Fourth Euroacademia International Conference Identities and Identifications: Politicized Uses of Collective Identities

Performing Identity or the Risky Performativity of Situatedness Monika Jaeckel

Today's presentation can be discerned through the title – as a performing of identity that processes along the entanglement with the situation of this paper – in its preparation, presentation and in what it will continue to become.

In its setting, as e.g. is the institutional framing of this conference, the presentation usually collaborates with dancers from different training perspectives and methods. Each version is understood as a new iteration, with the intention to cultivate unexpected forms of movement such a situation allows, initiating *new modes of organization*¹ for the eye, as a sense of bodily experience and consequently affecting the mind. It is an enactment induced in recognition of D.Haraway's understanding that "[i]t matters what matters we use to think other matters". Though in this case, the presentation takes the actual situation, the very moment of now, as point of departure. A point, that is none in a literal sense, but one of many *phenomena*, unfolding along the *intra-actively* engaged lines of space, time and matter – as constituting the constellations of what comes to meaning. Through this performativity of situatedness the identity of place, subject and object simultaneously is affected and effects, is manifested and changes.

The approach considers that a shift in formation pushing forward *new modes of organization* that affect our understanding as subject or identity has to take into account that one's own situation, as any, is always threaded and diffracted through the dynamics of *spacetime manifolds*⁴. "Spacetime" - as one word – defines for K. Barad "an enactment of differentness, a way of making/marking here and now". Barad's definition of *Agential Realism* emphasizes that spatiality, temporality and matter/ing are *intra-actively* produced in mutual constitution. Differential boundaries are no longer considered as being established through a solitary or one-sided power of agency, but enacted in *agential separability* by *agential cuts*⁶. These cuts rather than marking a "once and for all" separation, define a moment of opening as *exteriority-within-phenomena* in the interrelating dynamics of iterative intra-acting processes. It is these phenomena, in which 'things' appear, that constitute reality.

Importantly this apprehension not only defies the ability of a disengaged position, but equally that of a non-local universality⁸ or externalized objectivity. Generalizing as distrust into the possibility of a comprehensive outside view the knower is put back into the world "to understand and take account of the fact that we too are part of the world's differential becoming". One, that always is produced by a variety of views and experiences, histories and locations, human and non-human others, simultaneously in past,

present and future¹⁰. As such theory in its immanence and inventiveness is "one of the 'apparatuses' through which phenomena are produced"¹¹, as R.Coleman states.

re-turning the past – taking position somewhere

Inventive theoretical thoughts can be used in this regard to address and rework notions, similar to Hughes and Lury¹² adaption of S. Whatmore's notion of *returns*¹³. Such *re-turns* are marked as "products of repetition, of coming back to persistent troublings; [..]", though through them "no singular or unified progressive history or approach" can be discovered, but an opening towards an "intensity of multi-dimensional trajectories" that enables a re-access of previously defined notions in a different setting. It is an understanding that takes into consideration the immanent re-working or *re-turning* of matter and mattering as *turnings over*. Under the aspects of *agential realism* these emerge as phenomena from *intraaction* and manifest as turnings towards or *re-turns* that again produce difference and meaning in their mutual entanglement.

Similar to the non-separation of *cutting together-apart*¹⁵ that an *agential cut* performs, the introduction of *re-turns* fosters an understanding of subject and object, nature and culture, theory and practice, the individual, the social, and the symbolic as co-constituted in relation¹⁶ - rather than being mediated through an opposition of otherness. The insight of being an always already embodied subjectivity that is affected by and through others¹⁷, because human or non-human "others' are never very far from 'us'" marks a profound shift away from dual opposition. In turning towards the relation of matter and meaning emerging from the entanglement of intra-activity that such *re-turns* establish "allows matter its due as an active participant". It acknowledges that materiality and culture - both including the ones of bodies – are active and work on each other, which *re-turns* "the idea of a unidirectional causal relationship between discourse and materiality".

