Mobile Homes

“Hikki” / tent sauna, Sørfinnset, 2007. Photo: Sørfinnset School / the nord land

-Perspectives on Situatedness and De-Situatedness in
Contemporary Performative Practice and Theory

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Introduction

The object of this dissertation is to address certain contemporary performative practices, and the tensions they reveal in relation to contemporary culture and theory. During the last years of the 20th and first years of the 21st century, several performance and art-related practices displayed a specific thematic structure related to the sense of belonging and movement, to the tensions between mobility and stability or home – several also had names which included the latter terms. They were part of a larger tendency in art and culture that investigated the social spaces and means available in late modernity through, for example, the communicational aspects of art and media, and the conditions for coexistence created in temporary rooms. While dealing with problematic issues of situatedness and de-situatedness, locality and globality, the practices also seemed to establish something else: A very elaborate and concrete “here and now”, a kind of social immediacy that both complemented and supplemented the art context. These “mobile home” practices diverged from other art practices by addressing
regular sociality: They were not really intended to be alternative spaces or realities, neither criticism nor commentary. They sought to blend in, to be a part of routine activities and life in general. This complicated the theoretical understanding of them, as well as the position of the researcher faced with them. Thus the practices occurred not just as comments on or the processing of historically defined problems, but as actual phenomena emphasizing precisely the relevant present manifestation as aesthetically, politically, socially, mentally and environmentally important. However, by their very nature, these existential moments were placed in a broader context in the flux of life: Accordingly, the projects blurred or mixed the different levels of discussion found in art discourse by embracing form and function, being social and reflexive, embodying the moment and succession, all at once.

These art and performance practices that thematicised or portrayed home and mobility seemed to parallel certain vital theoretical and societal discussions at the end of the 20th century. Having seen fast and vast development in transportation-related and mass media technology in the 1980s and 1990s, notions of movement, travel and the loss of borders were commonly worked and reworked in theory and in the media. When mobility was enhanced and encouraged through travel and communication, questions concerning situatedness and positedness arose, accompanied by enthusiastic cheers over technology and faith in it as progress.

Both optimistic and pessimistic tales were told, and artists responded with concrete, physical and spatial investigations. It is some of these investigations in particular which are addressed here, and which resulted in the two projects in question. My material consists of the land foundation in Thailand and Sørfinnset School / the north land in Norway - two ongoing, long-term socio-cultural projects organized as art or culture centres. These projects are interesting because they present specific theoretical and analytical challenges. As they are both inside and outside the art and performance fields, they transcend disciplines and roles, and they fuse the perspectives of researcher, spectator and creator. By making narrative structures diffuse or secondary, by addressing "real life" and social issues first, and by using everyday spaces as well as institutional contexts as their “sites of production”, they raise problems related to the initial stages of perception, experience, and thus of description per se. Which parts of the projects should be rendered and which should be left out? Which of their many parts are important? These questions in turn have had an impact on the analysis. What is their form or content? How can/should they be understood? Although aspects such as the relationship
between art and life, the nature of production, and the status of the artist as well as of the spectator have been addressed in relation to a variety of performance and avant-garde practices of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, I would contend that the practices with which I am concerned here push these questions even further and thus require us to find other, and perhaps new, ways of analyzing and understanding them. This implies that theoretical investigations also constitute a vital part of the present dissertation. The need for several different theoretical positions demands that relationships be recognized and defined between art theory and performance theory, and between phenomenological theory and post-structuralist theory.

The mobile homes discussed here are both different from and similar to what we usually associate with the term mobile homes in the form of caravans or of trailer parks. They indicate a field of tension that is relevant for life in general. Using the ‘land’ projects as material and a selection of phenomenological, sociological and post-structuralist theories as guides, I suggest the concept of the mobile home as one possible way of re-establishing lost aspects of identity and home combined with freedom or mobility. The mobile home is both my concept of choice as well as being physical, movable installations – I will combine these conceptual and concrete elements to exemplify some central questions and tensions in the practices. However, most importantly, the mobile home gives us immediate access to or an understanding of the co-dependency of tensions (opposites). Further, we see that the tensions we connect with home or mobility might change and be interchanged: A mobile home implies both relevant practice in concrete projects like the ‘land’ projects and a way of thinking, i.e. the mobile home becomes a way of fusing and mutating the situated and the de-situated aspects of art, theory and existence.

The problems associated with the dichotomy between the situated and the de-situated constitutes a leitmotif in this dissertation. The emphasis on and analysis of these tensions on a variety of levels (theory/discourse, subject/sociality, place/situation) seek to underline that the relationship between the situated and the de-situated still constitutes a cultural and a theoretical problem, and that underlining the problem’s relativity is no longer enough; the same applies to a focus centred on one of the two. The tensions between the situated and the de-situated are related to thoughts on the still and the mobile, the being and the becoming. In theory, it is expressed clearly in the relationship between phenomenological and post-structuralist theory, where one finds this perceived tension between the being and the
Phenomenology, here primarily with reference to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, is known to take a clear stand within the subject and its being, whereas the post-structuralists usually emphasize mobility and becoming over the immobile and the being. In relation to this, and while drawing on post-structuralist theory, I hold that certain contemporary traits as well as theories by post-structuralist philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, although crucial, are existentially troubling. To address this, I believe that we should search for a home or a situatedness, i.e. a perceived sense of belonging.

Further, I propose a confluence of art theory and performance theory. They deal, in fact, with much of the same material throughout the 20th century, especially in respect of avant-garde and experimental practices. Visual or contemporary art has faced a socially-oriented “wave” since the mid-1990s but has, in my opinion, failed to propose adequate readings or interpretations. Based on contemporary art, art theory has often suffered from problems concerned with representation, signs and (self-)reflexivity, focusing on misunderstandings and non-communication and failing to grasp reality-seeking and socially-oriented projects. To address this, I turn to performance theory, which has a strong focus on sociality and on the development of the terms of performativity, presence and immediacy in relation to the flow of sociality that pervades the ‘land’ projects. Nonetheless, a paradox remains between the perceived staged and the perceived authentic elements in the notions of performance and performativity. Taking this as a point of departure I identify a “longing for authenticity” in the land foundation and Sørfinnset School / the nord land (the ‘land’ projects), underlining this as a strong, collective drive and as a search for a sense or senses of belonging. The performance-theoretical approach also raises problems concerning time, space/place and individual/collective in relation to ‘social immediacies’: The ‘land’ projects are based on individual subjects, but they also develop and emphasize the collective and the common project, i.e. art becomes a tool for social enhancement while remaining far from devoid of intrinsic value. Further, the two ‘land’ projects are specific geographical locations and represent a turn towards the local and the posited. They build “social space” and international networks simultaneously. One finds several such paradoxes or contradictions in the two 'land' projects. The aim in this dissertation is to reach discursive ground, that is, a theoretical and practical understanding that embraces both the situated and the de-situated simultaneously. How can we, or can we ever, be situated and de-situated at the same time? And even more

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For a definition/explanation of phenomenology and post-structuralism, see footnote 46.
importantly, how can we avoid falling into the “retro trap”, re-building firm beliefs from the past, along with idols and nostalgia?

In the end, these become questions of ethicality: Is it possible to strive for equality in power structures while including the need for belonging and human affectivity? To be able to include, though not predict, the situated de-situatedness constituted by the human existential condition could help us further in finding a non-moralistic ethicality based on ecology, much needed in a world where “anything is possible”, but with the risk of “nothing being desired”. The ecological perspective is introduced as a practice-related, methodological and theoretical tool: Ecology is important in the everyday routines of the projects discussed and in the concrete actions of participants. Further, methodologically speaking, ecology represents a “willed” or ethical position, i.e. a holistic or “overall” approach to the problems. In theory, ecology provides organic terms and an ecosophical body of theory that coincides well with the organic structure of the projects. Thus the ecological perspective, like the mobile home, has a direct connection to both practice and theory; both ‘land’ projects aspire to maintain an ecological practice. Ecology also represents an ethical dimension in terms of the research approach, not least because it is related to one of the largest, most apparent and urgent global problems facing us today.

The material for this dissertation consists of two expansive, intricate and still on-going projects. In this thesis, I will relate this material to important societal and existential tensions in the interface between movement and belonging. Chapter One describes and introduces the two projects. I will identify the main problems and suggest a methodology. Central aspects here are the methodological challenges represented by the material. As “life-near” practices, the projects tend to draw the researcher in, blurring the distinction between categories and analytic elements. Due to this methodological complexity, theory becomes an important provider of relevant perspectives: Chapter Two discusses the prevailing theory within the fields of visual arts and performance. Here, some of the central problems as well as the two projects are placed within the perspectives of history and discourse, seen in relation to social orientation, life projects and aesthetics in the broad sense. Although the social focus of the projects is not unprecedented, it represents a problem to traditional art theory. This is elaborated in Chapter Three, where theoretical and practical tensions related to actual practices are presented. These tensions between the situated and the de-situated, the local and the global, avant-garde and tradition, subject and collective, organization and openness, also
show that the thematic structure addressed and presented in the projects far exceeds the art discourse. Here, the concept of “mobile home” is elaborated as a possible conceptualization of the tensions presented, becoming an example of co-thinking rather than a choice of a specific or distinct perspective. Some of the most prominent criticism is introduced at the end of the chapter, revealing certain fundamental problems in socially-oriented art practices, as well as weaknesses in the criticism itself. Having shown a certain inadequacy in traditional art theory and aesthetics, I continue to analyze the projects through performance theory and from the perspective of performativity in Chapter Four. While the performative approach is discussed as a historical and referential approach in Chapter Two, in Chapter Four it is furthered as an analytical tool when addressing the project’s social dynamics by building on theories by performance theoreticians such as Richard Schechner and Erika Fischer-Lichte. Here I also aspire to show how specific, performative perspectives in concrete art/performance projects can have further relevance for the understanding of social conditions in general. Perhaps the performative paradox found in the two ‘land’ projects can also be used to understand perceived senses of belonging and notions of identity in contemporary culture?

Consideration of different theoretical perspectives (always in relation to praxis) brings to the fore an ethical dimension, i.e. possibilities for action, for human consciousness, interaction, personal development. All these aspects are apparent parts of the ‘land’ projects that relate to ambitions of doing “good”, that is, acting sustainably. Chapter Five presents ecology from an overriding relational perspective as well as an ecosophical aspect of sustainability. Here, various areas of the problem concerning theory/discourse, space/place/situation and subject/sociality are placed in relation to Félix Guattari’s tri-partite object of ecology: the social, the mental and the environmental. The ecological perspective reconnects us with contemporary culture and society by relating to theory some of the greatest challenges of our times – over-consumption, pollution and climate change – while underlining the need for sustainability in the social and mental spheres. Finally, Chapter Six attempts to bring together the different concepts and theories, suggesting an ethical position and a specific focus on immediate conditions in art as well as in culture and society. This focus is prominent in experimental practices and performances such as the land foundation and Sørfinsset School / the nord land. The succession of immediacies constituted by the projects underlines the relationship to life or existence, as a philosophical perspective and as a durable, concrete performative technique.
I had to bring boots and a sleeping bag. It’s not art for sissies and apparently not art for the culture journalists in Norway either, because there weren’t any of them there… I took a train to Bodø in the north of Norway, it is an 18 hour trip. I could have taken a plane, but for some reason I got the idea that the train was cheaper. From Bodø I would have to drive with some acquaintances for another hour and a half to Sørfinnset in Gildeskål County. On the train I met a woman from Hong Kong; she was travelling around Scandinavia for three months by herself. I said to her that I thought she was brave to travel alone, she said that when one travelled alone one met interesting people. True enough, I met her.\(^2\)

\(^2\) Passage describing my first trip to Sørfinnset in July 2005.
1.1 Background
During the last years of the 20th and the first years of the 21st century, several art and performance practices thematised or bore the name 'mobile home'. Discussions around globalization and flux, identity and roots, were important parts of them. These were live art or experimental practices, connected to performance and avant-garde traditions, unfolding both inside and outside of art institutions or galleries, and they created lounges or social atmospheres where different types of “homes” and forms of life could be realized. Some, like Rirkrit Tiravanija’s and the G.U.N. ladies’ Mobile Home projects, used concrete mobile homes, caravans and camping equipment in their “existential investigations”, while others brought up the same thematic structure more reflexively, that is to say with references, symbols and texts rather than with instant, spatial and social tools.3 As the title Mobile Homes indicates, the various practices were concerned with the great extent to which geographical and social mobility is characteristic of our times, and how the relatively new-found possibility to freely choose your path in life can constitute freedom on the one hand, but on the other hand means a loss of stability and a break with traditional value – and what about those who are forced to leave, for whom mobility represents no freedom at all?

Thai artist Rirkrit Tiravanija has used cars and mobile homes as sculptures or installations in museums as well as devices for actual travels: In 1998 Tiravanija crossed the USA in a mobile home together with some art students, stopping and inviting random people and friends for dinner outside the caravan – afterwards documenting and discussing the journey in collaboration with the Philadelphia Museum of Art. For the Yokohama Triennale in 2001, Tiravanija exhibited a van filled with camping equipment – then exploring the social and life preserving forms from within the institution, by showing how you can actually camp in the museum, but then again how “unreal” or ridiculous this actually is.4 Tiravanija as an artist both accepts and rejects the institutional frame and discourse given concept of art. He works

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3 Rirkrit Tiravanija is a Thai and multi-cultural artist, famous on the contemporary art scene for organizing dinner parties and social, non-object projects. For pictures and biography see gallery home page http://www.gavinbrown.biz/artists/view/irkrit-tiravanija The G.U.N. ladies is a Norwegian artist collective consisting of Hanne Rangul, Sabina Jacobsson, Camilla Øyhus, Mariken Kramer and Madeleine Park. See home page www.thegunladies.com. G.U.N. originally stood for ‘Galleri Uten Navn’ (Gallery Without Name), this has now been changed to ‘Get Used to the Name’.

both without and within the institution or gallery, and navigates both the art market as well as local and social contexts. His participation in exhibitions and at biennales is often in collaboration with other artists or with students. There are often material forms, objects or themes in the rooms or contexts he sets up, but the social frame or actual presence of people who inhabit his themes or structures is nevertheless vital.

Another example of artistic practices working with these or related problems in a synthetic way is the Norwegian artist group the G.U.N. Ladies and their Gallery G.U.N., now unfortunately closed. The Gallery G.U.N., in addition to art production and exhibiting, offered places to sleep, when needed. In the annual exhibition Høstutstillingen in Oslo in 2004, they presented The Mobile Gallery, a caravan gallery where people could spend the night, where they held performances and exhibitions-within-the-exhibition, using tents and various camping equipment. They also distributed the brochure “People, Places, Beds and Spaces” – a sort of travel guide listing and describing different artist-run galleries around the world where it was possible to eat and sleep. Further, at the Venice Biennale in 2005 the Korean artist Kim Beom presented a small book called Hometown, giving facts on the Korean countryside in order for people to be able to make up “countryside, hometown identities”. Beom sought to accentuate and perhaps parody, how belonging, real or fake, gives perceived security and status, perhaps particularly in a world considered ever more de-rooted and fragmented. In 2004/2005 the two Norwegian artists Anders Kjellesvik and Andreas Siqueland, calling themselves aiPotu, travelled around Europe in several stages with a caravan from the 1970s. The caravan was used as home, as hotel for guests, as exhibition hall, art object and means of transport. The vehicle became a tool for social encounter, allowing aiPotu to “build sculptural meeting points, small and temporary interventions in the public space” in order to “recognize the identity of each place” they visited.

In 2003 the performance company Mobile Homes presented the event Mapping 4: Strategies of Survival at the Black Box Theatre in Oslo – a performance-related, live and interactive installation/spectacle, consisting of various media and concepts. When attending Mobile Homes’ “mapping”, we were asked to keep our tickets as a “soup voucher” for the end of the

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5 Presented at Høstutstillingen (“The Autumn Exhibition”) in 2004, Kunsthernes Hus, Oslo.
6 Quotes from artist group aiPotu’s Travel Book, documentation of the travels, Editions Dasein, 2006, p.XI.
7 Mobile Home was formed in 2002 by Zoë Christiansen and Sven Erga. See home page www.mobilehomes.no.
8 Presented at the Black Box Theatre in Oslo in January 2003.
show. We were also given a map of the performance room that suggested the room as a landscape or “country”. Among the landmarks on the map were a bar, a soup kitchen, a lounge compartment, a mini-wood of cypresses (“The Angel Wood”), two public areas with pillows and benches, an electronic music corner, and a central area with drawn mappings on the floor, which functioned as a central stage. There was also a stunt poet, a computer graphics artist, a scenographer, several actors/singers, and two screens. Live computer graphics that changed throughout the performance, were projected on both sides of the audience. The graphics included manipulated versions of the actors that played alongside the graphic, in both taped and real time. The event was a kind of multi-media impro-session; the audience was shown an intimate landscape in which different live art productions were going on simultaneously. By using pre-recorded footage of one of the actresses who was pregnant, and playing on this pregnancy both in other recorded footage as well as in live scenes on the stage, and further referring to her current, personal position as a mother; levels of fiction and reality were blurred, and the audience was given more than a scripted scenario.

The audience became part of the social room, a room controlled by the artists, but that opened towards sociality in a new way, similar to that in Tiravanija’s projects. The performance ended with both performers and audience being served soup, sharing a moment of eating and drinking together in the “temporary sociality” that was created. The event was in some way a traditional spectacle, but in other ways not; the public was included in an actual present, they became part of the artists’ lives and art production for a period of time. The totality of factors that were present in the social room created a sense of belonging that, instead of differentiating between the real and fictive, mediated and un-mediated, art and non-art, merged the room into a temporary and immediate environment, a “home” for the people existing in it. “Thematically, Mobile Home is concerned with how we deal with the loss of

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9 The concept of “site-specific” art or art in situ relates to this preoccupation with the actual room or place one produces in, used to designate art that explores the different relations to a specific space or place through diverse physical, social, mental or economical elements. Place as geography, place as people, place as economy, etc., further represents a turn towards “micro-political” and concrete rooms, when global theory and world politics seem too evasive to attack. For further reading see Miwon Kwon’s One Place After Another, Massachusetts and London, MIT Press, 2002, and in section 2.2.2 in this dissertation.
belonging in the modern, Western society.” 10 From 2008 to 2011 Mobile Home is also conducting a project around a series of travels – “(My) Life in the Systems”.

The above mentioned practices placed themselves in relation to central debates in art and performance, as well as in theory and culture: In the art field, they represented a continuation of central 20th century avant-garde problems or questions concerning the relation to life, to the institution, to form and materiality, and not least, to the spectator or possible co-creator. As contemporary cultural manifestations, they sought to act upon concrete problems and feelings in everyday life. These practices are examples of the “mobile home” concern in the art scene of the late 20th and early 21st century, and they give an idea of how this concern manifested itself – they are the background for this dissertation, the milieu from which my research questions arose. The two projects that will constitute the main material of this investigation, the land foundation and Sørfinnset School / the nord land, may perhaps be characterized as the “full blooming” of this series of questions concerning the relation between art and life, art and theory, object, work and situation, creator and spectator.11 Rirkrit Tirvanija, one of the initiating artists of the land foundation mentioned above, is a much-used and praised contemporary artist, and among those who are most famous for re-opening the 1960s avant-garde discussions on community and utopia in the 1990s.12 The two ‘land’ projects were chosen as material because of their maturity in relation to art problems and discourse, as well as for their thematic structures, which seemed to fit well with important, contemporary issues such as belonging, identity and flux. The projects thus seemed important in both an art/performance-historical context and in a contemporary socio-cultural context – I will return to the criteria of selection soon in the section on method. Among the “mobile home” projects I mentioned practices unfolding both inside and outside of art venues; the ‘land’ projects mainly use local and non-art venues, but they also participate in certain art fairs and exhibitions. The differentiation between art and non-art venues is therefore not seen

10 From the press release about the Mobile Home on Black Box Theatre home page, www.blackbox.no, October 2003.
11 Both projects emphasize the use of minuscules in their titles - the land foundation and the nord land – this is probably done so as not to be perceived as a regular land or country. Sørfinnset School is, however, an already-existing place/building, and it was thus not for them to decide on the question of name or title.
12 He has an important place in Nicolas Bourriaud’s Ésthetique relationelle – see bibliography for further reference. He was also one of the artists discussed in my master degree thesis – Christensen-Scheel, Boel, Fem former for betrakterdeltakelse, thesis for the degree of Cand. Philol., University of Oslo 2003.
as decisive, though it is an important aspect in terms of, for example, duration and “life-likeness” that the ‘land’ projects unfold in regular, non-institutionalized settings.

1.2 Practice
The use of only two projects as material might seem scarce, but in this case it is, in fact, an almost too-large object of study due to the projects’ particular organization. The projects started in 1998 (the land foundation) and 2004 (Sørfinnset School / the nord land) and are still ongoing. The entire process of the projects is addressed here, though a rigorous historical account will not be given, because other questions and problems will be the centre of attention. The projects also present a vast selection of material by including general sociality in addition to the many particular events they organize – my material thus consists of various live art or performance events such as exhibitions, openings, seminars, and workshops, as well as regular life and “un-defined” social situations, and different physical objects relating to both art and sociality. The relatively long time span, the vast selection of events, exhibitions and situations, as well as the inclusion of the entire time span and not only the specific events or artworks, make this material particularly complex and comprehensive. The projects also include groups of people and two distinctly different cultures: Norway and Thailand. Practice is understood here as the plain action, doing, undertaking or proceeding of human beings, but also implies the different ways of doing that are possible in general. Practice here is not thought of as the carrying out of a specific theory, though practice might be opposed to theory, as action or practice in general, and is then termed praxis. The aspect of habit that might be associated with both practice and praxis will not be discussed in this text.13

The two projects are located respectively in the North of Thailand (the land foundation) and in the North of Norway (Sørfinnset School / the nord land), and they are both “alternative organizations” grounded in the life of artists and their environments.14 They have a concrete

14 Both ‘art’ and ‘artist’ could be seen as problematic terms here, because the practices in question could be considered both inside and outside the concept/discourse. However, as I perceive the term art to be formally “undefinable”, I use it, while I at the same time acknowledge the possibility of the practices being something else, uncategorizable. Art (term) related problems will be further discussed in Chapter Two.
and long-term involvement in their projects, their participants and their environment – this environment is, as we shall see, local and geographically localized, as well as being global and fluctuating. Perhaps generally being built up around cultural activities, as “culture centres” that offer a varied programme, the projects have specific and local goals that exceed this cultural programme. The land foundation and Sørfinnset School / the nord land can both be said to work with the “mobile home” complex of problems – aspects of situatedness and de-situatedness in relation to local and global contexts – various concerns relating to place and space, as geography, mentality and sociality are addressed. Further, the two projects are connected and are collaborating, and there is a cultural exchange between Norway and Thailand on both private and professional levels. What follows is a more in depth description of the two projects:

1.2.1 the land foundation, Sanpatong and Chiang Mai, Thailand:


Initiated in 1998, the land (a more direct translation from Thai to English would be “the rice field”) was the merging of ideas by different artists to cultivate a place of and for social engagement… As some rice farmers are having difficult times in the area, due to the levels of floods and high water level, rice farming has not been very productive.
Because of this, some rice fields in the area have been offered for development, as the rice farmers are looking to find better areas for the fields… Though initially the action to acquire the rice fields was initiated by two artists from Thailand, the land was initiated with anonymity and with out the concept of ownership. The land was to be cultivated as an open space, though with certain intentions towards community, towards discussions and towards experimentation in other fields of thoughts. […]

There is no electricity or water, as it would be problematic, in terms of land development in the area… As it is not the intention to develop the land for any value intrinsic to land development, the lack of such amenities was a simple solution from such development. There will be development and experimentations to use natural renewable resources as sources for electric and gas. The artist group Superflex from Copenhagen have been developing their idea of the Supergas (a system utilising biomass, such as shit, to produce gas), and they have been engaging in using the land as a lab for the development of their biogas system. The gas produced will initially be used for the stoves in the kitchen, as well as lamps for light. Arthur Meyer an American artist from Chicago, has also been interested to develop a system for utilising solar power, as another source of energy to be stored and use. These projects will as well engage interested participation of the local village as well as students from the local schools and Universities. Water is not a problem, however, chemical pesticides and other such products have been introduced into the rice fields, which in turn feeds into the water streams and system […]

Parallel to the land as lab for self sustainable environment, architectural ideas for living will be carried out alongside the cultivation of the land. A gardener’s house was build by the Thai artist Kamin Lertchaiprasert, thought built out of practicality… The gardener’s house houses the gardener and his wife, as they tend to the land and manage the daily necessities. […] Surrounding the general spaces of the rice fields, kitchen, toilets, bathrooms and central hall, will be different structures for living. Based on the commonly found meditation huts in Buddhist monasteries, these structures for living would be accommodations for meditation. Initiated not purely as structures to be designed and made by artists, most of the projects to date are being developed by artists […] There is not a time limitation to the cultivation of the land, it is there to be used and can be used. 15

The land was thus initiated in 1998 in Chiang Mai by the two Thai artists Kamin Lertchaiprasert16 and Rirkrit Tiravanija, and though the two initiators from the start have sought to move away from the idea of ownership, their names remain tied to the project. The project has received some funding from the ministry of culture for different activities, amongst others a trip to visit the sister project in Norway, and from the Heinrich Böll

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15 From the home page of The Land Foundation, www.thelandfoundation.org, written by Baan Muang Fu T. Nam Bo Luang A., last visited 02.09.2008. The passages are quoted as they stand, with possible grammatical errors. This applies to all quotes and interviews in the thesis, and I have chosen not to underline errors with ‘sic’, because I have not wanted to “interfere” with the quotes.

16 All artists in the two ‘land’ projects participate in other projects and also have a separate art production. See Kamin Lertchaiprasert’s home page: http://www.rama9art.org/kamin/index.html
Foundation\textsuperscript{17} a grant for printing of catalogues in relation to a two-month art and culture project. But the project has mainly been financed by the artists themselves – this is perhaps one of the reasons why it has been hard to deny ownership, even if the idea of ownership itself is rejected. In addition to the “land” or rice field near the village of Sanpatong,\textsuperscript{18} the project consists of a sort of cultural centre in Chiang Mai, where we find an outdoor kitchen, a meditation house, an administration and an exhibition/workshop hall. However, these physical installations are perceived as functions, and can be moved/ altered to whatever need or idea the project has – the cultural centre is thus to be thought of as a concept, a function, more than a specific place. Further, the land\textsuperscript{19} has had a tripartite focus on ecological meditation and cultural activity since its inception. Within the project frame, they are involved with ecological farming, exhibitions, humanitarian work, workshops, yoga, meditation, seminars, alternative education, cultural exchange, cooking, writing, documentation, and more. Participants are primarily volunteers, art students or guests – there are also some employees within the administration.

When the project was initiated, Lertchaiprasert and Tiravanija, in discussion with their friends and advisors Uthit Atimana and Mit Jai-Inn, pictured a piece of land where they could spend time with friends, a sort of recreational space where they could retire. They bought a rice field near the village of Sanpatong, and asked friends to build small houses on the land.\textsuperscript{19} As they were both artists, and their friends were artists, the houses they built somehow took on the character of works or sculptures because they were artist-built: A battery house by Philippe Parreno / Francois Roche, a star-watching house by Tobias Rehberger, a star-shaped house by

\textsuperscript{17} \url{www.boell.de}: “The Heinrich Böll Foundation is part of the Green political movement that has developed worldwide as a response to the traditional politics of socialism, liberalism, and conservatism. Our main tenets are ecology and sustainability, democracy and human rights, self-determination and justice. We place particular emphasis on gender democracy, meaning social emancipation and equal rights for women and men. We are also committed to equal rights for cultural and ethnic minorities and to the societal and political participation of immigrants. Finally, we promote non-violence and proactive peace policies.”

\textsuperscript{18} In my printed material, some of the Thai names/expressions are found spelled differently – this is amongst others things due to different translations of Thai into English. In these cases I have chosen the spelling that is most frequently used in my material, in books, on the Internet, etc. However, there is unfortunately a risk of misspelling Thai words – Sanpatong is for example also found spelled Sa\textipa{mpatong} and San Patong, Silpadhamma is also found spelled Sil\textipa{ppadhamma}, etc.

\textsuperscript{19} In addition to the houses there is a platform chair called “The Western gaze”, storage for rice, a stage, a broken brick oven, a toilet, a shower (built by the One Year project and powered by bike), and probably more.
Carl Michael von Hausswolff (a Feng Shui compass was used to find the building site), a living bamboo dome by Markus Heinsdorff and Suwan Laimanee, a gardener’s house by Kamin Lertchaiprasert, as well as houses by artists Angkrit Ajchariyasophon, Thasnai Sethaseree, Mit Jai-Inn, Thaivijit Puangkasemsomboon and Somyot Hananuntasukand. The Danish artist group Superflex also installed their Supergas system on the rice field, and several other sustainable energy sources have been tried or planned, such as solar panel and dynamo (in the battery house by Parreno). There are also plans or dreams of building a new shower room, a library, a mediation hall, and of moving the office, perhaps out to the land.  

Artist and initiator Kamin Lertchaiprasert says:

> We don’t keep the houses as permanent structures, we use them…like Tobias’ (Rehberger) building, we took it down because it was dangerous. We experiment with what materials that function here, if the houses don’t function, we change them, like the battery house… If it doesn’t work we make it a studio or something else. If we had big money from the government maybe we wouldn’t have to think about these things that much – when we don’t have much money, we are forced to be creative. Perhaps it is better that we don’t have money. 

Today the project is named the land foundation. It has become a foundation more clearly grounded in the purposes of artistic/cultural activity, natural/ecological farming and self-knowledge through meditation – lately the cultural emphasis is further divided in two – art and media. Introducing the foundation structure consisted of a formal dissolving of private ownership; if the project breaks down or dissolves, values and properties will be transferred to the Chiang Mai University. The foundation is, as mentioned, mainly run by private funding

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20 The Supergas biogas system develops gas from cow or buffalo dung to use for cooking and lighting. The system was developed in 1997 and first installed at a family’s farm in Tanzania. Later, the system has been installed several other places, for example the land.

21 In 2007 the office moved from Umong to another location in Chiang Mai – I have not been able to include this material in the dissertation, partly because the projects continuously do new things and I cannot possibly record all changes, and partly because it is difficult to get precise details when I am located in Norway. I have, however, tried to follow news and updates on the home page until August 2008, as well as keep in touch with project managers or participants. It is, however, possible that certain elements/aspects in both ‘land’ projects have changed since this thesis was written.

22 Interviewed by the author in Chiang Mai 17th and 18th of February 2006 – this and following quotes were approved by Lertchaiprasert in August 2008.

23 The land changed to the land foundation on the 17th of February 2004 – ref. One Year Project catalogue, printed and written by the land foundation with diverse contributors, project advisors: Rirkrit Tiravanija, Kamin Lertchaiprasert, Uthit Atimana og Mit Jai-Inn, Chiang Mai 2005.
from the two initiating artists Lertchaiprasert and Tiravanija, but the aim is to make the project “self-sustained”. The structure is based on voluntary participation, and participants must pay their own expenses, particularly artists or participants who have funding – Lertchaiprasert says:

Everything is for living (but nobody really stays here)... It is open; people can come and stay if they make an appointment with the land office – there are sleeping bags here as well. Sometimes students ask if they can stay, or if I can come and talk, give a lecture or something like that.

The purpose of the land has become more and more public, a shared piece of land instead of private property, it has become a common project. And the discussions about what it should be, how it can develop: This is important to me, it’s a constant negotiation and I have learned a lot, also about controlling my own ego... The many discussions have in some way become the land; what is it? Even we don’t know, it is constantly different meanings and discussion. The “meaning” or intention of the land hasn’t been fixed yet and it is probably not to be fixed.

The land project and the culture centre and administration Umong Silpadhamma: “…aim to create a space for contemporary art and alternative education at the intersection of debate and holistic learning… Within the activities we have organized, we emphasize education and sharing of both tangible and intangible knowledge. We value the complexities and sensitivities that arise through the process of challenging the status and culture. We have no intention of commercial gain...” The relationship to the University of Chiang Mai and to temples as places of education and learning is important to the project. The land foundation has organized several workshops, lectures and seminars, often in collaboration with the local university as well as international instances. Bridge the Gap? 3 was one such seminar at the University, where several anthropologists and media researchers were invited to speak together with artists and curators. In 2004, the land foundation established the One Year Project as an alternative education, an experimental community consisting of about 16 students/artists living and working together for a year. The One Year Project students are the only ones to have lived at the rice field (apart from the attendant) for months, using it as community. In 2007 a second experimental community was established, One Year Project #2, and there are plans for a further development of the rice field. The ‘one year’ projects are thought of as a kind of education, but also as the creation of a community – sociality and

24 Kamin Lertchaiprasert in interview 2006, op. cit.
25 From the catalogue One Year Project catalogue, op. cit.
26 Chiang Mai University 24-25th of February 2006.
collaboration are thus important parts of the project, and all over the contents and intentions of the project keep moving.

Mainly rice, but also different plants and vegetables, are grown on small parcels at different places on the land: tomatoes, spinach, “morning glory”, etc. The plan is to acquire more land next to the land and grow more vegetables, so that more people can live from what is grown there. Besides poultry and two buffaloes (named Kamin and Rirkrit by the One Year Project), there are fish and frogs in the pond. One has attempted to carry out the farming according to the principles of Thai farmer Chalauy Kaewkong, and Japanese farmer and philosopher Masanobu Fukuoka. Fukuoka’s ideas on ‘natural farming’ seek to create growing conditions that are as natural as possible by not using any fertilizer or pesticides, and instead establishing a rich environment with natural enemies. This implies no weeding and little cultivation, avoiding monoculture growth, the use of buffaloes to plough and trim the grass, and further the use of buffalo dung for energy.27

The land foundation can be characterized as a project, that is, there is a certain structure or some aspects that hold it together, being places, social bonds and mental goals. With ambitions tied to sociality, agriculture and meditation, it is hard to lock the projects within an art sphere. Their organization might be reminiscent of cultural administration, but one in which the administrative and regular events to some extent are more included in the idea of the overall project. In a culture centre or administration, only the activities or events themselves tend to be emphasized; at the land foundation any part or any discussion can be given this same weight – the entire process is to a larger degree included in the project frame.

Thus the land foundation engages in various activities, from art production and exhibiting, research-based art and discussions, the social arenas of openings, performances and seminars, to education, cooking, farming and philanthropy – all the while keeping bonds with the “real world”, so none of these aspects are isolated or made totalitarian: Participants have other jobs and activities they attend to concurrently, and few spend all their time on the project. In a more regular art-historical perspective, in which time, space and media are investigated, I would emphasize a multi-spatial, multi-temporal and multi-medial approach: The land foundation consists of events and flux, of localisable spots and floating spaces, and uses

27 http://fukuokafarmingol.info
media from drawing, painting, sculpture, theatre, film, performance, video, text, computer, music, graffiti, etc. We thus find “regular” artists displaying “regular” cuts or drawings, or people with more activist or social attitudes. One of the volunteers, Jirasak Saengpolsith, has been involved in art therapy, helping out at a local community centre that helps HIV positive people, helped tsunami victims in 2006, and is active in temples and meditation. This, however, is reflected into the projects – the participants of the One Year Project visited and collaborated with the Community Health Centre for HIV positives and there also learned about the use of local herbs for treatment of various diseases. The actions and projects of each participant are included in the overall frame, and vice versa.

BBQ’ing at Umong, Chiang Mai, 2006.

An important part of the project, at least to me, is the many dinners and time spent cooking with others. Shopping for ingredients, learning how to cook traditional dishes, and then eating together, mingling and discussing – is a regular set up for an opening at the land foundation. Initiator Tiaravanija is known for cooking his way around the world, and using food as “medium” for communication. The necessary, biological and pleasurable sides of food are combined with cooking and eating in important social situations – moments of collaboration and anticipation, of communication and dialogue.
The land foundation develops through its activities; it continuously plans and executes new projects, seminars, workshops, and exhibitions, as well as engaging in different types of environmental, social and mental work. At the land foundation there is a general interest in the local environment and many of the artists were raised and live in the surrounding area of Chiang Mai, although there is no special focus on a particular local community or environment. Rather, they seem to establish contact and exchange with people who are interested in similar projects or who have knowledge they deem important, such as meditation, farming, experimental communities, various art production, music, etc. Sometimes, however, they are not the ones to initiate contact – different groups and individuals also take initiatives to collaborate or to exhibit at Umong, and a decision to collaborate or not is then made after a discussion among participants at the land foundation.
1.2.2 Sørfinnset School / the nord land, Sørfinnset and Kjellingvann, Norway:

![Image](image.jpg)

*The nord land, Kjellingvann, 2005. Foto: Sørfinnset School / the nord land*

*Sørfinnset School / the nord land* began its activities in 2004 at Sørfinnset in the North of Norway, under the direction of Søssa Jørgensen and Geir Tore Holm, and it is as varied as the *land foundation*. The project was directly inspired by the *land foundation*, and began as a part of a local governmental art funding called “Artistic Interruptions”, curated by Per Gunnar Tverbakk. “Artistic Interruptions” was a project that sought to develop socially ‘site-specific’ projects, as a continuation of the sculptural ‘site-specific’ project “Artscape Nordland”. *Sørfinnset School / the nord land* is based on collaboration with the local community in the North Norwegian village of Sørfinnset, a small place with about 70–80 regular inhabitants (around 150 in summer). The village is typical of northern Norway. It is

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28 Jørgensen and Holm also have other projects; Jørgensen has been a part of the artist project Ballongmagasinet that produces “soundworks”. See home page [http://www.ballongmagasinet.com/](http://www.ballongmagasinet.com/). Geir Tore Holm is currently projects manager at the Art Academy of Tromsø, and has in 2008, amongst others, participated in the exhibition Bakgrunn at Preus Museum – see [http://www.preusmuseum.no/norsk/utstill_archiv_more.php?id=483_0_59_0_C](http://www.preusmuseum.no/norsk/utstill_archiv_more.php?id=483_0_59_0_C) (retrieved 13th of November 2008).

29 Home page [www.artisticinterruptions.no](http://www.artisticinterruptions.no).

30 Home page [www.artinnordland.no](http://www.artinnordland.no). The term site-specific is defined in section 2.2.2.
surrounded by spectacular nature and has a rich cultural history, but today there are relatively few activities and few new jobs available – the basis for life is growing meagre.

The artists have sought to contribute through what they call ‘culture service’ in the local setting – meaning that they offer their cultural expertise, drive and energy to the local community in order to make something that is valuable to both the local community and themselves. The collaboration with the local community is a precondition of the project, which is based on events, dialogues and activities that require their interaction and participation, and the sense of local ownership that has been established is therefore crucial. The project has also established a cultural exchange with the land foundation; the Thais have built a Thai house in Norway, and a delegation from Sørfinnset have plans to build a typical Norwegian “earth cellar” (a traditional cave-like construction for preservation of potatoes, fruit and vegetables) at the rice field in Thailand. Sørfinnset School / the nord land is a living project, on-going and with an unlimited time span, and like the land foundation it becomes more and more composite as time passes: It consists of, amongst other things, a piece of land with artist-built living units, built preferably using local materials according to ecological standards (a Thai house adjusted to North Norwegian weather conditions and a Sami gamme built with local materials. A tent sauna (“Hikki”)\(^{31}\) is also planned, as well as a kitchen, a toilet and other facilities.) The local school, which is in disuse, is inhabited by the artists when they are at Sørfinnset, and functions as a sort of cultural centre from which activities are organized (cafés, parties, performances, concerts, debates, lectures on local history, cooking, hiking trips, and more) and as a place where guests may stay. There is a space at the school for tents and caravans in the garden, and there is an outdoor bonfire place and a herb garden. They also have a local radio project, Radio Kongo, transmitting from the school’s loft during certain periods, and they serve free coffee in summer – indicated by a sign placed near the road, saying “Free coffee – 250m”. The properties associated with the project, Sørfinnset School and the area around Kjellingvann, are both owned by the local authorities, the municipality of Gildeskål.

\(^{31}\) Ref. picture on the front page – “Hikki”/ tent sauna.
The Sørfinnset project is based on tight interaction with the local community and there is no aim to reach a larger audience. Still, anyone can participate, and different guests are often invited: During the summer of 2005, the delegation of Thai artists and students stayed at Sørfinnset in order to help build the Thai house and participate in other activities such as cooking Thai food for the locals, creating art, exchanging cultural specificities, and so on. Each summer an activity programme is set up, and though events are added, changed or cancelled, this serves as a plan for action. In the following, the programmes from 2006-2008 are rendered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme for 2006:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 July: Activity day – Samis in Gildeskål, lecture near ‘gamme’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 July: Activity day – Debate on art and tourism, serving local food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 July: Fish(ing) festival by UL Vårsol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 July: Tsunami memorial with Thai guests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 July: Olsok party (in remembrance of St. Olav who christened Norway) with artists, food and dance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– Inauguration of flag monument by the cross section at Sørfinnset (by artist group aiPotu).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Programme for 2007:

7 May: Making local Radio Kongo with artist group Rakett at the MC Fair, BIT Teatergarasjen, Bergen
26 May: First Saturday café: Where do we stand in the project? Potato planting, spring preparations and brewing beer.
29 June: Sørfinnset School / the nord land at Transborder Café, Festspillene i Nord-Norge
30 June: Saturday café at school: Food from wild growing plants. Information.
7 July: Activity day; Samis in Gildeskål – the ‘gamme’ is 2 years old.
– Lecture about Sami place names and reindeer husbandry. Maintenance of the ‘gamme’.
11-13 July: ‘Tove’ – workshop (craft technique) with Kristine Dybwad
14 July: Fish(ing) festival by UL Vårsol.
27 July: Seminar: Art and Critique.
28 July: Summer party at the Thai house with entertainment, food and dance.
30 July – 2 August: Participation at seminar/exhibition, Sparwasser/Umwetter, Berlin

Programme for 2008:

17 – 18 May: Potato planting, spring cleaning and maintenance of the school.
– Bonfire party at school on the 17th.
– Meeting about building of toilet at the nord land.
28 June: First Saturday café from 12–16, food from wild-growing plants.
5 July: The ‘gamme’ is three years old – celebration with serving of Sami specialities, lecture and maintenance.
19 July: Fish(ing) festival by UL Vårsol.
26 July: Summer party with stage acts and surprises.
28 – 30 July: Time for trips and excursions. Hiking in the mountains East of Sørfinnset, focus on philosophy and wild plants.
2 August: Last Saturday café of this season.
20 September: Potato-day and harvest.

Other on-going and more long-term activities:
- Finish building the Thai house near Kjellingvann (finished 3. of August 2008)
- Build an “earth cellar” (room made of dirt and stone with wooden roof, made to preserve fruit and vegetables) at Gjelseth, near the school, for preservation of the grown potatoes – focus of summer 2008. There are also plans for making such an earth cellar at the land in Thailand.
- Put up a “tent sauna” – Hikki – designed by the artist Per Enokson (picture on first side).
- Make local radio at the school’s loft.
- Better conditions for fish in Kjellingvann, by Talleiv Taro Manum.
- Continue to grow and enhance the herb garden at Sørfinnset School.
- Run and repair the school building.
- ‘Skolekjøkken’ (cooking in the school’s kitchen) by Marius Notvik
- ‘Potato Perspectives’ by Åsa Sonjasdotter.
- Presentations of artists and other guests at the school.
- Plan toilet at the nord land / Den glömda staden near Kjellingvann, by Liv Fjerdingrein (to be realized during the summer of 2009).
- Plan and develop other buildings, for example a kitchen, near Kjellingvann.

The Saturday café is a gathering place at the school for locals, artists and others – the café is often announced on small posters in nearby shops in adjacent villages (there are no shops at Sørfinnset). The artists use the café to meet the locals on a regular basis, but it is also intended that the locals meet each other over a cup of coffee and some freshly-baked buns. Sørfinnset School / the nord land is more directly run by the two initiating artists than the land foundation. Holm and Jørgensen, although they receive more support than the land foundation, cannot afford to pay employees, and it is harder for them to base the project on volunteers, as Sørfinnset is situated in a sparsely populated area. Sørfinnset School / the nord land is thus to a larger extent dependent on and interested in participation and communication from the local residents. The project in this setting brings artists, lectures, history, craft and cooking workshops to people living at Sørfinnset – visiting guests and artists also get a chance to see Sørfinnset and learn about local traditions and nature. One of the project’s main problems is, as mentioned, the tendency toward depopulation due to the loss of jobs, youth activities and cultural activities, and a particular challenge is how to create social and cultural productivity within this specific context. Sørfinnset School / the nord land is thus, to a larger extent than the land foundation, based on external funding, from Gildeskål Municipality, Nordland County, and Arts Council Norway. As far as I know, no conditions have been set for the funding, but the artists are constantly working in a relation to local community and
local government, and thus must feel this – they also have an initial common interest in preventing further depopulation. The artists placed themselves in a position where they are not entirely “free”, rather, they are dependent on the goodwill and collaboration of the people and authorities who surround them, such as the local inhabitants’ association ‘Sørfinnset vel’ – this engagement was, however, implicit in the project from its start, and it is an important aspect of the sociality they constitute.

**1.2.3 Similar but Different**

Having presented the two projects through various fragments and examples of their activities, one can see that they are organized around certain forms: Both projects, as one is inspired by the other, consist of a building with kitchen and possibilities for accommodation where people can gather more regularly and comfortably, and where the projects can be run (administratively) on a daily basis (Umong and Sørfinnset School). In addition to these “modern” houses that function as cultural centre, hostel, gallery and community centre, there is a piece of land (near Sanpatong and Kjellingvann), of nature, where a more nature-bound lifestyle can be experienced. Here, activities such as farming, fishing, hunting can be enjoyed, and traditional or ancient building techniques can be employed alongside brand new artistic and architectural designs. Further, it gives an opportunity to live using fewer resources and to use other energy sources, or even invent other renewable energy sources such as the biogas system at *the land*. Though both projects have an aim of ecology and sustainability, neither rejects new technology or non-ecological products. They use what is at hand and what is the most suitable in each situation, and we thus find combinations of high technology and “old fashioned” manual solutions.

Then, in addition to the “culture centres” and pieces of land for experimental living, comes the educational and presentational programme: The artists want their projects to offer development to the participants on mental, social, and emotional levels. This is more explicitly stated at *the land foundation* through, for example the One Year Project, meditation “sittings” every Sunday and free Yoga classes once a week. However, Holm and Jørgensen also seek to achieve some positive social change or development through their culture service – as well as for themselves as human beings and artists. Through excursions and hikes in the local area, and lectures/seminars about the local history, food and plants they both revive and
explore the locality – they organize them for others, but simultaneously learn themselves. Other parts of the programmes are less local and less site-specific; they present their projects at different art fairs, exhibitions, help others with plans to start similar projects and, not least, they collaborate with and visit each other. Though they participate in certain international fairs, they are to some extent reluctant to do this – they try to keep a local focus in their activities. However, they do expand their collaboration with universities (particularly the land foundation), seeking to unite art and research in sensual and intellectual investigations.

Summing up the projects, we can make the following list:
1) Both include a multitude and undefined number of events and objects, not only one presentation.
2) They use a wide range of media and genres from texts, canvases, photography, film, computers, sculpture, to music, performances, installations and social situations/SETTINGS.
3) They are not limited to one field, but participate in community work, art therapy, meditation, cooking, cultural seminars, politics, agriculture, history research, parties, regular social settings – and they do not differ between the different settings.
4) The number of people involved is unknown and changing, though there is a certain core group.
5) The places used range from institutions to personal homes, from natural settings to universities, from cafés to foundation or stately properties.
6) The time line is undefined, things may or may not happen.
7) Their general structure seeks flexibility and openness in all the above mentioned areas, however, without being dogmatic or consequent – this makes predefinition and definition in itself hard, if not impossible.

The two projects thus have several common denominators; it is however not within the scope of this dissertation to make a comparison of the two projects or to list qualities that can be directly compared. I present certain commentaries on the differences between Norwegian and Thai culture, and Western and Eastern art – these are mere suggestions, as I have no expertise in the area of Thai culture or Asian art in general. My main focus has remained with the research questions more generally tied to art and performance theory, to the relation between theory and practice, and to philosophical tensions found in material, theory as well as contemporary culture – questions that are presented in the following.
1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Initial Inquiries
Common for the two 'land' projects as well as for the previously mentioned “mobile home” projects is a particular awareness of the social space and the use of different strategies – social, physical, intellectual – that make me as a viewer/person/researcher participate more actively in a situation. Situation is here understood as an event, though not necessarily staged – an assembly of actions, reactions and things in a particular space at a particular moment. A situation can be defined by the various actors, by all of them or one of them; a situation consists of factors that can be controlled as well as factors that are given, uncontrollable or unexpected. As a researcher and participant, I experienced that the projects made me feel at home or as though I was part of something, a group or a mood, or, they made me aware of my own position in precisely this all-encompassing sociality. In general, these projects are live, they work with groups of people, and they most often make participants collaborate or actively participate. They seem to have both micro- and macro-political\(^{32}\) approaches at once; that is, they seek to work with the actual room, the concrete conditions here and now, as well as the larger political and societal picture. Through small and large actions that concern everyday matters and at the same time influence global conditions, for example when eating a meal together, they touch upon processes ranging from biological and bodily needs and fluids, through social rituals, joys and disturbances, to food politics, art, and sensuousness.

Further, the projects use a variety of media and discursive approaches, and the comprehensive sense of a whole makes it hard to isolate single works or activities as being more important than others. The sense of a whole does not indicate or refer to some clearly defined higher unity,\(^{33}\) but there is a notion of the many parts being connected, both with each other and with

\(^{32}\) Definition of micro-political in Oxford English Dictionary online, op. cit.: “Relating to politics on a small or local scale; esp. having reference to political issues concerning individuals or small groups, limited aspects of behaviour, etc., rather than society as a whole.” The micro-political might relate to the macro-political – which refers to matters of national, international, global, etc. concern. However, both levels must be seen to influence each other. The particular micro-political awareness is, however, important to the 'land’ projects, that is, a concern with close and concrete matters that one has a direct relation to.

other external and unknown fields. This can perhaps be seen in relation to the long-term and processual approach applied in the projects, that is to say: the various parts and activities are presented not as unique, single, independent pieces, but as dependent and co-existing aspects that are not meant to be thought of or perceived alone. This represents a clear challenge to the researcher: The practices may or may not be labelled as art, and they do and do not revolve around problems related to the art term or discourse. It is however a general aim in the projects as well as in this dissertation to move beyond the question of category – it is thus generally not a question of whether the practices are art or not, but a question of what matters in the practices, and particularly what matters for the people involved in them. Further, this perceived multitude will influence my choice of method, resulting in an eclectic and varied approach.

It is an aim to understand the ‘land’ projects as practices, in relation to their context and possible theory, and to denote certain key features in the way the projects, participants and contexts relate to each other. But the practices, as they in fact spring from art and performance history and discourse – they are planned and executed by people with art education and they receive funding from art and culture instances – must also be seen in relation to aesthetic and performance strategies and elements. Thus, another question is whether the specific, discourse related aspects tied to art and performance can be related to more general, philosophical, and social perspectives: To what extent do they blur art and life, and to what extent does this matter? This theme has, as mentioned, been a central one for the 20th century avant-garde, and creates new problems for the researcher: 1) In order to access the material, the role of the researcher must to some extent be blurred into that of the participant, creator – this brings in anthropological problems and problems of perspective. 2) The interference with other fields, activities and practices requires a re-thinking of the field's theory, or the use of theory from other disciplines. This is of course scientifically "dangerous", and contains epistemological risk as the entire line of thinking is de-situated. 3) Through various thematizations and actualizations of the situated and the de-situated, the practices bring forth existential tensions, tensions that are apparent in 20th century theory. That is to say, by playing out or materializing certain problems tied to situatedness and de-situatedness, the local and the global, they impel the use of theories that are often perceived to be contradictory (phenomenology and post-structuralism), as well as a far more pragmatic and relational approach than most theories convey.
1.3.2 Art History and Performance Theory
The use of theoretical approaches is a central question in this thesis, and an attempt will be made to unite different traditions and perspectives in order to shed light on the discussed material, as well as on the theory itself. Coming from the field of art history or theory, I have been trained to relate to questions concerning the history of modernism, form, production, work, representation, media, etc. Art history or theory can perhaps be said to be a media, genre, and “ism”-focused discipline, in general strongly dependent on hermeneutics and, later, when related to sociological power discourses, of de-coding. Art theorist Grant H. Kester states that “aspects of these (dialogical) projects simply cannot be grasped as relevant by conventional art critical methodologies.” – such aspects would typically be sociality, liveness and non-composed elements. When studying live art material however, from the historical avant-garde until today, it becomes apparent that the performance tradition (related to the theatre tradition), concerning both practice and theory, runs almost parallel to that of art history – constantly co-acting, but never really coming together, at least in theory. The term performance is used in the context of visual art, but then most often means something as simple as “live art made by artists”. The field of performance theory, which relates to and describes the same material and tendencies, has been little referred to in the visual art context. Today, this has changed or is about to change, but the sometimes unnecessary divide between visual arts and performance when relating to the experimental, live material of the 20th and

36 Visual art here refers to the institution or field of arts related to museums, biennales and galleries tied to the pictorial and sculptural tradition, also including photography and film. Through the 20th century the object nature of art dissolves, and live and social elements or methods are more generally applied. The same techniques can now be applied both in visual art, performance and theatre settings.
21st century could perhaps explain some of the challenges and, I would say, rather shallow readings of socially-oriented art projects within the visual art field.\(^{38}\)

The field of performance theory, defining itself clearly with Victor Turner and Richard Schechner during the 1970s and 80s, could be said to have emerged from a mix of theatre and anthropology, focusing on the different dynamics of social interaction. Richard Schechner also actively established performance theory as a discipline of study, emphasizing its synthetic, cross-disciplinary character and “broad spectrum approach”.\(^{39}\) The performance theory of Schechner and Turner emphasizes the ritual and behavioural aspects of action or performance in art, ritual and other activities such as sports or games, sides that are often under-communicated in art theoretical treatments of socially-oriented art. Performance theory on the other hand, might be seen to neglect the performance or art-historical tradition that these live or social projects actually stand in: Since the beginning of the 20th century practices or movements such as the Italian Futurists or Russian Constructivists have struggled with the nature of art and action, combining aesthetical, political, social and mental aspects in their experiments – field transgressions were not new to the 1960s.\(^{40}\)

The ‘land’ projects’ focus on the actual social room and the immediate human dynamics, and could be seen to give them a performative character and a theme of (co-)existence. The term performative is here understood as a derivative from performance – as something that characterizes the performance or live art setting and works with this quality specifically – though what this quality specifically is, is a matter of discussion or perspective. Further, performance is here both used in regular, social settings as well as in art contexts; performance is combined with the idea of "live art" tied to avant-garde practices of the 20th century, with the general theatrical "carrying out" of a programme or script, an impressive or remarkable social act, or quite simply with the social act. The perspectives or performance and performativity will constitute important additions to the art theoretical and aesthetical

\(^{38}\) For example Claire Bishop’s commentary “Palaver North” in ArtForum online, see more elaborate discussion under the section “Critique” in Chapter Three.


perspectives presented, precisely because of the immediate and social character of the material in question – this issue, as well as the terms performance and performativity themselves, will be further discussed in Chapters Two and Four.

