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CURRENT CONDITIONS OF CREATIVITY:
ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH AMONG YOUNG CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS
IN VILNIUS

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INTRODUCTION

Goda Palekaitė: so, you come to a gallery without preparation where you are expected to create something; there, you take the palette of your knowledge and skills, and start mixing the colors impromptu – is that right?.. Still, while improvising, you do not ignore the palette you have?

Augustas Serapinas: no. There is a difference between doing something randomly and improvising.

GP: do you reflect upon the process and its outcome afterwards?

AS: yes. This walk and talk with you is my reflection. Though a reflection is always slippery since the moment of improvisation is gone, you can never fully say why you did this or that. Paradoxically, in the end, my works appear as something logical and welcoming for analysis, even though they were not created this way.

GP: so you can say that you trust your intuitive logic and improvised expression, and most often it does not disappoint you?

AS: absolutely. I can create only this way, otherwise it does not work.

GP: and you also need adrenaline, therefore you place yourself in an extreme situation so you can create something that you wouldn't think of while staying comfortable?

AS: absolutely. And this is very stressing and tiring, it costs a lot of nerves. [...] To be honest, I am a shy and reserved person; still, I constantly push myself into uncomfortable and even awkward situations without a way out. But this circle is also my reason to create at all: I force myself so I can learn – this is the main reason: I learn from creating.

(Serapinas 2014)

The main theme of this research can be identified as an inquiry about the *conditions of creativity among young contemporary visual artists in Vilnius* – the capital of Lithuania, and a *search for their creative method*. My initial concern was the perception of the urban space within this particular group of its inhabitants, and an intention to understand their skills and specific knowledge, and how these result in the works that they create. Yet, while reflecting

upon the fieldwork experience, I found a need to consider a broader issue of general conditions of creativity and creative strategies among the practitioners of interdisciplinary art.

Many of the artists I met in Vilnius considered a walk through the city as a creative act and, hence, as an art piece in itself. Searching for an accurate term to conceptualize this, I came to the word *method* meaning certain artistic strategies and modes of perception – i.e. *ways of acting* (implying that perception is an action as well), that enable individuals to believe their seemingly everyday life actions to be creative, critical, and, hence, *different* from the rest of the citizens.

As one of my interview partners, Vytenis Burokas expressed, it is not, as one may imagine, that an artist *has an idea*, and *just needs to realize it*; instead, “an artistic idea can be undefined. It may start as a mere impulse and then settle down in different mediums. [...] You have a starting point and, in the course of creative process, your idea changes, develops and unfolds into something completely unexpected” (Burokas 2014). Hence, I focus on the *processuality* of a creative act instead of its final result, and inquire *with what conceptual means do artists reflect upon their urban condition, and how do they perform their position*.

Thus, throughout the fieldwork I realized that the primarily inquiry needed to be developed. The research question was not accurate enough to correspond to my interests. It sounded as: “How do young contemporary artists from Vilnius perceive and experience the city space through their technical, analytical and bodily skills; and how do these perceptions result in their artworks in public urban spaces?” During countless informal talks and interviews, I realized that its descriptive manner could not satisfy my interest and that beyond my primary focus on the perception of the city space, there must be another question. After recognizing my theme as a search for a *creative method*, I ask:

How do young contemporary artists from Vilnius perceive and conceptualize their urban environment through their skills, and what creative methods do they apply in action?

In the scope of this thesis, I attempt to discuss this problem and suggest taking a combination of certain philosophical, anthropological and art theoretical perspectives. I intend to draw a picture of the contemporary art platform in Vilnius as well as of general urban (spatial, institutional, ideological) modern conditions. For this, I distinguish several creative methods and modes of perception as suitable to conceptualize the theme. In my writing, I switch the *microscope-telescope perspectives* (Lopeta 2014a) and shift from descriptions of immediate

experience to distant analysis back and forth, and continuously contextualize issues within the local situation and theoretical discourses.

I expand my study into five core chapters: the impression of the field and the central ethnographic methods that have been applied are introduced in the beginning. Further, I consider particular artistic positions in relation to the phenomenological approach. In the third and fourth chapters I present my crucial fieldwork experience and its outcomes as two *creative methods*. Finally, I contextualize the situation within the *conditions of contemporary creativity*. The structure of the thesis is introduced in detail further.

FIELDWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Undoubtedly, my own cultural background was crucial in conducting this research: being born and grown up in Vilnius, I had an opportunity to achieve deep insights within a short period of time. Being a Lithuanian native speaker enabled me to converse and work in written form in the protagonists' mother tongue. Before coming to anthropology, I have been studying at Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts and working as an artist, although, in a different area from my interview partners; yet, this allowed me to immerse into the field instantaneously, and enriched the immediate experience with a broad spectrum of skills and knowledge acquired before. This, certainly, also served for the intimate collaboration with the artists: some of them have been my friends for many years, and others – at least acquaintances.

The fieldwork has been conducted in Vilnius in FEBRUARY–APRIL 2014 and methodologically consisted of meetings, informal talks, interviews, and walks through the city accompanied by artists, as well as photographing, participation in exhibition openings and lectures and so forth. The research culminated in an intense *curatorial work* for an improvised interdisciplinary art festival named *MINEO* that took place on April 4–5, 2014.

It was during a walk through the city that Kipras Dubauskas – the central character of this thesis, invited me to assist him in organizing the first unofficial and non-institutionalized art festival in semi-public and abandoned spaces on different sites in Vilnius. He imagined the event as an alternative time-space for spontaneously occurring, non-commercial, short-term public art and other (architectural, educative etc.) initiatives in form of sculptures,

installations, music performances, tours and workshops, seeking for the collaboration between artists, activists, architects and other explorers and *experts of the city*. It would open the city's abandoned sites in order to explore its forgotten social and historical levels, and enable a yet non-existing dialogue between people with similar concerns but very different professional tools to speak against their common antagonist – commercialization, privatization and bureaucratization of the urban space. I took the offer without longer consideration and undertook curatorial duties that included visiting and selecting spaces along with artists, transmitting information, editing and translating texts, meeting participants, driving, taking pictures, among others. The *curatorial method*, that is not introduced to anthropology yet, enabled me to touch the processes from within and to encounter certain challenges and risks that are only perceptible *by doing*.

My overall methodology was highly qualitative, wherein besides the curatorial method, *fieldwork on foot* (Ingold and Vergunst 2006) was of extreme importance. One could describe the artistic practice of my central protagonists as a site-specific visually-performative reference to graffiti, recent Vilnius' history, and institutional critique; therefore, I found it essential to accompany artists during their *creative walks* through the city. Further crucial aspects of ethnographic fieldwork were in-depth interviews (narrative and expert), informal talks, photography, and field protocols. During the period of two months, I conducted 13 semi-structured ethnographic interviews with artists and art experts; I had numerous informal talks, and visited a number of lectures and exhibitions related to the situation of public art in Vilnius, characteristics of public space, conditions of contemporary art, and others. Many of the activities and conversations I enacted were recorded by visual and audio means. However, I do refer to my methodological approach as a *creative methodology* where *improvisation but not randomness* (see the conversation with Augustas Serapinas above) dominated above the structure.

I indicate the central characters of this thesis as *young contemporary Vilnius artists*, even though these people *do not represent* the complexity of the field of contemporary art in the Lithuanian capital nor do they see themselves as a community. My decision to work with these particular persons was caused by their specific professional interests in space and environment, and their socio-critical approach rather than their feeling of belonging to one or another group. From many contemporary Vilnius artists I know, I elaborate only on several

artistic approaches: Kipras Dubauskas, Marija Puipaitė, Vitalij Červiakov, Augustas Serapinas, Kazimieras Sližys and Vytenis Burokas became central figures, and long conversations with an art philosopher and writer Algimantas Lopeta were crucial in conceptualizing and contextualizing the situation within the philosophical discourses.

With the word *young* I mean people who were born in the USSR and became artists in the Republic of Lithuania (all of them are in their mid- or late twenties), and who had to face radical changes in the social, cultural, political, urban, etc. life, and managed to position themselves as artists in a certain way. They all grew up in Vilnius i.e. they have a deep relation, experience, and knowledge regarding the city. Again, being part of the “break generation”, these people had to witness the crash of communism and the rapid emergence of “wild” capitalism within the same urban landscape. Further, they all graduated Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, which is the highest Lithuanian educational institution for visual arts; all of them have also collected experiences and were cherished in art institutions abroad. One last commonality is that seeing themselves as contemporary artists, they are not bound to any of classical disciplines of painting, sculpture, design, crafts etc.; they rather approach the field interdisciplinary with *theoretical*, *conceptual* and *perceptual* concerns.

Due to all the aspects displayed above, these people find themselves in complex and ambivalent circumstances, and have to make compromises. For instance, a 27-year-old artist Kipras Dubauskas combines his practices as a recognized visual and as an illegal graffiti artist¹, and frequently completes his works in public spaces without official permissions or any relation to institutions². Nevertheless, he is a graduate of the academy in Vilnius, and has recently celebrated a very successful M.A. defense at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Ghent, Belgium: his video installation “The Suspension of Disbelief” was awarded with the special jury prize³. Thus, he works both, *against* and *for* institutions; moreover, with such activities as the *MINEO* festival, he attempts to establish a communication between *the formal* and *the critical*, and, by means of trespassing this border, to *enlarge the frame of urban tolerance*.

¹ With *illegal graffiti art* I mean graffiti practices that are criminalized and penalized by the state. Even though there are several legal graffiti walls in Vilnius, they are rather seen as sites for practicing for the *real* action at night. However, every experienced writer goes to draw in the streets or on trains (cf. Jyse 2012; Stryts 2012).

² One can find artworks by Kipras Dubauskas under the link: <http://kiprasdubauskas.tumblr.com/>, accessed 10.5.2014.

³ Kipras has received the Horlait-Dapsens grant 2013, and sold his work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretically, my main point of departure is phenomenology – a philosophy that accounts for time, space and lived experience and thinks the world without subject and object; instead, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty draws in his “Visible and the Invisible” (1968), „each of us has a private world: these private worlds are „worlds“ only for their titulars; they are not *the* world“ (1968: 10, emphasis added). Even though we can never rejoin each the other’s lived experience, our private worlds are able to communicate through diverse means, and in particular, through the works of art. Deeply influenced by the phenomenological philosophy and, in combination with the developmental biology and ecological psychology, in the “Perception of the Environment” (2000), anthropologist Tim Ingold suggests that there can only exist an *organism in its environment*, which perceives the world through practically embodied capacities that he calls *skills*, and pattern of activities called *tasks*, and results in a landscape perceived as a *taskscape*, where action and interaction is prior to structures. Environment, in this case, is understood as *Umwelt* in the sense of a biologist Jakob von Uexküll (2001), and might differ completely among organisms even if they share the same space. Further, Ingold argues that the only significant difference between the human and the animal *environment making* is humans’ ability to *imagine* or *design* something, i.e. to create prior to realization. Then, things are actually being made without physical alteration (Ingold 2000: 175). Particularly interesting here is the parallel to post- or neo-conceptual artists who attempt to create or *make* art through minimal means of physical manifestation, rather emphasizing interaction with texts, objects, spaces, and other humans. This branch of art is further discussed within the context of art theory and philosophy.

However, I see phenomenology as insufficient to explain certain urban dynamics, modes of action and art theoretical discourses in the case of this research. Hereby, I follow Henri Lefèbvre’s texts on the city (“Production of Space” 1974, “Right to the City” 1968, and “Rhythmanalysis” 1992), and attempt to show that his Marxist-structuralist critique does enrich my particular picture in combination with phenomenology. I further elaborate on the theory by Michel de Certeau and his major work – the “Practice of the Everyday Life” (1984) where he introduces the concepts of *strategy* and *tactics*. For the art theoretical context, I mainly refer to Roselee Goldberg (2004), Arthur C. Danto (1997), Boris Groys (2008),

Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) with the concept of *relational aesthetics* and its critique deriving from Claire Bishop (2004).

My central anthropological reference remains Tim Ingold but a significant volume edited by Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright “Between Art and Anthropology” (2010) will be introduced as well – this collection is an exceptional but crucial attempt to bridge the gap between the two fields. Indeed, the lack of communication between contemporary art and anthropology is obvious, especially within the academic discourses in both, theory and ethnography. Meanwhile, in the exhibition and art-institutional discourses and practices anthropological knowledge and approaches are being applied as a common practice. Hal Foster criticizes this phenomenon and explains the variety of problems that originates in the artists’ ethnographic attempts; the art theoretician discusses the issue in several of his writings, probably the most famous being “The Artist as Ethnographer” (1996). However, in the field of social and cultural anthropology, there is a lack of joint publications, study programs, conferences and meetings, not to mention innovative interdisciplinary projects. One can say, mostly collaborations are initiated by artists within their frameworks rather than by anthropologists within theirs (cf. Schneider and Wright 2010). The classical field, traditionally indicated as anthropology of art, seems to be trapped in the social and symbolic analysis of artifacts. The actual situation of art has, however, not much to do with beautiful things and artifacts. This revolutionary shift has started already in the middle of the last century with early conceptualists and must be finally acknowledged by the social sciences. Referring to theories and conversations with artists, I will continue searching for the characteristics of contemporary art throughout the whole thesis.

To mention one of rare collaborations between an anthropologist and a contemporary artist, one can refer to the article by Steven Feld published in the collection by Schneider and Wright mentioned above. “Collaborative Migrations: Contemporary Art in/as Anthropology” represents his own cooperation with the photographer Virginia Ryan. Being an anthropologist and a sound artist himself, Steven Feld has been continuously working on the intersection of both fields. In this article, joint projects with Ryan are presented; these include visual media (sculpture, painting, photography, and video), acoustic media (ambience, music, sound art) and texts, as well as experimental modes of publication, installation, exhibit, and symposia. As Feld comments on his own experience within the established discourses of social and cultural anthropology:

The more I work with artists, and try to migrate the sensuous materiality of sound and image and object into zones of anthropological knowing, the more I encounter this kind of academic fundamentalism, like when people say ‘that was very poetic, but you didn’t theorize the material’. What is to be done about anthropologists reducing theory to the literal, anthropologists refusing the possibility that theory gets done in all media and in multiple ways, including artistic assemblage, performance, exhibition?

(Feld 2010: 124)

Finally, Feld concludes that art should be viewed as capable of creating “space for a sensuous theorization of knowledge” (2010: 125).

OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS

The first chapter “Something Representative: The Urban Condition”, primarily, familiarizes the reader to the field: it attempts to communicate the *ambience of Vilnius urbanity* with its contrasting patterns and colors as it emerges in the interchange between the central character of this thesis – an artist Kipras Dubauskas, and me – an ethnographer. Recalling the experience, I aim to represent its immediacy; this writing is rather an impressionist painting in the manner of Monet or Bonnard where the objects and their shapes can yet be recognized but the concern of the author lays in the textures and surfaces, the air and the light in which the shapes appear.

Thus, I select certain brushes and colors: I describe a situation that seems to me *representative* for the field and the fieldwork. *Walking and talking* with artists or, as Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst (2006) entitles, *fieldwork on foot* as a crucial method for this research is presented here: I compose the text according to one of the walks with Kipras, and introduce theories, data and other considerations respectively. I propose that Henri Lefèbvre’s deliberation of *modern urban space as social product* is suitable to understand the aesthetical views and conceptual standings of my interview partners. I take for granted the necessity to see the issue from an interdisciplinary point of view and the discussion occurs in the space of encounters between various forms of art, anthropology, philosophy and documents of everyday life. In the end of this chapter, the reader shall see a colorful portrait of an artist moving within his

environment – an *intimate picture of a person and of a city* that could have only appeared in a process of walking through and along.

The second part “Environment, Perception and Phenomenological Art” is, initially, a discussion of the concept of perception in relation to my ethnographic data. The idea of the perceiving *body-mind* or *person-organism* where the Cartesian dualism is being eliminated, originates from the phenomenological philosophy. To this regard, I discuss the basic approach and several of the central concepts of the French thinker Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and their application to anthropology by Tim Ingold. Thus – I introduce Ingold’s notions related to *perception* such as *environment* (and its origins in Uexküll’s biology), *skills*, *dwelling* and *wayfinding*. There, I aim to give a suggestion how do young contemporary artists *perceive their environment through their skills* (one can recall the ambiguous term *intuition*). The works by three artists of interlacing disciplines (Marija Puipaitė, Kipras Dubauskas and Vitalij Červiakov) are dominating the chapter. The text is composed while developing it according to the scale of an interaction: from an artist’s relation to an object, through a relation to built environment, to a relation to an urban environment and territory. Thus, a moving (i.e. processual and performative) *human body-mind* or *person-organism* does always stay as the initial point of departure.

The most extensive chapter of this thesis “Trespassing Method” presents my crucial findings, as the title indicates – the processes of *trespassing* certain spatial, institutional, disciplinary and ideological boundaries as a *creative method* used by particular young artists in Vilnius. The chapter explicates the largest part of the empirical research that I identified as the *curatorial method* i.e. the curating experience of the *MINEO* festival in February–April 2014. First, I remind the reader on the unsolvable problem of the “legitimization of art” i.e. the question, what can be considered as art and what cannot. For this I cite a conversation with the art philosopher from Vilnius, Algimantas Lopeta. Conceptually, I attempt to explain certain mechanisms of artistic practices based on walking through the city, and employ a consideration of *performance art* by RoseLee Goldberg (2004). Further, I elaborate on the notions of *strategy* and *tactics* by Michel de Certeau (1988), and discuss its contemporary application within the field of contemporary art. These concepts, being very suitable to describe artists’ intentions to trespass certain boundaries, have become popular among artists, but are being continuously misused (cf. Olsen 2013).

However, the largest part of the chapter is based on my ethnographic material: it is a description of the informal cultural festival *MINEO*. I introduce its initial idea and discussion around it, as well as the preparation process and the actual course it finally took; in other words, I find it necessary to consider its intentions, achievements and failures. For this, not only the participant artists will be presented but also persons and collectives who criticized it and refused to participate. Its process and the important sites are introduced as well; thus, Vilnius' critical urban spaces that might be dissolved in a few years are documented here. Finally, I do not claim that the trespassing method *is* working, rather I aim to examine *if* it is efficient and to which extent. A few foreign artists' names, in one or another way, related to Vilnius method of trespassing, are presented as well, and related non-artistic practices such as *urban exploration* are included.

The brief chapter IV "Infiltration Method" is, in fact, a presentation of the unexpected findings of this research. After a young artist Augustas Serapinas refused to participate in the *MINEO* festival (the fact was surprising to me since I thought his approach to be very close to the festival's initial topic), I became intrigued about his creative strategies and how do they differ from the trespassing method. After familiarizing with his approach, I might identify it as a *method of infiltration*. Finally and by the end of the research, I found an interesting comparison with the works by one other Vilnius artist, Kazimieras Sližys. This chapter, basically, presents the outcome of numerous informal talks with both of them, and an analysis of their works as art that is being (often secretly) incorporated in existing structures (e.g. art institutions) attempting to affect them from within. Moreover, a critical examination of surveillance strategies used by powers such as state and business is offered by Kazimieras – I call his approach *observing the surveillance*. Theoretically, I recall Boris Groys and his "Art Power" (2008) to show the subversive power of artists (or at least its intention) in regard to the institutions that regulate them.

The last chapter "General Urban Conditions: Contexts and Approaches" is devoted to discuss all the issues and aspects that are also relevant to fully accomplish the theme, but have not found place in the text yet. It suggests an image of the *conditions of creativity in Vilnius* that I have inquired since the beginning and indicated as my central theme. For this, I, basically, contextualize as following: first, I draw the context of the exhibition spaces for contemporary art in Vilnius, and briefly describe the curatorial methods of alternative project spaces such as "The Gardens", as well as large state institutions dealing with contemporary art. Then, I

introduce a still incredibly influential but problematic theory and practice within the contemporary art deriving from Nicholas Bourriaud's "Relational Aesthetics" (1998), as well as its critique by Claire Bishop (2004) and Stewart Martin (2007). One can suggest that contemporary situation in Vilnius shares commonalities or is influenced by this trend of the 1990s. Finally, I relate this to one last artistic or, better to say, management strategy – *networking*, and an institution in Vilnius designed for its cultivation. I contextualize the topic theoretically and, finally, summarize the type of art that we encountered in the previous chapters as *contemporary conceptualism* that, of course, is just one of diverse types of contemporary art throughout the world; I discuss its particularities, strengths and weaknesses. My most significant interview partners for this wide encompassing text were two young intellectuals from Vilnius: a contemporary artist Vytenis Burokas and a philosopher Algimantas Lopeta, who enabled me to view the larger picture of the whole.

Finally, I must admit that within the span of two years (I got the first idea for this research in summer 2013 and finished writing the thesis in spring 2015), my comprehension of anthropology, art and urban space went through significant changes. First, one might say, naïve and rather idealistic gaze toward creative urban action as something radical, has developed into questioning about the discrepancy between its intentions and outcomes. The inconsistency between the two and the gap of communication within the members of society who, apparently, should share vistas, became obvious while being in the field. This work is a reflection of these and other transitions of awareness; therefore, it sometimes appears dissonant. My subjective doubts are mixed with analysis to gain an interpretation rather than objective knowledge. Instead of pretending to speak of what I know, I choose to remain honest, "because one speaks not only of what one knows, so as to set out a display of it – but also of what one does not know, in order to know it" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 102).

CHAPTER I

SOMETHING REPRESENTATIVE: THE URBAN CONDITION

An ethnographer attempting to represent the immediacy in an analytic text is permanently caught in the gap between impression and investigation. Yet, one continues searching for accuracy in depicting the flow of experience. Following, I attempt to introduce the *spatial condition* of Vilnius and how it has attracted my attention. Its analysis and the observation of creative actions within it have resulted as this thesis. I begin this work with a description of the *introductory walk* with the artist Kipras Dubauskas on January 4, 2014. This tour through the city's forgotten and unforeseen spaces was a prologue to our more intimate collaboration. This experience, indeed, focused my interest, and defined my particular research method that is, in fact, always apparent but seldom reflected within the socio-cultural anthropological practice.

In the beginning of the chapter, I discuss the ethnographic method of *fieldwork on foot*, that I employed since this first walk. As a methodological unit it was introduced by Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst in their essay "Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socialising" (2006). Following that, I combine an associative or impressionistic style of writing with theoretical considerations around the concepts proposed by Henri Lefèbvre. City as a rhythmic structure and as a socially produced space is deliberated in his texts "Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time, and Everyday Life" (2004) and "The production of space" (1991b) – I relate these ideas to the data of my participant-observation. Further, I follow the "Writing Culture" (Clifford and Marcus 1986) scholars and their insistence to be critical and reflective upon the knowledge that we, as ethnographers, produce. One of them, Vincent Crapanzano, suggests the analogy between an ethnographer and Hermes – the ancient Greek god-messenger, the deity of travelers, tradesmen and thieves. He is the symbol character of the communication between the everyday and the divine, the familiar and the obscure – a translator who always interprets, and never tells the whole truth. Funnily enough, Kipras also works with the figure of Hermes in his short movie and related installation "Suspension of Disbelief" (2013b). By the end of this chapter, I relate the roles of an artist and an ethnographer through the metaphor of Hermes. My attempt here is to create an impression of Vilnius ambience or atmosphere and, thus, to grasp the contemporary moment.



Abandoned industries close to Vilnius city centre, reminding of constructivist sculptures. Kipras Dubauskas as a tour guide. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

I.I. RHYTHMIC FIELDWORK ON FOOT

Kipras walks quickly and confidently despite of the surface and obstacles on his way. He strolls through the city in tact with the rush of the streets and pauses of the greenery; it seems as if he has run many times the same path. Indeed, *return*, as he tells me, is important; return and observation makes one notice *the change* and *the possibility* (Dubauskas 2014). While moving along new and already abandoned spaces of ever-changing city, he tries to grasp the actual mode of being, and to articulate his contribution. There, he intends to perceive a possible space for his statement: what does the city need, and what does the artist want? His walk is a dialogue between a person and a space and, actually, it can be very creative *due to* the fact that he knows his path very well.

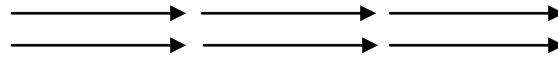
The crucial experience of *walking along* the artist, first encountered during this walk in January, became the central practice to my fieldwork. Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst introduced the phenomenon of walking with somebody as an ethnographic method under a name of *fieldwork on foot* in an essay⁴ that was based on their research on Aberdeen's walkers. Deriving from the presumption that walking is, initially, a social practice, the authors state that walking "affords an experience of embodiment [...] in an inherently sociable engagement between self and environment" (2006: 68). Referring to the anthropological practice of participant-observation, they offer an image: "to participate is not to walk into but to walk with – where 'with' implies not a face-to-face confrontation, but heading the same way, sharing the same vistas, and perhaps retreating from the same threats behind" (2006: 67). Hence, the authors argue for the significance of walking as an ethnographic method of *sharing* in saying that:

[T]hrough shared bodily engagement with the environment [and] the shared rhythm of walking, [the] social interaction [between an ethnographer and an informant] takes place. People communicate through their posture in movement, involving their whole bodies. [...] We could say that I see what you see as we go along together.

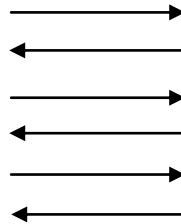
(2006: 80)

⁴ "Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socialising" first published in a volume edited by Simon Coleman and Peter Collins "Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology" (2006). Oxford: Berg Publishers: 67-86.

Since each walker is primarily facing the direction being walked, the scheme of the gaze-directions of the walkers appears as:



The authors contrast the scheme above to the mode of looking while communicating face-to-face as it occurs in a usual interview:



(2006: 80)

Fellow walkers look rather *with* each other than *at* each other; moreover, a walking individual generates a *rhythm* – a style of walking: two persons walking along need to feel tempo and bodily coordination in a similar way. In the case of a fieldwork, an ethnographer attempts to follow the rhythm of the person he or she is interested in; however, this alliance is not implicit but might occur when attempted. Not everybody walking next to each other achieve harmony. Hence, the rhythm of one’s partner must be actively perceived and *intended*. This attempt and intention turns *walking along* to a method instead of remaining a mere happening. Finally, each landscape and cityscape dictates its own style of stepping, crossing and trespassing its surfaces and textures, shapes and obstacles; the level of humidity and temperature, colors of facades and the rigidity of structures – every element implies the rhythm of walking.

Here, suggest a shift to seemingly different but, in this regard, comparable philosophy of an influential French Marxist thinker Henri Lefèbvre⁵ and his writings on *rhythmanalysis*. In his “Rhythmanalyses: Space, Time and Everyday Life” (2004), he attempts to prove the interrelation of time and space that we can think both: of lived space and time as separated perceptual units, and of them together. Rhythm, for Lefèbvre is an inseparable quality of a town or a city – it is the quality of social life and urban movement within the space with a particular emphasize on repetition (Lefèbvre 2004). A human body, for Lefèbvre, is the site of interaction, and a collision of biological and social rhythms. In his text, he proposes a figure

⁵ Henri Lefèbvre (1901-1991) wrote over sixty books discussing a wide range of subjects, including philosophy, political theory, sociology, literature, music, linguistics, and urban studies. He introduced Hegel and Marx’s early work into French debates but developed his original Marxism through a series of critical engagements with French phenomenology, existentialism, structuralism, and avant-garde. His most influential contributions include a critique of everyday life and studies of urbanization, space, and state (cf. Kipfer 2008: 2).

of a “rhythmanalist” – a character consisting of all: an artist, an ethnographer, a philosopher and a scientist. However, viewing human body as the centre in perceiving rhythms, a “rhythmanalist” does not view body as a subject, but rather observes and utilizes it as an instrument for investigations. The body serves him or her as a metronome. One should say, what Lefèbvre means is rather a poetics of an approach than a technique of investigation: “[the] stress on the *mode* of analysis is what is meant by a rhythmanalysis rather than an analysis of rhythms” (Elden 2004: xiii).

Lefèbvre views rhythm and, hence, time itself as something *lived*, and expresses it through an impressionistic manner of writing in his late texts⁶. There, he suggests a perfect example of a balcony that is situated at the same time *inside* a building and *outside* in the city allowing to observe while being *within* the flow of the city audibly, and *above* it spatially. Hence, the focus on the rhythm of the city itself or, as Lefèbvre, “meditation” enables one to fully experience it (Lefèbvre 2004).

This reminds us of one more branch of philosophy, namely, the phenomenological tradition of Maurice Merleau-Ponty that is more thoroughly discussed in the chapter II that is primarily dedicated to the intersection of art and phenomenology. One can here compare one idea both authors share: while Lefèbvre writes: “to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to have been grasped by it; one must let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration” (2004: 27); Merleau-Ponty’s famous expression correlates: “he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he is of it” (1968: 134-135).

