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Chapter 1 - The need for art

Why do we need art? Why do we need art in a world that lives through such radically changing times that many suspect we are heading towards our own extinction, and that the destruction of the planet is inevitable? Can art be more than simply a luxury item and a toy for the wealthy intellectual? Can art do anything for society today, and if so, what potentials are there?

This research is based on the hypothesis that through the experience of contemporary art humankind can learn new, yet unknown alternatives to sustain itself and its surroundings. I argue that certain contemporary art practices have specific strategies that lie within the particular nature of their force. This force might reveal a different attitude or behavior from the ones that currently dictate our lives, and that most probably lead to devastation. It is hypothesized that by engaging with certain contemporary artworks, one can become familiar with a different mentality that could result in decisions that might be able to reverse, or at least soften the consequences of, the disturbing disasters predicted.

1.1 Outline

This chapter starts by addressing the current issues we face on the planet, to highlight that we really are running out of time by not doing anything to prevent the natural disasters that will have such far reaching consequences. This is not a thesis on ecology, but ecological concerns are introduced in order to emphasize that it is the world's current thinking and attitude - a money-driven, capitalist, consumerist, anthropocentric view - that has driven us to the verge of disaster. As ecological concerns demonstrate, humankind can no longer ignore the consequences of its actions, both individually and on a social scale.

What does this dilemma have to do with art and in what way can art address any of these matters? I argue that there is one way to turn the course of events around, if it is not too late already, and that is through mastering a different mindset and attitude towards the

world and the planet. This, I argue, can take place through art. This does not mean that art itself can provide 'a solution', and that is not what I am proposing. I suggest, however, that certain contemporary artistic practices can help us exercise a different apperception of the state of things and therefore generate a change in our attitude towards the planet.

The need for a shift in attitude towards today's concerns is obvious, and has been recognized by many different forums. Within academia, for instance, various disciplines have started to explore alternative ways of thinking and the need for action. It appears to me that (slow)science, eco criticism and New Materialism, the three areas touched upon in this chapter, all agree on a new approach that manifests itself in interdisciplinarity, cooperation and unconventional, non-prescriptive approaches to life.

Interestingly, although they vary in method, a common point can be found in what they advocate: they call for the establishment of a space to exist without predefined structure, without goals previously defined by forums other than the community. Instead of arguing for yet another meta-narrative that could save the world, they take a different position and celebrate plurality, mini-narratives, inclusion, controversies, clashing ideas and non-teleological attitudes.¹

In other words, what I find as a commonality for most of these disciplines, possibly along with many alternative practices, is the establishment of spaces in which they seek an alternative for hegemony. Consequentially, they are not calling for the making of platforms that are predefined by structure, goal, production and monetary gain. The articulation of such non-defined, non-prescriptive space is presented in a radical form by philosopher Catherine Malabou (2013) as 'zero point'. The potentials of this phenomenon are elaborated and taken further, introducing 'ground zero' as the key concept of this research.

How does art, and in this case contemporary art, fit into this new attitude? As the basis of the research, it is proposed that some contemporary artistic practices are able to generate this site of 'ground zero' in which I see immense potential for changing how one relates to oneself, life and society. Discussing how science should change, how our approach and social, collective behavior towards the planet should be altered, is important, but I think that significant alteration of events can only take place if there is change within the

¹ Mini-narratives is a terminology I borrow from Jean-Francois Lyotard. In *The postmodern condition. A report on knowledge* (1979) he contrasts meta/grand- and mini-narratives, the former standing for general truth claims that humankind treat as unquestionable truisms, the latter for the 'truth of the local or the singular'. By 'teleological' I mean predefined, goal oriented, prescriptive.

individual. When it comes to the force of art, mentioned above, I note that it is usually not the concept of 'ground zero' that scholars come up with in order to address urgent change. Therefore, before I explore how contemporary art can open up such a space and why it is most valuable, there is a need to take a step back and explore what traditionally is associated with what the arts can do. The usual method for assessing art is by examining how much good it does for the individual or for society. This chapter demonstrates that art can indeed do many things for society and it certainly can be looked upon from the viewpoint of 'use' and 'benefit'. Sociological and psychological researches are introduced that demonstrate what 'good' art can offer. However, from the viewpoint of looking for potentials for effective change for today's world, I argue that this is not where the force of art should be sought. Most importantly, this is not where contemporary art should belong, as this approach to the 'benefit' of art keeps the arts within the very framework it ought to overcome.

Therefore, there is a need to get back to the initial proposition, namely to the question of whether art has the force to create an empty space of undefined potentials, since, for our times, this is the force with which it can contribute to the issues of the world.² Art as a 'force outside power-structure' is a concept that appears extensively in contemporary art theory. The nature of this force calls for a precise articulation though. Various scholars such as Chantal Mouffe or Jacques Rancière perceive contemporary art as a way to challenge hegemony. However, although they claim interrogation, I propose that their theories still keep art embedded in the social fabric, and they seem to understand art's force according to and in relation with the logic of the power-structure it challenges. In other words, art that is important for them does not take the beholder outside hegemony, but remains on the critical level of power-structure.

Therefore, a different theory, namely 'art as force-field' will be introduced as understood by professor of comparative literature Krzysztof Ziarek (2004), which seems to me to be a real alternative to power-structure. It is suggested that art as a non-teleological field has common characteristics and a very similar dynamism with Malabou's term 'zero

² At first reading, my approach might seem instrumentalist. My argument could be read as a need for change and that the arts can stand in the service of this change. If society wants to experience this change, it should/could use art. This could be the argument, but it does not need to be read like that, as the outcome of the change itself is not defined, projected, even anticipated. I simply argue that ground zero spaces are key for the adoption of a different mentality, and that such spaces also arise in a very particular way in some contemporary art practices.

point', or 'ground zero' as I alter it, and with the alternative space called for by the disciplines, namely (slow)science, eco criticism and New Materialism mentioned. Yet, there is something specific to contemporary art that distinguishes it from these disciplines, and this particularity is the potential of the personal experience. Let me start with the contextualization of the need for art by introducing ecological concerns.

1.2 Pressing matters



Fig.1. CO2 growth since the Industrial Revolution (Credit: Vostok ice core data/J.R. Petit et al.; NOAA Mauna Loa CO2 record.)

This part of the chapter addresses one of the most pressing concerns on Earth: climate change. Although it might sound strange to start a chapter on the need for (contemporary) art with ecology, it is argued that the need for contemporary art corresponds with finding alternative responses for the concerns of the planet. Ecological matters are not the topic of this book, but serve as a starting point to articulate the urgency of the research. So I will briefly introduce the ecological necessity to act and to act

differently to save the planet and life on Earth, in order to substantiate the need to adopt a different mindset. It is this different mindset, a 'think and exist differently', that I am interested in and in which contemporary art, I propose, can possibly help with this and other pressing matters.

Why do I introduce climate change and none of the other problems facing the planet? There are many great concerns in today's world and society. Different disciplines have different worries: teachers about the shrinking level of general knowledge, the effect of technology on the young mind, sociologists about the inability of the young generation to exist without apps or to think out of the box that techno-centric society is putting them into. Liberal politicians worry about the emerging right-wing tendencies across Europe, and global politics is concerned with Islam extremism. The list could go on, possibly endlessly. Among all these issues, one of the most pressing, is climate change. On a devastated planet, it is hard to worry about the effect of the World Wide Web or political affiliations when the existence of the very site that gives space for any kind of human activity is endangered. In the subsequent paragraphs I suggest looking into the reality of climate change in order to highlight how urgent it is for us to work out a different attitude in order to maintain life on Earth.

The chart presented above (fig.1.) demonstrates the rapid growth of CO₂ since the 1950s. The CO₂ level has never been this high. Scientists have now come to a general consensus that it is humankind that is destroying its own environment. The fate of the planet has become a common concern. The first statement on the NASA website (<http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>) voices this pressing issue: "Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities, and most of the leading scientific organizations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position".

There is no question anymore that the increased level of greenhouse gasses (CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide, CFCs) causes the Earth to warm up. Consequently, there is a rapid rise in the sea level. Ten of the warmest years since the 1970s have occurred in the past twelve years and "surface temperature continues to rise". Ice sheets are also of major concern: "Data from NASA's Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment show Greenland lost 150 to 250 cubic kilometers (36 to 60 cubic miles) of ice per year between 2002 and 2006,

while Antarctica lost about 152 cubic kilometers (36 cubic miles) of ice between 2002 and 2005” (<http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>).

Extreme events take place, such as devastating storms, tornados, floods and seasons with temperatures unheard of until now. Oceans have so far been able to absorb huge amounts of carbon dioxide, but even that is not without consequence as it changes the constitution of sea life, the intensity of currents and also global weather. Just to get an estimate on the numbers, one reads that “the amount of carbon dioxide absorbed by the upper layer of the oceans is increasing by about 2 billion tons per year” (<http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>).

Scientists have also calculated the expected effects of climate change at a regional level. For instance, in the Southwestern areas of the planet, natural phenomena that devastate the region will intensify: “Increased heat, drought, and insect outbreaks, all linked to climate change, have increased wildfires. Declining water supplies, reduced agricultural yields, health impacts in cities due to heat, and flooding and erosion in coastal areas are additional concerns” (<http://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>).

Among the many pressing factors, water is going to be a major issue. Although most of us are aware of this, there is not much that is being done in spite of the fact that an “analysis by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) ... found that 4.8 billion people – more than half the world’s population – and approximately half of global grain production will be at risk due to water stress by 2050 if status quo, business-as-usual behavior is followed (<http://growingblue.com/water-in-2050/>).