1.3.3 Situatedness and De-Situatedness
The titles and repeated references to "mobile homes", both as actual mobile homes and caravans, but also as a more philosophical concept or tension, indicates not only a preoccupation with, but an unfolding or materializing of societal and theoretical discussions on situatedness and de-situatedness, on both the local and the global level. Discussions on globalization and internationalization have been important parts of the late 20th century – the economical and transportational means, the mass medial development, as well as diasporic movements due to wars and catastrophes, have connected the world in ways that are ever more apparent. The Internet alone gave more regular and far faster contact with other countries and socialities. Theoretical developments in sociology, media, art, and technology tended to emphasize the speedy, uncontrollable, and globalized sides of this new reality: The globalization tendency was often either feared as a “smoothing” out of spaces and likening of cultures, introducing hard-core capitalism to all corners of the earth – or inversely, it was hailed as a new-won freedom, a possibility of global communication and collaboration on everything from everyday matters to large scale political matters such as working conditions or freedom of speech.41 Intensity and speed in communication made things happen faster, and movement in general – of people, meaning, and space – was explored and emphasized, in both art and business.42


Then followed the term “glocalization”, involving a renewed focus and interest in the local and “close” conditions in the human everyday, when faced with speed, mass, and multitude: We had reached the late or ‘high modernity’, a reality that corresponded to our post-modern “fragmented” theories; now what about the people who inhabited this fragmentarity? How would and could they cope? How were their subjectivities influenced, or were they not influenced at all? One suggestion made in this dissertation is that the two ‘land’ projects can be seen as dealing with these questions, and that they in some way are responses to certain general, societal developments, as well as the theory connected to these perceived developments or changes. The "mobile home" projects in general can be said to have activated certain contemporary conditions as they perceive them, and it is my hypothesis that a central theme in these contemporary conditions is the relation between the situated and the de-situated, and not only as relations between the local and the global. The tensions in relation to art and performance will here be considered on at least three levels, in relation to 1) theory/discourse, 2) subject/sociality and 3) place/situation. All of these levels exceed the artwork or project in itself as they include the theoretical context in which they work, the various subjects experiencing them, and the physical and social environment surrounding the projects – all external elements (though I cannot possibly trace them all here) are seen as potentially relevant or influential to the projects.

On the theoretical level, it is, as mentioned, the possible co-thinking of situated theories (phenomenology) and de-situated theories (post-modern, post-structural) – the phenomenological theories are considered to indicate a clearly defined subject, post-structural theories have been known to de-construct the subject, emphasizing its non-coherent or non-

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43 Used by a variety of scholars and instances during the 1990s, for example Roland Robertson and Ulrich Beck. Beck says: “Globalization is also a matter of situating and localizing. It is impossible even to think about globalization without referring to specific places and locations. One of the most important presuppositions and implications of the cosmopolitanization thesis is the rediscovery and redefinition of the local.” The Cosmopolitan Vision, Cambridge and Malden, Polity Press, 2006.

44 A term coined by Anthony Giddens to describe the late 20th century, Modernity and Self-Identity, Cambridge and Malden, Polity Press, 1991, see for example p. 4 and p. 20. We will return to some of the characteristics of ‘high modernity’ later.

45 Because there is indeed a question as to whether these developments have been as fast and far reaching as some theories might have suggested, and as it is also a question of perspective and culture, I use the term ‘perceived’ – this “perceivedness” is also used other places in order to indicate human ideas or conceptualizations of things or phenomena, that might not be as actual as they are precisely, perceived to be.
unified character. This has implications for art theory and discourse specifically – is the artwork and production a personal experience or a statement in a wider institution? This brings us to the second aspect, that of the subject and its position in sociality; the perception of the subject largely defines how meaning is constructed – is the meaning in the world or in the subject? Is there a common meaning, or is everything subjective? To acknowledge the different subjects, defined by their unique bodies, while seeing identity and subjectivity as continuously developing and exchanging in sociality, becomes a clear challenge in this perspective, a challenge made concrete by the sociality of the ‘land’ projects. Thirdly, the situatedness and de-situatedness of place and space relates to the "glocal" set of problems; is home where your peace of mind is? Is place a geographical spot, a particular constellation of people, or merely a situation? Relations between what is perceived as near and as distant are continuously worked and reworked, both physically and mentally, in constructed or already given spaces – analyzing material that relates to concrete places, but primarily working with social spaces, these tensions manifest themselves clearly.

Seeing and understanding the different projects as direct and conscious expressions or parts of their time, they are also intuitive and personal, creating or doing things they felt lacking around them. They thus concretely respond and react to physical and theoretical conditions surrounding them, though they are also far less conscious and more personal in many of their

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46 Phenomenological theory refers to the theoretical tradition connected to, amongst others, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Louis Althusser and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. From Oxford English Dictionary online, http://dictionary.oed.com/ – all citations from Oxford English Dictionary online are made 8th of November 2008:

“A method or procedure, originally developed by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), which involves the setting aside of presuppositions about a phenomenon as an empirical object and about the mental acts concerned with experiencing it, in order to achieve an intuition of its pure essence; the characteristic theories underlying or resulting from the use of such a method. In more recent use: any of various philosophical methods or theories (often influenced by the work of Husserl and his followers) which emphasize the importance of analyzing the structure of conscious subjective experience.” Here, the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty will be used, and it will be more thoroughly introduced in Chapter Three.

Post-structuralism is an imprecise term, but defined by the Oxford English dictionary online as: “An extension and critique of structuralism, esp. as used in critical textual analysis, which rejects structuralist claims to objectivity and comprehensiveness, typically emphasizing instead the instability and plurality of meaning, and freq. using the techniques of deconstruction to reveal unquestioned assumptions and inconsistencies in literary and philosophical discourse.” This is of course broadly phrased, and I will concentrate here on two theoreticians in particular, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in Chapter Three – Michel Foucault is also mentioned in relation to the methodological concept of ‘discourse’ in Chapter One.
actions and choices. This combination of personal likes/dislikes and feelings with concrete and formulated outer conditions is hardly new or surprising, however it does represent a theoretical and epistemological problem, and then also a problem in the understanding and discussion of these practices. As aspects of situatedness and de-situatedness are treated more generally in relation to theory/discourse, subject/sociality and place/situation, this is also done to challenge certain central problems in the discipline of art theory. These are of course vast and, to some extent, insurmountable problems, however, as I was faced with practices that were more complex and important in other ways than theories seemed to record, it became a main objective to explain the reach and complexity of these practices, their field and discipline expanding character, as well as actually addressing the many tensions they bring up. If I had not dared address certain philosophical basics and existential questions, I would, as I see it, not have been true to the practices and their concerns.

1.4 Method

The research questions posed in this dissertation are a combination of *inductive* and *deductive* approaches – they are formed through movements back and forth between empirics, theory and method. Both the inductive approach, as it implies a weight put on empirical evidence, assuming general relevance from specific material, and the deductive approach, which tests a specific hypothesis on a varied material, have their flaws. A method that oscillates between the two, as challenging as it is, might then be preferable. The methodology theoreticians Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg suggest this method as preferable precisely because one might avoid the most obvious traps of both methods, and further suggest this combined method to be called *abductive*.47 The abductive method goes back and forth between theory, empirics and the in-between level of empirically defined rules. The abductive approach thus considers theories on globalization and glocalization in relation to art practices calling themselves ‘mobile homes’, stating that their concern is loss of belonging, possibilities for movement, as

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47 Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg, *Tolkning och reflektion*, Lund, Studentlitteratur, 1994, p. 41-46. The term ”abductive” was not coined by Alvesson & Sköldberg, but they specify it as a method drawing on both inductive and deductive approaches. The term is known from several other theoreticians, amongst others language philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce – Peirce sees abduction as a logical from and traces it back to Aristotle. Ref. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Writings of Charles S. Peirce – Volume 2*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, p. 108.
well as the abstract and concrete components that the practices consist of, such as camping gear, people, food, social situations, various media, etc. Also, the total environment, the concerns of colleagues, media, entertainment and magazines, influence these elements and constitute a further abduction between method, material and theory. Two anthropologists who have written on methodology, Pertti J. Pelto and Gretel H. Pelto, also hold that “effective theory construction depends on both inductive and deductive procedures. That is, solid foundations for scientific propositions often depend on a painstaking accumulation of, and generalization from, basic observations of the real world; but, just as often, theoretical systems provide the frame of reference and basic assumptions in terms of which relevant hypothesis-testing observations can be pursued.” 48 In fact, this entire dissertation is marked by this research technique, and as a result one might notice the particular analytical technique; no single method or theory is chosen and applied to the material, nor is the material thought to “speak for itself”, inducing single, general theories or perspectives. This, one could say, could lead to the lack of a clear objective, or a not-clear-enough relation to previous theories and categories. However, I believe the material required a continuous and dialogical relation to the theory surrounding and constituting it, and further, the importance of discourse and history is important in addition to the performative and post-modern perspectives.

The criteria for selection of the two ‘land’ projects follow this movement back and forth between theory and practice: Firstly, as material they were interesting in themselves, and they challenged several of the questions known from the avant-garde. For instance, the projects work amongst other things with community structures, and they exceed or propose other solutions to objections often presented in relation to social projects in art theory. Such objections would typically be that they display a too normative approach in order to make the communities “ideal”, they show a lack of long-term projecting and sustainability, or they have an outsider’s or arrogant art perspectives on local communities. 49 Secondly, partly as an extension of this and partly because the projects stand in a direct relation to their time and environment, they both follow and challenge theory. Thus, the ‘land’ projects as practices challenge both practice and theory simultaneously – this gives room or opportunity for the emergence of new or different perspectives. And thirdly: Particularly on the side of social


organizing, environmental and sustainable thinking, I believe these projects can bring important suggestions that might also have a more general or directly applicable side. Three central aspects contribute to this: their long-term character, their nevertheless primary concern with the moment and with immediacy as potentiality, and third, their pragmatic and non-normative attitude. These three criteria will be discussed in depth through the course of this dissertation, but they also constituted important aspects of selection at an initial phase, because they provided possibilities for the study of contemporary practice, for commenting on relevant discourse, for dialoguing with theory, as well as suggesting a possible ethicality. The two ‘land’ projects incorporated and materialized a wide range of problems concerning art, theory and contemporary life, and their complex and mature discussions and manifestations made them not only a rich and sufficient, but also interesting and challenging material.

1.4.1 Participatory Observation

In traditional (20th century) art and theatre theory, the critic or researcher is allowed a certain “subjectivity” – the particular angle of the researcher is seldom commented upon, and the work of art, defined as such, is interpreted in a classical hermeneutic tradition or read as a “text”. Comparisons, form and structure analyses are made, biographical or historical methods are used. The interpreter and her position are rarely made apparent, though sometimes renditions include a rhetorical “I”. After the Second World War however, we see a development in live and spectator oriented art, related to the development concerning the production of meaning as something that occurs precisely in the spectator, and this has lead to several projects or practices where the researcher can be seen as a participant or co-producer to a larger extent. This makes the role of the anthropologist and the method of participatory observation relevant to mention. Researching the above presented ‘land’ projects, I have faced methodological challenges that an art or performance theorist normally would not have to deal with: As the projects are based on social relations and trust, and are largely moving in networks, access requires a certain amount of personal involvement. One often tries to avoid personal involvement in scientific research because it might cloud or prejudice judgement, hindering the surfacing of certain acknowledgements or perspectives. Though distance is no

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50 Ref. Alvesson & Sköldberg on hermeneutics and text, op. cit., p.114-

51 Social scientific method where the researcher participates more or less actively in the (social) setting that is studied, ref. Pelto & Pelto, op. cit., p.67.
guarantee for an “objective” position, reflection around the researcher’s role and influence seems to be the most important thing. I could have observed the projects from a distance, not speaking or getting involved in situations, not helping out, but only watching and noting other actors’ choices of action. Then, a more distanced, art theoretical position could have been taken, and I would have based myself on other data such as form or media, and perhaps the appearance of a sociality that I would not have participated in. I could also have researched more sociological aspects, then investigating “external” factors such as project structure, financing, position in the art world, etc. However, I have deemed the projects’ most important feature to be their long-term sociality – not their funding, status as art project, single events or use of media. The ‘land’ projects’ ongoing, processual, semi-public and semi-private character, and their infrequent differentiation between event and outside event were the most striking features in my eyes, compared to what was going on and had been going on in the art scene. Wanting to access or experience this sociality, I had to use qualitative in-depth methods such as participatory observation, rather than quantitative or distanced analysis – personal involvement can then also be necessary for the researcher in order to access the desired information.

The need for active participation on behalf of the researcher is also connected with an aspect discussed in the next section: the use of a performance theoretical, phenomenological or experiential method – also an aesthetic method or approach where sensuousness and personal experience is given weight rather than external or sociological structures. In order to access such a close or experiential perspective, participatory observation was necessary. An art critic, Claire Bishop, whose critique of the projects is discussed in Chapter Three, approached the projects differently and more as a traditional art historian – as though the projects were “displayed” for her. I have, however, taken another position, more in line with performance research, where sociality and participation are key features and where these also become important aspects of the researcher’s material. As theatre and performance usually involve an elapsed period of time, there is a concern with the evolving and dynamic of this time. In performance and performance theory, this could be thought to confer with the processual character of performance, which further implies a particular weight given to the production rather than the product. Richard Schechner uses participatory observation, but he does not

52 Alvesson & Sköldberg, op. cit.
53 See discussion on emic/etic on page 45.
directly problematize it – rather, his entire research is blurred with anthropology and the context of anthropology is seen to include or justify such a processual participation.\textsuperscript{54} Also, in theatre and drama pedagogy, processual and aesthetical practice as source of knowledge and method of learning are widely studied. Participatory observation could thus be seen as a more or less commonly used method in performance and theatre – it is an active observation in a social situation that includes a certain exchange of communication, feelings, etc., and involves a particular focus on the aspects of process and practical involvement.\textsuperscript{55}

Having chosen participatory observation as a central method – that is an active participation in project activities and observation of these – I had to reflect on my role in the projects and the consequences of this participation. I have visited \textit{Sørfinnset School / the nord land} on two occasions: once for two nights, and once for three nights – I have been at \textit{the land foundation} only once, for two weeks. While I sought to take enough initiative for conversation and action not to stand out negatively, I also tried to hold back, not to dominate or influence situations in any particular direction. The projects are moving in networks, though also using public channels such as media and newspapers, as well as presenting public or open events. This means that you can be introduced by friends, invited to participate in some event as an artist, speaker, etc., or you can attend an event that has been advertised in the media. However, mainly local media and cheap posters are used; there is little direct marketing towards the “art sphere” or art public. There are, however, different levels of participation in these projects, and some are “closer” than others: One can for example be an \textit{organizer}, a person who makes decisions; one can be an \textit{active participant}, a person who helps the organizers; one can be a \textit{participant}, a guest who is part of the organization; or one can be a \textit{spectator guest}, a person who attends events, eats food, stays with the ones they came with, and so on. These levels are examples, and not to be perceived as a classification of participants – the different roles and degrees of “closeness” are constantly changing and being blurred.

\textsuperscript{54} See for example \textit{The Future of Ritual - Writings on Culture and Performance} (Routledge 1993), where almost every chapter contains an anthropological description of different rituals as performances based on participatory observation.
After having participated in the projects a couple of times, I had the role of an active participant, a helper – when I participated in the beginning, I was more a distant participant, a guest. The further inclusion into the network has, as I see it, had few consequences for the way I perceive them and write about them, apart from the fact that the closer I get, the more information I get – but this would happen with any material I chose to study more closely and over a longer period of time. Whenever I participate I am “aware” of my participation, I take notes, photos, etc., but I am also a part of the group. When I enter the project setting, I have already assumed the role of “writer” or “researcher” by introduction, and my behaviour is therefore not questioned. However, in order to get information, to become a part of the network, I have to share the “person me” with them as well, and I have to participate and help with the organizing. I cannot take the “distanced role” of the art critic, but neither can I let myself be “absorbed” by the projects – I am reflecting on my own position as well as the material unfolding in front of me. However, there is a level I am excluded from, or have excluded myself from as a researcher: The projects have quite a lot of room for initiatives, and one would not obtain the “highest degree of closeness” until one has organized something there, and this I could not do as a researcher as I would then produce my own material.  

My methodological approach has consisted in participating as much as I can without dominating, but of course carrying with me and reflecting certain theoretical and discourse-defined problems. I have sought to blend in, as in anthropological research, though not to become “one of them” or to know their culture as it “is”. In anthropological method, one uses the terms of emic and etic to denote two different research methods that, coarsely put, takes an inside perspective (emic) or an outside observing position (etic). Here however, there is an obvious and conscious blurring of roles, or, a consciousness of the roles being blurred, but perhaps not of when – there is thus a dissolving of roles that in some way disqualifies the entire question of roles. I, as a person and researcher, am coming together in one perspective. I neither seek to become one with the projects, nor to hold a particular distance: I am an art theorist and will behave as such, though I have related to several situations that might be seen as personal. Pelto and Pelto suggest we remember both emic and etic perspectives; while the

56 At one occasion I participated as a moderator at an Art & Tourism seminar at Sørfinnset School, but I was invited as a participating guest and I did not actively take initiatives.

57 Pelto & Pelto, op. cit., chapter 4.
one indicates an important will to understand and to be empathic, the other questions these same things as “normalized”. When relating to the practices, I render my personal experiences through participatory observation, but simultaneously from a researcher’s critically reflected perspective.58 That is: I have reflected upon my own motivations and whether I had any obvious prejudice. Further, I have sought to avoid rendering aspects one-sidedly and have noted the objections and counter-perspectives I have come across. I have also noted whether participants have had ulterior motives (politically, economically, etc.), without finding any such particular interests to be aware of. Further, to keep observations “fresh” I have taken notes and pictures in most situations, or written things down as soon as I could after conversations.59 I also used a tape recorder or an iPod on several occasions, to record conversation and lectures, listening to recordings and transcribing them later on.

Other aspects that must be reflected upon while participating in the research object are language barriers and misunderstandings, as well as which culture or environment the researcher uses as reference point for the observations – does the researcher’s own culture or the culture that is studied constitute the point of reference, or as in this case, a specific international “art culture”? As this is not an anthropological research and as I am not trying to understand Thai culture as such, I have not specifically studied Thai customs or culture. I have, however, addressed literature on Thai culture and Buddhism, and had an awareness of this difference as I approached my material, particularly in what concerns the Thai art concept – which is, as I will address later, not the same as the Western one.60 I have also been aware of the fact that I might not have had a “complete” understanding of situations and conversation because of cultural differences. However, I have sought to compensate for this by increasing the amount of sources, and by primarily addressing issues that are not directly influenced by personal statements. Further, as it came to central questions concerning art and

58 Critical reflection in science, Alvesson & Sköldberg, op. cit., p. 11.
59 Here I have also sought to follow Pelto’s advice “concrete” instead of “vague” notes, op. cit. p. 70.
60 The term Western is problematic, as it vaguely refers to Europe, North-America and Australia. However, it is a term in common use, which indicates a certain cultural tradition and dynamic. It also used in the land foundation’s catalogue to indicate something that differs from the Eastern or Thai tradition/dynamic. I thus use the term, particularly to speak of a certain “Western art and avant-garde history”, that is, the art-history most commonly taught in the above mentioned regions. However, I am aware of the problems concerning such stereotypical categorizations.
the avant-garde, I found that my Norwegian and Thai informants were equally well-informed, and seemed to have a similar awareness of matters related to art.

1.4.2 Other Methods: Informant Interviews, Conversations, Discussions, Publications, Long-term Contact and Observation of Events

According to anthropologists Pelto and Pelto’s methodology, an examination “of cultural behavior with a variety of different approaches greatly enhances the credibility of the research results”.

61 In addition to participatory observation, I have thus applied several other methods: Informant interviews, conversations, discussions, analysis of recordings, publications, photographs, email contact with project participants over long periods of time, and observation of “enhanced” events such as openings and performances. Interviews have mainly been conducted as conversations, though I have also had questions; I have sought to let the informants talk, seeking to draw out what they think is important. This could be seen as a trait of qualitative research, that the content of study arises from the object studied, rather than from the researcher’s idea or hypothesis. Of course, such a position requires a reflected and critical position as well; the qualitative researcher should have a methodological awareness, a clear idea of the interpretive processes that are at work, and of the political and ideological dimensions. Lastly, the researcher must be aware of the potentially authoritative position of the research.

62 Thus, I have sought to be aware of my particular areas of interest, aspects I have brought up for discussion if the informants did not touch upon them themselves. The following topics or focal points have been particularly important to my general observations:

– Relation to art discourse and history
– Relation to avant-garde and utopian visions
– Degree of awareness of self
– Normativity – use of principles and guide lines, goals and aims
– Relation to contradiction, critique
– Organization, choice of solutions
– Relation to global/local problem complex
– Gender issues and awareness of these

61 Pelto & Pelto, op. cit., p. 121.
62 Alvesson & Sköldberg, op. cit., p. 10-17.
– And, are these above mentioned aspects at all important to them, or are they concerned with other matters in their project involvement?

Many of these aspects were, however, already given by being pronounced explicitly in published material, for example the relation to art, sociality, organization, the collective, the local.63 Others were clear concerns in the discourse, the surrounding texts and critiques, in discussions at the projects themselves, etc. My concern through the interviews and conversation were to “check” these stated fields of importance, to see whether portrayals, self-portrayals and my impressions matched or not. When interviewing, one must be aware of one’s own position and bias, as well as the position and bias of the informant – in this case, as mentioned, I have not encountered any clear political or ethically questionable ambitions.64 However, artists have a tendency, consciously and unconsciously, to phrase themselves, if able, in a way that conforms with certain art theoretical “catch phrases”. In my interviews with Kamin Lertchaiprasert, Søssa Jørgensen and Geir Tore Holm, I noticed this awareness of self-portrayal and ability to formulate intentions in line with important art theoretical questions and issues – issues that I would be inclined to find important or interesting due to my art-historical background. I did, however, not find any important divergence between speech and action – their practices are in fact about these matters of art, life, theory, practice, participation, etc. Professionally they are also likely to be concerned with these issues, as they all have art-related educations.

I did not have an opportunity to interview the fourth initiator, Rirkrit Tiravanija – but as he is a renowned artist, there is a large amount of published material on him, as well as interviews with him. I also attended a seminar in Thailand co-organized by the ‘land’ foundation and Chiang Mai University, where Tiravanija and Lertchaiprasert both presented and explained the land foundation as they saw it. I have thus interviewed three of the initiators as well as other participants (left anonymous) several times, and followed their practice through events, mail contact, publications, etc. I have also been to exhibitions they have arranged, and maintained contact with other participants who have become my friends. This material will be used mainly as background, only in some places are parts of interviews left as “illustrations” in the text – these are mainly quotes by Thai initiator Kamin Lertchaiprasert and all quotes

63 See back of text under ’Other Sources’.

64 Ref. Pelto & Pelto, op. cit.
have been approved by him. Other more indirect quotations by Holm, Jørgensen and Sarah DeWilde have also been approved, and other references have been left anonymous. I have mentioned certain problems concerning social relations in the ‘land’ projects; however, due to scientific guidelines on ethics I cannot render examples of personal or social problems. Even if these were anonymized, they would be possible to trace as the milieu is after all quite small.

*The land foundation* has published several catalogues, as documentations and processing of previous projects such as the One Year Project. I have used these catalogues as sources of information and inspiration, but without leaning solely on them for any information.

### 1.4.3 A Phenomenological or Pragmatist Approach

As one of the important theoretical perspectives in this dissertation, the phenomenological or ‘pragmatist’ approach also constitutes a method often used in art and performance settings. The phenomenological position, here rooted in the theory of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, is clearly situated in the experiencing subject – constructing its world from perceived phenomena. The pragmatist approach, with reference to John Dewey, puts a similar weight on the entire experience as ground for knowledge and action. When attending the different events and projects, in fact in all my dealings with art, I seek to be aware of my own perceptions and feelings in the particular situation; *I try to observe myself observing or interacting*. That is, I am not only aware of the artwork and the particular conscious references this might bring up, I also seek to record other and more trivial feelings and thoughts. The entire situation is potentially important: if I get bored, hungry, tired, if co-participants or spectators dislike each other, if the artist is arrogant, if I think of my family, of shopping, of a blister, if I notice a crack in the wall or dust on the floor, etc. All levels, from the external, structural to the internal and trivial, are seen as parts of the situation – I am letting the entire experience count, not only discourse-related aspects or area of focus.

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65 Alvesson & Sköldberg also mention phenomenology as a methodological approach based on the subject and her basic/trivial perceptions, op. cit., p. 95.
mentioned in the previous section. A phenomenological approach is also used in performance studies, noting precisely this double awareness, of self and situation simultaneously.66

As a method studying the ‘land’ projects, I have applied it whenever I have participated in the projects – and I have, as mentioned, taken notes shortly after. I was then looking for notions or experiences of something extraordinary or ordinary, of particular sensuous experiences, notions of community, joy, sadness, social anxiety, etc. Finding certain feelings in myself, I observed others in the same situation to see if I could notice their feelings. The phenomenological and pragmatist approach implies an inclusion of 1) a wider sensuousness as well as 2) a particular awareness of immediacy. It can thus be seen as a method to linger slightly longer into the now, and a way of finding new and relevant information in one’s own body.67

1.4.4 Theory as Method

The relation between theory and method then, is intertwined in humanistic research – working with a “purely” textual object or a more or less clearly defined mass of visual objects, the theory chosen to understand the object has often been closely linked to the methodological perspective. The use of theory defines a perspective or an approach to the material, the theoretical concepts and approaches chosen in this thesis must therefore be considered to be at the basis of the methodological tools. The use of concepts as areas of thought and experience is one theoretical and epistemological tool used to gather and focus meaning – concepts may be considered concentrations of meaning in certain contexts, working as assemblages, always able to dissolve, re-group or enter into new constellations. “The concept is the contour, the configuration, the constellation of an event to come.”68 Further, theoretical problems will as mentioned constitute a central issue in this thesis; the theory outlines a framework and places


the projects conceptually. In some respects theory is the basis for action, and further, for the way this action is understood. Other places theory is paralleled with practice, for both artists and researcher, and I note the same kind of movements or tensions in practice as in theory, as for example in what concerns the tensions between the situated and the de-situated. When theory stands in direct relation to reality, rather than being applied to a material, theory changes as practice develops – concepts must thus be thought of as temporary constellations of meaning, as situation-like constructs frozen in order to be examined.\textsuperscript{69} In general, the direct “application” of a theory onto a material or practice is avoided, because this often shapes the reading or understanding of the practices or experiences themselves. Theory is thus practice-based - at the same time, as mentioned in relation to the inductive and deductive approaches, the theoretical concepts can also be thought as separate from the practices, as belonging to a discourse and as part of contemporary culture and theory.

The material treated in this study requires a broad aesthetical position that co-places sensorial navigation with social interaction. This is because the projects themselves include “normal” situations of sociality and life, and the experiential situation does not distinguish between play and non-play, act and non-act, art and non-art, work and not-work; the periods between events are as important as the events. Further, the projects are not limited in time, meaning that they have not set any “final date” for their projects, and my experience of the projects still goes on when mailing participants, when going to spin-off events, when attending the projects, when checking updates on their internet sites, etc. Finally, there is no clear definition or limitation as to what concerns the theme or content – there are certain areas of focus, but the most important or most formative situations might lie outside the project events or intentions, such as discussions of the futures of the particular individuals and volunteers participating in projects. Thus, it is not clearly defined within the projects what is supposed to be experienced as important, and that which is experienced as important might just as well be something unexpected or something outside the planned events. However, the fact that it is so can be defined or recorded; to have no normative ambition is an ambition of non-normativity.

In the field of the performance theory, amongst others Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, and Dwight Conquergood have sought to overcome this problem of simplification and the

\textsuperscript{69} Definitions of concept are partially based on or inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s definition in \textit{Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?}, op. cit.
narrowing down of the multitude and complexity of experience and action. They expand their theories to include sports, religion, all art forms, as well as other prominent sides and actions of existence. Their method, particularly Schechner’s, consist of anthropological, objective descriptions of events, seeking to let events speak for themselves. This gives insight into the events’ complexities, particularly as they underline the far-reaching implications of actions, also those executed within an art setting or frame. Turner and Schechner study “formative events” and cultural “moments of tension”, such as festivals, religious rites, youth excess, quarrels, or sorrow, and search to analyze them as they actually unfold, instead of finding certain pre-defined formal elements in the performance or measure it against certain established terms, as many art theories do. I will seek to further such a “non-discriminating” research position, taken in order to expand on traditional descriptions of artworks or performances as consisting of setting and plot, as well as to make a statement in regard to perception and epistemology onto the impossibility and narrowness of including only certain, pre-defined aspects of the experience or situation. Experience most often contains or includes more than we have pre-defined words and categories to explain. In a performance context this is also addressed through a focus on wide sensuousness and non-verbal communication.

Oscillating between theory and practice, aspects of situatedness and de-situatedness will be concretized through the relation between phenomenological and post-modern positions. Both positions also constitute methodological perspectives, and I have already presented the phenomenological approach. According to Alvesson and Sköldberg the post-modern is a method in its approach to the research question – How do we read? How do we analyze? The post-modern perspective is anti-authoritarian, relativist, it stresses doubt and polyvalence. In this dissertation I particularly lean on the theories of post-structuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari – their method renders few empirical perspectives, and refrains from settling on particular norms, rules and perspectives. Central methodological, theoretical as well as practical challenges are thus to see these situated and de-situated aspects in relation to each

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other – underlining the need for post-structuralist overview and continuous questioning, in addition to phenomenological and performative bodily and personal participation.

In the following section Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse is introduced – a term that has already been used several times, and that represents a method that contains several perspectives that later have been associated with post-modernism or post-structuralism. The central characteristics of the discourse have also remained important post-structuralist “values”, visible in the theories of Deleuze and Guattari.

1.4.5 Discourse
One cannot avoid placing oneself inside a discourse; there will always be factors that influence what we write about and how we write about it. Discourse is a methodological conceptualization and a way to describe the coming together of communicational processes, rhetorics and power, developed by Michel Foucault. By discourse, the totality of statements (‘énoncés’) is meant, existing at any time or place within a smaller or larger field or situation. The discourse is the speech itself as well as the conditions which make the speech attain meaning – it is a formation or gathering of statements on a certain topic, defining what the important or related discussions in the “discourse” is. A discourse thus refers to a certain body of statements and discussions that follows a discipline, field, category, matter, etc., like the art discourse, the discourse on and around the war in Iraq, the discourse of a family, etc. A discourse can then concern something as small as a family dinner, something as wide as the “rhetorical events” leading up to a war, and something as unclear as the borders of a field or discipline like art.

The discourse could further be said to define a situation within which meaning is unveiled and analysis conducted through the spoken word – it touches upon how one should understand or analyze a practice or a phenomenon, by showing what is tied to the discourse and particularly, what is left out. This is one of Foucault’s main points, that in any communication or discourse, there is always something or someone that is banished, tabooed, deemed false or mad – that is to say, something that is excluded and invalidated. Foucault mentions three aspects of exclusion: ‘taboos’ (that which is forbidden), ‘madness’ (that which is excluded or

deemed invalid), and the ‘will for truth’. Further, in addition to these three external aspects of exclusion, there are several internal procedures that steer and control the discourse as event, as well as larger social and societal mechanisms. The ‘will for truth’ is, however, the most vigorous principle, particularly because we in modern times seem to think that whatever is discussed actually is the truth: Having “exposed” unfairness in power-seeking monologues, established freedom of expression and the right to be heard, we have blurred the perspectived, subjective and power-driven structures. From the 19th century on, Foucault says, the term of truth is made relative, the statement is one version of the truth and there are many truths and many histories. This development seems to have continued up till today, and has, as Foucault sees it, “masked” several criteria of seclusion by making them implicit in the discourse – one pretends and perhaps even believes that discourse is neutral, free and public, while instead it is filled with rules, criteria for participation and mechanisms of seclusion.

In order to break this culture of “masked authority”, Foucault suggests that we make certain choices by questioning our will for truth, and give discourse back its character of event, leaving behind the sovereignty of the Signifier. These “tasks” or themes are to be achieved through certain principles of reversal, discontinuity, specificity, and exteriority. We are thus to look for a deeper or other source of meaning, not perceive discourse as continuous, premeditated and clear, but rather let ourselves be overwhelmed by its particularity, and, finally, seek an outside and perspectived understanding, rather than bury ourselves in what is perceived as the “kernel of meaning”, or the truth, of the discourse. These four principles of reversal, discontinuity, specificity and exteriority could perhaps be seen as typical for “post-modern discourse”, seeking a decentreing of the authoritative discourse, but accused by some of fluffy verbalism and lack of specificity and concreteness. One of Foucault’s principles however, is precisely specificity, which aims at concreteness, and one of Foucault’s main points is that the idea of a clear, democratic, polyvocal discourse is in fact a pretence: A discourse is always to some extent defined by exclusiveness (in topic, language and participants) – to pretend that discourse is open, free and democratic, is then to blur the

75 Ibid., p. 53-55.
76 Physicist Alan Sokal has written several books and articles on the subject, though not scientific, see for example Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont, Fashionable Nonsense, New York, Picador, 1998. Norwegian social scientist Jon Elster has likewise been critical to the post-modern understanding of phenomena, events and places, and speaks of Foucault, see “Kvalitet i forskning”, Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift, 2006, nr. 4.
mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, mechanisms or rules that Foucault, through his analysis, seeks to reveal.

While placing the material within the discourses of art and performance which, as mentioned, are sometimes separate and sometimes come together – I also seek to show the projects’ independency from single discourses. Demonstrating how the ‘land’ projects belong to several discourses simultaneously – of art, life, locality, family, work, nature, politics, globality – this is in some way alters the “system of meaning” created by the discourse: The discourse is continuously disturbed by other discourses that prevent it from becoming hegemonic. This is an important feature in the two ‘land’ projects – though they came about and strongly relate to an art discourse, this context is continuously interrupted by other simultaneous contexts, and this is partly what creates the confusion about their nature. Further, by more or less explicitly showing how the different discourses and levels both interfere and co-exist, a certain discontinuity is indicated in the discourse. In the following I will present an example, that is to say something that occurred at one of the events at Sørfinnset. This example is not strictly confined to statements and can therefore not be directly aligned with Foucault’s concept of discourse and his principles for destabilizing the discourse. Further, it might be deemed too trivial or too “un-scientific” to be given any weight in an art context. However, I believe this example well illustrates Foucault’s four principles of reversal, discontinuity, specificity and exteriority in the discourse in practice, and shows the importance of “unimportant” and unpredictable events that is often emphasized in a post-modern or post-structural theory construction.

The example situation is related to the event, but is not part of the event’s discursive context – it was unexpected, yet became important for the participants at the time and has continued to be a point of reference. It can also be seen in relation to other unplanned, yet meaningful aspects of the projects, namely the different meetings between people involved and the bonds they create: At the Mønsås-party on the 31st of July 2005, several Thai women married to Norwegian men, living in the North of Norway, ‘accidently’ met through Sørfinnset School / the nord land’s announcement of a “Thai event” in the local newspaper.  

77 Celebration of the first standing structure of the Thai house – “mønsås” is the ridge beam.
in my opinion clearly shows a *discontinuity* in the local and the international, the site-specific and the institutional, art and politics, as well as the interference with several socialities and cultures: The meeting of these Thai women was unexpected by the project managers, but in some way it is what they hoped for – that something unexpected, meaningful and political will develop from social and “chaotic” situations. When the situation occurred however, it was problematic because it brought up a difficult topic, namely the “arranged marriages” between lonely Norwegian men and Thai women. In many ways these marriages are unproblematic, and can be seen as a ‘joining of forces’. However, they are also problematic; two people from two different cultures with different expectations of the relationship, and perhaps with very little knowledge of the other person’s culture, form a quite demanding bond, and exploitation occurs from both sides. It has been pointed out that some of these women end up in abusive relationships, and because they are not part of a more general social and local network, they often become isolated and any abuse is more difficult to discover and report.78 On the other hand, it has been known as a financial agreement, the woman is expecting money, and perhaps clearly shows that she is not in love with her husband. Or, the woman is obliged by her family, which is still located in her native country, to send money home. Sometimes this is unproblematic, at other times it becomes an unrealisable duty creating difficult situations.

In general one would perhaps expect “radical artists” and their friends to not support “arranged marriages” or exploitative relationships, but when we stood there, at the opening of the Thai house in the North Norwegian landscape, and these Thai-Norwegian couples came, it became impossible to think in those terms. First, when you are *in* a situation, it is often more complex and varied than its theoretical pronunciation – this is a typical phenomenological or pragmatist perspective. Secondly, you can hardly reject a person who is standing in front of you because there is a small chance that he, or someone like him, might abuse his wife. Even though disrespect and intolerance is against project values, both the “import” of brides and the social rejection of them could be seen as equally disrespectful and intolerant. Discontinuity in both project goals and discourse “logic” thus surfaced, and the opposing values became apparent: It is hard to single out a "correct" behaviour – at best one can try to evaluate each

situation without prejudice, daring to report exploitation, as well as accepting human migration and arranged marriages for mutual benefit. Later, in the observation or field study period, I have heard of several other relations between Norwegians and Thais – some that we do not question in the same way because they develop in a more familiar way, and are thereby understood or accepted, and some that seem to be more in a relation of “mutual satisfaction”, less familiar but still more generally accepted. These relations are an important part of the ‘land’ projects and their networks, displaying and challenging our thoughts on sociality, relations, cultural norms and exchange.

I have here merely scratched the surface of this discussion, using it as an example of events that may occur, and in no way intending it to be exhaustive on the matter. However, the opening for this “discourse discontinuity” requires that one mixes levels and includes what, on other occasions, might be deemed exterior to the projects, for example where one only asks and responds to certain predefined, discourse-defined questions. The mentioning of this particular series of incidents or thoughts is methodological specific, so specific perhaps that is hard to show its coherence with other project elements, which is precisely the point. The questions raised within this frame are both outside and inside a discourse, they could be seen as inherent to an inquiry on relationality – a study of “ways of interacting”, or they could be seen as “digressions”, as a dead end springing from one of the central questions. However, the inclusion of these unexpected, trivial yet existential fields of complexities and tensions is important in relation to the ‘land’ projects – they show how each situation is singular and that reality is heterogenic (the event was unexpected, particular), yet connected and related (looking at it retrospectively, it makes sense that it would happen). And further, it shows how our conceptions, as well as our feelings, are discontinuous (the concrete and actual happening brought several prejudices up for questioning, and showed an inconsistency within the same ‘scope of opinions’).

This, as I see it, is one possible actualization of Foucault’s theories, and perhaps other post-structuralist or post-modern theories, in relation to discourse – characterized by reversal, discontinuity, specificity and exteriority and seen in relation to the discourse, the necessary power relations that are always manifest in speech or text.
1.5 Summing Up

The point of departure for this thesis was the observation and experience of several social projects with a particular concern for the relation between belonging and movement in the human situation. These practices or phenomena could fit into several categories of, for example, art, performance, cultural activism, festival, farming, or just daily life. Most of the practices were observed within visual, live and performance art settings, but not only in traditional institutions such as galleries, fairs, theatres and museums – several practices also combine art and non-art arenas. The projects observed primarily worked with social matter, creating actual rooms or mini-societies, lounges, workshops, panels for discussion, etc., and they manifested two important aspects: A further movement into reality and art as “social matter”, both materially and immaterially, and a thematizing or problematizing of the tensions in contemporary social reality drawn between a de-situated globality and a more specific situatedness or locality – the projects are geographically situated, locally concerned as well as global and international in their projects and collaborations. The land foundation in Thailand and Sørfinnset School / the nord land in the North of Norway are considered to be representative of these contemporary “mobile home” practices, and they were chosen as material because of the many challenges they represent; for their contemporary cultural and social relevance as well as for their pragmatic and complex ways of treating the tensions between the situated and the de-situated in both art, theory and real life. One of the first challenges these projects represent relates to the characteristics described above: how can the traditional object- and media-oriented art theory deal with immediate, temporary and social structures that both use and exceed the art field and discourse? What parts of the ‘land’ projects can be seen as art or avant-garde thematics? This relation to the art field and history, as well as a possible movement towards performance theory, will be addressed in the next chapter.

Another central concern or challenge in this dissertation is the spectre of tensions between the situated and the de-situated, manifest in these concrete practices as well as in the theory used to approach them. More specifically the aspects of situatedness and de-situatedness are displayed in the projects treatment of 1) theory/discourse, 2) subject/sociality, and 3) place/space/situation. This implies that the tensions are to be found in practice and theory simultaneously, and that these levels interfere and connect with each other: The ‘land’ projects simultaneously act out the tensions between the phenomenological and the post-modern, between the art-historical and the performance-theoretical positions, while at the
same time shaping these tensions and giving them new form – they both repeat and produce. The concept of the ‘mobile home’ constitutes such a tension-filled constellation, which will be further elaborated on in Chapter Three.

The analysis in this dissertation is adjusted to a material that diffuses narrative structures, uses everyday spaces for creation and addresses real life and social issues before anything else – the method and analytic strategy are carefully chosen to address this expansive character of live, contemporary performative projects. The method and position of the researcher has, however, been problematic in this thesis, because the projects studied are ongoing social settings, and perhaps more reminiscent of cultures or organizations than defined art objects/settings. The ‘land’ projects present a methodological challenge because: 1) they blur the role of the researcher, spectator and creator, 2) they are cross-disciplinary – thus making relevant the theory from several fields, and 3) they make visible problems in existing theory by making the problems concrete through action. The projects thus demand a social and personal involvement from the researcher in order to “access” the material, and make relevant the anthropological notions of ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ through the use of ‘participatory observation’.

Further, this practical-theoretical complex called for an ‘abductive’ methodological approach, that is, an oscillation between ‘inductive’ and ‘deductive’ approaches, a combination of empirical investigations and theoretical structures. A constant possible trap is the drawing of general lines on the basis of two particular projects – however, efforts have been made to avoid this. Rather, there is an attempt to see relations between two particular projects and the more general societal and theoretical aspects that surround and constitute them. Lastly, I mentioned Foucault’s term or concept of ‘discourse’, which becomes important because it suggests the continuous construction of fields of validation through statements or utterances. And as we will see in the following, the two ‘land’ projects relate to several discourses, making different validations possible.

Meanwhile, however, more and more art documentation is being produced and exhibited that does not claim to make present any past art event. Examples include complex and varied artistic interventions in daily life, lengthy and complicated processes of discussion and analysis, the creation of unusual living circumstances, artistic exploration into the reception of art in various cultures and milieus, and politically motivated artistic actions. None of these artistic activities can be presented except by means of art documentation, since from the very beginning these activities do not serve to produce an artwork in which art as such could manifest itself. Consequently, such art does not appear in object form – is not a product or result of a “creative” activity. Rather, the art is itself this activity, is the practice of art as such. Correspondingly, art documentation is neither the making present of a past art event nor the promise of a coming artwork, but rather is the only possible form of reference to an artistic activity that cannot be presented in any other way…For those who devote themselves to the production of art documentation rather than artworks, art is identical to life, because life is essentially a pure activity that has no end result. The presentation of any such end result … would imply an understanding of life as a merely functional process whose own duration is negated and extinguished by the creation of the end product. It is no coincidence that museums are traditionally compared to cemeteries: by presenting art as the end result of life, they obliterate life once and for all. Art documentation, by contrast, marks the attempt to use artistic media within art spaces to refer to life itself, that is, to a pure activity, to pure practice, to an artistic life, as it were, without presenting it directly. Art becomes a life form, whereas the artwork becomes non-art, a mere documentation of this life form.

Boris Groys\textsuperscript{80}

2.1 Art Theory
Avant-garde history and discourse is central to 20th century art history and theory, and as experimental practice, the ‘land’ projects clearly relate to some of the avant-garde topics of concern, such as the relation between art and life, issues of autonomy and self-reflexivity, relations between creator, spectator and work, cross-disciplinarity and the multi-medial, social organization in art and life, as well as the nature of work and production in itself. In this chapter art- and discourse-defined theory is presented, and the ‘land’ projects are set in relation to certain central aspects of this theory. It is, however, not within the scope of this dissertation to trace a full history of the avant-garde, nor of 20th century art – for my purposes it will be sufficient to outline some of the most important aspects of these problems and show their relation to the material in question here. Further, the ‘visual art’ history will be connected to the history of performance art, quite easily as suggested, because the two histories coincide, to a large extent, with what concerns live and socially-oriented projects. While addressing many of the same phenomena in 20th century live art, art theory however seems to lack the open and socially-oriented thinking we find in performance theory. That is why I, like the art projects analyzed, coming from a visual art-theoretical perspective, move towards a more social and performance-theoretical position. Finally, it is suggested that the various art- and performance-theoretical perspectives could be co-thought in a theory of broad aesthetics.

2.1.1 Avant-Garde History and Discourse
In the beginning of the 20th century, questions on the “hold” of the art concept were generally considered; what could be seen as inside and what was excluded or in opposition to the art concept, and how did art relate to its surroundings, to life itself? The idea of the autonomy of art was questioned, both as lack of responsibility in artists' production as well as a rejection of art as bourgeois "décor". Marcel Duchamp questioned the nature of the object in relation to the act of creation and the creator with his famous pissoir in 1917. Some years earlier the Italian Futurists and the Russian Constructivists had already executed their experimental actions – this initiated a series of questions that became important for both the historical avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde of the 20th century. 81 The avant-garde can be perceived

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81 By the historical avant-garde, different groups of radical and experimental artists from the first half of the 20th century are meant, such as the Italian Futurists, the Russian Constructivists, Dada and Bauhaus – while the neo-
as being historical movements and phenomena such as the Futurists, the Constructivists, Dada, Bauhaus, Surrealism (the historical avant-garde) and Fluxus, the Situationists (the neo-avant-garde). This includes the development of new artistic techniques, new ideas on the object as work or event, formal experiments such as collage, montage, the ready-made, monochromes, assemblages and happenings.\footnote{Collage, montage and assemblage is explained in section 3.2.2 – a ready-made is as the name suggest a product that is already existing, such as Duchamp’s pissoir. A monochrome is a one-coloured picture, and a happening (the term was coined by Allan Kaprow) is similar to a performance, which is explained in section 2.4.2.} The avant-garde is, however, also understood in relation to more general ideas of experimentation, revolt and negation of traditional values, dealing with political ideas and social organization – then being experimental praxis or living, constituting a sort of opposition or alternative to society’s “regular practice and logic”. These aspects are of course related, but making this distinction can help us locate various “avant-garde objectives” – some related to form, media, the constitution of meaning by signs – and others related to politics, society and deeply existential issues. In some avant-garde works, then, one can find that only form or technique are challenged, while other projects have actionist approaches, seeking to have an actual impact on society, and not only on art production.

The so called avant-garde thus reacted to social and political matters, as well as cultural and artistic ones: The Russian Constructivists had clear political ambitions, and were active in the period leading up to the Russian revolution in 1917. Constructivist poet Vladimir Mayakovsky expressed his thoughts on a new political and active art in this way: "We do not need a dead mausoleum of art where dead works are worshiped, but a living factory of the human spirit – in the streets, in the tramways, in the factories, workshops and workers’ homes.”\footnote{According to Tansey, Richard G. & Fred S. Kleiner, \textit{Gardner’s Art Through the Ages}, USA, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996, p. 1063.} Art as an operational field was emphasized, as a means of improving or changing the human reality through societal, psychological and aesthetical factors – aesthetical and sensuous factors were thus also considered important for social and political change. In the avant-garde designates practices after the Second World War such as Fluxus and Situationiste Internationale. For further reading see literature by Peter Bürger, RoseLee Goldberg, Ina Blom, Boris Groys, Hannah Higgins and Mikkel Bolt in bibliography.
post-revolutionary era of the early 20th century Russia, art was an important part of the cultural and medial expressions of a new, different and more socialist world.

The Second World War also brought on similar existential and societal concerns – performance historian RoseLee Goldberg writes:

> Only ten years after a debilitating major war, many artists felt that they could not accept the essentially apolitical content of the then overwhelmingly popular Abstract Expressionism. It came to be considered socially irresponsible for artists to paint secluded in their studios, when so many real political issues were at stake. This politically aware mood encouraged Dada-like manifestations and gestures as a means to attack establishment art values. By the early sixties some artists had taken to the streets and staged aggressive Fluxus-style events…84

Seeing depictions and representations of art as separated from life must have become impossible in industrialized, war-plagued times. The avant-garde of the 20th century developed in relation to political and social conditions such as war and famine, and there was in general a greater visibility of these wars and famines due to the establishment of a mass media culture. Further, the development of photography, film and popular culture erased some of the barriers between “the culture class” and the “non-culture class”. Mass media made the mass culture more visible, and the increased quality of life gave a larger middle class to expose this culture. The establishment of a more “general” culture of artistic expressions is important for the development of an avant-garde; a visible “main stream culture” constituted a reference for the avant-garde as precursors to this culture. The “bourgeoisie” constituted another counterpart; mass culture was seen to be driven by the capital logic, while bourgeois culture was life-distant, though equally manipulative by showing problem-free and glossy sides of life. Bourgeois art and culture was in some way both related to elitist art as well as to capitalist and main stream art – it nevertheless represented an important point of reference for the avant-garde.

Another aspect related to the 20th century avant-garde is the growth and development of large institutions; the medial experiments performed by the avant-garde could have been brought on by democratic and institutional habits of self-reflexivity, as well as the feeling of distance and

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84 Goldberg, RoseLee, op. cit., s.144.
alienation that occurs in large industrial and administrative systems. A democratization and industrialization of Western art and society can thus be said to have necessitated more life-near approaches and another more life-near kind of art, though also an art that reacted to much of what was going on in everyday 20th century life. In her book on Fluxus and the neo-avant-garde, art historian Hannah Higgins notes that there are sufficient historical and sociological justifications to consider the Fluxus practices ideologically narrow and form-oriented, politically broad and socially-oriented, or merely apolitical. The same could probably be said of the avant-garde in general; some parts consist of concrete and specific ideological projects, other parts are strictly formal projects or defined by the art discourse, and still other parts are broad philosophical projects concerning life and existence. Experimental artists of both the early and mid 20th century sought to oppose art category and genres, and many of the events, works and practices were aimed at a capital-driven art and society, authoritarian and un-democratic hierarchies, and the divide between art and life – and they did this in different ways, by relating to themselves, their own expression as well as to the world around them. The relation to both a broad mass culture, social and political conditions on the one hand, and to a specific art and form history on the other, is the important mixed root of the avant-garde.

The avant-garde then unites art and non-art discussion, it is both object and idea, political and non-political, innovation and repetition. Art theorist Ina Blom writes on this repetitive function, correcting the idea of the neo-avant-garde as purely innovative, rejecting all references and authorities, or on the other hand, as purely predestined, merely repeating what had been done by the historical avant-garde before them. She writes of the relation between the historical and the neo-avant-garde production:

The deep logic of art history runs through these works as something that is kept in suspense as the repressive dimension of its continuity is repeated as a sort of silence, boredom, or distancing… I have tried to describe a particular case story in which the “closeness” or continuity of this historical relation was taken up and repeated in the notion of a touch which brought out the distance or the difference within this continuity itself. Consequently…this


“closeness” does not produce one avantgarde “signature strategy” or an “aesthetics of autobiography”, but different signatures whose different forms of repetition each produces the presence of a particular version of the avantgarde tradition.87

In light of this the ‘land’ projects can be seen outside an art context, dealing with other, and more specific and life-near problems – such as how to make alternative human or political organizations or communities, or how to give life to a small place in the North of Norway that is threatened by depopulation. But, the ‘land’ projects are initiated within, or at least in relation to, an art context: In Thailand, the land was intended as the private, social project of two artists and friends – both are however trained/formed as artists, they have acted on the art scene, worked with art issues such as problems of representation, authenticity, etc. In Norway, the project came about as part of a larger framework that sought to investigate the local and social potential of contemporary art. Here, the two initiators are educated as artists, they are working in an art environment with art funding and framework. The ‘land’ projects must therefore be considered as deeply influenced by and a part of art discourse. Their organizational form and concerns can also be placed into what has been called 'the history of the avant-garde', which shapes several concerns (educational, economical, thematical) within its practices. In this perspective the ‘land’ projects can be seen as holding a certain suspense tied to the art historical discourse, while at same time presenting its particular “signature”, its uniqueness in time and space. The projects must at least be tied to the extended art discourse, enabling us to understand the presented projects not as mere art projects, neither as phenomena delimited from the art discourse.

