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Art, Space and the Public Sphere(s).

Some basic observations on the difficult relation of public art, urbanism and political theory

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"Social space is produced and structured by conflicts. With this recognition, a democratic spatial politics begins." [1]
Rosalyn Deutsche

As we know, "art in the public space" can mean at least two things. For one, art in combination with architecture and artistic urban outfitting; this is the traditional conception - among other things, a conception of space as a physical geographical urban and architectural space. Yet on the other hand, "public art" in the sense of more recent forms of "art in the public interest" (or "social interventionism", "community art", etc.) - not least in Austria - has also been developed into a secure niche in the canon of available art practices and forms. Sending Austrian artists, usually subsumed under this header, to the Biennale of Venice is just the keystone of sanctioning social interventionist art practices in art history (and could very well be their gravestone, too).

However, what this general artistic enthusiasm for social issues tends to outshine is politics. What artistic social work replaces is political work. And what social interventionist art practices have completely superseded, it would seem, are political interventionist art practices. Politics, wherever it enters the scene at all, is understood exclusively by social work art "in the public interest" to mean policy: administration, engineering and possibly technocratic handling of social problems. Public art becomes a privatist version of public welfare. The astonishing thing about this is not only the appearance of bureaucratic phantasms of administration or administration reform in art, but above all a narrowing of the concept of the public sphere whose banner had once been held high. For the concept of the "public sphere" is relegated to the realm of social affairs - and yet the public sphere really only deserves this name if what it denotes is the *political* public sphere.

For public art, everything would seem to depend on what exactly is implied by the concepts of "public sphere" or "the public" or "public space". Is it a space in which conflicts are resolved or in which they are managed and administered? Is it a space of open political agonality, a space of the *battle for meaning* in the sense of a "politics of signification" (Stuart Hall), or is it a space of reasoned rational and informal debate, as Habermas would have it, or is it a space in which so-called concrete shortcomings are to be named and remedied "in situ"? Is the public space one space among many other spaces (private, non-public, semi-public, local), is the public space one *particular* space at all or is it rather a generic term for a *multiplicity* of public spaces? What exactly makes it a political space (as opposed to social spaces)? And what is public about the public space, and - vice versa - what is spatial about the public sphere? I am not asking these questions at the beginning of this chapter with any rhetorical aim of finding some kind of approach to the issue,

rather I would like to try and find a real answer to them in the following.

To this end, we will have no choice but to depart from the theoretically rather restricted art discussion in these parts, on the one hand turning to political theory itself from where the concept of the public sphere derives in the first place, and on the other to the recent Anglo-American discussion on public art that has hitched up to the discussions of political theory much more than is the case in the German-speaking world. For quite some time, the Anglo-American art discussion has, for example, been promoting the analysis of Claude Lefort's concept of a *libertarian democracy*, or Ernesto Laclaus' and Chantal Mouffe's concept of *radical and plural democracy* [2]. The discussion of art in the public space, it would seem, is becoming increasingly inextricably linked with theories of democracy that are unwilling to be fobbed off with a Habermasian or a social work version of the public sphere. So far the most valid articulation of public art concepts in the public sphere theories of Lefort, Laclau and Mouffe is in my opinion that of Rosalyn Deutsche. The double question that arises, for us and for Deutsche, is, what role does the public sphere play for political art practices and what role can political art practices play for the public sphere? And the initial theory for this chapter and it would seem for Deutsche's works is that we cannot find an answer merely with the aid of art theory and art criticism, but rather only by including *political theory*. But at the same time, this also suggests a paradigm shift away from the guiding theoretical discipline of critical art of the seventies - (Marxist) economy and social sciences. [3]

However, before discussing Rosalyn Deutsche's concrete answer to the question of the public sphere in the sense of democracy theory, our first step will be to address the more obvious question as to the

concept of public space in the rather urbanistic sense. Where is the space in "public space" (and then we will see where art and politics are)? This seemingly more substantial problem was also in some cases used to analyse political theory, for example, in critical and post-modern "urban studies". In order to restrict the subject somewhat, I would like to take Ernesto Laclau's concept of space, also deriving from the field of political theory, as a basic guideline. A concept of space that has been scanned by Doreen Massey, for example, as to its usefulness in terms of critical urbanism and geography. In the following I will thus look into the discussion that evolved around the various concepts of space as developed by urbanism and political theory respectively (Section I), before returning - after a brief excursus into a criticism of Foucault's, Deleuze's and Habermas' theories of space (Section II) - to the implications of public art in terms of politics and democracy theory (Section III).

/: Space vs. time - politics as spatialization

As Doreen Massey remarks in her criticism of Ernesto Laclau [4] the following movement evolved in the history of critical geography. In the seventies - during the general rise of social science, particularly Marxist, approaches - the canonical slogan was, space is a *social construction*. In other words, space was no longer seen as a preceding substance or as unchanging terrain that had always existed, and upon which the building of society had been erected, but rather the respective specific structure of space was theorised as the result of social, economic and political processes. Space theories underwent the same *constructivist* turn that had impacted on social sciences as a whole. In the eighties, this approach was made more radical by being inverted. Not only was space seen as a social construction, the general understanding was, inversely, that the *social sphere is also spatially constructed*. And this

spatial form of the social sphere certainly does have causal effects, i. e. the way in which society works is influenced by its spatial structure. The basic difference between the convictions of the seventies and the eighties (and nineties) lies in the fact that, in the first case, space is still seen as a passive mass, i. e. as the result of social construction processes, while in the second case, space itself assumes the role of a social actor. [5]

Massey criticises the notion according to which space is seen as a passive product and generally as being in a state of stasis - a conception, it would seem, that among other things creeps in when the category of space is placed in binary comparison to the category of time, with time usually being the positive term (e. g. as history, change, etc. [6]), and space being the negative coded concept. Although, according to Massey, the dualism of spatiality and temporality is very common among theorists, she above all accuses Jameson and Laclau of drawing on it (despite all the differences she admits these two theorists display; we will concentrate on her criticism of Laclau). Her criticism is motivated by, as Massey sees it, the depoliticizing effect that she feels their concepts of space have. With Laclau, space itself, she maintains, is depoliticized in that he (mis)construes space - in contrast to time - as a realm of stasis and standstill, "Laclau's view of space is that it is the realm of stasis. There is, in the realm of the spatial, no true temporality and thus no possibility of politics" [7]. In contradistinction to this, she feels that radical geographers and urbanists had made spatiality stronger and more productive as a political category with the aid of concepts such as "'centre'/'periphery'/'margin'" and their analyses of the "politics of location".

Thus, the question concerns whether and how the concept of space can be seen as being political itself. In order to investigate whether

what is initially an abstract criticism of Laclau is justified, we will of course not be able to avoid giving a brief description of Laclau's theory of space. However, before doing so, it should be noted that it is certainly rather odd to accuse an (exclusively) political theorist of depoliticizing his concepts from the viewpoint of geography, i. e. it is strange to accuse a political theory of advocating unpolitical concepts. This would rather suggest that certain discipline-specific misunderstandings may have slipped in during the translation process between "urban geography" or "critical urban studies" and political theory. Could it be that Massey does not take the concepts and theoretical constructions of political theory/philosophy on their own terms? Could it be that the language game of critical or post-modern urbanism - despite all reciprocal inspiration - cannot be translated word-for-word into the language game of political theory, and vice versa? That something like Laclau's concept of political space cannot be completely transposed to urban, social, geographical space? And that a political theory approach to the category of space cannot be totally absorbed in an approach of social science and urban sociology?

Let us begin by looking at what exactly Laclau understands by spatiality and temporality. Laclau bases his assumptions on the consideration that every system of meaning (i. e. every discourse, every structure, every identity, and ultimately every space) can only become stabilised by differentiating itself from a constitutive outside. [8] However, this outside cannot itself be part of the system of meaning (for then it would not be an outside but part of the inside), but must rather be something radically different. Yet for the very reason that it refers to something that it cannot fully bring under control itself, a system of meaning never manages to become fully stable. On the one hand, what it perforce refers to (the constitutive outside) does permit a certain stabilisation, on the

other the very same constitutive outside *prevents* complete totalisation of the system. A system, a discourse, a structure is thus always traversed by a constitutive ambivalence that Laclau calls *dislocation*. And in the dislocatory effects to which every structure is subject, he sees a *temporal* phenomenon, whereas he always sees the structure itself as spatial. The easiest way to understand this is perhaps by imagining structure, for example, as a particular topography. The very idea of a structure implies some kind of topography (a certain relational arrangement of elements that become "places" through their reciprocal relational determinations) - otherwise the structure would, quite simply, not be "structured". A structure or topography is in the extreme - albeit unattainable - case a closed system, with all possible recombinations of its elements and changes of its state being derivable from the interior of the system itself.