Occasionally *re-turns* become visible, so when S. Whatmore renders J. Bennet's statement that "[h]umans are always in composition with nonhumanity, never outside of a sticky web of connections or an ecology" with the supplement of "an ecology of matter" *What matters* produces meaning, though one that never occurs due to a solitary agency, but within a certain surrounding. Such constellation become an *apparatus* of bodily production²², in which we are *intra-actively* marked by institutional settings as there are families, nation states or other cultural paradigms. D. Haraway thus defines bodies as *objects of knowledge*²³,

Understood in a postmodern or post-structural sense representational instituted identifications constitute and thus 'brand' us²⁴. But as we are never solely defined as someone's child, nor by profession or nationality these instantiations might overlap, interact, conflict, decrease or enhance identification²⁵. Else, some of these classifications, like nationhood are rather latent commitments and provide a continual background that barely becomes explicit in everyday actions²⁶. Others rather pre-consciously subsist within

"the habits of the body²⁷ as affected by somatic memories and pre-reflective associations". As such categories "as race [..] sediment as 'the racial backdrop of practical conciousness". into the body. L.M.Alcoff here describes a point that equally can be accounted for classifications of sex or gender.

These 'images' of our world and the bodies in it are used to construct "meaning, using representational systems". S.Hall pointed out from a constructivist viewpoint: "Things don't mean: we construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others" As such the signifier rules over the signified as a classification that creates borders and bonds. "Meaning is produced within language, by the 'work', of representation" as meaning-producing- practices of designations. Though, as the conference description pointed out, these not necessarily reflect the complexity of human societies - within the iterative processes of worlding.

Identities rather have to be understood in the sense of "changing topologies of the contingent structural relations of power which materialize in *intra-action* with one another" ³³. As part of such iterative progressions representational concepts can no longer be seen to produce static instantiations ³⁴ that can be singled out in their meaning once and for all. Acknowledging *intra-action* as a mutual co-constitution allows to *re-turn* the process of identity as deeply intertwined with the world's becoming due to "the reciprocal agentive effects culture and materiality have upon one another" ³⁵, to cite R.Coleman again.

The impact institutionalizing terminology - ranging from art to language to nation state – has on the formation of their own identity – and furthermore on the ones of entangled human or non-human others -, marks institutions as intra-actively engaged and instances of emergence. Proposed as fixed positions manifests them as given or being accepted as common sense, but in fact they are "the result of sedimented hegemonic practice"³⁶ that often accompany the "irresponsibility of non-locality", and hence cannot be called into account ³⁷. But identifications are of this world ³⁸, their patterns emerge from their constitution of borders, which again *materialize in intra-action* from certain constellations of social practices as concepts or phenomena of iterative becomings.

Present – ethics of response-ability

At this moment, while trying to act within the specifics this conference has set up as markers of access, my presentation simultaneously looks for gaps and borders that allow to grasp matter/ing different from common interpretations. Irrespectively speaking as a self-defined actor my situation is not that one of solitary agent, rather my presentation marks again an experiment that always is at risk of unexpected openings as positioning or situated knowledge production³⁹ brings forward. These risks though can *re-turn* chances.

Bodies not only matter for identities⁴⁰, A. Machin remarks, rather in return identifications also produce a particular body⁴¹. Based on their boundary making practice of ex- and including identifications have to be seen as being in themselves *material-discursively* produced.⁴² Emerging from the structures of social practices they are one part in "a field of material-discursive differentiations whose dynamism is the 'ongoing ebb and flow of agency' that is the world in its differential becoming'⁴³. From this angle identities evince as positionings that mark a specific *situatedness* and as such always rely on a subjective-objective or partial perspective. This "partial, always embodied specificity'⁴⁴, P. Hinton points out in readdressing *Situated Knowledges*⁴⁵ marks the importance of Haraway's rework of the transcendent status that defines objectivity as a "view from above" or [..] an abstract and universal 'outside'".

