

Exploring the Liberating Potential of Youthnicities Emerging on Street-soccer Fields in Europe: The Case of the Netherlands.

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Abstract

In this poetic presentation, I&I give voice to the ways in which new urban tribes, or youthnicities, shaping in / on the game of street-soccer in different parts of the Netherlands, *unwork* themselves. Our story consists of two distinguishable but not separate tales. The first tells the lie of playing as musicking, a game in which the riddles of multiculturalism are both spoken and unspoken. The second explores the myth of the *unworking* of the academic I/eye through listening. By playing street-soccer and thus becoming as part of this youthnicity, the I/eye starts to put itself under erasure and learns to listen. By giving voice to these experiences, I&I practice the conviviality of the street in which a 'we' cannot be spoken of, but can be a praxis and an ethos.

Keywords: Street-Soccer, the Netherlands, Multiculture, Musicking, Third Ear, Urban Conviviality

This presentation is about the birth of a new urban ethnicity in Europe that *unworks* itself, and therewith offers a glimpse of how to avoid the rise of the new tribalisms on our cherished continent. It is about young men and women whose love for street-soccer, and the unforgettable events that touch/form them as street artists of that game, allows them to render the ethnic and religious identities that are the darlings of state managed multiculturalisms –Muslims versus Judeo-Christians, atheistic humanists versus religious adepts, and whites versus blacks and browns– less consequential. Being a street-soccer player is about keeping alive the dream of Martin Luther King, put to song by U2, that one day men and women on our continent will be judged and judge each other by the content of their character and the work they put into learning a skill. A meritocracy seeking planetary justice that is based upon a decent society (Margalit 1998).

What is about to be presented is above all a poetic rendition of the continuous coming into existence and simultaneous unworking of this new ethnicity. Actually a *youthnicity*, for this new ethnicity is a youth phenomenon understood as a remix of common sense ethnic descriptors and pimped cultural industry commodities which captivates those who are young of age as well as young at heart (Sansone 2003: 101). But first an introduction of the discipline that frames this presentation is in order.

If one of the most fascinating definitions of anthropology is that it is a poetic science, then this paper should be heard as an ethnographic balladry: a writing about an ethnos (one that unworks itself) where the multi-sensorial is actively hailed (Ingold 2008). Sociogenetically speaking why deny that wo/man is after all a tasting, seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and touching being that later learnt to record happenings on clay tablets that are today computerized (for a sociogenic interpretation of the history of orality and literacy, see Ong 2012). As you in your day to day sojourn through life touch your iPod screens, keyboards, works of art and each other, I&I, the writers of this piece, wish to affect you to think about the Europe of today in a different way.

I&I will of course raise some eyebrows. Isn't that something Rasta? Yes it is. Anthropology as a poetic science borrows this rendition of human identity from the poetic politics of Rastafari philosophy (on the emancipatory potential of this philosophy of identity, see Shilliam 2013; Gilroy 2010). I&I seeks to deconstruct the hidden coercion of consensus in the pronoun 'we'. We is always a site of negotiation. I&I reminds us of the unique beings involved in every 'we'. I&I is also however about foregrounding that every I is a becoming; is multiple; is many. I is an I&I in singular as well as multiple forms.

Yet as is tradition in ethnographic accounts, and every good suspense novel, and of course every street-soccer match, for this is the main topic of this presentation, we will play

the game of coming into consciousness of this youthnicity and its liberating potential in contemporary Europe. Please join us in this lie. We do so in two ways. We begin with one of the I&Is, Francio Guadeloupe, recounting his seductions during his encounters with street-soccer players in the Dutch cities of Amsterdam and Helmond. These seductions awaken him from the imprisonment of the dominant sensorial economy of Europe where the visual, the eye, the “what you see is what you get, is what is real”, is the order of the day. This is followed by Jordi Halfman’s *soundful* reconstruction of the way balling leading to youthnicities can bring about street conviviality unworking the academic visual I/eye who creates so-called ethnic, class, and generational divides. You, the listener/reader of this piece can then write in your mind or on your extended computers the next paragraph of this presentation, there with helping us to unwork whatever biases may have crept into what you have heard/read.

1. A sweet lie

It cannot be accidental that whilst experiencing this street-soccer match on the Louis de Visserplein in the city of Amsterdam, organized by Imagine IC¹, a Dutch organization that records and exhibits super diverse cultural heritage in the making, I hear the voice of Lauryn Hill saying “everyday people, they lie to God too. So what makes you think that they won’t lie to you?” Is this a case of an invitation to embrace an emerging imaginary of Europe by working through the seductive untruth of lies? Lies are words. But they are also more. Lies, as is known in all mystical traditions, signal the continuous dance of all that is alive. As such they are a defiance of Thought otherwise known as God, Reality, Truth, etc, created by language (James 1902). Lies alert one to what I have elsewhere termed *non-thought that both founds and demolishes thought* (Guadeloupe 2006). The human condition seems to be marked by the infinite rehearsal of positing useful partialities as unconditional even when all involved intuit that such cannot be.