This means that in forty years from now, my generation and our children will either have or not have access to drinking water, and there is a 50 % chance that the quality and quantity of our food will be majorly altered because of climate change. In order to change things, more and more people, not only scientists and activists, but lay citizens need to realize that something has to be done if we want our children to have shelter, food and enough drinking water. We can no longer shy away from the urgency to actively start doing something to sustain life. Yet, as I see it, we are still ignoring the consequences of our actions, both individually and on a social scale, regarding both societal and ecological issues. Today there is still not a critical mass that could turn things around. Clearly, existing strategies and practices on how to conduct life on Earth are falling short. This critical mass should rise urgently, and as I see it, it should rise from below, from the masses. It does not

seem to be in the interest of the politicians in power to start effectively caring for nature; they would simply lose too many important votes from those still obsessed with growth, money and production.

Therefore there is a need to work out a different mindset that considers these pressing issues holistically, and which generates change from 'below', from a micro-social level, as opposed to being part of a meta-narrative, namely, laws and legislations developed for change from 'above'. There is no new recipe for saving and changing the planet, and so far any recipe invented by ruling elite has turned out to become (more or less) fascistic. In such a crisis, we certainly cannot afford another regime built around yet another dysfunctional utopia. What is to be done? Several disciplines have major concerns about issues such as climate change, and 21st century thinking seems to be finding a new voice and a new approach for coming up with decisions. And after all, this is what we need: a new attitude and mentality that people can embrace, in the realization that the old ways no longer work.

The subsequent paragraphs therefore briefly introduce a few of these possible alternative approaches. My intention is not to map the field, I rather aim to demonstrate that the kind of space (and mentality) I find most valuable for altering the course of events differently also surface in non-artistic disciplines.

1.3 Alternative perspectives – from structure to matter

When looking for other than utilitarian, hegemony-driven application of a body of knowledge in academia, for instance, I detect two directions that I present through three examples. On the one hand, some professionals call for the redefinition of their own discipline, on the other hand they invent new disciplines where the newly outlined territory involves a non-teleological mentality. With this in mind, firstly, I propose to look into how the existing structure of science is criticized, and at the alternatives offered by scientists themselves. Secondly, I present two philosophy-based practices that have evolved with the intention of following a different logic from the production-oriented mindset.

When asking for solutions for most of the world's ills, people turn to science. Science, however, seems to be in the service of a technocratic world view that is concerned with short term solutions that usually serve momentary comfort, growth and gain. Many see the shortcomings of this attitude of science, and call for a revision of the mentality of the discipline as, in view of its consequences, we can no longer afford to follow this mindset.

For instance, scientist turned philosopher, Isabelle Stengers, shares this opinion. Stengers is deeply concerned with the direction science and scientific attitude is taking at the moment. In her article “‘Another science is possible!’ A plea for slow science’ (2011), Stengers distinguishes between ‘fast’ and ‘slow science’.³ She defines slow science as “resisting the fast, competitive, benchmarked research” and draws an analogy with the term, ‘slow food’, as against fast, bad quality and ‘ready to eat’ food and the system that produces it (2011:2). As opposed to slow science, fast science is a detached, production-oriented endeavor based on research and is dictated by the industry that pays the research laboratories. In fast science, she argues, there is no space or time to take into consideration the matters of the world, to ponder or to make mistakes, but instead the scientists serve the interest of growth and technology and produce results, data or facts for satisfying the expectations of the industry. About the present and the future of fast science and its vulnerability to economic interest, she writes: “... we may well have scientists at work everywhere, producing facts with the speed that new sophisticated instruments make possible, but the way those facts will be interpreted will mostly confirm the landscape of settled interests” (2011:9).

In other words, fast science for industry is serving pre-set interests often detached from the concerns of the world. As opposed to serving industry and profiting a wealthy few, slow science, for Stengers, is an alternative attitude, towards repositioning science for social relevance. This, she argues, still needs to be implemented, as it is not yet part of the scientific platform. Be it a fast scientist or a researcher detached from the world in his/her lab, their ignorance towards the state of things is striking. Stengers mentions a scientist who felt “quite justified when claimed that GMOs were the rational solution for feeding the

³ Slow science can be associated with the larger ‘slow’ movement (<http://www.slowmovement.com/>), recently becoming popular, or it can be seen as a natural initiative of scientists concerned with the world and worrying about the future of their discipline.

hungry, quietly ignoring the social and economical mechanisms creating hunger in our world” (2011:8).⁴

In both cases, if scientists stay isolated from the concerns of the world, without considering the larger picture and the far-reaching consequences of their research, scientific endeavor might indeed become morally questionable. For instance, if a diet pill is invented that makes people lose 10kg a month without eating less or exercising, the pill is put on to the market. Although possible side-effects might be shown on the box, fast science would treat the pill as a positive achievement, a contribution to health without giving second thoughts to possible secondary side-effects or psychological implications, ignoring questions such as is it really ‘good’ to be able to lose 10kg a month by simply popping a pill.

Therefore, in order for science to be able to contribute to the ‘things-of-the-world’, including the fate of the planet, it has to remain in touch with them. This is what slow science aims to offer. Stengers claims slow science represents the quality of research that keeps in mind its relevance for today’s issues, including a focus on the community (2011:2). She argues that slow science should be carried out through cooperation, fusion and hybridization of various kinds of science, and also the involvement of other disciplines. She writes: “What of slow meetings, that is meetings that are organized in such a way that participation is not formal only? What of slow talks...? ... learning and collaboration...?” (2011:12). There is a need for a more “demanding trust”, a demanding engagement in which time is spent on arguing and clashing opinions and coming *or not coming* to a common ground. This is an attitude I greatly sympathize with, as, although Stengers has clear expectations for science to take social responsibility, she is also calling for the establishment of a non-teleological platform for exchange of ideas.⁵

⁴ GMO – genetically modified organism – in agriculture has been introduced to grow healthier, more adaptive and resistant crops.

⁵ Of course, Stengers admits that universities cannot survive without working for the fast science industry. However, we might be able to learn “... on the one hand, adhering to a rule and, on the other, recognizing its power while looking for the opportunities to experiment outside its bounds”, in other words, think out of the box, “creating interstices where another science could discover its own demands” (2011:12). This new behavior seems to be in line with the slow science manifesto that reads (<http://slow-science.org/>): “We do need time to think. We do need time to digest. We do need time to misunderstand each other, especially when fostering lost dialogue between humanities and natural sciences. We cannot continuously tell you what our science means; what it will be good for; because we simply don’t know yet. Science needs time. —*Bear with us, while we think.*”

This 'slow' attitude of contradictions, interdisciplinarity, dialogues, time and also space to think and contrast opinions, outside the binding capitalist hegemony is a phenomenon voiced by Stengers. It is this need to create a *space* in which various disciplines and approaches can come together, without knowing what will come out of that cooperation that I also see the need for, in this society of crisis. Stengers is not alone with these concerns within the domain of science. For instance, one of her colleagues who juxtaposes Stengers' concerns and takes the matter further is the philosopher, Jeffrey Burkhardt. In his article, 'Scientific values and moral education in the teaching of science' (1999) Burkhardt argues that the scientific community is actually trained at university to unquestionably serve the interests of capital, in other words, hegemony. He argues that "institutionalized science and science education are essentially results-driven enterprises" in which "science is legitimated by its solutions" (1999:6). He adds that "scientific institutions have implicitly endorsed an internal form of productionism, whose goal is the equivalent of the 'maximum yield' goals of ... research: maximum physical products, information, and, of course, human capital" (1999:7).

According to Burkhardt, universities are expected to train human capital whose skills and knowledge are fit for and fit into the production chain for which it was designed. He writes: "They may be educating people in classical terms, but they are also training people to be task-oriented, punctual, and good at rule-following. The formal institutional nature of instruction in even marginally useful subjects such as philosophy is no less acculturating to the culture of modern market capitalist society than is study in business or science" (1999:3).

Burkhardt argues that students are schooled according to the mentalities of a production chain under the 'cover' of learning science. However, what really is communicated to them is not science and the scientific mentality Stenger outlines, but a productionist frame of mind that Stengers identifies with fast science. Burkhardt argues that "... in the process of doing and teaching the sciences, people are teaching and learning 'ways of seeing' and 'ways of being'. ... suffice it to say that a deep learning and deep reinforcement of beliefs and attitudes occurs along with the transmission of technical facts and methods" (1999:5).

In other words, a productionist mentality underlies education. This hidden attitude is communicated to the science student as what he calls "scientific productionism", the idea

that “science should continually produce more ‘output’”, namely measurable data to be used by the industry (1999:6).

This expectation from scientific output is not new, though, but has been traditionally embedded in science. As s Burkhardt states “...even before the modern institutionalization of science, scientists were seen as performing an important social function: to generate knowledge in order to improve the material well-being of human beings, with a particular eye towards increased human control over nature or natural processes” (1999:6). Which shows therefore that this scientific attitude embraces domination, patriarchal control and the mastering of nature that is juxtaposed by the principles of capitalism.

In the 21st century, it is this particular human control that is about to lead us into very unpleasant situations (to say the least). Therefore, this mentality calls for revision. Again, I feel that there is a need to emphasize that the ego-driven attitude based on production and short-term benefit imposed by hegemony could be overcome if humankind consciously created forums into which other-than such alternative motivations have a chance to materialize. . Neither Stengers nor Burkhardt want to see the end of productionism but they call for the introduction of other than scientific values to the scientific discourse in order to bring scientists back to what Stengers calls ‘slow’ science, in which scientists also see the larger picture of the world. Or, as Burkhardt puts it: “The point may be... that the scientific enterprise is not only about discovery of the world ‘out here’. ... it is also about discovery ‘in here’...” (1999:16).