Thus, I suggest viewing a conscious walk through the city, where no other purpose or goal is explicated but the creative and the explorative, as a *creative walk* or a form of *rhythmanalysis*. Kipras often works *without* a determined purpose; he rather meditates the city through walking across. Indeed, the practice of intuitive wandering and “goalless” fleeing through the well-known places in a constant return and repetition serves him for listening and observing, and drawing his personal map of the city. One might, as usual, name it *inspiration*; however, I believe the experience to be more – while an *inspiration* implies a clearly directed act (an input from outside taken by a human), our artist moves within the city in a certain rhythm but a rhythm works through the creative walk as well. An intended involvement in the walk and a wish to be “possessed” by it enables him to grasp it and become “of it” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 135).

⁶ See, for example the “Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities” in Lefèbvre 2004.

I.II. REPRESENTATION OF THE CITY

Kipras and me met in the president palace square – one the most “representative” sites of the city. We took my old Nisan Micra and drove to a very different but also representative district – to the central railway station: station districts in post-Soviet countries often represent the opposite – these are the sites of poverty, homelessness, prostitution, drug dealing, robberies, and other crime. There, we left the car and went on foot drawing a circle through the whole district.

Even though being born and growing up in this city, I was not aware of dozens of passages and inner yards that Kipras showed me that day. At once, Vilnius appeared incredibly interconnected: suddenly, there were secret ways and shortcuts, panorama views opened up from broken rooftops, holes in fences and never-locked gates served as entrances and exits! In hidden yards you could find leftovers of ever since burned houses⁷, unforeseen breaks and gaps unfolded between new structures. Without explicitly saying it, Kipras was proud to show me his private ways – his secret city. Indeed, Henry Lefèbvre’s essay “Right to the city” (1991a) served as an inspiration source for Kipras’ creative walks, as I became aware later. One can say that, while strolling through the abandoned and unnoticed places, the artist indirectly followed Lefèbvre’s invitation to act, as the philosopher writes:

Between the sub-systems and the structures consolidated by various means [...] there are holes and chasms. These voids are due not to the chance. They are the places of the possible.

(Lefèbvre 1968: 156)

We drove further to the Vilkpėdė district in the Southern Vilnius and arrived to a place, again, very representative for the dominating contradictions of the city. Nearly the whole area was industrialized in the middle of the last century, and has been turned from previously rural-residential into a factory-urban. Yet the industries have already decayed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Until now most of the buildings remained: old, rusted, some still working, some dead waiting to be demolished next to comparably new industries in the same area and a huge new highway. Previously, there was a residential village – wooden houses in a mixed style of countryside house and a villa are still inhabited there, on the Vilkpėdė hill. Its

⁷ There is a leitmotif of burning places in Vilnius encoded in literary and historical city narratives: the cathedral, the soviet trade-union palace, and many other public and private buildings have burned and still do burn, despite wet climate. Their remnants sometimes remain for years creating particular visual atmosphere of the city. This topic, however, needs another research.

inhabitants used to have a wonderful sight to the river that is the natural axis of Vilnius since its establishment. Now the new axis covers the watercourse – the main highway connecting three biggest Lithuanian cities is there.

From the hill of Vilkpėdė, one could view the familiar urban landscape as an appropriate sight for reading the messages inscribed; this time I thought of Henri Lefèbvre's notion of *space as a social product*. "L'espace (social) est un produit (social)" – writes Lefèbvre in his major book "The Production of Space" (1991b) signifying that a space "in itself" as an independent material reality does not exist; instead, it is fundamentally bound up with the social reality. For him, neither space nor time can be reduced to pure a priori concepts but are integral aspects of *social practice*, i.e. they are both, the result and the precondition of the production of a society. Moreover, being social products, space and time cannot be perceived universally but are inseparable from their social contexts (Lefèbvre 1991b). The production of space in Lefèbvrian philosophy is contained in a triadic notion insisting on the political nature of space in three dimensions: *spatial practice*, *representation of space* and *spaces of representation*. Here, I briefly introduce these dimensions for further efficient analysis:

The concept of *spatial practice* designates the *material dimension of social activities* and interaction. In concrete terms, one could think of the actual networks of communication and social relations as they occur in everyday life (e.g. daily route connecting one's home and workplace). *The representations of space*, in a different manner, give an image and define a space. They are found at a discursive level and, therefore, are maintained in verbalized and visualized forms such as descriptions, definitions, and especially (scientific) theories of space. Furthermore, Lefèbvre counts maps and plans, information in pictures, and signs among representations of space. Specialized disciplines dealing with the production of these representations are architecture and planning, but also social sciences. *Spaces of representation* might be defined as the inversion of the *representation of space*. This concerns the *symbolic dimension* of space. This dimension refers to something else than spaces themselves, e.g. the state; this process links the signified to a material symbol. The symbols of space could be e.g. logos or artifacts, buildings, and monuments (Lefèbvre 1991b).

In relation to the theme of this thesis, it is crucial to notice what Lefèbvre's interpreter Christian Schmid calls the "phenomenological access" to the triad discussed above – the trio of the "perceived," "conceived", and "lived" space. Here, without elaborating on phenomenology so far, I quote Schmid to emphasize the relatedness of seemingly

incomparable philosophical approaches, namely, Merleau-Ponty's influence on Lefèbvre, in order to support my decision of taking both accounts into consideration. According to Schmid, Lefèbvre's theory of the production of space can be, to a certain extent, seen as a critical reconsideration of phenomenology:

The phenomenological reference points become clear in the basic terms: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. [...] Lefèbvre's attitude towards the phenomenological version of perception is quite skeptical. Therefore, he combines it with the concept of spatial practice in order to show that perception [...] is based on a concrete, produced materiality. The concept of the lived (le vécu) too reveals a phenomenological point of reference. Lefèbvre thinks that the lived cannot be understood historically without the conceived. [...] Maurice Merleau-Ponty had developed a theory grounded on the basic concepts: "space", "time", and "lived world" (monde vécu). Already explicit here is the difference between a lived world and a perceived world [...] Lefèbvre's aim is, so to speak, a materialist version of phenomenology — a project Merleau-Ponty pursued too but could not complete.

(Schmid 2008: 37-39)

To emphasize the main points, one can say that the dimension of *perceived space* is its perceivable aspect that can be grasped by senses including seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting etc. Meanwhile *conceived space* (see the *representation of space* accordingly) is the process that brings together the elements to form the "whole" that is then considered or denoted as a space. Finally, *lived space* is the lived experience of space in action or its *performative* aspect. This dimension, basically, refers to the practice of everyday life, what is more, the lived practical experience cannot be sufficiently understood through theoretical analysis. There always remains something extra, an inexpressible and unanalysable but most valuable remainder that can be expressed only through *artistic* means (cf. Schmid 2008: 40).

The type of contemporary art that most accurately refers to this verbally inexpressible quality of lived public space is *public* or *urban art*⁸. As Mel Gooding indicates in the introduction to the collection "Public: Art: Space" (1998), "[t]he successful [...] public art work, whatever its scale, promotes a heightened awareness of both topographical and social space as the open

⁸ Despite of minor differences, both terms are mostly used synonymously in practical and theoretical discourses. Here, I prefer *urban art* for its implication that it happens in the city, whereas public art pieces can occur in rural surroundings as well. Moreover, urban art does not necessarily have to be public as we can see in the case of the semi-public festival *MINEO* (elaborated in the chapter III).

theatre of conscious being, and of both civic and personal relations” (1998: 19). Hence, an artist working in public is capable of directing the awareness or attention of large masses to social, urban and political issues, and even influencing judgments and opinions. Public art is, in so far, as Gooding implies, a genuinely *democratic art* (Gooding 1998), functioning as a public opinion itself, and being in this regard crucially different from the gallery art that functions only for and within certain circles.

To finalize the discussion of Lefèbvrian thought in relation to artistic public action in Vilnius, one must take into consideration that being a Marxist theorist, Lefèbvre argues that social production of modern urban space is inevitably a production and reproduction of dominant structures and ideologies of the capitalist system, i.e. for him it is denoted by economical hierarchy, dominance, and control (Lefèbvre 1991b: 26). However, in a city social order is destructed and restricted by diverse performances of everyday life (*lived space*). Combining both, aspects of everyday life and the political thought, interpreters note that Lefèbvre saw the city life as a “contradictory mediation between everyday life and the social order” (Kipfer 2008: 6). Thus, architecture and city design, as well as city planning, mapping, signing and other urban phenomena that determine our everyday life are representations of *hierarchically established space*; for instance, we encounter a territory *marked* by its owner with a fence and perceive it as his private property.

As a public artist considering social space through his works, Kipras Dubauskas interprets Lefèbvre’s writings as a genuine call for creativity accompanied or even driven by a social thought and action. The city, hence, becomes the *site of art*, rather than mere location. I suggest that as an urban artist, Kipras attempts his works to function as an *inversion* of this *representation of space*. Compare this to the statement of Kipras in the interview on tagging practices⁹ conducted two years ago, where I approached him for his contribution as one of the most prominent Lithuanian graffiti artist:

My motivation [is] the experience of the city, reading the city in my own way, the use of the city, even owning it – showing that there is my part, too. You do it because of the use of the city, to create your own playground with your own rules. Others use the city differently: look at those who use it in a corruptive way – they play their games and do not care what the

⁹ In graffiti jargon *tagging* denotes writing one’s nickname (a tag) or signing a piece. This practice is crucial for the graffiti culture because of many reasons: it is a form of calligraphy, a means of marking territory, a way of leaving one’s print etc. Practically, a tag is the first thing that a writer develops – it is easy and quick to write it unnoticed, and a wide range of techniques are suitable for tagging.

society thinks... [...] Graffiti is also an institutional critique, for example art institutions: why do you need a gallery to show your art piece? The space of an institution legitimates art. I do not agree! I think the city is also a space and a very suitable space for art.

(False 2013)

A tagger who purposely marks the wall that clearly does not “belong to him” with his painting and signature, in doing so argues against the privatization *per se* and declares that the wall, instead, as another young Vilnius graffiti artist expresses, “belongs to the landscape of the city” (Jyse 2012). In other terms, he or she *de-represents* it. Hence, based on my previous research on graffiti tagging in Vilnius¹⁰, I suggest that artists, whose works are considered as illicit by state institutions, aim to *re-establish the space* and *reproduce* it as a *non-belonging*. Thus, one can consider that, among other uses, graffiti is a globally spread artistic method of *de-representation* and de-commodification of capitalistically produced space¹¹, as long as it remains a political statement i.e. as long as it stays noncommercial itself¹². For artists like Kipras, it is crucial that graffiti practices stay outside galleries and urban art and does not become merely nice paintings on walls (cf. False 2012; Jyse 2012).

I view Kipras’ walk through the city and his other related projects, indeed, as a comparable endeavor for *trespassing the forbidden* and *uncovering the unknown*; thus, as a *creative method* aiming to de-represent the established representation. The difference between graffiti painting and a walk, in this case, is rather in form but not content: while in a painting-trip at night an artist leaves a visible statement, in a walk through ruins he only leaves a footprint. Nevertheless, motivation for both is the same; it is, as cited above, “experience of the city”

¹⁰ An ethnographic research “Graffiti Tags as Urban Markers and Means of Communication” was conducted in 2012-2013 by M.A. students of University of Vienna Jana Stupar Browne, Alicja Khatchikian, Goda Palekaitė, and Silja Strasser. Famous graffiti writers were interviewed by four researchers in their native cities: Turin, Vienna, Vilnius, and Zagreb. The paper was presented at the Communication and the City conference 2013, University of Leeds, Leeds.

¹¹ For example, graffiti is commonly painted on commercial mini buses, whereas nobody writes on private cars; similarly, private houses are significantly “cleaner” than commercial buildings. Stryts – a writer from Vilnius explained the choice of place as a political statement itself (Stryts 2012).

¹² Graffiti is becoming increasingly commercialized itself: there are graffiti galleries, workshops, sails, etc. Especially advertising companies are using it as a symbol for the “underground” urban culture, in order to attract young audience. Moreover, once illegal artists become popular figures and sell their pieces. The complexity of the issue is seen in the case of Banksy: ones famous as an illegal street-artist who was impossible to catch but incredibly active with his critical pieces in the UK and elsewhere, now he sells movies about his fame and Hollywood celebrities come to his shows (see e.g. “Exit Through the Gift Shop”, a film by Banksy, 2010). At the same time, such companies as IKEA create “Banksy style” advertising (e.g. their team “illegally” pasted stencils inspired by Banksy’s and Obey’s (famous US illustrator and street artist) styles over their billboards all over the subway system in Milan, 2012), supposedly, without paying him for the copyrights. This and other cases of so called *guerrilla marketing* strategies are discussed in the M.A. seminar paper “Performing Advertising: The Paradox” by Alicja Khatchikian and Goda Palekaitė, University of Vienna, 2013.

and institutional critique. However, I would emphasize that this describes rather an artistic *intention* or *motivation* but not necessarily the actual outcome. There are more factors that determine if this critical method is working i.e. if it has the intended impact on the society. The issue of the creative process and outcome will be discussed extensively in the chapter III, and presented within more general contexts in the chapter V.

I.III. ART AND ETHNOGRAPHY: A PARALLEL METHODOLOGY

In the span of past few years I have been working under the statement that denies the notion of masterpiece. I claim that it is not possible to develop a concept (which later would incarnate into physical shape i.e. artwork or scientific apparatus), which at its' culmination could be stated as finished and immutable (despite its outstanding artistry, skill or workmanship). Every attempt to make progress in a task achieves an actual retrograde performance. It is like going one step forward and two steps backwards. [...] When I step backward I find the evidence and this move defines my creative strategy. Each project that I work at the present is tied to those that I had realized in the past. For this reason all together they form a certain narrative, a detective story that revolves around graffiti subculture.

The decision to build a personal myth came after my persistent interest in derelict spaces and practical researches that consist of psychogeographical walks. I'm drawing a certain curve by my physical existence, by crossing and trespassing particular areas and at the same time I'm questioning my motives for these actions. The intuitive and instinctive impression, which comes during each of wanderings, is replaced with more cognitive and rational processes. Therefore one is always dependant on the other, but the methods to achieve the objectives, which I set for myself, are radically different. The moment when you enter the area with the awareness and consciousness, and when the feeling of intuitiveness steps further, is the moment of success.

“Suspension of Disbelief: A guidebook for different approaches” (Dubauskas 2013a: 3)



Screenshots from the movie “Suspension of Disbelief”. Greek god Hermes, played by Kipras himself, and a hare as his main attribute. © Kipras Dubauskas 2013b

Both ways of *reading the city*, namely, the graffiti practice and creative walks, for Kipras are often merged together and happen at the same time. Once in a while, the artist creates something external apart from the walks themselves that revolves around this practice, and participates in exhibitions. By now, the video work and installation “Suspension of disbelief” (2013b) is his largest walking-related project.

In the introduction to his M.A. thesis “Suspension of disbelief: a guidebook for different approaches” (2013a) that accompany the video work cited above, Kipras describes his creative standings and methods. Further, in a rather confusing manner, he draws his

theoretical background on a combination of Guy Debord's *psychogeography*¹³, Jung's terms of *personal* and *collective unconscious* and urban development studies. Yet, what captured my interest was not the theoretical considerations, but rather the associative power of the central character of his movie – its main figure is *Hermes*. In "Suspension of Disbelief", Hermes, played by Kipras himself, walks through abandoned or gentrified sites of Ghent. During the walk, he uses, hides and recovers certain objects that function as symbols such as a walking stick, a sculpture in shape of a hare, and others. The montage of the film functions as a loop and contributes to the psychoanalytical considerations of returning, remembering, experiencing consciously and unconsciously, and merging the "real" and the "dream" sequences. The author explains his decision to use a repetitive loop montage as following:

In order to experience [...], the audience must immerse in the specific emotional state that is often called suspension of disbelief. It refers to the spectator's ability or desire to ignore, distort or underplay realism in order to feel more involved with the story. Whilst at the same time viewer is obliged to follow the storyline from another point of view, as if to be in two places at the same time.

(Dubauskas 2013a: 9)

However, Hermes remains the central symbolic as well as performative figure within this work. As Kipras indicated later, in a presentation of the movie on the second day of the *MINEO* festival, he "attempted to relate a city and a myth through the figure of an artist" (Mineo 2014b). During our January walk, I evoke a discussion on this mysterious ancient Greek god of transitions and boundaries. Hermes is quick and cunning, he moves freely between the worlds of mortal and divine, as emissary and messenger of the gods. He is the protector of travelers, herdsmen, thieves, orators, literature and poets, as well as athletics and sports, invention and trade. At the same time, he is a trickster, and outwits other gods for his own satisfaction or for the sake of humanity.

For Kipras, Hermes is definitely also a god of graffiti and street kids. As an inventor of race walking, Hermes has much in common with the graffiti people who *walk quicker than ordinary people*, – as Kipras explains: *you cannot always run, you would draw too much attention, so you better walk quickly* (Dubauskas 2014). For me, as anthropologist, the first

¹³ Guy Debord defined *psychogeography* as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals" (Debord 1955, <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/2>, accessed 24.05.2014). It is based on the practice of aware walking through a landscape or a cityscape with continuous observation.

association is the one drawn by scholars of the most influential book in the postmodernist anthropology, namely, the „Writing Culture“ (1986) scholarship. There, Vincent Crapanzano portrays an ethnographer as a trickster like Hermes, like the messenger god who communicates between worlds but never tells the whole truth, „[an ethnographer] presents languages, cultures, and societies in all their opacity, their foreignness, their meaninglessness; then like the magician, the hermeneut, [...] he clarifies the opaque, renders the foreign familiar, and gives meaning to the meaningless. He decodes the message. He interprets“ (Crapanzano 1986: 51).

Indeed, the parallel between contemporary art and ethnography is evident; in particular, they share what is embodied by the metaphor of Hermes: constantly moving *between the worlds* and transmitting and translating messages from the foreign or unknown to the familiar and the public, both constantly interpret and express merely their subjective perception. In doing so, both are able to trick their audience as if their interpretation was any kind “truth” (artistic or scientific); however, we are all able to transmit only “partial truths” (Clifford 1988).

As Arnd Schneider and Cristopher Wright note in the introduction of the volume they edited “Between art and anthropology” (2010): “[d]ifferences between anthropology and contemporary art have more to do with finished products, rather than with intentions and practices” (Schneider and Wright 2010: 2). Indeed, a great number of parallels can be found between Kipras’ and my ways of working. At certain point of our walk we stop at a site comfortable to watch Vilnius central railway station from above. Kipras starts explaining me the specifics of the “graffiti research” needed before painting on trains:

First, you just come to observe – you do a research: you make notes and timetables of departing and arriving trains with their numbers; you note when guards change, where the cameras are etc.; like a spy you search for possible entrances and exits, holes in fences, chasms in the system... At first you continuously come without any paints, anything. Then, one night you take the pliers and cut holes in fences where needed. Only when everything is perfectly prepared, when you know exactly what, when and where, you come and do your job very quickly while the guards are changing¹⁴.

(Dubauskas 2014)

¹⁴ Even though the whole of action is carefully planned, Kipras says that one always keeps room for the unexpected, for the coincidence; it is useless to plan everything: “you only find a hideout while hiding” (Dubauskas 2014).

Apparently, graffiti artists have developed their observational techniques; “graffiti research” is their initial method for trespassing – just like an ethnographer, a graffiti artist needs to observe the system to see it through.

Viewing parallels between these practices and willing to collaborate with artists, I recall the approach of Schneider and Wright again, in particular their argument that ethnographers and artists should be concerned with an “anthropological practice *with* artists (rather than one that remains *of* artists) and, conversely, an art practice *with* anthropologists” (2010: 5). While in contemporary art practices experimentation between and beyond disciplines is a self-understood method seen as crucial to its development, within anthropology the issue is more problematic. While its periphery influenced by postmodern changes takes risks in conducting fieldwork without instructions, the majority follows the “disciplinary and institutional inertia [that] remains an obstacle to the development of a more experimental [...] anthropology” (2010: 11).

Moreover, Schneider and Wright suggest viewing ethnographic fieldwork practice as a sort of *extended performance* where social relations between anthropologists and their research subjects come into action (2010: 10). Thus, they insist on the need to acknowledge that the lack of experimentation within anthropological fieldwork is the crucial step to overcome within the fields of contemporary visual anthropology and anthropology of art (2010: 11).

Finally, one shall not forget that most of contemporary encounters between art and anthropology have its roots in the “Writing Culture” scholarship, where the ethnographic fieldwork itself has been scrutinized. As George Marcus denotes more than two decades after this revolutionary book, the volume, edited by James Clifford and Marcus himself in 1986 “offered a revealing critical examination of the textual production of authoritative knowledge about others and cultures [that] has encouraged, on the one side, a hope and an impetus for highly focused cross-over collaborations as *modus operandi* of intellectual work, and on the other side, that such work might make ethnography and the fieldwork that produces it, something quite different from its forms within the empiricist tradition out of which it emerged” (2010: 83). Marcus himself continues up to this day with such initiatives as The Center for Experimental Ethnography at the University of California that is investigating the

relevance of the experimental design process in the applied arts for anthropological practices¹⁵.

I.IV. CONCLUDING THE WALK

People from other, especially “more Western” countries visiting Vilnius notice: all social and historical layers are visible here, none of the contradictions can be hidden under the urban make-up of new paint and pavements; it is a village and a capital city at once; skyscrapers cannot conceal chicken shelters. It still looks brutally communistic and yet wildly capitalistic: vivid advertisements attempt to cover the decline of cheap anonymous communal suburbs. Labeled as the city of baroque for its marvelous historical architecture, it handles its heritage disrespectfully. Public and semi-public spaces are being commercialized, e.g. historical buildings in the old-town and on the riverside. Agreements relevant for the whole city community are being made “under four eyes” in dark offices. On the other hand, incredible sites remain untouched for decades: you would find a naphthalene smelling canteen called “Fireman’s dream” in between huge abandoned factory buildings.

To conclude our journey, Kipras and I arrived to the most mysterious site of the day. Still in Southern part of the city close to Vilkipėdė district, there appeared huge round objects – former reservoirs where water or other liquids have been previously kept. Cisterns of approximately 10m height appeared as abstract rotten metal shapes and seemed like avant-garde sculptures. We discussed the impression that these objects create: occurring “naturally” within the present landscape they reminded us on iron hills; at the same time being artificially placed as sculptures, they are invaders in space.

¹⁵ The website of the Center for Ethnography at the University of California: <http://www.ethnography.uci.edu/>, accessed 11.08.2014.



The area of former water reservoirs in Southern Vilnius. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

The affect awoken by industrial ruins has been discussed by Tim Edensor – a researcher who has undertaken numerous improvised journeys on foot through industrial ruins in the United Kingdom. In the chapter written for Ingold’s and Vergunst’s edited volume “Ways of walking: ethnography and practice on foot” (2008), Edensor suggests: “While such sites are frequently vilified as despondent realms, spaces of waste and blights in the landscape, they support a range of human activities and a plethora of non-human life forms, as well as offering aesthetic, somatic and historical experiences” (2008: 123). He contrasts the body that moves “unhindered towards its destinations” (2008: 132) in a regulated city to a body encountering a ruined space where it is challenged with multi-sensual effects including smell, sound and touch (in contrast to the sense of vision that is prioritized in a regulated walking). A picturesque passage materializes the sensuality of an experience:

Walkers experience the unfamiliar textures of decaying materials, the stark, hard, cold feel of a piece of industrial metal machinery, the splintery and pulpy texture of a damp wooden work bench, the delicious sheen of a wooden hand rail worn to smoothness over decades, the mouldering dampness of wallpaper and plaster, the weight of oil drums and steel boxes, the profusion of peculiarly shaped off-cuts and fragments of manufactures that were never

assembled, the thick greasiness of chains and cogs, the encrusted exteriors of foundry fittings, the pliability of wires and thin metal stripes, the cushioned consistency of moss and the sliminess of wet rotting wood.

(Edensor 2008: 132)

However, first one has to enter the space to be able to experience the subtlety Edensor attempts to describe. These sites are usually not available to anybody at any time; they are surrounded with fences and signs indicating: “trespassing forbidden”, “angry dog”, and similar. This was also the case when we approached the reservoirs pictured above: a high metal fence and warnings were positioned around the whole territory. But a trespasser is not a trespasser if he does not find an “entrance”. Kipras quickly detected a hole in one of the cisterns where a human being could fit in laid and so we were able to enter the reservoir: an amazing stream of light felt through the space; you could sense its roundedness in its volume and the metal cold.

There, Kipras introduced his idea to me: such abandoned and even forbidden spaces as these cisterns are perfect sites for the artistic appropriation. An experimental music concert held here would have a marvelous effect: a noisy street besides and the complete acoustic isolation inside along with the impressive light and textural effect the space creates, have to be discovered and experienced by more people. Hence, we – those who can share such spatial experiences with others, should organize an event, speaking in more concrete terms, an *informal art festival* in semi-public i.e. formerly public but now abandoned and non-trespassable spaces. It should open up space for non-gallery, non-institutionalized and often illicit art practices (Dubauskas 2014).

Thus, Kipras invited me to organize the event together and I agreed immediately. This cooperation, indeed, defined my research that has become truly experimental, as Schneider and Write suggested, and merged the ethnographic practice with the art-curatorial one. The chapter III “Trespassing Method” is dedicated to this experience and the art festival later named *MINEO*.

Throughout this first chapter I attempted to draw a portrait of an artist and to picture the city he is moving in. I believe it was only possible after experiencing the field *from within*. Next to ethnography, the discussion on methodology, especially, on *fieldwork on foot*, as well as theoretical considerations of Henri Lefèbvre’s notions and anthropological accounts by

“Writing Culture” as well as Schneider and Wright, were crucial to take. The following chapter “Environment, Perception and the Phenomenological Art” is dedicated to the philosophical approach that was central; thus, I discuss Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology and keep following Tim Ingold in order to represent the perceptual aspects of Kipras’ creativity; furthermore, I introduce two more incredibly interesting young artists from Vilnius – Marija Puipaitė and Vitalij Červiakov.



Getting into the space. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

CHAPTER II

ENVIRONMENT, PERCEPTION AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL ART

If the body had been easier to understand, nobody would have thought that we had a mind.

Rorty (1980: 239)

Following the French phenomenological tradition of thought, in this chapter I introduce the works of three young Vilnius artists, and propose to contemplate their artistic creative gaze in the light of phenomenological philosophy and anthropology. First and foremost, I follow the ideas expressed in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's "Visible and the Invisible"¹⁶ (1968) and the anthropological approach of Tim Ingold in his "Perception of the Environment" (2000). Both authors insist on comprehension of *perception* as a performative process by human body-mind, where thinking and sensing can only be understood as determining each other, and the Cartesian dualism – *cogito ergo sum* ("I think, therefore I am"), must be dissolved.

Hence, I aim to give an insight of the mode or *style of perception* of several Vilnius artists I am working with. First, I introduce a conceptual designer who merges design and sculpture in her works. Although Marija Puipaitė does not primarily work with the city, her objects became particularly interesting to me because of their phenomenological point of departure and sensual aesthetics they transmit. Meanwhile, Kipras Dubauskas strolls through the city as its socially-conscious inhabitant, as a graffiti writer, and as a contemporary artist. He believes to be engaged in an immediate and intuitive process of seeing and creating. Finally, Vitalij Červikov and his initiated "Group of Silence"¹⁷ explores the city of Vilnius while walking in silence i.e. they attempt to dissolve the conceptual and theoretical aspect of perception and draw closer to the pure sensual relation with the environment.

¹⁶ While Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) had already formulated the core ideas of his philosophy in the "Phenomenology of Perception" (1945), "The Visible and the Invisible" first published in 1964, is seen as the concentration and purification of his life-long work. The book is seen as a critique on idealism and empiricism. In the last chapter that remained unfinished "The Intertwining – The Chasm" philosopher introduces new concept of the *flesh*.

¹⁷ An article "Walking as a way of thinking" (2013) discussing the activities of the "Group of Silence" written by an art historian Jolanta Marcišauskytė-Jurašienė (in Lithuanian only) can be found under the link: <http://www.artnews.lt/apie-vaiksciojima-kaip-mastymo-buda-vitalij-cervikov-tylejimai-%E2%98%BC-19290>, accessed 19.12.2014.

II.I. PERCEIVING THE WORLD

First, I briefly introduce the origins or the general phenomenological premise that constitutes the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Phenomenology as a new philosophical direction and a method, was first proposed by Edmund Husserl as a critique upon Rene Descartes' argument that any perception outside the realm of natural science is false *per se*. Descartes' statement "I think, therefore I am" implied experience of the „outside world“ to be an *idea*. Only naturalistic objectifying gaze would give one a „real view“ of the world. Husserl's phenomenology, instead, relied on direct experience, that was not ideas or memories of a „real“ experience but that emerged in the present. Phenomenology was, thus, a reflection involving a perceiver in action while directly analyzing the experience (cf. Tudor 2010: 82-83).

