

P E N D U L U M
Portfolio **APASS**

*September 2018 - December 2018
- first block -*

Diego Echegoyen

“Politics appears when the order of
domination is interrupted. The
"excluded" and "invisible" make public
"the part of those who have no part"
at the heart of that police order.”

*Jacques Rancière,
El desacuerdo. Política y filosofía.*

Acknowledgments

Time through a pendulum movement

Notes on process, time, events and timeline

Swinging questions all the way

The School of love

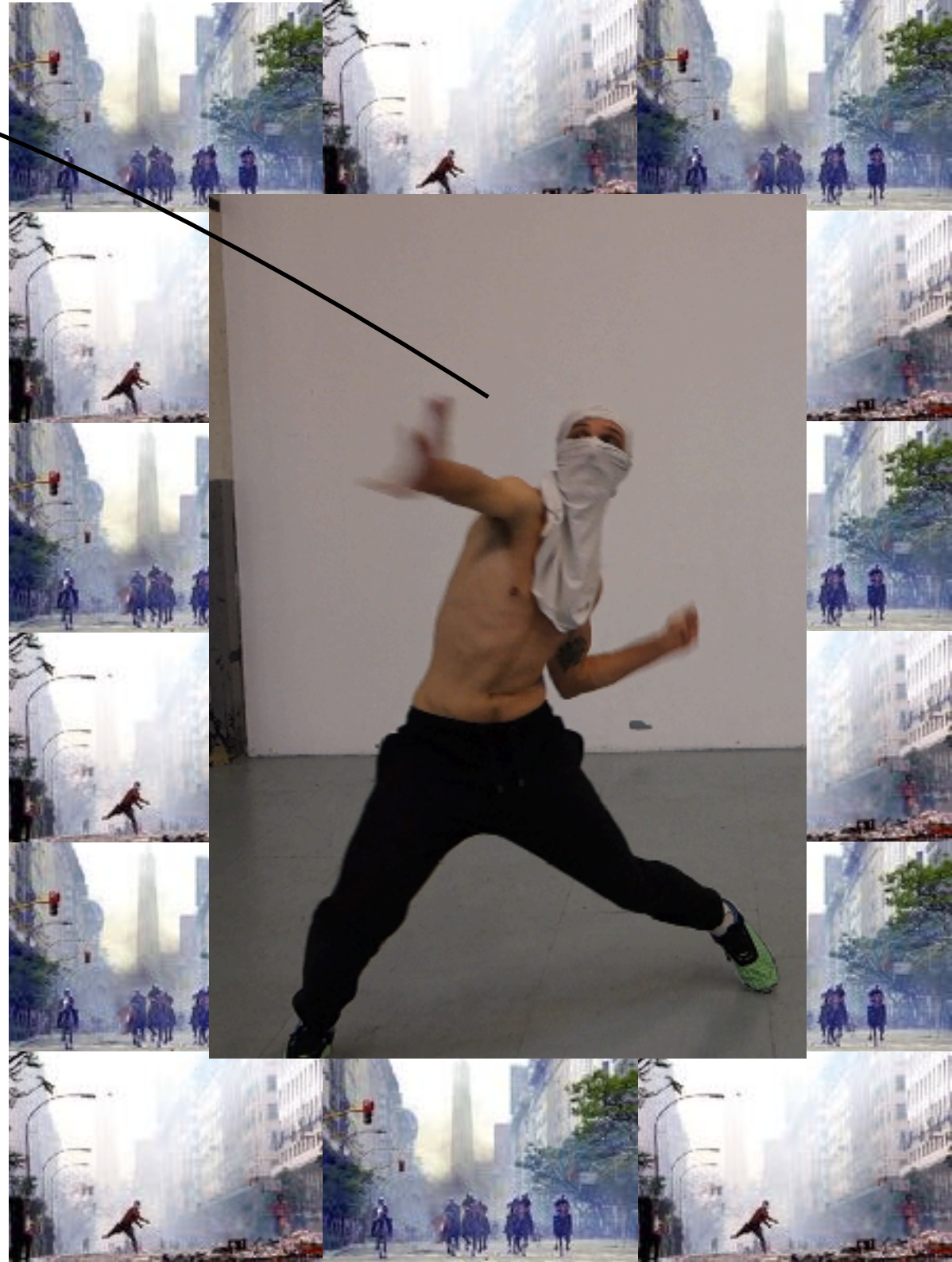
curated by Adva Zakai - September 2018/December 2018