Positioning argues against a "'full' and total perspective that is in search for the fetishized perfect subject of oppositional history"⁴⁶. Situating oneself within such a partial perspective is to consider "a politics that is not confined to any existing ascription of identity, but is rather a form of inquiry that needs to address the capacity for identity as a political gesture"⁴⁷, P. Hinton again *re-turns* Haraway. Positioning offers the insight to be part in the separability of *agential cuts* as a coming to meaning, but not through a hierarchical position. Rather these cuts leave marks that always also *intra-actively* a/effect the production of our own bodies as *objects of knowledge*.

Institutional organisations, as equally social practices, both threaded through contingent structures of power relations, permeate the production of bodies and consequently the constitution of *agential reality* within we intra-act and have our being. ⁴⁸ The material-discursive (or semiotic/cultural) relations that define institutions consequently produce bodies as governed and diffracted identity/ies of that very same regime of structures ⁴⁹ they come from. It is, as P.Hinton points out, "not a subject that pre-exists its situated standpoint, but a subjectivity that is called into being as an expression of socio-political difference" as its relational configurations just emerge in the process of being somewhere. As such we never respond to a radical outside of ourselves, but to the co-constitution of 'things'-in-phenomena we help to enact. ⁵¹ "Positionings [...] are produced in intra-action" and as such they can never be innocent of the phenomena produced or outside the system they are entangled with (- as also is my talk here). We do not have the sole power to choose nor are we chosen ⁵³, but we are always part of the *intra-actions* that contribute to the differential mattering of the world.

In its entangled becoming positioning shows that relations matter and "implies responsibility for our enabling practices" ⁵⁴. As a practice to get in touch it thus entails matter's *response-ability* ⁵⁵. Response/ability is not a strictly passive or active component, but marks our habitual bodily interaction in the world by forming exactly that background of our perception ⁵⁶ - that reproduces "norms and differences shaping the intersubjectivity of the community" ⁵⁷. Institutional frameworks consequently perform equally on us and the environment, as vice versa our performance in and through them affect the drawing of material-

discursive boundaries. That means "[t]he political subject [..] is repeatedly inscribed as the very means by which the world seeks to understand itself in its [sexed, raced, etc] difference".

Therefore Barad emphasizes the importance

to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future), for the entangled relationalities of inheritance that 'we' are, to acknowledge and be responsive to the noncontemporaneity of the present, [..]⁵⁹.

It matters, "[w]hat we inquire into, what we produce in that inquiry and what enables our capacity for inquiry "as P. Hinton reiterates Haraway, as these "are the movements of politics, or political production"⁶⁰. Similarly for A.Machin "the precariousness and ambiguity of identification not only underpins the antagonistic relationship with" the other, but offers an option for its transformation⁶¹.

Situatedness as becoming and worlding - shift happens

This lecture, as well as your presence of listening, or not, forms an apparatus of *intra-action* producing *exteriorities-within-phenomena*. Always being-becoming identity does not mean we or anything could not be engaged in the exteriority-within-phenomena otherwise, but that we and things perceived are always in a situation of being somewhere, emerging through intra-action, as a moment of worlding. One, that leaves marks on bodies as an impact of certain institutional framings and our identity relations.

Subjectivity not only is embodied, but emerges as dispersed and interwoven as "[t]he body is never merely a passive transmitter of messages but plays an active role in the generation of perceptual meaning" Decode states. While bodily characteristics are used to determine identity, physical features have no given or objective meaning rather they are affected through preconditioned or "pre-reflective bodily awareness and practice, that includes incorporated identities" Thus bodies matter in "becoming our identities" as objects of knowledge. They participate in the creation of meaning and emerge as entities through and in entanglement of intra-actions as agential separability of the a/effectively acknowledgment of subject-object-relations.

