



## abstracts

### IDENTIFYING THE POLITICAL

#### Conceptual Analysis: Rhetoric, Poetics and Populist Talk in Contemporary Politics

##### *Appearances of the Political 1/6*

Winter Symposium: February 22-23, 2016, University of Latvia (Main Building, Raiņa bulvāris 19) in collaboration with **University of Latvia**

Monday 22 Feb.

**Johanne Aarup Hansen**

*The political aspects of form*

At the NSU winter symposium I would like to talk about these political properties of things in the context of a research project I am currently working on about the forms of money. In the project I am trying to look at and analyse money as a relational designed object. What kind of values are embedded into their nature? What are their relational boundaries? In the process right now I am working on a qualitative user survey, a series of interviews of different people from different classes about their relationship to the different forms money takes (coins, creditcards, mobile pay, bit coins ect) and a mapping of the different money/payment methods' interfaces. At the symposium I will present some of my thoughts and findings in the project so far and then I would like to do a small performative exercise.

**Eret Talviste**

*Fictional and non-fictional peripheral areas as alternatives to neoliberalism?*

This presentation examines the appearances of political in today's society in the periphery of a former Soviet Union small town life and peripheral experiences in Hélène Cixous's *So Close* (2007) and Clarice Lispector's *Near to the Wild Heart* (1942). I will begin with looking at these two novels and argue that peripheral areas in those two novels can be seen as feminist alternatives to neoliberal ideology. With the help of affect theory, I will examine how Lispector and Cixous critique political by looking at social and cultural codes and how they these codes are, or are not rooted in peripheral areas. I will then move on to looking at a real small town life to give personal examples which are inspired by Kathleen Stewart's affective moments in her *Ordinary Affects* (2007). By doing so, I will argue that peripheral areas offer far more potential resistance to neoliberalism in theory than in practice.

Peripheral areas in Lispector's and Cixous's novels are often displayed as places of intimacy. Yet, their characters are also isolated both because they exist in periphery and because of their isolation from other

human beings. I will thus explore how Cixous's and Lispector's examples of their characters' experiences in periphery reflect the contact with another human being. When contact occurs, it is almost always positively affective. Comparing and contrasting Lispector's and Cixous's narratives to the way how otherness is perceived in real peripheral areas allows me to examine the importance of privacy and individual space in a small town. I will suggest that in real periphery people often lack individual space and privacy which is necessary for affective contact with others.

As peripheral areas alone are not enough for practising alternative politics, it is important to consider whether the characters who occupy periphery are actually detached from the political system. I will suggest that Lispector's and Cixous's characters on the periphery feel more because these characters are on the edge in a sense that they are more daring and willing to exist outside the law.

### **Raine Vasquez**

#### *Challenges in Outlining the Possibility for a Political Art.*

In his 1998 publication, *Relational Aesthetics*, Nicolas Bourriaud sought to capture the participatory ethos and emancipatory agenda of recent conceptual practices in contemporary art. Meanwhile, Grant H. Kester's publication, *Conversation Pieces* (2004), likewise scrutinized these community-oriented and collaborative practices, preferring instead the agnomen, "dialogical aesthetics," which was meant to acknowledge these work's conversational nature. These theories, in their emphasis on a politics of the particular, epitomized in the here-and-now moment of individual connection between people, in performances, collectives, and digital arenas, characterized as micro-utopias—over and against the modernist pursuit of the universal—have claimed to have identified the new political possibilities in contemporary art practices that carry forward the emancipatory agenda of the historical avant garde while resisting modernist trappings. But, in their reference to the rhetoric and politics of the historical avant garde, do these works engage a true and meaningful political thrust? Can art still be considered ipso facto political?

According to Jacques Rancière, the "distribution of the sensible,"—the common sensory fabric which defines our way of being together—is determined through the establishing of possible modes of perception. Within regimes of distribution, the "police order" attempts to maintain the existing pattern of what is visible and invisible, sayable and unsayable. Politics, then, is understood as opposition to the established order in an attempt to reconfigure the distribution of the sensible. Rancière's outline of the historical "regimes of distribution" identifies the regime which dominates modern art, whereby the hierarchical order of the arts and their subject matters are broken down and "art in the singular" comes into being, as the latest aesthetic regime. Any political renewal then, would necessarily be against this established fabric. What does this mean for working artists? How can art work to re-distribute the sensible when art, and the subject of aesthetics itself, outlines that very structure which it is to oppose?

