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NOV
2018
(Wednesday afternoon
until Friday afternoon)

SENSING COLLECTIVES - AESTHETIC & POLITICAL PRACTICES INTERTWINED

Workshop organized by Jan-Peter Voß,
Nora Rigamonti, Marcela Suarez, Jacob Watson
Keynotes by Antoine Hennion & Sophia Prinz

with support from
the "Innovation
in Governance"
Research Group
and the Graduate
School "Innovation
Society Today" at
the Department
of Sociology
at Technische
Universität Berlin,
and from the Institute
for Latin American
Studies at Freie
Universität Berlin
and in cooperation
with the ICI Berlin
Institute for Cultural
Inquiry



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CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

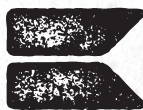
The relation between aesthetics and politics has long been an issue of concern: often treated as opposites, sometimes connected perhaps, but essentially belonging to different spheres. Politics has been understood as the public questioning and shaping of collective orders, through power struggle or rational deliberation, mainly within the institutions of the nation state; while aesthetics has been considered either a private affair or a radical form of play contained in the field of arts (Rebentisch 2012; Hoggett/Thompson 2012; Reckwitz/Prinz/Schäfer 2015a). Their mingling has been observed with skepticism [e.g. Horkheimer/Adorno 2006 [1944]; Downs 1957; Debord 1996 [1967]]. Yet this line of separation is undoubtedly less clear than some have claimed. For aesthetics and politics this is reflective of what can also be seen as a broader questioning of accounts based on social theories of functional differentiation.

Examples such as President Barack Obama singing *Amazing Grace* at a funeral for victims of the Charleston mass shooting (Latour 2016), anti-smoking policies' use of shocking images on packaging to dissuade tobacco product purchases (Keane 2014), the Slow Food Movement's mobilization of a constituency through taste experiences (Hayes-Conroy/Martin 2010), the Occupy Movement's bodily performance of collectivity in urban spaces (Butler 2015), or the Center of Political Beauty intervening in the public discourse on refugees in Germany with the mass-digging of "graves" on the lawn in front parliament (Stange/Rummel/Waldvogel 2018) are all illustrative entanglements of doing aesthetics and doing politics. We suggest that in activism, party competition, public policy and international diplomacy, as well as in various branches of art, design and marketing, in everyday life and consumer practices, aesthetics and politics have become inextricably intertwined – or have always been so.

With this workshop, we want to re-examine the nexus between aesthetics and politics by turning away from their conception as institutionally or communicatively differentiated spheres and instead take a "practice turn" (Schatzki/Knorr Cetina/von Savigny 2001) to have a look at what is actually done, and how, and to what effect – both in art, design and aesthetics (e.g. Zembylas 2014) and in politics, policy-making and governance (e.g. Jonas/Littig 2016). We propose to start with a generic (and provisional) definition of aesthetics as the doing (and undoing) of sensorial perceptions and politics as the doing (and undoing) of collective subjectivities and agencies. This brings us to focus on a variety of specific forms of entanglement between aesthetic and political practices. We are particularly interested in the interplay and tensions of such entanglements that are constitutive of social orders and patterns of governance as well as those that are disruptive. For quick reference we suggest as a guiding question for this endeavor: How do practices of shaping perceptions and practices of shaping collective subjectivities as well as agencies intertwine in specific situations, to what effect and for which kinds of collective orders?

Our conceptual starting point is defined by two recent trends in the fields of sociology and the study of governance. For one, the past two decades have seen a shift in the field of sociology toward the senses, opening up new ways for studying social relations beyond words (Vannini/Waskul/Gottschalk 2012; Göbel/Prinz 2015; Howes/Classen 2013; Synnott 1993). Then, across the social sciences, conceptions of governance have been widened from a focus on rules and the state's

