

HETEROTOPIAN ZONE

WHAT IS IT?

Michel Foucault named real places that are different from their surroundings and somehow produce their own alternative reality “heterotopias” (Foucault 1992: 34). According to him, norms of conduct are shifted in heterotopias. Furthermore, they are places of crisis and deviation, they have an entrance and an exit and are, accordingly, places that one goes through, where one gets stuck, or that one does not get into in the first place. Though ‘heterotopia’ is initially a spatial concept, heterotopias also have their own time and temporality. Many of the spaces that Foucault identifies as heterotopias are institutional spaces: prisons, cemeteries, hospitals, brothels, and theatres.

Since the 1960s, heterotopias have increasingly become a format of creation in design, architecture, fine art and live performance. The theatre had already been one of Foucault’s examples, but it seems that when live art leaves the theatre space to conquer other public spaces it takes the heterotopian potential of theatre with it and starts to produce ‘other’ other spaces through **performative practices**¹ (geheimagentur/Pilkington 2019). The production of heterotopias² became an intrinsic part of the participatory turn in the arts and could possibly be described as one of its primary formats.^a In the context of PABR, the **research format**³ *Heterotopian Zone* invents an alternative reality in a designated area, testing alternative forms of living while also observing and questioning the world outside from within the zone.

WHAT IS RESEARCHED?

Foucault’s heterotopias are set against the background of normativity and the unified space of national society that is surrounding the “other spaces” (Foucault 1992: 39), co-

CONTEXT

1 Performative Practices: The performativity of practice refers to the ability of ritualised and continuous actions to constitute reality. The term follows the linguistic concept by John L. Austin reformulated by Judith Butler, that understands language and movement not only as descriptive or assumptive but as having the potential to create reality. Through continuous use, acts and actions can shape bodies, perspectives, and the subjectively perceived world (Butler 1993).

2 Examples for heterotopias: The memorials by Thomas Hirschhorn are outstanding examples from the world of fine arts: The memorial (Hirschhorn, *Gramsci Monument*, 2013) is reinterpreted in Hirschhorn’s work as a heterotopian space in which practices of gathering, learning, relating and remembering are hosted, triggered and performed. Another example is Banksy’s *Dismaland* (Banksy, *Dismaland*, 2015), a dark version of Disneyland set against the background of migration and European crisis. *Dismaland* also reminds us that the fairground and the circus have always been heterotopian experiences and at the same time shows us how Banksy turns the amusement park into an artistic format.

3 Research formats: A single research format is realised in a specific context to configure the collaborative research of different experts in a physical way. It can structure one complete research project or become a smaller element within another format. The process starts with a desire, need, or question that brings together the participants as co-researchers, creating a collective agenda and interest in the research process. This collective interest has to be established before the participating researchers are able to perform, test materials, act, or assemble collaboratively. The co-researchers should be able to arrange, rehearse and plan details and activities for performative events. The activities and events then need to be evaluated or compared in relation to the underlying needs, questions and desires. Only after this evaluation can it be decided whether the same process should be repeated, —whether the rules and conditions should be adjusted or modified, whether the format should be changed entirely or whether researchers should proceed to another application/publication.

creating their otherness through sameness all around. The rise of heterotopias in the arts (Digel/Goldschmidtboing/Peters 2019) might be spurred by the erosion of that national normativity that came along with the idea of the one public, the one society, the one code of conduct. At best, these new kinds of heterotopias are set up to negotiate what diversified common space and what commonality could be in the context of the erosion of these old Eurocentric norms. Therefore, heterotopias have become laboratories of collective research⁴. In order to create an alternative reality, many aspects of living need to be transformed, many sub-spaces and sub-practices need to be invented to sustain the claim of an alternative reality. Many co-researchers⁵ need to be involved to set up