In the presentation, I will expound the underlying assumptions of the politics of "relational aesthetics"—and the participatory ethos associated with it—and elaborate its insufficiencies utilizing Rancière's framing of the political. This will show the contemporary turn in artistic production to be implicit in the perpetuation of the aesthetic regime, rather than challenging it. Furthermore, if what is required is the redistribution of the sensible and a challenging of the aesthetic regime, then the deferred question of how art might effect this resistance remains to be answered. In hopes of addressing how this might be

accomplished, and what it would entail, I will look to the speculative philosophy in Reza Negarestani's *Synechistic Critique of Aesthetic Judgement*, which, in arguing for the re-interpretation of Kantian aesthetics in terms of a function of the dialectics of the tension-spaces of magnitudes, lays out a trajectory for a non-trivial political art.

### **Corinna Casi**

*Political Decisions in Landscape Choices: How the choice of a landscape or a natural species can be political?*

A central topic in the Aesthetic of Nature are pictorial sceneries, meaning having certain type of characteristics connected to design, form, shape, color, etc. as Allen Carlson argued.

The choice of privilege aesthetic scenery has historical roots; as a matter of fact, this tendency comes from the eighteenth-century notion of picturesque and from the aesthetic landscape model. The general public privileges beautiful sceneries to watch, to take pictures of and spend free time. The attention on the visual feature of a scenery determines the choice of preserving and protecting mainly pictorial landscapes.

In my presentation I will argue that in the choice of pictorial landscape, there is something political.

Privileging beautiful sceneries, the Western world emphasizes the attention on the visual, avoiding to take into account other characteristic of a natural environment. As Y. Saito argued, other features such as sounds, smells and other sensorial qualities are left out.

Unscenic landscapes - such a wetlands and swamps - and non-aesthetically appealing natural objects – such as rats, snakes, Venus flytrap - have been considered not worth of attention for decades, simply because they were not considered beautiful. Many of these examples have ecological benefits for ecosystems and in many cases what is aesthetically beautiful hide unhealthy ecosystems as a trimmed lawn where pesticides are used.

In order to oppose to the tyranny of pictorial landscapes, I will propose alternative viewpoints such as consideration of all other senses while experience nature and a deeper engagement in a natural environment in accordance to Rolston's theory. I also believe that ecology can help shedding light on the beneficial characteristics of unscenic landscapes and non-aesthetically valued natural objects educating people to a more aware attention for healthy ecosystems even though not "classically picturesque". In doing so I want to show that a larger variety of natural environments and elements can be considered worth of respect therefore worth of being protected. This will influence the political agenda of natural environments and species to be protected shifting from superficially and mainly-visual aesthetic, to healthy and aesthetically worth of value.

### **Minna Heikinaho**

*The body relates with other and begin to speak. The author is not required (outside)*

How do we create collective articulation chain between artists (art action) and society, what kind of structure we are developing? What is the collective body of experience and what it can do? Does the art work of the existing (action) through the shape of form and how does it articulate?

The author is not required, the setup of art work are enough. We are in this situation, the social body. The contents of the corporeal presence, the work experience and now-a moment to throw off,

emancipate and evoke the viewer-experiencer. The situation may create a new form of work experience. The experience, where the viewer-experiencer and the author (or authors) are producing the art work together. Mimesis can help with translation. The collective work experience (production) emancipate the author and the viewer-experiences the contents of art works (collective corpus) enter out in these situations. The performers (the original authors) are shoved over, they settle the role of translators. The authors, kind of situation triggers, may follow in parallel sessions further away. In this way we may produce the work experience together, collectively and on an equal footing.

My corpus settles into your corpus. In this situation, the being another we learn and identify to being another, perceiving bodily. In these situations we will create new experience articulation and understanding. The encounter of situation will break the hierarchy between the viewer-experiencer and the author. We will emancipate of our normative attitudes, if we give ourselves permission to do so.