As these examples show, there are some members of the scientific community calling for a new mentality within science that would help reconnect the discipline with the ‘things-of-the-world’. Both authors mentioned are demanding an other-than utilitarian use of science and the establishment of interdisciplinary forums for science to integrate into the community. Therefore, these approaches can be seen as an alternative way of thinking, outside the current hegemonic framework. At the same time, they do propose a solution, even though it is not direct and prescriptive. Nonetheless, in terms of attitude, I see a parallel between the nature of non-teleological space in contemporary art, that I am about to outline, and the author’s imagined operation in the establishment of non-hegemonic forums. These operations do not serve productionist interests, ordered from above, but allow organic growth from below, that dictates and follows its own laws and needs.

The discipline that is also in line with the ideas of these two scientists in terms of calling for a different attitude, is eco criticism. Although the field is vast, I am concentrating on it from the viewpoint of its criticism of hegemony and the evocation of non-prescriptive space for decision-making. Timothy Morton's major work on eco criticism, entitled *Ecology without nature* (2007) voices urgent and critical concerns right at the beginning: "Old ways of thinking, we tell ourselves, are not to be trusted. They helped to get us into this mess in the first place. In virtual reality it becomes impossible to count on an idea of 'distance'. We feel that we can't achieve a critical purchase, but are instead about to be dissolved into a psychotic aquarium of hallucinatory un-being" (Morton 2007:26).

Morton departs from the usual critical point arguing that the "old ways of" technocratic thinking are leading us towards a psychotic mentality of hyperreality in which we completely disconnect from the things-of-the-world and from issues that need to be urgently addressed. Calling for a change is the departure point of eco criticism that urges the adaptation of other than productionist mindsets. This approach is in line with what has been voiced above, but takes the arguments still further, therefore getting us closer to outlining the space contemporary art might be able to create. Let me explain.

Eco criticism is a revisionist movement in which scholars of the humanities decided to apply their knowledge to the non-human world and address environmental issues and crises.⁶ The diversity of this discipline calls for interdisciplinarity "where work on nature writing can sit comfortably next to animal studies, and postcolonial theory rubs shoulders with ecofeminism" and "history, philosophy, sociology and science studies, and not least... ecology and the life sciences" are included (Bergthaller, <http://www.easlce.eu/about-us/what-is-ecocriticism/>).

When looking into how eco criticism is carried out, one can detect similarities with the new scientific attitude articulated by Stengers and Burkhardt, yet their argument is taken further. For instance, literary scholar, Eoin Flannery, in his article, 'Ireland and eco criticism: an introduction' in the *Journal of ecocriticism* (2015) looks at how land is regarded in 21st

⁶ Eco criticism roots in Romanticism and since then "it has ... broadened to address the question, in all of its dimensions, how cultures construct and are in turn constructed by the non-human world" (Bergthaller, <http://www.easlce.eu/about-us/what-is-ecocriticism/>). Alternative titles, but different in terms of their approach and political affiliations, for such a way of thinking would be environmental/ecological literary studies or green cultural studies.

century Ireland. He argues that, due to the increasing capitalistic demand for production, land is treated simply as property and exploited for short-term market interests. Maintenance, care, and sustainability become secondary, which most probably leads to ecological harm. Flannery therefore calls for a reestablishment of the bond with the land, but not according to the Romantic ideals of the past or by following the new-found conservatism, but in a reestablishment of “dwelling knowingly in a specific place” (2015:3).

This “dwelling knowingly” is a mentality in line with new science, in the sense that it takes the focus off the ‘above’-imposed order, and calls for attention on to the ‘below’. In order to substantiate this move, Flannery introduces the term ‘microspeciation’ meaning a sensitivity to the local and, most importantly for this research, for going at a slower pace, and creating practices that are generated from below, in this case, literally from the ground.⁷ Furthermore, when deciding on matters concerning ‘dwelling knowingly’, Flannery encourages the incorporation of other-than-scientific partners. This he sees in ‘other than cognitive’ elements, suggesting a concentration on, for instance, *physical knowledge*, as dwelling is a physical act.

Although ‘physical knowledge’ might not sound like a radical factor when making decisions, it actually is, because in order for the physical to become a decisive player, there is a need to abandon body-mind dualism: a way of thinking we have been used to in the West for centuries. From here another step should be made, so I introduce the philosophical, yet very much practice-oriented direction in line with this attitude and need for shift: New Materialism.

This relatively new discipline represents a worldview, a method of thinking, an analysis of texts, philosophy as well as practice that has been gaining particular attention in the 21st century. New Materialism does not limit itself to a particular field of research but deals with nature, art, society, politics or thoughts in general. Most importantly, the discipline “has set itself to practice the Spinozist dictum that the mind is always already an idea of the body, while the body is the object of the mind” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin

⁷ Flannery argues: “[...] we must now think of liberation as going deeper, lower. In other words, in advocating this shift of perspective, we wish to suggest that it is possible to develop a new politics of microspeciation which seeks to expand the possibilities of the local, not reduce them, and which offers the opportunity to reconfigure positively our social, economic and political experience of the fundamentals of space and time” (2015:3).

2012:91). This quote suggests that mind and body, and consequentially any kind of dualism, is a fictional interpretation of the world: the mind is the product of the body and the body is the projection of the mind; the two cannot be separated, just like meaning cannot be separated from matter.⁸

Why is it important from the viewpoint of this research that dualism is rejected? As I suggested previously, if one can go beyond dualism, the structures according to which we build our lives simply fall short. Philosophers Rich Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin explain this in terms of New Materialism: “new materialism engenders *immanent* thought and, as a consequence, it breaks through not only the mind-matter and culture-nature divides of transcendental humanist thought, but *also thinking, causal structures and teleology (i.e. a determinism)*” (2012:96, italics, DV).

What emerges then if thoughts, decisions and actions are not derivatives of dualism? The answer, as one would expect from New Materialism is very ‘organic’: “... beneath every object, every representation, every physical of metaphysical ideality lies a phenomenon, which is the flesh and blood of the world, the life that continues to live in and through being as it is represented in itself. This is being as it is *lived*” (Beistegui quoted in Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:109).

In this sense, once beyond the dualism of representation-represented, there is a force, a life that is experienced in its materiality. New Materialism sees this force in the nature of matter and argues that “matter is a transformative force *in itself*, which, in its ongoing change, will not allow any representation to take root” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:107). As the authors put it, and we shall see it recurring in the philosophy of Catherine Malabou, “*anti-representationalism* (an immanent gesture) is employed” in order to break through matter-meaning, content-form dualism through which the world – and also art – is perceived (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:98). Matter then is thought to have a potential, an agency that manifests in action *without being predefined*. New Materialism even uses the terminology ‘agency’ and argues that “matter comes into agential realism” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012:113).⁹

⁸ Aside from Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari are often cited along with Donna Haraway’s concept of ‘naturecultures’ and Bruno Latour’s idea of ‘collectives’. Central to the ideas of these thinkers is the call for a non-dualist attitude.

⁹ These ideas reoccur in the attitude toward art when seen as agency in the work of Alfred Gell and WJT Mitchell who also treat the artwork as entity in itself with an agency, and whose ideas I adopt as the

In other words, New Materialists see matter as ‘force in itself’. Therefore, in order to come to yet unknown alternatives for living our lives, as opposed to squeezing practices and phenomena – those we would identify as ‘matter’ - into one superimposed order, one needs to create space for them to exercise *the force that is embedded in their own nature*.

I have arrived at the base of these arguments, namely to the potential of matter that is beyond order. As I see it, ‘matter as force’ can generate a space in which the things-of-the-world have the liberty to arrive without any imposed structure and can be an alternative to hegemony. As it is this space that I consider as the potential for change, and which I also see emerging in particular ways in some contemporary art, it is necessary to articulate its precise nature. Let me now outline this non-teleological forum itself through the ideas of French philosopher, Catherine Malabou.

1.4 Ground zero

It is interesting to see that the disciplines cited, when realizing that there is a dire need for a change in attitude in order to solve the ills of the planet, come up with well-founded arguments for the generation of non-defined *space*. As I have suggested, in order to create yet unknown alternatives, there is a great need to generate open spaces, where the things of the world can reveal themselves in their (possibly endless) complexity. These open platforms in which yet unknown ways of being in the world can surface, are states of emptiness, zero points or, as I slightly alter it, ‘ground zero’. In her paper, *Whither materialism? Althusser/Darwin* (2013), Malabou argues in terms similar to those alternative disciplines are calling for. Given that patterns we have been using so far obviously do not work, we need a new method that she sees in the making of creative spaces that admit non-teleological experiences that aid us to think (and exist) outside already taken-for-granted structures. This could give rise to a new attitude towards the world and possibly provide an alternative means for making decisions. Starting her argument from a New Materialist perspective, Malabou (2013) springs her analysis from nature and matter, presenting a take on the Darwinian evolution-theory which she parallels with Althusser's notion of socio-

foundation of this research. But before I introduce that, there is still a need to look at an important idea of New Materialism.

political order. I will present this briefly in order to explain where the nature of what she calls 'zero point' might lie.

Malabou argues that the Darwinian idea of evolution is misinterpreted and that Darwin never wanted to call his theory 'evolution' in the first place. The general interpretation suggests that Darwin, when thinking about the concept of natural selection, survival of the fittest and so on, had a *teleological* goal in mind. Therefore, Darwin's suggestion that 'the fittest survive in the best conditions' is a phenomenon that takes place according to specific criteria, and that one understands what 'fit' and "best conditions" represent, in advance. Malabou suggest that this is a false interpretation of Darwin, as what 'fit' represents and what 'the best conditions' stand for, are only apparent *after* the selection has been made. As she argues: "There is no better 'in itself.' Certainly, Darwin described natural selection as a 'work of perfecting' or as an 'improvement,' but these notions of 'better' remain without intention" (2013:8).