The two projects thus know of and sometimes relate to (avant-garde) art history and discourse, and thereby to problems dealt with by the Russian constructivists, the Dada movement, Bauhaus, John Cage, the Fluxus movement, the Situationists, etc. Such problems are for example, as mentioned, the nature of art, art’s critical and innovative potential, medial, aesthetical and sensory investigations, political and societal organization and production, and the relation to the spectator/participant. The ‘land’ projects include different physical and metaphysical elements, social situations, architecture, food, rituals, different media and technologies, music, discussions, nature, meditation, politics, performances, people, practical activities and more. One might however ask why one should call something art if it is impossible to differentiate it from other things or fields? In this case it has to do with the

87 Ina Blom, op. cit.
discourse, the surrounding statements making the practices what they are – and these statements are clearly tied to art and performance history, that shape past, present and coming concerns: Art, art’s character and relation to life conditions, as well as creative possibilities for artists, are often discussed by project participants, friends, commentators and others. At the same time, there seems to be an awareness of these “art discussions” as co-existing with other issues, like self-management, solidarity, community work, culture, tradition, religion, sustainability in environment and sociality, politics, media, and more. There is thus a pre-occupation and constant investigation into art issues and own identity as tied to art questions and problems, however, there is likewise a will to overcome and ignore these art-confined and -defined problems in order to solve or investigate more pressing and inter-human problems, concerning health and well-being of the communities around them. When at Sørfinnset they trace and revive local “earth cellars”, small “caves” meant to contain and preserve potatoes and vegetables during fall and winter in the north of Norway, it is a project with obvious value as human necessity (potatoes/food), with cultural/political and local value. The potato planting and preservation need not be put into an art context to be valuable or to give meaning; its value is apparent in several other contexts, such as food provisioning, culture preserving, sociality, etc. The importance and the shift of these different values are defined by the perspective, by the situation of analysis, but at the same time these situations and perspectives flow together.

The point here is to stress the co-existence and simultaneity of these multiple values and aspects, that they don’t need to be defined specifically within one specific concept, field or frame to have importance and constitute meaning. The main goal for the Sørfinnset project is as stated by Holm and Jørgensen, to “service” a particular community threatened by depopulation through different cultural aids and initiatives – the main tools being the actual interventions, the actual activity and creativity they produce. They have of course a larger “visual art” content (exhibitions, performances, sculptures, etc.) than other “non-art” projects because the organizers are “visual artists”, but what holds the projects together is not mainly art – but rather local, social, historical and cultural discourses, and situations, as well.

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2.1.2 The Problem of Autonomy

Autonomy is the right of self-government or the liberty to follow one’s own will. The often-acclaimed autonomy of art has had at least two implications through its many discussions, and depending on how you understand it, it has represented both freedom and exclusion from “regular society”: In the first instance autonomy is understood “positively”, as independent or freed from the rest of society; from regular life, capitalist logic, etc. In the second instance autonomy is understood more “negatively”, as separated or excluded from everyday experience; art becomes elevated, isolated – it cannot or does not want to deal with common existence. Autonomy is, on the one hand, seen as a critical force or potentiality, on the other hand autonomy hinders and excludes. Paradoxically then, the power to escape seemingly reduces the influence on reality by defining it as “un-real”: Because art in modern Western history has been associated with representation, fiction, the un-real or un-realistic, it is given a larger room for experimentation and research than other societal practices. At the same time it is somewhat excluded from regular logic and debate; art risks being “left outside”, not being taken seriously and not having any real impact on events.

Being both system-related and discourse-related, as well as having room or will to overlook these boundaries and definitions, is typical for many so-called avant-garde practices, as well as the two ‘land’ projects that are discussed here. However, this simultaneous refusal and dependency marks an important crux: The distinct quality of art is blurred into a particular potentiality, a possibility of doing something outside and inside at the same time. This is what has been termed the “utopist” vision, the belief in some transgressive quality, given by the discourse and concept "art". But then, art becomes secluded from daily life; and the freedom that gives art its power to address social issues differently, simultaneously excludes it from having any actual impact or influence on these same matters. This autonomy, emphasized by Theodor Adorno as an important counterpart to commercialized mass media culture, indicates that (high) art can preserve certain singular qualities: Art, through its elevated and constructed character, does not partake in the mass-medial everyday to the same extent, and can thus escape the uniforming character of modern commercialization. Autonomous art can then be

89 According to the Oxford English Dictionary online, op. cit.
heightened to address poetic matters, and freed from thoughts on necessity and utility. However, in terms of autonomy – what makes art free is the same thing that secludes it from what it seeks to be an alternative to; since art does not deal with actuality, it cannot really be an alternative to actuality.

This "double" nature of art's autonomy as both freed from and secluded from regular spheres touches upon the problem of affirmation and negation, that is, whether art affirms or negates something when, for example, explicitly criticizing it: Is it possible to completely negate something when it is addressed explicitly? Will one not always to some extent enforce the position of that which is criticized by giving attention to it? Or, inversely, if what one attempts to criticize is not addressed, as in the avant-garde’s “alternative” or “utopist” communities, how then can the matter be discussed or changed? The avant-garde perceived as a negation of society and its logic can then never really get past what it criticizes, and the avant-garde perceived as utopia flees the problems and presents something un-real instead. Performance theoretician Peter Bürger contradicts this pessimistic attitude, saying that art can deal with social and political matters, but then sociality must be included into the nature, or institution, of art. Bürger underlines the distinction between the singular work and the art institution – when we speak of art, we do not speak of single works, but about the institution and discourse of art. Bürger says that the institution of art, though existing long before the avant-garde, first became visible when the avant-garde criticized the autonomy status of art in bourgeois society. Finally, he concludes – the principle of autonomy excludes art from that which it seeks to criticize:

…Because art is detached from daily life, this experience remains without tangible effect, i.e., it cannot be integrated into that life. The lack of tangible effects is not the same as functionlessness … but characterizes a specific function of art in bourgeois society: the neutralization of critique. This neutralization of impulses to change society is thus closely related to the role art plays in the development of bourgeois subjectivity.92

This, in the end, constitutes Bürger's critique against the neo-avant-garde; the freeing from one's own techniques can only be done once, before it becomes narcissist or self-affirmative – that is to say, only the historical avant-garde materialized its own revolt, because the revolt included a critique of sociality – it was about sociality, not about artistic means – or, the

92 Ref. Peter Bürger, op. cit., p.13.
artistic means concerned society. Bürger, broadly put, holds that the neo-avant-garde, because it continued with many of the same means and manifestations as the historical avant-garde, necessarily became too pre-occupied with their own means in order to be able to perform any actual social critique.

The relation to “real” life and society remains an important issue in contemporary artistic practice: A further plunge into everyday matters, and that which is perceived as “authentically trivial”, is still a major concern for those artistic practices which seek to reach, influence or operate within actuality. In this thesis, I will underline art’s capacity to act and react within “regular life”, perhaps not for all socially-oriented projects, but certainly for the two ‘land’ projects. There is, however, also reason to continue underlining a particular characteristic of art, if not a distinct autonomy: The thing that actually distinguishes art from most other human societal fields or areas is the possibility for non-logic and/or non-profit. This does not mean that art is not part of any commercial system or commercial logic; it means that the idea or concept of art still allows funding or support of projects that do not have specific purpose nor follows a predefined logic, neither in economy nor in content. Sørfinnset School / the nord land receives its funding from art and culture budgets, not because it could not be justified in other societal contexts related to regional development, but because of the way our societal administrative systems are built up, this is where such projects can find funding. While “art” is large international institutions and biennales, big money and power, it is also a possibility for “unknown” individuals to explore practices and projects that do not have a clear, predefined role in societal systems and discourse.

In the two ‘land’ projects, the problem of art’s autonomy is displayed even more clearly, they have clear bonds, for example financially and press-wise, to large institutions, but at the same time, they invest themselves as private persons. The artists might have a certain distinction between private person and artist in some areas; for example the two Thai artists, Tiravanija and Lertchaiprasert, only involve their family to a certain extent, but they do involve them, as co-administrators, as participants, as reasons, inspirations or as audience. The two Norwegian artists, Jørgensen and Holm, are a couple, and up till now they have spent the summers at Sørfinnset School with different collaborators, thereby necessarily sharing some of their private and personal spheres with art people and in an art context. When these artists make something as “artists”, what they do will be related to and perhaps seen as art, at least as long as it is not clearly defined as something else. An artist seldom has specific “work hours” – to
be an artist seems to be more of a “person”, than a “profession”, which again brings us to the category break-down between art and life, or art and other practices. The “actions” executed by a “person” can be seen as regular life, while the “actions” of a “professional” tend to be tied to a category, a genre or a discourse. To be a contemporary artist is perhaps no longer associated with a specific craft or product, there are no “professional expectations”, at least not in the regular sense, though there might be certain cultural and discursive requirements the artists feels he or she has to fulfil. As I have indicated, the clear definition of the ‘land’ projects as art or not art is not seen as important to this discussion; however, this question is tied to the performance of their practices, which contain both discourse-related and more discourse-free elements. Lertchaipraser: says:

The results or activities are not that important to me…it’s the processes that make me learn something. I like to see it as experimental research for the artists and other ordinary people to learn about society … Creating things to understand about life, about my life, about social, about nature; this process is most important to me, what I learn from it, what I understand – the goal is the process, the moment of creating things … you can call it art, but for me that sounds funny, it is too narrow. I think it is more about life. In ancient tradition the idea of art was much vaguer … Some years ago we invented the term Euka-beuk – which is humoristic and doesn’t really mean anything – instead of art, to also include other fields of knowledge and disciplines like cultures, politics, society, life, etc. But then people started combining Euka-beuk with just art, so we stopped using the term. 93

Thus, they openly seek to escape the art term, but they are also at peace with it – making exhibitions and various art activities part of their everyday life. This means that they create art, but art goes into the larger production. Further, the ‘land’ projects might be said to materialize the problem of autonomy: As art in art settings, they are visible, but then they are not seen as actual – they become examples, representations, etc. As regular life and everyday practice, however, they are real, but invisible. Acknowledging this dilemma, they record and photograph many of their undertakings – knowing that they need “proof” of their activities for funding, discussions, art settings, etc. At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted avant-garde theoretician Boris Groys commenting on the increasing amount of art documentation in art institutions, and further the role of and reason for this documentation. In short, what Groys is saying is an “ancient topic” – Plato stated that art as representation or as mime of reality can never live up to reality itself. In this perspective, the representation or documentation will

93 Kamin Lertchaipraser: in interview, op. cit.
always be “less” than the actual situation, and in this way, it will also become a negation of life itself. Later, several theoreticians have underlined the reality and uniqueness of each situation, reading or experience as productive and “new” – French poet René Char said: “The act is virgin, even when it is repeated.” However, in the two ‘land’ projects there is a clear concern with live sociality and live collaboration; end results, as Groys points out, do not really exist, and “art products” get the character of documentation.

2.1.3 The Self-Reflexivity Loop
In the 20th century art and avant-garde history lies an increasing awareness of self, own position, own techniques etc. The turn towards self may be tied to the artistic rebellion against the “genius creator”, where artists, particularly in the 1960s and 70s, sought to alter the hierarchy of art and authority of the artist. The concept of art was pushed and pulled, but experimenters often ended up confirming the art term, at least they seldom managed to free themselves from it. The direct opposition to and concern with the art concept and the art production often gave the works very clear references to traditional art (what they were opposing), and thereby to some extent contributed to affirm the concept. Artist Joseph Kosuth was part of the conceptualist movement that was concerned with art as part of language and philosophy, making art dependent on its conceptualization. Kosuth is known for One and Three Chairs from 1965, amongst other works, an installation consisting of a chair, a picture of a chair and board with the word ‘chair’, its pronunciation, meaning etc.. He stated:

Being an artist now means to question the nature of art. If one is questioning the nature of painting, one cannot be questioning the nature of art. If an artist accepts painting (or sculpture) he is accepting the tradition that goes along with it…Painting is a kind of art. If you make paintings you are already accepting (not questioning) the nature of art. One is then accepting the nature of art to be the European tradition of a painting-sculpture dichotomy.

96 Boris Groys, op. cit.
The emphasis put on *conceptualization* meant that art could not escape itself, escape categorization, for if it did, it would lose its value or particular interest: “Advance information about the concept of art and about an artist’s concepts is necessary to the appreciation and understanding of contemporary art … Art’s only claim is for art. Art is the definition of art.”

Kosuth, then, in some ways contradicts himself; he says that the nature of art must be questioned, and that this cannot be done by simply painting, because then this nature is accepted without question. However, one could say the same thing about art in general, how can you really question art if what you make is directly rooted in it?

Composer and experimenter John Cage became a bridging personality between the historical and the neo-avant-garde, between the pre- and post-World War II eras. Cage studied Zen-Buddhism and sought the productivity of the exploring mind, the always open, non-normative research into the common and sensory world. He particularly explored intentionality and chance, trying to remove the creator completely from the action or object by setting up schemes based on random principles, or using techniques that would play off music, sounds or tones in random patterns. This could, however, also be seen as formal investigation into the nature of the act of creation – Cage was a strong and visible character in relation to his works, they were, and still are, very much perceived as works and as created by him.

Self-reflexivity then, as the idea of autonomy, contains a paradox: The gap in intention, but closeness in practice, between *self-scrutiny* and *self-concern* or narcissism. During the 20th and into the 21st century many artistic practices have been focused on how to produce and further the production of self; production has become self-reflexive, and this might be seen as a trait of high modernity. The development of democratic institutions and a vast bureaucracy in the Western world during the 20th century has demanded self-scrutiny. A central idea in the rational discourse and the division of existence into fields and systems is to simplify through differentiation, generalisation and categorization. Differentiation then leads to a multitude of choices and possibilities, a systemic multitude that the art-concerned

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100 High modernity as described by Anthony Giddens is characterized by amongst other self-reflexivity, op. cit., p. 20.

101 By for example 17th century scientist Francis Bacon, and 18th century scientist Carl von Linné, etc.
sociologist Niklas Luhmann calls complexity. Complexity occurs when there are several possible paths and none of them can be defined as “the best”. The division into groups and structures is supposed to simplify our conception of them, but when there are too many structures, categories and divisions, we end up with an extreme complexity as a result of multiple definitions (initially made to reduce complexity) that stand in a referential relation to each other. When a system includes or treats itself, Luhmann calls it hypercomplexity: “We term hypercomplex a system that is oriented to its own complexity and seeks to grasp it as complexity, because the attempt – since it occurs within the system and must be established as self-description – produces more than itself.” Complexity then is defined as the necessity of making selections, and hypercomplexity as the self-reflexivity of this complexity.

This self-awareness is what has been thought of as a sort of paradigm shift in the theory of the 1960s and 1970s, where there is a sharp awareness of one’s own position in and relation to power structures. The point I want to make here is that this self-reflexivity and orientation towards ourselves as systems might in turn have lead to a theoretical hyper-referentiality. Extensive systems and organizations give us a massive body of possible conceptual references, and when we allow the terms and concepts to become rigid, we have to build bridges between them through linguistic or conceptual constructions tied to “meta-”, “inter-”, “re-”, “trans-” and “post-”-perspectives. This referential complexity has been very apparent in art theory and has had much to say for the actualization of practice, meaning that a specific theoretical discourse has followed and partly decided contemporary art; artists have become curators and writers, and writers and curators have become artists. This focus on self, “the self-reflexivity loop”, established through the 20th century art discourse, constitutes a fundamental creational and theoretical problem for the ‘land’ projects: Artists today cannot produce without thinking very clearly about how they produce. This self-reflexive element is highlighted by Peter Bürger as a narcissist doom – while they seek to negate, they end up affirming – that is, the focus on the criticized becomes stronger the more one criticizes. The ‘land’ projects clearly seek to escape the continuous re-processing of the art system caused by a self-reflexivity loop. Nevertheless, an important part of the ‘land’ projects is discussion

about themselves, about how to proceed, which choices and decisions to make. Further, all that is done is documented; in writing, in photo, sometimes in video, and always through the people participating and their processing, discussions and memories. The working and re-working of the project’s ‘self’ and production of ‘self’, is thus a central part of the projects, and this, as mentioned, in some way represents a contradiction – because they also seek to exceed this reflexivity that defines them. For example, both projects insist on being written with only minuscules, the land and the nord land, in order not to stand out as distinct ‘lands’ with associations to countries and governments. However, this result in the use of italics or brackets in for grammatical purposes, which perhaps make the projects stand out even more in the text, though maybe avoiding associations to proper names.

The ‘land’ projects do, however, also escape the self-reflexivity loop, but those parts which escape it are perhaps, as mentioned in the last section, the most evasive ones, the ones that just disappear – as regular, small-scale, trivial, social settings. Then, it becomes a concern for the researcher or critic to trace other paths than those determined by the art discourse or through reflexivity. For example one of the initiators, Rirkrit Tiravanija, is known to organize dinners both in and outside of museums on his many travels around the world. Then these questions come up: does the artwork lie in the sensuousness of the food, in the “displaying” of the social setting, or perhaps just in creating a certain sociality through an “ordinary” dinner? The awareness of a dinner as art and not as a mere dinner, may, for example, give the dinner a different character by placing it in relation to other art-related practices, histories, texts and contexts. One might, for example, say that the awareness of a dinner setting as art could display the entire dinner as social object and make visible certain structures that the participants/observers were not previously aware of. Or, one might suggest that a dinner would be “an eating of the artwork”, and thereby make a statement towards a material tradition. Or again, that themes are displayed in art settings in a way they are not usually displayed – eating can then be about food politics and unjust distribution of resources, about eating disorders or social rituals. It might, however, also be said, that having dinner in a more or less peaceful setting is a social value in itself – a value of experienced togetherness, a necessary “performance” of co-existence. In Chapter Four on performativity, I will return to

105 Rirkrit Tiravanija has organized dinners in New York, Zürich, Venice (IT), Chiang Mai, and Oslo, amongst other places.
this “empty sociality”, a sociality potentially “freed” from artistic references and continuous processing.

2.2 Aesthetics Unfolding

2.2.1. Socio-Spatio-Temporal Constellations
Discussions around art’s autonomy, art’s relation to societal mechanisms and different aspects of reflexivity are “classics” in art theory and history. Further, conceptions of space, place and time indicate important discourse-related fields addressed in the art history and unfolded in the ‘land’ projects; where and when are the projects created, and how and for how long do they exist? These questions relate to different aspects of production; of the idea of a single creator, the unique artist, or of the various collaborative productions known from the 20th century, little by little also including the spectators as co-creators. That is, is the site and moment of production defined by the artist or by the spectator? Is the moment of production a moment or a period, an event or a duration?

The ‘land’ projects, with their long-term involvement and variety of expressions and events, are aesthetics unfolding in undefined space and time. However, they also exist as concrete pieces of land, specific people, specific times. In order to address such a broad aesthetics, one must have an equally broad understanding of space, place and time. During the 20th century, theory concerning place and space has certainly evolved and become more complex: From an idea of places and events as defined and delimited entities, a more nuanced picture now prevails, combining aspects as different as point and period, geography and situation, sociality and mentality.106 Place has thus merged with different aspects of time, sociality and mentality, constituting complex socio-spatio-temporal constellations. In philosopher Félix Guattari’s theories for example, the idea of the subject is tied to the idea of place or space – the subject or subjectivity is dependent on each particular situation, consisting of a multiplicity of factors such as point in time, past, present, future, physical components and environments, social situations, statements, etc. Further, there is a tight connection between the subject and her (existential) “room”; both subjectivity and place are seen as unfolding in time and space, they

106 See bibliography for further reading. Here I draw on John Dewey, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, Félix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Rosi Braidotti, Michel De Certeau, Marc Augé, Edward Casey, and Miwon Kwon.
are to be understood as constellations consisting of physical and non-physical components, uniting layers of time, reality and imagination. The understanding of a space or situation thus includes thoughts on geography, culture, society, emotions, and further, a reflection on “given-ness” and agency in this situation: Is a situation given or is it actively constructed? Does place/space have any intrinsic qualities, or is all imagined or perceived by the subjects involved? Even though place is often understood as tied to a geographical situatedness, while space is tied to more abstract elements, as in philosopher Michel de Certeau’s theories, they both include many of the same conceptions: A geographical place or point necessarily implies culture, presumptions, emotions, etc., while social and mental space are indeed also dependent on physical and geographical structures. Therefore space and place are here mentioned together, or when one of the terms is mentioned alone, it does not clearly exclude the other.

Further, the relation between the given and the made stands out as crucial: For performance theoretician Judith Butler, gender is not given, but performed, and for De Certeau, place is practiced: “Space is a practiced place.” he states. Similarly, for Deleuze and Guattari, place is not given, but constituted – it is territorialized through people, actions and constellations. Place or space is likened to situations, and a situation is at least geographical/physical, social, and psychological/mental. Nevertheless, there are certain physical or actual existences that most of us accept: A land mark – the Eiffel Tower, for example – is something in itself; a physical and concrete construct that exists in space and time. It is part of national, political strategies as well as personal stories and traumas, but it is also something in itself – it is undeniably there. Post-structuralist theories such as those mentioned above, which emphasize perspective and situation, have been criticized for rejecting the actual world and its physical phenomena. A focus on the complex constellations of space and time does not, however, reject or deny the physical world and existences or phenomena outside the subject, but it

107 The ‘subject’ is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter Four.
110 Michel De Certeau, op. cit.
112 Anthony Giddens advances such a critique in his Modernity and Self-Identity, op. cit., ref. note 76 on Sokal and Elster.
might be said that these aspects are toned down or receive less attention. An ambition in this thesis is, as mentioned, to use post-modern or post-structural theories, but to include more positioned perspectives, either inside or outside of the subject. I will thus suggest that geography, nature and physical aspects are seen as important factors in the construction of events and spaces/places, as well as social structures/dynamics and mental/personal perceptions and imaginations. Further, space is both acted upon and influenced, as well as influencing and defining actions and events; gender, for example, is not only performed; it has a very clear physical component as well as a historical and cultural context. Lastly, we must accept that our writings and thoughts on the physical world, meaning space and place as we perceive and describe it, can never be detached from us and our perspectives, even if we and our perspectives are multiple.

2.2.2 Site-Specificity: Art Space, Perception and Experience

Site-specificity and the explorations around ideas of location in art and performance generally follow these questions related to space and place as given/performed and social/physical/mental. In the 20th century, the concepts of in situ (lat. “in/at place”) and site-specific developed in an art context, tied to a new-found awareness of the many relations between object, experience, subject and context. Site-specific art is defined by art theorist Nick Kaye as “practices which, in one way or another, articulate exchanges between the work of art and the places in which its meanings are defined.” “Site-specificity, it follows, is found in use; and site, location, like architecture itself, is always being produced, and so is subject to instability, ephemerality, and temporality.”113 Kaye leans on theoreticians Michel De Certeau and Marc Augé, who both, to a large extent, see place/space in relation to practice.114

Another art theorist who has written on site-specificity is Miwon Kwon – she follows the concept of site-specificity in art from public sculptures that relates to their environment, to “functional” sculptures, social sculptures and further to social project in specific local communities, some with similarities to the ‘land’ projects. The relational is seen as moving from a purely formal phase, through a physical and functional one, further entering a social

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and communicational phase. This almost linear “development” described by Kwon can be seen as spatial; the formal, physical, functional and social all become different and complementary aspects of societal and artistic situations at the beginning of the 21st century. Kwon’s concept of site-specificity begins with a sculptural relation to place, and she shows how the idea of sculpture, or creation, has become more abstract and less dependent on concrete physical structures during the 20th century. Today, art, as well as architecture and design, might be purely social, functional and non-material arrangements; the idea has moved from the object through the objects function and further to “sets of interactions”. Sørfinnset School / the nord land was initiated under the label “Artistic Interruptions” that sought to explore the social dimensions of sculpture or art in particular places in the North of Norway, also in relation to the site-specificity concept. The movement described above from isolated object to fluid sociality, then, perhaps formed an art- and culture-historical back drop that made it possible to receive art funding for these kind of complex, experimental and “non-material” projects.

However, I believe that the dissolving of the material object in favour of the social and communicational aspects of production has still not reached its peak at the beginning of the 21st century. That is to say, there is a revaluation of material culture, but now in symbiotic relation with social and communicational aspects; i.e. the communicational aspects are finely tuned and the physical material is included in them. One can increasingly see how the physical/environmental, personal/psychological and collaborative/social aspects come together in the analysis of art, event or production as situated situation.

2.3 Sociality and Art

2.3.1 Social Projects and Relational Aesthetics
Social and immediate investigations have thus become an important part of 20th century art discourse and an important aspect of the avant-garde praxis, but this social development has, until recently, received less serious attention than the concrete works, actions and media. This relates to the central theoretical challenge of this thesis, that the ‘land’ projects’ experimental character seems to escape our theoretical tools, and that the art-theoretical tools

115 Definition of sociality, Oxford English Dictionary Online: “The state or quality of being social – Companionship or fellowship in or with some thing or person”. Sociality in art follows this relational thinking.
are too often tied to specific, narrow discourses, neglecting obvious social and existential elements. Many of the avant-garde practices were, as mentioned, concerned with society and politics, trying to create some kind of alternative living or alternative pictures of reality based on other more social and sensuous (aesthetic) systems of logic: From the Italian futurists who wanted to rebel against bourgeois culture, to the Russian constructivists who sought a democratic art and living, based on street art and new media. Or from the Bauhaus school who excelled in sensory and technological stagings as part of a new world, and to the post-World War II movements of Fluxus and the Situationists, combining complex media experiments with social actionism. Peter Bürger sought to emphasize precisely this social project of the historical avant-garde, perceiving the medial and technical revolts as deeply social and existential rejections of bourgeois culture and suppression. Concerned with the theories of Theodor Adorno and George Lukács, and of the avant-garde in relation to modernity, Bürger does not, however, develop the social element further.116 Another avant-garde theoretician, Boris Groys, has also been concerned with the "fundamentally" social character of the historical avant-garde. Groys believes that sociality or politics must be one of the prime motivations of the artistic creation in order for it to be political; art cannot have political or social impact only by thematizing politics – it must be political in its essence.117

So, when the French art theoretician Nicolas Bourriaud attempted to define new relational aesthetics at the end of the 1990s, this had – and still has – a deep impact on the art scene.118 The relational aesthetics sought to judge artworks “on the basis of the inter-human relations which they represent, produce or prompt.”119 By pointing at a series of artworks focusing on social relations and situations during the 1990s, Bourriaud wanted to revive the radical and transformational potential of contemporary art through a focus on artworks as social and collective capacities, as opposed to authoritarian and private discourses. Thus, he asked: Does

116 Bürger, op. cit., p. 86-87.
117 Ref. Boris Groys The Total Art of Stalinism, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1992, and Art Power, op. cit. Groys view as presented in Art Power is however questionable – by emphasizing the social and political character of Stalinist and Nazi art, he in some way excuses them. An objection would be, however, that this “art” could be seen as political propaganda rather than art, and thus it is not art with political potential.
118 Relational aesthetics – term coined by Nicolas Bourriaud during the late nineties in his text collection with the same name (see bibliography).
the artwork permit you to co-exist with it, to dialogue with it? Bourriaud emphasized the notion of relationality, inspired by concrete artworks (amongst other, by Rirkrit Tiravanija) and the theories of philosophers Gilles Deleuze and particularly, Félix Guattari. Bourriaud’s texts are, however, short and manifesto-like, and his theory does not present a complete philosophical perspective. Rather, he pointed to and enforced a social and collaborative tendency on the contemporary art scene, and referred to Deleuze and Guattari for more elaborate aspects on relationality. Deleuze and Guattari’s theories on the other hand, are not specific enough as regards art to use in the understanding of contemporary experimental practice. In Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?, for example, they show, in my opinion, a quite traditional perspective on art and the artist as something mystic and extraordinary, a perspective that obscures the processes of production and elevates the artist to a sort of creative genius. They describe how the artist (always he) creates affects and includes us in his compositions, which is almost always paintings by historical and famous figures such as Albrecht Dürer, Pierre Bonnard, Vincent van Gogh, Paul Klee or Paul Cézanne. They underline art as a framing of chaos, a composition, and seem in general to think of paintings when they write of art. However, using the general philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, which can also be said to include a wide sensuousness, one could perhaps establish such relational aesthetics. These connections and developments will be explored more fully in the next chapter, and further, the use of ‘organic’ language or concepts tied to biology is important in the development of this relational and “living philosophy” – aspects that will be discussed in Chapter Five.

2.3.2 Organizing Existence: Life Form and Life Style
The avant-garde as social project could be seen to have been engaged in life form, experimenting with different aesthetic (sensory) or cultural (un-classified) approaches to life,

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123 In 2004 art historian Grant H. Kester suggested the concept of dialogical aesthetics, which is an understanding of certain contemporary projects as centred on “the creative orchestration of dialogical exchange.” Op. cit. p. 189. Kester thus notes the increasing number of socially-oriented art projects, but focuses on aspects of dialogue, direct communication and speech.
practice, theory and politics. Thus, sociality and social organization have been more “hidden” parts of art theory. The avant-garde sought some kind of alternative life praxis, based on, for example, aesthetic/sensory approaches or community-like organization representing different “political” models or structures. The Russian constructivists wanted, as previously mentioned, “art” to be alive (or to be life). Organizing practices and projects immediately before and after the Russian revolution, they wanted to make new media systems, new ways for people to engage in the community, to express themselves through street art and participate in the formation of society. The avant-garde practice of the constructivists is concerned with the form of society and form of life, as much as with the form of objects or the form of humans on a canvas. In addition to Relational Aesthetics, Nicolas Bourriaud has written on two other phenomena in the late 20th century, namely art as life form and art as post-production. Post-production refers to how art and its meaning are constituted outside themselves in multiple subjects and multiple times; as in life in general, meaning is played out and re-worked over and over again. In Formes de vie, concerning life form, Bourriaud makes the connection between materiality, sensuousness and lead life – form is then understood in the broadest and most complex way, as the way of doing, the performance. To work with sensuousness and experience in a broader perspective may be seen as working with society or life itself – changing actions and perceptions becomes creating alternative forms of living.

More recently, art theoretician Ina Blom has suggested that certain artworks today could be seen as precarious ‘social sites’, as assemblages that constitute specific constellations or formations of history, geography, identity and sociality – constituting certain styles or ways of living.124 Blom seeks to place these new and “rambling” social artistic practices in relation to the more familiar discourse of style, though filling the term with new meaning:

Paradoxically enough, the apparently style-less “event art” that rose to prominence after 1960 – an art focused on the uncontrollable “becoming” of life forces, rather than on predetermined aesthetic genres and formats – could be seen as the artistic corollary to the new ways of “living style”. For what emerges as in the intimate association between style and being is the idea that appearance is not only a matter of fitting into performed categories and responding to expectations, but also a matter of idiosyncratic becoming … In many ways, the art of the twentieth century avant-gardes could be understood as a shift towards a “life production”, parallel to one found in modern politics.125

124 Blom, On the Style Site, Berlin and New York, Sternberg Press, 2008 - the term ‘assemblage’ is discussed and defined later, see section 3.2.2.
Blom coins the term of style site, a combination of the art aspect of site-specificity and the more general notion of “life style”. Thus, there is an attempt to co-think sociality in art with specific materiality and place – the ‘style site’ could be thought of as a specific constellation of time and space factors, combined with the willed production of life made by the single individual: The style site is the social realisation of space, and the continuous focus on the “way of doing” has consequences for the formation of identities.

In addition to these important notions, I would like to add two central elements that are quite prominent in the ‘land’ projects, which will be discussed further in the following: the search for a particular scaled-down and trivial form of sociality, and an important motivational or ethical aspect. The ‘land’ projects are concerned with doing and doing good – the term of style would, then, however social it is meant to be, reflect a certain “mannered” or staged way of doing, as if the way of doing was more important than the doing in itself. Nevertheless, art in the ‘land’ projects can be understood in relation to the concept of ‘style site’, and most importantly as a ‘life form’ rather than a product. The “products”, artworks, exhibitions, events, single aspects – that is, all the “end results” – are thus toned down, as mentioned in relation to Groys, to accentuate the fact that the “real” art project is the life project.

2.4 Performance Art and Theory

Having defined central qualities of the ‘land’ projects to be live and social, and having found that art theory to a certain extent lacks tools to deal with this sociality, I will now move on to performance theory which concerns itself precisely with live sociality. Further, as mentioned previously, performance theory also includes avant-garde practices, which through the 20th century have had a live and actionist focus. Performance theory can thus be said to treat many of the same phenomena as art theory or history, but with a different perspective.

2.4.1 A Coming Together of Visual Arts and Performance

In particular, the more experimental artists of the 20th century have related to the mentioned performance perspective, where emphasis was put on the live and processual, instead of
material and absolute, character of the artwork: Emphasis was shifted from object and work, to production and situation. The capitalist, rationalist paradigm was dispraised, and an artwork’s worth in mind was far more important than its worth in money. This to such an extent that, often, worth in money was sought to be avoided through a non-material and ephemeral character – which gave a particular prevalence to performance and live art. The history of performance starts in RoseLee Goldberg’s rendition with the Italian Futurist performances at the beginning of the 20th century, where other and more unusual elements were drawn into the regular setting of, for example, a concert. In 1909 Tommaso Marinetti printed his "Futurist Manifesto" in the French newspaper Le Figaro in which he expressed the need to free Italy from a dead matter of professors, archaeologists, cicerones and antiquaries. Marinetti also publishes the manifesto “The Pleasure of Being Booed”, indicating the start of a more “audience-confrontational” attitude in art. Different and sometimes abusive strategies like gluing the audience to their chairs were used to assure a "heartfelt reaction” from the audience, and further to awake them from their "intellectual poisoning".  

The history of performance is often aligned with performance art history or avant-garde art history – performance in art is most often related to the social and medial projects of the previously discussed historical avant-garde of the beginning of the 20th century. The development of the field of performance theory through Richard Schechner combines this performance art perspective with more general anthropological and behavioural concerns: Performance and human interaction are in focus, rather than discipline research and media development. However, in what concerns performance art history, this is little emphasized or investigated by Schechner and his colleague Victor Turner. Even if art and performance theory both consider the historical avant-garde as their common point of departure, the current performance theory primarily turns to the post-World War II performance art. The emphasis on a performance theory and a performative aesthetics as something particular, however, as something that transcends art theory, was an important furthering of live and social theory in art, and this does not stand in any direct opposition to art theory. Rather, considering the latter developments in art theory that have been towards precisely sociality, relationality and

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127 ‘Performative aesthetics’ refers to the theory of Erika Fischer-Lichte, op. cit., will be presented in the following sections.
interaction, co-thinking the different perspectives on live art and experimental live projects is here considered to be a strengthening of both fields of art and performance.

2.4.2 Performance and Performativity

A performance could be described as a situation or project, a constellation of people and/or elements (abstract and concrete, animals and machines included) during different periods of time, from punctual to periodic. RoseLee Goldberg concludes that the only possible definition of performance is “live art by artists”\(^{128}\) – she then underlines performance as art, related to discourse and history. Performance art can be seen as live art, concerned with presence and direct communication, using the body to convey energy and create tension, either in stage-like situations, or in more social, site-specific and political contexts related to art history, theatre history and avant-garde history. But, performance and performance theory can be explained in broader terms as well, as a field of theory developed by live art and anthropological scholars mainly after the Second World War, which investigates the nature and potentiality of live actions, performance art and various rituals in religion as well as everyday culture and sports.\(^{129}\) Performance theoretician Richard Schechner holds that “ritualized behaviour extends across the entire range of human action, but performance is a particular heated arena of ritual, and theatre, script and drama are heated and compact areas of performance”.\(^{130}\) Further, he suggests that a performance is “the whole constellation of events, most of them passing unnoticed, that takes place in/among both performers and audience from the time the first spectator enters the field of the performance – the precinct where the theatre takes place – to the time the last spectator leaves”.\(^{131}\) Whether one calls a performance ritual or theatre, says Schechner, depends mostly on context and function.\(^{132}\) He also suggests defining performance through the use of the concept, as events called “performance” in this or that culture, or as events treated as “performances” by scholars.


\(^{129}\) Victor Turner collaborated with Richard Schechner, but was an anthropologist and thus did not work specifically with live art. Turner will be introduced and presented more elaborately in relation to the social dynamics of performance in Chapter Four.


\(^{131}\) Ibid., p. 71.

\(^{132}\) Ibid., p. 130.
Schechner lists five qualities of something he calls ‘actuals’, and though this does not directly overlap with performance, it can perhaps be understood as a further concretization of performance qualities: 1) **process**, something happens **here and now**, 2) **consequential, irremediable, and irrevocable** acts, exchanges, or situations, 3) **contest** – something is **at stake** for the performers and often for the spectators, 4) **initiation**, a **change in status** for participants, and 5) space is used **concretely** and **organically**.\(^\text{133}\) There is thus a particular concern with the live or the immediate, further the importance and transforming potential of this immediacy and, third, there is a specific attention to the situation or place where this transformative immediacy occurs. Schechner however avoids any further definitions of what a performance “contains”, his definition is much **context-related**, depending on the culture or setting in which the event is perceived, discussed, etc. At the same time, he is clearly mainly preoccupied with ritual and theatre as contexts. He does however underline how “diverse and extensive the performance world is”: “Performativity – or, commonly, “performance” – is everywhere in life, from ordinary gestures to macrodramas.”\(^\text{134}\) Summing up Richard Schechner’s suggestions in a somewhat dryer way, I suggest performance to be:\(^\text{135}\)

- (art) event(s) or process(es) constituting  
- a skill  
- an action or occurrence  
- an achievement  
- a display or doubling

The term **performative** can, as previously mentioned, be understood as an adjectival/adverbial construction referring to certain qualities of performance, for example as used by Judith Butler to indicate the norm-defining strength of action, behaviour and live performance, like in “performing gender”\(^\text{136}\). Or, as the term was initially coined by language philosopher J.L. Austin, it means the quality of action related to the speech act – “it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action.”\(^\text{137}\) But, performative could also mean any quality one chooses to focus upon within a performance spectre. The term performative, when

\(^{133}\) Ibid., Chapter Two.

\(^{134}\) Ibid., p. 326.

\(^{135}\) Also relates to Marvin Carlson’s definition, see p. 146.

\(^{136}\) Ref. Judith Butler, op. cit.

used, often aims at certain and particular qualities of performance, but since these qualities change from writer to writer and situation to situation, the term depends on which qualities the writer emphasizes in the performance term.\(^{138}\) Schechner draws a parallel to the construction and function of the terms theatricality (theatre) and narrativity (narrative), but he holds that performativity is wider, and he does not make any clear distinction between performance and performativity.

To define the performativity term, performance and theatre theoretician Erika Fischer-Lichte sees Austin's and Butler's use in relation to each other: As Austin understands the performative to be tied to praxis and reality; he sees the term to designate something real or true. Butler, on the other hand, connects it to performance or staging of this praxis or action. This indicates a central and problematic aspect to the field of performance and performance theories that I will return to later, namely the paradox of and partial contradiction between the perceived real and the perceived staged. Fischer-Lichte concludes this specific discussion by saying that Austin and Butler’s definitions are not really opposed, although they seem to be. Rather, they both aim at a certain live and transformative quality that characterizes performance. Fischer-Lichte further suggests the development of a new aesthetic based on performance and performativity, and she ties the term performative closer to performance, assigning its primary features to be the continuous feedback and co-presence of actors and spectators, a destabilization or erasure of binary oppositions, and a transformative power that makes change possible. Here, the performative is used to designate (any) conspicuous quality or aspect in performance and live sociality, but I will also refer to and include Fischer-Lichte’s more specific characteristics. The social qualities and aspects of performance and performativity will be further discussed in Chapter Four, as well as in the conclusion.

2.4.3 The Broad Spectrum Approach
The performance concept, and what has been written about it, has unclear and mixed roots in live art theory/history (f.ex. Richard Schechner, RoseLee Goldberg, Allan Kaprow, Eugenio Barba, Peggy Phelan, Josette Féral, Elizabeth Burns), anthropology/cultural studies (Victor

\(^{138}\) A further discussion on performativity is conducted in the next chapter. Anita Hammer discusses this specific quality in an article on performativity in theatre, church and rituals: “Speilinger og refleksjoner: Performativt perspektiv på teater, kirke og ritualer”, din – Tidsskrift for religion og kultur, nr. 3-4, 2005.
Turner, Richard Schechner, Dwight Conquergood, Eugenio Barba), and sociology (Erving Goffman, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Burns) – these are all mixed and cross-referenced in the performance field, dealing with art/theatre history and universalities of human mind and behaviour at the same time. The political, anthropological and societal aspects of “performance” are emphasized whether they are seen in art contexts or not. Artist Allan Kaprow for example, has a specific life/art-project – he relates very clearly to art history and form problems. At the same time, however, he draws on Eastern philosophy, the pragmatism of John Dewey and he seeks to “change” both art and life by blurring them. He investigates (social) phenomena in a new way, through practice, while relating them to art history, sociology and theory. This in many ways coincides with the project of Richard Schechner, who refers to Kaprow in his writings, though Schechner at the same time develops a more ethnographic, anthropological and religious path through his renditions of performance and human interaction in tribe rituals, carnivals, religious celebrations etc. The “art part” of performance is also connected to the anthropological part, and non-art theorists like Judith Butler, Erving Goffman and Gregory Bateson are now associated with and much used in art, performance and theatre theories and contexts. This is however perhaps the particular strength of the performance (theory) field: The refusal to exclude relevant or interesting matters/aspects to any phenomena because they fall into or lean on another discipline than the one where the research is conducted. The performance approach is tied to art, but just as much to behaviour and interaction in general – the performance theory likewise deals with both artworks and live art in particular, as well as gestures and (inter)actions in general.

Performance theory constitutes a synthetic and processual approach to practice and theory, particularly apt to describe the complexity of the current cultural situation. Performance theory also allows us to broaden our view on aesthetics and avant-garde history by further including social and existential perspectives. The performance perspective can also, though not in all its aspects, be seen as an alternative to the formerly criticized focus on medial and textual references. The performative is then seen as a perspective that focuses on action or practice, which can have a more experimental or “un-thought” character than text. To some, like Dwight Conquergood, the performance perspective is perhaps most important not as a set of terms or as a specific category, but as a research attitude that seeks to relate to the ever-

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139 In Richard Schechner’s essay “The Broad Spectrum Approach”, performance studies are presented as an alternative to the text and language based tradition, op. cit.
changing, undecided and dynamic quality of what is live and social. Then, it is the openness of the term, the term’s “contested” character, which is crucial.140 In 1988, Richard Schechner writes an essay on the future of performance studies and of the synthetic character of the performance approach. He emphasizes the “broad spectrum” character of performance, including “the performing arts, rituals, healing, sports, popular entertainments, and performance in everyday life.”141 Schechner points out that the academic rigidity hinders a broad spectrum approach, forcing research and practice into specific and primarily text-based discourses: “Performing arts curricula need to be broadened to include courses in performance studies. What needs to be added is how performance is used in politics, medicine, religion, popular entertainments, and ordinary face-to-face interactions … Performative thinking must be seen as a means of cultural analysis.”142

Schechner makes it clear that a multidisciplinary approach is necessary in order to study performance phenomena. This approach also indicates a general multidisciplinary attitude based on the specificity or uniqueness of a phenomenon or a problem that has become so important today. This means that one acknowledges the particularity of each case, each problem or each experience and seeks to describe it or understand it starting from a set of “actual” manifestations – each situation or performance is “new”. Each relation in the ‘land’ projects then refers to an actual relation: When I call these projects multidimensional or interdisciplinary, I am not only referring to a thought multitude of dimensions and disciplines, I am thinking of the actual and multifaceted experiences I have had, combining what can be defined as private and professional, art and politics, technology and handcraft, media and content. The ‘land’ projects can thus so far be seen as performance-related (live and socially-oriented, focuses on the relation between people), site-specific (deals with the existing structure sand dynamics in a particular space and time), and discursive (referential and self-referential, contextualizes own activity and relates it to other people, artists and theoreticians) – and they thus require the use of a broad aesthetic apparatus that combines art and performance theoretical perspectives.

140 Ref. Dwight Conquergood, “Performance Studies – Interventions and radical research”, op. cit.
142 Ibid., p. 8.
2.5 Broad Aesthetics
The many different practices, and the emotional, intellectual and social levels that constitute the ‘land’ projects should, as I see it, be perceived through an aesthetic that includes all the senses and all sensuousness as part of a larger public and political sphere. Performance theory constitutes such a broadening of the perspective, unifying different expressions, experiences and fields in the analysis of immediacy, rituals and social dynamics. A further elaboration of the term and conception of aesthetics is thus necessary to understand the reach or potentiality of the ‘land’ projects particularly, and of performance theory more generally.

2.5.1 A Synthetical Perspective
During the 20th century, one could say that an aesthetic that gives prevalence to signs, sight and visual culture has been emphasized – visibility and intellectuality. However, our perception of and interaction with the world and each other includes far more than signs and sight: Smells, touches, feelings, bodies, sounds, tastes. First, then, we must work with a more “complete” sensuousness in aesthetics – the many senses that are at play in each situation we encounter are too often neglected. This has importance for the ‘land’ projects’ relation to “visual arts”, often likened with art history, and the idea of performances and experimental projects as something that expands beyond this limited setting. A performance is thought of as a widening of aesthetics sensuously and bodily, as well as intellectually and theoretically. The mentioned importance of food and cooking in both ‘land’ projects is an example of such a broadening; food is not merely visual, nor merely symbolic or political. Food is sensuous, and of course social and ritual – a meal is biology, aesthetics, performance, politics, religion, culture, as well as being deeply symbolic and absolutely necessary. Food is not only actual, physical, colourful, tasty and necessary, it is togetherness and action: We went shopping together at the market in Chiang Mai, about seven people, five more than one would actually need. Then we cooked together all day at Umong, making red curry from scratch and translating different herbs from Thai to English.

In the following, I want to mention some more contemporary theories/theoreticians who move across the limits of art and visibility, including sensuousness, politics, religion, body, presence and lead life into a more general, philosophical understanding of aesthetics – beginning however, with a historical reference. The concepts of aesthetics and sensation have been altered through history, but etymologically, aesthetics stems from the Greek word ‘aisthēsis’,
meaning sense perception or sensation.143 Aesthetics as a discipline, however, was neither named nor concretely tied to perception and cognition, until Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten published his *Aesthetica* in 1750. Aesthetics was thought of by Baumgarten as a sort of perception, tied to epistemology – he called it “sensuous knowledge”. Baumgarten saw both scientific and aesthetic thinking as necessary for “complete knowledge”, though deeming sensuous knowledge as belonging to a “lower” faculty. ”According to Baumgarten, aesthetic knowledge is specialized in perceiving complex phenomena – not in order to analyze them in their composition but to make them present in their intuitive density.”144 Before Baumgarten, as we usually know it from Plato and onwards, the importance of sensuous information and experience to formation of knowledge was much debated, and in general deemed less important than reason, text and intellect.145

2.5.2 A Sensuous Approach

Seeing this problem from a more contemporary perspective, sensuousness has become “everything” – it is as if that which is not seen (or sensed) does not exist. Philosopher Jacques Rancière writes about the social and political importance of being sensed, about the “life (de)constructive” power in the creation of sensuousness. Rancière expands the conception of aesthetics to 1) include all sensuousness and 2) to include relations to and within this sensuousness. He further ties aesthetics to politics through the distribution (sharing) of the sensuous: What, in a society, do we hear and see, and what remains invisible and inaudible? Rancière sets the senses in direct relation to the political through this “sharing or distribution of the sensuous” – it is how we relate or create relations through sensuousness that constitute the political, meaning the sharing of what is commune. In his argument Rancière takes the ”original scenario” of aesthetics, the way he finds it described by philosopher Friedrich Schiller, as his point of departure: 1) art is a way to perceive/experience 2) aesthetic experience is heterogeneous and, 3) aesthetics are not just art. Further, he holds that the politics of aesthetics are undecideable; art and aesthetics cannot be isolated from politics, but neither can art be used to fulfill political ambitions, because sensual perceptions can never be steered.

145 Plato, op. cit.
The political has been a key notion in Rancière’s theory, and in *La mésentente* (1995) he combines it with aesthetics. The political is here presented as a disagreement or conflict of interest based on the sharing or distribution of the sensuous. This aspect, which has received particular attention in art circles, is further explained in *Le partage du sensible – esthétique et politique*. The distribution of the sensuous concerns how we share, distribute and relate to the sensuous in a common sphere; how some phenomena are seen and heard while others are neither seen nor heard. How we perceive “reality” through our senses is thus a deeply political concern, and it is in the production of different landscapes of the sensuous that “art” can work politically, he says. Rancière understands aesthetics as everything that concerns sensuousness and not as the more delimited notion tied to art, visuality and judgements of taste.

Rancière deals with several of the above mentioned and “classical” topics of 20th century art theory: The relation between art and life, art and politics, art and aesthetics, aesthetics and romanticism, and the different historical conceptualizations of aesthetics. But, instead of claiming anything new on behalf of these conceptualizations, he goes into them and shows the many possible perceptions and readings of aesthetics, art and politics now and before; he also returns to Plato and Aristotle in his treatment of the concepts *mimesis* and *representation*. By suggesting different regimes or ways of thinking about the relation between art and politics, Rancière shows us how we, through the *way in which we think about the relation*, can change it radically. A small movement of the mind can thus be all that is needed to “save” art from its end or death. Rancière holds that contemporary art, by seeking the outside, often excludes the inside and thereby creates a consensual frame that effectively seeks the outer – the ”political contemporary art” becomes a parody of its own efficiency. Art does become political by acting “outside itself”; in the real world the politics of art produce forms of attention that can contribute to new landscapes of the sensuous.

Rancière has what one could call a micro-political approach; he does not reject or dismiss reigning theories or systems, but he shows how and why they are unstable and/or can be

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146 The book is translated to English with a preface by Slavoj Zizek, then given the title *The Politics of Aesthetics*.


148 Put forward in lecture held in Paris 24th of May 2006, «Contemporary Art and the Paradoxes of Political Art».
thought in several ways – he builds scenarios. Rancière both accepts and rejects art as a separate field, he speaks of parts of contemporary art as quite “secluded” and driven by specific people and a particular discourse, while he, at the same time, includes art in a broader conception of aesthetics, sees aesthetics as politics and politics as co-existence. Rancière suggests different divisions and regimes, but simultaneously makes clear that these are only ways of thinking, which at any time could be replaced by other perspectives that would result in other conclusions: different perspectives result in different conclusions. This very pragmatic way of relating to theory and terms like art can be a way out of disillusion, the death of utopias and the current lack of motivation. At the end of Le partage du sensible, he suggests that we live the “impossibility” of utopia and instead think of heterotopias, thus moving from ‘non-place’ to ‘other-place’.

This way of thinking about art and conceptualizations about art coincides with the approach taken in this thesis – art can be traced as particular people in particular networks with power or as a specific system or discourse, but these categorizations can also be broken or transcended. Art does not have to be a specific set of practices or questions; it can be as wide as “practice” or “project” related to a broad conception of aesthetics and history. Aesthetics here is thus understood as whatever concerns the senses and in the broadest sense of the term – aesthetics is not particularly visual, and it is not associated with “aesthetization”, that is with judgements of taste and good or right visual form. Further, contemporary philosopher of aesthetics Martin Seel writes:

Aesthetic interest … is grounded in the desire to be perceptually aware of the presence of one’s own being. For epistemic beings, however, the consciously lived present means that indeterminacy flares up everything that can be theoretically and practically determined. A particular accomplishment of aesthetic intuition is to make present in their non-transparency the unrecognized and unused possibilities that emerge here. No consciousness of one’s present possible without aesthetic consciousness … It is not so much an awareness of certain facts, desires, duties, or life plans as it is a sense of the here and now of one’s own life, as it becomes accessible only in openness to the play of appearance of a given situation … one could say that aesthetics, as a doctrine of special possibilities of perception and special possibilities of living life, is part both of a comprehensive theory of perception and of a comprehensive ethics.150

149 On form from Oxford English Dictionary online, op. cit.: “The particular character, nature, structure, or constitution of a thing; the particular mode in which a thing exists or manifests itself.”

150 Martin Seel, op. cit., p. 16.
Seel thus sees sensuous awareness as life awareness, connected to presence and life conditions – a perspective that might be considered in relation to the previously presented perspectives on life form. Aesthetic reflection and aesthetic conditions then, are preconditions for life and sociality – sensuousness and immediacy become inseparable from perception, cognition, life and politics, and, in many ways, this is what the more simple acts of the ‘land’ projects may convey: The making of a meal, the sharing of food, conversation about the dishes, and about art – are all life conditions, always very sensuous and thereby belonging to the conceptualization of a broader aesthetics. The importance of smells, tastes, sounds, colours, touches, as sources for life and learning, as grounds for action, are still understated in theory and in need of being given more serious thought. To get an idea of the rich sensuousness in the ‘land’ projects, the reader is encouraged to look at the Appendix of photos in the back of the text.

2.6 Summing Up
In this chapter, the projects in question are placed in relation to discourse, and several art-theoretical problems are raised – the problem of autonomy, is autonomy possible or impossible, and does autonomy enable or disable? Further, I have identified a ‘self-reflexivity loop’ in the late 20th century art and art theory, where the intended scrutiny of self may lead to a primary concern only with and relevance for the self. The two ‘land’ projects relate to and work with some of these aspects, however, they also exceed them, and need to be evaluated on the basis of other criteria. Dealing with avant-garde history, one faces similar problems – here one also finds parallel theoretical tracks of art and performance theory. Often dealing with the same practices, they have different perspectives on these practices: Art theory can broadly be said to be concerned with the object produced, the end result, while performance theory tends to focus on sociality and processuality.