Thus, the world consists of the logic of shapes, colors, reliefs, lights, shadows and masses. Sizes and distances being relative at any time do only exist for an analytic objectifying gaze, while textures and ambiances are our environment in which we are immersed with our body-minds. In his last posthumously published book, the “Visible and the Invisible” (1968), the most influential French phenomenologist and the hardest critic of objectifying scientific thinking Maurice Merleau-Ponty illustrates:

For natural gaze that gives me the landscape, the road in the distance has no “width” one could even ideally calculate; it is as wide as the road close-up, since it is the same road – and it is not as wide, since I cannot deny that there is a sort of shrinking in perspective. [...] [T]he perspective contraction is not a deformation, the road close-up is not “more true”: the close, the far-off, the horizon in their indescribable contrast from a system, and it is their relationship within the total field that is the perceptual truth.

(Merleau-Ponty 1968: 21-22)

We can here consider a common practice of an artist who intends to draw a road that opens up in front of him i.e. to represent the distance that we know to be there. He or she uses an analytic method – perspective, and applies a technical tool – a pencil, to *measure*. An artist estimates the *relation between the world* and his or her *body*. Hence, artistic gaze is analytic but it differs from e.g. scientific in so far that it always directly involves the body, and, thus one is capable of grasping the “perceptual truth”.

All of the artists presented in this chapter explicitly attempt to dissolve the contradiction between body and mind, and insist for an immersive dialogue between human and non-human environment. Although deriving from philosophy, in the discourse of social and cultural anthropology this approach has been extensively discussed by Tim Ingold. He has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork among Saami and Finnish people in Lapland, and comprehensively discussing the questions of environment, technology, as well as evolutionary theory in anthropology, and the intersection between biology and history. Basically, Ingold's endeavor is to establish the concept of *skill* within the social and cultural anthropology. Cultural differences are for him, above all, the differences in *skills* that he defines as "capabilities of action and perception of the whole organic being (indissolubly mind and body) situated in a richly structured environment. As properties of human organisms, skills are [...] as much biological as cultural" (2000: 5). Ingold's considerations in relation to my observations of the skillful acting in the city, will be presented subsequently.

As Ingold insists in his most significant book "Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill" (2000), "the person *is* the organism, and not something added on top" (2000: 3); thereby, his main attempt is to dismantle culturally prescribed oppositions between body and mind, person and organism, human and environment, and instinct and reason. Talking about artistic practices it may be helpful to notice that he frequently recalls *intuition*: "[i]ntuitive understanding [...] is not contrary to science or ethics, nor does it appeal to instinct rather than reason [...]. On the contrary, it rests in perceptual skills that emerge, for each and every being, through a process of development in a historically specific environment" (Ingold 2000: 25).

Environment is Ingold's further elaboration of the *Umwelt* concept by an Estonian-German biologist and one of the founders of behavioral psychology, ethology, and biosemiotics, Jakob von Uexküll (1864-1944). Later on, I briefly introduce Uexküll's major idea, since I believe the concept of *Umwelt* to be helpful to understand the mode of acting in the city of such artists as Kipras Dubauskas.

II.II. THE INVISIBLE IN THE VISIBLE

[T]he real is coherent and probable because it is real, and not real because it is coherent; the imaginary is incoherent or improbable because it is imaginary, and not imaginary because it is incoherent.

(Merleau-Ponty 1968: 40)

For Maurice Merleau-Ponty, such things as pure physical object and a human body do not exist; similarly, there is no interior and exterior world (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 26). Instead of these distinctions, in the “Visible and the Invisible”, he introduces an all-encompassing notion of *flesh* that has no name in any previous philosophy and that refers to *human element of being in the world* or – put another way – the *perception itself*. For him:

The flesh is not matter [nor is the visible], is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term “element”, in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea [...]. The flesh is in this sense and “element” of Being.

(1968: 139)

As we shall see further, Tim Ingold applies Merleau-Ponty’s concept in a search for a similar anthropological category: instead of diving into the depth of the term itself, he offers ethnographic examples. For this, along with the Merleau-Ponty’s and Martin Heidegger’s phenomenological philosophy, he requires a combination of distinct intellectual paradigms, and combines the approaches from social and cultural anthropology, ecological psychology and developmental biology.

Yet, it remains difficult to denote what makes an artwork phenomenological i.e. how does an artist grasp this *flesh* in a creative moment and translate it into an artwork? This obscurity often gets loaded with mysterious terms such as artistic genius, muse, vision etc. As Alphonso Lingis – a translator and interpreter of Merleau-Ponty designates: “In the midst of the sensuous experience there is an intuition of an essence, a sense, a signification. The sensible thing is the place where the invisible is captured in the visible” (Lingis 1968: xli). Following this, I suggest viewing an artistic intention as an *intuitive search for essence, a sense or signification*; and thus, through a work dealing with perception and sensuality, an artist may capture the *invisible in the visible*.

Let us consider the works of a young conceptual designer¹⁸ from Vilnius, Marija Puipaitė¹⁹ who continuously searches for a juncture between a design object and a sculpture through the intersection with her own body. Marija's designs deal with intimacy and tangibility via senses, and are fairly unusual in the context of visual arts due to their attention to smell and touch, rather than vision. Her recent series of works "Embracing the Touch" (2014) consists of three objects without any particular use that inversely repeat or resemble the shape of her own leg. There, Marija aligns her body with another material (e.g. wood) transmitting the curve of her leg to the object and, at the same time, defining the position of sitting by shaping the sculpture. She describes the topic of these works as the *sensual relation with material world* and invites us to see designer's body as a tool or an ingredient in creating objects. Moreover, she talks about the *sophistication of the process of creation* and the *experience of physical integrity* with her own works, where imagination and intuition play a crucial role (Puipaitė 2014: 6).



"Embracing the Touch" by Marija Puipaitė. © 2014 Marija Puipaitė

¹⁸ Conceptual design differs from product and industrial design insofar it emphasizes designers ideas and creative decisions rather than practicability and applicability to the market.

¹⁹ Marija's website: <http://www.marijapuipaitė.com/>, accessed 23.3.2015.

While presenting her previous work entitled “My Essence” (2012) that should function as a *self-portrait in a chair*, Marija narrates:

Having a chair in mind as an image strongly related with human I aimed to embody myself in it. I looked for ways in which I could interact with the object, transmit something that was really me, my essence. Smell or, to be more precise, an idea of a smell seemed to be a true evidence of my presence. It was as invisible as disturbing for others. As a medium to capture I used almond oil. I spread oil on my skin and after cleaning it with a tissue I applied the same oil on a sanded chair. This performative exchange made us one. A wooden chair absorbed my tangibility. I could see myself as an object and relate my body to material environment. If this was a product it would have a particular signature; it would be a literal translation of how designers and other makers leave personal traces in the objects.

(Puipaité 2014: 9)

Hence, the surface (in this case the human skin and the wood) becomes a medium for the possible integrity between an artist and an artwork. Moreover, Marija plays with the borderline of “what belongs to me (to a human/designer) and what belongs to the wood” (Puipaité 2014: 15), and merges this border invisible in imprinting her smell into wood. Comparably, yet referring to the sense of vision, Merleau-Ponty described a relation between a human and a thing: “The relation between what I see and I who see is not one of immediate or frontal contradiction; the things attract my look, my gaze caresses the things, it espouses their contours and their reliefs, between it and them we catch sight of a complicity” (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 76).

An artist, who views his or her creative act as a phenomenological act, transmits the perception into an artwork, both, engaging in immediacy, and reflecting it with a distance while finalizing a product. This way the *invisible perception* gets captured in the *visible body of art*. To conclude our talks about perception and sensuousness, I ask Marija about her motifs to work towards this particular direction. “Through the [contemplation on the] environment made of material things, I experience the existence of myself as a body” – she utters (Puipaité 2013).

II.III. THE PROCESSUAL ENVIRONMENT

If designers create objects, architects create urban environments, and if a designer can have an intimate interdependent relation to an object, an architect can feel similarly to a building. In his essay “Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses” (2005), a famous Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa proposes the idea of phenomenological architecture and proclaims a “sensory architecture in opposition to the prevailing visual understanding of the art of building” (2005: 39). Pallasmaa is generally preoccupied with the critique on the understanding of architecture as a *distant* visual unit and calls for phenomenological architectural approach that would take into account all human senses and, above all, asks architects to imagine themselves *being within* a building.

Comparably, Tim Ingold insists on seeing buildings as organisms that can only be perceived in a *dwelling* process *from within*: “buildings, like other environmental structures, are never complete but continually under construction, and have life-histories of involvement with both their human and non-human inhabitants” (Ingold 2000: 154). Thus, a building is, above all, a *processual environmental structure* rather than a complete urban (or rural) unit waiting for the settlement. Respectively, Ingold introduces the conceptual opposition between *dwelling* and *building perspectives*. On the one hand, one can see human life as *dwelling* that is “the immersion of the organism-person in an environment of lifeworld as an inescapable condition of existence. From this perspective, the world continually comes into being around the inhabitant [...] through [its] incorporation into a regular pattern of life activity”. On the other hand, there exists a common assumption that Ingold calls *building perspective*, and criticizes accordingly; namely, that humans inhabit a world, which has already preexisting meanings that have been constructed before (Ingold 2000: 153).

The crucial notion of *environment* used by Tim Ingold, is actually a socio-cultural development of the biological concept of *Umwelt* by Jakob von Uexküll. Most of Uexküll’s work was devoted to the problem of how animals perceive their surroundings and how this perception determines their behavior. In the book “Umwelt und Innenwelt der Tiere” (1909), he introduced the term *Umwelt* to denote the subjective world of an organism. There, he discussed the topic mentioned in the beginning of this chapter: things are organized accordingly to the relevance to an organism: what is close to us appears as large, what is far away – as small, finally, even more far away existing i.e. non-dangerous and non-utilizable

for us phenomena are not perceivable at all. This *island of perception* is our *Umwelt* (Uexküll 2001).

Even more, the biologist draws a beautiful example to show that every object becomes something new depending on the *Umwelt* it happens to be in: *a stem of a flower* appears useful for holding its beautiful blossom for a human; it becomes a long tube full of water for a bug inside; it is a stable path for an ant on it; and a juicy breakfast for a cow (Uexküll 2001). Here, Merleau-Ponty's notion of *flesh* might be useful again: a bug, an ant and a cow are of different *flesh*. Similarly, and as I propose following, inhabitants of a *city environment* perceive certain built structures depending on their *skills*. Thus, a particular urban environment might be one thing for an artist and another for a taxi driver firstly not because of conceptual meanings that its elements are symbolically loaded with, but because of the difference in the mode of moving and acting within it.

II.IV. EDUCATION OF ATTENTION

Tim Ingold's notion of *skills* might be seen as his central and broadest concept referring to modes of learning and perceiving as well as to modes of acting and, all together, ways of *being in the world*. In the following passage, anthropologist explains:

Knowledge of the world is gained by moving about in it, exploring it, attending to it, ever alert to the signs by which it is revealed. Learning to see, then, is a matter not of acquiring schemata for mentally constructing the environment but of acquiring the skills for direct perceptual engagement with its constituents, human and non-human, animate and inanimate. [Thus], it is a process not of enculturation but of enskilment.

(Ingold 2000: 55)

Hence, *skills* are both, biological and cultural; they are neither merely inborn, nor simply learned; instead, they are grown, incorporated in a person-organism through practice and processes that engage us in an environment. What a human being learns from others is, for Ingold, not information but *attention* for particular ways of perceiving – for this, he creates a term *education of attention* (Ingold 2000: 22). By this, the anthropologist means that we all do *hear* but a composer *listens*, we all do *see* but a painter *watches*. As Ingold states, watching,

listening and feeling are things people *do* (2000: 24). Thus, he implies a *skill* or a *mode of attention* to be an *activity*.

Hence, the *skills* of a graffiti artist would help him to find a gap in a fence as a possible escape while it might remain unnoticed by many other passersby. The surface of the roofs would be for him a safe place to work, since ordinary pedestrians do seldom raise their heads to see what is happening above (cf. False 2013; Ruas 2012). A graffiti artist has special incorporated knowledge of a city as a wild animal does in the woods. For him, the woods of the city can be better perceived at night in silence when you hear every single car approaching. As Kipras explains, you reduce your vision, but you develop an immediate reaction to other triggers of your senses: if you hear a car – you hide without longer consideration (Dubauskas 2014). As for Merleau-Ponty, *flesh is both, the seer and the seen*; subsequently, a graffiti painter reduces his own vision in order not to be seen. As a funny consequence, we may consider graffiti artists as *the only type of painters painting in the dark*. Moreover, particular bodily practices are grown into his habits of movement: *graffiti writers walk generally faster than ordinary people*, says Kipras, *they are also good in jumping, falling, climbing, and sliding* (Dubauskas 2014). As a graffiti man, Kipras Dubauskas has particular skills in watching, listening and moving in the city; as an interdisciplinary visual artist, he has incorporated an intuitive mode of *feeling* the aesthetical qualities of its shapes and surfaces. Being both and merging it with a socio-critical thought, works like his video installation “Suspension of Disbelief” (2013b) discussed in the previous chapter, come into being.

Finally, one has to consider one more aspect of acting in the world that is central to Ingold. He, following Merleau-Ponty’s perception of space and things, understands a *landscape* or, in this case, a *cityscape* in which an organism-person is acting, as a *taskscape*. While embodying capacities and gaining skills, we develop our perception depending on the things we can do with and within the environment (Ingold 2000). While a farmer might see flowering orchards as a potential of gaining fruits, Vincent van Gogh viewed it as an invitation to create a painting²⁰. In the case of my research, a cityscape for both of my interview partners, Kipras Dubauskas and Vitalij Červiakov whom I introduce following, is not an object of artistic or intellectual interrogation. Instead, it becomes generated in movement, in perception and conceptualization of possible artistic tasks. In other words, the perception of the city space comes into being while drawing a personal trajectory through it or, *while finding one’s way*.

²⁰ “Flowering Orchards” (1888) is a famous series of paintings by Van Gogh.

II.V. WAYFINDING: NAVIGATING THE URBANITY

As I introduced earlier, one of my central fieldwork methods was *fieldwork on foot*. Following the introductory walk with Kipras Dubauskas described in the previous chapter, I continued accompanying him and other artists in their walks through the city. As noted in my field notes, after some time, there has developed a certain sense for the act of walking itself – a particular sensibility and attention for the space and the movement that, I believed, could respond to the artist's:

The silence in our walks is no less important than the talks. While strolling along, a speechless connection grows and you start feeling that you perceive the same. Of course, we know that we never sense things the same – how absurd it would be to believe so; at the same time, two painters understand each other when they claim to see dozens of shades of black on one black surface, and indigenous hunters understand they both hear hundreds of separate sounds in the woods... In the third or fourth walk through the city's ruined industries with Kipras, I had a feeling, I start hearing the differences between those sounds. And so I could find my way through the woods as he did...

(personal field notes, February 18, 2014)

Hence, Kipras' tours through the city are determined by finding his personal way through it or even, one can say, creating his way. Knowing the city by heart, he still uses maps to discover its corners, and betrays them while trespassing the lines drawn on paper and expanding them with the experiences he gains on his way. Conceptually, he considers maps and mapping as an important phenomenon when thinking about the urban situation in the process of walking, and calls his activity an attempt to draw an "alternative city map"²¹. As Tim Ingold suggests there is a difference between using a map and *mapping* where the latter terms denotes the process rather than instruction and a movement based on attention rather than prescribed knowledge. Again, intuition and improvisation is crucial to *mapping* and *wayfinding*: "we know *as we go*, not *before we go*. [...] [T]he traveler or storyteller who knows as he goes is neither making a map nor using one. He is, quite simply, *mapping*" (Ingold 2000: 230-231).

Moreover, I believe that Kipras implies the same idea as Ingold discusses, namely that "no map, however 'modern' or sophisticated the techniques of its production, can be wholly

²¹ See the invitation for the *MINEO* festival (2014) participants cited in the following chapter.

divorced from the practices, interests and understandings of its makers and users” (Ingold 2000: 225). Hence, the initial attempt of the artist overtaking the roles of both, the maker and the user, is to emphasize his practices, interests and understandings, and to create *his own map* – a subjective one that is based on *wayfinding*.

As Ingold poetically remarks, “wayfinding might be understood [...] as a movement in *time*, more akin to playing music or storytelling than to reading a map” (Ingold 2000: 238). He makes it more precise in a description as following:

[W]hile dwelling in the world entails movement, this movement is not between locations in space but between places in a network of coming and going [...]. In wayfinding, people do not traverse the surface of a world whose layout is fixed in advance – as represented on the cartographic map. Rather, they “feel their way” through a world that is itself in motion, continually coming into being through the combined action of human and non-human agencies.

(Ingold 2000: 155)

Let us further consider the works by another young Vilnius artist, Vitalij Červiakov – a collaborator of the *MINEO* festival – one of the few people who did not only show interest but also actively contributed with the presentation of his works²². Each of the works within the performative series titled “The Reticence” (started in 2010, ongoing project) initiated by Vitalij and practiced by himself along with a group of Vilnius inhabitants, were organized according to the same script: a group of people would meet at the cathedral square in Vilnius before the sunrise and, led by a compass, start walking to one of the directions decided in advance (North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, West, and Northwest). Even though walking as a group, nobody would talk during the entire trip until the sunset. The duration of the travel would depend on the length of the day (long in summer, short in winter), and the line made by walking would be between 30 and 40 kilometers (cf. Marcišauskytė-Jurašienė 2013). The walkers would search for the most direct possible way and attempt to stay on the course indicated by the compass; if needed, they would trespass private properties, water streams, busy streets etc. Usually, the participants would carry cameras and sound recorders to document the environment, and make notes. After collecting the video material of the participants, Vitalij composed these to video pieces – this documentation was the only “result” of the project. Otherwise, the actual artwork remained in their silent memories.

²² The process of the festival is extendedly presented in the following chapter “Trespassing Method”.

Another Vitalij's project (work in progress) is directly concerned with map-making and official mapping strategies. In the scope of *MINEO* festival, in a presentation held on April 5, 2014, he proposed an idea of walking along the current "border" of Vilnius (the official city's perimeter in 2014 was around 150 kilometers; however, the line is being changed every year expanding in periphery (Mineo 2014b)). The artist suggested to use the city map as a point of departure and to make a several days lasting tour "around" its borderline. The only task of the trip would be to walk on the line as accurately as possible. This performance would question map-making itself, and confront the arbitrariness of the prescribed territory to the actuality of the direct perception of the city. In a talk Vitalij explains:

While walking on the border, specific contradictions can be directly perceived. Just think of the question what is natural and what is man-made in the city: for example, if you go barefoot you feel what cannot be expressed in words – there is a difference if you walk on a pavement or on grass! [...] The border is, after all, different in every single point.

(Červiakov 2014)

Within this project, Vitalij intends to collaborate with architects, geographers and cartographers, and wonders how such exchange could broaden his perspective. Coming from the field of photography, he also documents his findings, and occasionally presents them in exhibitions²³. However, representation is not his main concern. In both of Vitalij's works the actual interest, comparably to Kipras', lays in *wayfinding*: the prescribed map is being performatively scrutinized in an immediate action of perception. The official border is attempted to be erased through the act of walking. Walkers search for their way and cross obstacles occurring on their path: private territories, fences, and sites of natural environment such as hills, swamps and small rivers. The awareness of the environment is placed above the verbal conceptualization of an artistic event, and above and representation in general.

Following the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, perception is only possible through direct engagement i.e. it comes into being through a performance. However tiny the action might be – e.g. moving your eyelid, only *through action* the world appears to us when the movement of the eye makes the world vibrate (cf. Merleau-Ponty 1968: 7). This philosophy,

²³ See e.g. the exhibition "Tarpdiscipliniškumo kapinynuos (?)" ("In the cemetery of interdisciplinarity (?)" in the "Vartai gallery" and JVMVC in Vilnius, 2013: <http://www.artnews.lt/paroda-tarpdiscipliniskumo-kapinynuos-jvmvc-ir-vilniaus-vartu-erdvese-21103>, accessed 4.4.2015.

of course, remains a premise that cannot be proved. Similarly, Tim Ingold's anthropological thought applied here to discuss artist's actions, is rather my suggestion to approach than an intension to explain. I follow these thinkers and believe that a moving and acting human being must be understood within its *environment*, both *natural* or *built*, whereas these two categories, according to Ingold do not stand in opposition either. Instead, they continuously extend and prolong one another, and overlap in the process of dwelling through and within. Thus, the distinction between the perceiver and the perceived is to be erased, as Merleau-Ponty expresses:

For the visible present is not in time and space, nor, of course, outside of them [...]. To put precisely, it stops up my view, that is, time and space extend beyond the visible present, and at the same time they are behind it, in depth, in hiding. [...] What makes the weight, the thickness, the flesh of each color, of each sound, of each tactile texture, of the present, and of the world is the fact that he who grasps them feels himself emerge from them by a sort of coiling up or redoubling, fundamentally homogeneous with them [...] as it were his double or an extension of his own flesh.

(Merleau-Ponty 1968: 113-114)

CHAPTER III

TRESPASSING METHOD

In my view, the question of what art really and essentially is [...] was the wrong form for the philosophical question to take.

(Danto 1997: 35)

The artists I meet in Vilnius, as well as many of their contemporaries throughout the world, consider a walk through the city, a spatial experience or a statement to be an art piece itself. For instance, a young artist Petras Olšauskas, without presenting an object or a particular action as an artwork, believed to have been creating. Petras, who joined the *MINEO* curatorial team in February, is being frequently involved in group and duo (along with his sister Marija Olšauskaitė) exhibition projects of interdisciplinary contemporary art²⁴. Within our festival, he primarily overtook a role of observer of the organizational process, and was crucial in logistic issues such as driving, building, buying etc. He was, however, not deeply involved in communicating the festival's message (except of communication with the Botanical garden, see elaboration further). Since Petras often remained silent in our meetings; after a while I started wondering about his intentions and asked whether he is going to create an artwork for the festival. He answered that he views moments of organization of this event as his artwork itself; he likes to *conceive it as a sculpture*; “I believe that I might be creating now”, he replied (Dubauskas and Olšauskas 2014).

Thus, organizing an event may be perceived as an artistic contribution. Distancing themselves from object-production, artists inextricably merge interdisciplinary practices in order to produce a *performance* that has a social significance to the others. The artistic tendency to fully abandon a particular medium and form of expression (painting, sculpture, craft etc.) is as old as the art of 1970s, and is found within any artistic discipline (if we still can talk of disciplines). As art historian and philosopher Arthur C. Danto suggests, already “[w]ith Warhol it becomes clear that there is no special way a work of art must be – it can look like a Brillo box [soap pads], or it can look like a soup can. But Warhol is but one of a group of artists to have made this profound discovery. The distinction between music and noise,

²⁴ Petras' latest exhibitions were curated by “The Gardens” project space in Vilnius and New York, for more information see <http://thegardens.lt/category/past>, accessed 12.2.2015.

between dance and movement, between literature and mere writing, which coeval with Warhol's breakthrough, parallel it in every way" (Danto 1997: 35).

In this most extensive chapter of the thesis, I basically introduce an interdisciplinary cultural festival *as an artistic practice of trespassing* certain institutional boundaries. The *MINEO* festival that was organized by artists Kipras Dubauskas, Petras Olšauskas and me attempted even more: we wanted to trespass boundaries between certain groups of Vilnius inhabitants – so called unofficial *experts of the city* in order to raise a debate about actual urban problems and *evoke change*. This wish, in fact, appeared to be rather idealistic than realistic. After contextualizing Vilnius creative activities in relation to the basic ideas of *performance art*, as well as considering artists' approaches in terms of the philosophy of Michel de Certeau, in particular his concepts of *strategy* and *tactics* (1988), I shall invite the reader to follow a detailed account on the festival. Its inspirations and intentions, as well as its actual process are presented following. Here, I introduce all the groups of city inhabitants that have been involved in *MINEO*, both, refusing and agreeing to participate. Finally, one should be able to see, why the intension to trespass has been not really fulfilled, and how this attempt was lived through.

III.I. ART – WHAT?

Artistic activities that are being described in this thesis are not to be confused with somebody's private interest; instead, these artists conceive their actions not as personal engagement but as social and culturally collective. Loosing tights to a medium enables contemporary artists to focus on the *artistic intention* that, according to a certain philosophical approach, is sufficient to "legitimize" their activities as artistic. No better could the issue be discussed than a philosopher from Vilnius, Algimantas Lopeta suggested in one of our long conversations:

Algimantas Lopeta: first of all, a theoretician should not moralize an artist as many do. E.g. saying "this is not art" is absurd; it is the same as to say "this did not happen". This is not theoretical but moral approach; instead you should ask: "how could it happen?"

Goda Palekaitė: so if an artist labeled something as artwork – it became art? Is it beyond questioning?

A.L.: yes, *de facto*. We should not think in terms of a subject who defines a phenomenon as art. Not the subject is important but that there has been a possibility to declare so. No historian would find an artist who “found out” e.g. abstract painting or contemporary art. It is a nonsense saying that Duchamp invented conceptualism. He was only a symptom of his time. [...]

G.P.: how is something being “legitimized” as art?

A.L.: you don’t need to “legitimize” anything. The tradition of the legitimization of experience comes from Descartes and Kant. It says: “there is an experience but I have to “justify” it to prove it is true”. As it could be an empirical contraband! [...] If somebody says “I make art” – it is art; but if you start thinking “no, art is something else” – you search for a moral category and an essentialist definition of art as Kant was searching for the reason of all possible experiences.

G.P.: then we shall talk about two different categories: art as an event or experience, and about definition of art – its conception. A conceptual categorization is necessary to be able to perceive contemporary art at all. Petras tells me that the festival is his artwork – but I would not know that his artwork existed if he did not tell me! Thus, to talk about art as somebody’s experience is not enough, we also have to talk about the conceptual categories that communicate this experience.

A.L.: that is right. But we can only talk about them if we stop considering what one told and start asking what enabled him to tell so. There were all conditions for him to do it...

(Lopeta 2014a)

Hence, I follow my interview partner and abandon the issue of “legitimization” of art. Instead, I am interested in the approach saying that we must inquire about *general conditions of contemporary creativity* i.e. what conditions of contemporary thinking *enables* an artist to think in these terms at all? This is, above all, a philosophical question and I acknowledge my limits: it is impossible to answer within a short ethnographic work. Within this chapter and the whole thesis, I rather focus on one of the contexts i.e. spatial, social and art-discursive conditions for the contemporary spatial art in Vilnius. As it was more precisely indicated in the introduction, I focus on the activities that one can identify as *creative methods* and rather leave out their local, global and historical interrelatedness. Following, the most crucial method of *trespassing* will be discussed.

III.II. IN THE CONTEXT OF PERFORMANCE ART

While the most important aspects of perception and experience of Vilnius *creative walks* are described in the previous chapter in relation to the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Tim Ingold, the *performative quality of a work*, in RoseLee Goldberg's terms (2004: 10), needs to be mentioned as well. Whereas I do not intend to classify the activity of Kipras and Petras to *performance art*, I believe the term to be helpful in contextualizing their case.

Indeed, as Danto notes, "two outwardly indiscernible things can belong to different, indeed to momentarily different, philosophical categories" (1997: 35): a walk through the city that Kipras and I overtook as a creative act may be everyday activity for people living in the area. During the preparation process of *MINEO*, the three of us had many walks with the intension to experience and to *perform* the space of the city. During one of them, in the outskirts of Vilnius, next to the factory for recycling industrial trash, we met an old lady who asked us what we were doing on such a path. "Walking around", we replied; "Don't you have jobs so you walk around at this time of the day?", the woman smiled. She told us, she is the only one from a big family still alive because she also walks every day, while all her friends and siblings have already passed away. After we departed, Kipras said: that *is* our job – to keep walking in order to stay alive in this city, to live over its changes, and to capture and transmit them to the others (personal notes, February 18, 2014).

As an artist driven by graffiti experiences and explorer's calling, Kipras believes his encounter with the city to be rather communal than personal. Clearly, he often remains non-understood because of a lack of a distinguished form of expression. However, already early performance artists in the mid-20th century created artworks without distinguished form that were ephemeral and temporary in their existence (cf. Goldberg 2004). Nevertheless, one can trace the roots of performance art already in the very beginning of the 20th century, particularly, in the ideas and artistic practices of the avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Russian Constructivism, Dada, and Surrealism. By questioning the means and purposes of artistic expression in general, as well as criticizing the separation between art and social life, the unconventional, experimental acts, and radical art-political manifests paved the way for the performance art. Hence, the performance art was born among those painters and sculptors who found their interest in *change*: from *product* to *process*, from *stable* to *active*, from

“work-in-itself” (finished, complete, and unchanging) to the “work-in-progress” (incomplete, contingent, and fluid), turning painters and sculptors into performers (cf. Carlson 2004: 138).