In other words, concepts, such as 'fit', are independent from value-judgments. Furthermore, one cannot come up with prescribed criteria according to which the selection is going to happen: one can only learn what exists, adapts or survives under specific circumstances *after* the encounter takes place. As Malabou puts it: "The best is the fittest, but aptitude is here independent of all value judgments or all actual teleology. ... Natural selection is a-teleological, without intention. ... natural selection is paradoxically non-anticipatable, a promise of forms never chosen in advance, of differences to come" (2013:6).

In other words, Malabou understands that according to Darwin the working of nature never takes place according to rules, structure and criteria already present 'out there'. One can never tell in advance what will survive and be able to adapt to specific conditions. What does survive only becomes apparent in the moment of and during the encounter: in its emergence, and not before that.

Why is this idea relevant for this research? Malabou continues by detecting the exact same teleological materialism projected on to society, as on to nature. She argues that in the same way as we perceive nature, we also make society work according to predefined, set criteria, trying to adjust and curtail the things-of-the-world to the structures we treat as taken-for-granted, but which, in fact, were invented by us and later applied as rules. "The formation of forms — forms of life; forms of thought, forms of society — is governed by an internal tension toward a *telos*, which necessarily orients and determines every self-

development. ... Such a materialism presupposes that everything is accomplished in advance; the structure precedes its elements and reproduces them in order to reproduce the structure” (2013:4).

Malabou explains that society pretends to know what forms should manifest, and creates structures that assume that forms will emerge somehow, according to prescribed criteria. As she says: “The catalogue of tasks, the outline of jobs, the protocol of exams always precede the real encounter with the variability and diversity of candidates, thus preventing differences from emerging by themselves” (2013:10).

This juxtaposes what has been suggested before, namely the fact that structure is imposed on ‘matter’ from above, it does not spring from matter itself. There is no freedom for forms to emerge that could bring something new, to change the hegemonic system, but society already carries within itself a value-system that forms ought to follow. This teleological approach, claimed to be adopted from evolution theory, ironically even contradicts the current understanding of Darwinism, as in this system it is not going to be the best and fittest that are selected, but those that play the best according to the set rules. “It is not the best that are selected, or even those that exhibit an astonishing capacity for adaptation, but those who are the most conformable” argues Malabou (2013:11).

What is the problem with this approach towards life? Malabou (2013:11) points out that “nameless individuals” will never have the chance to emerge outside the already existing structures, and come up with new forms. Therefore, there is no space left for the introduction of new alternatives.¹⁰ Teleological structures always impose reproduction as opposed to production. Furthermore, order from above easily forces its self-interest on to ‘matter’, with no consideration for what matter would dictate by itself. Although one can see the sad consequences of such decision-making, this attitude can work for a while in times when there is no a need for radically new approaches. One can put up with this violation of possibilities of “encounter... by teleology, anteriority of meaning, presuppositions, predeterminations” (Malabou 2013:7).

However, I argue that in times such as ours, we cannot afford such castration of chances for the emergence of change. As Malabou argues and I agree: “As soon as selection becomes an intention of selection, which supposes predefined criteria, certainly

¹⁰ These teleological structures influence the arts as well; we know what good music is supposed to sound like and to some extent we can define what good art is supposed to represent.

programmed this time, as soon as there is no more naturality or spontaneity in the promotion, the plastic condition is threatened or even inexistent” (2013:7). Looking at the working of society, it is quite obvious that the possible birth of new alternatives is suffocated at its core, which under the current circumstances we can no longer afford. Therefore, the task is a given: there is a need to re-establish those states of emptiness in which the encounter, the unexpected and the unpredictable can emerge with its own potential. Malabou asks: “... *where, in society, is the void, the nothingness, the point zero from which a form can emerge?*” (2013:4, italics, DV). She sees the *space of nothingness* in the ability to allow encounter without teleological implications. As one might recall, similar encounters were advocated by Stengers, and I argue that these, specifically, are the spaces that we must engage with. As Malabou puts it, our job is to “*free the ... repressed status of ... nothingness and to reveal it as... formative...*” (2013:15, italics, DV). Nothingness – existence without pre-imposed structure – has endless possibilities that should not be forced into structure according to already existing social models. She, therefore, calls for the sensibility and sensitivity to let such empty spaces emerge in which things can spring without us implying a priori structure upon them, because it is in these spaces that creativity can take place. I argue that this is our social duty right now, namely the creation of such spaces. Malabou concludes her paper along these lines: “Opening the unassignable place in a global world, where every place is assigned, has become the most urgent ethical and political task” (2013:16).

In other words, when thinking holistically and trying to find solutions for problems that concern entities of such a grand scale as the human race or the planet, we cannot afford to think and make decisions that operate in this teleological one-way street. We cannot afford yet another set of hegemonic theories, a ‘map’ of the planet only to be overthrown by coming generations. We cannot invent another meta-narrative, thinking that it is going to point to better solutions. We simply do not have the time for it. So this approach of not-telling, questioning, or as Morton (2007) puts it “non-identity”, a way of not stating but *giving space*, has to be incorporated into the attitude of science, the humanities and into forums of social decision-making in order to make change possible.

For this research I would like to apply Malabou’s concept of ‘zero point’ to contemporary art. Malabou talks about ‘zero point’ that – to me – symbolizes emptiness, a

vacuum of space and time, without dimensions, yet with a huge amount of potential. Having engaged with specific contemporary artworks, I have noticed that there is indeed such a potential of nothingness. I suggest a slight alteration to this term, though, and instead of calling it 'zero point', I would rather title this empty space of potential 'ground zero'. In the case of this research, I believe this alteration is justified, as I would like to suggest that, instead of a '*point*' there is *dimension*, in other words, *space*: space that can exist beyond hegemony. In the engagement with art, it *feels* like space, rather than a point, a vacuum. 'Ground' is therefore a more suitable word than 'point' to connote space. .

I am, at the same time, aware that the term 'ground zero' is heavy with connotations from current history. Most people would associate it with the tragedy of 9/11 in the United States, with the collapse of the Twin Towers. Undoubtedly, 9/11 was one of the great tragedies of humankind that is not to be debated - and it does not even occur to me to suggest that acts as such might have other than devastating impacts.¹¹ Still, I adopt this term because I find that it implies space that is completely empty and lies at the bottom of/beyond all structure. Furthermore, if I look at the collapse of the towers *strictly metaphorically*, and if one can deduct the horrendous trauma that it induced, to me 'ground zero' signifies the consequence of the destruction of order and structure imposed on the world by modernist, European values, driven by capitalism. Consequentially, 'ground zero' is not only the symbol of the space that remains after the collapse of the social values mentioned, but it also stands for the individual without any structure, any superimposed form of power, in other words, without the ego. 'Ground zero' in this research therefore represents a *space* beyond order and structure, a space of retreat beyond the ego-boundaries. In this sense, 'ground zero' - although reaching it might be difficult or even painful - becomes the *potential space for new life to emerge*. One can spend time in this space, with the liberty to see and confront yet unknown features of what one identifies as oneself.

The question that needs to be addressed now is how all this involves the arts? Where does art step into this picture and – most importantly from the viewpoint of this

¹¹ The sensitivity of this argument recurs later in Chapter Four when the infamous commentaries of German composer, Karlheinz Stockhausen, on 9/11 are discussed. Although, from the viewpoint of art, Stockhausen appears to celebrate this act, I argue that from life cannot emerge from trauma. The space of trauma is frozen and dead, whereas ground zero is the potential of life.

research – how can contemporary art have a say in the creation of such non-teleological space? The subsequent sub-chapters shift the attention on to art and its potential.

Shifting to art

How can art make a difference in a world that currently views artistic practices and art appreciation as a luxurious pastime of the privileged elite? Where and on what platforms could art possibly make a difference? The reason why art is problematic when it comes to involving it in decision-making about the world, is because of the general goal-oriented mindset of the world, dictated, according to Stengers and Burkhardt, by the current productionist attitude. This mentality of classifying values is necessarily intertwined with political decision-making, with the distribution of funds and consequentially with allowing only certain disciplines to have a say in decision-making, excluding others. In other words, as practice shows, no matter how the 'benefit of art' is understood, it is not necessarily in the interest of decision-makers to invite art practitioners into forums of judgment, on the grounds that art's primary interest does not lie in the generation of fast profit. So the general conceptualization of the arts excludes it from decision-making, on the grounds that art does not have straightforward relevance when deciding on matters of the world which are currently associated with profit and gain. This implies that in our society, when pressing concerns have to be dealt with, it has not been the practice to involve the arts. Indeed, although some theorists, arguing for the use of art, have demonstrated that the arts have value for augmenting performance, I agree that if the value of art is to be defined on an instrumentalist basis within the structure of hegemony, it is difficult to come up with solid arguments that firmly stand their ground.

However, what humankind needs to master for our society is an other-than-instrumentalist attitude towards the world. I argue that art, especially contemporary art, is able to aid us in mastering this new mentality. Where does this 'different attitude' originate? As I see it, the contemporary art that is able to make a difference – not from the viewpoint of hegemony, but from the perspective of overthrowing it - does not work under terminologies such as 'use', 'gain', 'purpose', 'method', 'structure' and so on, simply because it is part of a different discourse. The fast scientific approach wants measurable data that

proves that there has been 'growth' and 'development'. However, in the contemporary art practices I am referring to, these principles make no sense whatsoever. The contemporary art I have in mind as of key importance for today's matters does not know quantitative research. It is not about truth claims and falsities. It is created from an urge to show, to reveal, for a large variety of reasons, but not with 'a' specific goal in mind. Such contemporary art is a reflective/contemplative but very much action-based practice in which there is no specific target. In most cases, the scientific mentality operates with truth claims and expects proof that can be tested, proven right or wrong. Art in general cannot be proven right or wrong. There can be successful art, good artworks versus bad pieces, but we cannot judge them according to the categories used by the rationalist, capitalist, fast scientific mentality. I therefore argue that what science and the humanities can learn from contemporary art is the very attitude or mentality that the previously mentioned philosophers and scientists also demand, especially because, as I demonstrate below, this is the attitude that is in the very nature of some contemporary art.