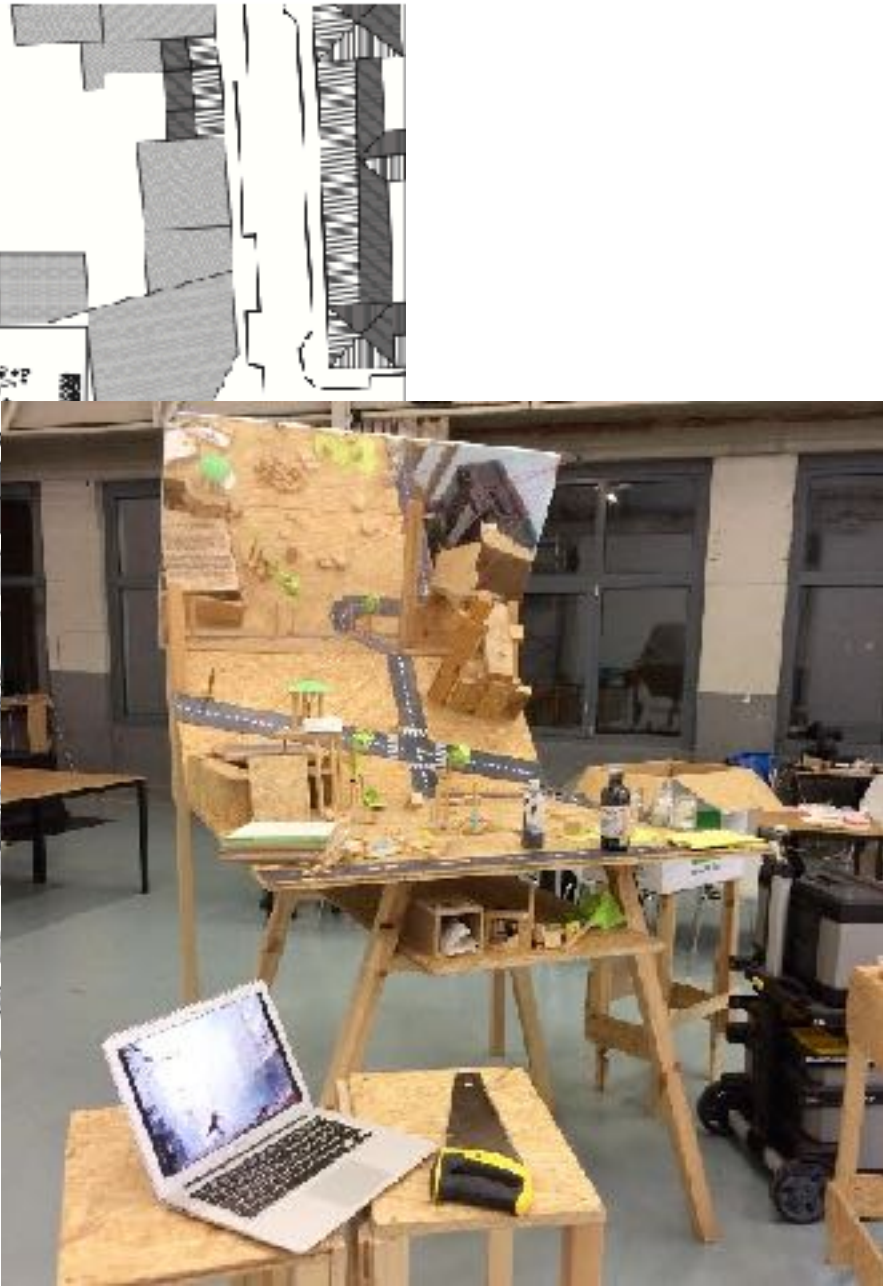
Going out / Desk-work research and street-work research

Nightwalks + Cartographies

References.

Dedicated and external mentors: Christof Meierhans, Vladimir Miller, Santiago Cirugeda.





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Acknowledgments

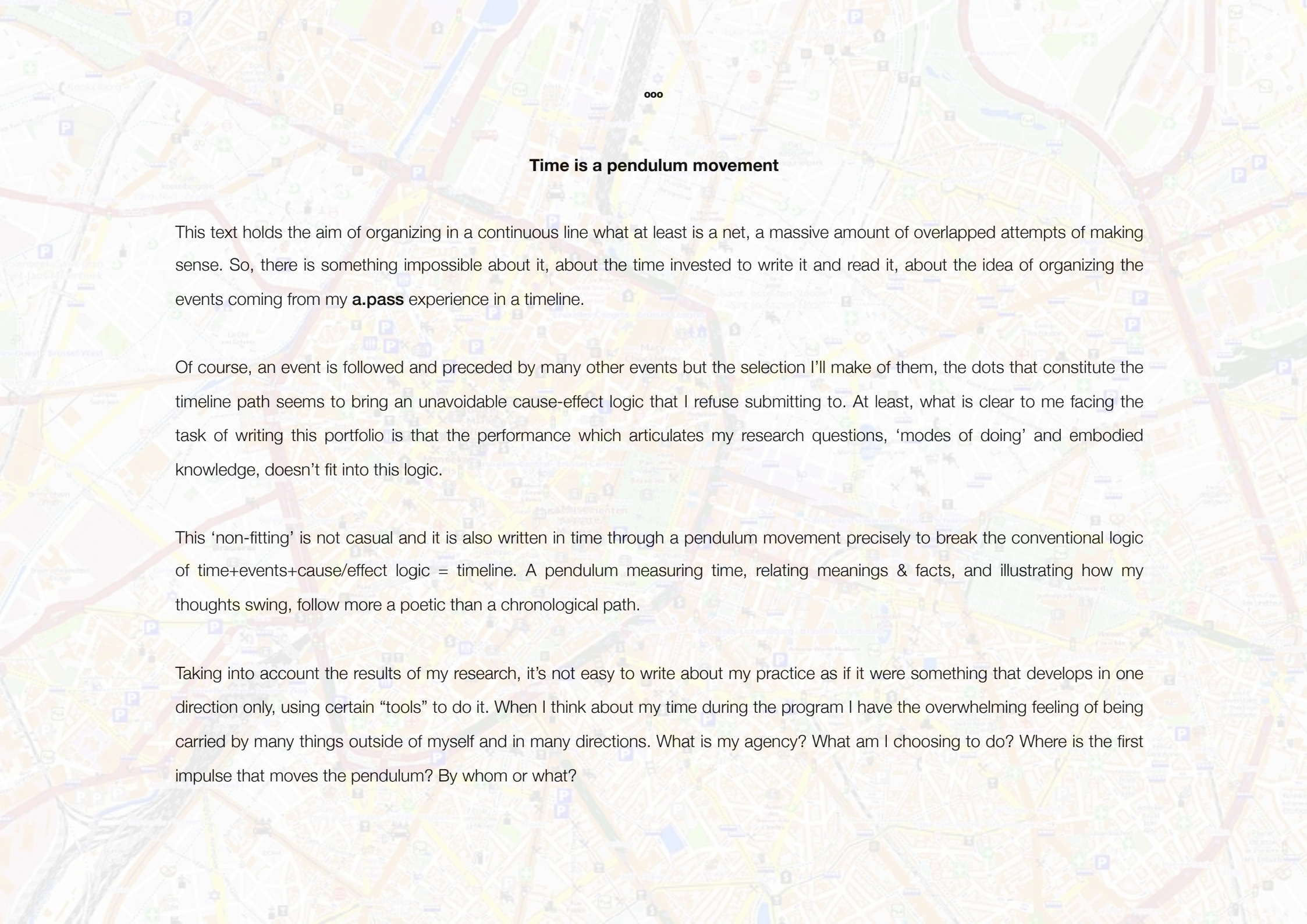
This research wouldn't have been possible without the **a.pass** environment and its core team which provides the material and immaterial conditions for it to exist. Providing help, collaboration, support, discussions, agreements (and fundamental disagreements), problematization, criticality, productive anger and frustration, and many other circumstances and situations that belong to group dynamics in research or creation environments.