**Author(ship)** Can the content of an artistic action to be owned, to set it a price tag on? Can it be objectified? No, it eludes the mechanisms of the marketplace, it states its own stand (politics) and commits to shared principles. To take an example: in order to disrupt the logic of careerism and market value associated with the author's name, the artist must elude the mechanism of authorship. And because collective authorship is shared, we are left with content, a socially critical and reflexive act, experienced and lived in the now moment. The political.

That's the reason; Why the authorship had to emancipate!

Since 2008, I have not use my personal name with my art works.

### **Henrik Juel**

*A Study in the Rhetoric of the TV-camera - How powerful political figures are being presented on TV and video.*

Controlling the visual appearance as well as the sound-bites of politicians, political events and political debates may seem as important as ever.

But the actual and typical aesthetic-normative features of how political figures are being filmed, framed, and cut on TV and video most often pass unnoticed - even within academic analysis. Usually we notice only what is going on in front of the camera, not the significant work going on behind the camera.

In my presentation I want to demonstrate and discuss how the work of the camera - such as framing, angle, focus, light and camera movement - shapes the appearance and impact of politicians and events internationally on TV and on the Internet. I shall also include examples of how seemingly conventional and simple editing techniques such as crosscutting to reactions shots of an audience or an opponent may greatly influence the credibility of a political speaker.

I shall argue that the transparency and neglected nature of these crucial features stem from the fact that they are in line with strong conventions in filmmaking and in line with traditional, popular and ideological ways of presenting power: as viewers we consider this to be the "normal" or "proper" way to portray politicians and political events. It is only in extreme cases we talk about "propaganda" or "manipulation" by the filmmakers and TV-reporters. Most viewers seem to hang on to the rather naive mainstream belief that "documentary" films and news reportages basically are re-presentations of reality, or at least a slice of reality.

I shall offer, however, a critical "rhetorical" approach to present day TV- and filmmaking saying that to put up a camera is already to take a specific stand and to see things from a certain perspective. To frame in a specific way a politician with the camera is also in a wider sense to "frame" that political figure. To crosscut or not to crosscut to frowning opponents of that politician is always also - willingly or not - an active participation in a debate. So in my approach I am not just using concepts from rhetorical theory to analyze the performance of a political speaker, but I use concepts from rhetorical theory to analyze the often-unnoticed performance of the camera and the often-unnoticed performance of the editor in re-mediating live politics for TV and video.

I shall illustrate my main points by showing short video clips from presentations and debates in e.g. the European Parliament and in the U.N. Security Council.

### **Sergei Kruk & Ilva Skulte**

#### *Disappearance of the political. Computer analysis of Latvian parliamentary discourse*

Dictionary of Standard Latvian perhaps should add a usage label 'pejorative' to the word 'political'. Scholar of Latvian nationalism Ieva Zaķe (2008) contends that since its origin in mid-nineteenth century it lacked a political dimension. Cultural nationalists conceive of a nation an organism solidified by a shared culture. Parts of the organism are united by virtue of their functional interdependence which is coded in the culture. Following German Romantics, Latvian cultural nationalists hold that the private, introspective learning of culture secures the appropriation of the a priori consensus reached by the ethnic group. Politics as a way to find a compromise among diverse interests of autonomous individuals is being substituted by cultural socialization. Subsequently, the political disappears from the political discourse. For example, in 1993-2014 during the parliamentary debates the word 'liberalism' was used only 81 times – much less than 'communism'. MPs hold that the society is 'ill', 'irresponsible', 'disintegrated', 'split'. It is the task of the political elite to 'unite', 'integrate' and 'instruct' the society. The former President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, in her National Day addresses, imagined the nation as children guided by their mother-the state.

We argue that the way politicians speak about the political phenomena can explain the notions of state, society, nation and the people (*tauta* or *Volk*) as they are conceived in cultural nationalism. Collocation analysis demonstrates that citizens are not treated as rational individuals capable at self-organization. The role of civil society is reduced to proving help to people in need but it is not considered as a responsible political actor. Positive connotations are associated with the word 'people' – it is a social organism perfectly integrated by ethnic culture. However the only political activity reserved for the people is participation in the parliamentary elections.