Furthermore, such contemporary art practices are able to open up this space of non-dualism, non-identity in other words they point towards 'ground zero' types of experience. These practices are the subject of this research, as I see a huge potential in them. Because they manage to go beyond discourse, they are able to open up a space, as will be shown below, and has already been suggested by Malabou, that is a 'force beyond form'. Therefore, they are a kind of power that does not manifest into a system, an alternative structure as we know it, and consequently does not become a world view. It is important to emphasize that this 'going beyond the discursive' might be one of the key attributes of contemporary art, leading us into an 'embodiment', namely an other than cognitive engagement.

Let me take one step at a time, though, and clarify first what the force of art is associated with, in general. Subsequently, I will discuss theories on the force of contemporary artistic practices. As well as referring to prominent thinkers, I will present what I see as the force of contemporary art that manifests the attitude so necessary for our world today.

Art for social and individual good

Much research has been conducted into the 'use' and 'benefit' of art for the individual and society. Such instrumentalist perspectives on art that explore what art is good for, explore the value of art within the given social framework. Although such an approach keeps and evaluates art strictly within the given social order, for example how it helps to establish and sustain hegemony, this type of research exists and is often used as an argument for taking the arts seriously, applying for grants and support or simply treating it as a legitimate discipline, alongside sciences and the humanities. Therefore, although this approach towards the arts will not be adopted in this research, it is briefly introduced in order to highlight its dynamism and shortcomings.

'How the arts impact communities?' was the title of a paper on the measurement of the impact of culture, given by Joshua Guetzkow, professor of sociology, at a Princeton University conference in 2002¹². Countless researches have been conducted into the benefit of art, from the perspective of both active and passive participation.¹³ Among these, Guetzkow's research focused on three statements; first, that the arts improve social capital; second, that they have a positive effect on the economy; and finally that they are good for individuals.

When referring to social capital, Guetzkow was looking at community art programs in which people, often with some type of social disadvantage, would participate in projects designed for community improvement (e.g. the creation of a more tolerant environment). He mentions a few tangible outcomes of involvement in art projects, such as "fostering trust between participants and thereby increasing the generalized trust of others, ... increasing their sense of connection to that community, ...learning technical and interpersonal skills important for collective organizing" and so on (2002:6).

Researchers usually see the economic benefit of the arts in the (in)direct financial outcome of art events such as concerts, theatre and other ticket sales, festivals of all kinds

¹² Taking the Measure of Culture Conference Princeton University June 7-8, 2002

¹³ Here I think of a wide range of study. Just to name a few: on the benefit of art education for children (see: http://www.heritage1886.org/new/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=197:positive-benefits-of-art&catid=22&Itemid=59), on the benefit of art for public health (see: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2804629/>), the achievements of art therapy is available on various forums, or the RAND corporation studies highlight (often instrumentally) the beneficial aspects of involvement with the arts (see: <http://www.rand.org/topics/performing-arts.html>).

with relatively high entrance fees or block-buster exhibitions. All these events are very likely to generate revenue, help in the growth of tourism and show sponsors of the event in a different light, that can be used for marketing purposes (Guetzkow 2002).

However, the impact of the arts on business is manifold and the merging of the two above, art's social capital and its economic benefit, can result in outstanding performance. Those who think about business with an artistic mindset are capable of bringing unique insights into the world of economic affairs. As László Láng (2014) the chancellor of International Business School, Budapest, argues:

Business facts, figures and theories must be translated into an alternative future or action. We are moving beyond the information age when analytical skills were required for this translation, into the conceptual age where the required skills are things like empathy, creating symphonies, storytelling, making meaning beyond numbers, etc. By enhancing such skills, arts may open up the mind to this conceptual process of translation, and thus increase business success.¹⁴

When referring to individuals, it is stated that the arts can help improve health, skills and cultural capital. Various tests have been created to measure such impact, one of these is the 'Mozart effect' that demonstrates that listening to Mozart or other "similar stimuli show improved performance on visuo-spatial reasoning". It is also a fact that children involved in artistic activities or receiving education with an artistic focus (e.g. the Waldorf-school) perform much better in other disciplines and in their future careers (Guetzkow 2002:11).¹⁵

Guetzkow convincingly demonstrates various ways the arts enhance human performance. Nonetheless, there is a problem not only with the argument, something that Guetzkow also realizes, namely, how do we know that it is the arts that have to be supported and not other type of social endeavors? He argues: "From a policy perspective, ...

¹⁴ Email correspondence, 2015, Budapest.

¹⁵ Again, understandably, there is a lot of skepticism regarding these statistics. Firstly, how do we really know that the arts helped in this or that problem/issue. Research relies solely on accounts of the participants who have volunteered to give their opinion. Furthermore, how do we know that other, non-art activities would not have resulted in an equally beneficial outcome. As Guetzkow (2002) argues: "The fundamental question here is whether impact can be *measured* solely or largely on the basis of these accounts, especially considering that participants almost always self-select into participation. What would happen if people were randomly assigned into an "arts treatment" group?"

the issue is no longer whether the existence of the arts has a beneficial impact, but whether money spent on arts programs will have *more* of an impact than other programs” (2002:18).

This problem is very pressing in current society in which funds for activities (seemingly) outside the economy are becoming more and more scarce. According to Guetzkow (2002:18), the question we need to answer is not whether “did this program work at all” but “did this program work better than another?” How do we know that in order to master creative living we need the arts and not a good therapist or a coach?

Are arts programs for at-risk youth more effective than the Boy Scouts or midnight basketball? Do arts programs draw people away from other high impact activities in which they would otherwise be involved, such as environmental activism or charity; would public money be better spent on things like transportation infrastructure or police? (Guetzkow 2002:18)

There are many problems with such arguments. Aside from never clarifying what is meant by the term, ‘art’¹⁶, Guetzkow presents an *instrumentalist* view of the arts and explores how they are able to make us become even better citizens, part of the power-game that has gotten us into the problems we are now trying to climb out of. Furthermore, it keeps the arts in an apologetic position, hinting that art indeed needs to come up with arguments for its legitimate existence; it is not a given that the arts are entitled to be supported. Nonetheless, this is the way that the arts are often approached, so a few more lines need to be dedicated to arguments sprouting from a similar attitude.

John Carey, professor of literature at Oxford University, has a chapter in his book, *What good are the arts?* (2005:96) entitled ‘Do the arts make us better?’. While working within the broad concept of art, and with an instrumentalist attitude, he touches on a very sensitive terrain and highlights the complexity of the answer to his question. He reaches back to Aristotle and argues that Aristotle considered the arts were the part of education that had the capacity to lift the moral qualities of the viewer. This argument on ‘art for the betterment of humankind’ became especially powerful during Romanticism when thinkers such as Kant, Schiller, Schleiermacher and others attributed an almost supernatural, prophetic power to art

¹⁶ Should we understand community art projects for the nurturing of a particular neighborhood or the minimalist sculptures of Donald Judd under the term ‘art’? Surely the two have a different impact on very different audiences.

and named the artist the new 'messiah'. The artist as a new prophet was able to lead humankind to a new, happy, transcendental, perfect society of the abstract God figure. These and other theories (such as Theosophy) in the early 20th century influenced a lot of artists and creative thinkers such as the Russian Suprematists, Constructivists, the De Stijl artists and architects, Rudolph Steiner and followers, the Bauhaus to some extent and modernist architecture in general.¹⁷

Carey (2005:97,98) points out that this ability of the arts to lift the moral spirit was not only the mission of philosophers or artists but was also present in 19th century institutional practices, such as making the entrance to public collections free of charge or in designating Trafalgar Square as the new centre of the National Gallery, so the poor could also walk in. This might indeed be the case, and unconsciously one might agree with this attitude towards the arts, namely that art is able to lead us to some kind of spiritual revelation, to some kind of 'enlightenment'. But is this really the case?

By relying on psychological studies, such as the *Psychology of the arts* by Hans and Shulamith Kreidler (1972), Carey (2005:101,102) demonstrates that there is no reason to think that the arts will produce any behavioral changes, and nor is there direct proof that the arts can help us in any way to become 'better' or 'happier' human beings. Needless to say, Hitler himself was a fanatic art lover and painter, and the case of John Paul Getty is also striking (2005:129,130).¹⁸ No, Hitlers and Getties will not become different kinds of human being just because they engage passionately with the arts. However, other statistics prove that the arts can interfere with violent personality traits; art workshops held in prisons helped to reduce the violence rate by 20%, and while the prisoners took part in the project, one detention centre reported a 58% decrease in offensive behavior. As these data show, the arts can help reduce violence rates, help self-expression, give a pathway to the safe flow of pain and anxiety and help the growth of self and social respect that detainees have issues with (2005:155-162).

¹⁷ It has to be noted that these philosophers were not instrumentalizing the arts; on the contrary, they saw the arts as a means of breaking through and overcoming the current social framework (see for instance: Steiner, Rudolf. (2003). *The Arts and Their Mission*, II. 1923. in *Art, an Introductory Reader*. New York: Sophia Books, an imprint of Rudolf Steiner Press).

¹⁸ Getty was a dedicated art collector and founded a museum now bearing his name, in California. Getty thought that those who did not have the taste for art were barbarians and belonged to a lower caste in society. He stated that these people should be transported into remote areas to live, welfare should be withdrawn and they should be prevented from population growth so state birth control should be imposed by force in order to prevent the overpopulation of the useless individuals of society (Carey 2005).