That to say thanks to all those who in one way or the other, through active participation or a side conversation collaborated with this process.

Thanks to:

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Time is a pendulum movement

This text holds the aim of organizing in a continuous line what at least is a net, a massive amount of overlapped attempts of making sense. So, there is something impossible about it, about the time invested to write it and read it, about the idea of organizing the events coming from my **a.pass** experience in a timeline.

Of course, an event is followed and preceded by many other events but the selection I'll make of them, the dots that constitute the timeline path seems to bring an unavoidable cause-effect logic that I refuse submitting to. At least, what is clear to me facing the task of writing this portfolio is that the performance which articulates my research questions, 'modes of doing' and embodied knowledge, doesn't fit into this logic.

This 'non-fitting' is not casual and it is also written in time through a pendulum movement precisely to break the conventional logic of time+events+cause/effect logic = timeline. A pendulum measuring time, relating meanings & facts, and illustrating how my thoughts swing, follow more a poetic than a chronological path.

Taking into account the results of my research, it's not easy to write about my practice as if it were something that develops in one direction only, using certain "tools" to do it. When I think about my time during the program I have the overwhelming feeling of being carried by many things outside of myself and in many directions. What is my agency? What am I choosing to do? Where is the first impulse that moves the pendulum? By whom or what?

I use the metaphorical figure of the pendulum to see myself in a process of going back and forth, in and out, crashing involuntarily against different things and being informed by them as well. This whole cluster of events affected my research as well as my subjectivity.

As time went by I discovered the liminality between my research and my own life as a migrant, here in Brussels.

So, as Hamlet says: *time is out of joint!*

However I will try to keep it as clear as possible, this documentation wouldn't be faithful to my experience if it is not (a bit) *out of joint*.

This text needs to be developed using the same tools, passing through the same landscapes as my research passed through.

That's why I tend to think much more of this as a navigation diary than a portfolio. Which, in the end, is a free narrative that is written in a wider sense of the notion of *time*, sometimes submitting and sometimes breaking the timeline.

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Swinging questions all the way

I applied to **a.pass** with a research project focused on the agency of performing arts, when placed in the public space, to be used as a tool, interrupting the regularity or the usual logic of social reality and in doing so affect changes within this reality.

How the research evolved during these last one and a half years urges me to make an update on the focus alongside the process. Following its swinging different questions, subjects, and relations among them, this is what emerged.

How radical can political art be to change social reality?

What is the agency of performing arts to operate in society?

Should art point out? Should art solve social problems?

*Is it enough to bring the problem up to the surface and put it to
discussion in a critical perspective?*

What if our art pays the price of being eaten/extracted by 'realpolitik'?

Are we responsible for that? Is it possible to avoid it?

*Is it possible to bring the public space occupancy into my artistic
research as a subject to make inputs to the social reality?*

Wait a minute... What is artistic research?!

Should art agitate and provoke spectators? On which level?

As human beings? As citizens? As artists? In their specific social roles?

As victims? As victimizers?

On their individuality? On their collectiveness?

On their responsibility? On their guilt? On their innocence?

On their awareness? On their unawareness?

From my outside position? From my inside position?

From a 'well-intended' helping position?

From an 'over-identified' position?

Artistic research is a moving target!!

Can artistic forms produce legislation?

*What do I mean by 'artistic forms'? Theater? Dance? Performance?
Post-dramatic theater? Participatory art? A meeting point among them?*

Where is the place for ideology, aesthetics, ethics, politics?

*How to make them 'work' altogether with a critical perspective towards
my own practice?... Do I have a concrete practice?*

How do the public space regulations inform specific kind of citizenship?

How is the notion of citizenship distributed through different status, grades of access to justice, rights and freedoms?

What constitutes the public space?

What constitutes the public sphere?

What constitutes the public domain?

Is it possible that a strategy becomes research?

What is my artistic research question?!

What the fuck is ARTISTIC RESEARCH?!

Can a myth work as much as it works in storytelling or dramaturgy as the foundation or the structuring tool towards an artistic research?

Does artistic research need a narrative?

Does the narrative become a white-noise inside an artistic research?

Does the narrative turn it into fiction?

TRUTH REVEALED: THE QUESTION OF "WHAT IS ARTISTIC RESEARCH?" MUST BE UNANSWERABLE TO KEEP GENERATING PROCESS.

I was right, it was a moving target...

How can I research about public space through a performance that is not placed there?

Can an artistic research produce different experiences of citizenship?

What kind of "we" is constituted by artistic/urbanistic/architectural and collective experiences whether in public space or inside a institution?

What constitutes us as a "we"? What kind of "we" are we here and now inside this building, inside this institution, inside this educational system,

inside Flemish administration, inside National administration, inside European administration?

Where am I within this "we"? Which is the place I occupy?

What is "we" now?

What would be a possible way to communicate with refugees or immigrants from regions without a common language with me?

What is the common between us?

What kind of dialogue comes out of it?

How do I feel as foreigner?

As a potential immigrant or illegal immigrant?

What am I in the city's dynamic?

How is it to move my own life to a new country?

What did I leave behind? What did I bring with me?

What is the sacrifice of leaving my city and affects?

What would have been the sacrifice of not leaving?

What is the situation about my papers? Am I legal? For how long?

What am I going to do when my ID expires?