1. The game on the Louis de Visserplein was part of the Pannas and Akkas project (2012–2014) in which contemporary heritage of street-soccer was documented, discussed and exhibited. The project was initiated by Imagine IC and realized in partnership with a large network that included soccer players, artists, academic researchers and people from the neighborhood.

But then again lies are sweet. I am witness to this. I like what I am experiencing on the Louis de Visserplein, and simply due to my compliance, I too am making it true; in other words, endorsing the words being uttered by the street-soccer players with a seal of approval (Rorty 1990). The guy with the ball between his feet, his curls dangling as the sunlight makes his brown skin radiate the sublime beauty of the Sahara desert, is bragging and boasting. He is a premature incarnation of Muhammad Ali, and like that righteous brother that proclaimed himself to be the world's greatest, his feet are floating like a butterfly while his words sting his opponent like a bee. I like that comparison. I decide to call him Ali in my mind. My young Cassius Clay believes the lie. His opponent, a close cropped muscular dude, with a darker tint, is calling his bluff. Like Joe Frazier, he too believes that he is greater than this so-called world's greatest - on this cement pitch. Yes, I will call him Frazier.

Frazier knows the game; he is a seasoned street-soccer player, so he realizes that Ali's mouth should not distract him from observing his foot work. He can do every trick that Ali can do, and in his mind he can do it better. But what he cannot do, or perhaps forgets to do today, like the legendary Frazier forgot to do in his third match with Ali, is dance. Actually 'to music', as it is termed by ethnomusicologists. Now 'to music is to take part in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing' (Small 1998). Frazier forgets that the movement of his opponent is not solely dictated by habituated skills, but more so by reacting to and causing the surrounding sounds to react to his dance with the ball. It's a looking that is multi-sensorial; the dance of the senses.

Ali is dancing, Frazier is sporting. And street-soccer is a dance turned into a sport, and sport turned into a dance. A duel, is a dance. The music that is coming out of the speakers is that new urban anthem, Wine and Kotch of CharlyBlak and J Capri. Ali's footwork seems to adapt to that of the dance hall tune, but it also seems to let itself be influenced by the sounds coming out of the mouths of the people cheering on and the advices of other street-soccer players on the field. And, amazingly, the crackling of the meat that is being barbequed. All these sounds conversely seem to me to somehow adapt themselves to Ali's footwork. Surely a pre-recording, a CD, cannot adapt itself to this dancer, or a piece of raw meat grill faster because of Ali's foot work, but it is a lie I like to believe. Moreover it is a lie that corroborates my intuition that because Ali was leading the dance, he seduced Frazier into going left when he should have gone right. And, knock out, he goes blind, Ali passes him.

Later on when I ask Frazier who goes on to play a magnificent second game, about the incident, he simply says that Ali had *geluk*, that he was lucky, and simply leaves it at that. His answer unworks my lie and reminds me of those words of Tracy Chapman that we are

always and only telling stories. I like my lie and I like his answer for it leads me to recognize the constant emergence and dissolution, the unworking of the youthnicity in the social phenomenon of street-soccer.

2. Youthnicity as an alternative form of being in common?

That day on the Louis de Visserplein, the guy preparing the barbeque, Khalid, is someone who in the eyes of those too mesmerized by mass media would be considered, a devout Muslim and Moroccan. Khalid's long beard and shaven head bringing to mind Mohammed Bouyeri, the murderer of the controversial Dutch artist Theo van Gogh, would have added so called fact to their fiction. Today to me he could easily have styled himself on Rick Ross, for he has the *moves* and is a *playa* (an urban dandy) as they say in street lingo. He knows the handshakes, he knows *straattaal* (urban variant of Dutch spiced with Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish, English, and Antillean words and modes of conjugating), he knows how to flirt, he knows his street-soccer, and he knows how to handle forced ripe youngsters in puberty. Khalid has got game (verbal, social, and sport-wise). The youngsters respect him. He does lots of work with them advising them to stay in school and respect their elders. A quick conversation reveals that he, like many other street-soccer players, grew up in working class neighborhoods in the urban centers of the Netherlands, where to adapt Eric B & Rakim's classic phrase, "it ain't so much where you're from in terms of ethnicity that matters most, but where you're at in terms of soccer skills" was the ethic that *playas* lived by. In these neighborhoods the children of newcomers and those descending from men and women whose grandparents had already populated these lands, threatened by the ever-present xenophobia, socialized each other into a new ethnicity. A youthnicity where street-soccer became part and remains a part of a world of cultural expressions ranging from Hip Hop, break dancing, graffiti, and Reggae, kick boxing, Antillean carnival in Rotterdam, and today the Dino show, and Nintendo FiFa, that feeds an emerging imaginary potentially valid for everyone (Glissant 1997). A democratizing humanism respectful of *humanities*, of I&Is, that does not stifle individuality (Ibid; see also Gilroy 2010; 2004). Khalid has embraced this imaginary and the Netherlands that brought him into contact with it, without renouncing his Moroccan roots or Islam.