Carey (2005:115,116) returns to 'real life', though, and brings a counter-example when quoting Heaney, who argues that poetry improves people as it stirs deep acoustic memories, but many of the boys in his classroom who were passionate about poetry still ended up in the IRA, killing and blowing up people.¹⁹ Nonetheless, even Carey acknowledges that the arts really have the ability to do something and generate change. He suggests, and I tend to agree, that the arts help in leading one back to the bodily union one experiences during infancy, namely that there is no sharp distinction between the outside world and the body. He writes: "The natural sense of oneness between the body and the outside world is '*another way of cutting up the universe*', an alternative to the objective, scientific way, and it is the artist's way as well as the young child's" (2005:111, italics, DV).²⁰

The important part of Carey's approach from the viewpoint of this research is his argument about the arts providing "another way of cutting up the universe". As I have already suggested, the art that should be listened to today is the art that questions the steady and safe social bond, so it 'cuts up the universe differently'. The value of art for me lies precisely in its ability to generate thinking *outside* the social frame, the very cage that rationalist, instrumentalist teleological thinking is making tighter and tighter by mapping the world. Ironically, in this case, the 'use' and 'benefit' of the arts is not going to be grasped from an instrumentalist viewpoint, as this 'outside' is not conceptualized within the value-system of the current society. Therefore, such instrumentalist apperception of the arts has to be surmounted if one wishes to explore what the arts can really do for 21st century society. I suggest that the 'use' and 'benefit' of art for us today is the very ability of art to overcome the very paradigms (such as 'use' and 'benefit'), in other words the very structure in which art has been traditionally understood as means for a social good.

Before I move on to what this 'outside' might represent and how the force of art is able to take the beholder beyond current hegemony, thereby offering an alternative for

¹⁹ The arts are often characterized as 'spiritually uplifting', and Carey also dedicates some critical thoughts to that and to the concept of ecstasy. Most of us are convinced that ecstasy is a state of blessing and is good for us and good for the people. However, Carey points out, what football hooligans experience when they tear apart a stadium is also ecstasy, when people lynch one another is also ecstasy. Ecstasy is therefore not necessarily good for the people, at least not in the sense of moral good. We could argue that the ecstasy generated by art is different, but, when referring to the survey of Margaret Laski, Carey points out that people with a high ability to have aesthetic experience have a (much) higher rate of being selfish, self-obsessed and ignorant (2005:124,125).

²⁰ With this statement Carey touches upon what is going to be elaborated further in the concept of the transitional space of art.

decision-making about our future, there is a need to look into various contemporary art theories that expect a similar, interrogatory, anti-hegemonic force from contemporary art.

Having looked into their ideas, I will outline where I think the force of contemporary art we should listen to might lie.

Contemporary art for deconstructing hegemony

Several art theorists argue that the role art should play in today's society is political. In this sense, artistic practices should take on the conscious role of questioning and interrogating the current state of affairs orchestrated by hegemony. Although the practices should remain artistic and not simply politically active, theorists see the role of art as radical interference. One of the most distinctive voices in this field is the social critic and philosopher, Chantal Mouffe, who sees art's central role in (socio-political) criticism as questioning the set values of hegemony. In order to argue for the critical role of art, in her book *Agonistics. Thinking the world politically* (2013) Mouffe introduces the term 'agonistic art' which she sees as a possible agent for 'agonistic democracy'. It seems that, although Mouffe calls for the overthrow of hegemony, she still keeps the arts within an instrumentalist framework, namely in use for agonistic democracy. Nonetheless, in the ensuing paragraphs, I will introduce her ideas in order to see how she sees the role of art as an agent that can invite us out of hegemony, and how her take on the matter corresponds with my idea of art as non-teleological space beyond hegemony.

The key term 'agonistics', in Mouffe's approach, is in itself aggressive terminology and indeed, Mouffe is not about peace, reconciliation or coming to agreements. It is not how she sees the potentials of either democracy or of contemporary art. Mouffe argues that consensus can only be the result of exclusion which she dismisses as anti-democratic in itself. Why is that? Consensus in most cases involves compromises. With good arguments and a sufficient amount of pressure, compromises can be induced on the weak or the underprivileged. For Mouffe, in order to coexist and live well, consensus is not compulsory; the parties do not necessarily have to agree. Furthermore, tension can result in the birth of unexpected constellations. 'Agonistics' therefore stands for a strategy which involves struggle and controversies, and the possibility, or even the celebration of not being able to

come to an agreement. It is through this attitude that contemporary art can act upon society, namely by questioning the hegemonic structure that binds society in order to establish agonistic democracy. Mouffe holds very strong views about agonistics and puts a considerable responsibility on art: “The agonistic approach sees critical art as constituted by a manifold of artistic practices bringing to the fore the existence of alternatives to the current post-political order. Its critical dimension consists in making visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, in giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony” (2013:77).

In other words, Mouffe expects art to shed light on the power-structure that binds society, as well as on the subjects and practices excluded and ‘otherized’ by hegemonic operations.²¹ Although Mouffe is quite pessimistic when exploring whether art has the necessary space and potentials to question, interrogate and make a difference, she argues that the ‘struggle’ should continue anyway and “we should visualize forms of artistic resistance as agonistic interventions within the context of counter-hegemonic struggles” (2013:72). Put differently, Mouffe claims that art should be openly politically critical, counter-hegemonic forums should be established and art should play an active role in questioning and interrogating with the open intention of making a difference. In other words, good art should operate with an open political goal in mind: it should be teleological.

Mouffe’s approach to contemporary art as radical, oppositional, counter-hegemonic interrogation and statement is very popular these days. Many art institutions practice political criticism and they manage to overcome the dictating power-structure they were initially part of. For instance, the Kyiv Biennale in Ukraine recently announced the cancellation of the 2015 event not only because of the physical dangers of political unrest and the problems of displaying and exhibiting works in a potentially politically dangerous

²¹ Although Mouffe sounds very radical and active, she has doubts if art can still obtain a platform to act as a critical agent. Can (self-)reflective experience still have a role in capitalism, driven by production? Is there a chance to think out of the box? Can art have enough power to step above the power-structure the entire society is embedded in? As she puts it: “Art has been subsumed by the aesthetics of biopolitical capitalism, and autonomous production is no longer possible. ... We have all been transformed into passive functions of the capitalist system” (2013:72). Can art as a radical practice be heard at all in a society where even the institutions, namely sites of critical culture that are supposed to reflect upon the world we live in, are embedded in hegemony? Mouffe argues that even museums, supposedly sites of progressive criticism, are paralyzed by capitalism: “The main objective of these ‘postmodern’ museums is to make money through blockbuster exhibitions and the sale of a manifold of products for tourists. The type of ‘participation’ they promote is based on consumerism, and they actively contribute to the commercialization and depoliticization of the cultural field” (2013:83).

zone, but also because the organizers felt that “In the times when our society faces serious force majeure and directs all possible efforts to overcome the tragic consequences of this situation, it is not appropriate for us to proceed with organizing the multi-million dollar project” (<http://www.biennialfoundation.org/2015/03/kyiv-art-biennale-cancelled-due-to-political-instability/>).

In this case, the cancellation of the event stands for social sympathy and, as such, is a political statement. In Europe, many art professionals feel that political statements are expected from contemporary art. For instance, take a look at the mission statement of the OFF-Biennale Budapest²² which is a contemporary art event that is expressly organized to exclude governmental organizations as well as government funding. They openly claim that “art is political!” It is a (relatively) massive project, at least for a country the size of Hungary, involving about two hundred artists and eight cities apart from Budapest, with strong international and regional cooperation. The initiative was created to show what contemporary art might represent when it is not dictated and driven by the current Hungarian state regime that has taken over the major art institutions and to some extent enforces art to collude with the vision of the government. For Mouffe, as well as for many of the OFF-Biennale participants, art and politics are intertwined. The crucial question for Mouffe is the “possible forms of critical art” and she is interested in “... examining the different ways in which artistic practices can contribute to unsettling the dominant hegemony” (2013:76).

How does Mouffe see effective political art? Mouffe presents the example of Alfredo Jaar’s 2008 Milan project entitled *Questions, questions*²³ that was an open political statement against the Berlusconi government. The work consisted of texts such as ‘Do politics need culture?’ or ‘Is the intellectual useless?’ displayed in public spaces, including public transportation, billboards and elsewhere. This was a project that called for intellectual work and critical thinking against a given political regime. Mouffe argues that Jaar’s intention was to “‘try to create little cracks in the system’ by occupying any space available for three months so as to create a network of resistance and to restore the meaning of the public space, which had been erased by the control of Berlusconi” (2013:79).

²² For further information visit: <http://offbiennale.hu/what-is-off/>.

²³ http://www.alfredojaar.net/milano_questions.questions/.

I can imagine that there were people (especially the already critically thinking elite) who 'got the message' and were (re)assured, in their existing framework, that the Berlusconi-government was imposing practices that curtailed democracy. Practices such as Jaar's, aim to impose those desired 'cracks' in order to create space for "building a counter-environment" and to introduce, through "aesthetic means", "new forms of identification" (2013:80).²⁴

What really makes me wonder regarding Mouffe's suggestions, is whether practices as such are powerful and all-encompassing enough firstly to unsettle hegemony and, secondly, to create an alternative that comes about non-teleologically. Mouffe sees these practices as examples of agonistic art activism, and a form of agonistic democracy. Yet I would argue that all these works reflect and stay on a socio-political level, and remain a commentary on hegemony, therefore keeping within the confines of the power-structure they aim to overcome. As I see it, the problem with this work is that it makes sense only within and in relation to hegemony: in this case, the Berlusconi-government. In a way, such works remain parasitic on the very order they aim to criticize, and rarely inspire a revision of universal issues such as 'oppression' or 'corruption' in general that, to me, would be the purpose of good art. Furthermore, such projects rarely inspire personal work. They address the collective, but they do not address the personal, biographical, or psychological. In this sense, although I called Mouffe 'radical', she is after all not radical enough, as those 'cracks' might emerge on a social and collective level, but they might not be powerful enough to work on a personal realm for us to reconsider to what extent we, personally, are effected and manipulated by the matters targeted. So what Mouffe has in mind in terms of counter-hegemony revealed by art, is not what I have in mind, as for her the artistic practices remain on the level of socio-criticism and interrogation of a specific situation. Such artworks do not seem to be reaching for universal reconsideration of, let us say, hegemony in general, nor are they engaged with the personal.