monopoly of violence to the shaping of collective orders through culture, i.e., the systems of meaning that are taken for granted in the practicing of certain forms of life, such as language, gendered bodies, material devices or infrastructures (e.g. Manning 2006; Barry 2001; Butler 1990; Foucault 1986). The new sociology of the senses and the cultural turn in governance studies meet each other, or can be made to meet, in praxeological approaches of social research that take specific sensorial dispositions and affective competences of human bodies as well as materialities and the physicality of media and artefacts to be constitutive elements of social order (Dewey 2005 [1934]; Bourdieu 1987; Gomart/Hennion 1999; Hennion 2007; Shove 2003; Reckwitz 2016, 2015b). They devote attention to “aesthetic practices” as activities that reflexively engage with sensorial perception and affect (Reckwitz/Prinz/Schäfer 2015; Thevenot 2014; Hennion 2004). The sociology of the senses and praxeological studies of social ordering have also converged in a growing body of research that has begun to study the aesthetic practices at work in governmental public relations (Latour 2016; Tye 2011), the everyday politics of parliaments (Manow 2004; Dányi 2015), policy-making and governance (Schulte-Römer et al. 2017), marketing (Spence/Gallace 2011; Lindstrom 2005), grassroots mobilization (Butler 2015; Hayes-Conroy/Martin 2010, Sassatelli/Davolio 2010), art activism (Groys 2014; Weibel 2015) and public participation (Marres 2012).



The aim of our workshop is thus to further probe and outline a more conceptually refined practice-oriented approach toward the intertwined and reciprocally constitutive relationship between aesthetic and political practices. We hope to learn from concrete empirical examples about a variety of specific ways in which sensorial perceptions and collective subjectivities and agencies are shaped and about how they relate to each other, interact, and co-produce or jointly work to dismantle collectively lived realities. We expect that a focus on sensorial perception, affectivity and aesthetic practice will contribute a novel perspective on the (un)making of collective orders as it traditionally concerns studies of politics, governance and innovation, but where, so far, social order has largely been reduced to institutional, discursive and cognitive dimensions.

We invite contributions in the form of academic papers as well as artistic performances or accounts of interventions which provide exemplary demonstrations of aesthetic and political practices intertwined. Academic papers may focus on theoretical and methodological aspects directly related to the issues mentioned or may provide close-up empirical accounts of the intertwining of aesthetic and political practices and on their combined effect on specific, historically situated orders. We are primarily interested in papers or performative demonstrations concerned either with the disruptive interplay of aesthetics and politics breaking, subverting and deconstructing collective orders or with the constitutive interplay of aesthetics and politics building, maintaining and reinforcing collective orders. Collective orders may in any specific case be old, established and hegemonic or new, alternative, emancipatory realities and ways of life. We suggest that within this complex intertwining and nesting of aesthetic and political practices, and their ambivalence as both order-creating (modes of governance) and order-disrupting (modes of emancipation), a more differentiated approach may reveal a map of sorts, a sophisticated mingling and overlay of these practices and their effects.

PLANNED PROGRAM & SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

The workshop will open with two keynote presentations Wednesday afternoon. For Thursday and Friday we plan to compose a program of up to 12 contributions selected from submitted abstracts.

We invite abstracts of up to 500 words outlining the intended contribution to the workshop, either in the form of a paper or a demonstration, to be submitted by 15 August 2018. We will make a selection from submitted contributions and notify contributors by 1 September 2018. A program of confirmed contributions will be circulated shortly thereafter. We will have keynote addresses by

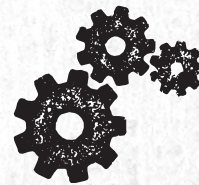
Antoine Hennion – research director at the Center de Sociologie de l'Innovation, Mine ParisTech,



Sophia Prinz – visiting professor for «Theory of Art and Composition» at the University of the Arts Berlin.

Selected contributions are eligible for a refund of travel expenses (train ride or flight and accommodation for two nights). Additional funds are available for the publication of results in form of an edited volume and/or a special issue with an international journal. We welcome artistic performances, experiments or demonstrations and will facilitate their execution to the best of our means (various possibilities are on hand at the ICI: conference room, dining area, lounge, there is also a bookable theater near the venue, cooking experiments off-site).

Please submit abstracts and any enquiries regarding the workshop to the team of organizers via email at: sp@soz.tu-berlin.de.



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