The aim of this research is to reconstruct the model of society envisaged by the political elite, viz. what is the nature of social bond among autonomous individuals. During the recent financial crisis Latvia witnessed a dramatic transformation of the political elite as the so called 'oligarch' parties lost the parliamentary elections. The liberal leadership has changed aesthetics of political discourse – now the notion of civil society appears in more positive contexts. Nevertheless the new political elite has adopted several policy documents de jure affirming the principles of cultural nationalism which misrepresent rationality of autonomous individuals and collective political action.

## **Valdis Tēraudkalns**

*Performing morality: recent debates on values in Latvia*

Aim of this presentation is to analyse recent debates on changes in the Law of Education proposed by parliamentary deputy Stepanenko. This study will be using concepts of framing theory as analytical tools (frames diagnose, evaluate and prescribe). For social movements the development of frames is important for inspiring, motivating, legitimising and mobilising actions of a movement and for dealing with antagonists.

Attention will be paid to performative aspects of these debates – various public activities organized by both side of the debate. These actions will be viewed in the wider context of similarities between recent tendencies in the politics of Russia and wave of neoconservatism in Europe (including Latvia). The study will take into consideration also characteristics of alliances formed by religious groups and political parties and relative nature of divisions 'left/right' in political life of Latvia.

## **Olga Petrova**

*Possible security and economic consequences for the European countries during the migration process from the Middle East*

The paper examines the process of migration or massive flow of refugees from the Near East to the territory of the Europe. The problems include, first of all, security (like acts of terrorism in France on 13. November of 2015) and economic, cultural, social and religious issues, excluding the attitude of the local society, in which already exist radical right-wing's views, which are directed against new-comers from the Near East (for example burning of dormitories in Sweden and in Germany).

More detailed this paper examines the activity of the terrorist organisation „Islam State”, who penetrate into Europe as refugees and also can be penetration of so-called „Young Lions of Caliphate” or teenager, who were trained by „Islamic State” members to kill otherwise-minded in spite of gender or age.

Impossibility of penetration of the „Islam State” members in many respect depends on the functioning of Migration Office, who must work professionally, quickly and precise.

An additional problem, which is scrutinized in the paper is that not all refugees, who flee from their countries into Europe are from Syria; many people arrive from other places (for example, from Africa, Middle East or South Asia). They might be called economic refugees, but not military refugees and accordingly concerning their must functionate other mechanisms.

Tuesday 23 Feb.

## **Carsten Friberg**

*The End of Enlightenment? - Or, how did academia loose its ideals?*

My motive for this emphatic and perhaps dystopic question is partly an observation of contemporary research politics, partly a characteristic of contemporary intellectual climate made by the German

philosopher Heidegger. In his 'Letter on Humanism' he wrote, in 1946, that thinking today has become instrumental; hence, the academic endeavours become a battleground for different 'ism's where 'positions' backed up by theories are carried forward to beat opponents and prove their value in their utility for the current society, i.e. the current economic order.

What presents itself as the legitimating principles for academic work and research today may also be seen as a particular political ideology turning intellectual work into instruments for maintaining this same ideology. Hence, the ideals of Enlightenment, ideas of critique without compromise, are becoming undermined and discarded largely without protests from the academic world which gives silent consent to this development – perhaps in fear of losing one's job more than intellectual integrity.

I will discuss whether this characteristic of Heidegger, which to Heidegger is regrettable, is being fulfilled in academia today and whether this is a return to an academic culture that bears more similarity to a medieval idea that knowledge should be exercised to support the powers than to the critical rationality of the Enlightenment. A question can be if the political order, and a consensus about certain ideologies, is today so prevalent that critical academic work is becoming, unwilling or simply not recognised, tools for these ideologies.

### **Max Rynnänen**

*Could political concepts be studied as aesthetic concepts?*

Political action is often quite about aesthetics. It is about heroic narrations of resistance, artistic forms of activism (drums, flags) and visibility games in the media - and in the worst case this is all there is. So why not discuss from an aesthetic point of view central political concepts and try to understand politics in a new way from this point of view? My sketchy study will focus on 'resistance', a concept and tradition criticized loudly by e.g. Peter Sloterdijk already in the 1980s, but a concept which has also gained new interpretations within the wave of Laclau/Mouffe inspired work on rethinking oppositional forces. In my sketch I will ask for the narratological structures, visual communication and other artistic ways of building the culture of resistance (demonstrations, occupations of the street, etc.)