²⁴ Mouffe (2013) writes that she sees in Jaar's work an oppositional, interrogative force that is not directly, narratively political, yet it is more powerful as a means for counter-hegemony. Although in terms of Jaar's work I can see what she means, as indeed, fortunately his practice is not journalistic. However, similarly to the work of many fellow artists addressing socio-political issues, the project *Questions* stay on a blunt, easy and cognitive level that to me does not appear to be powerful enough, neither politically, nor artistically.

A philosopher who also attributes a political attitude to art in terms of interrogating hegemony, and who is also closer to addressing the personal, is Jacques Rancière. In his essay 'Aesthetic separation, aesthetic community' (2011) in order to demonstrate what he means by the force of art, Rancière refers to an artists' collective called *Campement urbain* who camp in the much troubled and currently dangerous outskirts of Paris, the notorious *banlieux*. The artists' aim is to reverse the discourse that, due to the mass individualism advocated by capitalist productionism, sees the crisis of the outskirts as the lack of social ties. These suburbs are overpopulated and cramped, almost without personal private space. This claustrophobic existence does not result in the making of a strong community, but rather in frustration. In their project *I and Us* (2005-present) participants (the residents of the outskirts) work on creating a space in which one individual can exist solitarily in a "completely unnecessary, fragile and useless space". The claiming of this empty space forms a community of those who are, on the one hand, able to be alone and be just themselves individually ('I'), but also who shape a community of 'Us' in which every member is entitled to having the experience of spending time being alone. Those participating *individuals* in the project came together as a *community* and were even willing to wear T-shirts with mottos that stood for the experience they gained from the project. A hijab-wearing female participant (fig. 2.), for instance, was wearing a T-shirt onto which she had written: "I want an empty word that I could fill" (2011:45-54).²⁵

²⁵

This longing for an empty space in which creativity – individual creativity - can emerge is also crucial for Guy Debord who gave special importance to time spent outside the world of production. These are the times of not doing anything, sitting in bars, going for pointless strolls, trotting down the street with no purpose in mind. This space is also that of creativity, as I learnt from artists who can lie on the couch for hours watching the ceiling and seemingly doing nothing.



Fig. 2. *Campement urbain, I and us* (2005-)

In a sense, the 'body' that is recreated here outside the hegemonic structure is the body of much needed solitude, in other words, individual and collective empty space. In my interpretation, although Rancière acknowledges political relevance, he is actually more interested in the potential of creating some kind of 'ground zero' without teleological implications. He celebrates such projects because they take place on a personal level and the individuals come together as collective space from which organically, non-teleologically, new alternatives might emerge. For Rancière, critical art reconsiders subject-object relations and does so beyond representation, reason or words, addressing the individual and calling for deep, personal reconsideration: in the case of *Campement urbain*, for an empty, silent space of retreat. This necessarily might have political consequences on the level of the community, but the departure point is the personal experience.

This 'space of emptiness', Rancière claims, emerges in connection with the idea of going beyond hegemony. It appears that real counter-hegemony cannot spring from negative identification (e.g. I define myself in the light of the other). Real and effective counter-hegemony might surface from thinking/being in the world completely in parameters other than hegemony. This most important idea, as I see it, is present in Rancière's take but less so in Mouffe's argument on art.

It has been suggested that one of this 'other than hegemonic' phenomena is non-teleological space. This is what the force of art can generate; although Rancière touches

upon it, it needs further substantiation. In order to demonstrate how I perceive this force of art, a force that might lead to (but at the same time be inseparable from) those most important spaces of 'ground zero', I will present Krzysztof Ziarek's take on the subject.

1.5 Art as an alternative space

In the book entitled *The force of art* (2004), Ziarek diagnoses the powerlessness of art in a techno-centric world driven by business and economic interests. This "'powerlessness,' in the context of art, suggests that artworks, when compared with social, political, or even physical forces, lack any effectiveness in changing reality" (2004:3). Indeed, if art was to prove its use for the development of society according to the parameters of science or technology, it would fall short. As demonstrated previously in the discussion on the 'benefit of art', if put into an instrumentalist position, the arts are always made to fight for their own legitimacy.

Furthermore, according to Ziarek, we do not need art for the sake of creating happier, wealthier, healthier individuals. In other words, its mere nature should not be defined within the parameters of the use-benefit-goal mindset that characterizes our current society. Instead, Ziarek considers that the force of art is about counter-hegemony, although not in the sense Mouffe advocates critical attitude. Ziarek uses the term 'force', rejecting the term 'power', to connote what art can do, and how. Ziarek believes expressly in the 'force' of art, and not in the 'power' of art. The reason for this distinction, he explains, is that 'power' is usually identified with the power structure that defines our world and aims for growth, wealth and development, whereas, in the case of art, its 'power-less-ness' is understood "not as a negative judgment ... but as a provocative indication that art functions *otherwise* than through dominant articulations of power (2004:3, italics, DV).

It cannot be overemphasized that, as Ziarek states, this attitude towards art, excludes the expectation that art should act within the same frame of references we attribute to practices that are there to evoke some kind of change in society. Art should not be thought of in utilitarian terms, which is why he rejects the instrumentalist attitude. Along with that, he also rejects the role of art in the service of any political goal, even if the goal is to question hegemony. In this case, art still positions itself in terms of hegemony, therefore

cannot rise above or go beyond it. To Ziarek, the force of art is to act *otherwise*, in other words, outside, 'other than' the power-structure. When it comes to art and powerlessness as a proposition for an "alternative economy of forces", art is to function in a way that is *unlike* the operation of the power structure we are embedded in. Therefore, Ziarek articulates that the force of art lies in its "ability to let go of power, to transform relations and enable their alternative configurations" (2004:3, 4).

How should one imagine the nature of the force of art? If art is not power than what kind of force is it? By the force of art, Ziarek understands the *transformative* character of art (2004:5). He uses the term 'force' to underline the transformative nature of art in the tradition of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, and he describes a "level of nonformalized functions and flows of energy, that is, in terms of the elemental constituents of 'being' prior to their actualization into substances, objects or bodies" (2004:7). This is perfectly in line with how I see the force of art, namely as a site of 'ground zero', an energy that does not strive for a particular goal.

The nature of this force is explained through Heidegger's ideas: "... force is seen in the Heideggerian perspective as *rupture*, change, transformation, that is, as the very dynamic of being and unfolding" (Ziarek 2004:7). Unfolding, dynamism of being and rupture are key concepts for what I think of the force of art.²⁶ I would like to highlight the 'dynamism' element in art as Ziarek feels that, and I could not agree more, instead of understanding the artwork as an object, it should be understood as an event, or as 'work'. In this sense, the materiality of the artwork is secondary; its impact on the subject becomes its primary goal (2004:9).

²⁶ Although their ideas differ on many points, Ziarek is just as critical of the objectification and commodification of art as Mouffe appears to show in her *Agonistics* (2013). He writes: "The notion of contemporary art as forcework highlights the dynamic, transformative momentum of art's work over and against the notion of artworks as objects and/or commodities" (2004:7). Ziarek therefore understands under the term 'art' as a force-field in which the commodity status of, and even the 'objecthood' of the artwork is secondary, and art, seen as action, as a non-teleological force, can exercise particular transformative effects on the observer.

Ziarek does not simply argue that, even if it is an object, art should be understood as other than an object or commodity, but also sees great danger in treating art as commodity. He writes: "To understand the work of art as an aesthetic and cultural object, subject to the laws of aesthetics, cultural transmission, and commodification, is to effectively foreclose art within the operations of making and power and this to sap and annul the very force of art, that is, forcework understood as the transformative redistribution of relations otherwise than in terms of power" (2004:107). This is important to consider, as if his theory were to be listened to by practitioners, it would lead to a very different positioning of the arts that currently revolves around the art market which treats art as a luxury item.

If art works upon us, and if it has the force to change and transform, one wonders how it does so and what exactly it is that changes. If the work of art cannot effectively exercise practical change on the world that we live in, what can it change, where does its force lie? As Ziarek puts it: "...the artistic forcework can be seen as an enabling, transformative work, which radically *changes the very momentum of relations*" (2004:11, italics, DV). The reason why this force field is so important to recognize is because, through changing how we relate to the world, it is capable of taking us beyond constitutions of power. As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, it manages to overcome the power-structure we are embedded in and which we cannot see or think our way out of.

How does this tie into how Mouffe and Rancière see the force of art? Unlike Mouffe, Ziarek does not think of this move as political, in the sense of referring to a political statement, nor does he expect artworks to target specific elements of the power-structure he would like to see overthrown by the force of art. Along with Rancière, he believes that by making the viewer *personally* exist within this space of 'otherwise', there is an engagement with thoughts, ideas or behavior that is 'other than' the formulas we are taught to engage with. This 'otherwise' becomes the real alternative, a force that does not aim to make itself understood by, and in terms of, power-relations. Therefore – and this is why this theory is more radical than Mouffe's - "...art's force is not an alternative power but an alternative *to power...*" (2004:12, italics, DV). In other words, art is not counter-hegemony or 'counter-environment' as it cannot be explained in terms of hegemony since even the negative identification (counter-hegemony) would not make sense.