On the other hand, the symbolisation/systematisation (= spatialization) of the structure as compared to the heterogeneous/ exterior consists in the almost complete elimination of its temporal character, i. e. the dislocations of the structure. Hence, creating a topography always entails the effort to transfer time into space (what Laclau calls the "hegemonization of time by space"), to minimise the dislocatory, "destructuring" effects, and to define the flow of meaning. In order to be able to symbolise a temporal sequence [9] of events, they must be made synchronously present, they must be spatialized. This is achieved by means of repetition. The mythical figure of the eternal return of the same is - like any myth - *spatial* in precisely this sense. For example, this figure describes a circle [10]. But myths of memory *spatialize* the historical event, too, for example myths constructed around national historical events and their representation in the form of monuments. Sedimentary social myths and traditions are quite

simply the result of repetitive practices (Laclau, "[a]ny repetition that is governed by a structural law of succession is space" [11]) that have lost their contingent origin in the course of their repetition with the effect that we now perceive them as necessary, naturalised, unchangeable and eternal. This space - engendered by the hegemonization of time by space - may be a space of memory, as is the case with the national monument, in which a certain historical memory has been fixated [12] (only secondarily is it the "physical" space surrounding the monument). Laclau, too, concludes from this that it would be naive to hold on to the notion of space as an unchallengeable objectivity that has always existed. Quite the contrary, space is the result of an artlculatory practice - the practice of defining meaning. The result of this practice necessarily consists in the form of some kind of hierarchised structure in which the relations between elements, levels, places, etc. are more or less clearly defined, i. e. fixated. In this sense, Laclau's position is a structuralist one because, to him - and this is where he falls in with Saussure - meaning can only evolve within a relational system of differences. On the other hand, however, this fixation can never completely succeed. It would be a totalitarian illusion to believe that one could master the totality of a system of signification, regardless of whether we call this system "discourse", "society", "city" or "public space". Thus, establishing the flow of meaning to form a structured system allows us to forge a topographical relation between the various elements of the system. Yet the relation, the articulation and hierarchisation between the various regions and levels of the structure is only the result of a "contingent and pragmatic construction" and not the expression of an essential connection. This is precisely due to the fact that every identity is flooded by a constitutive outside, i. e. time. In this sense, Laclau's position is a post-structuralist one - the relational system can never be completely constituted or closed. [13]

To summarise, if space is always subverted by time, then there is no possibility to tie down or end this contingent and pragmatic construction of a system of signification once and for all, for this possibility would only exist if the connection between the elements were actually essential and preceded articulation. But, of course, this is not the case, the connection must be articulated continuously, time must be hegemonized constantly through practices of spatialization, and this works by means of repetition (sequence). Thus, articulation is a continuous and continuously failing process that essentially consists in the repetitive connection of elements. It is precisely by means of articulation, by linking different elements, that we open up a space.

Articulation, in turn, progresses in a double movement. On the one hand, hegemonial articulation, if it succeeds, can lead to what Laclau and before him Fredric Jameson - both referring to Husserl -
called
sedimentation or the "sedimentary forms of 'objectivity'" [14]. This is the field of the ostensibly objective or, as Barthes termed it, the "naturalised" social sphere, as must be distinguished from the political field of rearticulation. Following Husserl, sedimentation is a name for the routinisation and forgetting of origins - a process that tends to occur as soon as a certain articulatory advance has led to a hegemonial success. In Laclau's terminology, this movement simply describes the *fixation of meaning* in solid topographies that need to be conceptualised as sedimentations of power and which spatialize the temporal movement of pure dislocation into a precise *choreography*. Traditions are such routinised practices or, for example, foundation myths and spaces of memory as are constructed, for example, by national or other monuments. Yet inasmuch as these spatial, "ossified" sediments can, on the other

hand, be reactivated, there also exists a temporalisation of space or an "extension of the field of the possible". In the words of Laclau, we are confronted with a moment of "reactivation", with a process of *defixation of meaning*. In this case, more and more elements, levels and places are perceived as contingent in their relational nature.

This puts us in a better position to judge to what extent Doreen Massey's criticism of Laclau's concept of space is justified. Laclau makes it quite clear that he is not speaking of space in the figurative sense, but rather physical space - being only discursively accessible in his understanding - is constructed in the same way as discursive space: "If physical space is also space, it is because it participates in this general form of spatiality." [15] This is the classical constructivist view that Massey would ascribe to the first wave of "radical geography" in the seventies. But Massey overlooks the point of Laclau's approach, more or less wilfully reducing it to traditional structuralism. For just like the second wave of "radical geography" discerned by Massey, Laclau (in turn favouring political discourse theory) actually bases his assumptions on the inverse theory that space is not only constructed discursively, but also that discourse itself - seen as the partial fixation of a system of signification - is essentially spatial. (Without, however, inferring that space has any causal effects on time.)

Consequently, Laclau's political theory is not only beyond the bounds of Massey's distinction of the seventies and eighties (that could be seen as a distinction between constructivism and post-constructivism), but may well equally be beyond the bounds of the categories of passive and active. Massey's criticism, as mentioned at the beginning, is that Laclau continues the old metaphysical notion in which space is labelled as a passive mass, a mere product of a construction achievement, for example. Yet to Laclau the

difference between space and time is not a difference between passivity and activity. Time is not the "actor" creating passive spatial sediments, i. e. social deposits, but rather time - as dislocation - is precisely the category that *prevents* these sediments once and for all from becoming firmly established. As Laclau attempts explicitly to explain, space can hegemonize (i. e. "spatialize") time, but time itself does not hegemonize anything at all: "But while we can speak of the hegemonization of time by space (through repetition), it must be emphasized that the opposite is not possible: time cannot hegemonize anything, since it is a pure effect of dislocation." [16]

The reason for this is easily apprehended. Although the existence of a constitutive outside of a system of signification (a space) is a precondition that a certain systematicity (e. g. topography) can become stable, at the same time the constitutive outside (as the source of dislocation of the system) is the reason why the system will never be able to close itself to achieve totality. A condition allowing spatialization and, at the same time, a condition thwarting total spatialization, time is beyond the bounds of categories such as activity/passivity. And if time does not simply play the active part, inversely space cannot play the passive part either; thus, the convenient symmetrical dualism that Massey imputes to Laclau does not work in this way. What effect does this have on Massey's criticism that Laclau depoliticizes the concept of space? In Massey's reading of Laclau, time plays the active part, while space plays the passive role. At the same time, the active part is conjoined with the category of politics, while the passive role is free of all politics. Inasmuch as Massey imputes this conviction to Laclau, she can accuse him of seeing space as a passive, unpolitical mass in true Western tradition. This would be the case if Laclau's theory were to fit Massey's portrayal. But that is not what Laclau writes. Here,

Massey is taken in by a categorial mistake that inevitably occurs when categories of political philosophy are read as categories of social science.

In actual fact, time is not so much the category of politics as the category of the political. This distinction itself is qualitative and not simply quantitative - and it is thus generally inaccessible to social scientists. Although it is true that Laclau compares politics and space, "politics and space are antinomic terms" [17]. However, he does so because, to his mind, space, i. e. the social sphere or "society", is precisely the - unattainable - *final product* of hegemonial efforts of *spatialization*. Precisely these hegemonial efforts are politics, namely practices of spatialization by means of articulation. Thus we must distinguish between spatialization as politics, on the one hand, and space as a category of the social sphere, identity, discourse, society, and systems of meaning in general, on the other. Indeed, politics (= spatialization) can only exist in the first place because space is impossible in the final analysis. The complete constitution of space/system/identity/ society is impossible because these categories refer to a constitutive outside that is at once the condition enabling them and making their complete closure and self-identity impossible. And one of the names for this outside is time.