The field-crossing and experimental character is the reason for the avant-garde designation, and the term implies a challenging of traditional norms and values. This might only be in form

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151 Another contemporary theoretician used in this thesis who is concerned with presence is professor in literature, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht – he suggests that the interest and awareness of the immediate material and immaterial presence gives a heightened awareness of self in the world, and thereby, one must read, in relation to others, *Production of Presence*, California, Stanford University Press, 2004.
and colours, but it nevertheless indicates artists who in some way seek to challenge the existing, and who take a critical stand towards existing societal and/or artistic structures. The relation to both social and political conditions on the one hand, and to art/culture history on the other, is the important mixed root of the avant-garde. The avant-garde was indeed about lived life and life perspective, and about aesthetics and culture as alternative landscapes of sensuousness – not merely about aesthetics in politics, but about aesthetics as politics. Current socially-oriented and experimental art is well seen in the light of this “life political” development, where existential and referential complexity in the works/projects come together, and force us to “gather” the perspectives, as in Bourriaud’s understandings of ‘relational aesthetics’ and ‘life form’, or in Blom’s term of ‘style site’. Thus, having the mixed nature of the 20th century avant-garde, as both visual art and performance practice – the ‘land’ projects come through as life forms, where physical, social and personal elements are melted together in doing, in praxis. They do however document and discuss themselves, but the documentation is never seen as an “end result”. Both ‘land’ projects seek productivity over product, and they wish to start something that a community or others can continue – their relation to what they do is therefore generative and not result oriented.

Further, the ‘land’ projects can be thought in relation to the art theoretical term of ‘site-specific’, and must be seen as experiments where notions of space, place and time remains important: The ‘land’ projects as “land projects” can be seen as particular pieces of nature, concrete geographical places, as well as conditions for personal and social existence and existence in general, social and mental places and spaces. Instead of solely seeing a place as something physical and defined, place is seen as ‘socio-spatio-temporal constellations’ that unfold, containing every time specific and different sets of determining factors or vectors. Human performances and experiences are seldom, if ever, isolated moments with specific meaning or intention, rather they are mixes of fields and emotions, layers and spaces. Nevertheless, geography, nature and physical aspects remain important factors in the construction of events and spaces/places, as are social structures/dynamics and mental/personal perceptions and imaginations. Spaces and places like the ‘land’ projects are thus given and performed, imagined and real – seeing the ‘land’ projects as “lands” and understanding the renewed focus on concrete material and place they constitute is important in order to understand their dynamics. A renewed focus on local places and values is also a more general reaction to contemporary life conditions.
During the 20th century, an aesthetic that gives prevalence to signs, sight and visual culture has been emphasized; however, our perception of and interaction with the world and each other include far more than signs and sight: Smells, touches, feelings, bodies, sounds, tastes. First, then, I want to emphasize a more “complete” sensuousness in the aesthetics of the ‘land’ projects – the many senses that are at play in each situation we encounter are too often neglected. Second, aesthetics must be seen in relation to other societal fields that it necessarily includes and concerns: The philosopher Jacques Rancière expands the conception of aesthetics to 1) include all sensuousness and 2) to include relations to and within this sensuousness. He further ties aesthetics to politics through the distribution (sharing) of the sensuous: what, in a society, do we hear and see, and what remains invisible and inaudible? The broader perspectives on the avant-garde discourse and on aesthetics must, in the ‘land’ projects, also be seen in relation to performance theory, a set of theoretical perspectives developed amongst others by Richard Schechner during the second half of 20th century. As the ‘land’ projects are live projects that are both inside and outside the art field/discourse, performance theory provides a necessary theoretical basis. Performance theory in general constitutes a synthetic and processual approach to practice and theory, particularly apt to describe complexity in cultural and social situations. Performance theory also allows us to broaden our view on aesthetics and avant-garde history by further including social and existential perspectives – this sociality that is so important in the ‘land’ projects, and that art theory has difficulties explaining, will be addressed in detail with precisely the use of performance perspectives in Chapter Four. First, however, I will turn to the tension field between the situated and the de-situated, arguing that this tension field is at work both in the practices themselves as well as in the theory needed to analyze them.
Chapter 3 □ Theory and Practice: The Problem of the Situated and the De-situated


Jörn Schafaff
Bangkok, March 2005/2548

Text hanging on the wall at Umong, Chiang Mai, 2006.
3.1 Philosophical Nomadism and Phenomenological Situatedness

Having underlined the two ‘land’ projects’ social character and presented them as part of a broad aesthetics or sensuousness, I will now turn to the more general problem of the situated and the de-situated. Both as dependent on and independent from the art discourse, it is a central concern to point at the projects’ vital dynamics: What is at work in the ‘land’ projects? My suggestion is to start the analysis with an inquiry on the tension between the situated and the de-situated, because this tension gathers theory and practice, art and non-art, and shows how problems transcend fields and unite people. The problem of the situated and the de-situated is apparent in our contemporary culture and becomes a central dynamic in the ‘land’ projects, showing how art and art practice contain tensions that are alive and at work also outside art’s own field and discourse, thus blending part of the projects with contemporary existence. The problem of the situated and the de-situated is also a fundamental field of tension in the human existence, as well as in Western theory and philosophy. Ultimately, it spins around human possibilities for keeping, dwelling by, challenging or escaping ideas, materiality, and sociality.

In the more recent history of humanist research, the problems of situatedness and de-situatedness have been approached from different angles: The forerunners of Structuralism from the first half of the 20th century, Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce, displayed one form of situatedness when they sought to uncover essential structures, to reveal how the world of meaning was built, primarily on the basis of language theory and philosophy – the text or language became a situated system, to some extent existing independently of people and times.152 From another perspective of about the same period, the phenomenological approach was more concerned with phenomena as they were perceived by the subject. Where the structuralists’ world could be said to exist also outside the subject as rules and structures, the phenomenological world existed primarily through the subject, as unique experiences and perceptions – both theoretical positions could, however, be said to display a certain situatedness, either in the object of research or in the instance of perception itself. Taking a leap up to the 1960s and 1970s generation, the so-called post-structuralist or post-modern theoreticians reacted against these presentations of a perspective as the

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perspective – either made too “objective” outside the subject, or too subjective in the “personalization” of experience. Post-structuralist, post-modern or post-colonial theories are theories tied to the period from the 1970s and onwards, and they are known for an emphasis on the moving, processual or de-situated character of meaning or systems. In general they seek to loosen the grip of what they perceive to be single dominating powers or perspectives, much as attempts to reveal more general dynamics or previously deprived positions, for example tied to minorities or suppressed groups/individuals.\(^{153}\)

The above mentioned theoretical positions are all in different ways concerned with positions; the position of the researcher, the writer, the reader, etc.: From where and by whom is the “world” seen and described, and what role do these renditions have in the constitution of truth and power, in ways of seeing the world, in interpretation and understanding? In the continuation of this and in relation to the main problem of this thesis, the presentation of a situated de-situatedness is one of the main tasks. To use a nomad perspective, while at the same time having a notion of a certain perspective. The phenomenological research of Maurice Merleau-Ponty will be seen to constitute a particular bodily situatedness that might be seen in relation to the more fluctuating aspects of the post-structuralist theory of Deleuze and Guattari. The structuralist movement will not be given any particular consideration here, since it represents a different line of research focused on language and text, while the main interest here is in sociality and sensuousness. It does, however, constitute an important reference for phenomenological and performance research, because it has been dominant through the 20th century and has thus acted as a point of departure.

One could, of course, also find perspectives of situatedness and de-situatedness in other and perhaps more prominent branches or bodies of theory from the 20th century, and I do from time to time draw on sociologists like Niklas Luhmann and Anthony Giddens. I have, however, chosen to focus on the phenomenological and the post-modern/post-structuralist perspectives in addition to art and performance theory, because they quite explicitly state this problem of situatedness and de-situatedness as a theoretical and scientific issue. Further, they both have an important relation to art and performance theory, and are frequently used as both theoretical and practical sources.

\(^{153}\) This is a very short and broad rendition, however I believe it sums up some of the most important features usually attached to or associated with these theoretical movements. See also note 46.
3.1.1 Phenomenological Situatedness

The perceptual phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty displays a clear situatedness, a perspective placed within the thinking and experiencing subject/researcher. All phenomena are perceived from somewhere, by someone – the world is already there, but I am the ultimate source. There is a perceptual complexity in the 1940s phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. He points at something important and essential in the human perception through his repeated insistence on the body and the physical aspects in every situation of experience.\(^\text{154}\) He unites the aspects of meaning and of presence, the subjective and the objective into “the-thing-in-itself-for-me” and says, “I am not in space and time, nor do I conceive space and time; I belong to them, my body combines with them and includes them.”\(^\text{155}\) A place, which is the space where human existence unfolds, is, like existence itself, both physical and metaphysical. Merleau-Ponty underlines spatiality in experience, stating that every sensation is spatial. He also emphasizes the synthesis of experience – there is a merging of subject, sociality and environment: This intertwining of physical, social and mental elements is essential to communication and belonging in contemporary culture. Here, media theoretician Marshall McLuhan’s influential “punch lines” of the medium being the message and media being extensions of man, attain a new relevance tied to the communicational and perceptual structures of today.\(^\text{156}\) Merleau-Ponty said something similar to McLuhan some twenty years before him, something that is valid also when faced with new technology:

> It is literally true that the subject who learns to type incorporates the key-bank space into his bodily space. The example of instrumentalists shows even better how habit has its abode neither in thought nor in the objective body, but in the body as mediator of the world … so direct a relation is established that the organist’s body and his instrument are merely the medium of this relationship.\(^\text{157}\)

Thus, the physicality and the "meta-physicality" of existence cannot be kept apart, they are part of the same experience, the same existence, and one has a very complex perception of being in the actual room and the “constructed room” at the same time. You cannot leave the materiality of your own body and this body’s perception of the world around itself: You are

\(^\text{154}\)Maurice Merleau-Ponty, op. cit.
\(^\text{155}\)Ibid., p. 161-162.
\(^\text{156}\)McLuhan, Marshall, op. cit.
\(^\text{157}\)Merleau-Ponty, op. cit., p. 168
your body, literally speaking, and all the body’s complex processes can therefore always be
tied to any situation that you experience or inhabit; the complexity of human existence is
thereby always in some way tied to the concrete perceptual situation. These distinctions
between body, mind and world are still sought to be avoided by Guattari and Deleuze some
fifty years later; they seek to replace polarities and dualisms with complexities, instabilities
and multiplicities. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they hold that: “There is no longer a tripartite
division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a
field of subjectivity (the author).”158 Returning to Merleau–Ponty, on the one hand he may be
accused of taking a too clear stand within the subjective experience, thereby becoming a
solipsistic159 – forfeiting a perspective or view that does not have any claim outside itself, that
is, without any “common value”. A clearly situated subject can thus be seen as restricting
access to other or common experience. On the other hand, Merleau-Ponty’s situatedness
constitutes a complexifying and nuancing position. From the perspective of the subject, all
levels of existence come together in one – categories, fields and experiences become
connected. There is undoubtedly some kind of common experience, experiences that are
rooted in sociality or that are perceived similarly by different people. Yet, this common
experience is located specifically in each subject, and attains meaning only there. The subject
body is constantly interacting in the world, being part of as well as being particular. An
acknowledgement of the many physical bodies and subject perspectives, a uniting of body and
psyche, is what we find in his phenomenological theory.

3.1.2 Philosophical Nomadism

As the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty clearly underlines the aspects of being, Gilles
Deleuze and Félix Guattari clearly point at the *becoming*; the state or action that is yet to
come, the “what-you-are-always-on-the-verge-to” be or do. This is for them an ethical issue, a
necessary condition of human freedom since the being indicates a clearly defined and locked
existence, a sort of “subject prison”. Guattari and Deleuze have therefore argued for a more
floating and dynamic conceptualization that makes sense when trying to understand the

159 Solipsism defined by Oxford English Dictionary Online: “The view or theory that self is the only object of
real knowledge or the only thing really existent. Also, egoism, and in a weakened sense.” Solipsistic is thus self-
contained with negative connotations.
complexity and co-existence of experiences. The earlier mentioned reflexive definition of complexity by Luhmann perceives complexity as an overload of differentiated elements, and the elements defined as such, separate. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, present complexity as something closer to chaos, and refuse to make the distinction between chaos and order. Chaos is not opposed to order, it is everywhere, in everything, confronting the heterogeneous states of complexity: Chaos has no concepts, Guattari says, it is pure ontology. Complexity then means something that is full of intermediary zones, complexity becomes more blurred and impure; it is hypercomplex in a different way and often impossible to trace. Luhmann however also says that only complexity can reduce complexity –– this is what leads us into the formerly mentioned ‘self-reflexivity loop’. But by adopting this thought and reversing it, one could open for an initial complete complexity, assuming that there are no clear systems and no clear boundaries. In Chaosmose, where Guattari stands as single author, chaos, which he compares to psychosis, designs an essential way out of “being in the world”. It is by passing through this dangerous chaos that the other becomes possible, that the ontological can split and the creative processes can occur. Guattari keeps the chaos in the world, not between or outside worlds, he does not seek to “order” the world, and he impels us to blend and mix the existing boundaries in order for a new singular specificity to emerge. By a complete de-territorialization of the common fields and subjects, that is to say the loosening up of idea, notions and structures that are made or have become rigid – I will seek to re-territorialize on new and meaningful constellations that are always open for change.

Complexity and chaos (as understood by Deleuze and Guattari) thus describe the regular state, not something constructed or out of the ordinary. Deleuze and Guattari’s complexity becomes multitudes of singularities moving fast in unclear patterns – mixes of media, fields and systems that turn into impure and chaotic hybrid organizations.

In A Thousand Plateaus Deleuze and Guattari develop various notions of the situated and the de-situated, or of models of nomadism and models of sedentariness. The nomadic represents a transformative force, the existential machine-like forces driven by affects that refuse to accept the state apparatus, but keep turning into, keep becoming. The nomadic moves in a smooth

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162 Guattari, Chaosmose, op. cit., p. 110.
space, that is, a space where free movement or thought is possible, whereas the sedentary is set to a striated space, a space where lines and marks are already made. Further, they distinguish between movement and speed; movement is extensive, speed is intensive. This relates to the notions of territorialization, de-territorialization and re-territorialization, notions of how one inhabits space. The state apparatus creates and moves in striated space, also making space striated by its territorialization. The nomadic on the other hand is characterized by a de-territorializing relation to earth, and speed is an essential feature of their “war machine”, i.e. their unconventional yet exemplary life mode. In relation to the nomad, Deleuze and Guattari touch upon the tension between the local and the global. The nomad, they say, despite his moving nature, could also be thought of as “he who does not move”, because he relates to his environment in a non-expansive fashion, he stays in his environment without seeking to increase or augment his pastures.

One could in fact say that Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is made up of the thousands of tensions related to situatedness and de-situatedness; once you have fixed something, other things move, once you are moved, someone or something have made you stand still. There are lines and bodies, but the lines always fluctuate and the bodies have no organs; it all designates an extremely finely tuned and organic way of thinking – perhaps too complex to be grasped in the short rendition of their theory that is within the scope of this dissertation. In the beginning of A Thousand Plateaus, they express the wish to compose a book of “plateaus that communicate with one another across microfissures, as in a brain.” Then, we understand, that it is precisely the points of connections, the fissures or microfissures that constitute the pivotal points or junctures where the situated and the de-situated meet, before they connect, transform and continue their machine-like becoming. Deleuze and Guattari’s theories and concepts are complex; on the one hand they are immediately graspable, intuitive, while on the other hand they are so complex, so multi-faceted, that they almost become mathematic. I have nevertheless chosen to use their theories because they combine un-neglectable aspects of existence in the most organic way, an organic way I had long sought when working with socially-oriented experimental art.

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163 Deleuze & Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, op. cit., p. 420.
164 Ibid., p. 24.
3.1.3 A Situated De-Situatedness

The phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty constitutes a situatedness, but that in many ways is complexifying because it fragments meaning in each subject – there is a strong perception of the constituted perspective, but the perspective is in itself always poly-perspectival. The idea of several simultaneous contexts, but each context as defined, is thus one possible way of situating thought while keeping the notion of other perspectives, of other realities. The co-existence and co-dependence of multiple contexts could also be united in the ontological complexity of Deleuze and Guattari; the contexts are then blurred into a more unclear hybridity, and become simultaneous potentialities in a virtual, that is to say unrealized, space. The rhizome structure of Deleuze and Guattari can be seen as constituting such a situatedness in combination with its organic and multiple character, underlining notions of heterogeneity, multiplicity and breach. The rhizome is a subterranean root that constitutes an organic and concrete alternative to tree-structure much used in Western thinking. Instead of having a localizable root, a clearly defined trunk and branches that divide into two, four, eight, etc., the rhizome is one and many simultaneously. It grows from the middle and at several places at once, it goes directly from one, to five, to eight, etc.: The rhizome is an un-structured structure, a situated de-situatedness. Further, the rhizome is characterized by connections, heterogeneity, multiplicity, a-signifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania (technique of transferring engravings and prints to a flat surface – to copy by tracing).

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165 New media theory can be of help in understanding contemporary time and space culture, and for analyzing today’s social structures. Computers are, for example, apt to show this simultaneity in presence and meaning effects: Media theoretician Lev Manovich speaks of a sort of reality that merges the room inside and outside of the computer; the user exists in the actual physical room in his or her body and in the virtual room inside the computer, and the room inside the computer can be aesthetic, informational or social, or all – this, by the way, is reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty’s lesser technologically oriented phenomenology. The perceptual situation includes both actual and fictive room, and both places are experienced physically and mentally at the same time. To describe the virtuality of cyberspace, the media theoretician Lev Manovich uses concepts such as “floating architecture” and “navigable space”. Within the perceptual situation in cyberspace there are several choices, maybe endless choices, divided into ‘open’ and ‘closed interactivity’ that the user can choose between, more or less freely. Ref. The Language of New Media, Massachusetts and London, The MIT Press, 2001.

166 Ref. note 71.

Here, the unifying and “whole” character of the rhizome root is underlined – it is connected, and through this connection it is something, a localizable existence. To emphasize the situatedness of the structure and to further develop the concept of re-territorialization could be seen as a furthering of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory. Their concern was primarily to express the non-linearity of structures and further to free them from stately sedentariness – as mentioned in relation to space and place, they do not particularly elaborate on or emphasize this situated character as something positive. Though they, in their treatise on nomadology mention in relation to the nomad that the real movement or speed is perhaps that which does not move. Deleuze and Guattari thus point at the problem’s necessary relationality, meaning an existing and undeniable mutuality. However, in our multicultural, globalized world, to point at this relationality is, as important as it is, no longer enough. We have to move farther into the problems concerning identity and the human need for perceived belonging, towards the home that the ‘land’ projects both thematize and constitute.\footnote{Perceived belonging’ is further explained in section 4.4.}

A main concern in the problem of the situated and the de-situated, as suggested, is how to keep radicality, anti-dogmatism and dynamism, while resting in the familiar and having an identity, a perceived identity. We need to acknowledge the home while figuring out ways to keep it moving, or ways that makes it less authoritarian and less consolidated. The dogmatism of some so-called anti-authoritarian cultures is a paradox; often the most anti-authoritarian are the most authoritarian precisely because of their highly heightened perception of the needed value of anti-authority. Thus the radical and revolutionary, which in themselves are moving concepts or ideas that demand change, often become ideas that are very much situated or attached. To fight for a concept, you have to have a “frozen” idea of the idea, something that is defined as something you believe in, even if what you believe in is precisely change and movement. The real challenge thus lies in true non-dogmatism, which can only be achieved by keeping an open mind into every particular situation, and further to evaluate every situation as particular.\footnote{Ref. Michel Foucault, L’Ordre du discours, op. cit., and the theory of Richard Schechner, Performance Theory, op. cit.} Epistemologist and communication theorist Gregory Bateson defines this sort of flexibility as an uncommitted potentiality for change\footnote{Gregory Bateson, op. cit.} – this is combined in the ‘land’ projects with a will to preserve, but is that at all possible? Bateson further points out that in order to remain flexible, one has to insist on flexibility – an insistence that might
become tyrannical. This, one could say, is the normativity Deleuze and Guattari balance against, I believe, without falling over. Summing up the idea of the ‘situated de-situatedness’, I suggest that a sustainable flexibility must also imply the acceptance of some rigidity.

### 3.2 Situated and De-situated Perspectives in Art Theory

#### 3.2.1 The Phenomenological Position as Ground for Experience

Art theory often displays the above discussed tensions between the phenomenological "internal" positedness and the post-structuralist "external" fluctuation very clearly: The art theorist or spectator is most often a situated presence, a concrete person, but at the same time someone who makes herself invisible by a sort of distance or omnipotence – during the last fifty years there has also been a clear concern with the institution, the superstructure of art and art itself as institution.\(^{171}\) Also, in art theory the situated, phenomenological, experiencing subject has to some extent been opposed to the institutional and systemic organization of space – and the actual, sensuous experiences have been less emphasized than the tracing of power structures.\(^{172}\) Lately however, with the popularity of, for example, lighting and ambience artist Olafur Eliasson and other sensuously oriented artists, sensuousness as primary focus has returned to the art institution and theory. As discussed in relation to Rancière, this sensuousness as a primary focus or experience in itself, as well as being the matter of society, of politics, etc., is a clear concern in both ‘land’ projects. Sensuousness in food, fabric, nature, concerts, interiors, exhibitions, is appreciated in itself, but there is also an awareness of the importance of this sensuousness for sociality, for interaction, the experience of self and others.

One of the first philosophers to emphasize this experiential sensuousness in relation to both art and theory in more recent history was American pragmatist John Dewey. Dewey, much

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\(^{172}\) Can be seen in text- and language-oriented artist such as Joseph Kosuth, “new conceptualist” work by Matias Faldbakken, or in the institutional emphasis of artists such as Hans Haacke and Andrea Fraser.
like Merleau-Ponty, brought to the fore the physical, sensual and actual experience as vital for knowledge or understanding. In his seminal book from 1934, *Art as Experience*, he says:

> In order to understand the meaning of artistic products, we have to forget them for a time, to turn aside from them and have recourse to the ordinary forces and conditions of experience that we do not usually regard as esthetic … (...) A philosophy of art is sterilized unless it makes us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience, and unless it indicates why this function is so inadequately realized, and unless it suggests the conditions under which the office would be successfully performed. ¹⁷³

And further: “The nature of experience is determined by the essential conditions of life … The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way.”¹⁷⁴ Dewey thus underlines the importance of not only a wider experience, but of “regular” experiences, to the art sphere. As Rancière does later, Dewey sees the aesthetic or sensuous experience as important for both art and life – aesthetics and sensuous perception being aspects that concerns the society and philosophy as a whole. Dewey has been important in art theory, but perhaps even more so to performance theory.¹⁷⁵ His experience-oriented philosophy focuses on the situation, that is to say, the moment of performance. Performance artist Allan Kaprow, who is also part of the neo-avant-garde art history, was influenced by Dewey’s philosophy in both texts and performances.¹⁷⁶ After Dewey, the art theoretician Michael Fried is probably one of those who has come the closest to these perceptual theories in relation to more traditional visual arts.¹⁷⁷ With a phenomenological and bodily approach, he addressed various aspects in relation to the concrete meeting with, or experience of an artwork. He also compared this meeting with a social situation, reminiscent of theatre or performance – I will return to Fried’s theory in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁵ See for example Marvin Carlson’s “Perspectives on Performance: Germany and America”, introduction to Erika Fischer –Lichte’s *The Transformative Power of Performance*, op. cit.
The phenomenological research marks an awareness of the actual or immediate situation, of the moment of sensation and experience – this, without doubt, is the centre of performance research and theory: the moment of the event and how this “turns into”, indicates immediacy, becoming or transformation, as well as the state to come. Though there is performance research that addresses more textual, external, and compositional qualities, performance history and theory in general can be said to have had a moving object, making the actors and their actions come into focus, and the overall experience constitute the object of analysis. Though there is performance research that addresses more textual, external, and compositional qualities, performance history and theory in general can be said to have had a moving object, making the actors and their actions come into focus, and the overall experience constitute the object of analysis. 178 Art theory, on the other hand, has had a more still-standing object, making it less obvious to study the situation and more apparent to study the object. During the 1960s however, and in relation to what has become known as the neo-avant-garde, the event was given a central focus. Here, for a moment, performance theory was opposed to art theory, but the foci on either object or situation have in fact co-existed within both disciplines, at least since the 1960s. It is, however, clear, that performance theory is centred on precisely the performative event or situation.

The relation between the still and the moving, between the object, spectator or actor as situated, and further, the context, meaning, and the body itself as moving, mark several important tensions in the meeting of disciplines as well as within each discipline. And, it is both a matter of perception and of production – from which perspective is the experience seen or rendered? The phenomenological approach has been on and off in both art and performance theory, but one could say that theories concerning sensuousness and experience have been less emphasized or deemed less weighty the last twenty to thirty years than theories concerning language, text, and power structures. This is perhaps because of the “object’s” evasiveness, and thereby the perceived evasiveness of the theory itself. However, the phenomenological, bodily, experience-directed and situated perspective constitutes an important historical and philosophical, and, not least, actual part of art and performance history. The phenomenological and pragmatist approaches of Merleau-Ponty and Dewey also centre the bodily perspective, and give weight to the perceiving as well as to the producing subject. The focus on phenomenology here does not, however, mean a return to the clearly defined experiencing subject; the external and institutional positions are likewise considered important. Rather than perceiving the phenomenological position as locking meaning to the subject, preventing a nuanced subject position as well as more general organic perspectives, ...
the phenomenological perspective may be seen as one that acknowledges the actual and factual existence of the subject and the subject’s body as the preconditions for anything and everything, particularly when relating to sensuous matters and a broad aesthetics.

3.2.2 Assemblage as (Micro-)Fissures in Theory and Praxis

Relations between the situated and de-situated are important in Deleuze and Guattari’s theories, and they continuously connect, fuse, react, transit and transform through micro-fissures. Assemblage is a central term as we consider Deleuze and Guattari in relation to art theory or contemporary art. Assemblage is generally defined as ‘a bringing or coming together; a meeting or gathering; the state of being gathered or collected’,¹⁷⁹ and in art history an assemblage is a “three-dimensional composition made of various materials”.¹⁸⁰ In an art context the assemblage can perhaps be seen as a furthering of the ideas of collage and montage, that is to say the co-placing of separate pictures or angles. The technique of collage is attributed to Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, who started to glue pieces of paper, ads and newspapers to their paintings around 1912. The concept of montage is usually ascribed to filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein, known for the technique of cross-cutting images and thereby “making” new and unknown connections within each spectator – the montage became a way of more actively engaging the spectator in the narration and construction of meaning. The 20th century artistic techniques of collage, montage and assemblage in themselves imply the gathering or co-placement of a certain amount of material, either in order to express a particular meaning, as Eisenstein, or as was done slightly later by, for example, Allan Kaprow, in order to express a certain randomness in the co-placement of things – perhaps eventually seeing new meaning in what seems meaningless or random. Or, as art theorist Kristine Stiles expresses it, the assemblage implies the gathering and display of “the performative relationship between thought, behavior and things.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ According to Oxford English Dictionary Online – see assemblage.
¹⁸¹ Kristine Stiles, “Material Culture and Everyday Life”, in Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, ed. Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1996, p. 288. Performative is here not used in the same way as it in the rest of the text, performative here seems to mean something like “activating”.
Through their combination of physical, sensuous, intellectual, mental and social elements, the ‘land’ projects constitute assemblages or assemblies of elements in an art theoretical understanding; they present or emphasize certain things that in turn are co-thought, such as meditation, agriculture and art. The ‘land’ projects through their activity programmes and various arrangements, in and of themselves constitute assemblages – but it is questionable whether the projects constitute compositions, as the art-historical understanding of an assemblage implies. Is it a person or a group of people who have gathered activities, or is it more complex gatherings of ontological, existential aspects, combined with the art-historical conceptions and more familiar vectors? Deleuze and Guattari speak of the assemblage as a multiplicity that acts on semiotic, material and social flows simultaneously. This implies the formerly suggested upheaval of the distinctions between world, object/work and subject – that is, a rejection of a rationalist and structuralist doxa.182 The assemblage could be thought of as a temporary constellation that constitutes the ground for social interaction and common understanding – the assemblage shifts from within as well as being altered from the outside. The assemblage is the temporary and simultaneous co-placement, co-display or co-existence of meaning, material and sociality.

Thus, being a principle of relationality, of co-placement or co-thinking, the assemblage is also a principle of simultaneity related to time and presence. As the parts come together, they are not completely becoming one, they co-exist, and further, they co-appear as in the art technique. When art theoretician Ina Blom writes of Rirkrit Tiravanija’s dinner parties, she emphasizes their assemblage character or the assemblage of elements that they constitute, that is to say, the particular way they make different social and aesthetical aspects come together and co-appear:

Unlike ordinary dinner parties, the actual social situations initiated by Tiravanija do not simply take place as a matter of course, i.e. in order to enhance social relations. Instead, they are connected to highly specific historical, spatial and aesthetic complexes that modify the familiar social relations they might initially seem to evoke. No models from the field of sociology or anthropology (theories of the exchange of gifts or hospitality) will provide an adequate description for the type of combinations of elements initiated by Tiravanija … Elements specific to the contemporary fields of activity and forms of knowledge named “art” and “aesthetics” are used as points of departure for tracing possible new social links. The new

182 For example in Charles Sanders Peirce’s distinction between the Signifier (the word), the Signified (that which is spoken of) and the language user (the one who speaks), further he distinguished between index, icon and symbol. Ref. Encyclopædia Britannica, http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9066717
“question of style”, or the “crisis” of the proper function of art and aesthetics, triggered by the new significance and mobility of style, positions style as an event, or an unaccounted-for appearance. The artistic interventions in the style site come across as efforts to further mobilize its various components and to reconnect them in new types of assemblages and constellations. And this activity should, in the last instance, be understood as an attempt to imagine what social relations might possibly come to look like.\(^{183}\)

Again, the site, as the place, location or situated setting, is related to the idea of being and particularly of becoming – what sociality do we have, do we constitute, can we constitute? The idea of the assemblage could then be transferred, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest, to the live and social sphere: The assemblage relates, but in its logic it bears the existence of a simultaneous multiplicity – thus it is both situated and de-situated at once in its fundamental structure, a fissure in and of space and time.

### 3.3 The Mobile Home as Concept of Co-dependence and Mutuality

#### 3.3.1 The Home

Now turning to a possible conceptualization of the situated de-situatedness: The combination of societal flux and the artistic search for a sense of home or belonging makes the artists’ concept of ‘mobile home’ into something more than caravans and camping equipment, and more than specific art practices or a theme. The ‘mobile home’ seems to catch something symptomatic of our times; it becomes a theoretical and philosophical concept, and it illustrates the coming together of the art discourse with other discourses in a specific complex of problems. The search for the “home” as the search for stability, safety and identity is a deeply existential issue for human beings, as is the urge to move, to run, and to be in opposition. However, in a world where globalization, through mass communication and transport, amongst other things, is relatively new-found, and where mobility maybe has been equalled with freedom and dynamism to a too large extent, we have to find new ways of thinking about belonging and situatedness that are not merely safe or reactionary returns to left-behind concepts from the past. Diasporic movements of workers and refugees constitute an important part of this globalization, and the often forced mixing of cultures and identity that these bring on make it ever so clear that questions of belonging must be continuously re-addressed, and not only be considered as imaginary power constructs made to consolidate

\(^{183}\) Ina Blom, *On the Style Site*, op. cit., p. 157-58
nation states and authoritarian discourses. Questions of belonging and identity, of perceived situatedness, are thus not problems of a new and more visible multi-culturality in the 1980s and 90s, they are prevailing social and global issues, and are just as, or perhaps even more, important than ever.

Reactions to this experience of a fast moving, globalized and diasporic world can be seen everywhere in contemporary life and culture, in the renewed interest in local communities, rural living and religion, in movements like Slow Food, Slow Planet and Slow Home, in the hiring of “life coaches” and planners to keep different sides of everyday life together, and last but not least, in the many small and large conflicts and wars tied to cultural/identity-related differences and territories. There seems to be an experience of chaos and uncontrol due to both wanted and un-wanted speed, mobility, fusing, and synergy, and this seems to create a discomfort that one attempts to counteract through different concretizations or re-territorializations: These are attempts to re-establish lost feelings of belonging and locality through different constitutive actions (actions or rituals that confirm or create individual or group identity), and values tied to tradition and religion receive renewed interest. Sociologist Anthony Giddens gives an important survey of these aspects in high modernity in Modernity and Self-Identity. Here he points out three factors or dynamics of modernity that makes these times existentially troubling for ordinary individuals: 1) Separation of time and space, that is the articulation of social relations across wide spans of time-space, up to and including global systems. 2) Disembedding mechanisms that separate interaction from the particularities of locales. 3) Institutional reflexivity: the regularised use of knowledge about circumstances of social life as constitutive element in its organization and transformation.

Some of these aspects, such as the self-reflexivity loop that the institutional reflexivity might cause, have already been mentioned in relation to art theory. Further, Giddens suggests precisely the tensions between globality and locality, time and space, to be an existential field

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184 Ref. theories on the nation state and the building of nations, see bibliography Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri.
186 Ritual theory is not specifically addressed in this context, as it implies a rather large body of theory that falls outside of the scope of this dissertation, it is however important in the theories of both Richard Schechner and Victor Turner.
187 Anthony Giddens, op.cit, p. 20.
of tension or worry. The subject needs to have an idea of itself, a *self-identity*, and this is troubled by perceived gaps in time and place, and by the over-awareness of self and its institutions. Giddens concludes by underlining the need to perceive the subject as an active agent, this perception must also be held by the subject itself, and observes the different reactions to the perceived loss of the situated subject, that is, various re-constitutive actions tied to existence and morality: “The invasion of the natural world by abstract systems brings nature to an end as a domain external to human knowledge and involvements … In other words, repressed existential issues, related not just to nature but to the moral parameters of existence as such, press themselves back onto the agenda.”\(^{188}\)

Deleuze and Guattari are concerned with ‘abstract machines’, and could be said to represent such a “disembedding force” in contemporary theory and culture. Their continuous emphasis on fluctuation and becoming could in fact be seen to co-act with the global capitalism they set out to criticize. This aspect has become ever more apparent in recent years; mechanisms of revolt and critique become one with mechanisms of commercial gain and mainstreaming. For example, to be cutting-edge or avant-garde in an art context is often the same as making a lot of money – when critique and revolt have themselves become mainstream values, one might question the content or value of this revolt. One could ask then, if this reveals an important weakness in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory? It certainly indicates a problematic and paradoxical mechanism; however, it also shows the interdependence of the polarities they set out to prove. In fact, *relational theories necessarily imply the combination or co-action of perceived oppositions* – whether they should be called oppositions is thus another question. Further, they cannot and do not deny the subject body: Subjects with and without names are used as examples. There is no doubt in the physical existence of the subject, though they criticize the way these subjects or persons are made into specific beings by the definition of their subjectivity. Though Deleuze and Guattari criticize institutional rigidity and society's territorializing powers, they never underestimate the need for re-territorializing movements as well. In their treatise on nomadology they see the nomad as re-territorializing in his de-territorializing movement; the nomad's fluctuating and moving relation to land is his territory (or identity). This may seem like their ideal portrayal of the relation between the situated and the de-situated – an acceptance and conforming (situatedness) to the fluctuating and organic (de-situated) character of existence. Thus, they do emphasize certain qualities or ethical

\(^{188}\) Giddens, op. cit., p. 224.
aspects in their overall fluctuating philosophy, such as the nomad’s sustainable relation to the local land and its nature.

In this context, the projects in question work clearly and explicitly with the different physical and abstract notions of home as a specific and general situatedness both in their personal lives as well as in life in general. In the Oxford English Dictionary online, one of the main definitions of home is as follows: “A dwelling-place, house, abode; the fixed residence of a family or household; the seat of domestic life and interests; one's own house; the dwelling in which one habitually lives, or which one regards as one's proper abode. – Sometimes including the members of a family collectively; the home-circle or household. In N. America and Australasia (and increasingly elsewhere), freq. used to designate a private house or residence merely as a building.” Thus a home can be physical, social and mental; it can be tied to an actual physical existence, a geographical situatedness, a more general and abstract feeling of belonging, or specific (social) situations or people – this follows the more general discussion of space and place made in Chapter Two. A home can be a house, a family, a feeling, a setting, food, nature, music, a person, a feeling of inclusion – the home is not in any way given, and it can be found in another place on earth, in a different culture, in a different world. The home is then not necessarily a specific culture, a specific religion or a specific family; still, the renewed focus on the home does imply a renewed focus on “close values”, on precisely religion, family and tradition. In this setting and in the ‘land’ projects, home follows this physical, mental and social diversity, but in addition seeks to describe a time, place, space, sociality or feeling where the subject or collective perceives a temporary or lasting situatedness or belonging. This perceived need for belonging will be more elaborately discussed later – like Giddens however, I hold that certain contemporary traits such as the self-reflexivity loop in art, as well as theories by, for example, Deleuze and Guattari, are existentially troubling, and I believe that we, in order to address this, search for a home or a situatedness, a perceived sense of belonging.

3.3.2 The Concept
Using the ‘land’ projects as material and the above mentioned theories as guides, I suggest the concept of the mobile home as one possible way of re-territorializing or re-establishing lost aspects of identity and home combined with freedom or mobility. The mobile home is a
chosen concept that I will use to exemplify some central questions and tensions in the practices, but the mobile home most importantly gives us an immediate access or understanding of the co-dependency of tensions (oppositions) that relational theory implies, and further that the tensions understood as home or mobility might change and be interchanged: Think about everything you want to stay the same, to remain the way it is, the way it has always been. Like the love you feel for someone, the age of a person you love, a smell of something, the weather … Then think of all you wish to change, with the world, with yourself, with family and colleagues. Then try to keep both thoughts in the same thought and make them play. Then think that everything contains this play, this tension between permanence and impermanence, conservation and change, being and becoming. The mobile home, then, is your search for something other, something better, combined with nostalgia and the wish of finding things to be the way they have always been. The mobile home is to be in the other and simultaneously travel in the same. It is neither confrontation nor repetition; it is a constant negotiation and compromise between many pasts, presents and futures, between many subjectivities and values – while at the same time being something, being home.

The mobile home is considered contemporary, yet it has sides that can be likened to other historical periods and moments. Tradition is often thought of as “all past” where the contemporary situation is compared with a quite recent past, in our case the 20th and perhaps the 19th century – one often forgets that there are several histories and many moments in history displaying a multitude of beliefs and practices. In Chaosmose, Félix Guattari points out that it was not until late in occidental history that art was detached as a separate and specific area of practice – for example, archaic societies had a quite different way of categorizing, meaning they did not categorize into different arts or disciplines the way we do; religious representations, rituals and art were much more closely intertwined, as two sides of the same coin. Another example is the Middle Ages, where a work of art had a quite different quality as something publicly displayed, less delimited from everyday life, and more unfinished for the spectator to accomplish. Theatre theorist Elizabeth Burns also points this out in her book on theatricality, describing plays and “tableaus” in the middle ages as more “interactive” and quite different from what we are used to think of as a “traditional play”, then

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189 Guattari, Chaosmose, op. cit., p. 137 onwards.
most often referring to the 19th and early 20th century.\textsuperscript{190} The contemporary ‘mobile home’ situation, however, can be said to have certain similar traits as archaic and medieval situations: The medieval text for example, reminds me of the contemporary, internet related concept of hypertext,\textsuperscript{191} where the text is seen as “interactive” and gives room for interpretation and adaptation, and where the ideas of ownership and origin to a certain extent are blurred. Recently coined concepts like ‘sampling’, ‘postproduction’ and ‘hyper-textuality’ are therefore not necessarily "new", but they have a specific condition today related to intensivity and acceleration in technique and media - that is, there are more choices or offers, and they move or are processed faster. These previously mentioned de-territorializing (Deleuze and Guattari) or disembedding (Giddens) forces require a new ability to adapt or balance; in relation to this, the mobile home becomes a picture of how we can travel, move, choose, without giving up our sense of belonging. This is of course a journey of tension, centred on an existential complexity combining the philosophical ideas of being (Merleau-Ponty) and becoming (Deleuze and Guattari).

The mobile home is thought of as both actual practice in concrete projects like the ‘land’ projects, and as a way of thinking; the mobile home becomes a way of fusing and mutating the situated and the de-situated aspects of art, theory and existence. Culturally, the mobile home represents the tensions between the local and global, place and space, tensions made apparent by speed and notions of duration. Theoretically, the mobile home tries to mutate phenomenological and post-structuralist theory, writing on behalf of both the situated and the de-situated. Philosophically, the mobile home is the co-dependence of perspectives in existence and the way these are conceptualized, through both being and becoming. A general aspect is that the many aspects of mobility and immobility, situatedness and de-situatedness, are not opposed, rather they are co-dependent and intrinsically related to each other, both in idea and existence. The point of the mobile home is thus simple and it does not claim any radical newness; it merely shows the co-dependence of contradictions and further the instability of these contradictions themselves. In this context, it is the perceived oppositions or contradictions between the situated and the de-situated in theory, subject and space, that are of


\textsuperscript{191} Ref. for example ed. Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly, \textit{New Media: A Critical Introduction}, Routledge 2003, on hypertext p. 23: “…hypertext has to describe a text which provides a network of links to other texts that are ‘outside, above and beyond’ itself.”
The purpose of the mobile home concept in relation to the main question is to show 1) its co-dependency, placing increased emphasis on the home, 2) the necessity of conceptualization in itself and 3) to point at the ‘land’ projects as pragmatic, co-dependent tension-filled spaces. Pragmatic here refers to the focus on the actual situation as ground for action. Apart from revealing important qualities in the material, the mobile home is in itself a way of thinking, or it represents thought in itself.192

The conceptualization of the mobile home explores the relation between sets of poles and everything between these poles as co-dependent tensions within any field. The mobile home is the antagonistic or agonistic193 entity that exemplifies the complexity of any given phenomenon or theoretical construction; a tension that is always inherent, though not necessarily in a conflictual, nor harmonious, way. On tensions and contradictions; the idea or conceptualization of something as a concentration, concretization or conceptualization is made only through relations to other concentrations, concretizations or conceptualizations.194 The terms contradictory and oppositional could then be put in brackets because the inherently relational character that I attempt to point out in this argument, blurs what is perceived as contradiction and what is perceived as connection – as previously asked, can things that stand in a necessary relation to each other really be seen as contradictory? Perhaps it is not so important whether one emphasizes these conceptualizations as relational or contradictory, but the perceived contradiction nevertheless has an important constitutive function that cannot be overlooked when we think about belonging and home. Even though home and belonging in some ways are very unclear and relational concepts, they are perceived as very real for each human being that relates to them; one could for instance be willing to die for one’s family and belonging, and thus it becomes very clear that home and belonging is not only relational, but also perceived as oppositional. To acknowledge this very “clear idea of un-clearness” has become vital in the current cultural situation: While I follow post-colonial theory195 and admit

192 Thought in itself is the issue of concern in for example Deleuze and Guattari’s *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie*, op. cit., and Michel Foucault’s “Theatrum Philosophicum”, in *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime*, USA, The University of Michigan Press, 1997.
193 Ref. Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, London and New York, Verso, 2000, p. 80–: agonism means athletic contest, it is thus less conflict based and more turned toward game and play.
194 Ref. Deleuze & Guattari on concepts, *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie?*, op. cit.
that there is no such thing as a defined identity as “black”, “woman” or “gay”, there still is, as sociologist Anthony Giddens points out, a very strong conception of identity as “something specific” – there is a we and an I even though one cannot fill these concepts with specific meaning. However, both relationality and perceived specificity manifest themselves as tensions in human conceptualization, and must therefore be considered both in thought and in praxis.

3.4 Mobile Home Tensions in the ‘land’ projects

I will now proceed with a series of concrete discussions and examples where ‘mobile home tensions’ can be found in the two ‘land’ projects. Five areas are used as labels for the discussion: Organization/ownership, local and traditional / global and contemporary, multiple discourses: interior/exterior, economic/cultural/material/social exchange, and space/territories. I have already touched upon most of these issues, but I am now assigning them a particular function as_fields of tension_ – that is, areas of perceived opposition and paradoxality where there is a multitude of paths and choices, but where none of them clearly stands out as “the best”.

3.4.1 Fields of Tension

_organization/Ownership_

One of the most apparent fields of tension that can be found in the ‘land’ projects that has a more general relevance today is the issue of organization, project and structure: How can an open, generative quality be combined with the planned and with ideas of “ownership” – meaning, how can one project or plan something, with certain guidelines, while at the same time leaving it open, dynamic and non-hierarchical? This of course relates to macro-political aspects of socialism and liberalism, control and freedom – vast and here insurmountable topics. The ‘land’ projects are ‘projects’ and thus have a certain structure and certain aims to begin with, like The Land Foundation’s tripartite division of art/culture, meditation and

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196 Ref. Luhmann, see p. 71-72.

197 However, well discussed and presented by for example Michel Foucault in _Naissance de la biopolitique_, or by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in _Empire_ and _Multitude_, see bibliography for further references.
ecological farming, or Sørfinnset School / the nord land’s concept of ‘culture service’. And even though the aim in both projects is to be open and inclusive, conflicts may at times occur, or the group is made to choose between different alternatives/principles: coffee shop or free coffee at the Sørfinnset School, commercial participation or not on behalf of the land foundation?

Central to both projects are precisely these tensions between how they can proceed with change and tradition at the same time. Even if there is no specific goal, there has to be something in order to continue: Do we continue doing the same in the same way? Do we spread ourselves out or do we remain exclusive? Continuous experimentation is one of the key aspects; the tension lies in the constant questions, the openness, the undefined situations and genres. At the same time it is very difficult to balance a total openness with a direction, and it is a challenge to think sustainably and in the long-term, while constantly having to challenge one’s own concepts. Lertchaiprasert reflects on the issue: “… Discussions around the organization; some want to make it more like “modern management”, I want it to be more spiritual … Some are afraid of making it too religious, like Inson and Venetia’s Dhamma Park … Some want more a real system … like a museum … but we don’t want that, we adapt some techniques, but not all. Uthit called it “spiritual management”. 198

The ‘land’ projects constantly have to negotiate – if the artists had been too dominant, they would have excluded the participation of others, a participation they constantly need in order to make the projects work and keep going. Many performance artists have sought democratic interaction, for example with the public, but when the public does not obey or fulfill the project the way the artists want, they intervene and correct them. This is sought to be avoided in both ‘land’ projects – they are, as discussed, not interested in producing a particular end-result. Nevertheless, the ‘land’ projects are projects, thus bound together by a common idea or aim (art/culture, agriculture and meditation in Thailand, and culture service and stopping depopulation in Norway), at least a perceived one; the participants must have a feeling of a common goal or objective, a feeling of being in something together. Further, there are certain personal preferences and requirements within the projects – in the Thai project, alcohol is not welcome, there is no alcohol served at openings, and staying at Umong I was encouraged not to drink while on the premises. Also, participants of the One Year Project must attend a

198 Interview, op. cit.
meditation course, a ten day “sitting” in the Vipassana technique by master Goenka, encouraged by Buddhist organizer Kamin Lertchaiprasert. The meditation stay is in a temple, where one has to be silent for the entire stay, only meditating, eating and sleeping. These aspects are thus to some extent normative, and the “forced” Vipassana stay might be regarded too religious – if the projects are seeking non-normativity, they probably should avoid any compulsory activities that can be tied to religion. However, this also displays the simple fact that the projects must have a content or some guidelines, and that these are influenced by personal interest. Multiple ownership is nevertheless a general precondition in the social organization of the projects, and they are forced to be pragmatic and non-dogmatic in their overall approach, while simultaneously having content and specificity.

Further questions in approaching these kinds of practices/organizations are how are they organized? How are they run on a daily basis? These questions are structural – how is something set up in order to produce something: a “line of production”. What techniques or tools are used in order to create? If you want to make something, you start by asking: How does one make it? What should it consist of? Do we get closer to the answer by identifying the parts? Superflex, one of the artists groups that contribute to the land foundation, has published the book Tools, which sums up their ‘artistic’ intentions as tools or supertools: “SUPERTOOL is a set of parameters based on SUPERFLEX’ existing working methods. These parameters act like kernels that can be used as a starting point for different users. Users draw on the parameters as an open source for different activities.” This last aspects means that they don’t copyright their concepts, they are meant as free tools for social collaboration and improvement. Examples of these methods are the Supergas/biogas technique installed at the land as well as in Tanzania and Cambodia, the Guarana Power drink (for energy and empowerment) based on guarana fruit from Brasilian farmers, or several Superchannel projects, implying broadcasting and recording projects and discussions on social constellations. It is all about groups and situations “where people have organized themselves collectively in order to achieve their aims.”

199 See home page for Vipassana by Goenka - http://www.dhamma.org/
The concept of tools as methods or techniques for the collective initiative to make personal and social improvement or development gives us a good indication of the projects’ structures. The idea of tool is understood as mental, social and physical – a tool can be a simple conversation or a chemical invention such as the biogas system. The only prerequisite is sociality and the ability to co-act, discuss and co-think in order to solve ‘existential’ problems. This way of thinking production is complex; it is personal and authoritarian as well as collective and democratic; it is concrete and abstract, social and economical, artistic and political. The ‘land’ projects can be seen as a sort of ‘problem solving’ based on non-restricted creativity and the wide range of media, genres and tools that the broad aesthetics provides. Thus, having this creative and ‘multi-methodical’ attitude, organization is centred around certain loose, though vital, values, leaving space open for just about any kind of personal, social or societal interference.

Local and Traditional, Global and Contemporary
Another set of tensions can be found around the combination of the local and traditional with the global and contemporary – this is, for example, manifested in the focus on aspects from concrete, local building techniques (as in the Sami ‘gamme’ and the Thai house) to the importance of the wider sociality (as in international cultural exchange and friendship).
In the building of the houses at both ‘lands’ there have been used traditional, local techniques as well as (local) techniques from the other side of the world. The Sami ‘gamme’ near Kjellingvann is built for the local environment where it stands, it is in its “right” environment – the Thai house however, is a mix of localities: It was designed by Thai people according to Thai tradition, but it was made by local materials and had to be adjusted according to elements in the North-Norwegian climate, like wind and snow. The one is thus a local tradition, the other fuses local and foreign traditions – both are, however, both local and traditional in different ways.

The houses that are built are never seen as mere sculptures, they are always seen in relation to their culture and their use. The Sami ‘gamme’ is filled with reindeer skins, dry wood to make fire, salted dried fish, dried meat, a coffee kettle and matches. Likewise at the land in Thailand, they insist on the user value of the houses, the life and sociality that makes them important. In order to make this use sustainable, however, it has to be adapted to current life...
style, or at least it has to allow contemporary life to merge with it. Also, contemporary feelings and actions might be more or less reflected in relation to historical roots or bonds – as mentioned, understandings of practice were far more intertwined and undefined in both Antiquity and the Middle Ages, as well as that of art in relation to other fields and everyday life.

Further, ideas on Western avant-garde as alternative and “oppositional” practices, in relation to ideas on ecology and old handicraft, are constantly visible. In Thailand, for example, they have quite a different way of thinking art, more as craft, but in a Western context, what is Thai tradition resembles Western opposition because of, for example, community-like organizations and ecological perspectives. In one of their catalogues the land foundation writes: “Modern education deals mostly with information and Western ideas, and lacks consideration, appreciation, and application of Thai geographic, historic, artistic and cultural values.” They do not actually reject Western modern/post-modern insights, but there is a clear underlining of traditional aspects, such as craft, value and belonging. The idea of the global tied to long-distance mobility and flux of communication must thus be considered in relation to our conception of the local, the traditional and the idea of immobility. The two projects are both manifesting these problems in order to establish a non-normative on-going dialogue between tradition and future, technology and handicraft. Mobility and flux are seen as anti-hierarchical and process-oriented, as well as a part of capitalism and commercialization – the paradox I presented in relation to Deleuze and Guattari’s theories.

The Thai art traditions does, however, differ from the Western and American on several points – the whole idea of an ‘avant-garde’, for example, can be seen as an expression of Western ‘progressive, evolutionary thinking’. It implies a constant movement, and a movement forward, towards something better, more complex, more correct and more efficient. In this way, the avant-garde of the 20th century can be seen as a typical Western phenomenon, exposing the progress-oriented character and thinking of Western art and culture. The notion of contemporary art underlines such a Western art attitude: Contemporary is now, and necessarily different from yesterday’s art, because art has to change or invent something new.202 In many Asian cultures, on the contrary, art is not about innovating, but

about living up to old masters and ancient traditions. Respect and sociality still seem to have a more prevalent character than in Western societies, even though Thailand has been changing rapidly lately with a more market-oriented economy and new communication technology. One of the historical “idols” or references of the two Thai artists at the land foundation is Inson Wongsam. Wongsam is known for, amongst other things, having travelled all the way from Thailand to Italy as a young artist in 1962/63 on a scooter in order to learn classical Italian painting. He travelled for about two years, and can be said to have lived “experimentally” in order to reach the classical Western idea: In some way one could say that he objected to his own traditional culture in order to reach the “norm” of another culture. This exemplifies some of the complexity in judging certain expressions as avant-garde and others as traditional. Today Wongsam has established something he calls the Dhamma Park with his wife Venetia Walker. The Dhamma Park is at the same time their estate (or “land”, ref. the ‘land’ projects), an exhibition hall and a cultural and educational centre for art and Buddhism. They also grow cotton plants, use the cotton for production of fabric, and keep different animals running around freely on the property. The park reminds one of a ranch, a “foundation” in the name of the artist and of Buddhism. In one way the park is a private property, a symbol of status, on the other hand, it is a realisation of “utopia”, of the artist’s dream world – a combination of egoism and altruism.