However, for half of the century, the new genre was overlooked because it fit no category, and unexamined because the material could no longer be perceived but only described. The field started to be recognized as independent during the 1960s in the USA, Western Europe and Japan. RoseLee Goldberg, the key figure in the theory of performance art, indicates central names of artists, originally coming from other disciplines, who, in fact, formed performance art: “in the late 1960s [...] increasing number of artists turned to live performance as the most radical form of art-making, irrevocably disrupting the course of traditional art history. [...] Performance has attracted very different practitioners: Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, Joseph Beuys and Hermann Nitsch in Europe; Yoshihara Jiro, Yoko Ono, Atsuko Tanaka, Shigeko Kubota, and Yayoi Kusama in Japan; Carolee Schneemann, Robert Whitman, Claes Oldenburg, Robert Morris, Yvonne Rainer, and Allan Kaprow in the United States. [...] Their actions, more often than not, were provocative and ironic, and they were frequently responsive to the political and socially transforming developments that raged around them” (Goldberg 2004: 15).

Since the time when performance art emerged in the mainstream contemporary art scene of the 1960s, there have been numerous scholarly attempts to define it as a subject field and distinguish it from the others. However, Goldberg, whom I follow here, focuses not on its particularity but rather on its applicability. She is concerned with the socio-political and conceptual qualities of the performance art that allows it to merge disciplines and relate artistic fields of visual arts, theatre, music and others, with critical approaches.

Interpreting the case of my interview partners, one can search for, as Goldberg expresses, *performative quality of a work*, and look what its analyses tells us about the work itself. Any type of a socio-cultural performance does not release a preexisting meaning; instead, it is always in the present, in the here-and-now (cf. Bruner 1986: 11). After the act is over, the meaning vanishes – even with a precise documentation, it can never be captured. However, the *performative quality* allows to trespass borders between disciplines and to combine visual art and music, theater and theory, language and dance. *Performativity*, moreover, cannot be exclusively analyzed in practices that are classically understood as performative. The practices of visual arts, architecture, and performance art commonly denoted as postmodernist and the academic response to it, apply the *performance principle* to reflect upon diverse

aspects of social and artistic life. Performance is no longer confined to the stage, arts, and ritual. Performativity is everywhere linked to the interdependence of text and interpretation, action and reaction, the subject and the object (cf. Hoffmann and Jonas 2005).

Moreover, one must see performance as an interruption in the casual: everyday life of crowds is being violated by interrupting in private and public spheres. It allows our cultural moment “to step from its edges” (Goldberg 2004: 11). As one of the most influential performance artists of the 1970’s, Laurie Anderson, expressed: “It is the anarchic and experimental arm of our culture. It isn’t supported by the mass media and is not recorded by it” (Anderson 2004: 7).

In regard to my fieldwork and activities of the artists involved emphasizes must be made on the political *provocation* as a general characteristic of performance art. Thus, one can also say that the expression *performative quality of work* denotes the artists’ attempt to challenge and reject prescribed norms and rules in a modus of action. Instead of committing itself to established academic disciplines and discourses, since its very beginnings, it sought to merge boundaries and bring about *change*. This can be related with the discussion of Kipras’ artistic motivation and intentions presented in chapter I “Something Representative: The Urban Condition”. There, the provocative political motivation is discussed as his central reason of combining established and non-established (or even penalized by state) artistic practices.

Although performance art obviously borrowed formal elements from theater, it is can be seen by fundamentally anti-thesis to the classical forms of theatre. It refuses the theatrical structure based on a prescribed play and the theatrical illusion. On the contrary, as a theatre theorist Marvin Carlson summarizes in his influential book “Performance: A critical introduction” (2004), that performance art typically has four anti-theatrical components: (1) It happens in a particular space, which is not illusively created by a narrative story and stage design elements (*here*); (2) it happens in a particular period of time (*now*); (3) the audience is present and perceived by the performer, that is, an interaction occurs (*between*); (4) it spotlights the *performer’s* person and body – the performer is not an actor or actress, playing a role, but represents his or her own person with his or her own concerns (Carlson 2004). Again, we can definitely view these aspects as characteristic for many of the artworks presented in this thesis

Finalizing the context of performance art, I would like to mention one of the pioneers of performance art, namely, a German artist Joseph Beuys. He became the central figure of the postwar Germany in claiming to be an artist and a shaman at once, and has been crucial in

establishing performance art as both – *social* and *ritualized artistic practice*. As Goldberg writes, “[c]ommitted to the idea that art has a capacity to transform people – socially, spiritually, and intellectually – Beuys created what he called “social sculptures”. These might include lectures, collaborative protest activities [...], or symposia on art and politics. [...] [In 1974, the artist performed his famous *I Like America and America Likes Me*, where] *Coyote* was a metaphor for the tragic decimation of the Native American peoples (who respected the coyote) by the early European settlers (who despised and shot it). Beuys spent a week “in captivity” closed with the wild animal in a New York Gallery” (Goldberg 2004: 50).

Thus, creating a personal myth, such as Beuys did, became a common artistic practice. As it has been shown in the chapter I, Vilnius artists also attempt their works to be seen within a particular personal narrative (see e.g. the video and the paperwork “Suspension of Disbelief” by Kipras Dubauskas discussed previously, 2013a; 2013b). However, an artist does not become a shaman only because of claiming so; instead, a performative work may be a site of combining spiritual narratives and practices with other means. Finally one can say that “live work by artists unites the psychological with the perceptual, the conceptual with the practical, thought with action”, and spirituality with sociality (Goldberg 2004: 9).

III.III. RECONSIDERING STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Hence, through a performative work that occurs in particular time and space, artists like Kipras, Petras and others, aim to develop a creative environment and provoke change. In the case of *MINEO* festival, they are seeking for a change in the social consciousness of the city dwellers and Vilnius urban development. While we may comprehend their understanding in art-theoretical terms referring to the tradition of performance art, one must also consider artists’ intentions in a broader context of social communication. Hereby, I relate the approach of Vilnius artists, in particular Kipras Dubauskas, to the theory proposed by Michel de Certeau in his “Practice of Everyday Life” (1988), and especially his separation between *strategy* and *tactics* as two modes of *social intensions*. I see de Certeau’s ideas as applicable in considering particular modes of performing in the city, and conceptualizing different types of encounters in the modern urban life. However, these terms are proposed here not with an aim to assign artists’ activities to either *strategy* or *tactics* – it is rather attempted to show that

both dynamics overlap within the scope of artistic practice. De Certeau's terminology shall help me to highlight both aspects within performative creative actions in terms of *socio-spatial* rather than *aesthetical intension*.

Here, we shall begin with the practice of graffiti writing that, to my view, is exceptionally illustrative for the concept of *tactics*. As showed in previous chapters, graffiti practice considered as illegal and penalized by the state, plays a crucial role in Kipras works; moreover, it overlaps with institutionally recognized and welcomed activities such as exhibition-making and education. The conceptual basis for graffiti writing itself might also be characterized by explaining it through two usually overlapping perspectives: on one hand, the city is perceived as a canvas – a space suitable to express artistic ambitions (cf. Monet 2012); on the other hand, consciously or not, “writing on the city” (Tonkiss 2005: 142) is a political statement. Looking from both viewpoints, tagging is an “autochthonous youth culture that works by fixed rules” (Bazuco 2013) that are transmitted “from experience to experience” and learned in the street. Thus, as a young writer from Vilnius expresses, graffiti *tactics* perfectly functions as “strategic errors in the system that makes the city live” (Stryts 2012). As shown in the previous chapter on *skills*, it includes special knowledge about the city and comprehension in action: knowing how, when and where to write, run, hide, and escape; as well as special techniques, for instance, as one of interviewed taggers from Vienna indicates: “a lot of people use acid, because if you put it on the glass you cannot clean it off. You put pure acid in the marker and when you write it on the window, it is permanent” (Sobek 2013).

In Michel de Certeau's philosophy, the concept of *strategies* stands for established scripts and patterns of action that are being employed by institutions and do indicate, how one should behave in a certain urban space; they are technocratic mechanisms “that seek to create places in conformity with abstract models”. In opposition, *tactics* “do not obey the law of the place” and are rebellious in their nature (de Certeau 1988: 29). For instance, in a chapter of the “Practice of Everyday Life” (1988) entitled “Walking in the City”, de Certeau insists that “the city” is generated by the strategies of governments, corporations, and other institutional bodies who regulate space in producing things like maps and describing the city as a unified whole. In contrast to *strategies*, he characterizes *tactics* as the mode of acting of the *non-powerful*. *Tactics* is not a subset of *strategy*, but its adaptation to the technocratic environment. While a city planning commission may determine the grid of the streets in a district, a local walker would figure out how is it best to navigate them: he or she would find

shortcuts and avoid curves by trespassing territories arbitrary e.g. crossing grass-plots and private yards. More radical is the example of a graffiti artist who *de-represents* a “representative” space (a wall, a fence etc.) that does not belong to him or her (as I argued in the chapter I), and proves that *tactics* happens when “the weak make use of the strong” (de Certeau 1988: xvii).

While graffiti is a rebellious method of questioning *strategies* of the city and the state, contemporary artists also find other means to talk about the issue. We could see an example in the chapter II: Vitalij Červakov is dealing exactly with the same problem in his performative series of walks along the “Vilnius border”. There, he questions the assumption that a city *has* its defined borders, and, instead of technocratically planned separation between *the urban* and *the rural*, represents an ever intertwining and processual local reality. In this case, an artwork questions and confronts the viewer with the issue without employing the role of “the rebel”.

Be they institutionally recognized and permitted or not, for de Certeau, the “arts of doing” enacted by ordinary people such as walking, talking, reading, and dwelling, function as non-interchangeable elements of creative resistance to larger structures. *Tactics* of everyday life is a powerful force because, as the philosopher expresses:

Marginality is today no longer limited to minority groups, but is rather massive and pervasive; [...] an activity that is unsigned, unreadable, and unsymbolized remains the only one possible for all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has now become a silent majority.

(1988: xvii)

Although more than three decades after “The Practice of Everyday Life” was published have passed, de Certeau’s philosophy remains incredibly influential in academic and artistic discourses; especially those dealing with urbanity and spatiality (cf. Olsen 2013). Despite that, this remarkable text and its reception must be reconsidered in the contemporary context.

However convenient it is to see urban artists as *tacticians* with their works subverting institutional strategies, I attempt to show that the issue is more complex: while working as a graffiti artist at night, and constantly trespassing forbidden borders within the city, during the day, Kipras searches for ways of collaboration with artistic and other institutions in order to extend the limits of urban communication. Even more, certain *institutions* in Vilnius are ruled

by *unidentified trespassers* (as e.g. the case of the Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass demonstrates further in this chapter), who *enable* artists to work *tactically*.

As a critical surveyor of de Certeau's philosophy, C.S. Olsen notices, "[i]t seems to be a dominant assumption today, that art can only be critical if it occurs outside the institutions" (Olsen 2013). However, she implies this assumption to be naïve and, instead of that, proposes to abandon the binary thinking in *strategy* and *tactics* as oppositions, and to acknowledge de Certeau's attempt to establish a conceptual ground for a dialogue and interchange between the structural planning of urbanity and the common use of its dwellers. This interpretation is especially useful in regard to contemporary urban art:

When applying this approach then to site-specific and critically engaged art practices, these should not be construed simply as a reaction to or a means to fix a ready-made urban space, but should be seen as integral to creating, analysing and understanding space. As Harvie (2009) states, art practices does more than merely demonstrate urban process, it may also produce urban meaning.

(Olsen 2013)

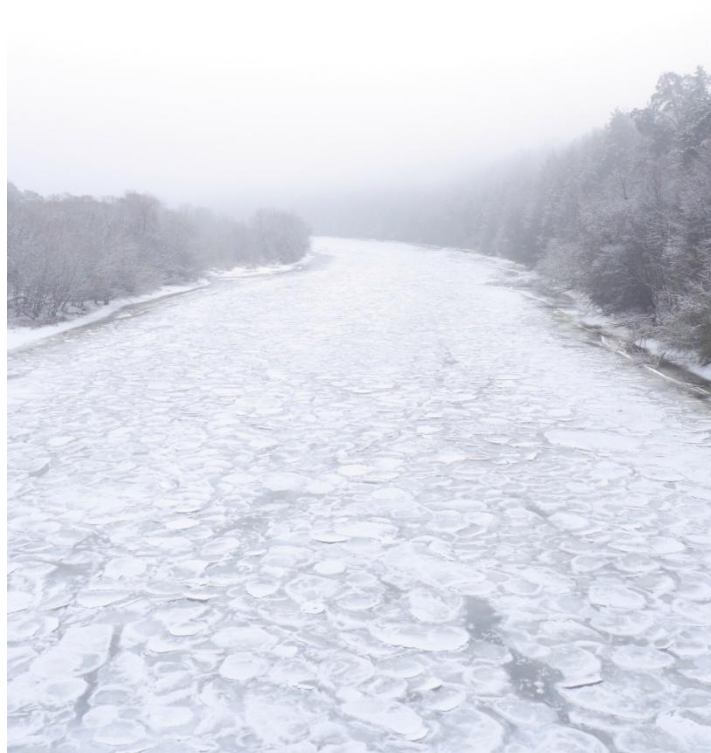
To conclude my suggestion of viewing Vilnius urban artists in regard to de Certeau's philosophy of the space, one shall emphasize that *tactics* may become *strategies* and the other way around. Similarly and paradoxically, radical avant-garde art determined nowadays mass-culture, and anti-institutional art from the 70's is now primarily found in state museums. Thus, the distinctive *tactics* and *strategies* shall be better viewed as useful indexes in considering contradictory aspects of the same phenomenon, rather than a binary opposition.

III.IV. MINEO

III.IV.I. INSPIRATIONS AND INTENSIONS

The real magic of Vilnius unfolds once you encompass whole incoherence at a moment: wild silence between two naked hills while walking on the railroad, and rotten and new industrial monsters appearing on the other corner. [...] Vilnius' magic is found between an ice-covered river and a hidden dusty Russian bookshop, placed in an abandoned factory building waiting to be demolished for years already. The bookshop and its keeper are, however, still there. We ask him in Russian if he has many customers to buy the literature (that ranges from science fiction to pornography). "Nowadays not many..." - the Gogol's character replies.

(personal field notes, February 24, 2014)



Typical landscape of Vilnius in winter. © 2014 Julian Wieser

In the beginning of my research, inspired by the walking experiences described in detail in the chapter I “Something Representative: The Urban Condition”, Kipras and me started daydreaming about a cultural festival taking place in April 2014. It would have encompassed visual arts, urban exploration, guided city tours, urban cuisine, experimental music concerts and much more. We would include a cook, a mini-bus as a travelling bar, and invite many visual artists, musicians, architects, professional travelers, geographers to collaborate! We would invite ordinary city inhabitants and create space for an interaction between them and the “experts”!... In fact, these were unrealistic ideas – I attempt to show the reasons following.

Any case, a two days festival later named as *MINEO* really took place on April 4-5, 2014. Being way smaller in its scale and demands than we initially wanted, a cultural city event represented a compromise between our intentions and the real situation. In order to summarize these intentions, I first quote an excerpt from our “call for artists” written in February 2014²⁵:

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

CALL FOR IDEAS

Between the sub-systems and the structures consolidated by various means [...] there are holes and chasms. These voids are due not to the chance. They are the places of the possible.

Henry Lefebvre “The Right to the city” (1968: 156)

The MINEO creative crew spotlights on the issue of expanding commercialization and privatization of Vilnius semi/public space. Marginal alienated spaces are being expropriated and converted to suit the needs of the “mass culture”; moreover, decorative sculptures are emerging as a result of the decisions closed in the municipal offices. These institutional practices narrow social and historical context of public space, consequently, disabling the emergence of alternative space scenarios. This situation directly influences general bourgeois apathy, conformist thinking, and lack of social consciousness, i.e. the loss of the right to the city.

²⁵ Written in Lithuanian by Kipras and myself. This and following *MINEO* texts in English have been translated by myself and used to communicate with non-Lithuanian speaking participants e.g. Mirjam Wirz and Philippe van Wolputte (see elaboration following).

As a theoretical standpoint, we choose “The right to the city” (1968) by a philosopher Henri Lefebvre and his contribution to the debate on urbanization process. This project attempts to expand the horizon of a Vilnius citizen within the urban environment, and to stimulate a more eager social consciousness. It works both, in theory and in practice, as public lectures and discussions, video screenings as well as art projects in unexpected public and semi-public spaces. An emergence of a new interdisciplinary dialogue is expected.

QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED: What is defined as a public space? Do citizens conceive their right to it and use it? How are its cultural and geographical boundaries being defined? Does the act of trespassing them imply a socio-political statement? How may alternative city maps be made? How does a place become a space in a collective memory? What sort of new strategies might emerge within this context?

THE MODE OF ACTION: A map denotes the practice of moving itself and, hence, is drawn and redrawn each time anew dependently on the gaze and the trajectory of the practitioner. This marathon-like project functions as an excursion: constantly moving in time-space and ignoring the “representative” routes of Vilnius and, instead, focusing on the site specifics, the practitioners of different fields share their insights and experiences.

The three days long walk will begin on the right side of Neris river (Žvėrynas, Naujamiestis, Vingis park) and move towards the southeast Vilnius (Paneriai, Vilkipėdė, Naujininkai, Rasos). [...] Further routes will be developed based on the ideas of the participants. Please, check the blog <http://mineovilnius.tumblr.com/> for visuals and all updates.

Coordinators view MINEO as a long term project that would take place every April in order to represent the critical artistic approach towards the negative developments of the city space.

(Mineo 2014)

Thus, on the one hand, the idea of *MINEO* was driven by Henri Lefebvre’s consideration of the city as a socially constructed space (as it was discussed it in the first chapter). On the other hand, an artist being at the same moment a walker, focuses his or her work on the *perception* of the space. This was described in relation to the theory of Tim Ingold (as discussed it in the second chapter). Finally, an artistic practice functions as a *tactical* interruption in a *strategically* determined city space, and attempts to subvert it or to expand its limits (as

presented in this chapter above). Taken these practices together, as I suggest in this thesis, constitute the *method of trespassing*.

Following, I first exemplify this method with the works of a contemporary Belgian artist Phillippe van Wolputte. The *MINEO* team has established contact with him via e-mail. In fact, he found festival's concept very intriguing²⁶. Working in Antwerp and Amsterdam, van Wolputte creates installations, site-specific interventions, video works and collages that “show or suggest the possibilities of abandoned, neglected locations which have an important function in the memory and the social landscape of a city and in a way possess a beauty of their own” (van Wolputte 2015). On the other hand, van Wolputte's artworks often refer to the contemporary tragedy of modern societies. For instance, in the documentation of "Give off / Give out" (2011), we see an intervention performed in Jakarta in 2011: in the video, we face the absurd and desperate attempts of a small team trying to prevent the fine dust (that is incredibly dangerous when inhaled) that remains after demolishing the buildings (van Wolputte 2015). As Pieter Vermeulen describes: “[i]n these times of city marketing, spectacular architecture and the inexorable privatization of the public sphere, van Wolputte's work offers us an insight into an often forgotten, but nonetheless integral part of the urban fabric. Abandoned, asbestos-ridden buildings, hidden tunnels, shelters, drainage canals: they are all what we could call the underground of our everyday urban condition” (Vermeulen 2013).

Van Wolputte's artistic practice is inspired by the tactics of occupying and squatting, at least, the theoretician Pieter Vermeulen relates his works to the concept of *tactics* of Michel de Certeau (cf. Vermeulen 2013). As I have showed in the subchapter above “Reconsidering Strategies and Tactics”, this term would usually imply the informal, non-institutionalized and in-itself rebellious practices enacted in order to subvert the technocratic and the formal. Nevertheless, the Belgian artist, despite his young age (born in 1982), has an impressive list of numerous solo and group exhibitions, residencies, fellowships and awards. There, he presents nothing other but the same “trespassing” pieces – that means, his *tactical* practice is *institutionally* recognized²⁷. Thus, one can find room even for informal and critical practices

²⁶ Phillippe even decided to come to Vilnius on his budget to meet us in April 2014. He kindly agreed to present his works in a form of lecture or workshop, and to share his experience with us – the newcomers. Unfortunately, in the end he could not take the flight because of personal reasons, and did not come. We kept in contact by e-mail.

²⁷ See Philippe van Wolputte's official website with his works and his biography with the list of exhibitions, fellowship and awards: <http://www.vanwolputteprogress.eu/biography.html>, accessed 25.04.2014.

in contemporary galleries and project spaces not on exceptional occasions but on regular basis. Even though it is not the case in Vilnius yet, as van Wolputte's example demonstrates, it is usual in the Belgian and Dutch scene. This fact, again, exemplifies my argument raised above, that trespassing and institutionalized methods, or improvisational and technocratic mechanisms do not necessarily contradict each other in practice. Another, rather hypothetical question would be: in how far, then, are these tactics invasive, if they do invade only within a certain frame?

Another Vilnius-related case and, as Kipras saw it, a perfect and inspirational example to be followed, was the *Flash Institute* and the *Flash Bar* long-term project initiated by a Swiss artist Mirjam Wirz in Vilnius in 2005-2007. We contacted the author who is currently living in Switzerland, and introduced our *MINEO* idea asking her to share the video documentation of the *Flash Bar* and her experience with us. She kindly agreed and we screened her videos on the second day of the festival. *Flash Bar* included many interdisciplinary Vilnius artists and initially was a series of public lectures, installations, videos and performances. Wirz, along with her team, searched for public places in Vilnius where they opened a bar for one evening each time, that was built from materials found on the spot. Six spaces were selected due to their socio-historical and actual particularity or their impressive spatial characteristics. For instance, the abandoned Soviet taxi park in Vilnius is described as a "spiral within the building coils upwards over several floors. It lays a trail that leads upward, and one that leads downwards. If you take the wrong one, then you end up in a dead end, the problem being that you first notice it upstairs. We set up on the 1000m² on the last floor" (Wirz 2014)²⁸. In fact, the *Flash Bar* project served not only as inspiration for us, but also as a positive example of how an artistic initiative might contribute to the practical use of an abandoned or undervalued urban space.

To conclude the inspirations of *MINEO*, one can say that being an interdisciplinary team (Kipras and Petras working interdisciplinary as artists and me – an anthropologist with an artistic background), we intended to function as a link between different practitioners of the city. We expected to be a welcoming joint for individuals and groups non-related to each other, but interested in the issues of Vilnius. The goal, as we discussed was *not to exclude* neither *distinct* artists from architects, archeologists, sociologists etc., but the opposite – to *invite* diverse practitioners of the city to share their experiences and views on the problematic

²⁸ See the official website of the *Flash Bar* with all the locations and descriptions: <http://www.flashinstitut.com/index.php>, 25.5.2014.

issues through our suggested common creative space of the festival, and search for an interlace. As late as the end of February, we agreed on the title of the festival – Petras suggested *MINEO* by combining two Lithuanian words: "MINtis" (idea) and "ĖJimas" (walking practice) willing to emphasize both, the conceptual and the perceptual aspects.

We sent invitations to participate (attached above) to numerous individuals and communities that we saw as *experts of the city* i.e. to the people who *shared interest in contemporary urban condition* and who were *actively engaged* in practices of its *creation, exploration* and *critical examination*. Among them, there were many visual artists (mostly acquaintance artists whom we expected to be interested in the topic), art curators, a community of young architects, travelers' communities, urban explorers, activists, and others. Along with invitations, we added that organizers do not intend to give tasks, neither to define a strict corpus of the festival, but expect to receive ideas and suggestions for possible events: artworks, lectures, discussions, guided tours etc. As I elaborate further, we also went to gatherings of certain communities (Vilnius Travelers' Club, urban activists etc.) in order to establish contacts and invite people in person. For a month (February 2014), Kipras and me were primarily preoccupied with meetings, telephone calls and e-mails where we explained our idea and discussed the possibilities for collaboration.

My personal involvement as a curator was contradictory in-itself and, in fact, meant both, an incredible possibility to witness the intensions and the tensions from within, as well as my own psychological struggle to stay not too much involved. As I reflect in my field notes by the end of the fieldwork:

Starting from the beginning of the fieldwork, Kipras and me started organizing the festival. We met two or three times per week to discuss, to have walks, to go to lectures, meet participants, to buy, to visit, to prepare etc. Our communicative pattern, as I soon recognized, often looked like: him dreaming about hundreds of things and believing all is possible (to my view, they were inadequate to the situation of time, money, working power, interest of people etc.), and me trying to structure the situation, and often to show his dreams being impossible. I didn't like the role since the beginning – I don't enjoy managing business things in general, and now I had to manage things with an artist who had many interesting ideas but often lacked the sense of reality.

For example, we met many times to talk about texts we write – invitations for participants, translations (I translated to English), modifications in invitations, descriptions etc. I find many field notes where I prepare for talks with him that question and often deconstruct our concept, our sentences, our plans... Now, I see it as a very complex and ambivalent way of doing fieldwork. As a curator of the project, I definitely interfered and influenced its development. Even though I tried to do so only on the organizational but not on conceptual level, it was not enough. On the other hand, due to this particular involvement, I engaged in discussions that screw through the artists' thinking on the deep level of doubt. I was able to witness the greatness of contradictions and inconsequence at the moment when they arose, because I provoked them. Naturally, I had not less contradictions in my own thinking and was truly forced to face things I was not expecting to encounter.

(personal field notes, April 2, 2014)

III.IV.II. REFUSALS

One must now say that more than two thirds of individuals and groups refused to participate or have never reacted to our invitation²⁹. Nevertheless, I found an articulated refusal to participate conceptually more important than a positive but passive reaction that we also encountered. Particularly in consideration of the complexity of urban issues and the lack of a *common creative language*, I believe that elaboration on the refusals exemplifies the *urban condition* in Vilnius. Following, I attempt to show the reasons and the arguments of refusals.

VILNIUS TRAVELERS' CLUB³⁰ is the oldest (established in 1961) institution for travelling activities in Vilnius. It organizes guided tours through the city and its surroundings in both urban and natural environment weekly, and collaborates with diverse experts (historians, archeologists, natural scientists etc.). However, since all the information is spread only in Lithuanian and absolutely not advertised, it is only available for a particular intern community

²⁹ I use data from the e-mail address created especially for *MINEO* and from my field protocols. It is, however, impossible to count precisely because numerous invitations and refusals took place in spoken word. Vilnius, being comparably small as a capital city (population of 600,000 inhabitants) enabled us to use many important contacts we had as its native citizens and active engagers in diverse cultural and social activities; thus, our message was, to high extent, spread verbally between colleagues, friends and acquaintances. According to my calculation, there could have been up to 150 invitations.

³⁰ Information about the club and its weekly activities online (in Lithuanian only): http://www.zygis.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=4, accessed 10.05.2014.

that consists of Lithuanian speakers only (e.g. tours are not available for international tourists). Their tours, often guided by geographers, are e.g. walks through hills around Vilnius, and similar.

Willing to establish contact and invite for collaboration, Kipras and me went to their meeting on February 10 – there was a presentation of a new book about sculptures in Vilnius “The Path of Vilnius Sculpture” (2014) that was publicly discussed by its author art historian Jolanta Marcišauskytė-Jurašienė. The book is intended to denote sculptures of different periods in the city, and to guide a traveler from one to another; it includes maps, pictures and descriptions of the sculptures; nevertheless, being a tourist guide, it lacks an art theoretical focus or position and simply includes everything found in the city (Marcišauskytė-Jurašienė 2014).

The participants of the meeting could be clearly indicated by the age group: most of them (the leader of the club as well) were the elder generation Vilnius inhabitants. Kipras and I were the only young people in the gathering of approximately one hundred. We were not surprised by their reaction when the author of the book presented the chapter on modern sculpture, since it is common that the elder Vilnius citizens are skeptical towards modern (not to talk about contemporary) art of any sort. In this presentation it was obvious: an uncontrollable disgust and hater towards a sculpture by Vladas Urbanavičius³¹ came uncontrollably from the travelers.

Due to the gap between generations, artistic taste and aesthetic understandings, Kipras and I realized that a meaningful discussion between us and the club community would rather be improbable i.e. a conversation with the travelers would be stuck at the point “why should we accept this ugly piece of rotten metal as art”, as many of them expressed about the sculpture of Urbanavičius (Travelers 2014). We had to admit that even though we might view the problem of commercialization and privatization of the city space similarly, our approaches and methods are completely different. To be precise, the art forms we propose as appropriate to deal with the city issues (contemporary sculpture, installation, performance etc.) are not recognized by these people *as art* at all (cf. Travelers 2014).