### **Nils S. Konstantinovs**

*Catchers in the Rye: The Politics of Childhood. Constructing Image of a Child in Latvian Political Discourse*

In today's culture where childhood is often idolized and romanticized child has become a symbol of political and religious values – purity, sacredness, morality, aesthetic ideal, meaning, and future potential. The conception of childhood we employ embodies our judgments as to what matters in our being as adults. Therefore constructing *a child* means constructing or deconstructing the social fabric and political reality itself. This paper follows how the political language of 21<sup>st</sup> century Latvia shapes the concept of childhood and how the aesthetic and moral ideal of a child emerges out of these language games.

First, the presentation introduces philosophical and social frameworks of interpreting and studying childhood as social phenomena. A brief historical overview is given, with main focus on the works by Jenks and Cassidy. Then examples from modern day Latvian politics are studied – quotes from political speeches and other verbal plays. The paper concludes with a brief overview of ideas and cultural metaphors

underlying thinking about childhood in Latvian politics, and some thoughts for further development are introduced.

### **Laine Kristberga**

#### *The Unnoticed Art in Latvia: Pantomimes, Happenings and Carnivals*

In my presentation I will focus on the art-related activities and processes, which existed in the periphery of the official artistic canon or conventional forms of the official (social) realism in the 1960s and 1970s in Latvia. These stagnation years, which started from Leonid Brezhnev's instalment as first secretary of the CPSU in 1964, can be characterized by panoptic and paranoid control over society and personal lives. Every form of expression – be it the spoken or written word, film, theatre or art – was restricted (censored) within the ideological paradigms of the soviet rule and had to fulfill the duty of advertising Socialism, collectivism and other ideals of the Soviet state. Naturally, such a controlled system discriminated against not only individuals, but also numerous artistic forms or disciplines by denying them the status of a professional art form or giving them a low place, if any, in the Soviet hierarchy of art.

Paradoxically, this turned out to be one of the paths through which new ideas and creativity flowed into art. Amateur activity in art had always been promoted in the U.S.S.R., as the citizens had to be occupied in meaningful activities after work, too. Thus, for example, amateur photography was viewed as a positive example of a hobby and the amateurs could experiment with the form and content, insofar as these works were kept private. Similarly, other forms of art or hobbies developed, for instance, pantomime, movement theatre and even happenings and performance art.

Frequently, the "other" art existed only within close circles of the artists, their family and friends, thus establishing some form of the second public sphere or *die zweite Öffentlichkeit*, where the totalitarian body of *Homo Sovieticus* could be subjected to various transformations: it could be painted, dressed and undressed and, consequently, turned into a body free of ideological messages.

In my presentation I will map the trajectories of this "other" art drawing attention to the Riga Pantomime, Andris Grīnbergs with his eccentric persona as a hippy and dandy of his time and his happenings, as well as Imants Lancmanis and the carnivals organized at the Rundāle Palace. By drawing on these examples I will discuss the politics of form prevailing in the 1970s in Latvia.

### **Bill Thompson**

#### *Solipsism as a Research Method*

I would like to present the work I have done over the past sixteen years since getting my doctorate at the age of 55.

My dissertation took my original question of wayfinding in complex space to a finding concerning knowledge. This finding was that social knowledge, knowledge shared between individuals, was categorically different from reasoning ability and phenomenological knowledge per se.

Working on from that finding I read mostly in and around texts on political economics, neuroscience and culture. What emerged from my use of those resources was a feeling that social knowledge was often more appropriately called social control, what I now call big-body rules that individuals are required to conform



to either by contract or incorporation. This applies to the way many individuals understand systems, anthropological findings, cultures and includes workers in the research fields of environmental psychology, architectural phenomenology and design.

Early in my labours I found the big-body rule assumption strange, however it has proved so ubiquitous that I now believe it is the standard social knowledge model in use in most design courses and indeed in most research institutions. It informs most discussions on human behaviour including debates concerning political economic theories. It leads inevitably to the application of the term schizophrenic.

When looking at the history of the development of human knowledge there is a fairly unremarkable evolution away from species accounts to concepts of self, however this floundered in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when shared phenomena in the form of systemic lawful relationships between them failed to retain commensurability with its descriptions of the individual. The 19th century and later existentialists described a difficult relationship between the self and the systemic modes of sharing its feelings. Any understanding of any self, included individual knowledge that could not find exact or sometimes even appropriate expression by using systemic modes of sharing.