Like his “crazy” trip to learn classical Italian painting, Wongsam’s “Dhamma Park” appears as a mix of tradition and avant-garde; Western ideals and Asian opposition, becoming Western avant-garde and Thai tradition. The different elements are intertwined, and what he does out of altruism is just as much a symbol of status for himself. The cotton farm, the ‘dhamma’ message, and the community-like structure is just as apparent on his estate as the “modernist” artworks he makes. The pictures are displayed in separate buildings, and Wongsam himself walks around like a landlord. Power is thus both situated and de-situated; but not in a completely similar way to the ‘land’ projects, where there is a continuous and explicit aim to de-situate power. Wongsam’s Dhamma Park, however, is an estate, and there

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204 “…‘Dhamma’ (Skt Dharma): meaning the eternal truths and cosmic law-orderliness discovered by the Buddha’s, Buddhist teachings, the Buddhist path of practice, and the goal of Buddhism, the timeless Nirvana (Skt Nirvana).”, ref. Peter Harvey, An Introduction to Buddhism, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 2.
seems to be no real community structure – more relations between employer and employees, even though it is possible to spend the night or have dinner there at any time.

Different notions of the local and the global, the traditional and the contemporary or avant-garde are thus mixed and confused; clear notions of the different aspects are difficult – yet we have certain ideas of tensions, of different opinions and practices. We sense that there is a contradiction between local houses and global networks, but at the same time, a local house or base might be exactly what you need to operate a global network. Further, we know that a local base is not enough; a global network requires global action as well. In order to be inclusive and open, people have to meet, meaning travelling and thereby polluting – this again, creates a tension between the sustainability of the environment and the sustainability of sociality. Thus, none of the positions are stable. This could be seen as an important part of the projects’ anti-dogmatic character: Challenging themselves and their own beliefs, or merely doing what they want or think is right – different attitudes are promoted, strategies meet and part.

Multiple Discourses: Interior/Exterior
Some aspects of the projects exceed the art discourse as well as the tripartite ambition of agriculture, culture and meditation. It can be seen as an important field of tension that the projects include such “exterior” problems or issues – the logic or the harmony of the projects are then questioned; they reach out, but they will never be able to reach over. The inclusion of social problem fields shows their incapacity, their utopian character. On the other side it also displays people who actually make a difference: During the One Year Project, the students had contact with a Community Health Centre in Chiang Mai run by Pimjai Intamoon. Pimjai Intamoon was infected with HIV by her husband, and was thus “not to blame” for her condition. But she still found that living with HIV/AIDS was a great taboo, and that the health system in Thailand did not offer proper guidance, help and medication. She therefore started a health project focusing on social dilemmas related to HIV/AIDS: Exclusion from society, family, work, and thereby often also economical and psychological problems. Intamoon managed to get financial support from (international) humanitarian projects, as well as having established a Teddy Bear Project, where she teaches a technical skill (how to sew and produce teddy bears), also constituting a work place and a social arena. The Teddy Bear Project
focused on marketing and sale in addition to the actual production, thus trying to establish a lasting platform for the production. Intamoon also works to prevent HIV/AIDS; she has, for example, made many appeals to the government to regulate the sex industry, and close internet sites which show unprotected sex. Intamoon has lived with HIV for almost 19 years, and is still in good health. She has a holistic message; connecting physical, mental and social conditions, she focuses on training and a healthy life style by walking several kilometers every day and organizing activities – she sees helping others as a way to help herself. Like the ‘land’ projects, she thus focuses on immediate and local conditions as well as having a more ambitious, global goal. Intamoon uses the immediate, physical resources she has available, but also addresses a wider, international community.

The first One Year Project visited Intamoon to learn from her practice and philosophy. One of the students knew her already: Jirasak Saengpolsith, one of the volunteers and students at the first One Year Project. He has given drawing classes to youths struck by HIV, and been involved in projects to prevent HIV. When the tsunami catastrophe hit Thailand and Indonesia in the winter of 2005/2006, Saengpolsith travelled to the south of Thailand and Indonesia to help and comfort children that had lost their parents. He then activated the children through form-giving activities such as drawing and modelling, a sort of art therapy. Together with the children he made a bronze house, a small sculpture of a possible school that was sent to Norway and that constituted the formal representation of Geir Tore Holm and Søssa Jørgensen at the Sculptural Biennale at the Vigeland Museum in Oslo in 2006; again, levels, nations and intentions meet and intertwine. Together with this bronze house, Holm and Jørgensen presented their application in the contest for the Norwegian Tsunami memorial – several Norwegians also tragically lost their lives in the tsunami. A memorial of the catastrophe was planned at the seaside in Oslo, but Holm and Jørgensen instead suggested that the memorial money would be used to build a school in the destroyed town of Batticalao in Indonesia – the town where Saengpolsith had been helping out after the disaster. These different, but at the same time closely-connected aspects, present activities and projects within the projects that are not conformist, nor art-related – they are concrete responses to actual happenings in the artists’ social and physical surroundings. Representing a sort of discourse exteriority as I discussed in relation to Foucault in Chapter One, they nevertheless have a deep and lasting meaning for the people involved. Like the many ‘hidden’ relations between Thais and Norwegians, it is an example of an aspect that is crucial, yet precarious.
Economic/Social/Material/Cultural Exchange

It was a rice field, only water and rice. We dug a pond and then filled it with water. the land is built like a human body, with three quarters of fluid and one quarter of solid. the land develops very slowly, we don’t have any support for maintenance, but some project by project support from some organizations and the government. People propose things and then it develops slowly, slowly. The authorities don’t understand what we are doing, they expect us to make money, to make profit and make it like a museum or tourist attraction. But, we want to avoid the business system, so people can live out some experimental idea without thinking about profit but beneficial to nature, community, culture and spirit.205

When the artists have a principle of non-profit, and other people involved want to make money, for different reasons, what happens? As when the Thai artists who came to Norway started selling home-made products, like small drawings or purses at the local market, or when the local North-Norwegian county wants to set up a coffee-shop and tourist spot to attract attention and money? Or when the land foundation in Thailand is invited to participate in art fairs in Amsterdam and Paris, what do they do? Some say they should not participate, because they do not have anything to present, they are all about living, others say they should not participate because the art fairs are part of an international commercial and instrumental system that they try to represent a non-profit alternative to. Others say that it is important not to feel superior to other people, and that it is more important to participate constructively than not to participate at all. In the end, they participated because of the personal situation of one of the volunteers; then, a pragmatic, constructive, yet reflected choice was made – in some ways arbitrary, but not by chance. The volunteer’s private life was not the only reason, but a ‘socio-spatio-temporal’ drop that made them go in a certain direction. Again, this “drop” was not part of the official programme, or made as part of a consistent structure or strategy, neither was it random: It was an aspect of the immediate social and personal circumstances of the people involved.

Further, the ‘land’ projects include queries on how different senses of belonging and mobility are connected and blurred, like Norwegian and Thai identity, Sami and Buddhist identity, artist and local identity. Feelings of belonging to a group of people, to a place, or to a moment, are blurred – sometimes one feels more at home with strangers, or the Thai house becomes more local in the north of Norway than in Thailand. Or there are more similarities

205 Interview with Kamin Lertchaiprasert, op. cit.
between the spiritual cultures of Buddhists and Samis, than between Norwegians and Samis. Or the old Norwegian man living at Sørfinnset has been to Thailand more times, working as a sailor, than the “art jet set” all together. Senses of belonging can be to a place like Sørfinnset, Chiang Mai or Sanpatong, to a group of people like the One Year Project, a group of friends, family or a professional artist circle, or one can feel that one belongs to a particular nature, to food, dance, music, an object, etc. The building of a Thai house with local north Norwegian materials could be said to exemplify the negotiation or tensions of the mobile home, the many levels between the local and the global, the situated and the de-situated. The cultural exchange, the friendships and marriages, between the people within the groups and between the Thais and the Norwegians, actualize the tensions further; some want to risk it all, others want to combine principles and the way things are with small steps into “the other”, while others again do not want to change at all, but keep things the way they are. The collaborative and the common combined with the personal, the freedom of the group and the freedom of the subject. These are complex aspects that will be further addressed in the next chapter.

Spaces/Territories
The socio-spatio-temporal constellation or situation is where all the tensions come together: The projects can then be seen as attempts at a re-territorialization in a different world, that is, at a territorialization that balances the many different situations and tensions. Space and place are imagined and experienced in this way, performed and given; a space indicates a certain emptiness, a room waiting to be filled, while a place can attain a certain density, a given constellation. Sørfinnset for example is a geographical situatedness, a group of people, a nature, various cultural and social dynamics, as well as a multitude of histories and memories. Sørfinnset was there before the project started, and it is a concrete place as well as a potential space. One could give many differing pictures and stories of Sørfinnset and the people who live there, but for the artists starting their project, the already existing place and community constituted a given; they could not predefine the interests and the nature of the inhabitants, but they were relating to certain concrete bodies and opinions in a more or less defined physical and geographical context. The rice field in Thailand could perhaps be seen as differing from Sørfinnset School / the nord land at this point, as a more open and undefined space. One of

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206 For further reading on space as void, see Edward Casey, The Fate of Place, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1998, p. 3 onwards.
the Thai artists, Tiravanija, described it as a “neutral ground” – a space/place that needs to be filled with intentions, experiments and people. Of course, the rice field is not “empty”; it is situated in Thailand, near the village of Sanpatong, it relates to Thai agriculture and culture, to people around it, to history and to future, etc. But, there is no clear collaboration with a local community or culture within the project, the project is instead used to attract or gather other people and projects. This, however, is an important part of the Sørfinnset project as well – as it has developed, it has collaborated with different people, locals, architects, artists, etc. The difference lies perhaps more in their starting point: Sørfinnset School / the nord land came to an already filled and defined public land, a “dense space”, Sørfinnset, while ‘the land’ was sought out as an “empty” and open space to be filled with people, ideas and culture, purchased for private money.

However – and this shows the interconnectedness of the terms and different aspects of our spatial reality – ‘the land’ is now a foundation, it is no longer private, and the people around the project, after years together, now probably constitute a dense space or community structure like Sørfinnset. Their thoughts and memories, the land and the earth, the economy, the exchange – all these concrete and abstract factors make both projects combinations of pasts, presents and futures, of physical, personal and social elements. Both spaces are both empty and dense, both representing choices made as well as future openings. When the old Sami Knut Sundsfjord points at the mountain, he speaks of his ancestors’ agricultural traditions, coming to think of his own identity and the conditions for Sami culture in Norwegian – he feels proud of his ancestors, sad thinking about the persecutions they experienced and angry at the Norwegian government for letting or making it happen so late in history. The relation to space and place is blurred with feelings, history, society, memory – therefore also becoming all that. Likewise, standing by the green, green rice field in Sanpatong, I think of food, friends and future, the social relations needed and perhaps used to cultivate the rice, the future possibilities of more agricultural activity, perhaps of an ecological community, unfolding creativity and showing their “arts”. Place or space then, is most importantly relational, either to self, nature/things or other people – although that is not to say that nature does not have a value in itself. Even though both ‘land’ projects can be seen as both empty and dense, the notion of potentiality stands out quite strong. Potentiality, with references to antique philosopher Aristotle and contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben,
is possibilities not yet used – potentiality is *what comes before the performance*, before action, it is a space (dense or empty) waiting for things to happen.

### 3.4.2 Critique

The relation between the situated and the de-situated constitutes a central and fundamental field of tensions in the two ‘land’ projects; it describes their essential structure between art and non-art, between locality and globality, tradition and avant-garde, interior and exterior and, as we will see later, between subject and collective. These tensions constitute theoretical as well as practical challenges in the projects, and I believe it is *these clusters of tensions related to both theory and doing that are the focal points of their "experiments"* – it is this three-dimensional practical-theoretical field of existence that they aim at with the ‘mobile home’ concept. This combination of theory and pragmatism can be seen in their organization, economy, sociality, physicality, and mentality – and as these levels and aspects are blurred and intertwined, it is the different contests between the situated and the de-situated that stand out as a major theme. As a theoretical challenge between situatedness and de-situatedness in the theoretical basis of the ‘land’ projects lie the tensions between a need for discourse, for project identity in the art sphere, for the placement of action, in relation to other actions, and further, the need to document and theorize practice, so that it is not forgotten and completely disappears. On the other hand, the motor of the projects lies rather in their sociality than in art, and parts of the projects, such as friendships or nature or local service, really have nothing to do with art or art discourse – there is a notion of art and art as context, institution, discourse, and further there is no real attempt to escape it, but there is alongside it a clear drive to work with aspects that are not specifically a part of this frame or framework. The previously mentioned tension between art and non-art in some way parallels the tension between progress and tradition, avant-garde and history, situatedness and de-situatedness. One of the most frequent responses in relation to the ‘land’ projects is: “Sounds interesting - but is it art?” This aspect is taken up by art theorist Claire Bishop in her commentary on *Sørfinnset/ the nord land* in Art Forum online in 2005, where she re-names the project Palaver North and

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ironizes over their "dialogical form". She concludes by saying that these casual, social and local settings are cozy enough, but she does not see the art in it:

The next day involved a long drive from Innhavet — the Twin Peaks of Norway — to Sørfinnset, where Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lertchaiprasert (founders of The Land in Chiang Mai) have teamed up with a couple of Norwegian artists (Søsaa Jørgensen and Geir Tore Holm) to produce The Nord Land, a spin-off of the former’s Thai project. Headquartered in an old school in a tiny village, the project has a self-consciously educational approach based on — guess what — dialogue and traditional activities like cooking flatbread. Søssa and Geir were preparing a meal when we arrived: The menu included seal (caught on Friday as part of a workshop with some Greenlanders), salmon and roast cormorant. Local hunter Kenneth Norum, who’d shot the seal, joined us for lunch. Getting into the spirit, I “dialogued” with Kenneth, who was still hungover from the previous night’s binge on moonshine, but was coaxed into telling tales of local exotica, such as the killer whale who lived in a nearby fjord.

Although the atmosphere at the old school was relaxed and friendly, I found it hard to work out where the art was amongst all these benign open-air activities. It’s undeniable that this type of project raises more intriguing questions than a bronze Tony Cragg — but for how long? What if The Nord Land is the relational equivalent of the stone doughnut, and looks just as dated and curiously irrelevant in a few years’ time? Fortunately Tverbakk is also commissioning artists who address the local and international more reflexively: Aleksandra Mir has proposed a Hollywood walk of fame for the nowhere town of Narvik, while Carsten Höller is planning a one-room hotel of two-way mirrored glass (Dan Graham’s pavilion meets motel tourism). In projects such as these — and Simon Starling’s plan to set a decrepit house afloat in the sea — the artists import the full force of their own vision rather than getting lost in the locale.208

In her commentary she says that “Getting into the spirit, I “dialogued” with Kenneth …” — interestingly enough she puts dialogued in quotation marks, as I read then it indicating that she considered the dialogue to be staged or not “real”. Perhaps considering the entire project or situation as an art event or object, it is as if she did not really talk to Kenneth; she “dialogued” within a specific constructed context, and thus the conversation was not to be seen as social and regular, rather she seems to consider it to be the “object” of the project — perhaps with references to art theoretician Grant H. Kester’s ‘dialogical aesthetics’. This is one possible way of understanding or analyzing the projects, as constructed or reflexive events where the "double" layer of communication, the "composed" side of sociality is sought to be displayed. I would think of this as a specifically art-theoretical way of distancing oneself from the actual experience or situation, not giving this sociality any particular value in itself, but analyzing it as an object with reflexive elements. Even if art theory has related to

208 ArtForum online, http://artforum.com/diary/id=8524
ephemeral, live and moving artworks from the avant-garde during the 20th century, this
perspective of ‘object analysis’ rather than situational or social understanding seems to be
prevalent. Further, the idea of movement could perhaps be said to be incorporated in art
theory particularly in what concerns the fluctuation of meaning, media and interpretations,
and not really in what concerns the object or event itself as fluctuating.

I would thus say that Bishop's critique bases itself on a theoretical fundament that is not
completely apt for understanding the projects in question; she searches for a reflexivity or a
composed dimension, which can be found, but which is not really emphasized. When Bishop
mocks the project in Art Forum for being a local chat room displayed for her pleasure,
something that she can come and “see” and that should provoke her or amuse her, she has, as
I see it, chosen to under-communicate large parts of the projects. Grant H. Kester says in this
concern: “When contemporary critics confront dialogical projects, they often apply a formal,
pleasure-based methodology that cannot value, or even recognize, the communicative
interactions that these artists find so important.”209 Because it is not about Bishop as a
“viewer” that has turned into “participant” or about art that has become social to “illustrate”
dialogue – it actually is in itself.

Soon however, one of the locals and volunteers at Sørfinnset, Kenneth Norum, answered
Bishop:

In the period from 23.2 to 27.2 I had the pleasure to be a visitor and a volunteer
in the “Artistic Interruptions” program at Sørfinnset school, by the artist groups
Balkong with Søssa Jørgensen/ Geir Tore Holm and Rakett with Karolin
Tampere/ Åse Løvgren. For me and for the whole community this program has
been a very rich experience. The artist brings art, culture and understanding of
art to the people, who gives back their sort of living and experience. This kind
of mixture leads to learning and creativity that creates new ideas and projects.
Next summer we shall build a traditional Norwegian "gamme" and a Thai
house together with students from Thailand and Norway. People living near
nature meet across borders to exchange knowledge and culture and to
understand how to use the earth without destroying it.

Your journalist? Claire Bishop visited the project at Sørfinnset school Sunday
27.2 for a meal and an interview with some of the artists and with me who had
provided some of the ingredients to the meal and was invited for lunch by the
artists. I was really upset when I read the ArtForum article about her visit ...
The art, artists and thinking behind the project were not addressed, apart from
her belief that the project will be irrelevant in a few years time … It does not
matter to me that she presents me as "the simple mind” who cannot "dialogue"
with her without telling her anything more than "local exotica." I am nothing

209 Grant H. Kester, op. cit., p. 10.
more than a local volunteer and a guest who is there to learn. But I am very disappointed for the artists, who had a successful story to tell, about the last and the coming events over the next year. After an afternoon, how she can judge that this project will not work out? It’s healthy to have critical journalism, but the criticism should be based upon a complete picture of the situation. Claire Bishop came Sunday afternoon, so she was not there for the events the artists organized for us Friday and Saturday, maybe if she had been there, she could learn and understand why this kind of mixture creates and develop people and art. 210

Bishop's commentary in ArtForum must be read humorously, and her critique to some extent falls with her approach or attitude – the projects do not claim to be art or to have any specific artistic value (as an answer to the ‘where is the art’-question?) – they search for social value with artistic means. Further, they are concerned with long-term commitment and the active participation of their guests, that is, they do not want to display or confront in a regular way. 211 Bishop does, however, also touch upon two central and problematic elements in the projects; what becomes the quality of each artistic element when this aspect is not emphasized? And most importantly, is it at all possible to construct, guide, or arrange sociality? In a far more serious and earlier published article in October magazine, Bishop surveys this sociality in art settings and institutions, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija's dinners, and questions their role as sociality. 212 This article was in fact one of the first thorough critiques of the “relational” and “utopist” strategies in Nicolas Bourriaud’s Relational Aesthetics, and further, of artworks associated with this concept, particularly socially-oriented works. Bishop uses political theoretician Chantal Mouffe’s previously mentioned concept of ‘antagonism’ as main objection. 213 Mouffe has established ‘antagonism’ (conflict or confrontation) and later ‘agonism’ (playful disagreement) as preconditions for democracy. According to Mouffe, a democratic society must be able to accept and display clear and “uncomfortable” differences in opinion, because politics always is a matter of diverging interests. Later Mouffe emphasizes the importance of agonistic or playful disagreement, that is, disagreement becomes playful instead of violent if it is tolerated. Bishop however primarily uses the idea of antagonism, of opposition or conflictual thought, as objection – she thinks that artworks by

210 http://artforum.com/talkback/id=49172
211 Confrontation and shock have been used as communicational means in avant-garde art, ref. Ina Blom, The Cut Through Time, op. cit., p. 13.
212 Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”, October 110, Fall 2004.
Tiravanija do not display this conflict or tension that is necessarily there in sociality, and that they thereby become flat or hypocrite. At a seminar arranged to evaluate Sørfinnset School / the nord land’s framework of Artistic Interruptions, Norwegian art critic Øystein Hauge also criticized the general frame of Artistic Interruptions on the basis of the concept of relational aesthetics. He thus had some of the same objections as Claire Bishop, that these social, constructive rooms do not create any tensions or real discussions, and that they therefore become “paralyzed” by their own self-declared dialogical and collaborative atmosphere.

This could be a valid objection if you participate on a short term basis, as previously underlined, but the projects emphasize long-term commitment, and if you stay for longer than a day, you will quite easily see these conflicts or disagreements appear and co-exist. This long-term commitment is of course not the case in the same way in Tiravanijas institutional dinner parties, however, you will also see there that quite a few of those involved are friends and collaborators, thus involved in a different kind of long-term communication or commitment. This of course implies that the projects are not completely open, and in some way they are not – like regular sociality they require something, a bond, a need, an exchange, etc. Further, conflict-free social zones are impossible in human society – there will always be tensions, negotiations and conflicts, though hopefully not so much violence. I believe one important aspect in this respect is the time invested in the practices, they really are not to be “looked” at to entertain or provoke you, they are found at a different level. Another Norwegian art critic, Janicke Iversen, pointed out the costs of the Artistic Interruptions when commenting upon an evaluation of the project. This is not highly relevant, but not irrelevant either: A project that uses too many resources will not be sustainable in the long run. Both ‘land’ projects have worked for their financing through scholarships, collaborations, etc., and they aim for self-sustainability – the questions becomes however, whether these projects use more than they produce? For the time being, they seem sustainable, only time will show to what extent.

In a post-script to the Norwegian edition of Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics*, curator and art theorist Andrea Kroksnes asks how these critics, such as Bishop, can be so provoked by this well-meaning kind of social art?215 I have tried to think of a few reasons:

– they think these projects give a wrong idea of reality
– they are trained within a “critical paradigm” of Western art and media, and perceive oppositions and confrontations to be a vital source of production
– they feel uncomfortable in a situation that includes them and makes them visible, and they react to this with dislike – the traditional critic who observes the art object from a safe distance is exposed.

Being part of the label Artistic Interruptions, the Sørfinnset project could be imagined more confrontational or investigative than it actually is, but for Holm and Jørgensen it is a clear aim to keep honest and respectful in their relations with the existing community – they are not there to “teach” or confront the locals with anything. However, I believe the project quite naturally made them relate to the existing social and physical structures at Sørfinnset, necessarily becoming tension-filled without seeking tension explicitly. The idea of the critical artist who “interferes” with his or her context can be thought more or less confrontational, but Holm and Jørgensen have had to keep a “low profile” in relation to their surroundings in order to establish any connections at all. They have, then, perhaps been less critical or confrontational in what they have done, instead suggesting actions and events that they have sought to develop in collaboration with the inhabitants at Sørfinnset. With a more confrontational approach, they would not have been able to become a part of the local setting in the same way; it would have been a different and probably much shorter, project. A “deconstructive approach”, such as Bishop's, that seeks to reveal double layers or hidden power discourses has been quite common in contemporary art. But what we find in the ‘land’ projects, which want to *construct* lasting networks and effects that develop further without their project managing, is quite different – to show/reveal/display is thus not enough, one has to create/construct/participate.

The fact that Sørfinnset School / the nord land is still collaborating with the inhabitants of Sørfinnset is in some way a proof that they have not explored the locale as exotica, as Bishop accuses them of, or acted as arrogant “ethnographers” in an unknown or unaware setting. Art

theorician Hal Foster criticized certain artists for being unserious ethnographers in local, social projects.\(^{216}\) There are, and there were in 60s and 70s, projects with certain similar strategies as the ‘land’ projects, which each in their way worked or works on (alternative) social dynamics with different political, environmental and aesthetic ambitions. And though one could criticize some of these artists and projects, like Foster does, of being “exploitative” in their relation to the sociality they examine or try to “change”, this must be evaluated in each specific case. It could however be pointed out as a problem in general when one works with sociality and relationality that one moves in for a \textit{(defined) period of time} (normally not the case in “regular” sociality”, but can be the case in holidays, job-related stays, etc.) and that one goes into the social situation with an \textit{“intention” or “purpose”} (which could, however, also be the case when one, for example, looks for a friend, a boyfriend, a business contact, etc.) – this could give a certain instrumental approach to sociality and human feelings, which could be criticized from an ethical point of view.\(^{217}\)

These periodic and intentional aspects applied to sociality are problematic in themselves, but there is no such apparent “exploitative” character to the ‘land’ projects. On the contrary, they seem to be conscious of these aspects and constantly, actively work to counterbalance such possible effects, even if they are not always successful, and even if not all possible power strategies and relations are found or thought of. In Thailand, however, I reacted to what seemed to be a much more apparent and in-use hierarchy – the relation to the locals around Sanpatong is not the same in Thailand and Norway. Partly, it is not meant to be, either; the Norwegian project relates specifically to the local, while ‘the land’ is a rice field used for agriculture, education and exhibitions or openings. At one opening in Thailand however, the local women came to cook for us – paid and wearing white bonnets, they reminded me of maids or servants. This made me as a Norwegian, raised in a tradition where class distinctions are sought to be eliminated, feel uncomfortable – I felt as though we were exploiting someone. Talking with project volunteers, they pointed out that the village people did it on their terms, and that giving work to the locals was a good and valued thing. Secondly they said that there was not really any local art discussion, and collaboration with the locals like at

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\(^{217}\) Sociologist Erving Goffman draws this parallel between “regular” and “performed” behaviour, suggesting that regular sociality also can be thought of as performed, ref. \textit{The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life}, England, Penguin Books, 1959/1971.
Sørfinnset would probably be difficult. I do not have enough knowledge of Thai culture to comment upon this, and it is not within the scope of this dissertation to evaluate Thai society or social structures. However, based on my own observation and talks with locals, it can be said that the Thai society and the Thai ‘land’ project to a greater extent conform to hierarchical structures of owner/servant, man/woman, elder/youngster, etc. than does the urban Norwegian society. This is a problem from my perspective, but seen pragmatically, it might be just as important to create jobs with good conditions in the local context, rather than insisting on not employing anyone as maids or gardeners. Further, one cannot say for sure that a dissolving of traditional classes leads to the best and most equal life conditions and power structures – urban and so-called democratic and capitalist societal forms have also created new and sometimes invisible under-classes, apparently having equal rights, but actually using none. This, however, exemplifies the mobile home dynamic as the constant challenging and re-evaluation of ethical and social actions – a constant and immediate navigation is necessary.

There are thus several unequal relations within both ‘land’ projects, some necessarily have more power than others and some necessarily are more in need of comfort, attention, etc., than others. Even if there are constant problems, and constant power displacements and relocations, there is an overall will for togetherness and mutuality that keeps the projects together – precisely because the mutuality, if not even, equal, problem-free or harmonious, up till now has been sustainable. One such aspect is the relation to art and art discourse, though there are many similar traits, there are also several differences between Norway and Thailand, read between Western and Eastern discourse and culture. But, as practice, they represent an alternative to other practices, and thereby take certain stands or express certain opinions. As pragmatists they cannot reject the commercial, capitalist world, but they can question it, try to navigate ethically and responsibly whenever they interact with it. Further, they cannot reject a collaboration because they do not think the gender situation is what they would wish, they suggest changes, accept differences, compromise.

However, and this is why I insist on the way of analyzing or understanding, the projects can, as I see it, not be understood as objects, narratives, or reflexive entities, as this gives a very shallow and misleading idea of the actual multitudes their praxis constitute. One could, of course, insist that they are created in relation to an art setting and therefore should hold regular "quality requirements", or that one should be entitled to an opinion even if one has not spent the night there, etc. This, as the projects do relate to regular art discourse and history is
legitimate, but it does not provide any new perspective as to what these projects are working on. The particular pragmatist, praxis- and experience-oriented focus of the ‘land’ projects places each of these referential or reflexive perspectives into a larger picture; there is a continuous live and existential drive that requires a further investigation into their social and performative character, as a continuous actualization or unfolding of existential conditions and worries rather than specific artistic, formal or thematical arrangements – and this is where we will now turn.

3.5 Summing up

In this chapter I have argued that the problem of the situated and the de-situated manifests itself as a fundamental field of tension in both practice and theory, more specifically in the two ‘land’ projects and in the relation between phenomenological and post-structuralist theory, simultaneously and interactively. Situated perspectives of existence as well as those of the researcher and art viewer are often perceived as conflictual or oppositional in relation to the de-situated and fluctuating post-structural theories. However, I have tried to show how this problem or field of tension becomes a three-dimensional field, a mobile home concept that explains the particular unfolding and manoeuvring of the ‘land’ projects as particularly complex or composite in their pragmatic relation between theory and practice, between the situated and the de-situated. The phenomenological position as a situated, subjected existence in the two ‘land’ projects becomes a necessary precondition for, rather than an opposition to, the fluctuating and floating identities we find in the theory of Deleuze and Guattari – this aspect will be thoroughly discussed in the next chapter; how the subject and the subject body is the necessary situated pre-condition for the existential de-situatedness.

Mobility and flux can be seen as anti-hierarchical and process-oriented, but also as a part of capitalist logic and commercialization, or as tied to forced mobility and diaspora. Mobility has multiple connotations, but overall there seems to be a notion of a loss of “sense” or “belonging” in our contemporary era of high or accelerated mobility. A central question becomes: How can we re-establish a sense of home without rejecting movement and process? How can we establish a new home without rejecting an old one? There is no single being, but there is a sense of existence, there is no particular home, but there is the idea and experience of home as constitutive. The mobile home "explains" this mutuality or co-dependency in perceived oppositions by the necessity of precisely a perceived sameness or otherness in order
to constitute. I have suggested the concept of the *mobile home* as one possible way of re-territorializing or re-establishing lost aspects of identity and home combined with freedom or mobility. The concept gives us an immediate access or understanding of the co-dependency of tensions, and further that the tensions understood as home or mobility might change and be interchanged; the mobile home becomes a way of fusing and mutating the situated and the de-situated aspects of art, theory and existence – it is about being able to think contradictory with unstable contradictions.

In art theory, the situated position of the art researcher or viewer can be likened to that of the phenomenologist or pragmatist. This should not imply, however, that the research object is likewise positioned as entity. In the ‘assemblage’, a concept used both in art theory and by the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari, the notions of simultaneity and relationality are central. The assemblage is the temporary co-placement, the necessary situated de-situatedness of the live or social context. Further, Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘micro-fissures’ and their concept of the ‘rhizome’, as simultaneous, heterogeneous multiplicity, express similar qualities. The mobile home, the assemblage and the rhizome are thus theoretical-practical multiple entities that characterize the situated de-situatedness we find in the ‘land’ projects, and from the above conducted discussions I have drawn the following characteristics: The ‘land’ projects are hyper-complex (as in Luhmann’s system theory), they are chaotic (as in Guattari’s philosophy), they are situated (as in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology), they are de-situated and simultaneous (as in Deleuze and Guattari’s theories), and they are processual and productive (as in Schechner and Fischer-Lichte’s performance theory). In the projects, these tensions are played out constantly; how can one organize or be “one project” while representing a multitude of views and subjects? How can one expand on sustainable sociality and collaboration while being environmentally aware? How can traditional positions and culture be combined with modern technology and politics? These are just some of the questions discussed and acted out within the projects in problems and situations related to ownership, organization, tradition, democracy, globality, locality, exchange, belonging, place, space, as well as relation to art and discourse – and it is the number of these questions and the way they are placed within a long-term frame that to some extent disqualifies more traditional art critical perspectives onto the projects. The two ‘land’ projects do not present a work, object, spectacle, or an event defined in time – the projects continue, and they are constantly relating to new social issues, logistical problems, world catastrophes or trivial tasks. They discuss their relation to art, but they keep going, keep moving, while being a project, an
entity. As they continuously unfold in different directions, they gather around certain ethical and existential issues of agriculture, art/culture and mediation, or plainly "culture service" and social activism. Their reality is, as I see, not “utopist” nor ethnographic, but it certainly is frail and constantly threatened by breach and fragmentation.

In this chapter, I have also presented some of the most important critiques presented towards sociality in art contexts: can the “constructed” sociality exist at all? And more importantly perhaps, can this sociality ever become sustainable? Art critic Bishop presented such a critique towards what she perceived to be friction-less sociality in certain contemporary art practices. As the ‘land’ projects may to some extent be touched by this critique; their sociality is frail and it may not survive as long as their initiators hope, but they also escape the critique – they do not seek to construct sociality, rather they attempt to enable it. Further, no sociality is friction free, and the fact that the ‘land’ projects have chosen a less confrontational approach does not mean that they seek to force or pretend harmony. Rather, they could be seen to oppose to the confrontational, and often uniformed, attitude displayed in much Western contemporary and so-called experimental art.
Chapter 4 ¤ Performativity: Subject, Sociality and Situation

Reflexive appropriation of bodily processes and development is a fundamental element of life-political debates and struggles … In conditions of high modernity, the body is actually far less ‘docile’ than ever before in relation to the self, since the two become intimately coordinated within the reflexive project of self-identity. The body itself – as mobilised in praxis – becomes more immediately relevant to the identity the individual promotes.

Anthony Giddens218

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218 Anthony Giddens, op. cit., p. 218.
4.1 Subject
Claiming that there are particular analytical challenges in relation to the ‘land’ projects on the levels of theory/discourse, subject/sociality and place/situation theory, I have suggested the ‘mobile home’ tensions as an apt description of the theoretical and practical problems that are continuously and pragmatically navigated within the projects. I have previously also addressed some concerns in relation to the projects’ organization and their idea of space and place, then arguing for a complex, social and temporal understanding of space and place. However, in the two ‘land’ projects there is a particular concern with social and immediate interaction, with the live and everyday movements that keep the projects going on a daily basis. Performance theory, as it is tied to live art discourse on the one hand and to social anthropological and ritual theory on the other, provides us with tools to further investigate this "mellow sociality" as sensuous and experiential material. Performance theory also includes social and existential perspectives as performances often more explicitly or specifically work with or in the social dimension, with possible exchange or communication. Tied to the main problem of the situated and the de-situated, I will now further develop what might be seen as a performative aspect of the ‘land’ projects, namely their many socialities and they way these become part of a constant flow of sociality. In an analytical perspective, one of the most apparent, and I would say important, features of the ‘land’ projects is precisely their social existence and the way they unfold through social bonds, organizations and dynamics. This, as Bishop's critique suggested, creates tensions towards the subject as single will or distanced observer. A main drive is thus sociality, and a central question might be the co-existence of the subject and the collective, the being separate and being same simultaneously, which the ‘land’ projects not only suggest, but require. Another central question is the actualization of these tensions in time, as immediacies, events, durations and/or as existence – in relation to this I will address the performance-theoretical aspects of communitas, liminality, presence and performativity, as well as more general aspects of subject, community, and belonging. In the following, then, I will discuss issues that relate to the problem field of subject and sociality, and further to the socio-spatio-temporal constellations in which they exist and interact.

4.1.1 The Individual and the Non-Unitary Subject
The post-structuralist theories of Deleuze and Guattari, as well as of Deleuze and Guattari-inspired feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, are understood to present a critique of the
unitary subject. The subject critique points out the problems of defining a subject as a unity and further saying that a subject “consists” of specific elements such as an Ego, a Super-ego and an Id – as did psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Guattari as a psychoanalyst as well, and working at a psychiatric institution, was particularly concerned with fighting the Freudian “I”s – for Guattari, relating everything to a subject construction would be to simplify diagnoses, and thereby hindering the understanding of each human as unique and the way to recovery as, likewise, unique or different. Guattari worked towards a schizoanalysis, that is very roughly put an analysis of the subject psyche as fragmented and temporary. Guattari did, however, not reject the subject entirely – the subject stands for specificity and difference – but he rejects our ideas of subjects and subjectivities as one thing constituted in one particular way. Instead of subject then, Guattari speaks of subjectivation vectors like family, social conditions, particular events, etc., meaning past, present and future conditions that at each moment or in each situation shape and influence feelings of identity and choices of action. In their common texts, Deleuze and Guattari use names and persons, both as examples in their theory and when referring to other philosophers or theoreticians, but they never present the idea of the subject as a specific and acting container, it is always made general, specific or abstract. Then, as much as they are aware of and express the need for sedentariness and re-territorialization, they try to avoid it, and thereby, as mentioned, leaving an overall restlessness or unsatisfied will to situate in their texts.

Philosopher Rosi Braidotti follows many of the same lines of arguments as Deleuze and Guattari; she sees the need for a subject position, but underlines the ethical aspect of movement and un-settlement in relation to power structures – she stresses the becoming even more strongly, making it a precondition for sustainable social relations. Braidotti points out the feminist position in relation to this abstract being; the un-specified being, the being that is not concretely tied to the subject or the actual conditions, tends to be male and white. This is not a direct critique of Deleuze and Guattari; however, it does point out a certain lack in their theory – a lack they cannot control because it lies in the reception of their philosophy rather than in the philosophy itself. Their philosophy re-worked and applied will tend to forget the specific female and minority condition because it rises above it – it dissolves the subject and

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221 Guattari also worked with Suely Rolnik, who presented many of the same points of view concerning subjectivity – see bibliography for further references.
the subject as defined by being woman or being minority, to more general “becoming woman” and “becoming animal” as intensities or drives, rather than given characteristics. The general “being” or “becoming” of philosophers have historically taken male experience as point of departure and as its basic condition. This was pointed out by feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray, and is specifically taken up by Rosi Braidotti in relation to Deleuze and Guattari, who, as mentioned, actually seek to supersede these dynamics or conflicts. When we speak of subjects and subject positions then, it remains an important task to include the multitude of existences different from our own, particularly those existences which might be marginalized or discriminated.

In the text “Theatrum Philosophicum” Michel Foucault discusses Deleuze’s contributions to philosophy: Foucault underlines the difference in perspective he finds in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* and Deleuze’s *Logique du sens*:

*Logique du sens* can be read as the most alien book imaginable from the *Phenomenology of Perception*. In this latter text, the body-organism is linked to the world through a network of primal significations, which arise from the perception of things, while, according to Deleuze, phantasms form the impenetrable and incorporeal surfaces of bodies; and from this process, simultaneously topological and cruel, something is shaped that falsely presents itself as a centred organism and that distributes at its periphery the increasing remoteness of things.

Foucault clearly takes Deleuze’s side, and he sees his theories as directly oppositional to phenomenological and former theories on the subject and the process of thinking. Foucault’s basic objection is based on the “positive” situatedness of the subject as the prime source for thinking, understanding and interacting, saying that this falsely presents the idea of a self-defined and free subject set in opposition to the world, to things and events. There is thus the idea that when the subject is clearly defined or is perceived acting as entity, it is cut off from the processes it lives and breathes – it becomes isolated from its own material. Further, such a subject-posited perspective would in Foucault’s eyes make the subject wholly responsible for its own actions and happiness, as if there were no biological, social, and societal processes or distribution of power.

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223 Michel Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum”, op. cit., p. 219.
Going back some thirty years to Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, she defends the phenomenological subject against this kind of critique: To be a subject, an individual or a body is a universal fact, to exist is about will. The continuous exchange, the flux of identity, the inter-mediality – is all acknowledged, but Beauvoir says that in the end, what matters is the will to exist, the will to act as a free subject, not the fact of being a free subject. In many ways she is in line with the more recent writings of political theorists who see the insistence as political in itself; what we want we must think and believe – the pronunciation and conceptualization carries power in itself. However, there also are, as she points out after two world wars, several concrete things we can avoid, such as violence, discrimination and persecution, in order to make the individual freer or more able – in this way, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari can be seen to carry on the existential project. Beauvoir likens phenomenology with existentialism in this willed positedness – it is not so much what actually is (though she holds that the subject is a fact), as about what we can be or can achieve together as individuals. The world according to Beauvoir is both given and made, and existence is fundamentally ambiguous – acknowledging the subject, however, is about locating the site of existence, the necessary precondition for any ethical or social choice or action.

Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the unitary subject gives necessary insight into dealing with the organic complexity, the multiple and multiplying relations, the movement and becoming of thoughts and concepts, of power and machines. But one might, as suggested, question if it is at the expense of the experiencing and embodied subject – here, the subject as entity and body is seen as a fact, as a point of reference and site of meaning: The subject or individual body constitutes a clear situatedness in the human existence and it is the location or the site of movement; the subject body is where it happens. The term subject body indicates an emphasis on the connection between subject and body; with reference to philosophers John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, all experience and perception is seen as inseparable from the body. The body is the necessary materiality of the unique subject, and a never-to-be-left-out subjectivation vector. The tension between the individual freedom and the responsibility towards the group or community has been set up as a major gap in Western philosophy and

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226 Fischer-Lichte uses the term body-subject to indicate a similar connection between body and mind, op. cit.
political theory; and in their different ways, Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze and Guattari, all sought to narrow this gap. Merleau-Ponty unified the subject and the world through the “subject-world”, while Deleuze and Guattari considered the world to contain, work and re-work the non-unitary subjects. Would it be possible to reach a subject position that incorporates both perspectives?

Sociologist Anthony Giddens could perhaps be said to balance these different aspects, at least to acknowledge them as existential and theoretical challenges simultaneously. Referring to sociologist Erving Goffman’s role theories, he underlines the need for a subject position, and as Beauvoir, he emphasizes the will to situate as an ethical necessity. Giddens description of high modernity corresponds somewhat with Deleuze and Guattari’s de-situating and fragmented universe; however, Giddens never leaves the subject. Instead he criticizes contemporary theory for losing the subject in structural and systemic analyses – the subject as active agent must in some way be restated in order to ease existential trouble, he says. And I agree: If the subject site is lost, meaning is lost, and thereby also values, morality, driving forces, and eventually – the will to live. This, ultimately, is the confrontation made by Beauvoir and Giddens as I understand it: There is a world with diffuse power mechanisms and a subject with concrete physical needs, but there is nothing without the will to exist. As the term ‘subject body’ is used to underline the subject's necessary relation to its body, as well as pointing at its materiality, the term ‘subject site’ is used to emphasize the subject's dependence on the situation, the specific socio-spatio-temporal constellation or assemblage of various vectors it acts within. The ‘subject site’ thus claims to be where it happens, where it all attains meaning; however, it also indicates that the subject, its situation and its body are co-dependent, constituting a specific, singular materiality which at the same time is essentially social and changeable.

We also could turn to Thai culture for inspiration and different perspectives on the subject position. The Buddhist philosophy presents a self that can be defined in a much broader and “world-related” way than the traditional Western individual: ‘Self’ is not self-contained and clearly defined – ‘self’ is part of a context, of others, of “all”, and thereby also having a clear self-interest in the well-being of “all” – ‘self’ is here understood as the subject’s idea of

227 Erving Goffman, op. cit.
Simultaneously, however, there is a focus on individual action in relation to, for example, re-birth – we thus find a parallel focus on all and one. These issues clearly arise at the land foundation where several of the typical observer- and critic-related questions get new dimensions when individual values are replaced with collective ones. The land foundation seeks to replace Western individualistic values with more collective and co-creational ones, at the same time they are very concerned with respecting the singular voice and its expression. The Thai social culture that is actualized through the land foundation provides different perspectives into the subject-world dichotomy as well as the subject-collective dichotomy; turning to other cultures, our problems change and evolve. In some respects, the Thai culture can, as previously mentioned, be seen as more hierarchic, in other ways it may be more inclusive in its ideas on the subject as fundamentally collective. Buddhist philosophy in this context remains a source of inspiration; it must be the task of a specialist to consider and explain the Buddhist subject position and its complexities.

4.1.2 Subject and Togetherness in Art and Performance
Following from the above mentioned and thereto-related theoretical discussions, the subject has received an odd place in today’s art world; it is the point of departure for everything, because everything is a perspective, a personal opinion or rendition. At the same time we do not want to attach anything to the subject – the subject is not one thing, it is non-unitary, and only exists as temporary attachments or concentrations of subjectivization vectors, established as specific constellations and territories. The problem related to a concept as something common and specific, while at the same time being fluctuating and changeable in each subject, has been important in the engaged and experimental art after the Second World War. A central question in contemporary art theory is how can we relate to the fleeting character of meaning and still talk about something common – how can we create something as subjects without appearing to be geniuses, artists or authorities, and how can we make something together, either mentally, socially or physically, based on the ‘we’ as non-unitary? This common work based on disagreement, what we do together while we mean differently, continues to be an important issue. The critique of the self-contained, defined subject has thus had consequences for (art) production and perception on several levels: The production of the subject is tied to the production of meaning (and presence) – where and when is something

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228 Ref. Peter Harvey, op. cit.
“attached”, attaining meaning? Further, what does this notion about production of meaning mean in relation to the production, where and how is it produced? In the field of meaning production in art and media in the 20th century, we have had a movement from creator to spectator, the notion of who produces meaning has moved from “sender” to “receiver”.229

It is the spectator who through her “reading” gives the artwork its existence. Nevertheless this notion has often not resulted in much other than de-motivated self-documentation and totally fragmented renditions in art and a paralleling “Gonzo journalism” in art criticism; meaning creative writing with its basis in the personal associations of the writer. These texts and renditions have contributed with many important lines of thought, broken with the traditional role of the creator and art critique as authoritarian and more legitimate perceptions than other interpretations. But these renditions have also pushed away important parts of the debate, and today it may seem as though it is no longer about something common that is perceived subjectively or about something subjective that is experienced in common, but more about something subjective that is displayed, and one then ends up where one started: with the single creator, the ace.

This fragmentation of the production of meaning that the movement from sender to receiver has led to, could thus be seen to have weakened the belief in communication in general and thereby produced several “consciously closed” or inward-going renditions. On the one hand, then, it is important to underline that all meaning depends on experience, on the other hand, the idea of a common public sphere has to be strengthened. We are here talking about the actual and theoretical tension between the situating of all meaning in the subject, which in turn leads to a de-situating of meaning in general, and further, the possibility of situating of meaning in a public or common room, meaning the possibility for common or shared meaning. In this problem of doing something common while we “mean” differently, praxis gets a particular role: It is in the common praxis that the differences have to be realized, based on the utmost will for negotiation and pragmatic thinking, without wiping out uniqueness and particularity.

229 In works of the historical avant-garde, in Bertolt Brecht’s confrontation of the audience with his ‘epic theatre’, in Allan Kaprow’s direct involvement and directing of audience as participants, and to the way co-creators and co-contributors in the ‘land’ projects. Ref. Boel Christensen-Scheel, Fem former for betrakterdeltakelse – En analyse med utgangspunkt i utstillingen “Passasjer – Betrakteren som deltaker”, University of Oslo, 2003.
This is the actuality of the two ‘land’ projects; they are constantly faced with the challenge of trying to be a project, a direction, as well as being a multitude. As shown in the previous chapter, personal feelings and needs can collide or converge with collective or project drives – what is “personal” and what is “project” often becomes blurred in praxis; the binary oppositions collapse in the performative, as performance theorist Erika Fischer-Lichte says.\(^{230}\) It becomes unclear what is an official goal and what is the well-being of a single individual, and trying to avoid the neglect of a person in favour of an idea, sociality as concrete materiality and condition is always prioritized. Thus, when relating to actual practices, we see that the one and the same concept or idea is filled with different meaning – it becomes a question of navigation and of situation rather than of subject and sociality, because these are already fused – the subject is social and vice versa.

4.2 The Social Subject of Performance

4.2.1 Reflexivity and Awareness of Self

Performance studies can be seen as the investigation of this social subject or subject sociality, the “doing together” of subject(s) as constellations or situations in time and space. An important aspect of performance definitions, like Richard Schechner’s, is therefore the reflexivity or the doubling of the action or behaviour, the *action that requires another*.\(^{231}\) Performance theoretician Marvin Carlson suggests three possible notions based on how the term is generally used: \(^{232}\)

1) performance as a showing of skill (by humans, animals, technology, etc.) – performance is then a display of (admirable) actions.

2) performance as “patterned behaviour” – refers to Schechner’s concept of “restored behaviour” and indicates a reflexive distance between the behaviour and the “self”. The action or the performance gets a particular character or value because it is repeated or restored, this gives the action a notion of itself and its own practice/existence (self-reflexivity).

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\(^{230}\) Fischer-Lichte, op. cit., p. 163.

\(^{231}\) Ref. Chapter Two on performance and performativity, see also bibliography on Schechner and Carlson.

3) Performance as a living up to standard – indicates the quality or success of an action, performed for someone (this might be oneself or some abstract standard).

In all of these definitions, performance is clearly reflexive or self-reflexive, always displayed or carried out for someone. There is a doubling of the action through the presence of an observer or an audience. Further, there is an intellectual awareness of oneself acting – an act and the consciousness of the act, both in itself and as act – this is what gives performance its double nature; it both is and is again.\(^{233}\) The doubling thus implies a sociality that is apparent, but not necessarily in focus. Carlson, in his review of the field, seems to emphasize the mental notion or display of the performance, the visual or intellectual observance of a “phenomenon”, more than the implications of what the doubling means for sociality – that is, the double as a “twosomeness” rather than a reflexivity. In Chapter Two, I mentioned the ‘self-reflexivity loop’, coming from both intentions of self-scrutiny and self-concern. One could thus ask whether this prevailing focus on an intellectual awareness of self, and the remediation of self-pictures and – ideas in fact neglect the collective and wider sociality in favour of an introvert self-digestion. Performativity seen as (self-)reflexivity emphasizes the quality of display over the quality of action, and the doubling in itself seems to become more important than the other person or position.

4.2.2 Performativity as Sociality

Schechner and Carlson cannot be accused of this self-scrutiny or self-concern, and they are not so concerned with their own systems when being reflexive/self-reflexive. Instead, they are pre-occupied with (their own) actions, and what awareness, knowledge, experience these can give us of culture, sociality and mentality: To them, and perhaps to performance theory in general, the reflexive awareness is a heightened experience of being through the awareness of the action as action, and further of this action as performed by or related to self – the reflexivity then constitutes a revelation of insight through doubling, one experiences oneself experiencing or acting.\(^{234}\) The performance-theoretical reflexivity is slightly different from the

\(^{233}\) The double nature of performance here refers and relates to several aspects of Antonin Artaud’s theories on the theatre and its double (“Le théâtre et son double”- see bibliography), but is not directly overlapping – we will return to Artaud later in this chapter.

\(^{234}\) Ref. Fischer-Lichte, op. cit.
art-theoretical one, and far more socially oriented. Nevertheless, the two come together in a focus on the awareness of one’s own action, for all different purposes, be it institutional critique or soci(et)al reflection. In collective projects like the land foundation and Sørfinnset School / the nord land that are based on collaboration and co-action, this self-reflexive performativity and awareness of oneself, of the act as act and as a reference to other similar and non-similar acts, is however not the most prominent aspect, at least not the only aspect that deserves attention. I perceive the sociality and togetherness of the performance or human interaction in the ‘land’ projects to be less often conscious or perceived doubled, and more often immediate, trivial and social – in the ‘land’ projects, performativity is a sociality rather than a reflexivity. There is, of course, a reflexive depth and moments of self-scrutiny and self-concern in the projects, but these are not particularly sought or emphasized above “regular sociality”. The ‘land’ projects performative sociality might therefore perhaps be characterized as an “empty sociality”, where the social component is a together with someone rather than a for or in front of someone. That is to say, the different levels of experience come together in the subject site as a trivial, long-term duration, rather than “glimpses” of meaning, or double perspectives – the perspective is one and multiple simultaneously.235

The performative aspect of the ‘land’ practices and in general is emphasized as co-action, co-existence and immediate sociality rather than displayed action/behaviour. This makes some of the reflexive distance shrink; performativity as sociality becomes sociality for the sake of sociality, not for the possible perception or acknowledgment of something. Performance theoretician Josette Féral explains this in relation to the subject:

Performance is the absence of meaning … And yet, if any experience is meaningful, without a doubt it is that of performance. Performance does not aim at a meaning, but rather makes meaning insofar as it works right in those extremely blurred junctures out of which the subject eventually emerges. And performance conscripts this subject both as constituted subject and as a social subject in order to dislocate and demystify it. 236

Féral’s subject, as her process of meaning constitution, is both situated and de-situated – and, like several recent performance theoreticians, she emphasizes the absence of meaning rather than the emergence of meaning. Also Fischer-Lichte denotes this impossibility of textual,

235 This relates to Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy in general and their rhizome structure in particular.
semiotic or heuristic interpretations in many performances, for example those of Marina Abramovic, often consisting of bodily rituals without any apparent narrative structure, though with a strong physical presence and containing certain traditional symbols. Fischer-Lichte however underlines that it is not about an impossibility to read a performance as text or to attach semiotic meaning to a performance, rather it concerns the previously mentioned collapse of oppositions, where the immediate space and physicality is given a similar weight as text and meaning. Thus, in addition to the self-referentiality or symbolism of the action, the action has an actual value in itself, through its presence and performativity. Fischer-Lichte returns to the production of meaning as a more complex process that includes signs, texts, spaces, physicality and uncontrollable association; meaning then, is not made or read, it emerges – I will return to this point later.237

Nicolas Bourriaud, as an art theoretician, moves towards this immediate sociality, and he discusses artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres in his book on relational aesthetics under the title “Joint Presence and Availability: …”, which is about a non-reflexive conveying of “twosomeness”, of sociality and love. Togetherness as such does not have a particular content that is realized, made conscious or thought/reflected upon: Being together, working together is experienced by humans as something valuable and meaningful in itself, there is not necessarily a second layer (though of course and as said, always a multitude of thoughts and feelings). However, Gonzalez-Torres, with his interactive and emotionally loaded installations, is a good example of reflexivity and immediacy not being in direct opposition; as an artist he manages to combine aspects of reflexivity and history, with an un-thought and immediate affectivity.