their own sub-spaces and practices belonging to that *Heterotopian Zone*. Heterotopias such as the *Floating University* (Raumlabor 2019), *Animals of Manchester (including HUMANZ)*^I (FUNDUS THEATER/Theatre of Research 2019) or the *Free Port Baakenhöft*^{II} (geheimagentur 2017) involved different groups in their realisation. In the *Free Port Baakenhöft*, geheimagentur invited other Hamburg artists to propose contributions, for example to a *Battle of Baakenhöft* and to the *African Terminal*, where an exchange of used goods and a business school were set up to counteract and remember the colonial past of the warehouse where it was located. Heterotopias such as these are try-outs of alternative worlds of togetherness, worlds that are governed by a specific set of alternative rules, which can often be defined as a different set of rights that participants of that zone are entitled to. In the *Free Port Baakenhöft*, everybody has a right to access and use the port. Thus, *Heterotopian Zones* bring forth

CORPUS

I Animals of Manchester (Including HUMANZ, 2019) *Animals of Manchester (including HUMANZ)* was an interactive live art experience that asked audiences to take part in all kinds of animal encounters. Across a series of installations and performances, children, families and adults alike explored the relationships with fellow species. They were invited to become a citizen of the alternative city and to share ideas on how to improve relationships between species. What might life be like if dogs, cows, squirrels and other creatures lived alongside us not just as our pets but as our peers – our companions?

FUNDUS THEATER /Theatre of Research and Live Art Development Agency, *Animals of Manchester (Including HUMANZ)*, 2019, Manchester, UK

II Free Port Baakenhöft (2017): To claim the right to the port for the people of Hamburg, geheimagentur founded Hamburg Port Hydrarchy, which gave itself the mandate to analyse and develop the potential of Hamburg port. Free Port Baakenhöft was an alternative port, complete with jetty, port museum, regatta and ship welcoming station. Visitors were invited to explore the potentials of an alternative port, make announcements at the ship welcoming station, build and test floating installations for the Battle of Baakenhöft and visit an archive of artistic and activist interventions in Hamburg port.

geheimagentur, *Free Port Baakenhöft*, 2017, Hamburg

4 Collaborative process: PABR projects always lead to collaborative processes between diverse participants. They value heterogenous constellations, while recognising all disciplines equally and critically self-reflecting each discipline's habitus (Ziemer 2015: 171). While investigating a specific topic, all PABR projects entail an exploration of the limits and potentials of collaborative processes as such.

5 Researchers/co-researchers/participants: Researchers within PABR are those who are involved in the whole research process from beginning to end and are responsible for the shape and progression of the process.

Co-researchers are invited to collaborate and join the research process for shorter or longer periods of time.

Participants are invited to join the research only at certain points, for instance during its public presentation, and are involved in different ways. In order to organise participation on equal terms, it is crucial to recognise and acknowledge the different questions, interests, responsibilities, capacities and availabilities of the different co-researchers and participants and to define their role within the process.

different constellations of beings and things, different practices and different subject positions. In contrast to a simulation or an immersive experience of a fictional space, they are trying to make the alternative world real, for example by holding real business school classes and engaging in real trade. A *Heterotopian Zone* is designed to be taken over when opened to the public. It is made for interaction and embodiment. In order to set it up, different kinds of forecasts have to be made, and different kinds of offers and impulses have to be formulated and presented. Participatory performance⁶ practices enable researchers to do that (Plischke 2020). When these forecasts are materialised, it becomes very clear whether they have been correct or not, simply by looking at the way people relate to the offer, use the opportunity, embody the alternative protocols – or not. In all likelihood, people will do these things in a way that is not quite covered by the forecast, making this deviation an important outcome⁷ of the *Heterotopian Zone*.

As a set-up for collective research, *Heterotopian Zones* allow for a multitude of different research approaches and outcomes: What is a post-colonial trade cooperative? How can a ship welcome station be constructed (*Free Port Baakenhöft*)? Being limited in space and time, these try-outs are not ideal spaces but daring ones. In crisis and in play, heterotopias negotiate between different approaches and practices of producing an uncommon common space. Hence, it always also researches these negotiations that bring forth a new commonality, which is partly or potentially created by the heterotopian experience in question.