My proposal is to share my work to date on this issue of self and its relationship to claims that knowledge of the universe can be shared. My own work to date makes me feel that large scale systems, no matter how lawfully and accurately maintained, described and disseminated, cannot satisfy the growing need for self-expression that our species is equipped to enjoy. The political implication is that at the very least the lawful relationships acceptable to individuals must be made by lawmakers who are accessible to all individuals. This questions the role of deities in the evolution of the species as a thinking being but does not exclude the sharing of phenomenological models as social ways of knowing, or social knowledge by free and peaceful association.

### **Ann Mirjam Vaikla**

*Endeavour of Remembrance. Investigation of the phenomenon memorial*

My presentation focuses on the phenomenon *memorial* as one of the most outstanding physical bodies and often collisions of political and artistic.

What is a memorial? Why should we make memorials? Memorial in its complexity consists of different aspects. It has the appearance of all the time tenses: it is built to remember what happened in the past but to create a dialogue in the present and to point towards the future. It is impossible to create politically neutral memorial – it mirrors the face of the ruling government. Memorial is always built for someone. The dialogue between the memorial and its' audience is even more intense than in the theatre or gallery space. My investigations are mainly based on the two workshops held by Norwegian Theatre Academy / Østfold University College with the scenography students at the Håøya island in the Oslo fjord. First time in April 2014 I participated as a scenography student myself and second time in October 2015 as an associate workshop arranger. All from different nationalities (from Norway, Estonia, Germany, Bulgaria, France, Mexico, Lithuania, Denmark, Zambia, Sweden etc) we were dealing with the three unknown, forgotten and tragic stories of the people who lost their lives and with the question how to commemorate them via with our scenographic interventions.

I am curious to introduce the projects that were realized during the two times of the workshop on the island in an attempt to create a memorials that would be accessible for the audience and perceived with

their one or many senses (sight, smell, taste, sound, touch). What are the possibilities of a memorial being a physical act instead of block of marble? My observations of appearing memorials include sudden reactions such as during the recent terrorist attack in Paris. All kind of buildings around the world were colored in the French flag a day after. Seeing the Estonian TV tower from my bedroom in blue-white-red tricolore made a change in my daily thoughts in a rhythm of commemorating.

### **Marija Semjonova**

*Searching for Woman Face of the Age of Perestroika: Sofi Oksanen's "Stalin's Cows" (2003)*

Current paper will investigate how and why women's bodies and 'faces' were included into the difficult process of Perestroika on the basis of contemporary women's prose. I will focus my attention on the development of an idea of reconstruction of the communist political order in Soviet countries and recognition of it outside the Soviet bloc.

The political atmosphere in the novel of Sofi Oksanen is represented through the interrelationships between the ideologically 'new born' Estonians and Finns during the so called 'shopping trips' from Tallinn to Helsinki in the midst of 1980ties. The paper will show how the narrative techniques (e.g. the shift from the first-person narration to the third, the meaning of place, environment in explaining the characters) are involved into the representation of differences between the communist past (represented by Katarina – former inhabitant of Soviet Estonia who moved to Helsinki after marriage with Finnish engineer) and democratic society with a stable construction of views upon their own past and the past of their close neighbor – Estonia.

The novel by Oksanen is analyzed also in terms of the political discourse and discussion in Finnish and Russian societies after the publishing of the book. Special attention in the paper is devoted to the question of the formation of woman's body and corporeality within the discourse of 'deficit' in the Soviet Estonia and the discourse of 'fighting' for the best and modern clothes. Oksanen makes clear that woman's sexuality becomes a 'product for sale' if there is a need for the new dress or outlook. The politics of representation and recognition of woman's body is touched in the text in terms of acting with the body as a source for 'testing' the ideology of woman's correct/incorrect outlook, even more: the limits or 'shapes' of the body are compared with the borders of a state and a nation.

Thus, in the paper I will discuss how and why woman's body and the ways of viewing and describing it are being involved into the process of reconstruction of the strict communist ideology. The text itself here becomes a weapon for creating a new, politically provocative and diverse, space for woman and womanhood.