This “non-reflexive sociality” is thus an important part of the ‘land’ projects as well as of the performance/performativity term in general. However, one could say that it has been understated in the theory of late 20th century, in favour of concepts and notions of reflexivity and self-reflexivity. Being at Sørfinnset and cooking Thai food with the young Thais whom I had never met before is about many things such as the meeting of cultures, etc., but most importantly it is about doing things together and the feeling of community that arises when we do or work together. It is of course meaningful in precisely this way, through feelings of community, through the collaboration, the work that is actually carried out, the food that is made, eaten, and the symbolism that this leads to. But, the feeling of sociality is often not

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thought of as a “feeling of sociality”, more as a feeling of well-being or belonging – a state where presence and togetherness is all that is thought, that is to say, nothing is thought, it is just felt, perceived, experienced in immediacy: It is ‘being present in the world together’.

At the rice field in Sanpatong one evening after an “opening”, I believe of the Elvis’ house\(^{238}\) (a said-to-be full size reconstruction of Graceland in Bamboo scaffolding by French artist Alexandre Perigot) – we sent up Chinese lanterns. Thin rice lamps made to float up by the heat of candles, lighting up the sky, becoming like stars at a distance. Watching was beautiful, but what I remember was the communion\(^{239}\), the clumsiness and laughter when we struggled to light the lamps and send them up. It is traditional, meaningful, but for me, it was quite simply about feelings of immediate togetherness – a perceived belonging to the moment.

Afterwards, or sometimes also while I am in situations, I think consciously about this feeling of communion. I think about how it feels and how it occurs, I reflect upon my own feeling of togetherness, of belonging – then I believe I experience the reflexive and double nature that Schechner speaks of – that is, I have a particular experience or awareness of myself experiencing. The reflexive sociality is thus not rejected as parts of the ‘land’ projects; it too describes an important aspect of tense, live sociality. However, since there is more “long-term” than there is “spectacular” in the overall frame of the two projects, the empty and immediate sociality is emphasized as a state of immediately perceived collectiveness, reminiscent of performance anthropologist Victor Turner’s concept of *communitas*, though simultaneously including community and communion.

4.2.3 Community/Communion/Communitas

Communitas – “… meaning by it a relational quality of full, unmediated communication, even communion, between definite and determinate identities, which arises spontaneously in all kinds of groups, situations, and circumstances”.\(^{240}\) Turner sought to trace social structures and anti-structures in the human field of existence; seeing human culture and sociality as

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\(^{238}\) See picture on page 183, first page of Chapter Five.

\(^{239}\) Definition communion in Oxford English Dictionary Online: “Fellowship, association in action or relations; mutual intercourse”.

organized around rituals and social dramas, he began exploring the many relations and transitions in the different cultural and existential modalities. In this concern, discussions around community structures are essential – community structures, organization of creative collectives and collaboration are likewise “core issues” in the ‘land’ projects: How do smaller or larger groups organize themselves around rituals, events, activities, etc.? Community is also a central aspect in avant-garde concerns tied to experimental living, opposition to reigning regimes, and aesthetics as broader investigations into life form or ways of living, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Long-term or continuous sociality constitutes an overall, general condition in the ‘land’ projects, as well as being in the centre of the projects’ performative dynamics as immediate/empty sociality. When one stays at the ‘land’ projects, one participates in whatever needs to be done – the tasks vary a great deal, and strongly reminds one of regular days; fixing, administrating, cleaning, cooking, hanging out, etc. Every once in a while there is an opening, a seminar, an exhibition, a project, a party, which needs to be organized. There are events, and the time outside the events – to me, these “times” melt together in the ‘land’ projects, and the projects’ “content” does not clearly stand out as either events, contexts, or frames: Events are included in the overall frame, and the performative element is not to be found in the different framings of art, life, religion, culture. Rather the ‘land’ projects’ performative character lies in the continuous flow of sociality, a constant occurrence of socialities and a general focus on the many social bonds that constitute their reality, their networks, their lives. Performance theoretician Anita Hammer, in her treatment of the construction of social relations as social rituals and as theatre in cyberspace, is concerned with the clarification of the different contexts as ritual and as theatre, and says that due to the self-reflexivity of the context, the context is identified as specific by the viewer/user/player. Still, the overall space is blurred, and because the actual space is live and social, it presents itself as real. By doing this, Hammer holds, the situation can be both aesthetic and social, both theatre and ritual, while at the same time differentiating between the contexts. Seen in this perspective the projects become the simultaneity of several possible contexts – a local one, an international one, an art context, a political context, a social context and a spiritual context (to mention some possible angles) – and each is meaningful and particular without excluding the others. This is reminiscent of Fischer-Lichte’s argument in The Transformative Power of

241 Anita Hammer, Weaving Plots, op. cit.
Aesthetics, in which she says that it becomes impossible to differ between these frames or contexts in the performative, because the situation is experienced as temporarily real and unified for the people there – that is, one and multiple simultaneously.

Turner’s position is similar; there is both structure and anti-structure in human social relations, differentiations and categories, as well as transgressions and fusions of these. Communitas in Turner’s theory is, however, related to the anti-structural through the “un-normalness” of the situation – the communitas occurs intensely in some kind of liminal\textsuperscript{242} situation. The liminality indicates a “state of exception” where normal structures can be broken down and a different sociality can occur; this sociality is a more intense anti-structural experience and is a sort of pure, non-verbal experience of togetherness and community, and further of possible communion and communitas. Communitas can be seen as heightened experiences of togetherness, and Turner aims precisely at this social aspect of performance and the important experience of co-existence and co-action. But, where Turner describes communitas as something like a liminal phenomenon, as something particular or out of the ordinary, the ‘land’ projects convey, as said, an empty sociality that is more “ordinary”. The overall context in the projects is perhaps perceived as slightly “out of the ordinary” – everything is the same, but something is different. The fact that one perceives that one is doing something out of the ordinary, something of an event, makes one more aware of different aspects/elements. This could be seen as a reflexive element; there is a certain awareness of oneself as participating in something. It is, however, not behaviour that is repeated, differentiated, staged, enhanced, or necessarily much reflected upon – it is behaviour within a setting that is perceived as “slightly out of the ordinary”.

Fischer-Lichte, while referring to Turner, denotes this same extraordinariness – the performative, as she sees it not in any definable ways deferring from regular life, is still seen to produce feelings or experiences that are extraordinary. The focus on liminal, threshold, transformative, does in fact indicate a gap towards regular life as it is perceived, thus indicating on the one side that ordinary life is not really different, however, the performative is somehow primarily associated with all that is not regular. Though all existence can be

perceived as thresholds, as states of becoming, the general notion one gets reading performance and art theory indicates something out of the ordinary – thus something excluding itself from the regular sociality. It is this general idea, that can perhaps not be tied to any specific element, but which I would argue is overall prevailing, that opposes the ‘land’ projects and their long-term, non-spectacular unfolding. The ‘land’ projects as “slightly out of the ordinary” are to some extent anti-structure, but at the same time they differ little between event and process – there is thus no clear difference between structure and anti-structure, or community and communitas.

Turner’s communitas is a sort of gap in regular social structures, and thereby a social anti-structure. Community or everyday organization is then seen as structure, as something defined or pre-defined. Turner thus identifies both systems and non-systems, states where references and constructions are important, and states where references and rules are not valid. However, he also creates several bridges between structure and anti-structure, between community and communitas (communion in relation to this describes strong fellowship possible in both settings) – his term liminoid is such a bridge: The concept of liminality is developed to describe a ritual modality of transgression in smaller, tribal contexts, while the liminoid aims at similar conditions, though not equal, in larger, Western societies. The liminal is particularly collective, while the liminoid tends to have a more individual approach. The liminal is integrated in the overall social and economical process, while the liminoid develops apart from these processes, “along the margins”. Even as anti-structure then, the liminal is part of the social function, while liminoid seeks a critical stance. However, “in modern societies both types co-exist in a sort of cultural pluralism”, and “there are permanent ‘liminoid’ settings and spaces too – bars, pubs, some cafes, social clubs, etc.”243 The liminoid is also tied to leisure and commodification, while the liminal as mentioned is part of the overall function and sociality.

Though Turner’s concepts of ‘liminal’ and ‘liminoid’ are not fully developed – he remarks upon this himself244 – he describes important states or modalities in human sociality and interaction that are concerned with subject and collective experience, and that constitute the dynamics of social structures and anti-structures. Seen as wider modalities, the combination

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of liminal and liminoid states can, however, prove useful to the performative dynamic in the ‘land’ projects: Different feelings and experiences of togetherness are some of the main “motors” in the projects, but the sociality in the projects is not remarkably different from other social settings – for example, we find all levels of social closeness and distance from family bonds, love, and friendship, to professionalism, politeness, confrontation and ignoring of acquaintances, observers and “enemies”. The Norwegian artists Holm and Jørgensen are married, and thus on the one hand bring their personal and private life into the project. On the other hand, they are professional artists exercising their profession through the project, thereby needing to ensure an income, build networks, etc. Thus their participation occurs on several levels, and the levels influence each other; a personal problem could prevent them from doing an event, and vice versa – even if their behaviour could be singled out as clearly “professional” in some situations and “clearly private” in others, these levels and intentions co-exist and get mixed most of the time. The sociality in the ‘land’ projects cannot be seen as clearly staged, professional or manipulated, nor as clearly private, emotional or truthful, and nor is it to be found in some blurred middle-stage. Rather, sociality in the ‘land’ projects is staged, public, private and blurred at the same time: Whether you are included in the different spheres might depend on your status (as friend, acquaintance, etc., or as important, unimportant, etc.), or on coincidences – you might end up talking with someone who needs to get a problem off their chest, or who by nature is very talkative, and thereby attain much “close information” without being a friend or someone important from the art world. It is thus hard to define any particular sociality in the ‘land’ projects, there is not one type of relations, nor one form of community or communitas – we might denote different, more general modalities of liminal and liminoid, in addition to a broad spectre of bonds and situations.

One can, however, trace a critique of Western individualism in both ‘land’ projects; if you want to participate, you are expected to contribute in some way to the common sphere. The Norwegian artists were clearly inspired by the Thai “social culture”, when they went there on a study trip before the Sørfinnset project was initiated. As in many of the experimental and conceptual works of 60s and 70s, something is demanded and expected from the viewer or participant; “meaning” is not given or served on a plate. Meaning, or importance, has to be created by the individual herself – in this case together with other individuals. The ‘land’ projects clearly show how the individual potential also to a large extent lies within the group, the sociality, the communion; the individual existence and success depends on the group’s contribution and dynamics – as eco-philosopher Arne Næss says: “Being together with others
is essential to the realisation of the Self.”245 And, we are not situated in a white cube where each viewer has her own room for rational action and distanced reflection. Like in life in general, you are caught up by people and situations, reflections and (re)actions are constantly mixed and interrupted. Herein lays the incorporation of the performative communitas in the regular community, by making the heightened feeling of sociality a more regular or long-term condition, a strong sense of sociality is made possible, though not as something extraordinary.

4.2.4 Event vs. Existence
Performativity is here understood as social and material immediacy with a heightened feeling of sociality, and this emphasized sociality need not be seen as transgressive and extraordinary. Sociality is an important part of performativity and must not be understated in relation to reflexivity; the many immediacies or performance situations in the ‘land’ projects can be seen to constitute a regular flow of sociality. This combination of immediacy, the event, with duration, the long-term context, is particular to the ‘land’ projects: I have emphasized the flow of moments rather than each single moment – that is, the notion of moment is thus still important, but is somewhat “muffled” or down-scaled. Who, then, produces the ‘land’ projects – the organizers or the participants? And, how are they to be perceived – can they at all be watched or experienced as an artwork or performance event? The questions are perhaps leading enough to indicate that the production is not to be attributed to the organizers only, and that the long-term commitment, as well as the “non-spectacular” approach of the projects give weight to the social involvement rather than the display of an object or spectacle.

In her performance theory, Fischer-Lichte suggests the coming together of place, time, subject, and body in the human being as embodied mind. This coming together is enabled by the event-character of performance – the performance as event is characterized by the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, the performative generation of materiality and the emergence of meaning.246 Further, Erika Fischer-Lichte emphasizes three aspects in her plea for a new ‘performative aesthetics’ – 1) the autopoietic feedback loop, which engenders the performance and the phenomenon of emergence, 2) destabilization/collapse of binary oppositions and 3) situations of liminality that transforms participants. The autopoietic

246 Ref. Fischer-Lichte: embodied mind, see section 4.3.1 in this chapter.
feedback loop is what Fischer-Lichte conceives of as a necessary co-action or exchange between actors and spectators, and the phenomenon of emergence or the emergence of meaning, refers to the un-controlled or associative way we perceive and experience. The term emergence indicates that much of what we think is not willed or wanted, it just appears – this ensures a subjective experiencing of every situation, and the performative which emphasizes this subjective experience makes the subject and spectator even more important. Fischer-Lichte seeks to promote the “transformative power of performance” through her aesthetics of the performative – through the autopoietic feedback loop, collapse of oppositions, and situations of liminality, something life-shaking or existential is to appear.

The performative indicates a move away from, though not a rejection of, rational/textual meaning, interpretation and display, and a movement towards sociality and sensuous co-experience. That is, the key aspect of the performative event is not the interpretation and decoding of textual, symbolic or referential meaning, but rather an immediate and co-existential experience of togetherness and immediacy. This shift in focus from production of meaning to production of co-existence naturally gives prevalence to a more social paradigm, and thus places the spectator in a quite different position than in relation to traditional painting or theatre, that is, as co-creator. The aspect of co-creation is particularly important in the ‘land’ projects, in fact; since there is no script and no concrete plan, only an activity programme, the unfolding of the projects is driven by the general participation of a wider crew than the four main initiators Jørgensen, Holm, Lertchaiprasert and Tiravanija. The activities are central focus points and they gather people, but as these are not seen as isolated events and measured in term of artistic quality and transformative power, the focus is drawn further. There is a tight connection between creating events and creating life in the ‘land’ projects, not in the sense that art is life, more in the sense that creating is living. The artists and the people involved do not intend to make or create art or events, although they see creation as a ground for life and existence – the event is instead set into a social flow that makes it continuous. While keeping Fischer-Lichte’s performative qualities, perhaps less intensely, the event is included in a chain of events and the focus is thus shifted from event to existence.

There has been a movement in art theory from object to event during the 20th century, recorded by amongst other Miwon Kwon in One Place After Another, were she follows the conception of the artwork from object to communicative situation or sociality. In his 2004 book Conversation Pieces, art theoretician Grant H. Kester makes a further move from event
to duration; in relation to community-based art he seeks to shift the focus from an ultimate moment of meeting the artwork, to the long-term commitment and dialogical process. Kester, like Kwon, emphasizes the historical development, particularly tied to the avant-garde from the 1960s and onward. As the focus shifts from object to communication or sociality, the question arises: Are communities and communication at all possible? Following Kester’s rendition, art theory has, broadly put, emphasized non-communication and misunderstanding in order to escape the totalitarian idea of community and equality. One could say then, that the community or communitas so essential to the performance field has often been mistrusted and avoided in art theory. As we remember from the critique of Claire Bishop, she put “dialogued” in brackets, as if it was not real and perhaps, as if it was not possible. Kester and Kwon, then, take different approaches to the community: Kester accuses Kwon of adopting Jean-Luc Nancy’s idea of the “inoperative community” and of portraying a community-pessimistic attitude, where community implies the idea of mass and not of multitude.247 Kester points out, however, that we do form communities and often around certain identities or “operative political categories”, even if these identities are multiple and changing.248

A placing of the event in a succession of events relates the single moment to the flux of existence. Fischer-Lichte underlined the notion of event in relation to the transformative potential of the performative – how then does the succession influence the event? The succession of events will attain qualities from both event and succession, as previously stated, we can identify “event aspects” such as heightened experiences of sociality in both the ‘land’ projects, while continuously placing the event in a succession or process, and thereby making it less definite, less “end-product”. The potential for change that lies in the micro-political movements of cooking, talking, etc., then becomes less “transformative”, less liminal and more liminoid, but changes are still possible in every single action. This is because the main transformative quality of the event, I would say, is not the event itself, rather it is the unpredictability of the social situation (relating to Fischer-Lichte’s feedback loop), and an open enough structure to let this unpredictability act. A social situation in itself is unpredictable, and there is a particular potential in that which is unrealized.

247 Hardt & Negri, Multitude, op. cit.
248 Kester, op. cit., p. 171-175.
Philosopher Giorgio Agamben is one of several theoreticians who represent an ontological turn in theory in later years, where focus has shifted from specific situations and institutions to human existence, **bare life, biopolitics or life politics**.\(^{249}\) The physical body itself and its various processes become political and historical through its proper existence, through its bare life. This ontological, physical and phenomenological turn in present theory marks a new emphasis on the physicality of existence and on the body as the ultimate mediator. The bodily focus of Agamben coincides with the concerns of performance theory; the body subject is emphasized as the ultimate navigator and site of action. Agamben’s theory of the “state of exception” as a current “normal condition”, has received attention: The Danish avant-garde theoretician Mikkel Bolt writes that “[a]ccording to Agamben the most significant contemporary political event, is that the state of exception ‘originally’ was something extraordinary and only supposed to last for a shorter period of time, now have become the dominant way of governing in the Western nations.”\(^{250}\) Agamben writes about the Holocaust and the Guantánamo base as revealing exceptions, so revealing that they say something essential about our current state of existence. The investigation of the state of exception and on the existing potentiality can be seen in relation to Turner’s studies on social dramas and liminality as potent.

Agamben’s examples and material can, of course, not be likened to the ‘land’ projects, but the state of exception says something about a “state of complexity”, of massive systems combined with unpredictability – a turn towards, and just as much a threat to, bare life and existence. He describes landscapes that constitute the dark twins of the ‘land’ projects, states where all is possible because of vast and unclear power dynamics, combined with a renewed focus on life, biology and existential conditions. If, however, the analogy of the state of exception and the new state of existence is used, this can be paralleled with the event

\(^{249}\) Agamben’s term ‘bare life’ seeks to define existence itself, as tied to biology and the human flesh – the bare breathing and living itself, *Homo Sacer – Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, op. cit., p.3. The term ‘biopolitics’ is taken from Michel Foucault: “According to Foucault, a society’s “threshold of biological modernity” is situated at the point at which the species and the individual as a simple living body become what is at stake in a society’s political strategies.”, *Naissance de la biopolitique*, op. cit., p. 323. Anthony Giddens uses the concept of ‘life politics’ to describe similar tendencies, designates the same turn towards existence and health, politics that concern life itself , op. cit., Chapter Seven.

becoming the succession of events – that is, the extraordinary of the performance becoming the ordinary of existence without actually losing its particular performative characteristics, or, the liminal becoming liminoid.

4.3 An “Anti-Performative” Performativity

Certain conceptions tied to performance theory and the performative, which could be used to understand the social dynamics of the ‘land’ projects as relations between embodied subjects and collectives, have now been introduced. I will continue by developing a particular notion that I find strongly expressed in the two projects, namely a longing for authenticity: An introduction of the performative concept of presence will reveal the paradox still in vigour between perceived authenticity and perceived manipulation or staginess – this paradox has strong roots in art and performance theory, and thus shows a discourse-defined quality that is essential to the projects. Finally, aspects of belonging in relation to this perceived authenticity will be denoted, then also relating the ‘land’ projects to a wider cultural and contemporary setting.

4.3.1 Presence

Communitas describes a heightened feeling of togetherness and perhaps of presence in an environment or situation. However, as communitas emphasizes sociality, presence denotes the personal or subjective feeling of being here – this can be the felt presence of the embodied self, or of another person or object in relation to the self. The experience of presence is, like communitas, a feeling of existing in relation to, and both experiences of “being a part of” and “not being a part of”, of total inclusion and total rejection, can be experiences of presence. Richard Schechner briefly mentions the term presence when discussing the Japanese theatre of noh – in this tradition, the spectators are encouraged to relax their consciousness, “allowing material to stream upward from their unconscious to meet the sounds/images streaming outward from the noh stage.”\(^{251}\) Schechner call this meeting between spectator and performer/performance a “selective inattention”\(^{252}\) the spectators’ inattention allows personal, unconscious material to blend with the conscious experience, and thereby creates deep and


\(^{252}\) Ibid.
personal perception. This selective inattention is further related to the concept of presence, says Schechner – the experience of presence, of a star or a person is dependent on this star’s or person’s ability to act as a “blank screen”, in order to, as in the ‘noh’ performance, allow the spectators’ unconscious material to be projected in/on him/her: “Presence becomes a kind of absence…” – an absence of focus that allows the spectator to personally engage in the person or performance. Presence for Schechner is thus something that allows for co-creation by the spectator, this co-creation could also be something that makes the experience more engaging for the spectator or person involved. As a distant observer, what goes on might appear less relevant, inclusive, etc.; it is easier to perceive something as real when one stands in a perceived direct relation to it.

Michael Fried is perhaps the art theoretician most known for developing perceptual theories that treat the experiential situation, the actual meeting between the artwork and the spectator. Based on a sort of phenomenological approach, Fried makes a distinction between theatricality and presence: Theatricality is seen as the “social situation” created by minimalist art, where the spectator is confronted by the artwork and placed in direct relation to it, without being able to respond or answer because of the artwork’s finite character – Fried also makes a distinction between the theatricality that plays or communicates with the viewer on the one hand and the presence effect that is self sufficient on the other hand. He thus means that the minimalists stage a situation by using physical “embodied” structures emptied of meaning, and where the absence of meaning, as Schechner pointed out, reflects back on the spectator, putting him or her in a theatrical, involved situation. Fried disliked this minimalist theatricality, and perhaps he, as Bishop seemed to, disliked being exposed or directly involved

253 Ibid., p. 233.
254 Ibid., p. 232.
255 Fried, Absorption and Theatricality, op. cit. and Art and Objecthood, op. cit.
256 It has not been a goal here to give an exhaustive rendition of the use and development of the term theatricality, but it is used to illustrate certain points tied to longings for reality and authenticity. Theatricality is tied specifically to theoretician Michael Fried, as well as to a more general notion in the daily language of something being staged, dramatic, exaggerated – this daily use is also as I see the background for Michael Fried’s coining of the term. However, relating his notion of theatricality to Artaud’s notion of what is specific for the theatre, I show how these notions are highly dependent on the person perceiving the situation – whether something is perceived as real, as everyday, normal, or whether someone feels the most real, alive, present in a theatre or performance situation, does not concern the actual reality of the situation, but the perception of it. For further reading see Elizabeth Burns’ Theatricality, op. cit.
in the art situation. Instead he suggested presence, by which he meant a strong physical, but
*autonomous appearance* of an art object (in for example a modernist painting), as a
favourable experience. Fried’s distinction between presence and theatricality is interesting,
but it can only be said to describe degrees of difference; there are, for example, several
paintings or pictures that can more or less explicitly be said to address or include the viewer’s
physicality through for example gestures and glares, and thereby become theatrical. The
distinction is not valid for sculptures and paintings in general, and with new fusions it
becomes even more problematic. However, Fried sought to criticize a certain feeling of being
manipulated, of being involved against his will, which can be related to scepticism towards
mainstream and commercial culture that we find in several 20th century aestheticians,
amongst others Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Clement Greenberg.

Literature theoretician Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht also speaks of presence, and his notion
touches on both Fried’s terms of theatricality and presence. Gumbrecht’s project, however, is
a plea against the processes of interpretation and metaphysics in favour of immediate, sensory
or material qualities of experience. Both Gumbrecht and Fried nevertheless say something
about the *physical* and *bodily immediacy* and the importance of the actual perceptual situation
in the production of meaning, as opposed to hermeneutic and semiotic traditions. Gumbrecht
speaks of a *production of meaning* and the *production of presence*, and says that in an
experience or a process of interpretation we will oscillate between these two forms of
production, ensuring both bodily and intellectual engagement.  

Gumbrecht’s emphasis on the ‘production of presence’ in a literary situation can be seen as an introduction of the
performative aspect to the field of literature. This can also be connected to the above
mentioned performative “absence of meaning”, mentioned by Richard Schechner and Josette
Féral, and recently discussed by Erika Fischer-Lichte.

Going back to the first half of the 20th century, director and philosopher Antonin Artaud was
concerned with the theatrical as that which words cannot convey – meaning, as a specific live,
non-verbal intensity or presence in the performance here and now. Artaud emphasizes the
non-verbal, non-linguistic, “empty” but extremely meaningful, sensuous communication of

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257 The media theorist Lev Manovich develops some theory around this in his *The Language of New Media*, op. cit.

the theatrical experience, more specifically in the performance of for example Balinese dancers. In Fried and Artaud’s theories there is a concern with the non-verbal, with the complex and social character of theatre and performance, but Artaud’s conception of the theatrical, or of that which is specific for theatre and performance, has almost opposed connotations from Michael Fried’s definition. Artaud was interested in the “false reality” or the hyper-real virtuality,259 that occurs live in space, while Fried aims at a manipulation, also occurring in space, but that results in a certain fictiveness, a non-real constructedness that poisons the experience. In some way, Fried and Artaud are describing the same intensified experience of presence in a live situation, but they are perceiving the quality of this relation quite differently – they also, it must be said, had quite different material. Nevertheless it addresses the previously discussed relation between the reflexive and non-reflexive sociality, the distinction between sociality or performance as for someone or with someone. One could imagine that Artaud experiences the Balinese dancers in relation to him, not in front of him or separated from him. The communication he describes is non-verbal, and he is thus in a direct physical and mental relation with the dancers, their mimicry and their bodies – if the communication is perceived as real, the situation or performance is perceived as real, and the levels of reality and virtuality will be blurred in the totality of experience. But, if one like Fried gets the notion of being in relation to the communication, and not in the communication, the situation will feel more “constructed” or staged.

Erika Fischer-Lichte, on her side, denotes three forms of presence; weak, strong and radical. Weak describes the regular, physical presence of a person or object, a mere being there. Strong presence aims at the heightened feeling of being there discussed above, for example the strong presence of an actor “holding” the room. Lastly, Fischer-Lichte speaks of a radical presence that is a coming together of oppositions in a performative materiality; it is the embodied mind, with reference to Jerzy Grotowski and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Fischer-Lichte explains: “That is to say, the mind does not exist in opposition to the body. Rather, the mind finds its existential ground in the body, which brings it forth and can thus appear as embodied mind. The phenomenon of presence in particular rejects the binary opposition of body and mind as entirely inappropriate concept to describe human existence.”260 The radical presence is the destabilization and coming-together of subject-object, time-place, body-mind

260 Fischer-Lichte, op. cit., p. 173
– it is the ultimate immediacy as material and intellectual simultaneity. Fischer-Lichte thus transgresses the boundary set up by Artaud and Fried, a boundary Deleuze and Guattari seek to demolish, namely the divides between artwork, body, mind and world. This in some way disqualifies the question of reality, she says, because the situation in necessarily perceived as “real” by the people involved.

In the performance tradition then, here represented by Artaud, Schechner and Fischer-Lichte, the presence effect could be seen to create something real (because any live performance is unique), and convey an “authentic” life experience. In the art tradition, however, presented through Fried and Kwon (though contested by Kester), the presence and communitas is mistrusted and seen as imposed on the spectator/participant. This, in my eyes, is problematic; when analyzing and addressing social situations it is difficult to have a position that claims their impossibility – this easily becomes contrary and misanthropic, hindering rather than enhancing communication and understanding.

4.3.2 A Paradox Still in Vigour
Presence is thus tied to how we perceive or experience a situation; strong experiences of presences can become hyper-real, and depending on how it is understood, felt, interpreted, etc., it can be perceived as manipulated or authentic. When I use the term authentic here I seek to characterize something that is perceived as real, relevant, engaging, etc., when measured against certain criteria set up by the experiencing subject. Something that is perceived as manipulated usually calls attention to itself as made, a reflexive quality appears, and this is used more or less consciously by artists and others in, for example, the PR business. What is perceived as authentic, on the other hand, has lost some of this reflexivity, the situation is perceived as real and regular. This idea or impression of something being real seems to be important for the conception of a situation as important, meaningful, etc. (but not necessarily, to overtly use the fictive frame is a well known artistic technique): Michael Fried sought a perceived reality when he criticized the minimalists for being too “theatrical” and manipulating sociality, while Antonin Artaud saw a hyper-reality in the Balinese performing bodies – both sought an authenticity in experience.
In his *Performance Theory* Schechner says: “Performances are make-believe, in play, for fun. Or, as Victor Turner said, in the subjunctive mood, the famous ‘as if’.”261 The idea of something unreal, something staged or theatrical is then conveyed. But the fictive might be conceived as more real than reality; a death in a book might have more impact than a real death announced in the newspaper, and Schechner continues to say that: “Performance is an illusion of an illusion and, as such, might be considered more “truthful”, more “real” than ordinary experience.”262 – precisely because it is “as if” it invites us to let go, to let loose and exaggerate – a parallel to Artaud’s hyper-reality. This performative exaggeration might lead to states that are betwixt-and-between, states of liminality – theatre then, exists as a possibility for change and transformation through its experimental, live and make-believe character. Performance art and theory are diffusely committed to this direct and un-masked exchange, seeking to avoid or escape the distance, conventions and composition often associated with theatre.263 However, as mentioned, there has been an emphasis on reflexive elements in performance, even though Josette Féral and Fischer-Lichte have focused on the absence of meaning, they also conclude with the extraordinary, the betwixt-and-between, that leads on the autonomy and utopy of the “art situation”. In terms of actual composition, however, apart from the textual orientation a theatre play might have, performance art and theatre are not that different in terms of pre-planned and thereby ‘composed’ action or behaviour. The often smaller setting of the performance has a certain impact, but does not change the structure entirely. In *The Transformative Power of Performance* Fischer-Lichte mostly analyzes “experimental versions” of Greek tragedies or performance art pieces with strong historical and theatrical references – even if they experiment with certain techniques, they have many similarities with what we perceive as conventional theatre. Compared to very text-based theatre, the so-called reversal of roles and rooms might seem transgressive, however, in many cases I find these techniques to be included in the more regular palette, becoming just as normative in their turn. Fischer-Lichte, as mentioned, also denotes the paradox between the real and the manipulated by juxtaposing J.L. Austin’s and Judith Butler’s conceptions of performativity; Austin perceives it to designate the actuality of action, while Butler emphasizes the staging of behaviour. Fischer-Lichte nevertheless concludes by drawing the

261 Schechner, op. cit., p. xviii.
262 Ibid., p. xix.
263 Elizabeth Burns, op. cit.
positions together, saying that ultimately they both aim at the same live and transformative power.  

Today the term performativity is perhaps most often used about “staged behaviour” and “stagings of the self”, for example in creating political scenarios and particular appearances – performativity is then tied to a falseness in which one is fooled to believe in certain constructed versions of people or reality: Wars are described as “stagings” of political and national strategies, and politicians, artists, movie stars or other public people, use performative strategies in order to appear as something they are not, or not completely – for example dynamic, honest, perfect, mystic, etc. In this use the performative is associated with something constructed, as in Fried’s conception, but performativity in this setting is considered in close relation to performance, as a sort of sociality, where the immediate understanding of the close dynamics that run and push this sociality is emphasized. The point I seek to make here is that there is a paradox still in vigour between the perceived authentic and the perceived manipulated in the performative which is to be found in both specialized theory and in daily use, and this in spite of the claimed collapse of oppositions made by Schechner and Fischer-Lichte. To say that performativity can be found in everything everywhere, and then continue by saying that it is transformative and extraordinary, transgressive and liminal – sounds oppositional. The paralleling of tribal trance rituals with tooth-brushing and going for a drive might sound far-fetched and confusing – do we aim at regular life or life-changing ecstasy? The answer must be both, but this is not self-explanatory: On the one hand there is the claim that anything can be performative, the performance field includes sociality, sport, religion, art, etc. On the other hand there are the notions of liminality/liminoid, of communitas and presence, and a claim to transgressive and transformative qualities. This does not mean then, that all performative situations are liminal, or that tribal rituals and tooth-brushing should be seen as driven by the same dynamics – it merely points out that performance can include tooth-brushing and still might be transgressive, this must be evaluated in each specific event or situation. However, as there is a tendency to confuse these aspects and speak of them simultaneously, a paradox, if not direct contradiction, occurs.

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4.3.3 Longing for Authenticity

The problem of perceived authenticity is central to the entire discussion on art, autonomy and representation – can anything real be achieved through representation? To resume this discussion is outside the scope of this dissertation, but I have already touched upon several related aspects in the conducted discussion. However, this fear of not being taken seriously or of not being able to influence regular life, seems to be an important discourse-defined drive in the ‘land’ projects. I experience them to be concerned with authenticity on several levels – in order to be perceived as authentic by their participants and their local environments, in order to feel that as artists they work with reality as material, not only with comments in a “parallel universe”, and in order for authorities and collaborators to perceive them as serious or trustworthy. There is thus a search or longing for authenticity in the ‘land’ projects that can be seen in a rejection of staging, staged feelings, manipulation, exaggeration, etc.; nevertheless, theatre and performances as cultural events and expressions are part of the flow they constitute. The weight put on social immediacy and empty sociality is important for the perceived authenticity; the formerly mentioned absence of reflexivity can be thought of in connection to authenticity and a longing for “real experience”. The idea of “authenticity” was also important in the 1960s and 70s anti-authoritarian project, where the distant and staged was connected to bourgeois facades. Many artists then wanted to avoid art that was about art, and continuous “re-mastications” of the problems of representation. The quest for the authentic can also be seen as a movement away from the “society of the spectacle” – away from commercialism and rationalist thinking of usefulness and logic, as mentioned in relation to Michael Fried and his scepticism towards theatricality. But avoiding the manipulated not only has to do with capitalism and commercialism – rejecting the staged and spectacular also has to do with control and non-control, about trying to keep the subjects equal and non-manipulated in community, communion and communitas.

The longing for authenticity can be found in the ‘land’ projects’ “planning for real life”, and their concern with having a lasting character: Holm and Jørgensen have discussed whether they should move to Sørfinnset for a period, whether they will go there during summers for the rest of their lives and how to pass the project idea on to younger artists – like Rakett and Aipotu. In Thailand, the two founding artists are also concerned with “passing the torch”, already a younger artist named Angkrit Ajchariyasophon, has been given responsibilities to


266 See home page www.rakett.biz and www.aipotu.org
arrange and initiate new projects. They have also, as mentioned, made the project into a foundation, moving responsibility and ownership away from themselves. The two projects are actively thinking about the projects’ futures, maybe because they want to get out themselves, but nevertheless because they want the projects to keep on existing, also without them. This could be seen as good leadership, making oneself unnecessary while still ensuring that everything works “after plan”, or to “internalize” power, making it part of the system instead of showing it as the particular will of a certain person. This pre-occupation with the future and with making the projects endure could, however, also be seen as a “counter-acting” of artists’ “false” or periodic involvement in social and political issues – they seek to establish something lasting on a micro-political and “real” or local level.

Another element tied to the quest for authenticity in the ‘land’ projects is a transferring of the “climaxes” to the planning process, or to moments outside the events. This is related to a succession of events that is established, rather than an emphasis on the single event. Overall, the event is in a process, there are groups of people in long-term projects, not single creators and peeking climaxes. The ‘land’ projects are not opposed to events or the spectacular as such, but I would say that there is a belief in “real” or “regular” situations such as meals, conversations and discussions, over performances and exhibitions – “true and lasting feelings” must be created in the regular sphere or life of the participants, they must feel included. The relation to the art concept and history plays a role here; these projects are, as mentioned, part of a history that rejects the spectacularity of the commercial society and that seeks to “blur art and life”.267 There is thus an awareness of what is real or important and of where it occurs, and this is rather in the social everyday of Intamoon’s Community Health Centre, than in the opening of an international artist like Alexandre Perigot’s ‘Elvis’ House.

The drift or longing for authenticity is thus to be seen in the artists’ intention – they seek to influence real life and use reality as material. This is partly done to avoid the art theoretical self-absorption and concern with media, institutions etc., and partly to avoid the problem of representation – they want to act, not comment. In order to achieve this, they use several strategies, some more conscious than others: They act locally so that they can have a more direct communication and control with the different parts of their project – they interact with their immediate surroundings. Further, they tend not to exaggerate their acts, neither socially

267 Ref. Allan Kaprow, op. cit.
nor artistically – instead there is a continuous focus on process, administration, organization, meetings, etc. And finally, they use “regular sociality” performatively – that is, they see trivial and everyday actions as part of the overall context, thereby transferring meaning from the events, to the overall flow of sociality in the projects.

4.3.4 Anti-Performativity

So, when I now introduce the term *anti-performativity*, it refers to the fact that performance and the concept of performativity continues to embody a double nature that expresses an opposition – on the one hand the experience of reality, of existence, on the other hand the experience of something that is not inside of existence, but outside, above or beside. Further, it expresses a series of project goals and dynamics related to the longing for authenticity. As I have previously said that the performative depends on which qualities of the performance one chooses to underline – here it is the processual, durational and liminoid – *the anti-performative could just as well be seen as a performativity that emphasizes this set of qualities*. To make a rhetorical statement, however, and to underline precisely the paradoxes of the performativity term, I suggest the notion of “anti-” being present in the ‘land’ projects.

In the ‘land’ projects, the one and same discussion could be carried out in front of an audience on a podium, or while sitting on the ground late at night, drinking a cup of tea and having stray Thai dogs playing around. Personally, I remember the “off-stage” version as the most “real” and as the most important – even though the discussion includes the same people, the same topic, and the one cannot really be considered as more “real” than the other. It is perhaps about my perception of reality, which is about a feeling of being *in*, not being placed in front of: The feeling or perception of “reflexivity” is gone, I do not feel observed or as observing others, I am one with the situation, I am both ‘subject body’ and ‘subject site’ – I have radical presence, to cite Fischer-Lichte. The anti-performativity is thus not only an anti-performativity, but somehow an *anti-reflexivity* as well. It is a wish to avoid *awareness* of self in communicative situations, it is not being self-conscious. This relates to the co-creation and presence defined by Schechner, a more active (conscious or un-conscious) relation to a situation or performance is more engaging. One could, however, also say that the term anti-performative merely represents a further development of performative qualities – performance practices in the 20th century often started out as a reaction to the existing establishment of
theatre and convention, seeking a more genuine and intense communication with the audience.

The performative in anti-performative thus attains similar notions to theatricality as defined by theatre theoretician Elizabeth Burns.\textsuperscript{268} She suggests the theatrical in social life to be the perception of composed behaviour, that is to say behaviour that we deem as corresponding too well to conventions and stereotypes.\textsuperscript{269} Burns holds that the core of theatre so to speak, is social norms and conventions and the play with and on these. We thus recognize our conventions, agree to accept this play as real, and let ourselves be entertained or puzzled by it – this relates to the previously mentioned ‘framing’ discussed by Anita Hammer and Erika Fischer-Lichte. When, however, we are outside the theatre, we do not accept the playing with conventions or playing by conventions in the same way. The behaviour that fits too well with conventions is thus seen as composed, and further as unreal, even though there is no such thing as un-conventional or real behaviour. We all relate to sociality as a construct of implicit and explicit rules and guidelines, and behave accordingly. Anti-performativity in the ‘land’ projects may thus be seen as a rejection of behaviour that is perceived as \textit{composed after conventions} – here, typical art-theoretical and discourse-related conventions of representation, media, autonomy, etc. In a regular sociality any kind of strategic or overtly conventional behaviour could be questioned as in-authentic, perhaps because this behaviour then is seen as planned for own gain. If the aim is a sustainable and balanced co-creation, this “layered” or composed behaviour interferes and becomes “unconventional” in the setting. Because the ‘land’ projects have a fragile, fought-for, long-term social commitment, they have to be careful when playing with their play, because their game is real, it is not an “as if”. This concern stands out as an important backdrop in the ‘land’ projects – they are aware of the social rooms they create through actions, emotions, events, etc., and that these rooms should be experienced not as constructed, intellectual and “smart” commentaries, but as real and human, as heartfelt and thorough. This is at least my understanding of the projects, but at Sørfinnset it could be argued that this also lays in the project’s nature: Relating to an already existing structure such as a village and wanting to make friends and get support there, it is extremely important that the artists are perceived as honest and with real intentions, not as

\textsuperscript{268} For a more discourse-related perspective on theatricality, see Josette Féral’s “Performance and Theatricality”, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{269} Burns, op. cit., p. 33
some “fancy art people” from the capital coming to “teach” or to use the village to their own advantage. Creating rooms of presence, of perceived (and truly meant) authenticity, is therefore important for Holm and Jørgensen, both personally and professionally – Holm also has Sami heritage, which makes his interest in the area also about personal identity, and this might give him more “credibility” in relation to local culture. One aspect is thus to be perceived as authentic in order to be taken seriously, another aspect is that reality and real life manoeuvring is extremely important in the project strategies and for all the people involved: The ‘land’ projects are about believing in them, believing those realities that they create and believing that it matters to do, to plant, to bake, to build, to paint, etc. The projects then become about believing in one’s self and one’s own actions, by doing with and in presence (instead of just being aware of own presence and actions) – the artists and the participants confirm a belief in themselves while doing and doing enforces the belief in doing.

Neglect of human (perceived) need for belonging is an underlying theme in this dissertation – this need or search for belonging can be found in this “anti-performativity” in the ‘land’ projects, where the need for a location, a “home”, is expressed in the need for perceived authenticity. As I have underlined, in order to believe in the actual sociality of the situations and the commitment to them, the projects must be perceived as real. This is, however, combined with pragmatism and un-decidedness, which the mobile home concept intends to describe. The idea of authenticity is in the ‘land’ projects tightly connected to community and togetherness – where “true togetherness” is seen as differing from the “spectacular”, and rather found in everyday life or the process around the events. This in turn questions the performance-theoretical belief in the extraordinary as transformative; perhaps the transformation must occur in a regular setting to have a real impact, that is to say, to last? This awareness of sincerity in action may be thought of as a reflection, a mental focus, or it might be thought of as a form of sociality, meaning as a ‘performing together. The doubleness, or the performed, is then not a reflexive doubling or a particular look, rather it is a “twosomeness”, a co-existence.

4.4 Continuously Belonging to the Situation
Exploring notions of situatedness and de-situatedness in theory and practice, I have identified a particular long-term and low-scale performativity in the two ‘land’ projects. The long-term
(anti-)performativity stands out as a general focus on sociality as the primary motor and material of everything, and further it is characterized by a coming together of body, subject and environment in immediacy. I have also pointed out, with reference to Anthony Giddens’ theories on high modernity, that in contemporary Western culture we are witnessing a renewed focus on the importance of perspective and location, often seen through interest for values and tradition, and in activities related to religion and nature. It can also be seen in the current focus on for example “short-travelled products” in food industry and elsewhere (local design and materials in furniture, clothes, buildings, etc.), the revival/growth of local newspapers in the age of the internet, in discussions on freedom of speech in relation to religion, in the increase in marriages. The importance of location and belonging is also made clear by the many migratory movements, voluntary and not, due to natural disasters, wars, building projects, economy, urbanization, as well as general travelling for business and leisure. The three-dimensional concept of the mobile home further suggests that the ‘land’ projects act out this tension between situatedness and de-situatedness in their practice, making this search for belonging and longing for authenticity a part of their regular flow of sociality.

Belonging relates to identity and to “identify” with something, but it is perhaps a more general and affective term, emphasizing the aspect of longing. Here, belonging is discussed in a general way as a longing for and feeling of situatedness or sameness, an experience of being part of something more or less specific. At the same time belonging is discussed in relation to the very specific conditions in a performative situation, as the constitution of belonging as different temporary senses of belonging in sociality and in immediacy. Belonging is then connected with an understanding of subjectivity and place/space as tied to a multiplicity of physical, social and mental factors constituting temporary and lasting constellations and situations. This is in line with previous discussions on place/space and of the subject as a non-unified and dynamic constellation.\(^{270}\) However, also having re-emphasized locality and specificity, there are certain given factors in any situation, certain things that constitute a sort of “constant” in the human life, for example the physical human body as subject body or landmarks as concrete environments.\(^{271}\)

\(^{270}\) Suely Rolnik, http://caosmose.net/suelyrolnik/index.html, “Toxicomane d’identité – la subjectivité en temps de globalisation” and Molecular Revolution in Brazil with Félix Guattari, Los Angeles, Semiotext(e), 2008

\(^{271}\) Ref. section 2.2.1 on ‘socio-spatio-temporal constellations’.
4.4.1 To Belong Somewhere

A nomad is a person who belongs to a travelling people, meaning a people who settle in different places in order to find fresh pasture for its animals. A nomad has no permanent home, or has movement and temporary residences as her permanence. An inhabitant is a person or an animal that occupies or dwells in a place, a permanent resident – both nomad and inhabitant are conceptualizations that coin humans to categories according to their relation to the space they live. To have an idea of this belonging, of something we agree and disagree in, of something that is “ours” and not ours, is essential in order to function as a human being and as a social individual; to belong is our/others’ conceptions of ourselves, our/others’ ideas of who we are and who we are not. In parts of Western theory, the nomadic has been made exemplary or attractive the last fifty years; the so-called disinterested, de-situated critique that never settles, never slides into a power structure and never becomes paradigmatic, has been discussed by amongst others Deleuze, Guattari, and Braidotti.272 This valuation of the nomadic and nomadic cultures have, however, far from been the case in real life and politics – governments all over the world have persecuted and discriminated against nomad cultures in their proximity, such as the Samis or the Romani people. Not having a permanent home has been seen as a problem for culture and society, a “de-rootedness” that results in a lack of control and conformity – perhaps in the same way that non-situated power theories have been seen as obscurantist.273

Voluntary nomadism can thus be difficult because it does not fit with the generally accepted idea of home as situated. The new sort of airborne – but far less sustainable – nomadism in the Western world for business and leisure has been viewed differently and is generally more accepted. However, this global lifestyle is now also being criticized because of its often unsustainable character due to pollution from transport, strain and garbage from massive use of small areas, and the narrowing of architectural and cultural landscape through domination of shops and entertainment facilities. But in many places, migratory movements and tourism have resulted in new and exciting mutations of cultures, mixing human breeds and conditions, bringing the other side of the world into the everyday. Tourism has also often saved local

273 Ref. note 76.
work places; this is a relevant problem to the community in Sørfinnset and many of their neighbours in the North of Norway: Should they “sell out” to tourists to create work places? Would tourism make living conditions better or worse? And do they have a choice at all if they want to earn a living staying in the districts?

The sustainability of the human being and its culture seems to be somewhere between situatedness and de-situatedness; cultures and languages have always travelled, evolved and changed, but are still perceived as something very specific, as something that unites within and excludes from without. Belonging here is mostly thought of as a perceived rootedness for the individual, a relational notion that prevents the subject from being alone in existence. Here we find an important connection to the performative aspects of immediacy and to the practice and theory of the ‘land’ projects: Belonging is highly dependent on the current conditions and on social feelings of inclusion/exclusion. Am I feeling part of something, someone? Am I feeling excluded by those I want to be as, or am I feeling different from those who embrace me? Do I at all feel likeness and resemblance; do I feel genuinely part of something? Both ‘land’ projects are, as I see it, investigations into these fundamental questions on existence, on the motivations for art, life and action – they are grounded in existential conditions, and that is fundamentally what they portray and thematize in their many expressions and discussions. Identity in relation to this can be seen as the blurred field of tension between home (tradition) and movement (change of tradition/new tradition), where tradition and renewal stands in constant interrelation, not being clearly defined as something, but instead being dependent on the conception of the other. “To belong” is as complex and dynamic within each person as the idea of home, still it represents an important idea of identity and “rootedness” for human beings – philosopher Arne Næss likewise underlines the impact of the environment: “‘To have a home’, ‘to belong’, ‘to live’ and many other similar expressions suggest fundamental milieu factors involved in the shaping of an individual’s sense of self and self-respect. The identity of the individual, ‘that I am something’, is developed through interaction with a broad manifold, organic and inorganic.” However, belonging could be seen as more immediate, more socially defined than the home, as something more dynamic. Thought as less permanent and more “immediate” feelings, senses

275 Ref. Anthony Giddens, op. cit.
276 Arne Næss, op. cit., p. 164.
of belonging occur constantly, in changing environments, with colleagues and work, friends, with situations and activities, in real life and on the news, on soaps, in literature, with nature, food, clothes, music, with foreign cultures, with family, with strangers. Many different and continuous senses of belonging constitute our overall belonging, our home, and the way these senses are perceived and put together give an unknown number of results: Some are very attached to their family and hometown, while others are rather “detached”; they prefer their work, their colleagues. Others again work just for the money and “belong” to their hobby, their passion for tango, for cars, for other countries or cultures.

At Sørfinnset, the inhabitants are geographically situated, they share a culture, a mood, and they are familiar with many of the same traditions, but at the same time they have several other senses of belonging: One woman is from Thailand, another man has a girlfriend in Thailand, one is a passionate Frank Zappa fan, another is a passionate radio-maker, a third is a politician with dreams of a better international society, a fourth is a former sailor with memories of the Caribbean, a fifth has his childhood house and roots at Sørfinnset but lives in Bodø, though regularly visiting with children and grandchildren. Likewise the different Thai and Norwegian artists now have a particular connection to and memories from Sørfinnset that they did not have before; one of the artists made Sørfinnset her new home when she fell in love with and married a local man, and at U-Mong in Thailand, a large picture of the One Year Project participants at Kjellingvann was prominently placed in the gathering hall. The artists have created new belongings, to a small place in Norway, to the people there, to the food, the music: When I visited Thailand I brought CDs with Norwegian musicians such as Gåte (Norwegian folk-rock band) and Bertine Zetlitz. I knew the One Year Project had been to a concert with Gåte when they visited Norway, but when I handed the CDs over, it turned out that they had already downloaded and played some of their music. They had been listening to Gåte, remembering good times – for them, it represented a “belonging”, a time of formation and togetherness that they experienced in Norway as Thai artists, as well as making Norwegian friends and getting to know the landscape and surroundings of Sørfinnset. To me, feelings of past, present and future were blurred – waking up one morning on Thai mattresses at U-mong, going into the warm and humid Thai air, I saw and heard my international and Thai art friends talking, drinking green tea and listening to Norwegian folk-rock music, bringing up memories from my own personal past as well as from my past experiences with them. I thought that I should remember to send them some more CDs when I got back to Norway, which I did.
This is an example of how complex belonging (and the ‘land’ projects) really is; it is literally made by past, present and future sensations, by several geographical places, by material and immaterial objects and sounds, by nature, by plan and by coincidence. Having different belongings from childhood, our many meetings and experiences constitute new grounds – suddenly Thai artists and I have a common past, common memories and senses of belonging to the nature of Sørfinnset, which is the home of neither of us. But belonging can also be simpler, more spontaneous, for example when you immediately like or understand someone you meet; it could be your neighbour with the same culture or someone from the other side of the world. Then, the abstract and indefinable sense of mutual like constitutes a sense of belonging, strong and unpredictable, but not necessarily incomprehensible or coincidental. To belong somewhere is to relate to something – in the past, present, and/or future – it is both static and dynamic: There was only one non-Thai participating in the One Year Project, at the land she was working very consciously with gender issues, which she felt was missing in the Thai setting. She could then be thought of as feeling a stronger belonging to avant-garde culture and gender politics than Thai culture and sociality. However, staying in Norway with the rest of the group, immersed in a Norwegian environment, she more clearly felt a belonging to the group and the Thai culture. On the other hand, staying at Sørfinnset, I discussed gender issues in Thai Buddhism with her, and we were both concerned with the fact that there are no female monks in Thailand – we then had a common ground, a common perceived aspect of belonging. Another one of the Thai artists was an active part of the group, doing much Thai cooking at Sørfinnset School. She meditated everyday, and then borrowed the house of a local person. As mentioned, a romance developed and going to Thailand in 2006, they married – she came back to stay with him at Sørfinnset. The last time I went to Sørfinnset, they invited us for dinner, serving Thai curry, of course. She then, belonging to the One Year Project and Thai culture, apparently felt a belonging to the Norwegian culture as well, at least to a particular Norwegian person, however, keeping her food traditions and merging Norwegian produce with Thai cooking.

This tracing of the participants “attention” or perceived belonging is done to show that even though one has a background, a family, a location, belonging might be felt towards another place, another situation or another person, physically or mentally. Being in Norway might make you feel belonging towards Thailand, but being in Norway might also make you feel belonging to the Norwegian nature or a specific person. Abstract and physical feeling towards
times, places and situation influence our perceived belonging and constitute our identity, towards ourselves and others. Some identities, like the One Year Project group identity, co-existed with personal feelings of love, existence in nature and political convictions. The point here is that the relation to a stranger in a strange place can be perceived as stronger than feelings towards one’s own family in a familiar land. “Obvious” belongings to family and home land/culture are not unimportant, and most often they are very important (like the One Year Project’s group identity being strengthened outside of Thailand), but they are not necessarily the factors that determine the perceived identity or belonging – sometimes what is different and unfamiliar can feel more like home than the same and familiar. The mobile home notion of the other being constitutive for the same, thus being in the same also has relevance for the sense of belonging – once something is experienced or presented as other or same, they are in each other, they have constituted ideas of each other in the awareness of their being same or different.

Identity is multiple; it blurs different aspects into specific constellations – groupings and re-groupings of subjectivation vectors. Félix Guattari argues that a fragmentation or hybridization of identity is a necessary freeing of the subject, while Anthony Giddens, on the other hand, seeks to reposition the subject. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman is as Giddens more sceptical to such a hybrid identity construction, perceiving it to be a contemporary and “spoiled” position characterized by a state of choice that is reserved a “knowledge elite”.  