³¹ “Krantinės arka“ (2009) (“The Riverside Arch”) by Vladas Urbanavičius is a large scale modern sculpture at a representative site of Vilnius. Since its accomplishment up to this day it has evoked passionate discussions among diverse groups of inhabitants. With its shape and materials it reminds on an old rotten canalization tube and, apparently, this appearance annoys many citizens, especially, the older generation. The artists’ and architects’ communities, however, continuously defend the sculpture and argue that this modernist aesthetics is common in every larger European city.

URBAN EXPLORERS: The movement that calls itself “urban exploration” is a worldwide spread activity of walking and exploring urban spaces that are generally not accessible to the public or even highly secured objects. These might include underground tunnels, former war bases, rooftops or anything else that is challenging to access. Urban explorers, normally, come to those places and observe only, taking nothing but pictures, leaving nothing but footprints. Thus the practitioners clearly differentiate themselves from graffiti communities, squatters, homeless people and other groups that also find hidden entrances to forbidden spaces. Local communities of urban explorers often communicate via internet under nicknames sharing pictures and impressions or their explorations. Often even exact locations of the places are unidentified in order to keep the “urban secret”, hence, the *preservation* and the *exclusion moment* is important. As an ethnographer and practicing urban explorer Bradley L. Garrett who continuously writes on the topic, suggests: “Unlike political movements, [...] urban exploration is not an attempt to build a ‘new’ grand narrative of resistance, but to subversively reimagine what already exists, complicating urban identity and imagination through a playful exchange with planning, construction, waste and decay” (Garrett 2013: 9).

Hence, analyzing the intentions of the practitioners, urban exploration seems like a secret game. Supposedly, urban explorers worldwide see themselves as secret agents of the city *privileged* to experience certain urban moments before they vanish. However, and as we see following, this game sometimes turns to a serious fight for principals and, in the end, to a hermetic practice unwilling to be shared.

We, as *MINEO* team were profoundly interested in the Lithuanian urban explorers as true experts of the abandoned and the semi-public space. We contacted one of their leaders Darius (he did not indicate his surname) and exchanged several e-mails with him. His immediate reaction was a refusal and a statement that our intension to connect different professionals and people interested in the alternative city development strategies are merely “empty hopes”, and that he does not believe it to be possible. I quote several representative excerpts from his emails in order to show the position of this community:

City exploration is not a universal term. For one person it is skidding through the ventilation pit, for the second – prowling through the bush, for the third – a funny walk in a street chatting with friends. [...] How could you possibly believe to connect these people into one company? Do you think that a 28 years old urbanist who works as a driver and uses his spear time to illegally explore highly secured city objects would find something in common with an

18 years old art student who just “discovered” one or two pop places? I doubt. Their worldviews are too different.

(Darius 2014a)

I personally know all the individuals whom you invited to your event [he refers to urban explorers who received letters from us], and there are much more of them! Despite of that, we always walk one by one. Why? Because we are all profound individualists and different characters, and we have different positions. Some time ago I was also dreaming about such collaboration, but now it seems like a nightmare to me.

(Darius 2014b)

Finally, in his last letter, Darius expressed the reason for his skepticism directly:

Honestly, I don’t digest artists. They are too irresponsible and unpredictable for my taste. [...] And I am not creative in any sense.

(Darius 2014b)

Even though he did not reply anymore after some time, he shared links to some websites of urban exploration that we did not know before. I do not intend to judge Darius’ position as adequate or not since I see both, devastating aspects of his statements, and an immeasurable and ungrounded skepticism and mistrust. However, this conversation as well as the fact that other urban explorers did not even react, made their approach obvious: *individualistic, hermetic and unwilling to communicate their experience.*

As the Garrett formulates, “the practice enticingly complicates understandings of places by unveiling unexpected material traces and immaterial affordances that build resilient personal attachments where the ‘present’ tangibly intersects with the ‘past’” (Garrett 2011: 1048). Hence, personal attachments to the secrets of the city become stronger than the social and communal interest. As Darius admits, he used to dream about collaboration with others, but has abandoned these ideas for his private joys. As the artist Vitalij Červiakov expressed when I shared this experience with him: “urban explorers do not merely intend to prevent. It is *their* territory – they discovered and conquered it. They don’t care that Indians were living there before...” (Červiakov 2014).

Again, we had to admit that despite the fact that we might share the approach to the crucial problems of the urban condition, collaboration was impossible. Finally, the most surprising evidence was that this unique informal group of young trespassers and the institutionalized

group of old city tourists from the Vilnius Travelers' Club shared an *unbreakable skepticism* towards contemporary artists.

ARTISTS: Not only other groups of city experts were skeptical towards the *MINEO* initiative. We also encountered young artists, who even work with urban space in a similar manner as we intended, refusing to participate. Several of them apologized for not having time or being out of Lithuania in the period of the festival. Few, like, for instance, Augustas Serapinas³² gave us constructive critique of the concept. He basically criticized the concept of *MINEO* as socially non-relevant or even harmful for the city and its abandoned spaces. He described cities like Vilnius as being very particular for their unrealized spatial possibilities and plentiful urban secrets. Even though the artists often intervenes in forgotten urban spaces, he prefers privacy and intimacy, thus, he criticized *MINEO* for its intention to explore them in a form of social gathering, and questioned why should we uncover them, and so destroy their secrecy (personal field notes, February 19, 2014). Augustas' approach, in a way, correlates to the approach of urban explorers who keep their sites secret and share their findings only within the community.

III.IV.III. REFRAMING THE FESTIVAL

Negativity and radical individualism – *MINEO* seemed to provoke a more emotional reaction than it was expected in the beginning. We were profoundly surprised by those active refusals shouting: “don't do it, nobody needs it! Leave the city alone!” It looked like the city experts wanted to protect “the virginity of the city” by employing essential skepticism. Kipras, Petras and me met to discuss how to act following. I was interested in considering the critique more carefully, while Kipras intended to move further with the people who were interested and believed in the concept of *MINEO*. Finally, we decided to see the April 4-5, 2014 not as a large festival anymore, rather as an introductory event for the participants and active observers i.e. for the core group of people who would work on its expansion further, with the intension to discuss how the “real” festival could be developed next year, and inspire one another. We decided to reframe *MINEO* 2014 to a walking tour though Southern Vilnius guided by Kipras (in a similar manner as we used to walk before), and to several temporary events mostly undertaken by the most involved participants. In other words, while reflecting

³² I will elaborate on the scope of work of Augustas in the chapter IV “Infiltration Method”.

upon the refusals and the critique, we realized our vision and intensions to have been unrealistic in nowadays Vilnius conditions. In the end, we decided to reframe the idea and the event itself to a *group walk* relating THREE PARTICULAR SPACES:

THE ROUND STUDIO OF GEDIMINAS JOKŪBONIS: Gediminas Jokūbonis (1927-2006) was one of the most prominent Lithuanian sculptors of the Soviet era who created an amount of public sculptures and monuments for the Union. His studio is a particular space in Vilnius insofar it was the only personal artist studio in Vilnius in this scale and of this architecture and design in the Soviet period. While other artists worked in collectives without getting permissions to establish their private working spaces, Jokūbonis, being an important public figure, had this opportunity. The studio is still full of his models and drawings and now belongs to his family. His grandson, being a good friend of ours, kindly invited the *MINEO* group to use the space for video screenings and discussions, and even the daughter of Jokūbonis made for us a lecture-excursion on April 4, where she commented on the history and the specific functions of the place. It definitely served as an inspiration – as a historical space *where art is being created for the public*, and as a monument of the past era.



The group discussion at the Round Studio. One can see the round-shaped architecture specially designed for the artist. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

VILNIUS UNIVERSITY BOTANICAL GARDEN IN VINGIS PARK: Vingis park is the largest park of the city located in the city centre and facing the river course. The botanical garden of the Vilnius University (the largest state university) is placed, or one can say, hidden in its territory. Being a semi-public space (one can enter the garden for free upon the arrangement with its administration) and suffering from the constant lack of funding, this unique space is almost abandoned and hardly known among Vilnius citizens. The coexistence of urban and natural environment and problematic issues related to its maintenance (a huge shopping center is being built just next to the garden), welcomed us to come there often and to established a contact to its director. In fact, Petras Olšauskas, used to do voluntary gardening there since his childhood and knew the director in person. She kindly invited us to visit it during the festival and allowed us to organize a workshop and a picnic there.



Vilnius University Botanical garden in winter. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

THE CENTRE OF SCULPTURE AND STAINED GLASS (Skulptūros ir Vitražo Centras): It is a huge industrial building located in the outskirts of Vilnius close to the airport that was built in 1984 – just before the break of the USSR. It was designed as the largest factory for “making art” in Baltic countries meant to produce the Soviet monuments. Shortly after its opening and due to the crash of the Union, the place became half (but not fully, as it is common in Vilnius) abandoned. Nobody needed this kind of factory of monuments anymore, and its administration started renting space for small auto service companies and similar businesses. Officially, it belongs to the Artists’ Association that is the largest official community of visual artists and is partly financed by state but, of course, insufficiently to sustain its members and belongings. Thus, the institution cannot sustain itself; even though some sculptors are still renting its spaces as studios. Sadly, most of the young generation artists do not even know the place exists since it has no connection to the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts or to any contemporary art-orientated institutions.

One day, Kipras and I went there to meet its director and to introduce our idea to him. Following, I quote an excerpt of my field notes after the meeting:

Yesterday Kipras and I went to the Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass to meet its director – a person we both didn’t know before. We presented our project and told him how interesting the centre appears to us. We asked if it was possible to bring people here and, hence, to “reopen” it again. We told him that most of young artists, even those studying sculpture, don’t even know this place exists. The director, on the other hand, replied: “I thought, they closed the department of sculpture in the Academy of Arts, since nobody comes here to make sculptures...” Amazing how far apart these two worlds are – I thought...

The director agreed on everything without longer consideration and without any money, formalities or bureaucracy. In Lithuania, a word is a signature: he allowed 30 unknown people (I don’t think he even wrote down our names) to do a tour and a party in a building of critical state (definitely dangerous as well): “whatever you want”, he said. He offered us the access to electricity, water, toilets, and everything we might need for the event.

During yesterday meeting, the director made us a tour through the building – he guided us and explained the specifics and function of each space. There were hundreds of forgotten sculptures under layers of industrial dust... The director also guided us through the stonecutters’ area. We got to know that these professional stonecutters work as security guards during the night. Officially working as guards and illegally as stonecutters, these

profound craftsmen (most of them have education in stonecutting) and the institution itself save money in paying less fees; at the same time, they occasionally have some professional job; the need for stonecutting is so low that it would be impossible to survive only from that...

(personal field notes, March 14, 2014)



The Centre of Sculpture and Stained Glass in Vilnius: in Soviet times – a factory for building monuments, now is partly rented for private automobile business. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

Even more surprising was what I got to know later: the director himself occasionally works as a guard. With a suit during the day and with a guard uniform during the night, this man secures his income. This made me think how closely a guard, an artist and a head of an institution can be related in a city like Vilnius where social system and urban structure contradicts its own sole. Talking in de Certeau terms, *strategy* and *tactics* appears to be entirely intertwined here. It is difficult to say if the director was unexpectedly helpful to us because of his open mindedness and will for change or rather because hopelessness and non-caring for the Centre of Sculpture and Stained Glass. Nevertheless, this institutional and, surprisingly, very human encounter enabled us to trespass the border between the abandoned-used, informal-formal and forbidden-allowed.



The stonecutters area in the Centre of Sculpture and Stained Glass. These men work as stonecutters during the day and as security guards during the night. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

Finally, after arranging the spaces and deciding on the route of the tour, we created a two-day program that was now sent only to prospective participants and onlookers who showed active interest. It was around 30 people, mostly young artists, curators and architects, and a few urban activists. Although the majority did not offer any concrete ideas for the April 2014 event, they were interested in the discussion. The program of *MINEO* looked as following:

INFO FOR THE MINEO PARTICIPANTS!

What is defined as public space? Do citizens conceive their right to it? How are its cultural and geographical boundaries being defined? Does the act of trespassing them imply a socio-political statement? How may alternative city maps be made and experienced? How does a place become a space in the collective memory? What sort of new strategies might emerge within this context?

We aim to answer these questions during the marathon of MINEO 2014. We meet this April 4th-5th and start the engine of ideas and experiences!

MINEO'14 PROGRAM

04.04.2014 FRIDAY: drawing a non-representative Vilnius city map

2 p.m.

MINEO starts in Eduardas Balsys square at the sculpture-bench by Teodoras Malinauskas, Žvėrynas

3 p.m.

Excursion in the round-studio of G.Jokūbonis – a prominent soviet sculptor; the screening of a documentary “In-between the muse and the censorship” (Virginija Vareikytė)

4–5 p.m.

A walk in Naujamiestis

5 p.m.

An acoustic performance of the Tegu teka band in the territory of an abandoned water reservoir

5:30 p.m.

Walking the last part of the rout: Vilkpėdė – Riovonys - Žemieji Paneriai

6:30 p.m.

Coming back to the city by public transport. A river-side-walk to the botanical garden

7:30 p.m.

Vilnius University Botanical Garden in Vingis park: workshop and discussion, fire, potatoes, herbal tea, and a house wine degustation

05.04.2014 SATURDAY: we see what we've got

4 p.m.

Meeting in the round-studio (the yard of V.Kudirkos 4): architectural-photographic exhibition, video screening and discussion, getting to know the works of Vitalis Červikov and “The silence group”

6:30 p.m.

A bus will take us from Žvėrynas to the last point of the journey. Jokūbas Čižikas will introduce a virtual guide leading us to the Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass (S.Dariaus ir S.Girėno 25)

7:00 p.m.

Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass: an excursion

8 p.m.

Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass: music and views, food and drinks

PLEASE CONSIDER:

A registration for the first day walk, as well as for second day bus tour is needed! Please do register by email (mineovilnius@mail.com) until 3rd April. The price for the bus tour is 5Lt³³ paid on tour. It is one way ride, consider coming back on your own (the last public bus goes 11:21 p.m.)

Participation in the first day walk requires crossing certain private territories. With the registration mentioned above you confirm your own responsibility for all the actions you enact.

Do not forget good shoes, a camera and a glass for water!

III.IV.IV. THE *MINEO* DAYS

The days of April 4-5 went more or less as they were planned. There were between 20 and 30 people who participated in the whole program (exact number is not traceable because one could freely leave and join again). Some of the invited participants could not come but several unexpected newcomers arrived. Most of the people, as expected, were young artists, architects and urban activists i.e. persons who got interested and involved in the issues we proposed to consider, and their friends.

As it was indicated in the program, *MINEO* started with the meeting of all participants at the Eduardas Balsys square at the sculpture-bench by a young Vilnius sculptor Teodoras Malinauskas. This public art object is a circle shape bench in a non-beloved city park that is, actually, placed in an extraordinary location (facing the river turn and greenery on the boundary between the city center and Žvėrynas – the most beautiful residential district of Vilnius), but not enjoyed by city inhabitants because of its unreasonable planning and design (e.g. there were not a single bench in the park before the artist's intervention). Teodoras has designed his bench in 2008: its circle shape functions as an invitation to communicate – there is enough place for 8-10 people to sit but they all have to sit in a circle facing each other so communication is demanded. The bench was officially accepted by the municipality of the district, and built in. Indeed, it became daily used by the city's inhabitants. After six years it

³³ 5Lt was around 1.5eu

was destroyed and uplifted by “vandals”. Just before the *MINEO* days, Teodoras and Kipras renovated the bench with their own hands (cf. Mineo 2014a).

As Kipras told in the beginning of April 4th tour, the artworks by his friend and colleague Teodoras Malinauskas inspired him to start thinking about the possibilities of a small but necessary urban change. The bench project was a successful example, whereas another Teodoras’ attempt for a public installation had a different story: for his semester project in the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, he prepared a light installation in the largest alleyway of the Vingis park. He climbed up the lights at night and turned their direction upside down – from light directed to the path to the light illuminating the trees above. The installation made an impressive and unusual effect; however, the next morning, still in the dawn, just a few hours after his action, Teodoras brought his professors and colleagues to show the work. All the lights were mysteriously turned back without any trace! Somebody, probably the guards, reacted immediately to recreate the order of the park. Teodoras has never had a possibility to document this installation (cf. Mineo 2014a).

In this very first hour of the tour, a group of young architects who, in fact, are now central figures in a large nonprofit organization “Architecture fund”³⁴, organized a photographic workshop. I had a contact to the leaders of the organization since I have volunteered in one of their education projects in rural Lithuania in summer 2013. Since our first *MINEO* related meeting, architects were interested in collaboration and suggested several ideas for possible interaction. Finally, they have prepared a task for all the participants. We were asked to take pictures during the whole trip photographing space in regard to certain keywords. The general topic, as they indicated, was “Borders” i.e. it correlated with the issue of trespassing. While introducing the task, the architects gave us freedom for expression in photographing any urban, structural or their own psychological border that one found interesting during the trip. Next morning the pictures have been developed and exposed in the Round Studio of Gediminas Jokūbonis as we have used it as a discussion room. In doing so, the organizers invited the participants to comment and, thus, to reflect upon the first day experience and upon the topic of the *border* itself.

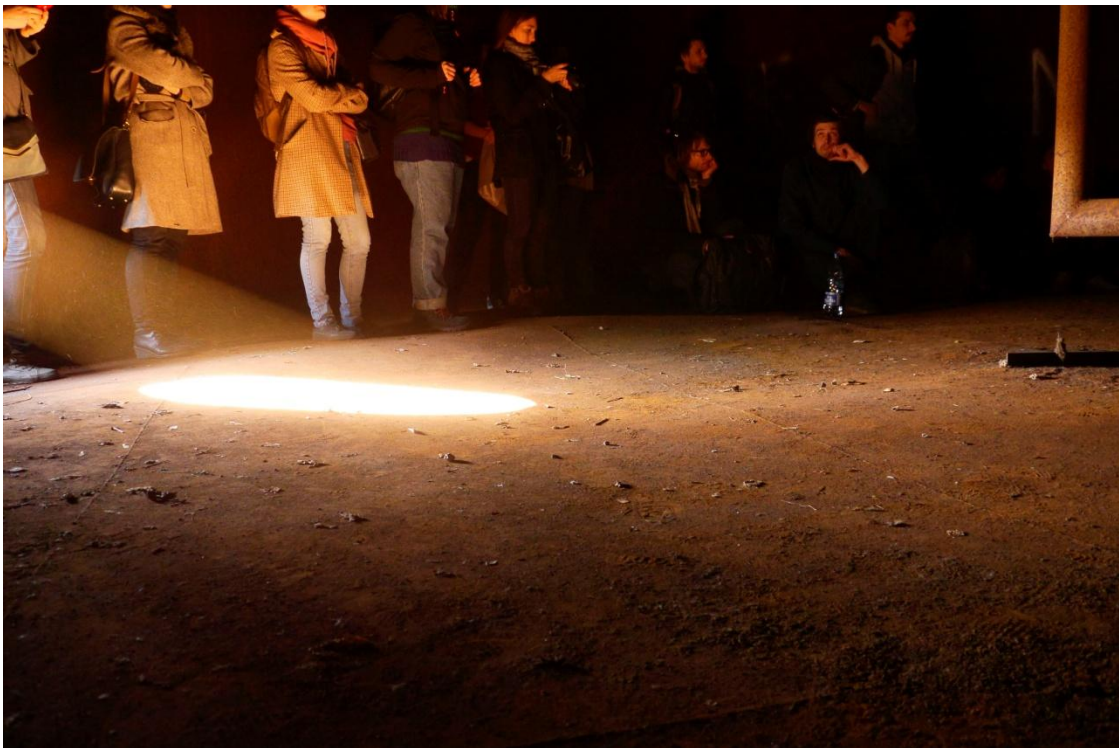
³⁴ Founded in 2004 by a group of prominent Lithuanian architects, “Architecture fund” is an independent non-profit organization actively functioning in areas of education, publicity, communication and urban development – all in relation to architecture. It is now guided by a group of young people who engage in and create numerous architecture-related public events every year. More information about the “Architecture Fund”: <http://archfondas.lt/en>, accessed 5.7.2014.

Thus, in a form of story-telling of unknown and never documented public artworks of Vilnius, Kipras started his mission as an informal tour guide. The walk began at the Liubartas bridge where Kipras invited the participants to cross the Neris river walking not on the bridge but *in* it i.e. walking in the construction of the bridge. As he explained, the “entrance” (a concrete and metal construction on the Žvėrynas side of the river) was easy: homeless people do usually sleep there in summer – the bridge surface protects them from rain and the site is not visible from the street, so nobody disturbs them in enjoying the wonderful site of the river turn (Mineo 2014a). However, after crossing the bridge, the “exit” was rather difficult for those who were not well physically trained – people had to jump from almost three meters high wall. This was not the only extreme and exciting moment. There were closed territories to cross, fences to overcome and slippery surfaces in the spring landscape to walk through.

Generally, Kipras’ tour and the stops-excursions at the Round Studio and at the Justinas Vienožinskis art school went fluently, although in quick tempo and challenging for some participants. It lasted around five hours with pauses while stopping at particular spots where Kipras narrated his “street-kid’s” stories: one could learn about the first graffiti in Vilnius, former youth gathering spots, secret installations, shortcuts through inner-yards, and so on. Even though the tour reminded on the walks we experienced before, afterwards Kipras told me that for him it was completely different: 30 followers was a too large crowd. Instead, as he discovered, he preferred intimate situations and would rather do more tours with less people. Moreover, the situation of a crowd climbing up the wall or crossing a fence to a forbidden territory was dangerous: on several occasions we had to rush because of police as well as to negotiate with the guards and inhabitants. The most useful strategy that we applied was: Kipras going in the front and ignoring the questions, and another person staying in the back to talk to workers or inhabitants of the place, telling them: “it is an excursion, we did not know it is forbidden to go there, I will tell the guide who is going in the front”. Meanwhile, for the participants – mostly young Vilnius citizens, the walk was interesting and inspiring; as one architect expressed, “unexpected perspectives on the city opened up, I saw things I did not know existing next to me for thirty years” (Mineo 2014b).

The experimental music concert of the “Tegu teka” (“Let it flow”) band in the abandoned water reservoir (see the description of this particular space in the end of chapter I) was, indeed, impressive: as the group of the participants arrived to the territory surrounded with a fence, the musicians were already inside in the cistern. One could hear unidentifiable sounds

spreading from the hole in a huge metal structure. The partakers were invited to “enter the building” and contemplate the amazing space and the echo of the floating sounds of a flute, female voice and self-made percussions.



A concert of the experimental “Tegu teka” band in the abandoned water reservoir. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

The first day was concluded with a workshop and a picnic in the Vilnius University botanical garden, which was organized by two urban activists, Viktorija and Dionizas. These people belong to “The right to the city” group that, basically, spreads their message online and in small scale public engagements. Since our first meeting in February, the activists were truly willing to collaborate with *MINEO* and had an intension to organize a workshop. Their goal was to enable brainstorming among different groups of the participants (architects, artists, and others) in order to exchange and reflect upon the urban situation, and, potentially, to define possible acting strategies. In the evening of April 4, Viktorija and Dionizas prepared a collage-like game merging diverse urban and social issues (discrimination, spatial segregation, inequality, power structures etc.). They invited the participants to describe and organize the topics according to personal interest and importance, and expected a discussion to develop. However, one has to say that the workshop did not function as intended – the participants remained relatively passive and, naturally, no actual strategies and ways of acting were defined. I suppose that its unsuccessfulness laid in their too broad problematic: willing to talk about all the urbanity-related problems that one could think of, organizers and participants remained shallow in describing each of them. Hence, the *MINEO* partakers being, generally, conscious about the issues, did not feel invited to discuss the problems that they already knew. At the same time, no specific deeper insight was offered.

Next day, April 5, we gathered at the round studio again. There, the participants could watch the video works by Mirjam Wirz (described above as a *Flash Institute* projects) and Kipras’ video work “Suspension of Disbelief” (presented in the chapter I), listen to the presentation by Vitalij Červakov (discussed in the previous chapter in the context of other Vitalij’s works), reflect upon the experiences of yesterday with the help of “photography exhibition” organized by the “Architecture Fund” people (introduced above), and discuss all together our approaches and aims, as well as our prospective actions.

This discussion, however, was also not an expressive one. We expected it to develop around the themes presented and experiences from yesterday. No eager to disagree, neither to introduce a new perspective was shown. People remained attentive and quite, and did not express a will for a dispute. I suppose, the reason was that most of the participants were not prepared, instead, they wanted to observe the situation – probably it was too early to expect a lively discussion. Additionally, most of them were artists, art theoreticians and architects;

supposedly, many people – also those who discussed the topics with us in private and had opinions, did not feel comfortable in exchanging opinions in a semi public even about what they are not used to talk professionally e.g. social issues of the city. Hence, the atmosphere of the Round Studio discussion was both, too relaxed to become professional, and too strained to freely express spontaneous opinions.

The fest at the Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass has actually turned into an impressive event: between 200 and 300 people (nobody actually counted, there was no security on the entrance, or tickets) circulated there from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m. This mass was unexpected; however, due to an unknown intriguing location (despite that it is in the outskirts of Vilnius), good music (friends of ours and some of *MINEO* participants improvised as DJs), and widely spread message, friends brought their friends, and further on. Because of few places, only 40 people could come by the ordered bus and enjoy the audio tour created by a sound artist Jokubas Čižikas³⁵ especially for this event. Others circulated with public transportation and private cars. The event was special within the Vilnius “bohemian nightlife” context (even though alternative and informal gatherings are being organized frequently). It was not merely a party: the space (there was a tour through the factory and the stonecutters’ area for 40 people), video projections in two spaces, music, an alcohol and a tea bar, and a food desk with hot soup were appreciated. Moreover, most of the visitors were acquainted to each other as young artists, designers, architects and their friends.

In this concluding part of the festival, we also created a contrasting space to the party atmosphere: there was a white empty room for projecting video works by Vitalij Červiakov. After the “Reticencies” trips described in the chapter II, Vitalij created videos based on film material documented during the walks in silence. These movies were projected in a silent room at the Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass.

³⁵ Jokūbas Čižikas – a young Lithuanian artist living in Amsterdam has arrived particularly because of the *MINEO* festival. He has created an experimental sound track of the “city sounds” that was played during the bus ride. The bus driver was asked to improvise as well and an alternative (instead of the shortest) way was selected to reach the Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass. There, Jokūbas played as a DJ as well.



A room with video projections by Vitalij Červiakov. © 2014 Goda Palekaitė

III.V. A METHOD OF TRESPASSING?

The chapter on the *Trespassing Method* was dedicated to the artistic practice of ignoring and trespassing institutional and prescribed ways of acting within a urban space, and exemplified with the focal event of my research, namely the *MINEO* festival. Referring to art-theoretical discourses and mainly based on RoseLee Goldberg's considerations, the issue was discussed in relation to performance art. Searching for a philosophical base, Michel de Certeau's distinction between *strategy* and *tactics* was chosen to comprehend the phenomenon. As we could see, individual informal *tactics of everyday life* of the artists often merge with institutional *strategies* of city planning and regulation. Formal and informal groups often share the same stereotypes as e.g. a conservative travelers' club shares mistrust towards contemporary artists as being unpredictable and irresponsible with an informal secret group of urban explorers. Moreover, even several young artists working with the urban issues such as Augustas Serapinas displayed mistrust towards the *MINEO* festival. Both, Augustas and the urban explorers group expressed an intension to *preserve* the abandoned Vilnius, and to keep the secret spaces away from the public and, as Vitalij Červiakov expressed, to keep *discovering the land of Indians* (Červiakov 2014). Furthermore, considering both, refusing

artist's and the explorers' positions, the question remains unanswered: if the explorers act as secret city agents, why then do they share their experiences and impressions online instead of creating a completely closed community? And why does Augustas present his secret encounters with the city in public galleries? To me it seemed to be an attempt to create a public secret and to mystify their experience that still compromised with the need to prove their relevance publicly and be visible.

Hence, throughout this chapter, I attempted to show what I discovered through my empirical research in February-April 2014: a stratification of the city artists, intellectuals and other experts, a gap of communication among them, and a lack of common language. After discussing the given situation as the *MINEO* team, we – Kipras, Petras and me drew a conclusion that this reaction and especially the *will to preserve* indicates an open wound: the problems are obvious to everybody but the gap in communication between groups is even more present. As organizers, we expected apathy and refusals due to financial and logistic issues, but nobody spoke of that; instead, an obvious mistrust for each other and a fight for the own *right to explore the city* took place. Even though sharing the same critical approach towards the issues of commercialization and privatization of the city space, among others, we could not find a common “expert language” to talk against it.