What is the sacrifice to be made to stay here?

I feel isolated... aside. Not speaking, not understanding everything.

In silence, feeling more foreigner than I am.

Far in language. Outside of language.

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School of love, curated by *Adva Sakai*

This block is informed by the inquire about the notion of 'political love' coined by Michael Hardt¹ in dialogue to Jan Masschelein's philosophical and pedagogical approach on the notion of school.

In the crossroad of these two theoretical approaches emerges the School of Love², relating notions coming from both within the framework of the educational institution while being problematized by the institutionalized artistic research in European performing arts context, as a mirrored framework.

First steps. I worked with concepts which were new for me, sometimes forcing them or putting them to friction and sometimes trying to be more sharp and accurate about them.

I arrived in the **a.pass** artistic research environment with a clear idea of what I wanted to do. My project was connected with *the agency of street performance to act as a potential tool to change social reality.*

In the back of my mind, nevertheless still very fresh, I had the line which traversed my last experiences in Buenos Aires in the field of performing arts as well as in the field of artistic activism.



¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swMwDa_0Pc0

² <https://www.schooloflove.info/>

My main aim for this first block was to go outside, to stay on the street in order to:

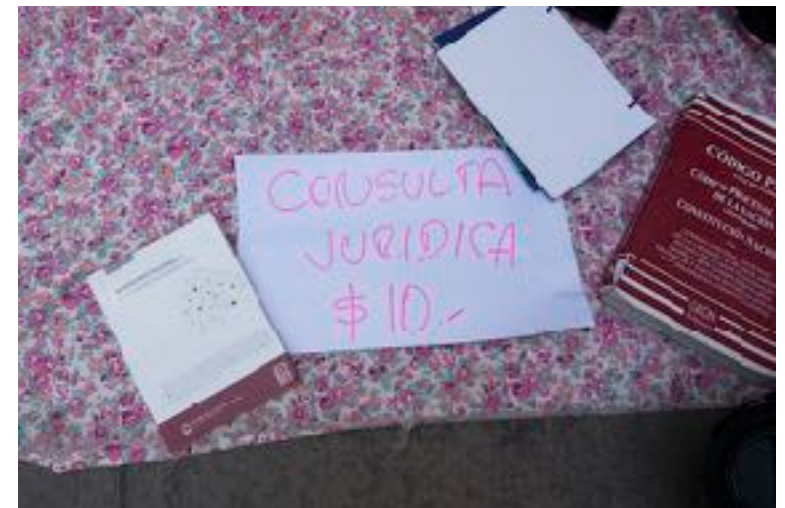
- ... observe how the social actors' dynamic is.
- ... have a personal experience on this dynamic.
- ... find spots that catch my attention.
- ... be able to identify (beyond what I thought beforehand) the issues I could select to work on.

During this first block I followed mainly three advises from my mentors:

- To make experiences to reflect on -Christophe Meierhans.
- To be more precise about the subjects. The smallest the best -Vladimir Miller.
- To work with the law in my hands -Santiago Cirugeda.

In order to do this I used a reduction strategy

- Reduce the Public space to Molenbeek (Start making day and nightwalks)
- Reduce the marginal populations to Illegal immigrants (it could be smaller)
- Reduce the Law to a specific one regulation.





There are labyrinths which are made to turn the entrance to somewhere, as hard as possible, keeping you out. This kind works almost as a wall. There are also those which are made to keep you lost in it, not inside the place you are trying to reach, not again out of it, but lost inside; there are also those ones in which you have to get in, in order to reach or get something from it and then to get out of it... if you can.

In my perspective Law seems to be a mixture of the two later kinds.

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Is the personal experience of life, in its deep meaning, an obstacle? What can be enabled by this connection within my *artistic research*? All the administrative procedures imposed to migrants starts working as a labyrinth.

I've been thinking a lot about that shape that Law, as an Institution, seems to be informed by. This has to do with my own and very simple experience going through all kind of bureaucratic procedures for my own domiciliation, European bank account in order to be able to pay a.pass, the mutualité, certifications, equivalences and validations; stuff from everyday life that made me go back and forth, from one to another office, again and again.

Bureaucracy is complex and annoying for everyone, but it's especially complicated (and sometimes arbitrary and contradictory) for migrants. The complexity of my experience as a South American artist migrating to Europe begun to provide some inputs on my research.

The feeling that the structure forbids exceptions, that is forcing me to ask for, was very strong and paradoxical and it was making me feel trapped or inside of a labyrinth looking for a way out. Somehow, to solve it or skip it.

In between self references, the idea of a labyrinth as a possible metaphor to work with was also at stake at this point.

The metaphor of the *labyrinth* brings the feeling of being trapped and disorientation both into the *artistic research* and my experience of *Law*. In both I'm going back and forth as a *pendulum*.

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Protocol for a *nightwalk*:

Spend the night in the public space with one video-camera, two sheets of paper and one pen (also had my middle-class white-male privilege).

No money, no documents, no keys, no insulin, no cellphone, no maps, no knowledge about the streets or the city.