Institutional frameworks simultaneously in demand and reproducing certain modes of identification built on concordant structures, which objectify divisions of society⁶⁶, need to be addressed as responsible and accountable in their material-discursive boundary making practices.⁶⁷ Required is a contestation of their 'logical barriers' based on an assumed rational universality as these define "specific (re)configurings of the world" we are in. Though due to the intra-active entanglement no universal position of nowhere or infinite vision that can claim sole rationality is produced. Rather than an impossible pretence of absolute reason it demands bringing together the diffracted objectivity, which the partial and shared views provide, that are produced and resonate⁶⁹ in *situated knowledges*⁷⁰. This includes to see ourselves as *de-centered* and situated, and consequently as response-able (and responsible) to and within the structures we help to

create. Important is further not only what is constituted – in institutions and through identifications -, but at the same time what is excluded and thus left in an undefined space, where despite all it provides openings for unsettling possibilities of performative intervention. Drawing boundaries as steady is not only risky through the implied act of exclusion, which as 'othering' always "entails an indebtedness to the 'Other', who is [...] threaded through, the 'self' – a diffraction/dispersion of identity" ⁷¹. An extended intra-active approach that acknowledges intra-actively changing identities can provide a sharedness for the 'exclusiveness' (in both senses of the word as being unique, but also excluded) of the other's ideas and views. *Situated knowledges*, in Haraway sense, are "not about isolated individuals" ⁷², but the joining of partial views that live *within limits and contradictions*.

The materialization of bodily *boundaries* in social interaction⁷³ is a coming together of inside and outside, an intertwined experience that marks boundaries as in themselves porous and only containing provisionally. *Exteriority* never is absolute, it emerges as a moment of opening and separation from *intra-action*⁷⁴involving differences in views, places, human and non-human others. As *views from somewhere*⁷⁵, in which each has its own participation of *agential reality* these differences affect the positioning and persistently create boundaries that as markers of a temporary outside though "shift from within" ⁷⁶.

Accepting that boundaries shift in *intra-action* allows "unanticipated insights—'points of view' which 'can never be known in advance'.."⁷⁷ as it is "a cross-cutting of topological reconfigurations' an ongoing rupturing"⁷⁸ from which unforeseen perspectives and unfamiliar connotations emerge. Such an inside and outside interrelation of chiasmic entanglement seems to accompany all *thingness*⁷⁹ that in its *thing-power*⁸⁰ iteratively emerges in the elusiveness of that moment – that iterative *exteriority-within-phenomena* (still entailing "an infinite number of past experiences, habits and memories that enact our particular present".⁸¹). Or as Coleman summarizes L. Walker's words"[t]he better future is not so much *the effect of* present actions, but *is* the present".⁸²

Endnotes:

also: 264 .. co-excisting multiplicities of entangled relations of past-present-future-here-there ..

¹ Change of organization through a different perception

² Haraway, Donna. 2011. "SF: Science Fiction, Speculative Fabulation, String Figures, So Far". Public address at the Pilgrim Award:4. California via Lublin, Poland. URL: http://people.ucsc.edu/~haraway/Files/PilgrimAcceptanceHaraway.pdf ³ Derrida, Jaques. 1991. trans. Berezdivin, Ruben. "At This Very Moment In This Work Here I Am" in *Re-reading Levinas*. edited

by Bernasconi, Robert and Critchley, Simon. 11. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

⁴ Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the univers halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*, 181. Durham:

Duke University Press.

⁵ Barad 2007, 137

⁶ Barad, Karen. 2010. "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come" in Derrida Today 3.2: 265. doi:10.3366/E1754850010000813

[&]quot;Agential cuts, by contrast, do not mark some absolute separation but a cutting together/apart – a 'holding together' of the disparate itself, ... without wounding the dis-jointure, the dispersion, or the difference, without effacing the heterogeneity of the other ... without or before the synthetic junction of the conjunction and the disjunction' (Derrida 1994, 29)."