Finally, the overall *MINEO* event turned to a compromise between two different intensions of its organizers: on the one hand we aimed to *raise problems about urban condition*, on the other – to *celebrate the experience* of the abandoned city. The result may be rather described as *intriguing, educating and entertaining* than *radically trespassing*. The trespassing moment happened, of course, on the institutional level; taken, for instance, the party at the Centre of Sculpture and Stained Glass: we neither had legal permissions, nor alcohol licenses, and even general safety requirements were ignored³⁶. We managed to revive a forgotten space and “reconsolidate” its historical complexity with the contemporary “bohemian” city life for one night. And even after the party, we heard young artists talking that it would be nice to rent a studio in there – so inspiring was the space. One must add that the whole festival was financed (transportation, logistics, print, decorations, free food, tea etc.) only with the money collected in the party for illegally sold alcohol, or better to say, it was organized almost with no budget at all. Due to our devotion and with help of few friends, it was possible to create such a venue in a city like Vilnius.

³⁶The building is in such a fragile condition that pieces of the ceiling fell on the floor during the party; fortunately, nobody was hurt.

CHAPTER IV

INFILTRATION METHOD

This short chapter reveals the unexpected results of my research unfolded after a young artist Augustas Serapinas refused to participate in the *MINEO* festival. In fact, before the first festival-related talk with the artist, I was expecting him to happily accept the invitation. I viewed his creative engagements and approach to the urban space and condition as very similar to *MINEO* aims. After Augustas expressed his general mistrust to public large-scale artistic engagements, as introduced in the chapter III “Trespassing Method”, I continued walking and talking with him in order to discover the particularity of his position and ways of acting toward the city space. Following, I represent the results of these talks and his recent work created in Vienna in 2015.

Further, another Vilnius artist – Kazimieras Sližys attracted my attention. His distanced gaze on public and urban space or, as I formulate, *observing the surveillance* and a *space between the urban and the virtual* that he achieves, needs to be considered as an important alternative to engaged and activist-like spatial performances such as those discussed so far. Kazimieras’ artworks are rather reflective than perceptive or active but they still do share a very strong critical position towards the issues of the present modern urban condition. Despite of very different types of installations (Augustas – site specific and rather experiential-phenomenological, Kazimieras – gallery orientated and rather conceptual-minimalistic), within this chapter, I propose a similarity between those two approaches toward art within a system, and conceptualize their *creative method* as an *infiltration in a given urban condition*.

IV.I. INFILTRATING WITH AN ACCIDENT

After Augustas refused to take partake in the festival, we met for a walk on March 11, where he was supposed to show me his works installed in several places in the city, e.g. a hammock in a canalization tube facing the riverside, and others. However, he refused to go there claiming that the location is dirty and watery in spring, and one would need special shoes. Instead, Augustas intended a “pure reflection” on his artworks, as he expressed:

This walking and talking with you is, for me, a reflection. If we went to see my works, our talk would be different because an object would stand in front of us. And now there is a pure reflection.

(Serapinas 2014)

In his creative ventures, Augustas always improvises: he rarely has a concept for an artwork in advance; instead, he receives invitations from diverse Lithuanian and foreign museums, residencies and galleries to create there from what he finds on the spot; therefore, his works are truly site-specific. One can even say, creative accident plays the most important role in his activity. I quote an excerpt from a talk with Augustas as an opening word of this thesis, since I see it as a decent invitation to consider an artist in a rather unusual light – without judgment what and why something is creative or not, and open to see his or her own gaze towards his or her ways of doing. There, Augustas points out an interesting aspect that *improvisation does not mean randomness*, and explains how this act of allowing a creative accident to happen functions as his mode of acting and perceiving the world (Serapinas 2014).

To mention an example, the artist tells me about his recent piece in a commercial gallery in Warsaw: A business orientated project space invited him to create something in a house of cultural and architectural value that has recently been privatized for commercial purposes of selling art. After spending some time there, Augustas discovered that there was only one historical flat left in the house – other original apartments have been transformed into “white cube” spaces as it is common in modern galleries. He managed to establish a contact with an elderly man living in that flat and, as a result, exposed objects from his apartment in the “white cube”; in doing so, he criticized the policy of the gallery.

My appearance in that exhibition evoke total confusion: the owner of the gallery refused to expose my installation, whereas the curators wanted me to be satisfied – they were even ready to quit their jobs. I have almost destroyed the gallery from within! This would be ideal to my approach – to come to a commercial institution as a guest and destroy it with an artwork.

(Serapinas 2014)

His other and particularly interesting work of infiltration was set up in one of the largest Lithuanian art galleries, namely National Gallery of Arts (NGA)³⁷. While constructing one of the exhibitions at NGA (contemporary artists Antanas Gerlikas, Gediminas G. Akstinas and

³⁷ Elaboration on the curatorial focus of NGA is found in the following chapter V “General Urban Conditions: Contexts and Approaches”.

Kazimieras Sližys were also working as builders at this exhibition)³⁸, he entered one of the ventilation tubes of the gallery unnoticed, and installed “a room for discussion” (with a small table, two chairs, tablecloth and a picture hanging) in a no more than two square meters space he approached via the tube. In this way, an artwork of the artist emerged in one of the most competitive Lithuanian art institutions without its administration even knowing it (Serapinas 2014).

Augustas’ last work was a spatial encounter with the Kunsthalle Vienna – the young artist was invited to participate in the exhibition „The Future of Memory“ opened in February 2015³⁹. There, he opened a hidden door in the main exhibition hall of the gallery, where he installed an “office” for *Marie*, a curatorial assistant at the Kunsthalle Vienna. He carried in a desk, chairs, a computer and other items needed for Marie to be able to stay in the “in-between” space during the exhibition opening hours. As we can see, this and his other projects attempt to reveal the art institution itself – exposing an employee of a museum, the artist uncovers the space up to its skeleton. As one of the curators of “The Future of Memory” writes:

Creating context-based installations, Augustas Serapinas develops his practice around the alteration and manipulation of architectural spaces. Identifying forgotten or hidden places within the walls of art institutions or from his direct environment, Serapinas turns these concealed spots into artworks. Dismantling what is officially regarded as art in the museum, the young artist therefore continues the tradition of institutional critique.

(Lauriola 2015 :138)

IV.II. OBSERVING THE SURVEILLANCE

Another young contemporary artist from Vilnius, Kazimieras Sližys creates situations in which he, as a detective, reveals the invisible and inaudible plain of modern urban conditions of contemporary life. Being interested in the situations of public life *where something went wrong*, he describes his approach as following:

³⁸ Augustas, along with his colleagues artists, occasionally works as a builder in large galleries in order to secure his income.

³⁹ More information about „The Future of Memory: An Exhibition on the Infinity of the Present Time” curated by the Director of Kunsthalle Nicolaus Schafhausen in its official homepage: <http://www.kunsthallewien.at/?lang=en&event=64802-the-future-of-memory>, accessed 29.3.2015.

[I]n visible/invisible language [...] I usually use site-specific situations, indoor/outdoor installations, ready-made objects, remade everyday objects, sound elements in order to activate viewers understanding, field recordings as a tool to create endless archives.

(Sližys 2014)

A typical work by Kazimieras is his “Published spying bug” (2011): a spying bug was hidden in various public spaces and a phone line where one could call and listen to the live sound of the places was created (Editing spaces 2011). Here and in other pieces, his interest lays in, as he counts, “urban space exploring, hunting security cameras, [...] new research of security, control, power, as well as experiments with radio waves trying to cover some city areas with short sound checks” (Sližys 2014).

Thus, pirate radio stations, non-functioning security cameras, warning signs, recording engines and maps are dominating objects in his installations, while artistic means such as drawing, sculpture and photography are reduced to minimum. Kazimieras’ last piece was an outcome of his three month Artists in Residence in Vienna (KulturKontakt Austria 2014⁴⁰). In the exhibition opened in Vienna in June 2014⁴¹, he presented a triptych of works: first, he exhibited playing cards made as a map of Vienna. Then, there was a video performance where the author himself places a pirate radio transmitter translating the sound produced by an underwater ship on the Kahlenberg hill, and contemplates the sound of the deep sea in a landscape of hills. Finally, Kazimieras made walks while carrying a pirate radio transmitter in various public spaces in Vienna, the sound he translated was pure silence; so he was able to create a „circle of silence“ in the heart of a busy city.

We can certainly find thematic analogies between the Kazimieras’ works and pieces by other Vilnius artists of the same generation that I have been discussing in this thesis (compare with Kipras Dubauskas, Vitalij Červikov and others). Sližys does definitely interrogate public urban spaces and explores the possibilities of acting as a contemporary artist; likewise as he questions the distinction between legal/illegal, permitted/forbidden, and intends to trespass these margins. His concern with institutionalized maps and territory is also shared with his colleagues. Finally, they are all preoccupied with contemporary (more or less) conceptual, often public art, critical towards the dominating system and its techniques of subjugation.

⁴⁰ About the residency program and the exhibition.

http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at/html/D/wp.asp?pass=x&p_title=14512&rn=162747, accesses 01.02.2015.

⁴¹ It is merely a coincidence that both artists, Augustas and Kazimieras were invited to work in Vienna.

At the same time, I see Kazimieras' works as being very specific within their context: the way he deals with the visible/invisible and audible/inaudible qualities of modern life is by no means phenomenological i.e. the approach is very distinct from his colleagues, e.g. artists presented in the chapter II. Instead of searching for *immediacy*, Sližys interrogates, spies and *observes the surveillance itself* in a cool distance. As an artist, he overtakes the role of a detective attempting to uncover omnipresent layers of modern condition: *what do you feel when you enter a space with a non-functioning security camera directed towards a security mirror glass that you are looking at* – this is his installation „Cctv“ (2009). Indeed, Kazimieras plays with the vulnerability of an individual; as he describes, he is interested in the “deconstruction of a territory for the purpose of building it again in the viewer's mind” (Sližys 2014). And, hence, *a space between the urban and the virtual* is what is being created in his works.

In this short chapter I introduced an alternative *creative method* to the *trespassing method*, which has come into my sight in the middle of my fieldwork. I see the *infiltration method* as one more creative and critical way of dealing with public space and modern urban condition, as well as questioning the state, its system and its art institutions. Hence, I suggest that both methods have comparable goals and reasons – both go against the apathy of senses and thought, and despise appreciation of private wealth and commerce instead of spatial and aesthetical freedom and diversity. One shall now ask, *in how far* can we talk about strategies and methods of artist as *independent* actors in resisting given structures and usual public awareness, whether it is a method of trespassing or of infiltration.

In his book “Art Power” (2008), an art critic and philosopher Boris Groys raises a question if one can nowadays speak about autonomy of art as a power of resistance rather than prescribing this capacity to merely political thought and action. Already in introduction he answers it positively: *yes, there exists certain autonomy of art* (2008: 13). He, however, immediately avoids possible confusion evoked by this statement in explaining:

Of course, that art has such an autonomy does not mean that the existing art institutions, art system, art world, or art market can be seen as autonomous in any significant sense of the word. For the functioning of the art system is based on certain aesthetic value judgments, on certain criteria of choice, rules of inclusion and exclusion, and the like. All these value

judgments, criteria, and rules are, of course, not autonomous. Rather, they reflect the dominant social conventions and power structures.

(Groys 2008: 13)

Thus, there is no independent merely aesthetic value judgment – this is always determined by ideologies and power structures of institutions, economical systems, trends etc. However, for Groys, exactly this absence determines the autonomy of an artist and an artwork. Thus, the art world strives towards “the fundamental equality between all visual forms, objects, and media”. Furthermore, “[o]nly under this assumption of the fundamental aesthetic equality of all artworks can every value judgment, every exclusion or inclusion, be potentially recognized as a result of a heteronomous intrusion into the autonomous sphere of art” (2008: 14). Hence, art is to be conceived as a battle field for equality among all possible ideas, statements and forms of expression that is being positioned in a middle of tensions of value judgments. While scholars, buyers, managers, state and non-state institutions continuously attempt to determine the aesthetic canon, creators continuously seek for “legitimization” of art forms that are excluded of it. At the same time, artists themselves become representative for market strategies and institutions, and in practice *the artistic* merge with the value judgment from the outside.

However, I follow Groys further, suggesting his theory to be a very useful on the level of conceptualization rather than praxis. One can remember the talk on “legitimization of art” with the Vilnius philosopher Algimantas Lopeta in the previous chapter, where he insists that a creative act should not be seen as something that has to be proven in a Kantian scale of beauty and truth (cf. Lopeta 2014a). Groys has comparably suggested that nowadays artists seek not for “vertical” infinity of divine truth” anymore – as, simply speaking, it was the case of the historical European art (Gothic art created for God is a direct example); instead, it is the “horizontal” infinity of aesthetically equal images” (2008: 17). Thus, *equal aesthetic rights* is an artistic intension per se, be it a “right to the city” as in the case of *MINEO*, or a “right to the museum” as Augustas Serapinas declares with his secretly installed piece in the Lithuanian National Gallery of Arts. Hence, one shall see informal critical and rebel artistic practices such as graffiti, informal trespassing, displaying the state’s surveillance systems, and others discussed in this thesis not merely as a statement against the existing social and urban structure, but also as an attempt to establish certain aesthetics as equally legitimate to exist in

a democratic city. Be it *visual aesthetics* of graffiti or *performative quality* (Goldberg 2004) of a creative walk, these artists attempt to break through the institutional value judgments on art.

One more, rather practical than conceptual aspect of the current condition of contemporary art in Vilnius is paradoxical became clear during the ethnographic fieldwork: many of young Lithuanian artists (and in particular internationally successful ones) work as builders and constructors in galleries. This is not their artistic performance but an attempt to secure at least minimal income since it is rather impossible to survive from contemporary art only. As I elaborate in the following chapter, there are no collectors or buyers, and the state funding opportunities are minimal if any. Hence, artist who do not emigrate from Lithuania and do not change their profession, often have to earn their living as construction workers in state galleries. Exhibition building opportunity seems to them more attractive than other mechanical work because of several reasons: occasionally it involves creative decisions; you can work with your friends and colleagues; young artists know the museum administration staff personally, so the jobs are easier to obtain. Hence, artists like Augustas and Kazimieras, one day receiving honorariums and scholarships from the Ministry of Culture of Austria, among others, work as underpaid builders in Vilnius on the other.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL URBAN CONDITIONS: CONTEXTS AND APPROACHES

This last chapter generally discusses all the issues and aspects relevant to fully accomplish the theme of the thesis and that have not been discussed before. It contextualizes the general *conditions of creativity in Vilnius* and contributes to the central topic, namely, the search for a *creative method* by young artists in Vilnius that would be suitable to communicate their message and act critically in a complex social context. Several and, to my view, most relevant of the strategies have been discussed previously. We could, however, see that, despite their importance for the artists, these practices rarely have the expected affect in public discourses. In other words, *methods do not work as they are intended* as e.g. the *MINEO* festival, thoroughly discussed in the chapter III (compare its intentions with its results), showed. Within this chapter, I attempt to consider the problem in its larger context of spatial and structural situation, i.e. to denote stronger forces that determine practices of young contemporary artists in Vilnius. I believe that indicating what conditions them shall answer the question: why do the strategies often remain non-functional.

To achieve this, I begin by presenting a *project space* called “The Gardens”, which I consider as an exceptional representation for Vilnius spatial specifics. Being run by two young curators independently from large artistic institutions and functioning as a low budget project space rather than a gallery (the distinction will be elaborated further), “The Gardens” dealt with young contemporary artists in the form of small scale exhibitions, performances, concerts, meetings and lectures. In the first part of the chapter, I discuss its activities and curatorial methods, as well as its position within the context of other spaces for contemporary art in Vilnius. I have to say though that “The Gardens” has been closed after I conducted my research and while I was writing this thesis (in November 2014) with a symbolic gesture: its last show was an exhibition by a distinguished British artist Chris Evans “Clods, Diplomatic Letters” – while the project space was closed, a part of its exhibition was permanently installed at the parliament of the Republic of Lithuania⁴². Afterwards, the initiators of “The Gardens” moved to other cities where conditions for contemporary art are more welcoming

⁴² More information about this exhibition: <http://thegardens.lt/category/past>, accessed 22.12.2014.

(Amsterdam and New York in this case), as many of most promising Lithuanian contemporary artist continuously do.

The next ambition of the chapter is to show the complexity of the relation between an individual artist and his or her institutional, spatial and even global context. In the final part of my empirical research I asked my interview partners directly: *are individual artistic strategies still possible?* Can an artist nowadays represent his or her works independently from institutional and other networks; or does one rather function as a performer within an anonymity-based system managed by curators? To this regard, one more strategy to be discussed here is *networking*. Its representative in Vilnius is a private para-academic institution and art centre called *Rupert* that has been established in 2013 with an aim to help young contemporary Lithuanian artists in creating their networks worldwide.

One more crucial theoretical and practical aspect that became comprehensible by the end of my fieldwork is related to the theory of Nicolas Bourriaud and in his 1998 published book “Relational Aesthetics” where he identifies *relational art*. I propose that certain Lithuanian scenes of contemporary art are still functioning according to comparable principles. One shall not ignore the fact that the curatorial affairs as well as theoretical establishment of *relational aesthetics* has been carefully scrutinized and criticized by Claire Bishop and other scholars (cf. Bishop 2004; Martin 2007). Following, I attempt to present the dispute, and to show its relatedness to the situation in Vilnius.

Finally, I define the type of contemporary art that is commonly being practiced in Lithuania as *contemporary conceptualism*, and employ the theory of Arthur C. Danto from his 1997 book “After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History”, to explain its principles. I attempt to show how problematic the fact of “one-way street” is: even though conceptualism is widely spread as an expansive branch of contemporary art, its dominance creates an illusion that *all* contemporary art is *like this* and excludes attempts to create differently (cf. Burokas 2014).

Empirically, I base the text on several extensive talks with Gerda Paliušytė – a curator of contemporary art and a co-director of “The Gardens”, Vytenis Burokas – a young contemporary artist who is being constantly involved in exhibitions and educational affairs (at the moment of our discussion he is a participant of *Rupert’s* educational program), and Algimantas Lopeta – an art philosopher and writer from Vilnius. These people were extremely important in my attempts to see the whole picture. I also include my field notes

from participant observation of Vilnius art events throughout an extended period of time (July 2013 – April 2014), and one more specific encounter with Augustas Serapinas whose artistic strategy I have been discussing in the previous chapter. Moving back and forth from very concrete examples to large philosophical and art-theoretical interconnections or, as Lopeta says, applying the *telescope-microscope principle* (Lopeta 2014a) in this last chapter, my effort will be to draw a contextual and overall image of the present situation⁴³ of contemporary art in Vilnius.

V.I. WHERE DO YOU FIND CONTEMPORARY ART IN VILNIUS?

From my field notes and from a letter to a friend:

“The Gardens” seems to me like little Vilnius, as a metonym of the city that embodies its locality and reflects its spirit in the most convenient way.

EXHIBITION CLOSING, summer 2013

A surreal situation that must appear in a movie, not in a text; contemplation on a particular ambience: yesterday I’ve been to the planetarium of Vilnius – a strange house in which Gerda and Inesa have their small project space “The Gardens”. There was a closing event of the SPUT⁴⁴ exhibition that consisted of several video and installation pieces, and a concert for an orchestra composed by a young Vilnius artist Naglis Kristijonas Zakaras, that was supposed to never-end⁴⁵. The same composition was played during the opening in the concert performed a month ago where sounds coming from the audience were recorded and transformed into a musical score that has been played this night. Now they were recording again to be able to add these sounds to the piece, and repeat the process again and again, so it never ends... You should have seen the space – bright hall in strange proportions, wooden furniture in forms of triangles – true Soviet modernism. I had to think about the difference between Euclidian and non-Euclidian geometry that Dominykas just spoke about a while ago... [...] Afterwards, artists from “Gardens” invited me to a party at somebody's garden. It

⁴³ *Present situation* is the time when the empirical research is being conducted, i.e. data up to April 2014.

⁴⁴ SPUT was curated by Gerda Paliašytė and lasted 21.6.2013-21.7.2013, info: <http://thegardens.lt/category/past/page/2>, accessed 12.12.2014.

⁴⁵ Zakaras was the author of the overall performance “Infinity – 1 (4)” (2013) that was specially composed for the space; the author of the music was Andrius Arutiunian.

was in the middle of Vilnius, one hundred meter distance to the main city library and right by the wall of the main city prison. Only a vertical obstacle – a huge fence of concrete and wires divided the garden and the prison church that is adapted for different congregations and has elements of roman catholic church, synagogue, orthodox church, and mosque... I was standing there looking at the Soviet monster library on the right and a huge five meter prison wall on the left, skyscrapers on the back, and grass with a wild hedgehog wandering inside. Contemporary music full of diverse voices was still echoing in my mind – “The Gardens” and the garden represented all the spatial contradictions of my city I could think of.

(personal e-mail to a friend, July 22, 2013)

The project space “The Gardens” was established in January 2012 by two young curators of contemporary art Gerda Paliušytė and Inesa Pavlovskaitė. Their aim was, as they formulated, “to become a relevant agent of culture in the city and to introduce the most interesting both local and international art processes in a shape of exhibitions, events, concerts and lectures” (Gardens 2014). Although its headquarters occupied only a little room in the house of planetarium, within the scope of three years its projects expanded from Vilnius to New York, from small scale solo shows of young artists to international events involving Lithuanian and foreign diplomats (see Chris Evans “Clods, Diplomatic Letters”, 2014); its exhibitions varied from one room space to artworks exposed in the house of parliament of Lithuania⁴⁶.

As Gerda Paliušytė notices, a *project space* differs from a private gallery insofar that it is a non-commercial institution that organizes art *projects* rather than sells art (Paliušytė 2014). While successful galleries usually survive from selling artworks for collections and other buyers, project spaces seek for funding opportunities for a particular project from state, foreign or private funds. Furthermore, project spaces have a different curatorial strategy: they do not intend to permanently represent particular artists, nor do they collect artworks; instead, they create temporary events.

“The Gardens” activity encompassed a wide range of contemporary art events; just to mention several: a long term collaboration with the “Art in General” project space enabled exhibitions in New York by young Lithuanian artists Marija Olšauskaitė, Petras Olšauskas (2013, 2014) and Antanas Gerlikas (2013); Gediminas G. Akstinas, Jurgis Paškevičius (2012) and Laura Kaminskaitė (2012) had their solo shows in Vilnius. In search for intersections between two artistic generations “The Gardens” invited for the *Exhibition of meetings* by

⁴⁶ Information about all venues is available on the official website: <http://thegardens.lt/>, 29.12.2014.

Gediminas Akstinas and Antanas Gerlikas (2012). Finally, they brought prominent foreign artists such as Mark Geffriaud (2012), Lara Favaretto (2012) and Chris Evans (2014) to Vilnius.

Consequently, an open curatorial strategy gives curators an extremely important role. This style of running an exhibition space enables a curator to be the first to have a vision of a (exhibition, performance, etc.) project, to organize its realization, and to select artists. Hence, we can often observe an equal or even a reversed relation between an artist and a curator: a curator *becomes the author* of the project and realizes his or her idea with the artworks that are most suitable to represent it.

The emergence of “The Gardens” and this curatorial method in Vilnius artistic arena was not unexpected. Its true predecessor was opened in 2008 as a gallery for *conceptual* and *post-conceptual* art and called “Tulips&Roses” with an “utopist” exhibition “The Store”. As its curator and the central figure of the gallery Jonas Žakaitis expressed, the utopia was to exhibit such international starts as Liam Gillick and Jason Dodge next to young Lithuanian artists⁴⁷. Despite its influence for the local contemporary art field, “Tulips&Roses” moved to Brussels after two years of struggle in Vilnius. The main reason was comparable to the one why “The Gardens” shut down in November 2014: there is “no market for contemporary art” here, i.e. it becomes impossible to survive as a non-commercial gallery or a project space. As Žakaitis said: “Vilnius is beyond the centers of contemporary art. It is a kind of periphery of the art world since it lives in totally different time scope than such cities as Paris and London do. [...] Contemporary Lithuanian artists do not have a tradition of contemporary art living in their history and language” (Žakaitis 2010).

Hence, alternative project spaces in town shut down after a few years of functioning; meanwhile, two large state institutions keep (occasionally) dealing with contemporary art. Contemporary Art Centre (CAC) is the main gallery with its focus encoded in the title. It receives state funds independently from the number of visitors and its social engagement. Consequently, its aims are merely artistic and it is not popular within other groups of society. Due to its trajectory that might be defined as *contemporary conceptualism*, the shows and exhibitions of the CAC remain interesting and intellectually accessible only to a very small group of inhabitants. The specifics of this art trend will be discussed following. Whereas National Gallery of Art (NGA) is different: it is a state institution seeking for public

⁴⁷ All information the gallery: <http://www.tulipsandroses.lt/index.php?/exhibitions/the-store/>, accessed 2.1.2015.

involvement and holding an educative mission. Its exhibitions are more accessible and sometimes even popular within the society. It takes care of mass media messages, creates educational programs and welcomes people of diverse interests. However, its exhibitions only occasionally deals with contemporary art and if so – with a more easily appreciable i.e. not so deeply elaborated approach.

V.II. NETWORKING AS AN ARTISTIC (?) METHOD

Following, I present the *networking* strategy nowadays commonly applied by young artists in Vilnius and worldwide. Basically, one can see it as a means of creating and managing social connections within the field of contemporary art, i.e. among individual artists, curators, theoreticians and collectors, as well as institutions and organizations. By the end of my fieldwork, I interviewed a young Vilnius artist Vytenis Burokas who works in the fields of installation, dance and performance, and frequently engages in diverse projects that require the skills of *networking*. Being a participant of the *Rupert's* educational program and a reflective person as such, Vytenis helped me to understand the principles of this system. In our conversation, I asked him:

Goda Palekaitė.: Can an artist nowadays work independently from artistic community and still be interesting for the public?

Vytenis Burokas: it depends on the aims and needs of the artist: if he or she seeks for participation in the processes of contemporary art and wants the messages to be read – than no. Because the artistic community is the reader, and the presence of a reader makes sense, so to say, for creating at all.

(Burokas 2014)

As Vytenis indicates, in the world of contemporary art, an artist usually starts the creative process not with a piece itself but with the context. Academies educate young artists in a way that his or her idea would be clearly articulated and conceptually defended so that it can be easily classified: “as an art student, you are trained to prepare a package easy to position in the contemporary art world” (Burokas 2014).

The next question is then: how do you, actually, reach the arena of contemporary art as a young artist, after you are able to position your works within it? Since, and as discussed above, the local situation is difficult i.e. there are no serious collectors, and the state is not concerned with buying recent pieces, young artists from Vilnius, need an international network. Financing from the ministry of culture is very low and only occasional, for this reason, most of the young generation creators must undertake other jobs, in rare cases finding a way how to make these jobs useful for their creative activities (as e.g. Augustas Serapinas and his secret piece installed in the NGA while working there as a constructionist, discussed in the chapter IV). However, the most wide spread strategy among the people I met is *networking*.

Networking means that an artist must, in one way or another, search for international networks that enable him or her to participate in financed projects and sell their works. This is rather a strategy of management and might be described as competitive, productive and anonymous. In 2013 a new centre for art and education called *Rupert*⁴⁸ was opened in Vilnius. Its mission was indicated as working “devoted to establishing close cooperation between artists, thinkers, researchers, and other cultural actors through interdisciplinary programs and residencies. A knowledge-based platform for innovative creative production, Rupert integrates with the social and cultural framework of the city of Vilnius while simultaneously supporting a strong international focus” (Rupert 2014). Vytenis explains to me the basic principles of this *site for networking*:

G.P.: what can you tell me about the Rupert’s educational program?

V.B.: it is a para-academic institution consisting of residency programs for foreign artists and an educational program for the local ones. In its essence it is made for artists to create networks. Prospective participants apply with their ideas and portfolios but their aim is not to realize their projects; instead – to be open for influences from other participants, visiting tutors, etc., and to develop their projects accordingly. The network that you are supposed to establish consists of a wide range of artists, curators, theoreticians from all over the world; you are supposed to establish contacts relevant for your future carrier. To be precise, this network enables you to function in the contemporary art world at all.

G.P.: can you mention an example how this system works?

⁴⁸ The official website of *Rupert*: <http://www.rupert.lt/about/>, accessed 3.1.2015.

V.B.: in Rupert, there are artists residents from different countries; moreover, there are guest artists, curators and theoreticians coming here. E.g. a renowned artist that is interesting to me comes to Vilnius and takes his time to meet me. We meet in a café to discuss art issues that are important to me. I present my works to him in this informal ambient and, if I am lucky, I get some useful advice. That's how the educational moment happens. For me, personally, it works rarely.

[...]

V.B.: These people who come are, of course, important – they shape the world of contemporary art; they participate in certain processes and rule art institutions. But you can also retrace why exactly these and not other important people come: they are a part of a network that is already established by other artists and curators from Vilnius [...]. E.g. I met Rosalind Nashashibi who is a great British video artist. It is, however, not a secret that “Tulips&Roses” gallery exhibited her works some time ago and she is a friend of its curators. So, nothing happens accidentally, you can always trace the footprints.