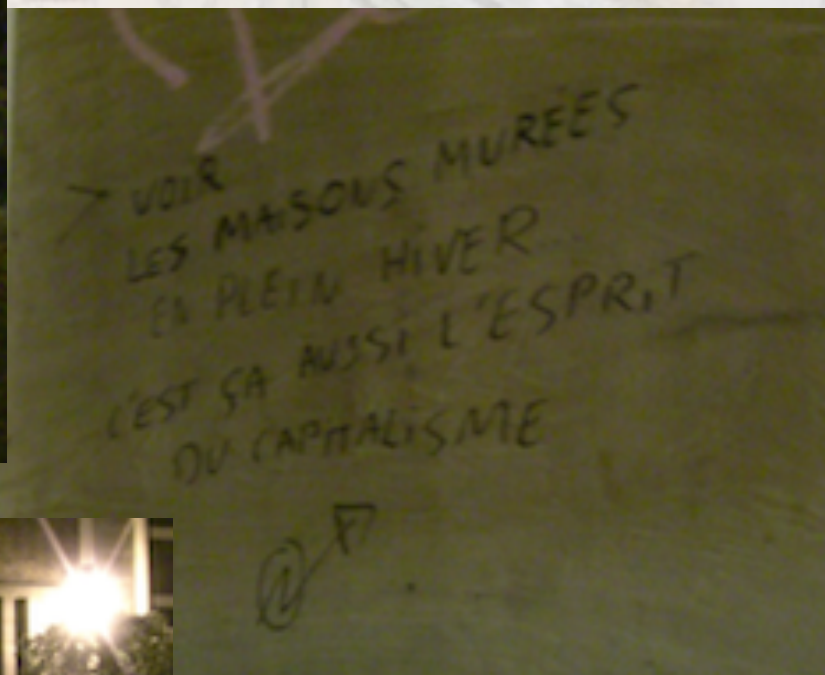
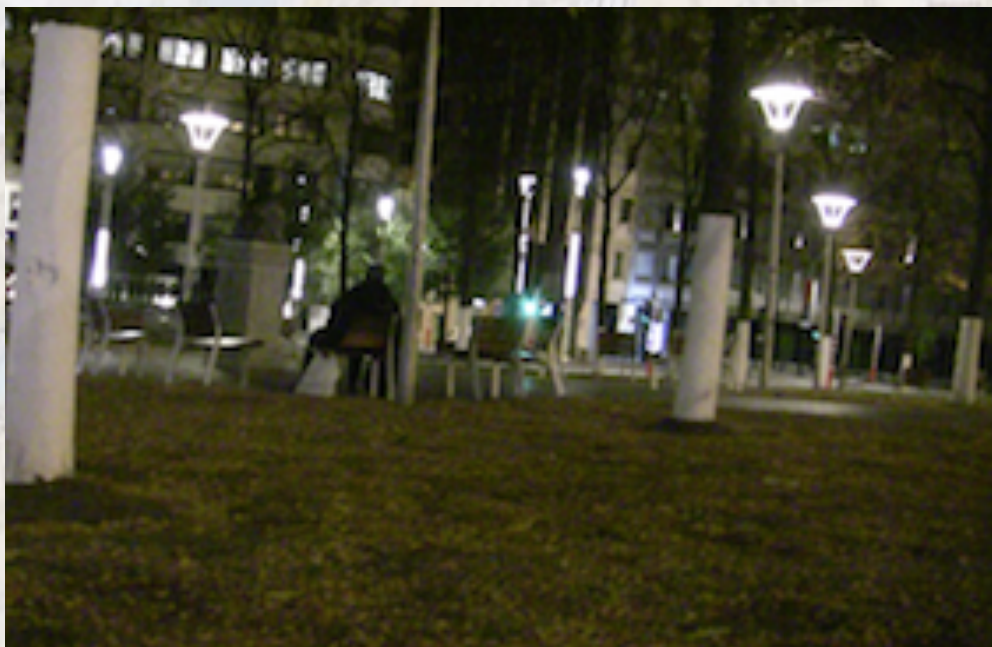
Take notes on the events that catch your attention.

Record some of it if possible.

Try to establish a dialogue with the unknown human and non human beings of the night.



BRUXELLES
BRUSSEL





Notes on the *nightwalk* for a subjective cartography:

1- Distortion on time perception and orientation

Quiet bodies, almost invisible into the shadows.

Keep walking

2- There are noises, I heard some plastic bag around, somewhere behind me. There is still a lot a movement, must be around midnight.

3- I'm over Neuve (pedestrian street from Muntput to Gare du Nord). I see a man, lonely, on his knees, asking for money. Right in front of him the H&M entrance becomes housing. A group of four people is living there. The idea of living and the place where someone lives seems to collide. Are they a family? Are they related to the man in front of them? They have mattresses, blankets, lots of plastic bags.

I don't want to look at them directly, don't want to be seen watching them. I pretend that I'm checking something on my cellphone (which is not in my hand, by the way... I feel pathetic). I hear the plastic bag movement, coins hitting the floor. I can see how they are checking something on their real cellphones.

4- I'm sitting on a bench in a small square placed in the corner of Rue Said Roche and L'Espargne, writing. I can hear again a plastic bag sound. Someone is stirring the garbage. A woman interrupts me. I stop writing and look at her. She walks around me and then in a bigger circle around the whole square. She gets closer, says '*bonsoire*' and keeps looking for something on the floor. She is collecting filters... she keeps walking and walking around. Now, she is at my back, somewhere... I don't want to show her that I'm concerned about what is happening behind my back so I just stay here, writing.

I finally turn back and she is not there anymore.

I'm alone again. Now, I'm with the space and the objects. Autumn leaves on the street, cardboard boxes, empty cans rolling because of the wind.

The wind composes a whole garbage choreography.

5- I stand up and keep walking again. I can see some prostitutes over the corner. There are movements, something is happening. I reach the corner and recognize where I am. It's the KVS entrance.

A drunk (or stoned) man goes directly towards a woman sitting on the stairs of the theater entrance. She stands up suddenly, frightened of him. I keep walking and looking. Now she is going in the same direction as me. I ask if something happened to her. She asks me to join her and walk a couple of blocks together. I accept.

She is freaked out, she doesn't stop looking around, not even for five seconds. She makes some kind of self-defensive surveillance. She is obviously scared and paranoid. I don't know what the man did to her, there is no space to ask neither.

Her name is Adize, at least this is what I understood. She is half Belgian and half... I couldn't hear.

She starts speaking a bit more, telling me details about herself. Sometimes she spends nights outside and sometimes not. She doesn't like going to her place.

I can't understand yet if she is working as prostitute or not, if she is an addict looking for her dealer or what. Maybe this kind of labels are useless here and now.