ARTISTIC MEANS

Creating a *Heterotopian Zone* is a complex undertaking on many levels, including logistics, resources, permissions, crafts and techniques, concept, communication, design, performance, decision-making and care. It is necessarily based on the collaboration of a

heterogeneous and transdisciplinary team. It is essential for heterotopian research to adopt a form of collaboration⁸ that reaches beyond all kinds of thresholds – institutio-

6 Participatory performance Participatory art describes a form of art that includes the audience in the creative process or in the performative event as co-producers. Its origins can be traced to the Futurist and Dadaist performances from 1910 onwards. Later, in the 1950s, Allan Kaprow designed performances as happenings, where the audience was invited to participate in producing the event. Although participatory art has its origins in a fine art context, the art form is inherently linked to theatre and performance, as people constitute the central artistic medium and material. Participatory performance tends to aim at group dynamics, social situations, and providing tools for claiming participation in social and political contexts as well (Bishop 2012).

7 Knowledge production: PABR formats and designs are governed by the pursuit of a question, a desire, a need or by the attempt to find a solution for a problem. This initial framing poses a functional background for the researchers to evaluate the outcomes of the performative events and research activities, and therefore produce specific answers to the functioning of hypotheses or working solutions. For the evaluation, several moments of presenting, analysing, reflecting and discussing results are implemented within the operational steps. Results can include solutions, knowledge, theories, practices, artefacts, feelings, etcetera. Many outcomes can be verbalised or visualised, but some manifest in a way that eludes the discursive grasp. Knowledge production within PABR means that explicit and implicit forms of knowledge are valued equally. The researchers try to choose forms of presentation and analysis that make these forms recognisable. It has to be made clear that this analysis is one of many possible research narratives. Besides, there might be diverse research narratives that can be known and recognised, but also some that remain unknown to the researcher. PABR is distributed knowledge.

8 Collaborative process: PABR projects always lead to collaborative processes between diverse participants. They value heterogeneous constellations, while recognising all disciplines equally and critically self-reflecting each discipline's habitus (Ziemer 2015: 171). While investigating a specific topic, all PABR projects entail an exploration of the limits and potentials of collaborative processes as such.

nal, disciplinary, social – and that is driven by vision, desire and curiosity. Many meetings and assemblies are to be hosted in the process of preparing a *Heterotopian Zone*. In this process, it is important to devise and host all these gatherings in the spirit of the *Heterotopian Zone* and follow the respective concept as closely as possible. The specific quality of the process will define the quality of the zone. Arguably, this practice of collaboration is the most important “artistic means” in this kind of research, a practice across divisions, collaboration driven by the question of how to make the alternative, the improbable and often supposedly impossible come true.

Claiming an alternative zone obviously does not mean that existing laws and rules do not apply. Therefore, the team creating the zone has to identify those rules that will produce conflict between the claim and the given order of things and either redefine or try to bypass them. In this context, understanding this process of creating the zone as research means that conflict will be intentionally sought out, it is already a result of artistic experimentation and should be made visible. In the

Animals of Manchester (including Humanz) all animals, including humans, have equal rights. If it is impossible to overcome rules which restrict movement of certain animals in the zone, then human animals also have to be subjected to these rules, thus achieving equal rights and making existing rules and legislation visible.

POTENTIALS, PROBLEMS AND OUTCOMES

Heterotopian Zones facilitate engagement and interaction with their publics by artistic means. Concurrently with the interaction, visitors are also invited to engage in research from an individual perspective. *Heterotopian Zones* potentially enable everybody to not only think about an alternative concept of living, but to also experience and embody it temporarily: How does it feel to be an animal amongst animals? How does it feel to be surrounded by co-species, to be part of a trade network, to wave your human privilege? This artistic aspect makes the research format of the *Heterotopian Zone* very accessible. It allows for a huge spectrum of different approaches and various levels of engagement. A playful example of research offering an accessible approach and inviting diverse forms of engagement is Constanze Schmidt's *The Centre for Vocational Design: 1st Vocational Orientation Fair (2017)*^{III}, which took place in the FUNDUS THEATER/Theatre of Research. Together with students of the Goethe Gymnasium in the Lurup quarter of Hamburg, the researchers transformed the theatre into an exhibition centre with five different exhibition stands at which new professions and new forms of vocational orientation were invented and designed. Entering this *Heterotopian Zone*, visitors were instructed to orientate towards known as well as unknown professions and ways of working.