(Burokas 2014)

Here, we face the problem that I have been suggesting through the whole chapter: while meeting contemporary art in Vilnius it *appears* as if all contemporary art was similar: concept-based, self-referential, and, hence, intellectually inaccessible to the wider public. As the artist expresses:

There are so many kinds of contemporary art in the world but in Vilnius we see and create only one sort of it or something related because everything that reaches institutions in Vilnius is, in one way or another, related to the same network. It strengthens the position of the dominating branch and marginalizes others who want to work differently. The different becomes unpopular.

(Burokas 2014).

Another critique related to the *networking* strategy may be raised from the art philosophical point of view: Algimantas Lopeta ironically calls *Rupert* a „travel agency“ criticizing the initial goal to establish contacts in order to travel and collect shows abroad instead of encouraging a discussion among artists on an elaborated level. To his view, the activity of the program is rather shallow: „if you meet people from *Rupert*, they just chat where one travels

and in which gallery one exhibits. You better don't ask what they create and for which purpose – it became a „bad tone“ to ask such things“ (Lopeta 2014b).

One may also add that the program contributes to the lack of communication between the artists and the public: offering one kind of contemporary art that is primarily concerned with references within the art theoretical discourses, the scene automatically excludes the part of society that is not familiar with the discourse without offering a valid alternative. Hence, the globally spread international network results in a problematic and unreflected relation to local audiences.

V.III. THE ISSUES OF VILNIUS RELATIONAL AESTHETICS

Discussing artists' and curators' strategies how to sustain and be visible in the brutality of the contemporary art arena, and how to establish a contact with the wider public, we must consider one more, and one of the most well-known contemporary curatorial methods suggested by a French curator Nicholas Bourriaud. His art theory and practice encompassed in “Relational Aesthetics” (2002) first published in 1998 has been enormously influential in galleries worldwide. As suggested here, it repeatedly (indirectly) serves as a conceptual basis for certain artistic practices in Vilnius. However, Bourriaud's concept of *relational aesthetics* has been deservedly criticized by various scholars for being supposedly social but actually exclusive. I discuss the theory, its critique and representative artworks, as well as its resonance in Vilnius, following.

To grasp the problem, we need to acknowledge that since the 1990s, there has been a new element for the dynamics of the art world, particularly for large exhibitions – the role of a *curator* has gained increasing importance. In Vilnius context we could see the representative examples of “The Gardens” and “Tulips&Roses” above. Curatorship ceased to function merely as exhibition and art-sales management; it turned to a creative process sometimes to a degree competitive with the artists' (cf. Smith 2010).

The central theme of the “Relational Aesthetics” is, thus, *relational art* that has been defined by its author as “[a] set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space” (Bourriaud 2002: 113). In his theory, Bourriaud views artists as capable to

produce social relations through creating moments of sociability, and regards art as an information exchange between artists and viewers. He suggests that exchanges that take place between people in a gallery or museum space turns out to act as the matter for an artistic work, and, thus, the human flow of visitors becomes the raw material and the subject of the space (Bourriaud 2002: 37-38).

An interesting phenomenon, indeed, was following: in the “Relational aesthetics”, Baurriaud discussed works of a specific group of artists suggesting to see them as the most innovative, prospective and influential within the contemporary art of the 1990’s. Afterwards and due to the fame of the book, he became the co-director of Palais de Tokyo where one of the most important centers for contemporary art in Paris is placed, where he began curating exhibitions with the artists he was citing in the book, i.e. Liam Gillick⁴⁹, Rirkrit Tiravanija⁵⁰, and others *became* undeniably influential.

For instance, Liam Gillic constructs spaces out of forms, plains, colors and materials suggesting these to serve for accumulating a discussion – a conversation within a community. One can say that a piece of art is only a pretext to invite people. His all works are constructed in a way to function only with a spectator in (front of) it. He uses „scenario thinking“ where he creates spatial situations to be completed by a spectator moving around in it. In an interview Gillic says: “My work is like the light in the fridge; it only works when there are people there to open the fridge door” (Farquharson 2003: 14).

Thus, one can draw a circle claiming that the curator has established the artists, and the artists seem to prove his theory that states:

[A]rt is made of the same material as the social exchanges, [thus] it has a special place in the collective production process. [...] If a work of art is successful, it will invariably set its sights beyond its mere presence in space: it will be open to dialogue [and] discussion.

(Bourriaud 2002: 41)

⁴⁹ British artist Liam Gillick, born in 1964. Gillick’s output is interdisciplinary: his heavily theorized interests are disseminated in sculpture, installation, graphic design, curating, art criticism, and novells. A prevailing theme throughout his work in all media is the production of relationships (particularly social relationships) through our environment. <http://www.liamgillick.info/home>, accessed 17.12.2014.

⁵⁰ Rirkrit Tiravanija is a New York-based artist, born in Buenos Aires in 1961 to Thai parents. He is best known for hybrid installation performances, in which he cooks vegetable curry or pad Thai for the visitors of the museum or gallery where he has been invited to work. As critics and Tiravanija himself note, this involvement of the audience is the main focus of his work: the food works as an instrument allowing a convivial relationship between the audience and the artist to develop (cf. Bishop 2004: 56).

One of the Bourriaud's critical interpreters – Stewart Martin notes that „despite its theoretical and historical precariousness, and the controversies attending its dissemination, [...] this text is currently recognized as one of the more ambitious and compelling presentations of a framework for certain novel dimensions of art. ‘Relational aesthetics’ has acquired the status of an ‘ism’, a name for what is new about contemporary art, and a key position in debates over art's orientation and value today” (Martin 2007: 369). Martin contextualizes the phenomenon of the *relational art* trend as a consequence of the “crisis of conceptualism” that was debated since the 1970's starting with Michael Fried's “Art and Objecthood” (1967). To put it simply, one of the outcomes of this crisis was a new field of institutional critique. For Martin, Bourriaud's approach is an inversion of the institutional critique insofar it produces institutional art, and, at the same time, it is an attempt to overcome the taboo of creating social art. He explains as following:

Negative utopianism is essential to institutional critique's anticipation of a social autonomy beyond art. If this dimension is lost, it immediately decays into institutional narcissism. The taboo ceases to function critically and merely mimics the art institution's alienation of social autonomy. [...] [O]vercoming the taboo on presenting the social has become a central task of contemporary art. Relational Aesthetics pursues precisely this task, but indifferent to the contradictions of art's heteronomy and autonomy within capitalist culture. Relational art has made the mimesis of the social non-art into the heteronomous condition of art's autonomy.

(Martin 2007: 384)

On the one hand, it is crucial to acknowledge the importance of *relational aesthetics* as a concept and a practice when willing to understand dominant tendencies of European contemporary art that, without doubt, formed and influenced the Lithuanian scene. On the other hand, one has to beware its critique. After establishing the concept, critical scholarship against it followed. A critique from a different angle than Martin's came from an influential art theoretician Claire Bishop who raised questions: what types of relations are being produced by relational art, for whom, and why, implying that merely producing a „dialog” is not sufficient:

The quality of the relationships in “relational aesthetics” are never examined or called into question. When Bourriaud argues that “encounters are more important than the individuals who compose them,” I sense that this question is (for him) unnecessary; all relations that

permit “dialogue” are automatically assumed to be democratic and therefore good. But what does “democracy” really mean in this context?

(Bishop 2004: 65)

Above all and most harshly, Bishop criticizes Bourriaud’s theory in regard to the role of contemporary art as a means to *reproduce* the conditions of modern life instead of reflecting upon them. As she writes in regard to Tiravanija’s work, „it is arguable that in the context of today’s dominant economic model of globalization, Tiravanija’s itinerant ubiquity does not self-reflexively question this logic, but merely reproduces it” (2004: 58). While Bourriaud himself positions relational art as “free areas” and “time spans” to enable an “inter-human commerce” that differs from everyday life structures that are imposed upon us (2002: 16), Bishop argues that “project-based works-in-progress and artists-in-residence begin to merge with an “experience economy,” the marketing strategy that seeks to replace goods and services with scripted and staged personal experiences” (2004: 52).

As we could also see in the *MINEO* example discussed in the chapter III “Trespassing Method”, Vilnius artists sought to create, in Bourriaud terms, a *sphere of inter-human relations* shared by diverse groups of people. Such artworks as a guided tour by Kipras Dubauskas may be classified to, as Bourriaud, “methods of social exchanges”, and the architectural photography workshop – as a “model of communication situations”. However, as Vytenis comments, very seldom it happens that chance-comer people participate in these events. Exhibitions are mostly made for artists, curators, and their friends, but very few people from outside the community find the way to a gallery or a site specific event. Most of the visitors are so called „gallery-goers“ (Burokas 2014). In the case of *MINEO*, after failing to attract the diversity of Vilnius citizens, there has been an attempt to create a *community* of participants-viewers that sets up situations in which other viewers are also addressed as an active social entity.

In relation to the central questions attempted to answer within this thesis, I also inquired: why do the artistic methods applied by the artists in Vilnius often do not satisfy the artists themselves? *Where does the discrepancy between the intentions and the achievements originate?* For this, I refer to the last portion of criticism towards the world prominent contemporary art figures around the year 2000 by Claire Bishop:

The feel-good positions adopted by Tiravanija and Gillick are reflected in their ubiquitous presence on the international art scene, and their status as perennial favorites of a few

curators who have become known for promoting their preferred selection of artists (and thereby becoming touring stars in their own right). In such a cozy situation, art does not feel the need to defend itself, and it collapses into compensatory (and self-congratulatory) entertainment.

(2004: 79)

Hence, the lucky ones (or the ones with the best *networks*) enjoy their “feel-good positions” and keep sustaining their status. There is no need to challenge, provoke or seek for a confrontation with the public i.e. with the real diverse, critical, and unsatisfied public. Instead, the high rank artists, curators and art institutions’ leaders with positions established, can maintain their self-congratulatory entertainment. Throughout my research, I basically worked with young artists *without* the established positions, i.e. still challenging, provoking, confronting and, possibly, seeking for this establishment. However, the most secured sites for the contemporary art in the country, such as the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius⁵¹, tend to indulge in their own entertainment. Being a complex institution with different projects and curators, it frequently changes and invites people from the outside; therefore, I do not intend to generalize, especially within this thesis where I do not thoroughly discuss its complexity. Nevertheless, I illustrate my suspicions about the non-functioning side of contemporary art projects in Vilnius with my ethnographic material: the field notes after visiting one of the exhibitions in CAC may help in the search for the reason for general skepticism and disappointment from both, art practitioners and theoreticians in Vilnius:

On Sunday, March 29, 2014, I went to the CAC spontaneously, and called Augustas Serapinas asking to guide me through the Exhibition in the kitchen that was the first event of the XII Baltic Triennial⁵². I knew that Augustas’ piece was supposed to be a walk to the “kitchen”; and he was expected to be there that Sunday. Nevertheless, the door of the CAC was closed. I called Augustas and he asked me to wait until somebody opens it, and offered an excursion guided on phone. I was waiting and thinking: how can one visit such an exhibition as an ordinary visitor if it is difficult even for somebody who has a phone number of one of the artists? Probably, there were not many ordinary visitors... After a while, Augustas called me back and instructed how to enter the back yard of the building. The door that he guided me to was locked as well. I was waiting again, now in the backyard of the CAC, next to the

⁵¹ The official website of the Contemporary Art Centre: <http://cac.lt/en>, accessed 20.11.2014.

⁵² More information about the Baltic Triennial: <http://www.cac.lt/en/exhibitions/triennial/7183>, accessed 20.11.2014.

waste containers where several homeless people were searching for goods. Finally, a young sleepy man speaking only English appeared with the keys. Led by Augustas on phone again, I entered an anonymously looking building that was, apparently, the kitchen and the office of the CAC. Strangely enough, I met a girl I knew – she was brushing her teeth. She mentioned briefly that she slept over night there. Kafka's characters crossed my mind... Finally, I was in the "Exhibition in the kitchen": there was a pink wall (a piece by Laura Kaminskaite), an object on a dirty table (a piece by Antanas Gerlikas – a non-existent musical instrument he saw in his dream), on the floor one could see some futurist drawings of cars (childhood drawings by Gerlikas), and other artworks among sheets of paper, empty bottles, packages of food and dirty dishes. It looked like a chaotic kitchen after a party. I asked if it was also a part of the exhibition. Apparently, there was a performance by Agata Erlacher on Saturday evening – a "special dinner" for curators, artists and their friends – that's why the kitchen was unexpectedly messy. I asked Augustas what he thinks about it. He replied diplomatically: in his opinion, this exhibition is not accomplished as it was supposed to be but it is rather an "introduction to an exhibition", a sketch, an experiment. Nevertheless, I went home irritated by the obvious: I knew most of the participant artists and curators as interesting ones because of their contribution to other projects, but as it came to the largest institution with certain budget but rotten structure, nobody took responsibility for the project, and employed it for their personal purposes e.g. special dinners for friends; that all resulted in big publicity made by the Triennial, and exclusion for outsiders as potential visitors, and overall mess...

(personal field notes, March 30, 2014)

V.IV. THE PROBLEM OF CONTEMPORARY CONCEPTUALISM

Summarizing most of the art pieces that the reader has encountered throughout this thesis, one can say that the most popular sort of Vilnius contemporary art is directly influenced by European and American *post-* or *neo-conceptualism*. Since its initial question interrogates the nature and possibility of art itself and its form is rather uninformative, it is hardly intellectually accessible to the masses. *Conceptualism* might be defined as primarily self-reflective: an artwork often refers to art itself by (visually, associatively etc.) discussing art history, theory, and art actualities, and creates an inner logic. Therefore, it is hardly readable

for somebody who is unfamiliar with its context. A piece gains a meaning only if a viewer participates in the context and puts an intellectual effort (cf. Burokas 2014).

We may here remember a renowned theory of art theorist and philosopher Arthur C. Danto that was introduced in his 1997 book “After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History”. There, he is primarily concerned with the definition of contemporaneity as “the end of art” or a “post-historical moment” meaning that attempting to characterize contemporary art, one has to abandon the mode of thinking about art in historical and stylistic periods or *master narratives*: “the great master narratives which first defined traditional art, and then modernist art, have not only come to an end, but [...] contemporary art no longer allows itself to be represented by master narratives at all” (Danto 1997: xiii).

Although in the end of 1990’s Danto claims that “ours is a moment, at least (and perhaps only) in art, of deep pluralism and total tolerance” (Danto 1997: xiv), he refers not to the plurality of art emerging all over the world but primarily to one sort of contemporary art found in New York and European galleries at that time, and exemplifies his theory with pieces that we now call *conceptual*, e.g. Andy Warhol’s “Brillo Box” stated that there is no need to search for an outside difference between the “art” and “reality”: “It meant that as far as appearances were concerned, anything could be a work of art, and it meant that if you were going to find out what art was, you had to turn from sense experience to thought. You had, in brief, to turn to philosophy” (Danto 1997: 13). Danto’s overall message is summarized as:

[O]nce art itself raised the true form of the philosophical question – that is, the question of the difference between artworks and real things – history was over. The philosophical moment had been attained. [...] And, because the present situation is essentially unstructured, one can no longer fit a master narrative to it. [...] [We witness] the greatest era of freedom art has ever known.

(Danto 1995: 113-114)

My thesis is, indeed, concerned with a type of Euro-American contemporary art deriving from the conceptualism of the 1970’s. Even though in the last twenty years it became obvious that master narratives do not explain art processes, we, nevertheless, face problematic conditions of conceptual or philosophical freedom within art that Danto is talking about.

Taken a more recent theory, we could again follow Boris Groys who denotes the fundamental influence on contemporary art by the conceptualism of the 1970’s as:

[A]fter conceptualism we can no longer see art primarily as the production and exhibition of individual things – even readymades. [...] Conceptual artists shifted the emphasis of artmaking away from static, individual objects toward the presentation of new relationships in space and time. These relationships could be purely spatial, but also logical and political. They could be relationships among things, texts, and photo-documents, but could also involve performances, happenings, films, and videos – all of which were shown inside the same installation space.

(Groys 2011: 1)

As Groys suggests, since conceptualism, art regained its focus on meaning and communication in establishing a form of expression (i.e. conceptual art installations) where diverse elements function as words in a sentence. For the philosopher, this does not mean an absence of materiality or form; it is rather that the conceptual artist shifted the interest from aesthetics to poetics and rhetoric (Groys 2011: 2-3).

An art philosopher from Vilnius, Algimantas Lopeta, is skeptical about artists' attempt to become philosophers as well as towards the self-sufficiency of the conceptualist form of expression. He notices that contemporary art often *pretends* to be a kind of philosophy but does not succeed its goal because of a lack of a consistent form; hence, it fails in standing individually for itself and, for that reason, it remains not welcoming for the wider public unfamiliar with the context (Lopeta 2014b).

Here, I include an excerpt of an extensive talk with the philosopher where he highlights the core or the “contemporary art problem” and may indicate why this form of art rarely functions in and within the broad society. Above, I presented two most promising spaces within the field – “The Gardens” and “Tulips&Roses”. The facts show that both of them could hardly survive in Lithuanian context, but even if the structural reasons of their unsuccessfulness are clear, this still does not explain *why* an independent initiative of contemporary art in Vilnius would not sustain itself.

Goda Palekaitė: Talking about spaces for contemporary art in Vilnius, it is worth considering that there is no space where one can see separate artworks of particular artists. One can find it for classical, modernist or abstract art but not for the contemporary one. There are only integrated exhibitions. Why do you think it is like that?

Algimantas Lopeta: Because this kind of art needs a bolthole or a context, because it has lost its form. E.g. literature, classical painting or film has a clear shape and is welcoming to be judged accordingly. Contemporary art (at least this type that is found in Vilnius) often functions as a combination of different forms that all are weak if taken separately, e.g. it is a concept presented as a picture, an object or a short text, but it does not appeal to sensitivity as a painting or as a sculpture; instead, it pretends to be a form of thinking. But the problem is that a statement is not thinking yet. A sentence in an exhibition can be an invitation to think but it is not elaborated enough to be considered as a thought. You can, of course, think through images or other means, like some people do, e.g. Godard thinks in a form of film but he thinks as a thinker with his own dialectics and his own system – if you follow him you follow a process. In conceptual art you often see a simulation of this process because they lack form. To make it clear, conceptualism is weak in itself.

(Lopeta 2014b)

To summarize, throughout this chapter, I basically discussed the social and institutional conditions for contemporary artist in Vilnius, and their general influences and contexts from art theoretical standpoint. One can say that it was a discussion about this particular relation between the personal and social i.e. an attempt to see the link between certain practices (or artistic methods as I label them) of a singular artist, and their implications and consequences within the context. Thus, considering individual and collective artistic practices, the impression I gained was following: even the artists themselves do not seem to be deeply interested what their colleagues are doing in their studios as long as one does not participate in the projects, exhibitions, and events. As a substitute, a *curator* gains authority as an author. One can think of *managing creativity* instead of *creating artworks* – *networking* and *relational art* seem to be very accurate examples of the processes that I attempted to depict here. Within art discourses, including theories, academies, media etc., an *artwork* is required to be classifiable i.e. to be clearly positioned within a network of economical and discursive interrelations. Philosopher Algimantas Lopeta explained this dynamics referring back to Hegel who claimed that we live in a society of *bourgeois persons* where all experiences of such a person are anonymous and interchangeable. Paradoxically, this person conceives him or herself as an individual and autonomous while, actually, everybody shares the same anonymous experience. Already in the 19th century, Hegel talked about *the end of history* (Danto with his concept of *the end of art* introduced in this chapter above, is a Hegelian

philosopher) that he has prophesied for the times when the bourgeois society reaches its culmination and bourgeois consciousness becomes overall present. Real politics will cease to be: there will be no real argument, just business. Consequently art, being *a symptom of the times* will only exist as varieties of reconfigurations of the same elements (cf. Lopeta 2014a).

Finally, considering general public opinions towards conceptualism, one can say that despite of the diversity of possible dynamics between an author and the public and the technological omnipresence, the acceptance and tolerance from the masses towards contemporary art remains minor. As Boris Groys remarks, “[t]oday, contemporary networks of communication like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter offer global populations the possibility of presenting their photos, videos and texts juxtaposed in ways that cannot be distinguished from those of many post-conceptualist artworks. The visual grammar of a website is not too different from the grammar of an installation space”; thus, “[t]hrough the internet, conceptual art today has become a mass cultural practice”. However, public awareness of the masses does not seem to increase and even people who do willingly use internet, keep having difficulties in accepting the forms of communication of contemporary conceptual art (Groys 2011: 11).

Coming back to the issues in Vilnius, on the institutional level, we have to consider that the Contemporary Art Centre is the only actually functioning gallery in town with its focus on contemporary art, i.e. distribution of finances and ideas is institutionally monopolized. Alternative project spaces such as “The Gardens” and “Tulips&Roses” shut down after a few years of operation. Self-promotion strategies are being employed by individuals in order to attract local and international attention, while *networking* strategy is even institutionalized in form of *Rupert’s* educational program. However, it is viewed skeptical by local experts for its focus on promotion instead of deepening the debate on contemporary art itself. Moreover, it is evident that basically one particular sort of contemporary art arrives at Vilnius - *post-conceptualism*, as discussed above. Whether one speaks of exhibitions, events or education, the “difference becomes unpopular” in the local discourse and even within the community (Burokas 2014).

The *relational art* debate presented in this chapter, also aims to explain Lithuanian contemporary art issues and the scene around the year 2014: influenced by the domain of the curator-figure of the 1990’s and the artist’s role as a social initiator, but initially focused on a group of „gallery-goers“, artists still do often practice a kind of Vilnius’ relational aesthetics where dinners with friends become performances, as, for instance, happens in the exhibition

in the kitchen described in this chapter. Moreover, even explicitly stating different intentions from the ones of relational art, it becomes difficult to escape the common pattern for an individual artist like Kipras Dubauskas, e.g. initial attempt of the *MINEO* festival was to organize a widely socially engaged event; however, it ended up with a group of colleagues and acquaintances. Here, one can observe a circle dynamics occurring as following: some sort of contemporary art excludes “outsiders”, whereas another sort remains exclusive since the “outsiders” refuse to participate due to their skepticism towards contemporary art. In the end, only artists “insiders” (not all the artists either) know what contemporary art in the city really is, and an elaborate discussion with the society does not take place or only on exceptional occasions.

CONCLUSION

From a conversation with the artist Augustas Serapinas:

Goda Palekaitė: remember when Kipras, you and me met, we were telling you about a trip on a railroad as an extraordinary experience? It was, indeed, a special experience for me. But, actually, many people are taking the same way home every day, so why is this walk special when it is perceived as a “creative walk”? What is the particularity that enables you to perceive it as something artistic and draw some conclusions? Is that all just a question of discourse – our own story that we tell in artistic terms learned through certain socialization, or do you think that there is an essentially different perception?

Augustas Serapinas: look. [He shows me a picture on his Smartphone: there is an elderly man standing next to an old trolleybus.] I was standing in a bus stop and, suddenly, I saw this old trolleybus coming. They disappeared from the city some years ago. I asked the driver and he confirmed that it's the last trolleybus of this type in Vilnius that is still running. I started taking pictures of it because I like its shape, materials, colors, and its potency of carrying history. Then, this old man appeared, he was drunk and desperate, he came to me and started telling me his life story. I thought – how beautiful: this trolleybus and this man next to each other, both are nostalgic reminiscences of the same historical period, embodying the feeling of the past. So I asked him to pose next to the vehicle and he willingly did. Such encounters are my best teachers, and I believe that busy people on the street would not find time and attention to recognize them.

GP: so you think that your mental state of being an artist enables you to experience things that would otherwise be impossible? May one say that your self-identification encourages you to search for such encounters, that walking through the city as an artist is primarily about intentions?

AS: you may say so. It inspires me. It affects me. This might answer your question: the possibility of extraordinary encounters and experiences increases with artistic intentions. My perception of everyday life events differs from the rational or practical perception. Yet, it enables me to answer certain questions through the associative means. I am interested in the here and now – in questions that cannot be conceived in words. May these be spatial, political

or sensual issues, you need to have a certain position in order to reflect nonverbally... Nevertheless, it does not guarantee anything. Calling yourself an artist does not ensure you an extraordinary perception.

(Serapinas 2014)

In the case of Vilnius, I faced two poles conditioning the creative thinking: on the one hand, there still is an intellectual hunger for alternative artistic practices. The urban skeleton of the former USSR and the memory of censorship is still deeply embedded, and inspires the critical and rebellious thought of the young generation. Consequently, they willingly reflect on the socio-history of the city through their art works. On the other hand, the general skepticism towards everything that is being culturally produced is a norm. Even among the contemporary artists themselves there is a mistrust against new initiatives such as the *MINEO* festival – these are being constantly questioned, e.g. while organizing the event, I witnessed many refusals to participate that were caused not by formal reasons (money, time, etc.), but because the artists, even those who work within the same field, were critical towards its concept. The positive part of my conclusions suggests that these conditions create a lively field of a creative tension – they make the socially engaged (urban) art truly *actual* in opposition to the passive and self-understood art scene in “more western” contexts.

VILNIUS FULL OF SPACE is a line that appears everywhere on the walls, bridges, and pavements in the city. It is still full of space for creativity and this must be loudly stated. As my interview partner Algimantas Lopeta argues and reminds on Althusser, art is a symptom of the general conditions that reflects a certain state of social consciousness and certain ideological horizon that is impossible to escape. The truly actual art reflects and contemplates the conditions of contemporary thought and life (reminding on Hegel). Employing the *telescope-microscope principle* and constantly approaching a single art piece as well as drawing back to general conditions, one might access the principle of contemporary creativity itself. To Lopeta, it is useless or uninteresting to consider an art work such as a walk through the city merely phenomenologically. For him, the description of the artist’s perception of space is only a starting point, but the truly important question is: *how is it possible at all that this artist believes he creates; what conditions allow him to believe so?* (Lopeta 2014a) Hence, I attempted to use this advice and combine an analysis of both, the *phenomenological intention* of particular artists, and the broader *framework of the contemporary conditions of*

creativity in Vilnius. I viewed this thesis as an opportunity to introduce this larger concern, and to put a conceptual milestone for the issues that must be worked through in the future.

The *MINEO* festival that took place on April 4-5, 2014 was my focus during the empirical research conducted in February-April. Starting from the middle of March, most of my activities were related to the conceptualization and organization of the festival. To sum up, I was completely involved in all curatorial steps. Walks and talks, primarily with Kipras Dubauskas and, later, with Petras Olšauskas (an artist who joined our team meanwhile), theoretical and organizational managing, spreading the message of the festival and meeting possible participants for discussions, logistical issues, arranging the possibilities for the non-institutional non-budget event and its documentation occupied my mind to large extent.

Nevertheless, not only those related to *MINEO* festival but also many other encounters with artist, curators and theoreticians were incredibly important in picturing the overall image. These were talks with Algimantas Lopeta and exchange of approaches with the persons who refused to participate in the festival, such as Augustas Serapinas, as well as other encounters with persons and situations: Marija Puipaitė, Kazimieras Sližys, Vytenis Burokas, and the reflections upon different exhibition events appeared in the final work, although not related to *MINEO*, and even initially not intended. Almost all the meetings and interviews were arranged through informal talks and personal contacts. This research would have not been possible without my artistic background and being not from Vilnius or when approaching people from an academic, scientific or artistic institution.

My total involvement, as a consequence, at some point turned to an impossibility to separate between me as a curator and organizer, and me as a researcher, and to take a distance needed for a social analysis. Moreover, all personal bounds complicated the situation (how to say “no” to your childhood friends?). However psychologically exhausting the final weeks of the research were, afterwards while reflecting upon the data, reading further literature and writing, I attempted to find a meaningful point of intersection between the insider’s and outsider’s perspectives, and between personal views of my protagonists and their social contexts. Regarding scientific inquire, an anthropological research about contemporary artists in Vilnius has never been conducted before, since the discipline of social and cultural anthropology itself has recently been introduced in the Lithuanian context of social science.

In the beginning of the thesis, I indicated my theme as a search for a *creative method* and the *conditions of contemporary creativity* among young contemporary artists in Vilnius. I asked: How do young contemporary artists from Vilnius perceive and conceptualize their urban environment through their skills, and what creative methods do they apply in action? In this question certain conceptual milestones were implied: phenomenological philosophy to consider perception, phenomenological anthropological inquiry about the environment and skills, artistic conceptualization implied the conceptual art, application in action as critical approaches towards certain conditions, and, of course, the city of Vilnius as the site and the context of this all. Throughout the text, I attempted to discuss all these issues based on my ethnography and with the help of the theory.