6- We reach the corner. Once again this corner. I have been here some minutes ago. I see an old woman laying on the sidewalk. I say *"we should help her, maybe. What do you think?"* She agrees. When I make my first step towards the old lady, Adize does the same in the other direction. Three seconds later she is not there anymore.

I get closer, she opens her blue eyes, the expression of her face moves, then her head, then her chest, then her legs.

She is there, I'm there, we are staring at each other. Some kind of non verbal language comes up between the two of us.

I ask if she is fine, if she needs help. She says 'no' and I immediately start to doubt if she doesn't need help or if she is not fine... 'no... I'm not fine', she says in perfect English.

A part of me feels relieved for the fact that she speaks English. I can help her.

I stay there. She adds 'I can speak three languages French, Dutch and English' ok... more than me.

I ask if she needs an ambulance. She stays in a pause and stares at me.

7- The Police arrives. I see a lot of officers during the night. They went straight forward towards her. They call the ambulance, while she is trying to explain what has happened to her. Someone punched her on the head, that was the reason why she was laying there. She says she doesn't want to go back to the Hospital and shows an ID bracelet on her wrist. She says she has been expelled from three health centers already. I leave... Police officers ask me to.

Why did I obey? I regret now.

8- I can see the interiors of houses from the street. Inside/Outside.

9- I walk around the Josefatpark for a while. Now the night is so quiet. I jump into the park and walk over there. It is open. It takes me some time until my eyes get used to the darkness. I lay down. I think it is half past three, more or less. I feel as if I was alone but I know, tonight there must be people sleeping here. I know, I'm not alone.

Maybe I can make a cartography of the open parks... (?)

10- I sit down on a bench, once again. Keep watching the water of the artificial lake, hearing the wind passing through the leaves.

Again the wind and its presence. I take a rest but I know that I won't be able to fall asleep here. Maybe next time I can last longer.

I decide to go back to the inside. I check the names of the street I went through on my notes to find the way back.

I think it must be almost four AM, I am not sure.

11- I reach the house, it is half past four AM. I'm looking at the time in a clock hanging on the wall of a closed bar.

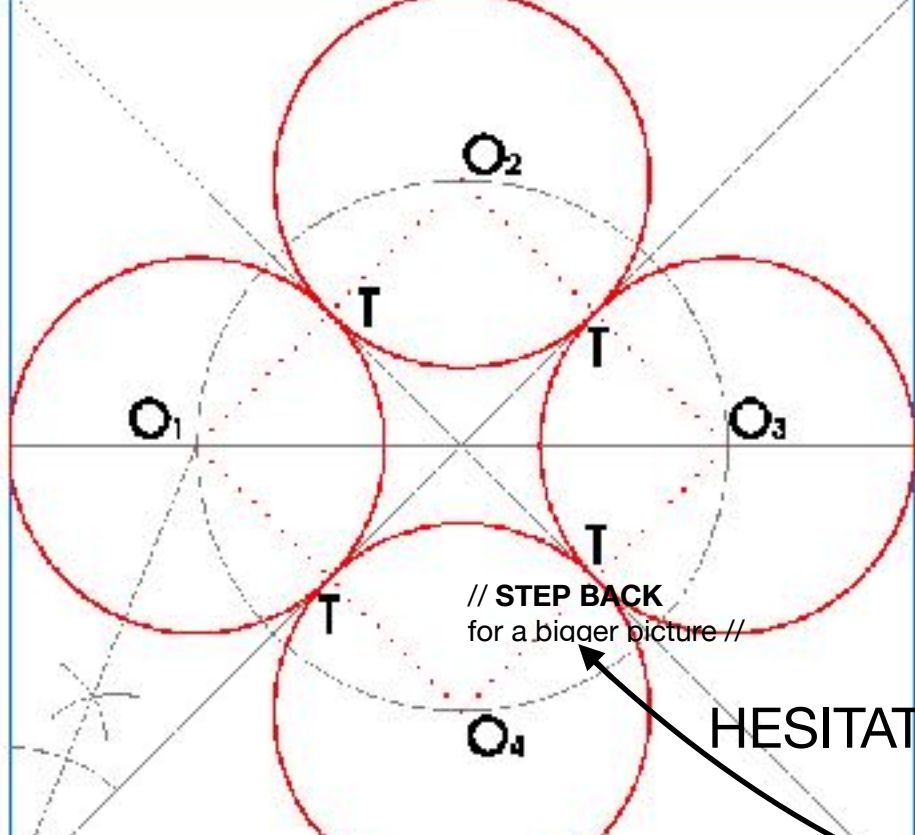
After making the reductions I proceed to work on the notions of overlapping and juxtaposition. What propelled me to the idea of intersection, which also brought the Set theory³.

Intersection-making

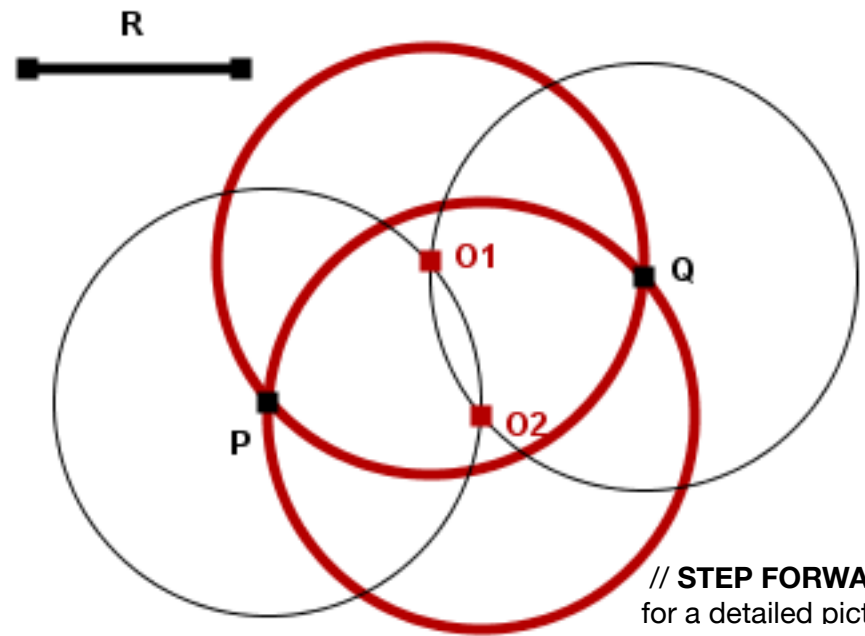
- * My own path and spots of attention during the nightwalk
- * Paths and points of attention of the three nightwalk groups during the half way days
- * Crossed subjective cartographies