However, it follows from this that time is definitely not identical to politics - as Massey implies. As mentioned above, the category of politics is spatialization. The constitutive outside of space, in contrast, is what is heterogeneous to the system - everything that cannot be explained from the inner logic of the system itself or what has never had any prescribed place in the topography: dislocation, disturbance, interruption, event. Laclau calls this moment of interruption and reactivation of spatial sediments "the political'" [18]. Thus, we must distinguish between politics

(spatialization) and the political (the dislocatory collapse of temporality in the emphatic sense). In his rejoinder to Doreen Massey, David Howarth rightly pointed out that in this Laclau follows Heidegger's criticism of the metaphysical notion of time as presence and representation. For Howarth, too, temporality is the category of the political as pure negativity (antagonism) that prevents society from achieving its identity with itself, while politics is a practice of spatialization, *identification*. As Howarth says, "The character of temporality is indeterminate and undecidable: it is a condition for politics, not politics itself. The political is antagonism and contestation between forces, whereas politics consists in giving form or embodying the political. In this respect, politics must always have a spatial dimension." [19]

So what Massey fails to recognise is what we might call the onto-ontological difference between space and time, or between the way Laclau uses these terms and the way Massey uses them. Howarth recognises this absolutely correctly in his reply to Massey when he says, "it is my contention that Laclau's usage of the concepts of space and time operates on the ontological level, rather than at the ontic level of Massey" [20]. When Laclau speaks of temporality or of the pair temporality/spatiality, he is strictly speaking about the conditions of the (im)possibility of spatialization (politics) and space
(society). He is speaking, if you like, about temporality as the *ontology* of social space and of politics. The latter, on the other hand, are located at the *ontic* level that Massey refers to, for example, when she investigates into a certain "politics of location". At the ontic level, time does not exist, but rather only *times*, i. e. spatial symbolic representations of temporal processes, for example history. From the viewpoint of the social sphere, the ontological level of temporality is only manifested in the event, only when

these temporal processes are abruptly interrupted and - for example at the moment of revolutions - when a new "chronology" begins, i. e. a new space gains hegemony over an old one.

By differentiating between a social science and a political philosophy approach, following Laclau, we can thus obtain three categories, or rather pairs of categories, which although all having something to do with "spatiality", must not be confused as they are located at different ontological levels. The categories are

a) *Time* and space. Time is the ontological principle of dislocation of a structure that results from the essential dependence of the structure on a constitutive outside. Space, inversely, is the name given to the theoretical extreme case of complete obliteration of temporality and dislocation. This extreme case can, however, never occur as the constitutive outside of the structure will always leave behind traces and dislocatory turbulences inside. If we could eliminate this constitutive outside, we would also eliminate the structuredness of the structure with it. Thus, the disappearance of temporality would also entail the disappearance of spatiality. Space itself - i. e. a closed, non-dislocated totality without a constitutive outside - is consequently never attainable. The term "society" is generally used in this sense of space ("everything is social") - as an undeceivable horizon that knows no outside. But in so far as space and time can only be analytically separated as ontological principles and the principle of space as totality is never attainable without inclusions and dislocations of time, *society is impossible* - impossible precisely as a closed totality, as space. This is the provocative key theory of Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's book *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy* [21] - society does not exist.

b) Spaces. If space does not exist in the strict, ontological sense, this is the very reason why spaces may exist at the ontic level.

When Massey speaks of space, and this is where the misunderstandings arise, she generally means this level of spaces. But Laclau, too, means spaces when he speaks of the unevenness of the social sphere and of sediments. The concept of sediments - not in the slightest indicating passivity - is fully justified in that it only makes sense in the plural. We will come back to this in the next section.

c) *Spatialization*. Spaces, however, are not pre-existent, but must rather be continuously constructed. This process of *spatialization* or sedimentation is the actual moment of politics. Laclau calls the logic of politics hegemony, thus spatialization is consequently quite simply the hegemonization of time by space. Laclau himself says, "any representation of a dislocation involves its specialization. The way to overcome the temporal, traumatic and unrepresentable nature of dislocation is to construct it as a moment in permanent structural relation with other moments [e. g. as topography, O. M.], in which case the pure temporality of the 'event' is eliminated" [22]. This construction - the more or less permanent connection of various moments to form a structured whole - is what Laclau (as in the Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall or Lawrence Grossberg) terms *articulation*.

//: From space to spaces and back: three blind alleys

On the basis of the above discussion, in the following I would like to focus on three - as I see it, unsuitable - strategies for reconceptualising public space that I will try to link to the names Foucault, Deleuze and Habermas. [23] Assuming that their theories of space are largely known, I will not describe them in detail. My concern is simply to touch on a possible criticism that would follow from the aforesaid, i.e. from the viewpoint of political theory. Whereas Foucault consciously attempts to promote anti-

public spheres via a strategy of multiplication, Deleuzians see the public, urban space as a flood zone of energy and libido flows. Habermas, in turn, hypostatizes a certain conception of public space to the *public sphere*. According to the theory, these three blind alleys of multiplication of space (Foucault), the substantialisation of space (Deleuze) and the hypostatization of space (Habermas) display a pronounced depoliticizing effect. Against the negative background set out in this section, in the following chapter it will be easier to come closer to a really *political* theory of public space - and thus public art.

Foucault's lecture entitled "Other Spaces", held in 1967, brought forth a whole genre of heterotopology studies in the wake of its publication in the eighties. The success of this incidental text can probably only be explained by the obsessive thirst of architects and urbanists for theory imports (and by the inexorable pleasure that architects take in 1:1 translations of post-structuralist theoretical concepts into architectural building forms such as folds or ovoids).

In Foucault's text, "Other Spaces", i.e. heterotopias, are presented as privileged, forbidden or sacred places *within* our society, spaces that mark out a space of transition, crisis or deviation. Crisis heterotopias, assigned by Foucault above all to so-called primitive societies, are privileged, sacred or forbidden places. Today, they would be replaced by deviation heterotopias such as holiday homes, psychiatric clinics or prisons. Generally speaking, heterotopias must be seen as folds from the outside into the inside, as Deleuze would say, as "bubbles" in a homotopos that Foucault does not define in any more detail. A typical instance of these bubbles is the last example that Foucault cites in his lecture, the ship, "a pitching piece of space", a "place without place that lives out of itself, that is closed in itself and at the same time at the mercy of the infinite expanse of the ocean". To Foucault, the ship is "the heterotopia

par excellence". And he draws the somewhat romanticising conclusion that "dreams run dry in civilisations without ships, espionage replaces adventure, and the police replace freebooters" [24].

As spaces of the outside in the inside, heterotopias are real, existing Utopias. And they are above all multiple, i. e. we should really speak of many small outsides in the plural. By employing this pluralisation of the category of outside (and its folding into the inside), Foucault does, however, let himself in for a certain inconsistency of his representation, for the heterological science he evokes is evidently unable to present a criterion for the exact nature of the borderline between the outside and the inside. If the outside is "real and existing" and occurs at many places inside, how can we speak of an outside? Is the other-in-the-same not immediately transformed into *precisely this* same? Are heterotopias not merely simple variations or certain modes of homotopias? In view of the fact that Foucault does not supply us with a criterion with the aid of which we can define the borderline between the inside and the outside, it remains totally unclear who or what actually determines whether a given place comes under this category or not. The very concept of heterotopias loses all contours. Benjamin Genocchio posed the same question in the following way: "How is it, that heterotopias are 'outside' of or are fundamentally different to other spaces, but also are related to and exist 'within' the general social space/order that distinguishes their meaning as different?" [25] The only possible answer is that the person differentiating the places is Foucault himself, Genocchio concludes. The categorisation of heterotopias is apparently an arbitrary act of the author.

Without a criterion for the borderline between inside and outside, the criteria for the concrete determination of places as heterotopias

are also weakened. Thus, when Foucault decides to assign to the category of heterotopias gardens, ships, childbed, brothels, churches, hotel and motel rooms, museums, cemeteries, libraries, prisons, asylums, holiday homes, psychiatric hospitals, military facilities, theatres, cinemas, Roman baths, the Turkish hammam, and the Scandinavian sauna, and if we can add, as Genocchio does, markets, sewers, amusement parks, and shopping malls, what on earth is not heterotopical? Are there any other places than other places?

