennale & Rimini Protokoll

Digital technology here affords a closer taking-by-the-hand than in *Walking the City*. The System of the game works like a clock. It does not stop. Either you are following the trace and the pace or you are out. The grade of freedom in the offer to participate is small here – it is more an invitation to step into a pre-produced role than to explore different possibilities. The devices help the visitor to take the position of the protagonist – like a prompter guides an actor through the performance.

While the user/gamer/visitor/spectator follows the visual instructions on the device, they listen to the stories of the protagonists and enter one room after the other. They sometimes meet other visitors, also equipped with iPad and earphones. On the screen, however, they see the another protagonist filming their own tour. For this reason, a single space can be for one visitor the canteen of an arms factory in Switzerland; for another, an apartment in Russia; for a third, the solitary room of a detention center for asylum seekers in Germany. The Rooms are defined not just through their built existence, but also by Situations and by

those who play their roles within them. As you visit different rooms from different places of the world and incorporate different positions in that deadly network you get a broad, diverse and multiple view on that field.

The *human agency* seems to allow less freedom in that piece than in the work of LIGNA as each movement in the installation and every position in the spaces is choreographed by the directors, acted and filmed by the protagonists and reenacted by the audience. It is this feeling of standing in place of somebody in a naturalistic reconstruction of an original venue that works better if you try to copy the point of view of the protagonist as perfectly as possible. Obedience to clear rules seems to promise a stronger experience. In *Situation Rooms*, the spectators are not only asked to follow the path of the protagonists but also to interact with other users – to shake hands, to serve soup, to take coats. By doing so, they serve the story of another visitor by using their bodies – in other words: they became an actor and perform with and for other spectators/actors. Concerning the *technological agency* we can add the following: the films are shot on iPads with a wide-angle lens framing a section of the world that demands actions and positions. They lay the path that the users will follow in order to reenact a historical situation. What brings us to the *agency of chance* that is marginal here as I compared this system with a clockwork. In fact, everything is set up so that, in theory, each session of seven minutes looks the same and works in exactly the same way. Nevertheless, there is a strange and unpredictable situation produced if we consider the moment of the after-performance, when the audience has given back the technical equipment, have met in the foyer and started to talk. Then a new play starts. Questions are asked, “Who were you?”, “where were you?”, and “what did you experience?”, questions that show once more how the ‘job’ of the audience has changed: chatting after the show is now carried out from an actor’s perspective – not of that of an audience.

To finish this reflection let us look at the final scene: All twenty users are brought into a conference room and gather around a table, some standing, some seated. Like as in the preceding hour, they all follow their displays and listen to the music that is played. The video clip moves around in the room, showing all other protagonists. After a while a message on both the display and the audio stream asks users to turn the display around so that it faces outwards; each visitor now holds a portrait of the protagonist in front of himself, against his chest. An image reminiscent of a Facebook profile, a screenshot from a Skype conversation or an ID-card on a lanyard that says: See, that is me. All users gathered collectively they show who they are in that situation – a spooky presence of all the missing people. However, after a short while the images began to switch screens, circulating the group at increasing speed, then finding themselves in a

black screen – the end: “please leave the installation”. The visitors that became these ten other persons and finally meet all the others are dismissed from their duty as actors and sent back to their life as theater goers – a debriefing that will actually take some more time as the stories will stay for a while. Situation Rooms is a wonderful example of a performance in digital culture if we reconsider the triptichon of digital culture of Stalder: Assembling the historic and personal stories of twenty protagonist of the international network of weapon trading (referentiality), having twenty users reenact them together (communality), sophisticatedly guided by an in-ear audio stream and a hand-held video display controlled via Wlan from a central server (algorithmicity) – these elements construct not one but many narratives of that hybrid field.

CONCLUSION

The role of the spectator has changed dramatically. Not only how we consider its presence and activity in the classical theater setting (as Rancière proposed) but also in what is expected of them from the artists and producers when they propose performances that rely completely on a willingness to coproduce. It demands much more than openness and awareness – it needs a readiness to follow the rules even if there is no explanation of where it might lead. Start walking – we will guide you. The romantic and nostalgic vision of the flâneur was the starting point for my argument of how the role of the audience in some contemporary theater changes and what part technologies and practices of digital cultures hold in it. It is the walking, the looking at things and the assemblages of stories – biographical and autobiographical, images and memories that evoke not only a participation in a performance but a coproduction of the very performance attended. In both examples, the impact of the acoustic source of the audio voice being very close to the ears of the recipients (earphones) and the direct addressing of visitors/users/spectators in second person language, are strong. Digital devices take the role of a guide, they take the visitor by the hand and stay with them until the end of the show.

Both the acoustic setting and the taking by the hand produce an individual approach to and for each member of the audience and help them produce their individual experience of the performance – the performances were literally different for each participant. On the other hand, there are still activities and situations that were made together, in a collective of co-players, co-producers. A common production through individual decisions and recalculated by technological devices? Or a production of individual acting and common sociality at the

same time – mediated and orchestrated by algorithms, as Stalder writes in his book on the culture of digitality?

In Benjamin's works, a society is evoked only by the fact that there are people on the streets, in the cities. How is that nowadays in the streets of our cities – what kind of societies are appearing and shaped by the use of devices? Reviewing this article, the streets of European cities are occupied by multiple societies: In Istanbul, a mob, mobilized by a TV broadcast of a video call of Erdogan, ready to use violence, is confronting tanks and soldiers. In London, ten thousand followed a social media invitation to demonstrate against Brexit. And in Hamburg, hundreds of teenagers who normally sit in front of computers games rove the streets to hunt Pokemon with their handheld devices.