³ Set theory is a branch of mathematical logic that studies sets, which informally are collections of objects. In set theory as Cantor defined and Zermelo and Fraenkel axiomatized, an object is either a member of a set or not. In fuzzy set theory this condition was relaxed by Lotfi A. Zadeh so an object has a degree of membership in a set, a number between 0 and 1.

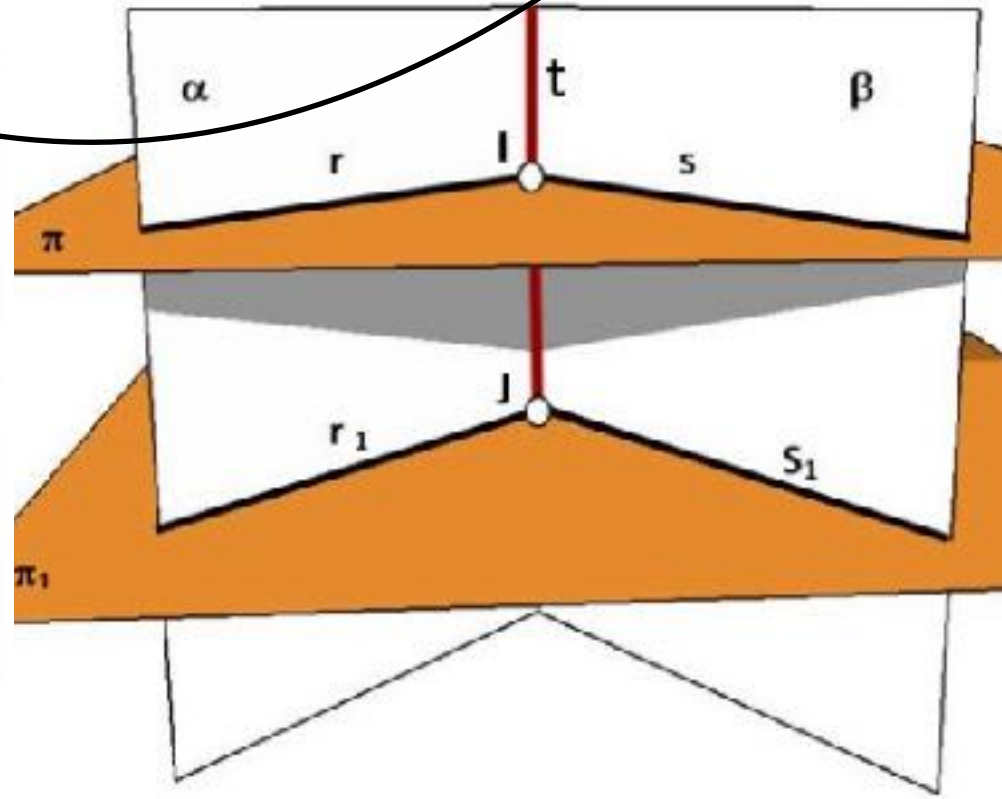
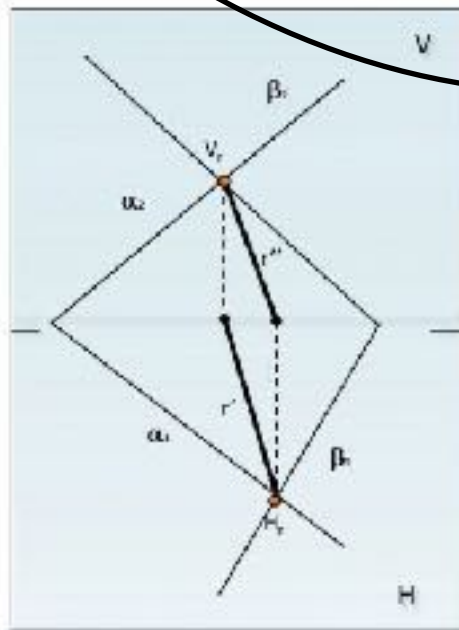
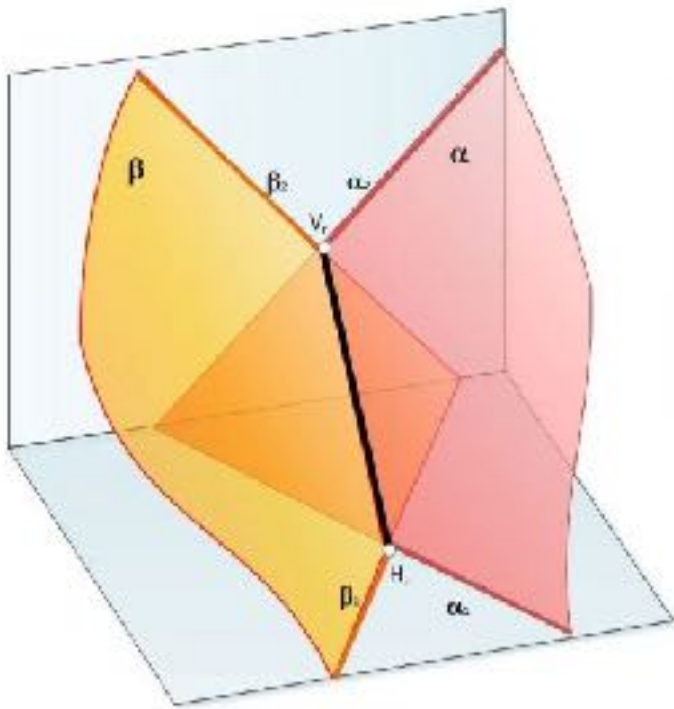


// STEP BACK
for a bigger picture //



// STEP FORWARD
for a detailed picture //

HESITATING PENDULUM MOVEMENT



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Through the idea of the labyrinth also appears the myth of *Theseus, Ariadna and the Minotaur* and a new question.