A sympathetic reading could of course see this systematic weakness as the real strength of Foucault's concept. For example, Bernd Knaller-Vlay and Roland Ritter advance the theory that Foucault's list of almost Borgessian anti-systematology is not a "weak concretisation of a strong idea", but rather he "creates a systematic inconsistency with which he protects the list from being completed". "The list of heterotopias suggests an open-ended series that can be thought out and continued." [26] Thought out and continued, that is all very well, but according to what criteria? The problem is that if I cannot give any criteria for the other/outside, then, conversely, I cannot subvert the own/inside either. Heterotopias are then not simple components of the inside, nor are they external to it, rather they *coincide* with the inside - in Foucault and also in Marc Auge. If everything can become a heterotopos, then ultimately nothing will. Foucault's fuzzy heterotopology consequently proves to be a homotopology.

This argument can equally be made along the lines of the logic developed in Section I: the mere multiplication of other spaces or internal outside spaces into an unclosable series inversely makes it impossible to define the borders of the own space or interior space in any way, as mentioned above, the outside must be of a *radically* different nature than the inside. If the inside, for example, is a

system of differences or of differentially determined positions, then the outside cannot be a further difference or position, for then it would be part of the inside. The constitutive outside - that Laclau conceives as distinctly non-spatial (time) - would in this case become merely another difference (or many other differences = heterotopias) of the inside. But then it would cease to be an outside (and the inside would no longer be an inside). And it is no longer constitutive as it has been broken down from an ontological category *(time/space)* to an ontic category *(spaces)*.

This thought leads me to the hypothesis that the actual, secret bugbear that the concept of the heterotopia seeks to oppose is not the ontological category of the "same" or the "inside", but rather the ontic counter-concept of a certain rival topos on the inside - namely of public space. In other words, the only thing that the heterotopias listed by Foucault have in common and that might be added consists in the fact that they seem nof fo belong *to one place*, namely to the bourgeois public. Foucault drafts a particularist concept of space whose unadmitted but implied opponent is the universalism of the public space.

This hypothesis is backed up by the fact that Foucault does not indicate how and whether heterotopias are mediated with each other - a task traditionally assumed by the public space over private spaces. It is not clarified what the reciprocal relationship between heterotopias is or how they relate to each other. Must we, we might ask with childlike naivety, go through the homotopos to get from one heterotopos to the other, or are there doors between heterotopias? And is the public sphere the space that we must traverse if we wish to pass from one heterotopos to another? What seems to be more probable is that the public sphere is not only the homotopos that embraces the heterotopias, but rather that, for the purpose of Foucault's argument, it assumes the role of the anti-

heterotopia (and heterotopias assume the role of anti-homotopias). The universalist bourgeois public sphere is quite simply the antithesis to the particularist heterotopias of crisis and deviation, compared to which the latter - precisely qua deviation - are tacitly defined.

Thus, heterotopias are the mere reverse, the inversion of the concept of an undescribed homotopos that is, however, implicitly manifested as the public sphere. A homotopos that must be presupposed as a universal, mythical authority so as to give meaning to the concept of the heterotopia. When Foucault, at the only point in the text where he actually speaks of public space, describes the opposition of private and public space as the result of a silent sacralisation, his text itself is the best example of the "silence" with which this sacralisation is still performed in its apparent subversion.

Let us look now at the version of the heterotopia that is being hailed as the "new public sphere" - the Internet. At a symposium held at the Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, under the heading "Fictions of the Public Sphere", the Frankfurt-based sociologist Peter Noller goes on to answer his own concluding question after taking stock of the commercialisation of the public sphere "Where is the public, freely accessible space of the 90s?", suggesting "In the digital cities of the networks" [27]. The idea of the Internet as "public space" or simply as "the public sphere" has become so firmly entrenched that it would be perfectly futile to line up assertions similar to Holler's. Even the criticism of the "myth of the public" would at first glance appear to have been already formulated and dealt with. However, this Internet myth is currently being countered with another myth that leaves no room whatsoever for the public sphere. We are talking about the (post-)Deleuzian myth of the Internet as a rhizomatic space of flows with no centre. Here, the public sphere is

overflooded by a spatiality that, as replete positivity or substance, utterly thwarts any rational discussion or normalisation/ spatialization. I call this reference to a space that is too overfilled to be circumscribed in clear-cut boundaries, and which at the same time "floods" the space of the public sphere, the space of flows theory. In the issue of the *Architectural Design* magazine dedicated to "Architects in Cyberspace", Sadie Plant formulates the space of flows theory of the Internet with unequivocal clarity. Cyberspace, she contends, resists all demands for supervision, regulation and censorship for "such zones have always been out of control". With this, she draws a parallel to cities, "Cities, like cyberspace, are not object of knowledge to be planned and designed, but cybernetic assemblages, immensely intricate interplays of forces, interests, zones and desires too complex and fluid for even those who inhabit them to understand" [28]. The reason for this urban resistance is to be found in the Deleuzian substance assigned to cities: "Weeds and grasses lift the paving stones." This allusion to May '68 and to situationism is not limited to the purportedly subversive potential of cyber-flows, "all spaces, their builders, and inhabitants, functioned as cybernetic systems in multiple layers of cybernetic; space" [29].

The euphoric myth of the intrinsic force of *flows* is usually articulated by the diffusely anarchistic evocation of centrelessness. The buzzword "rhizome" has been flogged to death for this purpose. But in a sense, promoting a flowing, rhizomatic centrelessness of the Internet/the city is an extremely vapid affair. All anti-foundationalist theories would today agree that, by definition, no system of signification has a *natural* centre, and for this reason alone the Internet too cannot have a *natural* centre. But what exactly does this mean? Again, I would like to link this problem back to the political theory outlined in Section I. Ernesto

Laclau makes it clear that the simple ritualistic reference to the decentrised nature of a structure is not the end of the story. What we must understand by a decentrised structure is "not just the absence of a centre but the *practice of decentring* through antagonism" [30]. In view of the fact that, on the one hand, every system of signification is dislocated, there can be no singular centre. Yet, on the other hand, we must note that "the response to the dislocation of the structure will be its recomposition around particular nodal points [=centres] of articulation by the various antagonistic forces". Such that we can say that precisely the dislocatory, decentrised nature of a system of signification is both the result of the battle of various forces for the meaning of this system and an appeal to undertake new attempts at centrisation: "Social dislocation is therefore coterminous with the construction of power centres." [31]

So what does this mean in terms of our problem? If the patchwork of heterotopias or the rhizome of the Internet were to possess a "natural" and stable centre, there would be no dislocation and thus no problems of meaning. The process of the articulation of meaning would stand still and we would enter a frozen world in which every sign is bound to a natural referent and in which complete transparency exists. A world of total and eternal wealth of meaning. Yet if, on the other hand, heterotopias, public spheres, etc. did not have any centre at all, if meaning were not articulated by the partial construction of nodes (by means of spatialization) and no signifier could maintain a temporary relation to a certain signified, then what we would see would be a psychotic structure and, again, no meaning, but rather a world of total and eternal meaninglessness. In this sense, Deleuze's flows model is extremely psychotic. And in Deleuzian space, too, there is no space for the public space of politics. Space is naturalised, vitalised, furnished

with natural metaphors, and assumes a positivity or substance that obviates any politics (i.e. all articulatory practices of spatialization).

Does the aforesaid lead to a general criticism of plural models of space? Does the criticism of Foucault's heterotopia model necessarily entail embracing the public sphere as a homotopos? This question leads us to the last model of the public sphere, namely the public sphere as a super-space or meta-space. The idea of the one standardising public sphere has often been ascribed to Jürgen Habermas. This may not be fully justified for Habermas himself speaks of the public sphere in the plural - of regional, cultural, literary, scientific, political, organisational, medial, and subcultural partial public spheres. The problem is not that Habermas does not recognise this plurality of partial public spheres, but rather that this plurality is swallowed by a positive principle of communicative reason.