When the public enters the *Heterotopian Zone*, the research is intentionally diversified and distributed. The desired outcome is not one single result, but a multitude of perspec-

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III First Vocational Orientation Fair (2017): Constanze Schmidt founded the Centre for Vocational Design in order to investigate how young people could become ‘working citizens’ when they design their vocational orientation according to their desires and interests. For the First Vocational Orientation Fair the Centre invited guests, such as the press officer of the municipal employment services, delegates from internship programmes and various workplaces as well as the Centre for School and Business (Zentrum für Schule und Wirtschaft), classmates, artists, teachers and parents. In the theatre transferred into an exhibition space three successive rounds of research conducted simultaneously at five booths required the visitors to make rapid transitions and choices regarding their next question about being a ‘working citizen’.

Constanze Schmidt/The Centre for Vocational Design, *First Vocational Orientation Fair*, 2017, Hamburg

tives. Thus, the question of documentation⁸ becomes important. Which outcomes should be documented and how: Is there a scribe taking down what happens in the zone? How can participants become co-researchers by having their voices heard and recorded, by being more fully included in the research process?

Meanwhile, it has to be kept in mind that in other areas of culture and leisure heterotopias as such are not necessarily research-oriented or visionary. Heterotopias today cannot only be found in the arts and in those institutional contexts where Foucault had originally located them. ‘Heterotopia’ has become a crucial concept for urban planning (Digel/Goldschmidtboing/Peters 2019). Considering furthermore the rise of tourism as a key sector of the global economy, it seems clear that heterotopia – as spectacle – has become a product: Cruise ships, wellness resorts, exclusive conference environments, resident estates, they all are ultimately trying to sell a heterotopian experience.^b Therefore, the research format *Heterotopian Zone*, which is supposed to be a set-up for collective research, has to resist from turning into an experiential product, as, for example, in the context of festivalisation (Bennett/Taylor/Woodward 2016).

Finally, a word of warning: The large scale and great variety of practices are key to designing a Heterotopian Zone. This will almost inescapably push core members of the research team to the limits of their resources.

ENDNOTES

a The memorials by Thomas Hirschhorn are outstanding examples from the world of fine arts: The memorial (Hirschhorn, Gramsci Monument, 2013) is reinterpreted in Hirschhorn’s work as a heterotopian space in which practices of gathering, learning, relating and remembering are hosted, triggered and performed. Another example is Banksy’s Dismaland (Banksy, Dismaland, 2015), a dark version of Disneyland set

against the background of migration and European crisis. Dismaland also reminds us that the fairground and the circus have always been heterotopian experiences and at the same time shows us how Banksy turns the amusement park into an artistic format.

b See *Heterotopia: Designing Our Mindscales* by Jason Silva, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKxQMyBI22o>, last visited May 3, 2019.

8 Documentation How processes of PABR are documented depends on each project and cannot be determined in a general way. Researchers are advised to put documentation measures in place that help to store and translate processes and outcomes for those contexts in which she wants the project to proliferate. Documentation should be intertwined with moments of presentation and of gathering research material. Each project should develop a documentation method appropriate to the project, which may consist of several forms of documentation. Performances can be documented by video recordings, whereas collections, archives and media artefacts may become their own documentation. However, the collective activities are fleeting and perceived differently by each participant. The same event can be evaluated differently from the outside than from the perspectives of the performing participants. For comparison and evaluation purposes, these different experiences need to be represented in some form: collective writing, questionnaires, drawings, transcriptions of discussions or interviews, formal responses, and so on.

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