Barad 2007, 179

⁸ Hinton, Peta. 2014. "Situated Knowledges and New Materialism(s): rethinking a Politics of Location" in Woman: a cultural review, Vol.25, No.1: Hinton on Haraway's situatedness. doi:10.1080/09574042.2014.901104 Barad 2007, 91

¹⁰ Barad 2010, 261: The past is not present. 'Past' and 'future' are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through the world's ongoing intra-activity.

¹¹ Coleman, Rebecca. 2014. "Inventive Feminist Theory: Representation, Materiality and Intensive Time" in Woman: a cultural review, Vol.25, No.1: 42, doi:10.1080/09574042.2014.901098

¹² Hughes, Christina and Lury, Celia. 2013. "Re-turning feminist methodologies: from a social to an ecological epistemology", in Gender and Education, Vol. 25, No.6. doi:10.1080/09540253.2013.829910

Whatmore, Sarah. 2006. "Materialist returns: practising cultural geography in and for a more-than-human word" in cultural

¹⁵ Barad 2007, 179

¹⁶ Dolphin, Rick and van der Tuin, Iris. 2012. "The Transversality of New Materialism" in New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies, 106-107, London: Open Humanities Press. http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/new-materialism/; also: Thiele, Kathrin. 2015. "Theorizing is worlding -teaching new Feminist Materialism in Contemporary Feminist Theory Courses" in Teaching with Feminist Materialism, edited by Hinton, Peta and Treusch, 99 - 110. Pat. Utrecht: Atgender

¹⁷ Baridotti, 162

¹⁸ Barad 2007, 179

¹⁹ Barad 2007, 136

²⁰ Coleman 2014, 38

²¹ Whatmore 2006, 603 (my emphasis)

²² Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in Feminist Studies, Vol. 14, No.3: 595. URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0046-3663%28198823%2914%3A3%3C575%3ASKTSQI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-M
²³ Hinton 2014, 110: "Knowledge production has always been bodily production, ... "

²⁴ Hall, Stuart. 1997. Representation - Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, 24 – 29. London: Sage/The Open University. cited in: Coleman 2014, 33

²⁵ The Fourth Euroacademia International Conference: "Identities and Identifications - Politicized Uses of Collective Identities",

conference description, http://euroacademia.eu/conference/identities-and-identifications-fourth-edition/
²⁶ Machin, Amanda. 2014. "Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?", https://euroacademia.eu/conference/identities-and-identifications-fourth-edition/
²⁶ Machin, Amanda. 2014. "Mouffe, Merleau-Ponty and Others: The View from Somewhere?", https://euroacademia.eu/conference/identities-and-identifications-fourth-edition/ 10.1080/13534645.2014.896553

²⁷ Machin 2014, 77

²⁸ Machin 2014, 80-81

²⁹ Alcoff, Linda Martin. 1999. "Towrads a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment" in *Radical Philosophy*, 95: 18 – 19, http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/wp-content/files_mf/rp95_article2_towardsaphenomenologyofracialembodiment_alcoff.pdf; in Machin 2014, 77

³⁰ Stuart Hall, 'The Work of Representation' in Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices, 1997, p.24 - 25 ³¹ Hall, 1997, 28

³² The Fourth Euroacademia International Conference: "Identities and Identifications - Politicized Uses of Collective Identities", conference description, http://euroacademia.eu/conference/identities-and-identifications-fourth-edition/

³³ Barad 2001, 99

³⁴ Rebecca Coleman, "Inventive Feminist Theory: Representation, Materiality and Intensive Time", Woman: a cultural review, Vol.25, No.1 (2014)

³⁵ Coleman 2014, 39

³⁶ Mouffe, Chantal. 2013. Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically, 2. London/New York: Verso Books in Machin 2014

³⁷ Hinton 2014, 101; Haraway 1988, 583

³⁸ Machin 2014, 80

³⁹ Haraway 1988, 590

⁴⁰ Machin 2014, 77

⁴¹ Machin 2014, 85

⁴² Barad, Karen. 2001. "Re(con)figuring Space, Time and Matter", in Dekoven, Marianne, Feminist Locations: Global and Local, Theory and Practice, 80. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press