For all partial public spheres, being interpermeable, refer to one all-embracing overall public sphere. According to Habermas - despite all admitted plurality at the level of partial public spheres - there is but one "democratic" or "autonomous" public sphere [32] that does not coincide with the public spheres of mass culture, but rather in which citizens could communicate about the regulation of public affairs. Within the scope of the aforesaid, the idea of a rational super- or meta-public sphere - i. e. the public sphere that we are talking about when we hypostatise the concept of *public space* into the concept of *public sphere* - is amiss. Not that there could not be a reasonable and democratically discussing public, of course there can, namely wherever people discuss in a reasonable and democratic fashion. We need not even dispute that reasonable and democratic discussion is possible per se (although practically improbable, nevertheless at least possible as a regulative idea and as an asymptotic ideal). But still it remains a partial public sphere

among many, a public sphere that is not by a long shot ontologically privileged, nor by a long shot an overall - or to put it in my words - a meta- or super-public sphere.

Our criticism of the meta-public sphere, then, in no way equates to Lyotard's post-modern criticism of meta-narratives. The point is not that all meta-narratives, to which I would also count Habermas' public sphere narrative, are to be rejected because they automatically led to a kind of totalitarianism. The real criticism is that such narratives cannot assert a meta-status and are thus at the same ontological level as all other narratives. Which does not in itself refute the meta-narrative itself - it may well make sense to argue in favour of the hegemony of a particular narrative - but rather simply opposes its transcendental status.

So I am certainly not coming out against the possibility of communicative reason or against the possibility of a democratic public sphere. Rather, I am opposed to the idea that this public sphere is ontologically privileged over other, pre-rational or pre-, non- or anti-democratic public spaces. To give an extreme example: if we do not wish to smuggle the idea of communicative reason into the concept of the public sphere, then there is not even anything to stop us from speaking of "fascist public spheres". Why should the public sphere of the one German people as constructed by Hitler's radio speeches not be a public sphere, why should the public sphere of a Nuremberg Reich party conference not be a public sphere? Why should only the informal rational dialogue generate public spheres in the emphatic sense, is there not equally the public sphere of command, authoritarian invocation, enthusiastically swaying or goose-stepping masses? Or, to cite some less emotive examples, what makes all the various "partial" public spheres such as the everyday public spheres of advertising, backstairs gossip, sports events, youth cultures, etc. any less public,

less autonomous or less universal than a public sphere created through rational discussion?

And even if we narrow our concept of the public sphere to political and *democratic* public spheres, their plurality remains irreducible, constituted around a collection of irreducible political language games and divergent demands. This brings us back to a conception of the public sphere that would be compatible with Ernesto Laclau's notion of public space:

"For me, a radically democratic society is one in which a plurality of public spaces constituted around specific issues and demands, and strictly autonomous of each other, instils in its members a civic sense which is a central ingredient of their identity as individuals. Despite the plurality of these spaces, or, rather, as a consequence of it, a diffuse democratic culture is created, which gives the community its specific identity. Within this community, the liberal institutions - parliament, elections, divisions of power - are maintained, but these are one public space, not the public space." [33]

What Laclau says of the institutional public spheres of democracy (parliament) can also be said of Habermas' concept of the democratic public sphere. It is not the public sphere. Just as the advocates of the "liberal democratic fundamental order" would like to restrict the democratic public sphere to parliament, Habermas hypostatises a certain *public* space (of rational discussion) to the one *public* sphere. [34] But is not precisely the irreducible plurality of the public sphere - i. e. the absence of a rational or other super-public sphere, a meta-space - the real precondition that something like democracy is possible at all? Laclau would maintain just that: "But the condition for a democratic society is that these public

spaces have to be plural: a democratic society is, of course, incompatible with the existence of only one public space." [35]

Which by no means implies that democracy consists of a merry patchwork of public spheres. Rather, democracy means that the conflict of the question as to *which* public spheres are tolerated as politically legitimate and which are not, is not automatically settled in advance - for example by taking recourse to a quasi-transcendent ideal of communicative reason. Democracy means that no particular public sphere, no individual project of spatialization may claim this transcendental status for itself. This, in turn, implies that the place of the public sphere remains void. This is what distinguishes this approach, corresponding for example to the theories of Laclau and Lefort (whom we will speak about below), quite clearly from simple pluralisations of Habermas' concept of the public sphere, as can be found, for example, in Fraser or Benhabib. [36] To recapitulate, we have identified three blind alleys that in a way are designed to illustrate what can go awry with theories of space and the public sphere and how certain decisions can, from the outset of the theory, have depoliticizing effects or implications.

1) The first blind alley was the multiplication of space, or rather the folding in of the constitutive outside into the inside. With the aid of this model of the heterotopos, Foucault aims to draw up a counter-model to the great closed space of society, a counter-model in that this space always displays inclusions of the outside, of the "other space" - heterotopoi. To say that these spaces are multiple and plural in no way implies saying that they constitute an endless unstructured puzzle or that they are all equal. As illustrated above, by virtue of the fact that the only applicable criterion of a heterotopos is its deviation from the homotopos, and that this is ultimately - similar to Habermas' super-public sphere - a phantasm

of the theory that either anarchistically warns us of it, like the Foucaultians, or upholds it, like the Habermasians, *everything* can become a heterotopos, from the sauna to the shopping mall. In the end even the parliament is a heterotopos.

2) The Deleuzian blind alley is the substantialisation of space. Here, all subtly differentiated public spheres - heterotopias, Utopias and homotopias - are in a way brought together. The literary public sphere no longer differs from the party political, subcultural, or artistic public sphere, for we are not looking at a logic of delimitable spaces, possibly systems, but rather a rhizomatic, centreless mess. This view could be countered by the fact that the space of the public sphere is not a quasi-natural force transforming the city into one big libidinal jungle of its own accord, for that would imply attributing it with its internal laws, an inner driving substance of constant becoming and fading. That would mean remaining in the realm of Deleuzian natural philosophy, if not to say natural mysticism. Consequently, politics becomes a distinctly superfluous activity, for it is the quasi-natural substance of the libido-flows that lifts the paving-stones - and not the politically organised and articulatory will of the demonstrators.

3) But a model contrasting with this vitalist hippie and neo-hippie model is the model in which the public sphere is assigned the role of the super-brain [37]. This is the blind alley of the hypostatisation of the public space: a particular public space - the space of rational, informal, normative deliberation - becomes the public sphere. Yet the space of the public space is not the bourgeois meta-space of rational and non-violent discussion, although it need not even be disputed that such a space does or, if not, in the contrafactual, regulative sense - *should* exist somewhere at the ontic level (although I would tend to doubt both - factual existence and contrafactual desirability - for different reasons).

Rather, the public space is plural or multiple and the Habermasian debating society, if it exists, is one public space among many, a space that is not in any way ontologically privileged over the others. None of these three approaches can answer the question of why the public space is, on the one hand, plural but, on the other hand, not indefinitely so, i. e. not unstructured, but rather *why* certain public spheres dominate other public spheres [38]. So none of these approaches can help us explain how the various public spheres are interrelated - for example how exchange relations are supposed to work between these public spheres if we a) do not assume an overall public sphere that unifies all others, thus taking charge of exchange (the homotopous space as a medium between the heterotopias) and b) do not wish to assume a puzzle of unconnected public spheres, between which no exchange takes place whatsoever. These problems can only be resolved by means of a political theory that takes into account the way in which various projects of spatialization - i. e. hegemonisation of space - are at loggerheads with each other and construct partial, transitory hegemonies over other spaces.