Can a myth work as much as it works in storytelling or dramaturgy as the foundation or as the structuring tool but this time in an *artistic research*?

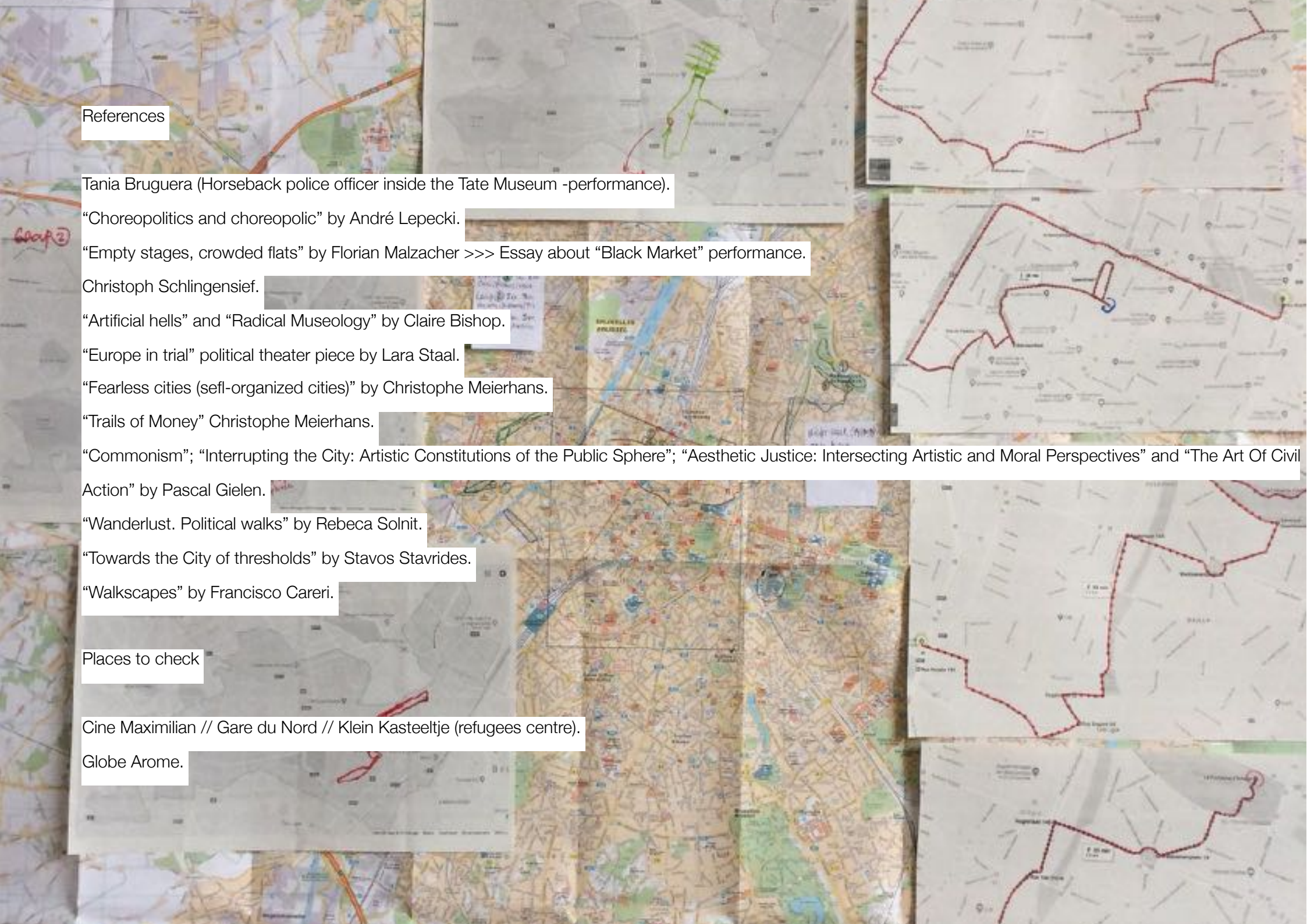
Does an *artistic research* need some kind of narration? Does narrative become a white-noise within *artistic research*? Does narrative turn it into fiction?

I'm disoriented, trying to find something that I don't know well what it is yet, trapped in this potentially productive darkness of the not-knowing.

I'm in the entrance of my own *artistic research's labyrinth*... still doubting how to get in (or out?)



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References

Tania Bruguera (Horseback police officer inside the Tate Museum -performance).

“Choreopolitics and choreopolitic” by André Lepecki.

“Empty stages, crowded flats” by Florian Malzacher >>> Essay about “Black Market” performance.

Christoph Schlingensief.

“Artificial hells” and “Radical Museology” by Claire Bishop.

“Europe in trial” political theater piece by Lara Staal.

“Fearless cities (self-organized cities)” by Christophe Meierhans.

“Trails of Money” Christophe Meierhans.

“Commonism”; “Interrupting the City: Artistic Constitutions of the Public Sphere”; “Aesthetic Justice: Intersecting Artistic and Moral Perspectives” and “The Art Of Civil Action” by Pascal Gielen.

“Wanderlust. Political walks” by Rebeca Solnit.

“Towards the City of thresholds” by Stavos Stavrides.

“Walkscapes” by Francisco Careri.

Places to check

Cine Maximilian // Gare du Nord // Klein Kasteeltje (refugees centre).

Globe Arome.