Bauman speaks for a less momentarily defined identity, holding that this conforms to a too-large extent with capitalist mechanisms (new day, new dress, new personality). As I here take a middle position between Guattari and Giddens, I nevertheless emphasize the immediate and evolving aspects of identity and belonging. By including the vast diasporic tendencies of the world, multi-culturality and hybrid identity is far from a “privileged position”. Further, a dynamic and immediate identity concept leaves a bigger room for singularity, and indicates a more social or collective dependence: If we are mutually dependent on each other in order to constitute, it means that much must happen in immediacy, when or as we experience or are confronted with something/someone, that is to say now. The present moment, in addition to history, family, geography, etc., is thus important in the constitutive process, but is seldom brought to the fore as such. This means, and the ‘land’ projects display this very well, that the

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Immediate sociality is important for the constitution of senses of belonging, and then also for the constitution of the subject – senses of belonging are constituted also in present moments, and this gives the immediate social conditions, including art/performance/experimental projects, a new importance in thoughts on sustainability.

I have previously argued that it is for and in the subject that something attains meaning – in spite of the unstable content of media, signs and concepts, one could say that what the individual feels belonging to, has a strong and concrete meaning.279 Belonging then, as dependent on and occurring in immediacy is also part of a more long-term flow of sociality – belonging is constantly created in the specificity of the situation and of the moment, and as a “rootedness”, it is crucial for movement: Belonging drives engagement, it is when something has come close to you, when you are moved, that you are ready for action, for movement. In the current cultural and political situation it is imperative to try to understand what drives us, and not least what drives others, in order to hinder a complete depletion of natural and cultural resources, and to increase understanding of each other. Contemporary performativity or immediate sociality must have as its most important task, both in art and elsewhere, to understand this closeness, this acting power that notions of home and belonging carry within them.280 In a performance tradition it is a particular point to underline the uniqueness of every situation; every action is new even when it is repeated, and when I now re-address belonging and home, it must be with such a notion of particularity and immediacy. Presence and immediacy can then be seen as important aspects in order to perceive of something as authentic or relevant. Experiences of participatory presence in immediacy might create a sense of belonging to the actual social room or constellation and, depending of the frequency and importance of this experience, it becomes more or less a part of a perceived identity.

4.4.2 Immediacy/Immediately – *Hic et Nunc*

Immediacy is here understood partly as the ultimate present, the potential point of now, the meeting of being and becoming, and partly as the general physical, social and mental condition the society, group or individual experience in an approximate present; that is what follows immediately before and after what the individual tends to include in her perception of

279 Christensen-Scheel, Boel, "Der det betyder noget", Denmark, Øjeblikket nr.47, 2006
now. Immediacy includes the now of the moment as well as the now of the “contemporary”: It is the specific point as well as those many and not-so-specific components of this point. Thus the current social, psychological and material conditions that constitute the ultimate ground and reason for action and non-action at any given moment, are included in the now – both notions do, however, indicate the moment of action and the idea of present time. The same discussion could be conducted for immediacy as for belonging; subject and place/space – can they possibly be perceived as something continuous, as one thing? Or must they be seen as fragmented, discontinuous, at all times? Again I seek to unite these situated and de-situated aspects, seeing immediacy as something both continuous and discontinuous: Immediacy is the ultimate, united now, as well as this now’s many reflections in social, mental and environmental pasts, presents and futures.

The idea of immediacy or present-time performance is central to the performance field, both in theory and practice; it is all about the energies, exchanges, developments, transformations, reflections, experiences, and the knowledge attained in the ultimate now, as we speak, as we do, as we encounter. Schechner coined the previously mentioned term of actuals for art as event and for anything that is actualized, meaning materialized or developed – to actualize is to create, a performance, theatre, art, sports, etc. Schechner relates actuals specifically to tribal rituals, but does not develop the term to cohere only with such: Actuals emphasize the present, the presence of an action in a setting, and the different social possibilities this leads on: 1) process, something happens here and now, 2) consequential, irremediable, and irrevocable acts, exchanges, or situations 3) contest – something is at stake for the performers and often for the spectators, 4) initiation, a change in status for participants, and 5) space is used concretely and organically. All of these aspects in their way describe different sides of the immediate situation; they say something about being in something (in both time and space) with someone – time, room and space is made concrete and organic through an appearance, a development, process or situation between participants. This actualizing or concretizing of events or happenings creates authenticity and perceived reality in art and experience; through certain experiences, perceptions and constellations something is pronounced and made clear/unclear to the spectator/participant.281 Antonin Artaud described

281 Performance theoretician Philip Auslander dedicates a book to the topic of “liveness” in relation to media and the new media culture – he seeks to find out whether one can speak of a specific live quality in terms of “aura” or “reality”, in relation to or as opposed to mediatized performances: Is the live body more interesting than the mediatized body, is the mediatized body reproduced and then less “original” than the live body? Does it loose its
the particular theatrical as an awareness of that which is not normally conveyed or noticed, a sort of non-verbal ultimacy or immediacy constituting a hyper-reality. That is perhaps also why he emphasizes the *mise-en-scène* as a way to this hyper-reality of the performance, saying that “[it] all depends on production and can only be determined on stage.” As mentioned, there is firstly a particular concern with the live or the immediate, secondly a concern with the importance and transforming potential of this immediacy, and third, a specific attention is given the situation or place where this transformative immediacy occurs. Further, in his text on actuals, Schechner argues in favour of “non-mimetic art”, an art that blurs previously accepted distinctions between art and life, work and person, artist and person – in “non-mimetic art” the distinctions and movements between “raw” and “cooked” are permeable. “Actualizing” to Schechner is a certain way of making “wholeness”, combining past and present, individual and group, inner and outer. This “coming together” of the different levels and concepts of existence describes a sort of pure immediacy or sense of presence in the world that connects the many aspects of both existence and research. This idea of a hyper-complex, organic whole is important in order to understand the ‘land’-projects – an idea I have previously discussed in relation to Deleuze and Guattari.

The term *hic et nunc*, latin for here and now, is frequently used in performance theory to designate the spatio-temporal character of performance; that is, the coming together of times and places in immediacy. In this lies the idea of the performative immediacy as a more potent, more decisive moment, as discussed in relation to Agamben and Fisher-Lichte. Immediacy indicates a proximity or closeness to the participant’s existence – even if we often pay too much attention to what has been and what is to come, we actually live and constitute in the present, and that is perhaps the most obvious argument for a rethinking and revaluation of immediacy. Immediacy is closer and more potent than other times because it is relational, it is in immediacy that we exist together, that we co-act directly, and it is in the manoeuvring of this immediate sociality and each single situation, that the most solidary and environment-friendly, or egoistic and brutal decisions are made – quite simply because it is now that

 aura? Auslander mentions immediacy as one of TVs main qualities, and nuances the idea of either the live or the mediatized as provider of the most important/enchanting performance – the relation between the live and the mediatized can be set up as conflictual within a specific discourse, but can also “be shown to have the same ontological characteristics” and to be used in similar ways, *Liveness – Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999/2008, p. 184.

decisions are made or actions are brought to life. Immediacy then primarily constitutes a ground for action, a point of departure or a totality that decides what is to come – in this way immediacy also has a wholeness, it is a continuity or duration, as it is always now.

4.5 Summing Up

Addressing the initial inquiry concerning tensions on the level of subject/sociality, I have in this chapter sought to establish a movement from the non-unitary subject to the collective or social (anti-)performativity of the ‘land’ projects: I have argued that the performativity in the ‘land’ projects is strongly social and that the performative element is to be found in the togetherness of the project, and not in the structure or the events themselves. Seen to be characterized by a flow of non-reflexive sociality, the projects’ long-term and low-scale intensity is emphasized. Sociality/relations are explored in community or senses of communion, meaning experiences (either consciously or unconsciously) of togetherness – and in these experiences of togetherness, a heightened feeling of existence, of presence and of communitas can occur. In these community-structures, the subject must be perceived as social, and the singularity becomes dependent on the collective. The relation between the subject and sociality is crucial to Western philosophy – here, I have seen the subject as non-unitary based on the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, but I have combined it with the single will of Beauvoir, and the idea of the embodied mind we find in Merleau-Ponty and Fischer-Lichte – that is, of the singular and unique subject body and its will to exist. Further, by emphasizing the lower intensity, the succession of events rather than the single event, we have moved from the extraordinary ‘liminality’ towards a more subtle, long-term ‘liminoid’ state.

The tension between the performative as something that is part of a “regular life setting” through sports, sociality and rituals on the one side, and as something that is extraordinary and exaggerated on the other side, creates a certain paradoxality in the idea of performative in contemporary theory. The performative theoretically and historically indicates authenticity and immediacy in exchange and live sociality; however, it is also connected to staged or


284 Ref. non-unitary: Deleuze & Guattari, will: Beauvoir and Giddens, embodied mind: Fischer-Lichte and Merleau-Ponty.
manipulative behaviour as well as connected to liminal and extraordinary states. Antonin Artaud and Michael Fried’s conceptions of ‘theatricality’ and ‘presence’ illustrate this (perceived) opposition: Artaud is occupied with the hyper-real virtuality that occurs live in space, while Fried seems to aim at a manipulation, also occurring in space, but that results in a certain fictiveness, a non-real constructedness that poisons experience. Aiming at the same “heightened experience of presence”, the two perceive this presence in different ways, as real (when one is the most alive, when one feels one’s own existence) or as constructed (when one feels what one normally does not feel or what one is supposed to feel in private spheres/settings). What is “real” or “fake” thus becomes blurred, and the actuality, not the content, of the experience, is emphasized. However, there seems to be a focus on the non-manipulative and perceived authentic experience in the two ‘land’ projects, perhaps as a statement towards problems of representation, as a reaction to self-obsession in art, or merely as a necessity when relating to non-art situations such as the village of Sørfinsset. In relation to this, the notion of ‘anti-performativity’ is used to describe a certain inner dynamic in the ‘land’ projects, based on this paradox as well as making a rhetorical underlining of the non-staged and immediate sides of performativity, the (anti-)performative becomes a way of describing the relation of a practice to ‘reigning theory’.

The (anti-)performatve aspect also has to do with a more general contemporary search for authenticity and belonging in the projects: The human need for a location or a home is tied to the need for “perceived authenticity”, and to some extent opposed to the staged or “theatrical” side of performance. Further, senses of belonging constitute in the moment, in immediacy, but they occur continuously, repeatedly, and are therefore less emphasized as singularities than as successions of singularities. The single subject or event is just as important, but is put in a necessary social and long-term context, and the overall focus shifts from event to existence. Adopting Fischer-Lichte’s idea of ‘radical presence’, it could be possible to co-think the immediate presence with the flow of sociality in the ‘land’ projects: The idea of radical presence need not be seen as that “radical”, nor must it be attached only to tension-filled and peaking moments – it can equally well be seen as the coming together of oppositions, as the balancing of sociality, subject, and environment, in a stream of moments and situations continuously constituting in the non-unitary, embodied mind. Thus, drawing a line between the discussion of subject/sociality and the performative dynamics, the contours of the ‘land’ projects’ contemporary relevance are beginning to become visible. However, in any
potentially exemplary sociality, we must consider the ethical dimensions – this is done in the following and penultimate chapter.
Chapter 5 ¤ Ecology: Environment, Relation and Sustainability

The principle of biospheric egalitarianism defined in terms of equal right, has sometimes been misunderstood as meaning that human needs should never have priority over non-human needs. 285

The relationship between identification and the narrower process of solidarity is such that every deep and lasting state of solidarity presupposes wide identification. The essential sense of common interests is comprehended spontaneously and is internalised. 286

The maxim ‘live and let live’ suggests a class-free society in the entire ecosphere, a democracy in which we can speak about justice, not only with regard to human beings, but also for animals, plants, and landscapes. This presumes a great emphasis upon the interconnectedness of everything and that our egos are fragments – not isolatable parts. 287

Arne Næss

The connotation of ecology should cease to be tied to the image of a small minority of people in love with nature or to (self-)defined specialists. 288

Félix Guattari

285 Arne Næss, op. cit., p. 170

286 Ibid, p. 172

287 Ibid. p. 173

5.1 Ecology as Relational Principle – Organic Purposefulness

The mobile home was established as a three-dimensional dynamic of tension, meaning that it is simultaneously theoretical, practical, and immediate, and the ‘land’ projects’ main feature has been identified as sociality. Further, this sociality is seen to be continuously, low-scale performative, almost ‘liminoid’. The shift in focus from event to existence, from moment to succession of moments, makes the projects more actual – the sociality in question is no longer only displayed or represented, and thus requires an ethical perspective. The long-term involvement makes the projects part of ordinary contexts, built up by everyday situations. Ethicality then, relates to the way of doing, to the actual unfolding of the mobile home tensions, the unfolding of the projects in and of themselves as well as to the sociality they construct. This is also where ethics and aesthetics combine; if the manoeuvring, as I pointed out when discussing Jacques Rancière and a broad aesthetic, always demands a choice not only of action but also of sensuousness, what you create, produce or choose will be your ethic. In performance theory, process, situation, and collapse of oppositions are emphasized; this blurs the lines towards the regular as well as opening for the irregular or extraordinary. A possible ethical perspective would then have to follow these complexifying qualities of process, uniqueness and symbiosis – I here suggest the ecosophical or ecological non-moralistic ethicality to propose such an organic and dynamic perspective, also apt to describe concrete and existing guidelines for action in the ‘land’ projects, as well as tendencies in the theory applied and addressed.

5.1.1 Ecology/Ecosophy

Biology stems from the Greek word for life, bios, and ecology stems from the Greek word oikos which means home or household – biology is thus the study of life and ecology can be thought of as the study of ‘home life’ or conditions for life. Ecological research can be said to focus on three main areas: individual organisms, species interactions and communities/ecosystems.289 The object of study is life and different relations between life and its environment – these are studied in order to find out what enables or hinders certain life forms under certain conditions at certain times. This of course includes the relation to other organisms; organisms influence the life, distribution and abundance of other organisms, and the relational wholes of

nature and organisms (biotic/living and abiotic/non-living environment) can be seen as communities or ecosystems. The term ecosystem describes the “biological community together with the abiotic environment in which it is set”\textsuperscript{290} – an ecosystem thus includes both living and non-living elements – atmosphere, rocks, plants, animals and humans, all that is “a source and a sink for energy and matter”.\textsuperscript{291} An ecosystem also follows the flows of energy and matter around the system, the relatively constant consumption and release of energy constitute the sustainability and longevity of the system. Transferred to the human sphere this includes the human physical environment such as cities, houses, things, clothes, art, etc., as well as social and psychological issues and dynamics.

The concept of ecology will be broadened to become a philosophical (ecosophical) perspective with certain ethical aspects, and less emphasis will be put on fatalistic interpretations of such as Darwinist evolutionary theory concerning “the fittest”. This “defence” may today not even be necessary: the theory of ‘natural selection’ has been considered quite differently in later years – more as a theory of organisms’ fantastic ability to adapt, and less as a theory of “elitist selection”. Recent ecological studies also show that what is the most “fit” is often very varied and actually different than first expected, meaning that fit is not the strongest, most intelligent or most beautiful, but the most \textit{relational} organism, that is to say the organism that best interacts with its environment.\textsuperscript{292} This again does not mean that an organism or individual has to erase itself into the environment, but that an individual organism with its specific set of qualities manages more or less well in a certain environment. Ecology and evolutionary development then become the specific individual’s ability to interact, to co-exist, and not the fatalistic selection of the “strongest” – the strongest might be the smallest, most “imperfect” organism that for various, and often unpredictable reasons, co-exists well with its environment. So, while referring to certain chosen ecological concepts and aspects as they are used in the defined field of ecology, ecology is overall not used as a neutral term, nor does it imply all biological, ecological or ecosophical research. I will emphasize certain aspects that I see as important in relation to the ‘land’ projects and practices, and further develop the concept in this specific theoretical context in relation to performance theory. Moreover I see the concept of ecology as apt for constituting

\textsuperscript{291} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{292} Ibid.
perspectives for a non-moralistic and affective ethicality based on the *sustainable balance* of subject, community and nature/environment – a perspective that will be taken up again at the end of the thesis, placing the problem of the situated and de-situated in an endless, organic mutuality – co-existent, though not harmonically.

Using ecology and sustainability as theoretical and philosophical principles may seem obvious in these times of climatic instability and over-consumption. However, the use of these concepts in this thesis stands in a longer eco-philosophical or ecosophical tradition, related to organically-inspired and environmentally-conscious theoreticians. Turning to biology and nature for inspiration, we could find words and concepts that give more *elastic*, dynamic, fluctuating takes on reality, but that nevertheless are visible, physical and concrete. *Ecology, mutuality, synthesis, symbiosis, rhizome* and *chaosmosis* are examples of such concepts that seek to grasp a natural complexity and organic character on paper, further moving them into the human everyday sphere, making them part of an ecosophy. The ecological concept is used for many reasons, but key notions are its necessary relationality, its focus on sustainability, its opening towards organic thinking and its balancing of ethicality and sociality. Sustainable here means endurable or maintainable, the overall balancing creating good or prosperous living conditions – that is, conditions that make something last or enable lasting relations. Ecology is an overriding and far-reaching term that indicates a mutuality or relationality in a hyper-complex whole, where *all the parts have their role and importance*. Ecology is a way to think connectedness in an un-simplified, yet ordered way; as an “ordering” of things, ecology implies a non-order, it is rational, yet irrational – it is in a relation, but *without ever being pre-destined or predictable*. The ecological perspective has an organic purposefulness; it can be completely unexpected, yet it is not necessarily random. In their study on ecology, Begon, Townsend and Harper point out the difference between *random* and *chaotic* dynamics; the main difference being that the random dynamic contains no differentiable patterns. The chaotic one contains certain discernable patterns, but is characterized by such fluctuation and multitude/variety that the prediction of future patterns or outcomes becomes impossible or inefficient. Chaos in this concern is thus not simply randomness and confusion,

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293 For example Félix Guattari, Arne Niess, Rosi Braidotti, Athony Giddens, Kisho Kurokawa.
294 Begon, Townsend & Harper, op. cit., p. 150
making phenomena impossible to understand, it is the impossibility of prediction and the possibility of a tiny movement causing a major change in the system or theory. 295

Ecology is thus a biological field of research with a particular concern in the relations between organisms and environment. It has since the 1970s and 80s become associated with various movements that have worked for the preservation of these relations and environments in nature. Many of these could be labelled under what Arne Næss calls shallow ecology – that is, the concern with simple environmental causes and issues without relating this issue to other chains and relations, and further the omission of humans and sociality in this ecology. The deep ecology, however, is Næss’ conception of an eco-philosophy or ecosophy. It designates ecology as a fundamental way of thinking relations to nature, humans, animals – not only the act of not throwing toxic garbage in nature:

So an ecosophy becomes a philosophical world-view or system inspired by the conditions of life in the ecosphere … A philosophical system has many components. Logic, general methodology, epistemology, ontology, descriptive and normative ethics, philosophy of science, political and social philosophy and general aesthetics are among the most well known. Ecosophy … says of this diversity: all are intimately connected! 296

Ecology represents the deep connection and interrelatedness between the many elements; there is a focus on the relation and the necessity of the relation itself. The relation always indicates a certain power structure, but ecology shows how the power structures are co-dependent or inter-dependent – indicating the dependency between the parts both ways, and thereby strengthening the “weaker” parts by emphasizing their power and need for respect as well. Ecology is here considered in relation to ecosophy, and is used as a more general theoretical and methodological approach, as well as for more specific analytical purposes, and then mainly tied to Félix Guattari’s ecosophy which is soon to be introduced. However, it is to be remembered that even if ecology refers to principles existing in nature, ecology is here specifically defined within a context, and the ecosophical theory is a human construct or ethic that includes human will from the beginning. The ethical dimensions are therefore to be understood within the context of ecosophy, where the dynamics are ecological.

296 Næss, op. cit., p. 38.
5.1.2 Ecology and Performativity
The ecosophical theoretical perspective has several common denominators with the performative: 1) it collapses binary oppositions, 2) it combines theory and practice, but has a particular focus on practice, and 3) it is relational, makes the connection between actors and their environment close. To connect previously disparate discourses and angles is thus a theoretical and methodological implication of an overriding ecology. The possible combination of the different perspectives on space and place is one such move; relating post-modern nomadism and phenomenological situatedness is another. As a relational principle of organic purposefulness, the theoretical concept of ecology includes and further develops the characteristics of the mobile home discussed in Chapter Three: hypercomplexity (diversity), combined situatedness and de-situatedness (relationality and paradoxality), processuality (organic, changing), simultaneity (balance/equality) and virtuality/potentiality. The earlier-mentioned rhizome structure of Deleuze and Guattari has similar qualities, though not exactly the same: Connections, heterogeneity, multiplicity, a-signifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania (technique of transferring engravings and prints to a flat surface – to copy by tracing).²⁹⁷ All of these qualities are, as mentioned, important features of the ‘land’ projects, and they constitute an analysis of the ‘land’ projects main qualities, and explain why the projects cannot be analyzed in a more traditional way:

1) **Hypercomplex** are the many genres, aspects and people/roles involved in the ‘land’ projects, and the many levels of references they imply.

2) **Relational** is the entire structure; it is based on relations and on relations having further relations, when it comes to people, meaning, politics or places.

3) **Paradoxical** is the nature of combined situatedness and de-situatedness; an insistence on local values, for example, often demands transport to the local site, and transport/travel is a mobility that somehow counter-works locality. Transport also pollutes the environment, but in order for relations to survive, they have to be kept refreshed by bodily presence – how to be both local and global at the same time, how to travel and not move, not pollute, simultaneously?

4) **Processual** is the ongoing character of the projects; they are not planning any “end”; and the events also have a process-like character because they are all included in the lives of the participants, as small parts of regular life.

²⁹⁷ Deleuze & Guattari, *Rhizome*, op. cit.
5) *Simultaneous* are the many and differing opinions and values of the people involved; simultaneous are also the different aspects such as local and global, subject and sociality, art and non-art.

6) *Balanced* is the way these simultaneities are treated; many mistakes are made, but absolutism is avoided.

7) And finally, *potential* are the gatherings of people and material, the avoiding of definitions, and the focus on practice and on the participation of all.

Seen in relation to previously discussed aspects of performance theory and performativity, we find many similar traits. Particularly important is, as mentioned, the relationality of the immediate situation. The manoeuvring of immediacy and the constant adaptation of elements into a “singular-collective whole” characterizes both the performative and the ecological situation. Further, the combination of immediacy and duration creates particular possibilities for sustainability, where the immediate choice is valued in itself as well as constantly measured against a past or coming immediacy or choice. The performative situation is a human ecological possibility, and thus relates to the coming ethical and non-normative suggestions.

### 5.2 Guattari’s Three Ecologies

More specifically, the concept of ecology that I suggest here in relation to performance and aesthetics is based on the ecosophy of Félix Guattari; in his *Three Ecologies* he suggests there are three important aspects that must be included into the concept of ecology or ecosophy; the environmental, the social and the mental. The tripartite ecological perspective of Félix Guattari provides a further analytical perspective: situations, projects, spaces and places can be seen as mental (psychological), social, and environmental (physical/geographical) at once. Guattari thus makes a further pronunciation of the dynamics of Næss’ deep ecology. An ecosophy can then be considered from the basis of balance and mutuality between the different relations to the self, the human community and the larger environment, nature and animals. What characterizes ecology is, as suggested, precisely this fine balance between the many parts, and that a displacement on a micro-level can easily have consequences on a macro-level, and vice versa. It is a relation between the many parts based on conflicts of interest and the fight for survival, rather than direct causal explanations: Structures made up
by a finely-tuned and complex symbiosis makes it impossible to define “the best” solution, as in Niklas Luhmann’s definition of hyper-complexity. Still, there is an ethicality in the ecological perspective, and as in Guattari’s ecosophy – it is not a matter of indifference which solution we choose.

In *Chaosmose* Guattari discusses the idea of subjectivity as drawn between individual, collective and institutional factors. He suggests that we rethink subjectivity through a complexifying analysis from an *ecosophical* four-dimensional object consisting of four ontological functions: semiotic Flux, machinic Phyla, virtual Universes of value, and existential Territories. All of these dimensions are again defined by *chaosmosis*. Osmosis can be described as the fusion and interpenetration of elements, chaos as undifferentiated and confused space (but not random, as we have seen) – together they might be seen as constituting a “chaosmos”. The three ecologies – mental, social, environmental – must be thought from the perspective of *sustainability*. Guattari thus broadens the idea of ecology to include a vaster and more complex idea of the relation as a balance between physical, abstract and psychological parts; not only designating specific relations in nature, or relations between “humans” and “nature”, but including relations between and within humans as well. I will, nevertheless, only use Guattari’s broader distinctions, and not directly apply his entire ecosophy. This is because it would complicate and perhaps confuse the argument – however mind-blowing, Guattari’s vast concepts would imply too large a theoretical body (chain of arguments) in order to be understood in relation to the material of concern here.

5.2.1 Social Ecology
Social ecology deals with social communities and relations mainly between humans, but also with political, social organizations that necessarily relate to nature and all forms of environment. Human (social) organizations have a deep impact on nature and the eco-system, and must therefore be seen in relation to it. Likewise, humans are influenced (made apparent by recent natural catastrophes) by their biotic and abiotic environment. Ecology is a “reactional” theory that focuses on the existence of organisms as co-existing in a milieu with other organisms, and the benefit or risk of this co-existence; this has many similarities with...

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298 Guattari, *Chaosmose*, op. cit.
299 Ibid., p. 174.
social theory. Traditional ecological research describes different forms of interactions or relations such as symbiosis (mutual benefit), predator-prey-relations or parasitic relations, which record the benefit or loss for the organism in the relation, whether the nature of the relation is exploitative, mutual, neutral, competitive, fatal or benefiting. It could of course be amusing to imagine this into the social relations of the ‘land’ projects, but it would probably turn out to be quite simplifying and harsh.

Degrees of competition, negotiation, discussions, symbiosis, parasitism and predation are also to be expected in human relations, but I have instead focused on the concept of mutuality as a condition for collaboration – if only one part is benefiting, or where the relation is exploitative, the relation is not sustainable and will therefore be fatal, if not for the humans involved, then for the relation itself. A one-way “predatory relation” is not sustainable in the long run – if there are too many wolves, they will eventually not get enough to eat or would eat each other. Broadly put: If humans exploit the resources of our nature one-sidedly, our resources will run out, our climate will change and eventually we will have “unbalanced” our life ground. Likewise, if people in the ‘land’ projects do not feel included or heard, the social relations break down, at least most often after a certain time. This does not mean that “unequal” relations do not exist – one could perhaps say that most relations contains “unbalances”, but still work and are thus balanced in terms of ecology. A purely “predatory” or exploitative relation is, however, unsustainable from an ethical or ecosophical point of view, even if such relations do exist in real life. A “life-sustaining” balance is sought in the ecosophical relation, though I am not claiming that nature always is sustainable.

Here we touch upon an interesting dilemma in community organization – the crux spinning around the degree of control or intervention. To seek sustainability in the human community on the basis of balance and reciprocity is, as I perceive it, not necessarily a natural undertaking; it often has to be made, at least in the short term. Balance and mutuality are ecological principles, but this does not mean that balance always occurs by itself. Thus, ecology, sustainability and mutuality are here not about a “turn towards nature”, away from control – sustainability is here about an active, continuous balancing of nature/environment,

301 Ref. Næss points out “the dangers of ecologism”, where ecology is seen as “the ultimate science”, op. cit., p. 39.
community and individuals. This balancing could be the natural adjustments within an eco-
system, or it could be the economical balancing we seek in social systems through taxes,
social systems, etc. The balancing can thus happen by itself through change in physical (and
other) life grounds, or it could actively be sought in the human sphere through principles of
inclusion and democracy. Ecological and organic balance is not thought of here as something
that just happens, as in a liberalistic “laissez-faire philosophy”; instead it designates the
continuous engagement and balancing of always new unbalances that often occur in organic
and natural systems, but that now are included in the human sphere, representing an ethicality.
Ecology is centred on mutuality or co-dependency of the parts in the eco-system – there is
always mutuality, but not always balance. Balance again, does not mean equality or sameness;
rather it is about sustaining life conditions, a continuous work to ensure communities.

The ‘land’ projects are clearly social projects, and I would say that they value togetherness
and community to a higher extent than contemporary culture does. In this way the projects
could, as previously said, be seen as a critique, or at least as an actual alternative to the
Western individualism. In Thailand, however, the market economy and Western ideals of
individualism have not been prevalent for that long, and the focus on community is therefore
perhaps not as much a critique of existing society, as an emphasis on existing values that one
fears are lost in the new market-oriented economy and lifestyle. Community living and
thinking could thus, as mentioned, be seen as “Asian” or “Thai” values in the meeting with a
Western discourse. However, the Thai artists have lived in New York, one until recently,
and they are just as familiar with Western art discourse, if not more, as the Norwegian artists
are. The ‘land’ was made a foundation in order to eliminate ownership, and meetings are held
regularly in order for the entire group to be in on important decisions. Still, it is a problem in
the land foundation, as I perceive it, that “traditional community values” also bring on the
traditional Thai hierarchy based on age, gender and position. This means that even though the
processes are “open”, and decisions are made by different people, there are very few women
involved in the decision processes, and the main decisions tend to be made or influenced by
the same people – there is also an overrepresentation of women in administrative positions
compared to the artistic positions. But, if the ‘land’ projects had not managed some sort of
sustainable relationality/sociality, they would probably not exist. Their structure is based on

the participation of persons, groups and networks – if the people involved felt that they were without influence, they would not, in my opinion, keep on participating. This is extremely relevant in the North of Norway, where the project is based on the collaboration with a local community; if the local community felt that they were ignored or set aside, they would not participate in parties, discussions and events the way they have done. Nevertheless, the original tension of depopulation remains a central issue in the Sørfinnset project, a tension that may be unsustainable in the long run: Like the youngsters of Sørfinnset, the artists are not willing or able to stay at Sørfinnset all year – there simply is not “ground for life” in a modern sense, there are not enough jobs. This continuously re-plays the original tension of depopulation and requires constant activation from the artists – this in the end, strains both participants and artists.

The balancing or actual sustainability must be done in practice, the social space has to be navigated as it unfolds – this is important in the ‘land’ projects on many levels: The projects consist of social networks/structures, they represent a turn towards sociality and relationality in art and performance; much of the projects’ meaning is constituted in sociality, through constructions of (temporary) communities, feelings of togetherness and collaborations. Sociality is one of the greatest challenges to human existence, which in its essence is co-existence – humans are inherently inter-subjective. The challenges that sociality brings on, like fights, disagreements, love, peace, and insecurity, demand a high degree of organic thinking and acting. Negotiations, compromises, discussions, and learning are therefore crucial; the managing of the projects themselves is the managing of the people that constitute them. Sociality as a key notion is, however, greatly dependent on its physical environment and personal embodiment as well as personal emotions and political/societal contexts. As mentioned, the physical, social and mental environment/performance influences the physical, social and psychological environment/performance – the many parts work together to constitute a given situation, and they constantly and reciprocally influence each other. The social situation can thus be influenced or changed by physical milieu, personal moods, etc., and vice versa.
5.2.2 Mental Ecology

Mental ecology indicates that the human personal psyche is seen as part of the eco-system – the human mind distinguishes itself from the rest of nature, but nevertheless is an important part of the ecosphere. To comprehend this interdependence between the different levels of the ecosphere, one must relate to the individual subject as acting force, as well as political and environmental changes and ideas. Guattari, who was a psychoanalyst, searched for an alternative to Freud’s psychoanalysis based on clearly defined subjects and diagnoses.

Deleuze and Guattari together, as said, also developed a more fluid and un-defined idea of the subject as constantly changing, defined as much by present and future as by past: The subject, as previously addressed, is understood as the combination of vectors of subjectivation (such as space, inheritance, genetics, family, friends, lovers, society, milieu, personal inclinations, memories, influence, intuition, and more), a situational constellation in a certain room at a certain time. This can be said to make the human psyche, as well as the way it is treated, more complex, but also more hopeful: You are not what you always have been; you are a mix of self and others, possibly changing in the present and the future. The subject becomes more inexplicable but less fatalistic – the subject, as the performative situation, is always potent.303

Another way of interpreting Deleuze and Guattari’s theories would be to understand the subject as made of external and uncontrollable influences – this makes the subject secondary; it becomes less important and more evasive – and thus more difficult to trace or cure. Both interpretations move focus away from the individual subject – not to deny or reject it as embodied mind, but rather to free it from normative conceptions and rigidifying structures. By not seeing the subjectivity as a defined entity, Deleuze and Guattari could be seen to enable both subject and collective; the non-unitary subject is necessarily more collective as it is constantly constituted and re-constituted by new subjectivation vectors moving in the collective sphere. But, they also seek to make the subject more singular, more specific, as an immediate situation or constellation. Deleuze and Guattari might seem to reject both subject and collectives by pointing at their fluctuating and problematic characters; however, a true rejection is not really an alternative as we exist both as concrete bodies and undeniable societies – what they suggest, I say, must therefore be seen as a rethinking of these entities and of the possibilities for creating freer and more flexible social and subject constellations through radical movements of the mind.

303 Ref Giorgio Agamben, op. cit. and Aristotle, op. cit.
As a critique against individualism and Western subject culture, the ‘land’ projects are part of a tradition: Many avant-garde or experimental projects from the historical avant-garde in the early 20th century through the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s and 70s have worked with community and co-existence as essential values in “utopian constructions”. Connections to socialism and communism are common, and in our contemporary world of the “fallen ideologies” the main problem, which in some way parallels the main problem of this thesis, is how to create a sustainable community that does not exclude or suppress the individual, but leaves room for active singularities, where the previous “mass” turns into “multitude”.304

Further, the emphasis put on spiritualism, meditation, superstition, myth and history is a clue to the focus on personal space and mental health in the ‘land’ projects. In Buddhism, meditation is a path to enlightenment and inner peace, meaning a way to control the “ego” in order to contribute more and better to a common community.305 The meditation each Sunday at Umong and a certain concern among the artists of being a “good Buddhist” (I have interpreted this quite simply to mean a calm and open-minded person) show how spiritual values have a place in the multitude of events that are going on at the land foundation. But this spirituality is not seen as opposed to secularity, new technology and materiality – the spiritual is tied to the everyday in both religious and non-religious ways, that is, both as part of and not part of official and formal religious structures. The free yoga classes twice a week further indicate this connection between body and mind, physicality and psyche that we find in many Asian and Buddhist cultures, but that can be said to be lost or at least problematic in Western culture and science, where spirituality and physics have been kept apart by the “rationalist discourse”. The ethical and spiritual have nevertheless become a visible part of contemporary secular culture also in Western contexts and particularly in experimental art; in the book Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art which came out in 2004, several performance practices and experimental practices are tied to Buddhist philosophy and meditation as an inner ethicality or conscience.306 In the book, performance-related artists like Marina Abramovic, Mariko Mori and precisely Rirkrit Tiravanija are interviewed on their relation to spirituality and Eastern philosophy. Eastern philosophy in some way seems to represent “a non-religious spirituality” long sought in a Western context – Eastern philosophy, meditation,

305 Ref. Harvey, op. cit.
and a nuancing of Western rational logic have, however, been an important issues in experimental practices during the 20th century, concerning both spiritual and bodily matters: Composer and actionist John Cage was, as mentioned, concerned with chance, the I Ching (Book of Changes) and Zen Buddhism, and as a teacher he brought this to many experimental artists after the Second World War.

Buddhism has several forms, tied to stately and official religion, to different practices of meditation, and it can be seen as a more general philosophy. Buddhism as general philosophy has several similarities to contemporary experimental Western practice and philosophy: Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy has many Buddhist traits, so has the Fluxus movement; they resist Western rationality as paradigm, in particular the commercial logic, and seek multitude, difference, relations and wholeness. Particularly important is the holistic approach, the non-dogmatism, the focus on peaceful co-existence and learning/meditation as ways to get there. Religious and spiritual aspects are, in this respect, also important in Schechner and Turner’s performance theories – they employ both ritual (religious/anthropological) and aesthetical practices to describe social and performative dynamics. The Norwegian artists have also included meditation in their programme, but are perhaps more focused on local traditions, such as the Samis’ nature religion where local spirits are asked before one starts building something, and nature as spiritual entity in general. The Norwegians’ relation to nature, the empty landscapes, the hiking and ski trips, could perhaps be said to give a sort of meditative effect, a cleansing of the mind and body, much in the same way as yoga and meditation. The young Thai students in the One Year Project expressed precisely this feeling towards nature and collaboration when they stayed at Sørfinnset – they took pictures, which they later used in an exhibition at Umong in Thailand, and one wrote a poem called “Untitled – Memories” (they gave the exhibition the same name).

Broad spectre philosopher Gregory Bateson combines ethical and ecological dimensions in what concerns the ecology of ideas and of the mind – structures of influence between humans are part of “the ecology of ideas” in relationships, and, further, these structures are “part of the larger ecological system within which that relationship exists.” Bateson also places the concept of ecology in a further “mental” relation, pointing out that our ideas about ourselves, ecology, and the ecosphere always include ourselves: “Herein lays the charm and terror of

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ecology” he says “– that the ideas of this science are irreversibly becoming a part of our own ecosocial system.”  

The human mind is thus one of the most important features of a deep or expanded ecosophy, and perhaps represents the greatest challenge to the ‘land’ projects: A non-unitary understanding of the subject and of identity as dependent on time, place and situation implies constant negotiation and contradictory feelings and messages of identity and belonging. Often these seem impossible to unite, like the combination of nature-oriented traditional cultures and new conceptions of democracy, equality and technology. At Sørfinnset one is often caught up in the social situation of the community, and one does not have much time to grudge or think of personal discomfort. There is room for personal choice and difference in the ‘land’ projects, but perhaps this room should be made even bigger, particularly in what concerns the female aspect – how can women become more visible as individuals in the Thai decision processes? And how can they avoid a “return” to gender roles when engaged in manual labour? When one is engaged in collective activities there is always a chance of the singular becoming collective, of personal needs, dreams and thoughts being neglected. Single existence is emphasized in the ‘land’ projects, but some singularities are definitely more emphasized than others. In Norway in general, there is an increase in the number of mentally ill – this might be because we diagnose these illnesses more, or perhaps because we tend to focus more on the single subject. A focus on the subject is thus not necessarily a goal, but neither is a return to old-fashioned agricultural communities that, to a large extent, were patriarchal.

5.2.3 Environmental Ecology

Environmental ecology is the perspective that focuses on the natural eco-system, the physical and organic surroundings including minerals, plants, animals and humans.

The ‘land’ projects consist of concrete pieces of land (a rice field, a patch of land by a lake) and concrete buildings (U-mong and Sørfinnset School). In this aspect, the environmental is tied to the physical surroundings of (wo)man – however, the physical surroundings are both

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308 All citations on this page are from Gregory Bateson’s *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, op. cit., p. 512.
309 In Norway we find that “mental problems” is the most common diagnosis at doctor’s offices (see http://www.ssb.no/emner/03/02/alegetj/, published 9. of October 2006), and that we use more money on mental health than earlier (see http://www.ssb.no/vis/emner/03/02/helse_statres/main.html, published 25. of October 2007).
natural and (wo)man-made, both nature and culture. The physical surroundings also influence the social and individual behaviour, all from indicating or deciding movements (streets/roads/paths, walls, hills, rooms, fields) to creating settings and potentialities (mugs and coffee, (dis)comfort, refuge, sensations, marvels). But, the environment is also thought of as being something unto itself; nature is not necessarily seen from a human perspective (though my perspective is necessarily more anthropocentric). In Thailand, the Buddhist worldview makes humans and selves parts of the “overall” – in the idea of the “dhamma” (the law of all nature) there is a larger perspective, a larger truth, and humans do not hold this truth.

At Sørfinnset, nature is also given a particular place, in the coastal culture people are used to the sea being “greater than (wo)man”, and the hard, cold climate demands a certain respect to survive – at least in the old days. Further, relations to animals are accentuated; Buddhism includes animals in its reincarnation system, placing most animals lower than humans, but nevertheless including them in the “chain of life” that we all belong to. And, animals have a place in projects as life companions: In Thailand, dogs live at Umong, and one of the Norwegian artists, Søssa Jørgensen, has a horse that she brings to Sørfinnset in the summers. Jørgensen’s horse and other horses owned by a local inhabitant become part of the Sørfinnset School / the nord land setting, and discussions around animals and animals’ rights are brought up.

Environmental and physical aspects are included in ideological and spiritual structures that seek ecological or sustainable living. To live sustainably, however, is viewed differently from, for example, urban perspectives and rural perspectives – for the artists, it is a point to keep the principles open, while of course risking offending someone when they make certain choices. One art critic, for example, got a tough ride when she was witnessing the killing of a seal “in her honour”. Hunting moose and seal is quite common in the North of Norway, and can certainly be said to be a part of a “natural living”, while hunting and killing in general might be seen as barbaric by more urban animal rights fighters and by Buddhists. There are also disagreements regarding what sustainability is when it comes to the killing of, for example, wolves in Norway: Farmers and people living in the countryside tend to be more positive towards the killing of wolves that eat their stock and threaten their children, while city-living activists hold that the preservation of the biological multitude is more important than the lives of a few sheep. Both sides might be said to have good arguments based on sustainability.

310 Ref. Peter Harvey, op. cit.
(human and animal, now and in the future). In the ‘land’ projects it is a point to see both sides and make them meet – even if total agreement is not possible, perhaps compromises can be reached. Perhaps then more human ways of slaughtering and treating animals are combined with the actual relation to them, meaning preserving their environment while living in a relation to and of them. Here one can speak of more or less sustainable co-existences; a longer relation to the animal combined with a better treatment might be preferred over quick breeding and fast slaughter. The rapid development of contagious diseases that we have seen several places, for example the Creutzfeldt-Jakob or “mad cow” disease, is an obvious argument for better conditions, which would serve both animals and humans. From an anthropocentric perspective it is a simple fact that healthier animals provide healthier food for humans. However, with reference to Arne Næss, I also want to emphasize the right of the animal itself, as well as a general respect for all life and nature, without saying that all organisms are equal.

The position of food as physical, social and psychological or spiritual is important: The preparation of an animal from the killing to the cooking, and the relation and nearness to this process, are particularly valued in the Norwegian project. Knowing and being near all the chains of the food process make you more aware of how it is produced/provided, and permit ethical and ecological choices towards this process. Usually, in an urban setting, the food-production process seems quite distant from the user/buyer, and it is harder to make ethical choices. Being near the food-production process is also important in the rice and vegetable production in Sanpatong in Thailand. Closeness is important for creating a concrete or real relation to the food (process), and in order to create clean, just and good products. Clean as in non-polluting and renewable, just as in fair trade and good working conditions, and good as in quality and taste of the product. The Norwegian artist Geir Tore Holm holds that if you serve quality, you get quality – meaning, if you treat people well with the food, music, and attention you give them, you get both better people and a better party. This is why he lies awake in the evening thinking about how to bake buns with marzipan or “lefse”-rolls with salmon, or why he tries to persuade the neighbour to engage a real band instead of using a stereo for the summer party. As I interpret Holm, quality in the environment relates to quality in the social and mental relations as well.

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311 Clean, good, just – these are the ambitions of the Slow Food movement – see www.slowfood.com
Environment, nature and physicality are thus given particular weight in the ‘land’ projects. Environmental and physical aspects are seen as valuable in and of themselves, as sensory and aesthetic necessities, but they are also always connected to social and mental structures and aspects – the physical and natural conditions we live by and under influence our personality, sociality and politics. The occupation with sensory matters such as visual art, media and exhibition might also be seen as environmental aspects. The rice field in Thailand is an environmental project in itself, and so are the energy-sources there: Supergas, the battery house, the “bike shower”, where a person treading the bike makes the water pump trough a cable and function like a shower. They strive to use ecological products, compost, they use local herbs in cooking / for medicine, they plant potatoes and try to preserve local history and nature. But, they do not reject technology, or other features like transport that might interfere with a “pure environmentalism”, but which are essential to a social and mental ecology.

The investigation of space as social, physical and spiritual in the ‘land’ projects, like asking the local spirits for permission to build a house, using local materials and workers, having guiding principals such as non-profit but not insisting on them, gives meaning to the concept of ecosophy, based on the ecological sustainability of the environment, as well as that of people. The continuous navigation according to principles such as ecology, non-profit and diversity, while at the same time trying to let go of control and project goals, is, as mentioned, one of the apparent challenges in the ‘land’ projects that is of wider relevance today – it implies a non-moralistic ethicality: Flying to Thailand pollutes, but keeps social relations warm, and thus more sustainable. Here one must discuss the best possible solution – how it can be done, how can love be sent from country to country, how can friendships and collaborations be kept alive? The ‘land’ projects have navigated without obvious prohibitions; when it comes to food, they try to buy ecological products, or even grow it themselves, but other products are not banned. In what concerns the use of technology one is likewise non-prohibitive – one uses the Internet and different highly technological equipment for film, photography and recording, while at the same time experimenting with alternative energy sources at the rice field. Energy is thus both used and produced, the paradox is lived; it is not done to change the entire world or invent new energy forms for the entire planet, it is done to make life conditions sustainable in a certain micro-political environment.
5.3 The Ideal Home – Ecology as Sustainable Ethics

5.3.1 The Ideal Home

The notion of the mobile home as an ideal home can be said to stem from the fifties, from post-World War II and from post-modernity with nomadic and de-situated ideals. The nomadic ideal can thus be seen in relation to anti-fascism, and the devaluation of a privileged belonging tied to race and nation. This re-valuation of nomadism by so-called post-colonial and post-modern theoreticians marks a shift in the status of the vagabond and the “rootless”. Still, for centuries the nomad has been the object of “romantic” dreams of freedom, the lone wanderer in a pact with nature. The romanticized idea of nomadism as freedom from home and things, only being responsible for oneself, has existed since ancient times. Nevertheless, travelling people and cultures have, as mentioned, often been devalued and mistreated – this also relates to the large migrations of people in the world today. As already mentioned, some travel freely seeking to fulfill their dreams, others are forced to leave due to war, famine, flood, etc. This inconsistency in views and feeling on locatedness and dislocation, on the situated and the de-situated, suggests a deep tension in human urges to move, from pain, distress, boredom, and desires to stand still, in happiness, in time, in place, etc. All humans have these urges and desires, more or less of each kind – the mobile home represents these tensions, the ideal home being the awareness of both urges, also representing a more flexible idea of identity, belonging and culture. To belong, to have an origin, is and has been tied to status. Background, family and position, where one is situated in society, supposedly gives you a sense of being or identity. The concept of an ‘ideal home’ could be seen in relation to both aristocratic heritage and to the shepherd’s “carefree” life. Then, even though the nomadic has been idealized and romanticized, the idea of the rooted belonging has been and still is a very strong conception in human life and societies. Geography is used to place people, socially and culturally, and statistics show coherence between place, space and “life quality” – that is, certain situations or socio-spatio-temporal constellations are more sustainable than others.

Rosi Braidotti presents a further post-colonial perspective on Deleuze and Guattari’s theories, arguing in favour of sustainable non-moralistic ethics. Sustainability is a key notion in her ethics, because it points at the sustainability of the relation, and of the power necessarily exerted in all relations. Braidotti’s ecology is based on Guattari’s ecosophy, consisting of at least social, mental and environmental elements, but she underlines the relational aspect and
the need for change even more strongly. She speaks of nomadic politics, “a general ecosophy of the becoming”, which 1) breaks the norm and 2) keeps on moving, not allowing old or new power structures to rigidify, thereby becoming norms. Sustainable ethicality must take the relation as point of departure, and she underlines that a positive view on relationality is not a suppression of conflict: “‘We’ are in this together, but we are not all the same”.312 This could be illustrated through the many “potential conflicts” at the ‘land’ projects; we have different ambitions and backgrounds, different goals and dreams, but we collaborate, work and cook together. The ‘land’ projects convey precisely this heightened feeling of togetherness, of a sociality that is not easy, but still necessary. We are in this life, in this society and on this planet together, which means that we have to collaborate even if we do not agree or like each other.

Wondering about motivations for ethicality, for altruism, Braidotti develops the problem of affect and dynamic, the relation between what “drives us” and what we theoretically see as “correct”. At this point Braidotti discusses Deleuze and Guattari’s paradox of de-territorialization and re-territorialization, the drift towards mobility and the importance of dynamism in power relations, in relation to affect and the wish of finding (new) values to “rest” on. But Braidotti does not want to let us rest; she sees the need for a subject position, but she holds that dislocations are more important than re-locations, and that we should always seek to establish “multiple ecologies of belonging”.313 Braidotti dismisses the need and longing for re-territorialization, admitting it is painful, but holding that it is necessary because according to her, it would lead to a moralistic ethicality if we (re-)attach notions and values, and she searches for a moving, non-moralistic one. The question is whether we can take such continuous dislocations, not as part of a market, but as humans. We live in total flux, but total flux is impossible for human cognition: Notions are gathered and attached, if only for a moment, when we think, write and talk about them.

The notion of an ‘ideal home’ is in some way opposed to non-moralism and de-situatedness, because in terms of ethics, we must have an ideal – not as a principle, but as an area for improvement. We can always do something more fair or less unfair. Having shifted focus towards existence, it is an aim to include other and marginalized existences in one’s proper

312 Rosi Braidotti, op. cit., p. 131.
313 Ibid., p. 267
existence. If the subject is defined as social and ethics as a necessity, the marginalized existence of others concerns each subject directly. Arne Næss says: “Equal right to unfold potentials as a principle is not a practical norm about equal conduct towards all life forms. It suggests a guideline limiting killing, and more generally limiting obstruction of the unfolding of potentialities in others.”314 This is an ideal, but it also stands in a direct relation to praxis. Gregory Bateson discusses flexibility, that is, an ability to change or adapt in relation to human sociality, intellectuality and nature:

I suggest then that a healthy ecology of human civilization would be defined somewhat as follows: A single system of environment combined with human civilization in which the flexibility of the civilization shall match that of the environment to create an ongoing complex system, open-ended for slow change of even basic (hard-programmed) characteristics.315 A problem for the ecologist then, who has flexibility as her highest goal, is that she must insist, even tyrannically, on this flexibility in order for it to persist. Deleuze and Guattari were inspired by Bateson, and their insistence on becoming might be seen in relation to Bateson’s focus on flexibility, an insistence we also find in the philosophy of Rosi Braidotti. Bateson continues: “From all of this it follows that to maintain the flexibility of a given variable, either that flexibility must be exercised, or the encroaching variables must be directly controlled.”316 I am thus continuously returning to the importance of immediate manoeuvring, of singular choice and action: Braidotti criticizes Arne Næss for displaying an in-the-end anthropocentric universalism through his deep ecology; by including all, she says, in a holistic and spiritual manner, man’s mind dominates nature even if it seeks the opposite. An ecosophy must thus be more actively manoeuvred and more willfully fragmented.317

5.3.2 An Ethic of Praxis

In the Oxford English Dictionary online ethics is defined as “The science of morals; the department of study concerned with the principles of human duty.” Ethics in this way has been, and still is, to a large extent, treated as a duty, an obligation, something often applied

314 Næss, op. cit., p. 167.
316 Ibid., p. 511.
317 Braidotti, op. cit., p. 115-117.
involuntarily to humans with negative consequences, such as control and notions of shame. This aura of negativity or concern primarily with the negative aspects of ethics, as obligation or as something needed in case of offence, is pointed out by moral philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen. Ethics, as rules of conduct, as prohibitions, are made to hinder, seldom to enhance. The accusation of moralism is then also one of the most common objections to ethical principles – this is partly why I will emphasize a non-moralistic ethicality here. Certain philosophers emphasize other sides of ethics; Emmanuel Levinas and Knud Ejler Løgstrup both see ethics as something existential, as an undeniable part of sociality and of being human. They speak of an essential inter-humanity that demands engagement – co-existence as co-commitment – it is not a choice or a rule, it is fundamental to existence. Levinas further discusses whether this affects human freedom, not to be able to avoid responsibility, but then also says that that “[t]he free human being is dedicated the Other, no one can be saved without the others.” Sociality and inter-humanity is thus more a fact, a point of departure, than an infliction or a discussion, and ethicality likewise. Existentialist Simone de Beauvoir’s ethics are based on the singular subject and a fight for her freedom; nevertheless she says that the other’s “appeal” necessarily concerns us. This is because our individual projects become meaningful only through others, but this, however, requires that the other individual is free to appeal/respond and that we are likewise. Freedom of subjects as an ethical dimension, as a condition for being able to engage, motivate and help, is thus not only an individual matter, it is a common and collective matter indicating the always ambiguous, paradoxical relation between self and others – this ambiguity constitutes the essence of Beauvoir’s ethics.

Ethics are here thought of in the widest possible way, and could be paralleled with the concept of ecology. Ethics in this context are related to the many actions we perform and choices we make when we interact. When I speak of principles in the following, then, I do not mean rules

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318 Vetlesen, Arne Johan, *Hva er etikk?*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 2007. Following Vetlesen, we will not differ between moral and ethics as is done in other moral philosophical works, rather praxis is used to indicate actions or concrete behaviour, ethics designates reflections on this praxis, but also the praxis itself – as ethics here are tied to the specific and live situation.