///. Public sphere (s) and radical democracy

What is to date probably the most valid attempt to interconceive art practices and the political category of the public space was proffered by Rosalyn Deutsche. One of the most overriding aims of Deutsche's seminal "Agoraphobia" essay is, in her own words, to infiltrate new theories of "radical and plural democracy" into the public art discourse. It seems that Deutsche shares the opinion that underlies this chapter. In order to attempt to answer the current question as to what makes art public, we will have to devote our attention to political theory. Of course, this does not imply demanding a new master theory for art. Rather, the questions, problems and impasses that have long concerned political

philosophers and democracy theorists in the form of the concept of the public sphere, have always determined the public art discussion - even where they were not dressed in the explicit vocabulary of political theory. For example, Deutsche says: "Although public art discourse has so far paid little direct attention to these theories, the issues they raise are already present at the very heart of controversies over aesthetic politics." [39]

When we speak of impasses, one of these impasses of the left in which a progressive theory of the public sphere - for example a theory of "radical and plural democracy" - should not stray was and, to some extent, still is Marxist economic determinism that declared political concepts such as the public sphere to be a mere superstructure phenomenon of the economic base. With her attempt to re-theoretise public art and public space, Deutsche has to fight on several fronts - against public art as embellishment, against public art as a means of gentrification (as an aesthetic arm of property speculators), against conservatives such as Jesse Helms, who seek to substantialise and restrict the concept of the public sphere, and on the other hand against the communitarist left, that sees politics simply as community work, and even, in terms of criticism and theory, against Deutsche's own colleagues from October, who continued to argue the ideology that art is produced autonomously and by artist personalities - for example in their defence of Serra's *Wed Arc* (which was removed from Manhattan's Federal Plaza), and who, in some cases, even succumbed to fits of cultural conservatism, etc. I assume that the criticism of public art as a means of gentrification, as an intrinsic means of distinction in art, as an individualist substitute for public welfare, is generally familiar so that there is no need to go over it again at this point. But the decisive front on which Deutsche's criticism has to liberate

the concept of the public space is the front with the neo-Marxist left (Harvey and Jameson) and their economic determinism.

On closer scrutiny, the latter proves to be the main opponent when it comes to a progressive articulation of the political public sphere with the aid of art/culture. A criticism of the Marxist/social science paradigm of art and cultural criticism, where it becomes economic-determinist, must go hand in hand with a criticism of the paradigm of the radical, often Marxist political left that brushes aside bourgeois democracy, and thus the bourgeois public sphere, as "purely formal". In these determinist approaches, politics and culture share the sad fate of being assigned to the ("purely formal") superstructure that is supposedly determined by the economic base. The typical example of a theorist operating with this Marxist meta-narrative is Fredric Jameson, for whom the cultural phenomena of post-modernism are, as we know, merely the "cultural logic" of late capitalism. This view is shared by David Harvey in his influential book *The Condition of Postmodernity* - of course, the "condition" of postmodernity in this case is again the economy. Belonging to the cultural superstructure, post-modernism is just a symptom of economic upheavals of the base (such as globalisation, etc.). [40]

The same fate of cultural categories is shared by the political categories such as the public sphere or political actors such as the New Social movements. From an economic viewpoint, the political public sphere is part of the bourgeois ideology that obfuscates the true social, i.e. in the final analysis, *economic* conditions; equally, struggles about issues such as gender, sexual orientation, etc. and about general cultural representations are only scenes of secondary importance: for if, in the final analysis, it is the economy alone that counts, the only true political actor can be defined by the category of class, and the only radical political demands are economic demands. Deutsche opposes this idea by pleading the case of

Laclau/Mouffe versus Jameson/Harvey. "Mouffe and Laclau reverse Harvey's proposal: socialism, reduced to human size, is integrated within new social practices. Links between different social struggles must be articulated rather than presupposed to exist, determined by a fundamental social antagonism - class struggle." [41] Socialist class politics, this would imply, is in no way ontologically privileged over other politics and demands. Rather, economic demands are presented at the same ontological level as, for instance, "cultural" demands. And given that class politics cannot cite any deeper social reality (the economic base), it cannot claim any automatic leadership over other, e. g. minority or identity struggles, but must rather first construct - i. e. articulate - a common chain of equivalence with them *in the field of politics* (i. e. in the "superstructure").

What this articulation creates is quite simply a common space (a space among many). This space has no substantial base distributing and determining all positions in it a priori (and thus automatically guaranteeing socialist positions *pole position*), but rather this space is the contingent result of an articulatory practice that links up the positions to form a topography in the first place. This practice is simply *politics*, to return to the terminology drawn up in Section I, a practice of *spatialization*. A necessary condition for politics and spatialization is, however, as mentioned above, that space does not exist as a closed totality with no constitutive outside, i. e. time. As soon as we cease to assign society a fundamental, standardising base or substance, social cohesion is always only the result of temporary - and ultimately failing - political articulation. Society as a totality, on the other hand, is impossible. However, the public sphere is possible precisely because society is impossible. This is one of the fundamental propositions of Claude Lefort's theory of democracy and Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's theory of radical and

plural democracy that Deutsche takes up when she says, "[according to new theories of radical democracy, public space emerges with the abandonment of the belief in an absolute basis of social unity (...)" [42]. Before discussing Lefort's exact argumentation concerning the constitution of the public sphere, let me cite a decisive passage of Deutsche's text in detail, for a lot of what she says may appear to be familiar.

"Democracy and its corollary, public space, are brought into existence, then, when the idea that the social is founded on a substantial basis, a positivity, is abandoned. The identity of society becomes an enigma and is therefore open to contestation. But, as Laclau and Mouffe argue, this abandonment also means that society is 'impossible' - which is to say, that the conception of society as a closed entity is impossible. For without an underlying positivity, the social field is structured by relationships among elements that themselves have no essential identities. Negativity is thus part of any social identity, since identity comes into being only through a relationship with an 'other' and, as a consequence, cannot be internally complete (...) Likewise, negativity is part of the identity of society as a whole; no complete element within society unifies it and determines its development. Laclau and Mouffe use the term *antagonism* to designate the relationship between a social identity and a 'constitutive outside' that blocks its completion. Antagonism affirms and simultaneously prevents the closure of society, revealing the partiality and precariousness - the contingency - of every totality. (...) It will be the Lefortian contention of this essay that advocates of public art who want to foster the growth of a democratic culture must also start from this point." [43]

If we follow Deutsche, the paradox of public art is not so very different to the paradox described by political theory. On the one

hand, society is impossible, i.e. every space lacks an essential identity or positivity and depends on a constitutive and yet negative outside. On the other hand, a certain *socialization* is necessary as a completely dislocated society (a space without spatiality, as it were, i. e. pure time) would of course be just as preposterous. Politics or spatialization is, on the one hand, only possible because society has no "basis", but must on the other, always fail in an attempt to merge spaces and their constitutive outside into *the space* of society. Deutsche's reference to Claude Lefort is pioneering in this respect, for it was Lefort who described the historical emergence of this logic - and in it the emergence of the public space.

Everything begins with what Lefort (following Tocqueville) calls the "democratic revolution". The historically decisive event for the emergence of modern democracy - an event that should, however, only be seen as a symbolic condensation of a development that commenced far earlier - was, according to Lefort, not the storming of the Bastille, nor the summoning of the general estates, but rather quite simply the beheading of Louis XVI. From this point on, not only had the king been "disembodied", but the place of power in society had been disembodied, too. The instance of power - and with it the instances of law and knowledge - were henceforth no longer localised in the "two bodies of the king" (Kantorowicz), the earthly and the transcendental. The exercise of power - i. e. the temporary appropriation of the empty space of power - is instead subject to political rivalry and can no longer cite any transcendental principle. Without such a founding principle, society is faced with the permanent task of refounding itself again and again. As a result of the evacuation of the place of power, the democratic dispositive thus releases a potential of autonomy. For if the place of sacral legitimation is vacant, society is referred back to itself in its search for legitimation. Through the evacuation of the place of power, a

new place is thus separated from the state - the civil society becomes a place of autonomous self-institution of society. And finally there evolves in the civil society a public sphere, seen as a space of the political (of conflictual debate) *within* the non-political (i.e., the "private" or economic parts of the civil society that are, however, always potentially "publicisable", i.e. which can be made the subject of public debate). [44]

The secession of an empty place from the state, the separation of the spheres of power of law and knowledge, the emergence of an autonomous sphere of the civil society, and finally of the public sphere in which the legitimatory foundations of society, having lost their transcendental status, must be renegotiated again and again - all this presupposes the instance of a fundamental division of democratic society, a fundamental conflictual composedness that is located at the ontological and not at the ontic level. Democracy is the institutionalisation of conflict - i. e. of the debate about the foundations of society - or it is none. Institutionalisation means i. a. the attested legitimacy of public debate about what is legitimate and what is illegitimate. The public sphere is not so much a pre-existent space in which this debate occurs or to which it is assigned. On the contrary, the public sphere must be created again and again precisely by means of conflictual debate about the foundations of society and the scope of rights (albeit on the absolute foundation of the right to have rights), and the extension of rights to new groups of the population. [45]