To be able draw any general conclusions, I further remind on the topics discussed in each chapter and central problems encountered as well as considerations developed:

In the chapter I “Something Representative: The Urban Condition”, I sought to give an insight and to enable the reader to sense the ambience of the Vilnius urban situation, as well as to introduce the central character of the thesis – a young artist Kipras Dubauskas, and his way of walking, thinking and acting. In doing so, I described our first walk through the city and analyzed certain awareness in regard to theory. First, I discussed my initial ethnographic method, which was *fieldwork on foot* that was introduced to social and cultural anthropology by Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst in their essay “Fieldwork on Foot: Perceiving, Routing, Socializing” in the volume edited by Coleman and Collins “Locating the Field: space, place and context in anthropology” (2006). There, the authors argued that the practice of *walking along* the persons must be acknowledged as a crucial part of an ethnographic research, and must gain enough space in the anthropological analysis. Further, I discussed Kipras’ critical approach in regard to the theories by Henri Lefèbvre in order to show that artists as him primarily intend to *enlarge the frame of urban tolerance and enable alternative urban change*. This is, indeed, my central observation introduced in this rather impressionistic chapter. However, and, as it becomes obvious in the following chapter, this intention does not fully result in the final projects the artists create.

The chapter II “Environment, Perception and Phenomenological Art” is a discussion of the works and approaches of three Lithuanian artists in regard to the French phenomenological philosophy and anthropology of perception. The projects of a conceptual designer Marija Puipaitė, previously introduced Kipras Dubauskas and an interdisciplinary artist Vitalij

Červiakov appeared to be interesting examples of “phenomological art” (I invented the term since there is no accurate term for this phenomenon). They are discussed along with Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “Visible and the Invisible” (1968) and Tim Ingold’s “Perception of the Environment” (2000). As the French thinker states:

Each perception is mutable and only probable – it is [...] only an opinion; but what is not an opinion, what each perception, even if false, verifies, is the belongingness of each experience to the same world, their equal power to manifest it, as possibilities of the same world.

(Merleau-Ponty 1968: 41)

For him, all of these perceptions are not false, but all true. Moreover, any true perception comes into being through direct engagement with the world. Therefore, I interpret e.g. Marija’s works where she engages in an intimate tactile relation with the wooden surface of a chair, and others, as genuinely phenomenological. Further attempt of this chapter is to conceptually shift from an *object* through a *building* to the *environment*, and to keep the *processuality* as the central aspect of the relations between a human and a thing / a house / a space. I proposed to see the works of these particular artists firstly inquiring about their perception and applied Tim Ingold’s theories on *skills* and *environment* as well as his terms *taskscape*, *wayfinding* and *mapping*.

One should also mention here that Tim Ingold who remained my central anthropological gateway through the thesis, with his notion of *environment* strictly rejects the notion of *space*. In opposition to space, he defines environment as an *activity* that is always processual and incomplete; and as something non-existing in itself but always in relation to human or non-human organism (Ingold 2000). However, throughout my work, I employed both notions, *environment* and *space* interchangeably with an implication that *space* is also a processual dimension of human action and perception that slightly differs from *environment*. While the latter may be used in any general context, the term *space* seemed to me as being more welcoming for specific definitions (e.g. urban space, gallery space). A space can also be rather independently framed from other spaces existing outside our *island of perception* – initially a biologist Jakob von Uexküll entitled this as *Umwelt* or *environment* (2001). For instance, a gallery space in London can be compared with a gallery space in Vilnius. In other words, *space*, in some cases, appeared to me to be more suitable as a conceptual category, while *environment* – as a perceptual one.

The chapter III “Trespassing Method” was, as the title indicates, devoted to the artistic practice of trespassing institutional and interdisciplinary boundaries and formalities, which, as explained above, took the largest part of my attention during the fieldwork. It is exemplified with the case of the *MINEO* festival. Originally, the event aimed to spotlight on the issue of expanding commercialization and privatization of Vilnius semi-public and abandoned spaces. It was intended as a critical initiative towards alienation and privatization of such spaces or their conversion to places for the “mass culture”. We – three main organizers (Kipras Dubauskas, Petras Olšauskas and me) suggested that this situation in the city directly influences general apathy, conformist thinking, and lack of social consciousness. With this project we attempted to expand the horizon of a Vilnius citizen within the urban environment, and to stimulate a more eager social consciousness. Moreover, we wanted to enable a discussion among the experts of the city and engaged inhabitants in order to define new possible strategies of public cultural engagement. *MINEO* was viewed as a long term project that would take place every April in order to represent the critical artistic approach towards critical developments within the city space.

This critical approach and intentions were discussed referring to art-theoretical discourses (e.g. RoseLee Goldberg’s considerations on the performance art). Further, Michel de Certeau’s distinction between *strategy* and *tactics* was chosen to conceptualize the situation. As it became clear during the research and as I showed in the chapter, personal informal *tactics* of the artists often merge with institutional *strategies* of city planning and regulation. Artists such as Kipras Dubauskas, basically working beyond institutional frameworks, are often enabled to finalize his projects *due to* the gaps and creative or tolerant turns within institutions that he willingly uses. This was, for instance, the case of the expansively presented encounter with the director of The Center of Sculpture and Stained Glass.

Furthermore, and looking from the outside perspective, one must say that formal and informal groups of city experts and inhabitants often share the same views and even stereotypes. This was my observation of the established and conservative institution of the Vilnius Travelers’ Club and a secret and totally informal community of urban explorers who both shared mistrust towards contemporary artists as being unpredictable and irresponsible. Moreover, several young artists who initially work with the urban issues, such as Augustas Serapinas, displayed mistrust towards the *MINEO* festival. All these people and more refused to participate in the festival and expressed an interest to *preserve* the abandoned Vilnius, and to

keep the secret spaces away from the public. The situation is discussed in the subchapter about *MINEO* under the title “Refusals”. Although as a curator and organizer, I was disappointed and deeply concerned about these refusals, as a researcher, I found them crucially interesting to discuss.

Despite of complications, a two-day event was organized and started with a five hours walking tour with approximately 30 participants through the non-representative and abandoned semi-public sites of southern Vilnius, which was guided by Kipras Dubauskas himself. Being a visual and graffiti artist who has grown up in that area, he offered a very particular narrative that uncovered early Vilnius graffiti history, psychogeographic qualities of walking, and the social and structural problems of the area. The excursion was complemented with visits of artists’ studios and a documentary screening, as well as with an acoustic performance in an abandoned water reservoir. The first day ended with a workshop organized by a group of urban activists who, referring to Lefèbvre (1968), call themselves “Right to the city”. The second day included a discussion, presentations of ideas, video screenings, and an excursion through the city by bus accompanied with an audio performance by Jokūbas Čižikas. It finalized with a tour in a very particular space, namely, huge and almost abandoned factory of sculpture and stained glass, and a party for approximately 200 people with live music and video installations there.

Thus, throughout this largest chapter of the thesis, I attempted to discuss the issues I observed through my empirical research in February-April 2014: a lack of common intellectual or creative language among the city artists and other experts, and mistrust towards each other. I suggest that a passive *will to preserve* the rotting and, on the other hand, rapidly commercialized sites, instead of inviting public to raise its awareness and act against, indicates a gap in communication. The problems are obvious to everybody – all of these groups share a similar vista to the issue, but the lack of communication and tolerance is even more present.

Hence, we cannot simply see artists as *tacticians* (in de Certeau’s sense) with their works acting against institutional strategies. The issue is more complex than that. Persons as Kipras Dubauskas embody both, *tactical* and *strategic* thinking and employ their phenomenological perception of the city as a means. For instance, Kipras works as graffiti artist during the night but also searches for ways of collaboration with institutions during the day. As I interpret his

intentions, he wishes to expand the limits of urban communication and to establish himself as an artist.

Finally, I am not an apologist of *MINEO* and must acknowledge its mistakes and failures. Even though the idea of *MINEO* was driven by Henri Lefebvre's consideration of the city as a socially constructed space, and his critical approach towards the contemporary situation, his will to finalize a project took over his political statement and compromised itself. In the end, the event turned to a compromise between two different intensions of its organizers: on the one hand we aimed to *raise problems about urban condition*, on the other – Kipras was willing to *celebrate the experience* of the abandoned city in an artistic action. After all the refusals and time and budget restrictions, the result was rather *educating* and *entertaining* than *radically trespassing*.

After my research was finished, *MINEO*, in fact, developed further. In summer and autumn 2014, Kipras organized several tours through the spaces we explored together as well as through several new sites. In 2015, he has received a scholarship to for the festival's further development. He continued communicating with some of the former participants and invited new people. In April 2015, there is again a two-day tour and other events planned, as well as its presentation in a group exhibition in September (Dubauskas 2015).

To conclude the theme of the festival, I have to acknowledge that I was expecting *MINEO* to be the most accurate circumstance to investigate the situation of young contemporary public art in Vilnius. Yet, while working as its curator and encountering unexpected skepticism and rejection, I had to broaden my perspective. Thus, in the chapter IV I discuss what I call the *infiltration method* – the practice applied by some other young contemporary artists in Vilnius, which has spontaneously gained an importance in my research.

Thus, the practice of infiltration in certain institutional systems and public situations as an artistic strategy was presented in the brief chapter IV "Infiltration Method". This was introduced as an alternative to the trespassing method. As the examples of the works of two young artists, Augustas Serapinas and Kazimieras Sližys show, *infiltration* can be seen as one more creative and critical way of dealing with contemporary urban conditions, as well as question the state, its system and its art institutions.

In the final part of my research represented in the chapter V "General Urban Conditions: Contexts and Approaches", I discussed its conceptual and local contexts. Within my

fieldwork, I worked with young artists who are still in search for established positions as artists, and who rather engage in non-institutional and provoking encounters with the institutions themselves and with the broader public. Anyhow, all of them are increasingly being recognized, awarded and, hence, involved by different established structures. It seems to be probable that in the future they would find themselves *within* these contexts. Hence, I took those structures and discourses into consideration.

This chapter was necessary to discuss the *contemporary conditions of creativity* in Vilnius, as I have formulated in my research question in the beginning, as well as to draw a line between an individual practice or approach and its social framework. Thus, I could observe certain dynamics: a single artist creating in isolation is not of interest neither of his or her colleagues, nor of curators. What matters to everybody is an exhibition or a project, in many cases, with a curator as its central axe. This phenomenon that now is a tendency is presented in regard to Nicolas Bourriaud's influential book "Relational aesthetics" (2002). The consequences and critique towards "relational art" have been thoroughly discussed by Claire Bishop (2004) and other scholars (e.g. Martin 2007). Hence, a curator becomes the *author*, and an artist is required to position his or her works within certain artistic discourses. One can also picture a curator as a theatre director who determines the overall performance of the exhibition while defining its general concept (or creating a script), selecting artist suitable to represent it, and organizing it accordingly. This type of curatorial practice was visible in Vilnius small-scale project spaces "The Gardens" and "Tulips&Roses" that are now both closed, as well as in large institutions such as the Contemporary Art Centre. Their specifics are discussed in the chapter.

Thus, one can think of *managing creativity* as a common practice – *networking* strategy is represented in Vilnius by the institution called *Rupert*. Its way of operation is discussed based on an interview with the artist Vytenis Burokas. Whereas general philosophical conditions were only possible to grasp through the conversation with the philosopher Algimantas Lopeta who, basically, insisted to see the nowadays art as *a symptom of its time* (cf. Lopeta 2014a).

Another aspect of *networking* is a concern about the artistic discourses that arrive to Vilnius. As Vytenis tells me, in such a small scene, one can often trace clear relations between artists, curators and institutions, and see why certain figures participate in the discourse while the others do not. Hence, it works as a multisided exclusion. While "relational art" exhibitions that are orientated to a small group of "gallery goers" exclude contemporary art from the

public, networking mechanisms does the same within its discourse. Finally, practices attempting to be alternative in this regard, such as *MINEO* fail in accomplishing their goals because of general skepticism and tensed situation.

This last chapter, thus, was intended to put emphasis on the last elements of a picture in order to get closer to my initial inquiry about the situation of contemporary creativity in Vilnius – finally, the reader could see my complete interpretation of the *urban condition of creativity*.

Vilnius' urban and cultural situation is highly contradictory, inconsistent and even paradoxical. Spatial incongruity is visible both, in centre and in peripheries, in galleries and in alternative spaces. Despite of its small scale and number of inhabitants, diverse urban and social strata are explicit in the Lithuanian capital: historical architecture of gothic, baroque and classicism blooms next to the Soviet modernist and anonymous industrial structures. Moreover, in the last twenty years its landscape has dramatically changed with monuments of contemporary everyday life and business: glass and metal buildings, vivid advertisements and innovative constructions merge together with historical textures and Soviet cement. While this might be the case of many post-Soviet cities, Vilnius is special for its particularly natural environment: Neris river course being in the middle of the city, divides its centre, industrial and sleeping districts. Its watercourse is rather non-urbanized, thus a sight at the river in the middle of Vilnius might remind on a smaller version of Siberian landscape. Vilnius topography is defined by green hills and rivers – from any sight one can see both, the urban and the natural. Finally, semi-rural and improvised life style determines the image: chicken shelters can be found next to skyscrapers, rotten garages next to business centers, and wild plants keep growing on the city walls. It is often uneasy to indicate if a space is abandoned or inhabited – many of old industries are still partly functioning (at least a café or a Russian bookshop stays open in a former factory). This, I believe, is due to the inconsistent work in the municipality and related offices and a continuous lack of finances: some even dangerous urban structures are not being closed for decades, others, meanwhile, are being suddenly privatized or demolished. As there is an obvious gap of communication within small groups of inhabitants, as it was showed in this thesis, there are gaps everywhere among decision makers. All in all, the better you know the city and the more corners you discover, the more chaotic the spatial situation in Vilnius appears to be.

Such vulnerable groups of society as young artists living in as incongruent city as Vilnius, naturally, find themselves financially and socially completely insecure and must maintain their living with different means. Although being recognized abroad (such as scholarships and income from cultural institutions in e.g. Austria as the case of Augustas Serapinas and Kazimieras Slizys shows, or Belgium as Kipras Dubauskas), the same artists, along with their colleagues work as builders and constructors in Lithuanian galleries in order to secure at least minimal income in their own country. Others have to emigrate not only for the sake of education (all of the presented artists have studied at the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts and, afterwards, in other European countries within student exchange programs or gained M.A. degrees in foreign universities), but also due to the financial insecurity.

General moods of contemporary artists and art-related people I met are rather skeptical: even though Lithuanian contemporary art is often appreciated worldwide, and valued in international contexts (e.g. award in 55th Venice Biennial 2013), successful people are massively emigrating, and innovative spaces are shutting down. Meanwhile, art schools (even the Academy of Fine Arts to a high extent) and large institutions are stuck in a system not familiar with contemporary art. Attempting to answer the *conditions*' question raised in the beginning, I discussed the contemporary Vilnius conditions, on the one hand, as an internationally spread network of connections, on the other – as an enormous gap between elements of the society, and even between the elements within the artistic community. One can claim that contemporary art in Vilnius remains both, *exclusive* and *excluded*. Hence, the *conditions* for contemporary art look similar to *incongruent time loops*. In other words, there is no common ground within the local art scene, and no means for a fruitful discussion to occur; this world is rather made of sporadic encounters and inconsistent particularities.

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ABSTRACT

The main theme of this research can be identified as an inquiry about the *conditions of creativity among young contemporary visual artists in Vilnius* – the capital of Lithuania, and *a search for their creative method*. With the term “*method*” it is meant certain artistic strategies and modes of perception – i.e. *ways of acting* (implying that perception is an action as well), that enable individuals to believe their seemingly everyday life actions to be creative, critical, and, hence, different from the rest of the citizens. Hence, the focus lays on the processuality of a creative act instead of its final result, and inquire *with what conceptual means do artists reflect upon their urban condition, and how do they perform their position*.

The central characters of this thesis are *young contemporary Vilnius artists*, even though those people do not represent the complexity of the field of contemporary art in Vilnius nor do they see themselves as a community. With the term *young artists* it is referred to the people who are in their mid- or late-twenties. They all were born in the USSR and became artists in the Republic of Lithuania, and had to face radical changes in social, cultural, political, urban, etc. life and position themselves as artists. They all grew up in Vilnius i.e. they have a deep relation, experience, and knowledge regarding the city. Again, being a part of the “break generation”, these people had to witness the crash of communism and the rapid emergence of “wild” capitalism within the same urban landscape. Further, they all graduated Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts, which is the highest Lithuanian educational institution for visual arts; all of them have also collected experiences in art institutions abroad. Seeing themselves as contemporary artists, they are not bound to any of classical disciplines of painting, sculpture, crafts etc.; they rather approach the field interdisciplinary with *theoretical, conceptual and perceptual* concerns. The final results of what these artists engage in can be prescribed to *video, installation, site specific, graffiti, urban, public, performance art, and conceptual design*. However, none of them would attribute his or her works to one of these fields.

Theoretically, the central gateway of the thesis is phenomenology – a philosophy that accounts for time, space and *lived experience* and thinks the world without subject and object. The idea of the perceiving *body-mind* or *person-organism* where the Cartesian dualism is being eliminated is the core of the phenomenological philosophy. To this regard, the general approach and several of the central concepts of a French thinker Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968), as well as their application to anthropology by Tim Ingold, are discussed. Thus Ingold’s notions related to *perception* such as *environment* (and its origins in Uexküll’s biology), *skills, dwelling* and *wayfinding* (2000), are introduced and applied in an analysis of the art works.

Further, Henri Lefebvre’s texts on the city (1968, 1974 and 1992), where he considers modern urban space as, primarily, socially constructed. Finally, theories by Michel de Certeau (his concepts of

strategy and tactics) (1984), Roselee Goldberg (2004), Arthur C. Danto (1997), Boris Groys (2008), Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) and Claire Bishop (2004) help to articulate the theme of contemporary creativity in Vilnius, and phenomena it conditions.

The ethnographic fieldwork has been conducted in Vilnius in February – April, 2014. The research culminated in an intense *curatorial work* for an improvised interdisciplinary art festival *MINEO* that took place on April 4-5, 2014. The overall methodology was highly qualitative, wherein the *curatorial method* and *fieldwork on foot* (Ingold and Lee 2006) were of extreme importance: since the artistic practice of my central protagonists might be described as a site-specific visually-performative reference to graffiti, recent Vilnius' history, and institutional critique, I found it essential to accompany Kipras Dubauskas and other artists during their *creative walks* through the city.

The present context of Vilnius exhibition spaces is introduced through a discussion about alternative project spaces such as “The Gardens”, as well as large state institutions dealing with contemporary art. Finally, this is related to one more artistic or even management strategy – *networking*, and an institution in Vilnius designed in order to cultivate it. By the end of the thesis, one finds suggestion to consider the type of art that we encountered in the previous chapters as *contemporary conceptualism*, and to beware its particularities, strengths and weaknesses.

The analysis is expanded into five core chapters: the impression of the field and major methods are introduced in the chapter I “Something Representative: The Urban Condition”. Chapter II “Environment, Perception and Phenomenological Art” is an interpretation of particular artistic positions in relation to the phenomenological philosophy and anthropology. Chapter III “Trespassing Method” is dedicated to the most extensive part of the ethnographic fieldwork; whereas chapter IV “Infiltration Method” discusses artistic approaches that appeared in the research unexpectedly. Finally, in the chapter V “General Urban Conditions: Contexts and Approaches”, one finds a contextualization of the whole situation within the *conditions of contemporary creativity* in Vilnius, and their theoretical background.

Thus, the text attempts to draw portraits of artists moving within his environment – *intimate pictures of persons* and *of a city* that could have only appeared in a process of walking through and along. The urban skeleton of the former USSR and the memory of censorship is still deeply embedded, and inspires the critical and rebellious thought of the young generation. Consequently, they willingly reflect on the socio-history of the city through their art works. On the other hand, the general skepticism towards everything that is being culturally produced is a norm. Even among the contemporary artists themselves there is mistrust against new initiatives such as the *MINEO* festival – these are being constantly questioned.

Hence, an analytical combination of both, the *phenomenological intention* of particular artists, and the broader *framework of the contemporary conditions of creativity* in Vilnius, is attempted.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Das zentrale Thema dieser Forschung behandelt die *Konditionen der Kreativität unter jungen zeitgenössischen visuellen Künstlern in Vilnius* - die Hauptstadt von Litauen - sowie eine *suche nach deren kreativen Methoden*. Der Begriff Methode verweist hier auf gewisse Strategien und Modi von Perzeption, welche bewusst von den Künstlern aktiviert und selbständig ausgeführt werden. Diese selbständig durchgeführte Arten der Wahrnehmung ermöglichen es, dass das alltägliche Tun als besonderer kreativer Akt gesehen wird, welcher den Künstler vom rest der Bevölkerung unterscheidet. Somit liegt der Fokus dieser Arbeit auf der Prozessualität des künstlerischen Akts.

Die zentralen Charaktere dieser Arbeit sind *junge kontemporäre Künstler* aus Vilnius, welche sich aber nicht als gemeinsame Gruppe begreifen. Die Künstler sind alle mitte oder ende zwanzig. Alle wurden noch in der UdSSR geboren und wurden Künstler in der unabhängigen Republik Litauen. Diese Generation war mit radikalen Veränderungen in Kultur, Politik und Urbanität konfrontiert. Natürlich mussten sie sich in Relation zu diesen Veränderungen positionieren. Als Teil der "losgebrochenen Generation" waren sie Zeuge des kommunistischen Zusammenbruchs und erlebten das schnelle Aufstauen eines wilden Kapitalismus. All dies in der gleichen urbanen Landschaft. Alle untersuchten Künstler graduierten von der Kunstakademie Vilnius, welche die höchste litauische Ausbildungsstätte für visuelle Künstler ist. Auch haben alle von ihnen Erfahrungen im Ausland gesammelt.

Nachdem sich alle von ihnen als kontemporäre Künstler verstehen, sind sie nicht an klassische Methoden (Malerei, Skulptur etc.) gebunden. Vielmehr nähern sie sich dem künstlerischem Feld interdisziplinär, vor allem durch *theoretische, konzeptuelle* und *perzeptive* Interessen. Das Endresultat ihrer Beschäftigung kann meist zu den folgenden Bereichen zugeordnet werden: *Video, Installation, Graffiti, urbane- und ort-spezifische Kunst*, und *konzeptuelles Design*. Indes würde sich keiner von ihnen zu einem bestimmten Feld zuordnen lassen.

Der theoretische Drehpunkt dieser Arbeit ist ein phänomenologischer Zugang. Ursprünglich eine philosophischer Zugang, welcher sich mit Zeit, Raum und verkörperter subjektiver Erfahrung beschäftigt. Die Körper-Geist Dualität wird von der Phänomenologie kritisiert und abgelehnt, hingegen versucht sie eine Welt zu denken ohne auf eine Ontologie zurückzugreifen, welche die Dualität von Subjekt und Objekt als grundlegende Prämisse ansieht. Somit versteht sich die Phänomenologie vor allem als kritischer Standpunkt gegenüber einem cartesianischen Weltverständnis. Vor allem die Schrift von Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968) und seine Weiterführung in der Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie durch Tim Ingold (2000), wird als Analysewerkzeug angewandt. Ingold's Konzeption von *skill, dwelling* und *wayfinding*, die zum teil auf Uexküll's

Verständnis von Umwelt zurückgreift, sind ebenfalls wichtige theoretische Konzepte, um die Künstler und ihre Werke zu analysieren. Durch das kritische Betrachten der epistemologischen und ontologischen Dualitäten von Körper und Geist, Person und Organismus sowie Subjekt und Objekt, wird versucht den spezifischen Anforderungen des untersuchten Felds gerecht zu werden. Weiters werden folgende Konzeption zur Analyse herangezogen: Henri Lefèbvre's Texte über die Stadt (1968, 1974, 1992), in welchen er darlegt wie moderne urbane Räume als primär soziale Konstruktionen zu verstehen sind, Michel de Certeau und seine Konzeption von *Strategie* und *Taktik* (1984), Roselee Goldberg (2004), Boris Groys (2008), Arthur C. Danto (1997), Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), Claire Bishop (2004), unter anderen.

Die ethnographische Forschung wurde von Februar bis April 2014 in Vilnius durchgeführt. Die Untersuchung kulminierte in einer intensiven *kuratorische Arbeit* für ein improvisiertes, interdisziplinäres Kunstfestival *MINEO*, welches am vierten und fünften April 2014 stattfand. Zwei angewandte qualitative Methoden sind hervorzuheben: Die kuratorische Methode und die Methode *fieldwork on foot* (Ingold und Vergunst 2006). Die Methode wurde durch die Begleitung von Künstlern in bei ihren *creative walks* durch die Stadt durchgeführt.

Der aktuelle Kontext der Ausstellungsmöglichkeiten in Vilnius wird ebenfalls dargestellt und diskutiert: alternative Räume, wie zum Beispiel *The Gardens*, oder auch große Institutionen, die mit kontemporärer Kunst verbunden sind. Am Ende der Arbeit werden Vorschläge besprochen, wie und warum die untersuchte Kunst als *konzeptuelle Kunst* verstanden werden kann. Vor allem mit dem Hintergrund die Stärken und Schwächen dieses Begriffs zu bestimmen.

Die Analyse ist durch fünf Hauptkapitel gegliedert: Die Eindrücke des Feldes und die wichtigsten Methoden werden in Kapitel I eingeführt "Something Representative: The Urban Condition". Kapitel II "Environment, Perception Phenomenological Art" ist eine Interpretation der partikulären künstlerischen Positionen in Relation zu der phänomenologischen Philosophie und Anthropologie. Kapitel III "Trespassing Method" ist hauptsächlich mit der Beschreibung der ethnographischen Arbeit beschäftigt; wohingegen Kapitel IV "Infiltration Method" die unterschiedlichen künstlerischen Herangehensweisen diskutiert, welche in überraschenderweise während der Untersuchung erschienen. Letztlich wird in Kapitel V "General Urban Conditions: Contexts and Approaches" die ganze Situation mit den *Konditionen der Kreativität* in Vilnius kontextualisiert. Auch wird der theoretische Hintergrund dieser Konditionen beleuchtet.

Der Text versucht ein Porträt zu zeichnen. Ein Porträt von Künstlern, welche sich durch eine Umgebung bewegen - es ist ein *intimes Bild von Personen und ihrer Stadt*, welches nur den Prozess von einem gemeinsamen durch-bewegen (*walking through and along*) entstehen konnte. Das urbane Skelet der formaligen UdSSR und die Erinnerung von Zensur ist nach wie vor tief verkörpert und wirkt immer noch als Inspiration für kritische und rebellische Gedanken der jungen Generation.

Konsequenterweise reflektieren sie durch ihre künstlerische Praxis die soziale Geschichte ihrer Stadt. Hierin findet sich aber auch eine generelle Skepsis gegenüber allem was als kulturelle Norm produziert wird. Sogar unter kontemporären Künstlern gibt es ein Misstrauen gegenüber neuen Initiativen, wie zum Beispiel dem MINEO festival.

Somit finden wir einen Raum, in dem die phänomenologischen Intentionen der partikulären Künstlern durch die Konditionen der Kreativität in Vilnius begriffen werden kann.

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2007 Art camp *Synthesis*: organization and participation, Aukštaitija, Lithuania

2008 Short modern opera festival *NOA*: scenography and costumes for an opera *Crane and Stork* together with Marija Puipaitė, director Jonas Sakalauskas, Vilnius Puppet Theater

2009 Scenography for a short movie *Free Falling* together with Teresė Dedūraitė, director Rokas Eltermanas

2009 Scenography and costumes for a theater play based on Franz Kafka's novels *The Fight*, director Paulius Ignatavičius, Šiauliai Drama Theater

2010 Nomination for the Lithuanian Theater Award *The Golden Stage Cross* for *The Fight*

2010 Live performance *Fridarytuvas*: author and performer in the exhibition *Waiting Spaces*, curated by the University of Applied Arts, Vienna

2011 – present Teaching of classical drawing and scenography at a private art school *Zeichenfabrik* and a public Volkshochschule in Vienna

2012 *Movie as Performance*: Review for Charles Fairbanks' documentary *Wrestling with my father* published in the *Ethnocineca* film festival official website

2012 Research assistant in the Center for Social Anthropology, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas

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- 2014 Fieldwork in a Ju/'Hoansi-San community in Namibia with a group of M.A. students from University of Vienna
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- 2014 Conference paper together with Alicja Khatchikian *The performing body-in-space through the lens: The Living Museum in Namibia* in *Anthropology and Photography* conference, Royal Anthropological Institute, London
- 2014 Publication of *Nesamas ir niekada nebuvo: šiuolaikinės San erdvės nesuderinamumas Namibijoje* (*The Non-Existent That Never Was: The Inconsistency of Contemporary San-space*) in a Lithuanian academic journal *Lithuanian Ethnography* 14[23]
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