What Ziarek is pointing out here is that art may be such a strong critique on hegemony that it does not even play according to the rules of hegemony, but offers a way of being in the world that hegemony cannot understand or comment on. Art might still reference social issues and problems, and in its subject-matter it might be socially critical, but that is not where its force lies. Art as force is no longer in the service of power and should not be understood from the viewpoint of power. Therefore, art's force becomes political in the sense that it is an alternative to politics. It can become so as "it instantiates the event as free from the most fundamental and pervasive kind of domination: the originary mobilization and shaping of force relations for the sake of power" (2004:14).

As stated previously, the force of art therefore operates outside the power of the social bond and this is what makes it really political. The question that calls for an answer next is just what kind of a force is Ziarek talking about? How can this force be grasped?

In order to elaborate on these different modes of operation, Ziarek (2004:16) reaches back to Heidegger and argues that the 'work' of art is to be understood as *poiesis* rather than a working towards something, for a particular goal to be achieved. If such a goal is in mind, the artwork becomes a teleological mission and loses the very thing it was created for, namely the nature of its free force-field. Ziarek's mission is therefore "to figure force otherwise than technologically"; this he attributes to art and borrows Heidegger's term of the poietic, while contrasting technic with poietic. He explains the poietic force as follows:

... art becomes socially 'meaningful' precisely when it breaks with the aesthetic and political functions that society establishes for it, when it alters the power formations that regulate society and that society wants to stamp or project onto artworks. Instead, what art inaugurates is a different forcework, a different disposition of forces, which means that the forces that operate in society in a technological or instrumental, overrationalized manner... become nontechnological. They are the same forces, yet their modality of unfolding is different in art, which means that the relations they produce become disposed into a different mode of revealing, and, as a result, the world unfolds differently (2004:41).

Poietic and technic spring from the same root, but they are qualitatively different forces. For poietic, this "different" unfolding is what Ziarek refers to with the term "otherwise" that he treats as analogous with "aphesis", in other words a "letting be" (elaborated upon in Chapter Three). For Heidegger, as Ziarek explains, in *poiesis* it is "enabling" that takes place, that is "nothing practical, nor an effect or a result; it does not produce a thing, an entity, or a being but simply enables what *is* to be *as* it is. ... this enabling is not passive or contemplative but instead participatory and transformative" (2004:141).

This is how Ziarek understands the force of art: as *poiesis*, as an enabling, as a real alternative to power that does not speak the same language as power. It is not goal oriented, not defined by production, rather this force allows the 'things of the world' to emerge without prescription. Through *poiesis*, as opposed to technology, another face of

relations manifest and a different perspective is possible. The subject-matter, the message (of the artwork) might or might not refer to actual events of the world, this is not the point. Instead, the force of *poiesis* takes one out of the technological mindset and it is this existence in 'otherwise', that is other than power-bound and technological, where a radically new take on the world might emerge. This shift from technic to poietic needs a more elaborate explanation.

From technic to *poietic*

In order to demonstrate how the force of art might be able to shift us from technological to poietic, I refer to an art project where the overthrowing of the technological mindset is especially tangible. The following example is important because it also reflects upon (and shows an alternative to) the dilemma that characterizes current scientific and philosophical discourse: slow versus fast (science) and the need for a space to consider the consequences of our actions.

Philosopher Robert Zwijnenberg (2012) demonstrates what might take place when a scientific experiment originally set in the fast science realm, in this case genetic manipulation to increase production, is turned into an art project. As transgenic aesthetic research at n The Arts and Genomics Centre in Holland, bioartist, Adam Zaretsky, carried out an experiment of genetically modifying pheasant embryos to grow two heads or four legs. He and the students would inject plasmid DNA into the egg in order to generate mutation. Having done the intervention, the fate of the embryos had to be decided. According to Dutch law, such mutants cannot be born (meaning the eggs could not be allowed to hatch) so the embryos had to be killed before hatching. The reactions of the students were striking as they varied from not wanting to follow the law to crying and mourning the unborn embryos. Zwijnenberg remarks on the project:

This hands-on tampering with life, however basic, by the students themselves set within this artistic performance, alienating them from everyday student life, gave them a deep, new experience and understanding of issues raised by the life sciences. In this embryology lab a lot of questions, anger, confusion, ambiguity and misunderstandings emerged from all sides (Zwijnenberg 2012 italics, DV).

This experiment exposed the consequences of genetic manipulation in a completely different light. For art, Zwijnenberg (2012) argues

... the materials, tools, and technologies of the life sciences are hardly neutral... They are rife with all sorts of cultural, political, social, and ethical assumptions and implications that are part of this particular scientific practice. ... The use of these materials, tools, and technologies within an artistic context automatically means that artists have to deal with these promises, expectations, and fears, including their cultural, political, social, and ethical ramifications.

In other words, artists have a holistic view of the complex connotations of a scientific experiment, in which, from the beginning, layers of meaning play a key role in the experiment and the subsequent experience. Due to showcasing the experiment in an artistic framework, this 'other than instrumental' understanding could give rise to a completely different take on the consequences of our actions. As Zwijnenberg remarks:

Nevertheless, or perhaps precisely because of this, I see this performance by Zaretsky as a wonderful example of creating a platform on which scientists, artists and scholars can work together on important issues associated with the notion of tampering with life. The artwork is neither the objects or eggs nor the processes and activities, *the artwork is the open space created with these objects, processes and activities in which something can happen, in which insights can arise that have not been predetermined, but are unexpected, surprising, threatening or unpleasant* (Zwijnenberg 2012, italics, DV).

What takes place during the experiment generates a different attitude, a different behavior towards the scientific process. Through a poietic strategy, in which the embryos are not treated as a means towards a specific end, but are looked upon as potential life in themselves, the outcome as well as the entire experience of the project may result in different decision-making.

The key point for this particular experiment is the phenomenon of 'open space' that resonates 'ground zero', a space without teleological implications for coming up with a change in decision-making processes. If the complexity and manifold meaning of such

experiments are acknowledged, it could lead us to a different understanding of science (an alternative to fast science) and also to a different political attitude. Nonetheless, I would not list this experiment under 'ground zero' in art, although it is getting very close. It is a strong, but, like Mouffe's take, still 'parasitical' commentary on science and its possible impact on society. Therefore, the project still remains within, and comments on, a hegemonic framework. For Ziarek, this case, as explained in detail, is different, as he sees the force of art as a completely distinctive alternative, one that does not even speak the language of the social framework.

The artistic practices I am looking for are sites of ground zero that might or might not carry a socio-political message, might or might not have a reference to the problems and issues our society currently face. The point is not their direct reference to specific issues. Rather, these artistic practices seem to carry the force of *poiesis*, in other words, they can rise above or beyond, without corresponding with the rules of the hegemonic (technocratic) system. Therefore, as Ziarek also explained, these practices operate with a different logic. The kind of art that seems to be relevant for the needs of the 21st century enables us to exist in spaces that are not teleologically defined, not prescriptive; instead they interrogate those frames of reference and taken for granted structures we, as society, live by.

Therefore, the practices I am referring to throughout the research do not mirror, but question and shape the reality we live. These practices are not instrumental in the sense that they do not aim to heal or fix what has been broken. Instead, these practices tear apart, they invite us to, figuratively speaking, fall apart in front of them; they are artworks that do not tell us how to put the picture back together. These practices therefore do not dictate any meta-narrative, but they are empty spaces with potential. This space is about confrontation, contradiction and confusion of the outer and inner self, both with our conscious and unconscious, carefully built Symbolic reality (elaborated in Ch.4).

One might be tempted to ask why look for such a space in art and not somewhere else? The reason why we need art, apart from other 'platforms' like slow science or New Materialism, might lie in the phenomenon that art is not simply cognitive. As Zwijnenberg argues (2012) "in the field of possibilities opened up by the artistic register – including inconsistencies, paradoxes, ambiguities, uncertainties – an artist can try out different and sometimes opposing avenues of understanding without being troubled by or getting stuck in linguistic paradoxes and dualisms".

Art, as an *experience*, can rise above the workings of the ego that is bound by dualistic apperception of the world. As it is not simply a cognitive act, it is not about bringing into being another set of possible theories that shape the world. It is not even about dialogues that might or might not lead somewhere. Art is a *physical, a bodily experience*, that acts in a different realm from philosophy or social sciences, even if they operate with the strategies of 'slow'. Although theory might help lay down foundations, changes usually take place when there is a going beyond cognition and there is a physical and emotional manifestation of the theory. As I see it, this is where art can join in with 'alternative ways' of grasping and shaping the world, namely with the *embodiment of the personal experience* that rises above discourse. In the space of ground zero, it does not make sense to talk theory after a while, as it is poetry that takes place, a free-associative, disorderly engagement with our existence in the 'otherwise'.

Juxtaposed by examples, my aim throughout the book is to argue that the contemporary art we should adhere to is not a mirroring, but rather a shaping of the things of the world through the participation of the observer. Some contemporary art has a specific liberty with which it can open up a space that is not created with a given predefined goal in mind. I refer to this as the 'transitional space of art' in which 'ground zero' is a foundation: a non-teleological realm in which 'being' can manifest itself without predefined structure and expectations. The reason why we need art, I argue, is that certain contemporary artworks have a potential very few cultural practices have: namely that they are able to create space in which we are able, with our entire being: conscious, unconscious, emotive, instinctual etc., to go beyond ego-boundaries.

The next chapters will attempt to clarify the following points: firstly, although much has already been said on the force of art, there is still a need for understanding *how* it is possible for a painting, for instance, to take one into any inner space. Secondly, if art can take the viewer into any space, how is it possible that such a significant space, termed 'ground zero', can reveal itself? Thirdly, if art is able to generate experiences of 'ground zero', just what kind of space is it and in what way might it be special? These questions are the focus of the following chapters. The next chapter entitled *Beyond representation* is a quest to address how an artwork can take one beyond the dualism of representation-represented and – once surpassed – how it operates.