Following Lefort and Laclau/Mouffe, Rosalyn Deutsche refers precisely to this necessary construction of the public sphere when she writes, for example, "the political sphere is not only a site of discourse; it is also a discursively constructed site. From the standpoint of a radical democracy, politics cannot be reduced to something that happens inside the limits of a public space or

political community that is simply accepted as 'real'. Politics, as Chantal Mouffe writes, is about the constitution of the political community. It is about the spatializing operations that produce a space of politics." [46] In other words, it is political intervention itself that actually creates the space for politics (the public sphere) - and not the other way around. The logical consequence is that "conflict, division, and instability, then, do not ruin the democratic public sphere: they are the conditions of its existence." [47]

This form of political spatialization - the opening up of a space of conflict and debate - originates, in turn - it must be added - in a constitutive division or a constitutive antagonism (between society and its outside, between the empty space of power and the state, etc.). The founding antagonism is institutionalised in society to become public political debate that must not, in turn, be halted. If it were to be halted, the empty space of power would be occupied, the separation between power and the state, and the division between the spheres of power, law, and knowledge would be annulled - the name of this condition of the democratic dispositive, according to Lefort, is totalitarianism [48]. In totalitarianism, the founding antagonism is denied, the debate is halted and, as a consequence, the public space implodes. So it is of crucial importance that the conflictual composedness of society, politics and, ultimately, the public space, is not suppressed or obfuscated, as it is in models of consensus. For Deutsche, the model of consensus par excellence is, of course, "Habermas's ideal of a singular, unified public sphere that transcends concrete particularities and reaches a rational - noncoercive - consensus" [49]. The Habermasian model must be anathema to an attempt to apply theories of radical and plural democracy to problems of public art - Habermas sees the public sphere, as we have seen, as a singular meta-space, society as a positive object whose conflictual

dimension (and thus its self-difference or non-identity with itself) is to be annulled by means of a rationalist meta-discourse,

"Construed as an entity with a positivity of its own, this object - 'society' - serves as the basis of rational discussions and as a guarantee that social conflicts can be resolved objectively. The failure to acknowledge the spatializations that generate 'social space' attests to a desire both to control conflict and to secure a stable position for the self." [50]

In the final analysis, the unification of the public space qua rationalisation of conflict comes down to a suppression of fundamental social antagonism, to the denial of all distinction between society and its constitutive outside - i. e. ultimately between space and time, for the (temporal) dislocation of space is seen in Habermas' model as something that may be rationally remedied. In Laclau's/Mouffe's model, on the other hand, it is precisely what constitutes spatiality. To Laclau, Mouffe, Lefort and Deutsche, something like public space does not emerge where consensus has been found, but rather where consensus breaks down (= is dislocated) and where temporary alliances need to be rearticulated again and again. On the basis of the terminological distinction between space as totality and spatialization as political practice, as set out in Section I, Habermas' model would be unambiguously identifiable as space - as a space of consensus in the singular this version of the public sphere ultimately has no place for divergent spatializations that do not wish to stand on the basis of "rational" procedural agreement. But as soon as - rationally unconveyable - conflictuality is denied, society is set as positive identity. As Deutsche rightly criticises, community art practices commit a similar mistake when they seek to create "society" by means of social consensus work and thus establish it as positive identity in the first place.

Thus, the public sphere is not a space of consensus, but rather a space of *dissent*. The urban public space - we may summarise - is generated by conflict and not by a consensus having recourse to rational and procedural meta-rules. In connection with the urban space, Deutsche speaks of three incommensurable meanings of conflict:

"Urban space is the product of conflict. This is so in several, incommensurable senses. In the first place, the lack of absolute social foundation - the 'disappearance of the markers of certainty' - makes conflict an ineradicable feature of all social space. Second, the unitary image of urban space constructed in conservative discourse is itself produced through division, constituted through the creation of an exterior. The perception of a coherent space cannot be separated from a sense of what threatens the space, of what it would like to exclude. Finally, urban space is produced by specific socioeconomic conflicts that should not simply be accepted, either wholeheartedly or regretfully, as evidence of the inevitability of conflict but, rather, politicized - opened to contestation as social and therefore mutable relations of oppression." [51]

What, then, is exactly the incommensurability of these three meanings of conflict? In view of the aforesaid, the following interpretation would seem appropriate. What Deutsche draws our attention to, intentionally or unintentionally, is the difference between 1. the conditions of the (im)possibility of society, and 2. and 3. the various attempts nevertheless to construct society partially (either as conservative and unifying or as progressive and reactivating). The incommensurability about which Deutsche writes thus correlates to the onto-ontological difference mentioned in Section I. At the ontological level, the category time stands for the fundamental lack characterising every space; the antic level, in

contrast, is distinguished by rivalling hegemonial efforts of *spatialization* - and, as a result, by a multitude of (possibly conflicting) spaces. The final determination of the urban space in terms of identity - as of any other social space - is thus, in the final analysis, impossible due to the ineradicable ontological conditions (the necessary reference to a constitutive outside and consequently the existence of a fundamental lack and antagonism). Inversely, precisely this failure of the closure of spaces to form space permits and requires constant efforts of spatialization - i.e. political practices of articulation.

But does the public space, as we have defined it following Lefort, not have a special relationship - a relationship that may not be completely reduced to the ontic level of other spaces - to the ontological level of space/time? Does the so-called public, *political* space - without becoming a meta-space - not refer to a far greater extent to the outside of society and to the instance of dislocation than other *social* spaces? Not because it emerged historically as a result of the division of society in the first place (the secession and evacuation of the place of power, etc.), but because it continues to perform this division qua conflictual debate again and again, and is itself constructed again and again by means of debate in the first place. Furthermore, it would follow from this that the public sphere evolves wherever "debate" occurs (and thus that it cannot be restricted to certain places such as parliament), i.e. that the public space itself is not a space at all (nor a space among spaces), but rather a *principle* - the principle of reactivation, i.e. of political dislocation of social sedimentations as a result of the onset of temporality. As a *principle* of reactivation (of space by time), the public sphere rather belongs to the ontological level than the ontic level of social sediments.

In fact, both concepts of the public sphere, Lefort's and Habermas', are ontological concepts (or rather they are both quasi-transcendental). Above all this unifies them against approaches of social science that always remain on the ontic level. And yet there is an indelible difference between Lefort et al. and Habermas et al. To clarify matters, let us recall how we defined space and time at the beginning. Time was seen as the ontological principle of dislocation of a structure that results from the essential dependence of the structure on a constitutive outside, whereas space, inversely, designates the theoretical extreme case of complete eradication of temporality and dislocation. This should make it adequately clear as to what the real difference is between radical democratic quasi-transcendentalists such as Lefort, Laclau, Mouffe, Deutsche and others on the one hand, and universal pragmatic quasi-transcendentalists such as Habermas on the other. It is Habermas' model of consensus that sees dislocation only as disturbance or noisome interference in the process of communication and that aims to eradicate dislocation and completely spatialize the public sphere. Ultimately, then, it is a concept of space.

As opposed to Habermas, according to whose theory the public sphere occupies the category of space (as unified totality), Lefort's public sphere is precisely not a space, but rather, in the final analysis, belongs to the order of temporality, namely to the order of conflict. Lefort's public sphere is thus ultimately not an ontic location but rather an ontological principle - *dislocation*. The model of radical and plural democracy is not concerned with the substantial consensual standardisation of space, i.e. finding consensus, but rather with its conflictual opening. It is about avoiding precisely the occupation of the empty space of power, the permanent creation of closed space. From the standpoint of democracy theory, the public sphere is at once a product and

condition of possibility of democracy as it is the public sphere that stands for the constitutive division of society and creates this division qua conflictual, antagonistic debate again and again. Democracy means that (at the ontic level) no particular public sphere, not even the public sphere of rational noncoercive discussion, may halt this debate or delegitimise deviating political language games. Lefort's public sphere is thus not a meta-space, either, as is Habermas' public sphere, because time cannot form space (time cannot, as Laclau says, hegemonise anything). It is nothing but the principle of the temporalising opening of space, the guarantor that the place of the public sphere remains empty. Public art will be measured by whether it ultimately decides in favour of space - the social - or for time: the political.