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43 Hinton 2014, 107
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- ⁴⁹ Barad 2001, 95: "structures are in themselves phenomena", 99: "structures are constraining and enabling, not determining"
- ⁵⁰ Hinton 2014, 108
- ⁵¹ Barad 2007, 178-179
- ⁵² Hinton 2014, 111
- ⁵³ Barad 2007, 178
- ⁵⁴ Haraway 1988, 587
- ⁵⁵ Barad, Karen. 2012. "On Touching The Inhuman That Therefore I Am" in differences, Vol. 25, No. 3:215: ".. matter is condensations of response-ability. Touching is a matter of response. Each of "us" is constituted in response-ability. Each of "us" is constituted as responsible for the other, as being in touch with the other." (emphasis original)
- ⁵⁶ Machin 2014, 78
- ⁵⁷ Machin 2014, 78
- ⁵⁸ Hinton 2014, 110
- ⁵⁹ Barad 2010, 264
- 60 Hinton 2014, 110
- 61 Machin 2014, 85
- 62 Machin 2014, 77 and Coole, Diana. 2005. "Rethinking Agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities" in Political Studies, 53:128. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Machin 2014, 77
- ⁶⁴ Machin 2014, 78
- 65 Haraway 1988, 595
- 66 Machin 2014, 85
- ⁶⁷ Barad 2001, 99
- 68 Barad 2007, 237
- ⁶⁹ Haraway 1988, 588 -> for Barad's notion of respons-ibility see Barad, "On Touching", 217 and 2010, 265:
- ⁷⁰ Haraway 1988, 582; also Adorno, Theodor, *Minima Moralia*, (Frankfurt am Main, Bibliothek Suhrkamp 1970): 55, "Das Ganze ist das Unwahre" via Diedrich Diedrichsen in an interview with B.M.Scherer about the Anthropocene project / Interview / The Whole Earth: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utF6DGfBsfM (accessed: 10.9.2015)
- ⁷¹ Barad 2010, 265: "Entanglements are relations of obligation being bound to the other enfolded traces of othering. Othering, the constitution of an 'Other', entails an indebtedness to the 'Other', who is irreducibly and materially bound to, threaded through, the 'self' – a diffraction/dispersion of identity, 'Otherness' is an entangled relation of difference (différance)."
- ⁷² Haraway 1988, 590
- ⁷³ Haraway 1988, 595
- ⁷⁴ For special article on Karen Barad's term of intra-action see "Intra-action", Kleinman, Adam. 2012. Mousse Magazine, #34. futher definitions of intra-action also in Barad, Meeting the Univers
- ⁵ Haraway 1988, 590
- ⁷⁶ Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in Feminist Studies, Vol. 14, No.3, 1988, p.595
- ⁷⁷ Hinton, "Situated Knowledges and New Materialism(s)", 112
- ⁷⁸ Barad 2010, 265: "Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming. It is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling of responsiveness. Not through the realisation of some existing possibility, but through the iterative reworking of im/possibility, an ongoing rupturing, a crosscutting of topological reconfiguring of the space of responsi-bility."
- ⁷⁹ Bennet, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter a political ecology of things*. Durham: Duke University Press ⁸⁰ Bennet 2010, "The Force of Things": 1-19
- ⁸¹ Walker, Loewen. 2014. "The Living Present as a Materialist Feminist Temporality", Woman: a cultural review, Vol.25, No.1: 56, doi:10.1080/09574042.2014.901098
- 82 Walker 2014, in Coleman 2014, 41

⁴⁴ Hinton 2014, 103, 107

⁴⁵ Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective" in Feminist Studies, Vol. 14, No.3, URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0046-3663%28198823%2914%3A3%3C575%3ASKTSQI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-M
46 Haraway 1988, 586

⁴⁷ Hinton 2014, 110

⁴⁸ Barad 2007, 90, 133