320 Levinas, op. cit., p. 110.

of conduct; rather I speak of certain dynamics, actual and ideal. I aim for an ethicality that
does not intend to set any overall moral standard, but instead requests a general morality
applied differently in each situation – *an ethic of praxis*. Making ethics a necessary aspect of
being, it is also a necessary aspect of any human production or practice, also artistic, and like
any human practice it is filled with tensions. As I here try to reintroduce notions of non-
moralistic ethicality in art and performance research, it will be based on elements from the
theories discussed above, particularly aspects of phenomenology, philosophical nomadism
and performativity: 1) *necessity*, 2) *specificity*, 3) *affectivity* and 4) *action or praxis*:

*Necessity* – it is a fundamental and necessary condition for human beings to relate to and care
about other beings, as well as its environment and life conditions in general. This is a holistic
thought based on ecosophy and sustainability that makes ethics ontological.

*Specificity* – each situation is unique and must be considered ethically particular. No general
rules of conduct can be made, only rules of good intention. Uniqueness indicates both
specificity and change – representing a particular constellation, though always new ones.

*Affectivity* – it is always problematic to dismiss or suppress the affective. Affect can be seen
as the drive in existence, as our motivation for life; again, the challenge is to relate the
situated, the affective, with the de-situated, the non-moralistic. The affect is rationally
irrational, and should be seen as a drive for ethicality rather than a threat to it.

*Action/praxis* – ethicality must be thought in praxis, it must be done/communicated and it can
be done/communicated. Doing can thus be ethical in itself, not doing or thinking is, however,
thereby not necessarily considered un-ethical.

An ‘ethic of praxis’ then, is an affective ethicality based on values and actions that refuse to
present norms and definite boarders. Instead, shifting but heartfelt values based on a principle
of sustainability are manoeuvred to constitute a “life-preserving standard”. Further, *The land
foundation* and *Sørfinnset School / the nord land* can, in my eyes, be seen in relation to such
an ethic of praxis based on sustainability – succeeding on some points, failing on others. Their
“live-and-let-live” philosophy also means accepting things that some might find offensive,
and it is therefore impossible to keep everyone at the project, some might fade out, others
might leave in anger. Nevertheless, by not applying any general rules, while still having some
vague goals or guidelines, they judge or evaluate each situation or choice separately, and actually manage to overcome some of these problems in practice. A disagreement at the land foundation, for example, can be discussed thoroughly, making people feel heard even if the opposite choice is made. Constant dialogue and evaluation of all available factors at a given moment seems to be the only way to a sustainable community; even though one might find other and better ways of retaining dialogue than by continuously having long meetings, which, through their, in general, tiring and excluding character, may be far from sustainable.

5.3.3 Ecology as Sustainable and Affective Ethicality
If the concept of the mobile home seeks to describe human culture and existence as drawn between situatedness and de-situatedness, then ecology is the description of the ‘ideal home dynamic’ – that is, a balanced and sustainable multi-faceted existence, a relation that is necessarily mutual and therefore brings forth an ethic of balance, though not of harmony or morality. Ethicality in this concern is about the way of doing, not about what to do – the ecological ethicality does not contain any rules of conduct, only dynamics and guidelines. The actual ethicality is, as mentioned, completely dependent on the specificity and ultimacy of praxis. With reference to thinkers such as Emmanual Levinas and Knud Ejler Løgstrup, ethics is thought of here as something fundamental to human existence, intrinsically related to being, not only “being human”.\(^\text{322}\) Sociality and inter-humanity is thus more a fact, a point of departure, than an infliction or a discussion. The concept of ecology indicates the organic character that any non-moralistic and affective ethicality must have, based on the sustainable balance of subject, community and nature/environment – a perspective that places the problem of the situated and de-situated in an endless, organic mutuality, co-existing, though not harmonically. This is implied in Félix Guattari’s work as well as in the ecosophy of Arne Næss. Ecology is a given, not a choice, but ecology opens for many possible choices, many possible ethicalities. Ethics is not only non-moralistic, it is also affective and non-coherent or discontinuous.\(^\text{323}\)

\(^{322}\) Levinas, op. cit., and Løgstrup, op. cit.

\(^{323}\) Ref. Foucault, section on discourse, Chapter One.
Despite the focus on ethicality and sustainability, I want to stress again that ecology does not indicate a harmonious zone or a conflict free whole, collaboration and co-existence is always conflict of interest and negotiation. It is the complex organization, the possible consideration of “everything” and the finely scaled balance that makes ecology interesting, and that makes it a life perspective where a common work or project can be realized on the basis of, and not by the elimination of, difference. Here also lies a previously mentioned misunderstanding, tied to the mentioned critique of the relational aesthetics by Bishop amongst other things, that the relational suppresses antagonism and conflict: In reality, all relations have to be based on and consist of difference and disagreement. In ecology one of the defined forms of interactions, mutualism, which actually means that both parties are profiting, is seen as reciprocal exploitation rather than cosy partnership.\textsuperscript{324} Altruism and collaboration is then something one must choose to believe in, or at least to believe that we are able to do things that are not for direct personal gain. Further, altruism and personal gain often combine, making the borders between them blurred and inseparable – to do something for others can for example often be of gain to oneself.\textsuperscript{325} We are probably better off seeing both partnership and exploitation whenever we study a relation: It is an ethical duty to try to trace the exploitation of a major power that leads to unfairness and inequality – but to deny and detest egoism and personal gain is not only unrealistic, it is unsustainable. As the tripartite ecology suggests; suppression of the subject or individual organism does not create a sustainable community; on the contrary the subject and the community need to be in balance to co-exist, and there must therefore be room for both. This is always sought in the ‘land’ projects, though not always managed.\textsuperscript{326}

5.4 Summing Up
Moving through the fields of art and performance theory, I have sought to analyze two experimental practices with relation to both fields – I have also sought to show that these

\textsuperscript{324} Begon, Townsend & Harper, op.cit., p. 381
\textsuperscript{326} From the section on method: I have mentioned certain problems concerning social relations in the ‘land’ projects, however, due to scientific guidelines on ethics I cannot give examples of personal or social problems. Even if these where anonymised, they would be possible to trace as the milieu is after all quite small.
practices work, rework and materialize some of the most pressing issues of contemporary culture, namely the relation between the situated and the de-situated, and an influence on our senses of belonging. Narrowing down the material to only two, though expansive, practices, it has been possible to examine “micro-factors” concerning specific places and single individuals. On the basis of specificity and pragmatism, I have underlined the need for non-normative relational theory as well as practice; however, I have also stressed the importance of specificity and belonging. Having spoken of *assemblage* in art theory, *fissures* in philosophy and *community/communion/communitas* in performance theory, I have sought to move towards a scientific and practical-theoretical position that embodies relationality. The non-moralistic ethicality of ecology suggests such a practical-theoretical situated de-situatedness – ecology is the science of relations, and the importance or influence of these relations upon the subject-plant-animal-mineral; that is, relations between biotic, abiotic and socio-cultural elements. Ecology is a relevant, important and perhaps obvious principle today, both because of its organic qualities that need to be included in theory, and because of its ethical qualities that represent a choice that has to be made in today’s over-consuming society. Most obviously, ecology relates to nature and environment, indicating that the world and our society includes more than human faiths – nature, animals and atmosphere must be taken into consideration to the best for all life and conditions for life on this planet. However, using philosopher Félix Guattari’s ‘three ecologies’, I hold that ecology is an apt concept for considering sustainability in social and mental relations and conditions as well. The ‘land’ projects work with the relationality between these fields, drawing on all of them simultaneously – they can thus be seen as activating or working with environmental, social and mental ecologies at once, found in their focus on nature and agriculture, in the social spirit and collaborative efforts, and in the non-structured space left open for the individual, for example in artworks, performances, discussions and meditation. Environment, nature and physicality are given particular weight in the ‘land’ projects: Environmental and physical aspects are seen as valuable in themselves as sensory and aesthetic necessities, but also always connected to social and mental structures and aspects – the physical and natural conditions we live by and under influence our personality, sociality and politics. Further, ecology presents, blurs with and develops some of the possible qualities of performativity as well as the mobile home: The concept of ecology displays hypercomplexity (diversity), combined situatedness and de-situatedness (relationality and paradoxality), processuality (organic, changing), simultaneity (balance/equality) and virtuality/potentiality.
Ecology thus introduces a possible ethical perspective through the principles of sustainability, balance and immediacy – constantly changing conditions demand instant and immediate navigation. Inspired by Rosi Braidotti’s search for non-moralism, ecology can be seen as an overriding perspective that allows us to keep the idea of the subject and individual disagreement into the functioning community and sustainable relation. The performative subject of the ‘land’ projects is singular and non-unitary, though fundamentally collective and social. The ecosophy of Næss suggests such a “non-isolatable”, collective subject, while Guattari holds that the non-unitary and singular subject is a precondition for human ecology. The ecosophy developed here thus takes elements from both Guattari and Næss – as the singular individual is fundamentally social, sociality, as well as dependence, is a necessity. However, ecology must follow the single individual, because the single individual holds the key to general development – each element, each singularity, shapes and influences both micro-political and macro-political movements. This relation between the subject and its social, mental and physical environment does, however, continue to represent a problem or field of tension. Braidotti also points out the problematic female position in an ecosophy based on ontological factors – existence as we know it from philosophy and literature tends to be white and male; we must thus always remember the actual singularity, which includes social and racial struggles of groups such as blacks and women.

Ecology represents the dependency between the many elements of the complexes studied, and the ethicality lies in the necessary sustainability of this dependency in order for the complexes to “survive”. And I underline that this dependency is not harmonious or smooth, instead it is tension-filled, yet balancing. Ecology, sustainability and mutuality are here thus not about a turn towards nature and self-regulation, away from control – sustainability is about an active, continuous balancing of nature/environment, community and individuals. Suppression of the subject or individual organism does not create a sustainable community, on the contrary the subject and the community need to be in balance to co-exist, and there must be room for both. Based on these considerations and the previously presented theories, I finally suggested an ethic of praxis characterized by necessity, specificity, affectivity and action or praxis – that is, a particular emphasis on the (anti-)performative and immediate character of ethics, as this is what might make it non-moralistic.
Later I stood in the hallway of the school; I felt a bit lonely, a bit tired of people. An old man with a trucker hat sat on a couch in the hallway. He started talking to me, he was Pite-Sami and his name was Knut Sundsfjord. He told me that the Samis had been discriminated against in the region of Gildeskål some fifty years ago, and he said that the building of the gamme had resulted in the stirring up of old feelings. He had talked with a member of the regional council, and he wanted an apology for the sins of the past. He pointed to a flat spot on the nearest mountain where he said the Samis had once cultivated a small patch of land. The mountain is called “The Star”. I looked up at the mountain top and over at Knut Sundsfjord, who is named after the nearest fjord. He smiled at me; he was a cool old Sami. He had even been to Thailand in his youth when he was sailing the seven seas …

327 Passage from my stay at Sørfinnset in the summer 2005.
6.1 Practical-theoretical Dimensions

In Chapter One, I had the following initial commentaries and inquiries: 1) In order to access the material, the role of the researcher must to some extent be blurred into that of the participant, creator – this brings in anthropological problems and problems of perspective. 2) The interference with other fields, activities and practices requires a re-thinking of the field's theory, or the use of theory from other disciplines' spheres. This of course, is scientifically "dangerous", and contains epistemological risk as the entire line of thinking is de-situated. 3) Through various thematizations and actualizations of the situated and the de-situated, the practices bring forth existential tensions, tensions that are apparent in 20th century theory. That is to say, by playing out or materializing certain problems tied to situatedness and de-situatedness, the local and the global, they impel the use of theories that are often perceived to be contradictory (phenomenology and post-structuralism), as well as a far more pragmatic and relational approach than most theories convey. And further: The 'land' projects in general might be said to have materialized certain contemporary conditions as they perceive them, and it is my hypothesis that a central thematic structure in these contemporary conditions is the relation between the situated and the de-situated, and not only as relations between the local and the global. The tensions in relation to art and performance are here considered on at least three levels, in relation to 1) theory/discourse, 2) subject/sociality and 3) place/situation. All of these levels exceed the artwork or project in itself as they include the theoretical context in which they work, the various subjects experiencing (such as me), and the physical and social environment surrounding the projects – all external elements (though I cannot possibly trace all of them here) are seen as potentially relevant or influential to the projects.328

Thus, during the course of this dissertation, several aims have been laid out: One tied to the perceived opposition between situatedness and de-situatedness, another tied to the specific practices and their position in art/performance discourse, a third tied to the sociality of the projects and its performative characteristics, and a fourth tied to the possibilities of a non-moralistic ethic of praxis based on ecology and sustainability – all aspects tied to the difficult position and role of the actively participating researcher. The aims stretch from contemporary culture and philosophy to more concrete problems in art and performance theory, but from time to time they are drawn together and seen as one. I hope to show, finally, that all

328 Text from section 1.3 Research Questions, pp. 34 and 38.
elements, from philosophy, to trivial observations and art/performance theory, come together in a contemporary cultural perspective. This perspective in its turn emphasizes the importance of performative aspects such as immediate sociality (seen in relation to senses of belonging) in contemporary culture (both art and life), and further its relation to more general existence and sustainable ethicality. The importance of these immediate social conditions is stressed for art and performance as well as for life in general; it is always the present ‘now’ that constitutes the ultimate ground for our choices and actions.

In the following, I will sum up the main points from the previous discussions, try to elaborate on some of these discussions, and finally suggest conclusions: The general complex of problems tied to the situated and the de-situated has been tied to the performative specificity and the sociality of the ‘land’ projects. Ultimately, I want to suggest that the creative and social strategies employed by two relatively small experimental performative practices can have a further importance as examples or existences also outside the fields of art and performance studies. In the perspective of broad aesthetics, as well as in the concept of the mobile home, this relation between system and non-system, art and non-art, is always there and always dependent on the perceived opposite. The ‘land’ projects in this way materialize the performative paradox we have indicated; as freedom from discourse and art on the one side, being defined by and finding essential meaning in it on the other. In this last chapter, I thus continue to wonder how we can keep a notion of stability and matter, while we continue to move with radical values of instability and equality in power structures, and with processuality and sustainability in creation. This problem is partially insolvable, but to act on the problem, to “try it” on different levels, is part of the attitude promoted through the two ‘land’ projects and in this thesis.

6.1.1 Post-Modern Values

In terms of scientific position and theoretical perspectives, the post-modern understanding of meaning as always fluctuating and of poly-perspectivity as a necessary part of any human discourse indicate the need for a greater flexibility also in scientific systems. But this constant dislocation of theory and meaning has left us strained, longing for certainty and neat boxes to put things in – this is, broadly put, the theoretical problem of the situated and the de-situated.
that I have indicated in this thesis.\textsuperscript{329} The idea or experience of a current flux in the world society is indicated by attempts to re-establish lost (or “pre-post-modern”) values of canons in art and research; at the same time we continue to travel, expand and internationalize in art, theory, politics and education.\textsuperscript{330} This thesis is written as a furthering of post-modern “value-free” and fluctuating thought, in a time where precisely values are reintroduced and reevaluated and often presented as opposed to post-modern “fragmentation”. I wish to underline the importance of the post-modern, anti-authoritarian project, while investigating and reevaluating the local and the situated. In connection with this, it should be remembered that there are also some clear values or motors in post-modern or Western secular thinking linked to democracy, freedom, and equality. And further, that these values/motors, amongst others, spring from important historical events such as the French and Russian revolutions and the two world wars. These are thus values with a strong historical and societal character, and with deep roots in politics, philosophy, literature and art.

Insisting on the important revolutionary values of equality and freedom of speech, of secularity and tolerance, one could ask, however, whether some Western societies have gone too far in their “value-freedom”, and instead become all-accepting, de-valuated – as they have been accused of in the conflict about the Muhammad-caricatures.\textsuperscript{331} Can the value of freedom of speech be regarded as holy when one seeks to abolish holiness altogether? These questions as such are not the issue here, but the Muhammad conflict has shown how the located, traditional, religious and value-oriented culture is set up against the Western, “value-free”, global and progressive society. Not because Western or European societies have no values, or that other cultures have more values, or that other cultures have no humanist values – but because the Western public, media room, including the Internet, have made it seem as if there

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{329} Ref. Giddens, op. cit.
\textsuperscript{330} During the first decade of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, several canons or lists have been made by newspapers and magazines, particularly in Norway and Denmark, claiming the 10, 50, 100, most important artworks, scholars, artists, etc. In Norway, the cultural newspaper Morgenbladet made a special edition claiming the 12 most influential artworks after the Second World War, and at the same time indicating a need to re-establish more “stable” values and criteria of quality.
\textsuperscript{331} With reference to the massive reactions in the Middle East, when the Danish newspaper Jyllandsposten printed caricatures of the prophet Mohammad on 30\textsuperscript{th} of September 2005. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyllands-Posten_Muhammad_caricatures_controversy Similar events occurred later when Swedish artist Lars Vilks exhibited drawings of the prophet. Ref. also commentary, “Den sekulære ekstremismen”, by Mohammad Usman Rana in Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten 25\textsuperscript{th} of February 2008.
\end{quote}
are no limits, no nos. Faced with accusations of value-freedom, while at the same time claiming the status as only true humanist culture, Western society thus needs to revise its relation between value-free and value-less, and rethink the idea of itself in relation to the status of others.332

6.1.2 Practical-Theoretical Immediacies
By broadening our aesthetic and historical perspectives, we acknowledged that the avant-garde (historical and neo-) was not merely an art project or a project of form, but also life projects and life form. The ‘land’ projects have thus not been analyzed as mere art projects, but more generally as ways of organizing and performing life and culture, but on the basis of and in relation to art and performance discourse. Art theory with its preoccupation about the object and its traditional “viewer-object-artist” structure, does not provide the necessary tools to understand experimental practices with weight on sociality, but since I began writing this thesis, several works that deal with this have appeared.333 In order to understand the ‘land’ projects it has thus been necessary to draw on several science-theoretical perspectives (phenomenological and post-structuralist), combining aspects of situatedness and de-situatedness in theory, as well as expanding the field of aesthetics itself to include all sensuousness and merge art and performance theory. Performance theory takes the social situation as its primary object of research, thus fusing art with sociality and exemplifying the important combination of discourse and non-discourse in relation to the projects in question. Dwight Conquergood, Richard Schechner, Victor Turner, and Erika Fischer-Lichte have all emphasized the discourse-fusing object of performance and performance theory.

However, more general and philosophical theories have also been used to address the questions on situatedness/de-situatedness, belonging and ethicality – here I have emphasized philosophical nomadism, performative processuuality, and phenomenological situatedness as important perspectives. I have also used certain sociological references providing a societal or institutional perspective: Anthony Giddens emphasized the need for a subject position and perceived values in a global and media-oriented world.

333 For example Ina Blom’s On the Style Site, op. cit., and Kester H. Grant’s Conversation Pieces, op. cit.
Most apparent, however, has perhaps been the relational focus held in the more or less obvious combinations of theories: As Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari represent relational thinking in a philosophical context, I have further emphasized the relationship between relational and situated thinking, and underlined the need for non-normativity rather than principles – this balance between freedom and rules, pragmatism and norms, has been addressed on several occasions in relation to both philosophy and trivial experiences. There has thus been a constant oscillation between theory and praxis; performance theory works with the social situation and notions of actions in immediacy and the ‘land’ projects translate this theory into praxis/practice. Further, the ‘land’ projects – as I mentioned in relation to the Thai-Norwegian weddings and Michel Foucault’s concept of discourse – give meaning and content to post-modern and abstract theory by showing what specificity, breach, unpredictability, etc., mean in actual and concrete situations. The constant emphasis on relationality and the apparent connection between theory and praxis make problems become live and three-dimensional; there is a continuous feedback loop between practice and theory that creates dependence and inter-relatedness – together, they become three-dimensional practical-theoretical spaces fused in immediacy. This three-dimensional thinking and simultaneous practical and theoretical orientation meets the theoretical challenge set up initially – however, it mainly tells us that we have to broaden our perspectives; we still have to evaluate each immediacy specifically.

6.1.3 The Mobile Home

The ‘mobile home’ was presented as a concept that portrayed mutuality and dependency between perceived oppositions, and further the relationality of these oppositions. The mobile home is seen as the actual complexity of live and experimental practices, and the term itself is taken from project titles, thus also indicating how these artists perceive their practices or how they want them to be perceived. The mobile home can be thought of as a theme or tension in the ‘land’ projects; representing a turn towards local values and traditions, they also keep the “mobile perspective”, the de-rooted and global ambitions through international collaboration and networks. From the mobile home, I drew one of the first conclusions; the co-dependence of contradictions and further the instability of the contradictions themselves. This means that the conceptualizations of the other and the same are co-dependent; to be in the “other” is to experience the “same”, because one has to have an idea of self or sameness in order to
recognize or identify otherness. The local, the known, the same, might indeed first be constituted when it is faced with an experience or idea of the other – the other is thus constitutive for the same. Likewise, experiences of sameness are dependent on ideas of otherness, and the concepts are continuously interchanged. The co-dependence of perceived contradictions can be found on several levels in the ‘land’ projects; from the mentioned practical-theoretical complex, through the art/non-art discussion, to the tension between the global and the local, as well as in the relation between everyday life and arranged events/exhibitions.

A central challenge presented by the mobile home is thus to keep several thoughts in mind at the same time: Place is both given and produced, systems both exist and are transcended, the ‘land’ projects can be seen as art and not – and when these opposites are related to each other, as they are in the performative collapse of binary oppositions, relations instead of differences are made visible. Miwon Kwon’s conclusion from her book on the “history” of site-specificity in art presents important insight:

Thus, it is not a matter of choosing sides – between models of nomadism and sedentariness, between space and place, between digital interfaces and the handshake. Rather, we need to be able to think the range of the seeming contradictions and our contradictory desires for them together; to understand, in other words, seeming oppositions as sustaining relations ... This means addressing the uneven conditions of adjacencies and distances between one thing, one person, one place, one thought, one fragment next to another, rather than invoking equivalences via one thing after another.\textsuperscript{334}

How then, can we move and be moved at the same time? How can we be both subject and subjected, both mobile and home? “We need to be able to think the range of the seeming contradictions and our contradictory desires for them together.”\textsuperscript{335} – and this is what I have attempted to reflect through the concept of mobile home: Is it possible to accept some constructs as facts and still be able to see them as constructs? And could we be willing to see that the affective and trivial are not necessarily affective and trivial? Rather, it is what we cannot understand from our current positions. The trivial has a particular position in this concern, because it represents the unimportant that holds defining and decisive power – and how can we ever become able to find the unimportant? Again, it is our goal to catch a

\textsuperscript{334} Miwon Kwon, op. cit., p. 166.

\textsuperscript{335} Ibid.
contradictory, yet obvious and even natural dependence of micro-, macro- and in-between levels. However, as it is hidden in the personal, specific and random structures of everyday life, we must wait until it occurs.

The mobile home displays a “simultaneous dialectic” where both poles are conveyed at the same time – the ecological perspective puts these poles in further relation to other poles, and continues a movement or oscillation between micro- and macro-levels, between trivialities and philosophy. Ecology as concept and field of research bases itself on a holistic perspective that traces influences, relations, and transferences – differences and individuality are made visible, but through a fundamental relationality. Aspects are balanced by the principle of ecology, but ecology is not thought of as a natural condition of non-control and self-regulation. Rather it represents an active and constant participation and interference with its many parts. An important element in this concern is immediacy, representing a constant adjustment and regulation to the current situations to avoid normativity and ‘rigidification’.336

The ecosophical perspective based on Guattari’s three ecologies provides a way to combine nature and environment with human physicality, sociality and mentality; this is of great importance in understanding the ‘land’ projects where the aesthetic is broad and includes all sensuousness, making life itself the end result and art its by-product, not the other way around.337 Any human praxis requires certain guidelines, preferably non-moralistic ones that include the singularity of each individual – here I have suggested an ethic of praxis on the basis of the presented theory and in relation to ecosophy, emphasizing necessity, specificity, affectivity and action or praxis – that is, a particular emphasis on the (anti-)performative and immediate character of the ethical.

6.2 The ‘land’ projects – Performative Elements in a Broad Aesthetic

6.2.1 Places of Heart and Mind

Returning to the material itself: Sørfinnset School / the nord land is located in a small village quite far from any big city, and the “land” that the land foundation refers to is a rice field located in the small village of Sanpatong, some thirty minutes outside of Chiang Mai. As

336 Term used by Deleuze and Guattari, Rhizome, op. cit.
337 Ref. Groys, Art Power, op. cit., on art documentation and biopolitics.
opposed to urbanization, this could be seen as expressing a movement out of the cities, towards small towns and nature. The weight put on traditional cooking/food and crafts, though combined with advanced communicational technology and living, also indicates this awareness of human need for situatedness, for traditions and belonging. Further, both projects can be seen in relation to spatial investigations in art related to concepts or terms such as *in situ* or ‘site-specific’, as well as to social and non-material projects developed both inside and outside art contexts during the 20th and 21st centuries. Both ‘in situ’ and ‘site-specific’ indicate particular relations to the space or place where the art unfolds – one aspect can be the production or relation of the artwork or projects to a particular physical/geographical environment (and often a movement out of the museum, gallery, theatre, stage – or a play with institutional and site-specific factors within the museum, theatre). Another aspect is the social elements and situations the concepts of space and place have come to include, as discussed in Chapter Two. The ‘land’ projects are situated geographically, but have several locations and an international public/base of participants. They are concerned with local culture and rituals such as cooking, meditation, nature, agriculture, craft traditions, and in general with culture’s many material expressions. However, they are also and perhaps mostly concerned with the many social aspects of art, organization and life; how to welcome people, how to present themselves honestly, to achieve their projects and develop new ones, to collaborate within the group, to tackle difficulties related to personal relation, economical issues, and more. All of these aspects are included in their relation to a specific space or place as consisting of physical, social and mental elements – a tripartite division that fits well with Félix Guattari’s three ecologies.

The ‘land’ projects have neither situatedness nor de-situatedness as specific goals, but their practices represent a constant negotiation and combination of the two. Situated in the north of Norway, one and a half hour from the town of Bodø, *Sørfinnset School / the nord land* is both situated in a locality as well as de-situated in terms of centrality and the art market. Combining and intertwining Thai and Norwegian culture, local inhabitants and global artworkers, both perspectives are seen and acted out. *The land foundation* has certain ambitions or goals, of agriculture, culture and meditation; the tripartite division is both intended and random – it is made in order to avoid two oppositions, to escape the “either/or”, the damned dualisms – but at the same time it can be more, or sometimes less. Actions and attitudes such as the involvement in Pimjai Intamoon’s Community Health Centre also show a broader and more profound engagement in social and societal issues, both in the ultimate
locality and elsewhere. Art becomes a way of life and a way of socializing, making sociality better. Sarah De Wilde, a Belgian self-invited participant at the land foundation, emphasized this aspect of social engagement in Thai culture in general: To a large extent lacking official social systems – or perhaps one could rather say that the society is built up around local and immediate social systems, because this responsibility has never really been transferred to the public sphere or official politics – Thai culture depends more than Norwegian on social networks and mobilizations of the locality, the “people around you”.  

The ‘land’ projects are places of both heart and mind – art might have brought the diverse and not so diverse (“art people”) participants together, but so have other and more important and immediate issues. At the sculptural Biennale in Oslo, Holm and Jørgensen displayed the small bronze house transported from the other side of the world, made by the children and Saengpolsith after the tsunami catastrophe in 2005/2006. Holm and Jørgensen hung documents from the tsunami memorial contest on the wall, while instead suggesting a new school in the damaged village of Batticalao – they also showed a video with an interview of the mother of one of their Norwegian friends who died in the tsunami. Artistically, this represents a very composite strategy – using text, moving picture and sculpture. They mixed classical bronze with contemporary video, and attached the communication to authorities concerning the application for a school, and the refusal of the proposal. Thus, they mix media and genres, they mix precious/classical with modern and poor, they combine purely formal strategies with political and social ones, they collaborate with other artists as well as addressing bureaucracy, and they propose a concrete societal contribution to a terrible situation. Further, they include a personal element, showing the mother of their friend grieving for their dead friend – in that way also working on their personal inner feelings of loss. One could object however, that each of these many elements are not perfect; they do not constitute complete formal strategies of high quality, and this might weaken their possible impact on viewers, authorities and others. Nevertheless, they make up a whole, a combination of multitudes or a rhizome, presented as genuine actions and manoeuvrings in a contemporary immediacy of formal and social tools possible or available.

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338 Interview on questionnaire with Sarah De Wilde, March 2008.
6.2.2 Sustainable (Anti-)Performativity

In order to understand the hybrid and social “art” projects that evolve today, one has to address the broad and performative aesthetics they require. *The land foundation* and *Sørfinnset School / the nord land* are complex and multi-dimensional practices that work with sociality as well as with psychological and formal matters – they are collaborations that balance choice and action, abstraction and physicality. The ‘land’ projects involve many meetings, many exchanges, and thus put a certain strain on sociality – as I discussed in relation to Claire Bishop’s critique in Chapter Three, and it remains a question whether sociality can be “produced” within a specific context. However, the projects cannot be said to seek to produce sociality or dialogue in such a way; as suggested they are reminiscent of regular sociality, with awkwardness and professionalism alongside friendship and love. Thus, I cannot say that the ‘land’ projects consist of close or distant social bonds, or that there is a state of meetings, of exceptions, because that depends on who you are and where you stand. I can neither say that they are manipulated, staged, nor that they are more real – I cannot say that the sociality is more intense than elsewhere, or different in any way. But, there seems to be 1) a higher degree of awareness of one’s own practice, a continuous discussion on actions and project, which includes reflexivity, but indicates a more general and open awareness and not the “doubling” of actions in specific situations, 2) where collectivity is a “pre-defined” or necessary value in itself, and 3) there seems to be a certain expressed and unexpressed “common drive” between the participants, an idea of common values or project hold them together.

There is a strong conception of a collective, non-unitary subject in the two ‘land’ projects – the individual is social, and sociality is individual. This gives room for a simultaneous acknowledgement of the two aspects, a non-opposition between personal and collective. There are necessarily tensions in the projects – a person can be opposed to another person, to a group or an issue. However, the subject and collective in general are not put in opposition to each other in the projects, because they intertwine in praxis; a personal issue can be included or become a project goal or vice versa. The project as such does not differ between what is good for the individual and what is the strict ambition of the project – a trivial, personal issue might influence the project direction or execution, or the other way around, the performative sociality collapses these oppositions between body and mind, subject and collective, place and dis-place. The mutual constitutive dependency of perceived oppositions that has been
conceptualized in the mobile home is a good description of sociality as it is played out in immediacy in the ‘land’ projects – can it also be said to explain their performative dynamic?

This implies that perceived differences in immediate socialities are mutually dependent as well: When we face the other, the same, the almost same, the almost other, or are just indifferent, we develop or constitute ourselves and others; we actually become with others in immediacy. This we is further an expression of belonging or identity, of likes and dislikes, but always of identification and placement, or territorialization. At Sørfinnset there is a clearer statement of preservation of an already existing community than in Thailand – but both aim at making a local community sustainable, and there is no other purpose than making this community last. The performative sustainability of the two ‘land’ projects thus combines aspects of situatedness and de-situatedness: There is a sense of purpose without a clear purpose, there is a notion of collectivity but that is made dependent on the subject. Sociality is preconditioned, but never solutions or actions, and actions and immediacy are central, but are always also seen in relation to the succession of events they constitute.

The (anti-)performative aspect of the ‘land’ projects combines the performative qualities set up by Fischer-Lichte; continuous feedback, boundary break-down and liminality or transformation, as well as the immediacy indicated by Artaud. The term ‘anti-performative’ is a statement to underline the paradoxical character of the performative, including both live quality and performed or staged behaviour: The performed as and when performed can be perceived as both real and un-real – the performance in itself is paradoxical in its nature. Fischer-Lichte draws these aspects together, saying that they both ultimately emphasize the potentiality of the moment and the performance, which is an important point. Nevertheless, as I was analyzing the ‘land’ projects, the paradox became more and more apparent: The ‘land’ projects are all about the regular, immediate, opposition collapsing qualities of performance, but they refuse the staged and extraordinary – the anti-performative thus underlines certain performative qualities while it negates others. The ‘land’ projects might be seen as “slightly out of the ordinary”, still the main drive of their sociality lies in the ordinary, the trivial. Certain aspects of performance theory insist on the extraordinary, at the same time the performative in these projects cannot be separated from the ordinary, from life itself. This crux must be the source of tension, the point of collapse, which makes what is conceived as direct oppositions fit into the overall framework as (in)dependent and organic entities, from scripted scenarios, exaggerations and excess, to regular sociality such as being, eating,
talking, waiting. As the ‘land’ projects stand out as a succession of immediacies, both immediacy and duration is made apparent, but it is perhaps mostly a reminder that we always exist in immediacy and that there is always another now to come. As we turn towards existence however, one might ask if the staged and the real are not the next binary opposition to collapse: *Performativity is at its best a super-sensitive navigation of an immediate, but far-reaching sociality where the close, the unimportant, the local, is put in its necessary relation with the formal, acknowledged and global, and where times and places collapse into the far-reaching goals of existence.*

### 6.2.3 The Idea of the ‘lands’: Place/Space as Potentiality

Now summing up the two projects in simpler terms, as having both situated and de-situated aspects or qualities – we find a certain situatedness in that:

1) they are tied to particular places; Sørfinnset, Chiang Mai, Sanpatong, Oslo, etc.
2) they relate to particular people.
3) they relate to particular ideas such as sustainability of environment, sociality and mentality through meditation, agriculture, creativity and collaboration.
4) they seek knowledge of local traditions and history, try to revive/preserve it through seminars, *lefse*-baking, *gamme*-building, *jordkjeller*-building, meditation, curry-cooking, local Buddhist traditions and rituals, teacher/artist living with pupils/assistants/volunteers as in Thai tradition, connection between mental and physical processes as in Asian medicine.

And a de-situatedness in that:

1) they relate to several places at once: Sørfinnset, several of the villages nearby, Chiang Mai, several of the villages nearby, Sanpatong, Oslo, etc. – in addition to all the places represented through the many nationalities of people participating, for example Japan, Belgium, France, USA, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Thailand, etc.
2) they do not insist on a specific group of people, they let new people in all the time
3) they do not insist on the particularity of their ideas, but are open to suggestions, discussions and different ways of doing things. For example, they try to buy organic food or home-made food, but if the circumstances dictate it, for example because of a guest or a collective plan, they would buy and eat something else.
As situated and de-situated, the projects contain a multitude of relations and paradoxes that co-exist and are co-displayed. This makes the projects examples of *simultaneity of contexts*, because they are all of these things combined, *at the same time*. One could also, however, as previously suggested by amongst others Fischer-Lichte and Hammer, isolate different frames or settings, and see these as co-existing and co-acting, though as separable and particular contexts. I have here however chosen to focus on the open, simultaneous and existential perspective – the idea of the ‘land’ projects, as I perceive it, lies in their broad potentiality – they do not lock the artists, participants or locals in particular frames or behaviours; they seek the “generative” through the existential, non-categorized specificity. The projects are *potent, un-realized*, because they insist on openness and inclusion – this does not mean that they have superhuman powers to keep full harmony and collaboration at all times, but that they potentially can do anything within their practices, even engage in war. War is, however, as far from their current practice as you can get; it is mentioned here merely to illustrate the potential of this potentiality. I have previously developed the notion of potentiality with reference to Giorgio Agamben as something inherent in human existence. Agamben traces the term back to Aristotle, who makes a distinction between “existing” and “generic” potentiality; the existing potentiality comes through knowledge or skills and is a more decided potentiality acquired through education and training. The generic potentiality is more vague, and reminiscent of the child, an “uncoloured palette”. Agamben focuses on the existing potentiality, which he develops into “… *Existence as potentiality*. It is a potentiality that is not simply the potential to do this or that thing, but potential to not-do, potential not to pass into actuality.”  

Potentiality is thus something pre-existing, something that is undone, and it is in fact precisely that it is *undone* that characterizes it. Once it passes into actuality it has lost its creative strength. “To be potential means: to be one’s own lack, *to be in relation with one’s own incapacity* … What is truly potential is thus what has exhausted all its impotentiality in bringing it wholly into the act as such.”

The ‘land’ projects are, with their many social encounters and their different (meta)physical production, projects built around such existential potentiality in space and time. However, in Thailand, and probably in the rest of the world, the idea of a concrete land in itself, of an agricultural property, indicates security as well as possibilities – it is an insurance of life.

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conditions and potentiality for development, projects, creation. Even Sørfinnset, which is not at all a property, is still very much tied to the concrete and earthly manifestations and activities it consists of, such as the particular and beautiful landscape, the school building where groups and guests can stay, the garden where they grow herbs, vegetables and where they compost organic material, the outdoor bonfire-place where we sit in the evenings. Both ‘land’ projects strongly indicate a “return” to locatedness, situatedness and concreteness in a global and fast-moving world – at the same time, the cultural and abstract values, the de-situatedness in multi-cultural non-normativity is held high. As part of a broader aesthetics, the ‘land’ projects’ sensuous and social character come together, the physical situatedness is combined with the (aesthetical) existence, and the relational structure becomes a potential, a ground for life-unfolding actions. Using the “logic” of the ‘land’ projects, then, we could imagine an aesthetic of navigation, including all sensory landscapes, based on immediacy and choice (pre-established or not), through a sea of singularities, of specific and blurred possibility or potentiality.

6.3 Concluding
6.3.1 A Neo-Existentialism?
Now suggesting some final viewpoints and concluding: A central challenge in this project has been to draw the many layers related to art, performance, practice and theory together, and to show their dependency on and relevance to each other in the dealing with the two ‘land’ projects – it has been my aim to show how such a combination of perspectives is in fact required in order to make sense of the ‘land’ projects, perhaps also of contemporary sociality. The observation of certain contemporary practices as well as my personal intuitions was the point of departure – to those intuitions and observations, I have added and developed several old and new concepts, proposed an ethicality that goes with and naturally arises from it, and tried to show the relevance of this ethicality in relation to both art and life. I have therefore insisted on keeping a foot in the “real world”, and not diving into a traditional analysis of practice, but instead constantly measured the layers of reality and experience, theory and concepts, up against each other. This is partly because the relation to the “real world”, to actual and trivial problems, is so apparent in the practices themselves, and partly because this is where the practices, as well as I, find motivation for action, theory and change altogether.
The general attitude of the ‘land’ projects could be said to be: “Life is more important than art – that is why art is important”. Art in the ‘land’ projects is always secondary to the people who make or constitute the art, it is secondary to their health and well-being and to all the real situations the projects include. This, in my eyes, is what makes them such important practices, because they put life first, in the practical, ethical and philosophical understanding of the word. The existential perspective has been apparent throughout the text, as an impossible yet decisive element – it marks a point where references have been set aside and where a new motivation is sought. When the existential dimension is called upon, it resembles the dynamic of the (anti-)performative: Binary oppositions collapse, theory and practice melt together, and a certain pragmatic of practice makes the choices of action infinite and analysis becomes difficult. The existential perspective underlines an ontological or life-political side that poses everything in a performative ultimacy, as Agamben's state of exception becomes a state of regularity, everything is constantly measured against the vastness of existence itself – making the extraordinary trivial and the trivial extraordinary. This, I believe, is the performative paradox as it is played out in the two ‘land’ projects, constantly oscillating between ordinary and extraordinary, immediacy and existence – a paradox that can perhaps also say something about contemporary culture as a “state of immediacy”, if not of exception as suggested by Agamben.

Simone de Beauvoir emphasized the will to exist; the subject is a definite body, a clear agent, but it is also and continuously changing, exchanging and being influenced or controlled – it is then not really a question of internal or external positions. Beauvoir says that the most important difference between dialectical materialism and existential ontology lies in the conception of the situation – the situation in existentialism is not perceived “as something that is imposed on the consciousness of a passive subject, rather the situation only appears through the revealing a free subject does through her project.” Here we find the beginning of a line of thought that combines our collective, non-unitary embodied subject with its socio-spatio-temporal situation, and that challenges the initial problems of space/place, subject and sociality. The action of choice is, for Beauvoir, an expression of freedom, because it is an expression of difference in the collective. Further, freedom implies ethics; to be free is to

341 Citation of James Baldwin, in ed. Gilane Tawadros, Life is More Important Than Art, London, Ostrich, 2008
342 Ref. Karl Marx, Verker i utvalg 1, Oslo, Pax Forlag, 1972, p.156.
343 Beauvoir, op. cit.
make the choice of wanting existence, and wanting existence is wanting ethicality. Existence in Beauvoir's universe is given a layer of awareness or will – a performative awareness where ethicality it is not an option, rather it is a necessary choice. A possible neo-existentialism as it is suggested here, then, does not reject the subject’s dependence of the collective, or of external influences. Rather it emphasizes the subject as the site of importance, as the site of meaning and expression. All goes through the subject and comes to action in the subject – the strengthening of the subject and the subject’s will to act as a situated de-situatedness is thus the ultimate, and perhaps neo-existentialist, aim expressed through the land foundation and Sørfinnset School / the nord land.

6.3.2 The Embodied and Heartfelt Mind

Having displayed and discussed a variety of theoretical positions, there is a question as to whether we can find some shared perspectives. Phenomenology places research and experience within the subject; this can also be linked to the existentialist individualism of Simone de Beauvoir – each person senses and understands in a different way, each person is entitled to their own “life world”. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as discussed in previous chapters, further describes how this personal and subjective experience in fact merges with the physical and external world – the relation, both physical and mental, with the world as well as the understanding and processing of the many worldly impulses and exchanges. The phenomenological perspective was criticized for being too concentrated on the subject; how could one approach generality, politics and collectivity from this basis? How could one deal with the external systems if all was personal experienced phenomena? Merleau-Ponty set out to free the individual, the singular taste and perspective, precisely by pointing out the singularity of perspective and experience, further uniting the subject and its surroundings, body and mind.

After the Second World War more common and societal issues were pressing, much was about building a society, ensuring equality for the individual, but now through the collective and wider societal systems. Michel Foucault aimed at these more institutional and societal mechanisms – searching to avoid the building of “one truth”, a limited perspective, he sought a more overriding, philosophical and historical perspective as point of departure: Foucault
wanted to further free the individual by focusing on wider, institutional and historical facts and mechanisms. His points were complexity and evasion of power, and, further, how this matters for the individual, for singularity and difference, for existence outside the norm. In the 1930s era of Merleau-Ponty, it was a point to show the individual’s strength and possibilities; in the 1970s Foucault showed how larger and often undefined mechanisms limited these possibilities, for some people in particular. Then, at about the same time and about ten years later, towards the 1990s, Deleuze and Guattari retained this wider societal and systemic perspective while beginning a slow return to the subject, though while underlining its non-unitary qualities.

In many ways, the theory of Deleuze and Guattari represents a total dissolution and multidimensionality – it is hardly possible to become more nomadic, more all-inclusive, than they are in parts of their texts. They present a hypercomplex, multidimensional, and sometimes, as I perceive it, contradictory body of theory – they open the mind as wide as it is, infinitely. Though they are not afraid of presenting paradoxes, this nomadic attitude prevents them to some extent from the re-territorialization (amongst others of the subject) that they suggest. What one might miss then, particularly from an aesthetical and experiential perspective, is the phenomenological, bodily positedness. Because we actually have a concrete, individual body that moves and experiences, there is a certain situatedness of this body in time and space, as well as the less concrete longing for this situatedness or belonging – this was discussed in Chapters Three and Four. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty, I move, according to Foucault, I am moved, and in Deleuze and Guattari, I (as a non-unitary existence) am moved (as in touched by other multiple existences). It is thus about different, but all much-needed, treatments of the human existential condition and its various relations, different possibilities and restrictions.

Now, relating these philosophical perspectives to more specific discourses tied to art and performance: Much performance theory, for example the recent work of Erika Fischer-Lichte, as well as the art theory of, for example, Michael Fried, bases itself on a phenomenological understanding of art phenomena: The bodily and subjective experience of a total surrounding, a melting together almost, of individual and surrounding space, sound, smell, sociality. A wider sociality is also included, particularly through the last decades of the 20th century. Schechner expands these limits in theory, as the avant-garde did in practice – performative practices have in fact alternated between these bodily- and socially-focused immediate
exchanges, as well as more systemic, actionist and political perspectives. In experimental 
performative practice then, these aspects have co-existed, and often been used together, 
sometimes apart. In the ‘land’ projects these aspects of vast system and close subjectivity co-
exist as the micro and macro of an ecological system, and this is why we need to co-think not 
only the different theories, but also theory and practices. The embodied mind, presented by 
Fischer-Lichte and building on Merleau-Ponty, is a uniting of body, mind and immediacy – it 
is an experience of body and mind simultaneously in a socio-spatio-temporal constellation. 
Having used this ‘embodied mind’ as a basic understanding of the subject in the ‘land’ 
projects, I want to place this subject in relation to the flow of sociality we also experience 
there. The embodied mind is an immediate, situational constellation, but placed in a 
succession of immediacies as it always is, it must be long-term sustainable and it must allow 
the more regular, emotional and trivial sides of existence. Again, I underline the combination 
of immediacy and duration, art and life, in the two ‘land’ projects.

6.3.3 Belonging in Immediacy

Ultimately, and even if immediacy is seen as continuous and long-term, we must address the 
immediate acting-out of life and the many tensions that arise in this immediacy: More 
specifically it is about the concrete social, physical, and mental dynamics that at each moment 
are at play in a situation – the constellation of these many factors, physical and abstract, 
historical and present, constitute the current situation and the basis for the action, choice or 
mood. These aspects are normally analyzed in particular situations such as plays, art 
performances and artworks as “artistic elements”, ambience, setting, mise-en-scène, etc., from 
the point of view of the critic or viewer – now they are made performative elements in a broad 
aesthetic, always assuming the position of participants and co-creators. The situations 
presented here have been more or less staged, and are more or less the results of conscious 
strategies. I have tried to emphasize the many parts, not making anything the most important – 
however, these parts are included in different overall contexts and also dependent on the 
choices made within these. More generally I wished to place a further emphasis on immediacy 
and immediate social conditions, as well as more “un-thought” and “un-reflexive” experience 
and value of togetherness, “twosomeness” or sociality in itself.
The importance of immediate social conditions for art, politics and life in general is stressed, and is in many ways the main aspect of performance and performativity – it is the present that constitutes the ultimate basis for our choices and actions. In the acknowledging of immediacy and current conditions as the ultimate ground for action, we also unite the many levels of this thesis; the performative, artistic, cultural, political and philosophical. Immediacy is a very performance-theoretical and -technical aspect but, seen more generally, it constitutes a philosophical perspective with political consequences. What you feel towards past and future depends on your existence here and now, and if you really live here and now, you will have little room left for the past and the future. If, however, the life here and now is unbearable, which it is for many people every day, your existence is easily transferred to the past or to the future – what once was and what might one day come, on earth or in heaven: The totality of immediate existential conditions then becomes decisive for the artistic as well as the human and political action. In Buddhist philosophy, existence in the present (through meditation amongst other things) is one of the preconditions for enlightened co-existence – one must understand that one lives in immediacy in order to really live, because it is in immediacy that we find our proper existence and actions, though they always stand in relation to both past and future.344

A second central claim is that senses of belonging, related to perceptions of and possibilities for situatedness, are also partly and importantly made, re-enforced, or weakened in this immediacy – one feels connections or identification with what is there or not there from how the current situation is or is not. Immediacy and performativity in the ‘land’ projects is thus both specifically and generally about immediate belonging and the importance of immediate social conditions for actions and choices, for peace and understanding – but it is not primarily about understanding: It is about sustainable co-existence, and art is included as a product or a trace of this. Experiences and identities must be seen as hyper-complex and always shifting, but nevertheless based on a perceived rootedness or a sense of belonging created by a multiplicity of factors but, most importantly, by an essential relationality or community. This implies that immediate social situations gain ever more importance, constituting a crucial and never-to-be-left-out addition to referential, historical and thematical renditions. One of the more generally important aspects of performativity today is precisely this social immediacy.

344 Ref. Peter Harvey, op. cit. and diverse interviews with participants in Thailand, see Interviews/Conversations in the back of the text.
where authenticity and nearness is felt and experienced. It is in this social immediacy we feel belonging, and it is in the present that we make choices and act upon this belonging, as long as it is made ordinary – made to be part of our lives. To emphasize immediacy as the ultimate point of action is thus not opposed to the existential succession of immediacies – rather it places the most potent moment in relation to its most vital motor, namely existence. *Thus, the ordinary as a main motor in trivial existence is as potent and performative as the heightened, densified and extraordinary – the regular life and existence, the low-scale, long-term and authenticity-seeking performativity is as close and as important to transformative action as the liminal.*

On the basis of these conclusions, I suggest that the 'land' projects seek the performative in the ordinary because this is where they perceive the transformative action to lie. That is, *transformation must be lasting in order to be sustainable,* and the transformative must therefore be sought in the long-term existence, through immediacy, rather than in immediacy itself.
Appendix – Pictures from the Projects

the land foundation:

*Umong,* Chiang Mai, 2006.

*Travelling Australian at Umong’s outdoor kitchen,* Chiang Mai, 2006.
Kamin Lertchaiprasert’s workshop, Thailand, 2006.

Small figures made of maculated money – Kamin Lertchaiprasert’s workshop, Thailand, 2006.
Stage and buffaloes at ‘the land’, Sanpatong, 2006.

Rice plants, Sanpatong, 2006.
Rirkrit Tiravanija, Hans Ulrich Obrist (famous curator), Kamin Lertchaiprasert, Hou Hanru (famous curator), and diverse “important people” observing ‘the land’, Sanpatong, 2006.

Geir from Sørfinnset in installation “The Western gaze” at the 'land’, Sanpatong 2006.
Superflex’ Biogas system at ‘the land’, Sanpatong, 2006.

Superflex’ Biogas system explained “chemically”, from the book Tools, op. cit.
Village women cooking at the land with brought gas, Sanpatong, 2006.

Wok mix, Sanpatong, 2006.
Bike shower at the land made by The One Year Project, Sanpatong, 2006.


Dada teaching his weekly yoga-classes at Umong, Chiang Mai, 2006.
Kaew Saengpolsith – artist and participant in the One Year Project, Umong, 2006.


At Intamoon’s workshop for teddy bear production, Donkaew/Chiang Mai, 2006.

Intamoon’s teddy bears, Donkaew/Chiang Mai, 2006.
Laura Ayers – artist and participant in The One Year Project, Chiang Mai, 2006.

Leftovers on blackboard from discussion about the content of ‘the land foundation’, Umong, 2006.

Rirkrit Tiravanija and Kamin Lertchaiprasert present ‘the land foundation’ at the Bridge the Gap-seminar, Chiang Mai University, 2006.
Sørfinnset School / the nord land:

The village of Sørfinnset, Sørfinnset, 2006.

Sørfinnser School, Sørfinnset, 2006.
Serving Thai food at local market in Gildeskål, Norway, 2005.

Bonfire outside the school, Sørfinnset, 2005.
Artist group aiPotu doing a performance outside their mobile home, Sørfinnset, 2005.

Kaew Saengpolsith dancing, Sørfinnset, 2005.
Søssa Jørgensen on her horse Kotsa, Sørfinnset, 2006.

Ronald, Geir Tore and Søssa having dinner at the school, Sørfinnset, 2006.
Søssa in the school’s garden with herbs, Sørfinnset, 2006.

Søssa and Yayar at the weekly pub, Sørfinnset, 2006.
Summer meal at Sørfinnset, Sørfinnset, 2006.

Cooking sausages on the bonfire with neighbours, Sørfinnset, 2006.

Geir Tore Holm planting potatoes, Sørfinnset, 2006.
Photo: Sørfinnset School / the nord land

Cured meat for summer party – served after the sour cream porridge by Geir Tore and Per Gunnar, Sørfinnset, 2005.


Old pictures from Sørfjorden exhibited at the school, Sørfinnset, 2006.

From seminar on art and tourism at the school, Sørfinnset, 2006.
Poster for summer party at Sørfinnset in 2008.

Poster picturing the building of the Thai house at Kjellingvann – used for exhibition at Umong about The One Year Project and their stay at Sørfinnset in 2005.
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– Geir Tore Holm and Søssa Jørgensen, artists and organizers of Sørfinnset School / the northland, 8th of November 2005 (2 hours), Sørfinnset, summer 2006 (2 hours)
– Kamin Lertchaiprasert, organizer and artist, interviews 17th and 18th of February 2006 (5 hours)
– Uthit Atimana, head of Media, Art and Design Faculty at Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, 19th of February 2006 (2 hours)
– Mit Jai-Inn, artist, Thailand, 17th of February 2006 (1 hour)
– Insoon Wongsam, Thailand, 17th of February 2006 (2 hours)
– Sarah de Wilde, volunteer and artist, Chiang Mai, 23rd of February (2 hours), by e-mail in March 2008 (2-3 pages)
– Kaew Saengpolstith, One Year Project participant, volunteer and artist, Chiang Mai, 21st and 23rd of February 2006 (4 hours)
– Pimjai Intamoon, Donkaew/Chiang Mai, 21st of February (3 hours)
– Rirkrit Tiravanija, lecture at Bridge the Gap?3, 2 day seminar at Chiang Mai University 24-25th of February 2006
– Laura Ayers, One Year Project participant and artist, Chiang Mai, 26th of February 2006 (2 hours)

All interviews and conversations are recorded on tape or noted.
Other sources: Catalogues and Home Pages


Fly With Me to Another World – A tale that never ends ... even when it reaches the horizon, published by the ‘Fly With Me to Another World Project’, Thailand, 2005

One Year Project ... Experimental Community, catalogue from the land foundation, Chiang Mai 2005

One Day. Eu-Ka-Beuk. 2months. Culture Sketch, catalogue from the land foundation, Chiang Mai, 2003


– www.thelandfoundation.org

– www.kunstinordland.no, see ’Kunstneriske forstyrrelser’/’Artistic Interruptions’

– Various e-mails, invitations and press releases from the land foundation and Sørfinnset School / the nord land. Sørfinnset School / the nord land has for example sent out an activity programme every summer since 2005.