[from: Andreas Lechner / Petra Maier (Ed.), *stadtmotiv**, Wien: selene 1999]

[1] Rosalyn Deutsche: *Evictions. Art and Spatial Politics*. Cambridge, Mass-London: MIT Press 1996, p. xxiv.
[2] Occasionally there have been translations of and interviews with Laclau and Mouffe in German-language art journals such as *Texte zur Kunst*, *springerin* or die *Nummer*.
[3] The fact that economic determinism has often been connected with these guiding disciplines is the real problem. After accepting the basic assumptions of anti-economic political theory (Lefort, Laclau and Mouffe), Deutsche must thus fight on this front against the heirs of economic determinism in critical urbanism such as Harvey or Jameson.
[4] Doreen Massey: "Politics and Space/Time", in New Left Review No. 196 (Nov./Dec. 1992).

[5] Massey counts the following among this second wave: Soja's Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory. London 1989, and the anthology Social Relations and Spatial Structures. London 1985, edited by Derek Gregory and John Urry, and her own Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production. London 1984. As can be seen from the programmatic titles of these works, it is characteristic that in these cases they seek to link up with social sciences rather than with political theory.

[6] "With Time, Massey writes, "are aligned History, Progress, Civilization, Science, Politics and Reason, portentous things with gravitas and capital letters. With space on the other hand are aligned the other poles of these concepts: stasis, ('simple') reproduction, nostalgia, emotion, aesthetics, the body." op. cit., p. 73.

[7] op. cit., p. 67.

[8] Specifically, the line of argumentation developed by Laclau is as follows. Laclau begins with Saussure's assumption that meaning can only evolve within a system of differences. The possibility of the existence of a system of difference, however, is dependent on the existence of its boundaries - and these boundaries cannot belong to the side of the system as, in this case, the boundary itself would be just another difference and consequently not a boundary of differences. Only if we see the outside of the system as a radical outside - and the boundary thus as an excluding boundary - can we speak of systematicity or meaning in the first place. As a consequence, the boundaries themselves cannot be signified, but can only be *manifested* as an interruption or breakdown of the process of signification. The radicality of the radical outside (non-meaning) is not only the condition of possibility for establishing a structure (meaning), it is at the same time the condition of impossibility of establishing a structure as closed *totality* (full

meaning). In other words, the function of .the excluding boundary thus consists in introducing an essential ambivalence into the system of difference constituted by these boundaries.

[9] Strictly speaking, the concept sequence - if it implies putting diachronous elements into synchronous order - is in itself a spatial concept.

[10] It follows from this that, strictly speaking, there is no diachronicity. In order to become representable, the diachronous must be synchronised.

[11] Ernesto Laclau: *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London-New York: Verso 1990, p. 41.

[12] We know from memory theory, for example from rhetoric, that our memory is best extended with the aid of spatial constructions, memory architectures.

[13] Massey's criticism of Laclau works precisely by constantly reducing Laclau to a structuralist.

[14] Laclau, op. cit., p. 35.

[15] op. cit., p. 41-42.

[16] op. cit., p. 42.

[17] op. cit., p. 68.

[18] Here, Laclau follows a distinction between politics and the political that can be found in French since Ricoeur and as recently as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, and in the Anglo-American literature, for example, in the works of Sheldon Wolin.

[19] Another interesting thing about this quotation is that Howarth, too, emphasises a point in his interpretation of Laclau that corresponds to the second wave of the eighties diagnosed by Massey, albeit in this case in terms of the narrower field of political theory: not only space has a political dimension, but also, as Howarth says, every politics always has a spatial dimension, too. David Howarth: "Reflections on the Politics of Space and Time", in Angelaki 1/1 (1993), p. 47. Cf. also Michael Reid's response to

Howarth: "The Aims of Radicalism", in Angelaki 1/3 (1994). On the discussion between Massey and Laclau cf. also Malcolm Miles: *Art Space and the City: Public Art and Urban Futures*. London: Routledge 1997.

[20] op. cit., p. 47.

[21] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe: *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London-New York 1985.

[22] Laclau: *New Reflections*, p. 72.

[23] The following portrayals do not intend to give a detailed, in-depth appraisal of these theories but rather a clarification - ex negativo - of our own suggestion of a political theory of space.

[24] Michel Foucault: "Other Spaces", in Roland Ritter and Bernd Knaller-Vlay (Ed.): *Other Spaces. The Affair of the Heterotopia. HDA-Dokumente der Architektur 10*, Haus der Architektur, Graz 1998, p. 37.

[25] Benjamin Genocchio: "Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference: The Question of 'Other' Spaces", in Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson (Ed.): *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, Oxford-Cambridge, Mass. 1995, p. 36.

[26] Bernd Knaller-Vlay and Roland Ritter: "Editorial", op. cit., p. 10.

[27] Cf. Marko Schacher's report in *Texte zur Kunst*, March 1997, p. 170.

[28] Sadie Plant: "No Plans", in Architectural Design, vol. 65, 11/12 (November/December 1995), p. 36.

[29] op. cit., p. 37.

[30] Laclau: *New Reflections*, p. 40.

[31] ibid. One of the side-effects of blind insistence on the fluid nature of the network, not taking into account equally existing fixation endeavours, is that we fail to recognise the production of new centres such as World Cities. A phenomenon that Saskia Sassen, for example, insists be taken into consideration: the

electronic "free-flowing" financial capital requires infrastructural fixation (Manhattan, London, Tokyo, Bombay). Sassen goes even one step further, contending that cyberspace is a new - transterritorial - form of centrality: the network has no centre, the network *is* the centre (or rather, I would add, one of the centres currently most articulated).

[32] Be it also in the form of a network of autonomous public spheres.

[33] Ernesto Laclau: *Emancipation(s)*. London-New York: Verso 1996, p. 121.

[34] It is often said that Habermas makes the communication model of the university seminar room into a model of politics. The fact that the agonal moment of politics is disregarded goes without saying. Cf., for example, Chantal Mouffe: *The Return of the Political*. London-New York: Verso 1993. Cf. also the works of William E. Connolly, e. g. *Politics and Ambiguity*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press 1987; or *Identity/ Difference. Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*. Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press 1991.

[35] op. cit., p. 120.

[36] Nancy Fraser: "Rethinking the Public Sphere", in Craig Calhoun (Ed.): *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1992; Seyla Benhabib: "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jurgen Habermas", op. cit. Despite the superficial multiplication of the public sphere, its decisive feature of normative deliberation is still preserved for all public spheres. The pluralising updating thus alters nothing about the fact itself.

[37] Habermas is sceptical about the consciousness philosophical legacy of a theory of the public space as a super-brain, although he does not always manage to avoid this tradition himself.

[38] Note, in both cases in the plural. Not why *the public sphere*

dominates other public spheres, but rather why certain *public spheres* dominate other *public spheres*.

[39] op. cit., p. xxii.

[40] Fredric Jameson: *Postmodernism. Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* London: Verso 1991; David Harvey: *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change.* Oxford: Blackwell 1989. Deutsche renders a convincing criticism of Jameson's and Harvey's economism.

[41] op. cit., p. 228-9.

[42] op. cit., p. 268.

[43] op. cit., p. 274.

[44] On Lefort's concept of the public sphere, cf. i. a. his essay "Les droits de I'homme et I'Etat-providence", in Claude Lefort: *Essais sur le politique.* Paris: Editions du Seuil 1986.

[45] To Lefort, the expansion of human rights - from formerly white, male land-owners, to the inclusion of women, to the inclusion of African-Americans brought about by the civil-rights movement, and beyond - (contra the ideology-critical suspicion of human rights being "purely formal") means a *generative principle* of democracy; it cannot be completed: what comes under the category of "humans" possessing the right to have rights needs to be defined wider and wider.

[46] op. cit., p. 289.

[47] ibid.

[48] A perhaps more apt name for this condition - considering the extent to which the concept totalitarianism has been ideologised by the rhetoric of the Cold War - was proposed by Jean-Luc Nancy: immanentism. This concept would have the advantage that it immediately makes it clear that in "totalitarian" conjunctures the constitutive outside of society is eradicated - or rather: denied - and the *immanence* of the latter is asserted. Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy: *Die undarstellbare Gemeinschaft*. Stuttgart: Patricia Scharz 1988;

Engl.: *The Inoperative Community*.

[49] op. cit., p. 287.

[50] op. cit., p. 310.

[51] op. cit., p. 278.