Contemporary theater practitioners inhale possibilities of digital cultures and adapt how technologies and their use are changing the viewing habits for their productions. The strongest impact of digital cultures on the field of theater is documented by the fact that the audience has become more and more a real coproducer of the performance. If that is a sign of a stronger emancipation of the spectator (Ranci re) or a (maybe neoliberal) imperative to creativity (Reckwitz 2012) or an increase of gamification is still to be discussed – what is obvious is that spectatorship is a highly performative mode of constructing worlds and cultures.

REFERENCES

- Balzac, Honor  de (2011[1833]): "Theory of Walking." (T. Infold, trans.), In: *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*, London: Routledge, pp. 33.
- Benjamin, Walter (1991): *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 3*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.
- Benjamin, Walter (1999[1935]): *The Arcades Project* (H. Eiland/K. McLaughlin, trans.), Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Birgfeld, Johannes/Garde, Ulrike/Haug, Helgard/Kaegi, Stefan/Wetzel, Daniel (2015): "'Eine Wechseldusche zwischen direkter Begegnung und vermittelt.' Ein E-Mail-Interview mit Rimini Protokoll  ber *Situation Rooms*." In: Johannes Birgfeld/Ulrike Garde/Meg Mumford (eds.), *Rimini Protokoll Close-Up: Lekt ren*, Hannover: Werhahn Verlag.
- Bishop, Claire (2012): *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London/New York: Verso Books.
- Brecht, Berthold (1987 [1930]): "On Everyday Theatre." In: J. Willet/R. Manheim/E. Fried (eds.), *Poems 1913-1956*, London: Routledge.

- Certeau, Michel de (1980): "L'invention du quotidien." In: Union Generale d'Editions 1, Arts de Faire, pp 10-18.
- Deleuze, Gilles/Guattari, Felix (1987[1980]): A Thousand Plateaus (B. Massumi, trans.), Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Eckersall, Peter/Grehan, Helena/Scheer, Edward (2015): "New media dramaturgy." In: Magda Romanska (ed.), The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy, London: Routledge, pp. 375-381.
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika/Wihstutz, Benjamin (eds.) (2013): Performance and the Politics of Space, London: Routledge.
- Gavarni, Paul (1842): Le Flâneur, Painting.
- Kittler, Friedrich /Griffin, Matthew (1996): "The City Is a Medium." In: New Literary History 27/4, pp. 717-729.
- Lefebvre, Henri (1974): La production de l'espace, Paris: Anthropos.
- LIGNA (n.d.): "Projekte". June 15, 2016 (<http://www.ligna.org>)
- Massey, Doreen (1999): "Power-geometries and the politics of space-time." In: Hettner-Lecture 1998 2, Heidelberg: Dep. of Geography, University of Heidelberg.
- Massey, Doreen (2005): For Space, London: Sage.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (2005[1945]): Phenomenology of Perception (C. Smith, trans.), London/New York: Routledge.
- Mumford, Lewis (2015): "What is a city? Architectural record (1937)." In: Richard T. LeGates/Frederic Stout (eds.), The City Reader, London/New York: Routledge, pp. 91-95.
- Noteboom, Cees (1995): "Die Sohlen der Erinnerung." In: DIE ZEIT, 49/1995, June 30, 2016 (http://www.zeit.de/1995/49/Die_Sohlen_der_Erinnerung).
- Oberender, Thomas (2015): "The audience takes over." In: Anne Fournier/Paola Gilardi et al. (eds.), Mimos 2015: Rimini Protokoll, Bern: Peter Lang.
- Rancière, Jacques (2009): "The Emancipated Spectator." In: Jacques Rancière (ed.), The Emancipated Spectator, London/New York: Verso, pp. 1-23.
- Reckwitz, Andreas (2012): Die Erfindung der Kreativität, Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Rignall, John (1989): "Benjamin's Flâneur and the Problem of Realism." In: Andrew Benjamin (ed.), The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin, London: Routledge, pp. 112-121.
- Rimini Protokoll (2013): Situation Rooms, unpublished manuscript.
- Rokem, Freddie (2010): Philosophers and Thespians, Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Scalway, Helen (2006): "The contemporary flâneuse." In: Aruna D'Souza/Tom McDonough (eds.), The Invisible Flâneuse?: Gender, Public Space, and Vis-

- ual Culture in Nineteenth-century Paris, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 164-172.
- Schipper, Imanuel (2014a): "City as performance." In: *TDR/the Drama Review* 58/3, pp. 18-26.
- Schipper, Imanuel (2014b): "Performing place and space." (G. Spearing, trans.) In: *Passagen* 63/2, Zürich: Pro Helvetia, pp. 27-30.
- Schmidt, Theron (2010): "Unsettling representation: Monuments, theatre, and relational space." In: *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20/3, pp. 283-295.
- Schwartz, Vanessa R (2001): "Walter Benjamin for historians." In: *The American Historical Review* 106/5, pp. 721-743.
- Shaya, Gregory (2004): "The Flâneur, the Badaud, and the Making of a Mass Public in France, circa 1860-1910." In: *The American Historical Review* 109/1, pp. 41-77.
- Stalder, Felix (2016): *Kultur der Digitalität*, Berlin: Suhrkamp.
- Van Godsendthoven, Karen (2005): *Women's Passages: A Bildungsroman of Female Flânerie*, PhD diss, University of Gent.
- Wihstutz, Benjamin (2015): "Unbekannte Räume, Grenzen, Schwellen." In: Jörn Schafaff/Benjamin Wihstutz (eds.), *Sowohl als auch dazwischen: Erfahrungsräume der Kunst*, München: Wilhelm Fink.
- Wolff, Janet (1985): "The invisible flâneuse: Women and the literature of modernity." In: *Theorie, Culture & Society* 2/3, pp. 37-46.