So too has Edje, a fully tattooed dude that reminds me of Tyga. I guess he is called Edje, little Ed, because he is short and has that eternal boyish look. Even in his thirties. What he lacks in stature he makes up for on the field. Edje is a street legend. Young kids flock to him. He's got skills and is respected the world over. He travels extensively giving clinics in street-soccer and even owns his own company. What a ball, being in the right place, making use of windows of opportunity, and good old-fashioned economic common sense can do!

Edje grew up in Amsterdam Zuidoost, the so-called chocolate city of Amsterdam where newcomers of Afro-Surinamese and West African extraction dominate. There according to the new urban myth that has emerged as state funded agencies have discovered street-soccer, what counts is playing the game with style. Not so in Amsterdam West, where for Moroccan Dutch what counts is winning. They cannot lose face. It takes little effort to demolish that myth. It is the latest transposition of the ideology of Near Eastern men being driven by honor and Afro-American males as ineffective. It need not detain us here, we will let others spill ink on the various historical transformations of racist myths that remind us that old colonial ideas die hard. Edje is a living deconstruction of this racist myth, and the idea of partitioning urban neighborhoods in ethnic terms, as he is the pink skinned son of oldcomers.

He learnt that winning and style are both important from Afro-Surinamese that taught him the game. Today the street-soccer team he heads consists of equally colorful figures such as 'IssyHitman' Hamdaoui, Orville 'Orry' Stoc, and Lenny Macnack. Each and every one of them is the outcome of the duel of cultures and individuals on Dutch soil, whereby cultural expressions from all over the world were active ingredients; creolization in the making.

Edje smiles when I bring up the myth of partitioning styles of street-soccer in the Netherlands according to the categories of state managed multiculturalism. "It is true and it isn't true" he says. "It's like me being a white boy, but also a Public Enemy fan and a boy from the Bijlmer".²

His words remind me of my encounters with Michael and Hassan in Helmond³. They are friends for life who in their spare time induct young boys in that city in the art of street-soccer. Both Mike and Hassan are proud of their Surinamese and Moroccan heritage, but the bond of being street-soccer players from Helmond binds them in a way that no hailing of being Surinamese or Moroccan can interrupt. They grew up together in the working class neighborhood of the Eeuwsels⁴. There on the asphalt and the cement and the grass, they socialized each other. Made each other strong while being called all kinds of names and were

2. The Bijlmer is another name for Amsterdam Zuidoost.

3. Helmond is a city in the South of the Netherlands.

4. The Eeuwsels is a neighborhood in Helmond.

told multiple times that they did not belong in the Netherlands; in Europe. It never however for them became a white versus black thing, a newcomer versus oldcomer struggle, as they had friends and foes that defied those divides. Together with other boys whose parents migrated from Maluku, Turkey, the Dutch Caribbean isles, and trailer park old comers, they became a force to be reckoned with. They would travel to Amsterdam and Rotterdam to battle with their peers. Their ethnic belonging was recognized, they claimed allegiance with the Surinamese and Moroccan boys they would meet, the racist myths of honor and style were pragmatically endorsed, but at the end of the day, they realized where they lived and with whom they balled.

Edje, like Michael and Hassan, like Khalid, brings me into full awareness that everyone in the Netherlands can speak and speaks the dominant discourse – the Dutch categories of state managed multiculturalism – but they also speak and live demotic discourses; categories of their own making born of creolization; youthnicities being the one that is the focus of this presentation (see Baumann 1998, who makes this point in his casestudy on Southhall, London). These youthnicities aren't static and must unwork themselves as no one can escape the dominant ethnic speak.

But is this all? Youthnicity as simply a moment of freedom from state managed multiculturalisms? Jordi Halfman, who has joined me in writing this presentation, and has done more extensive fieldwork on street-soccer, reminds me of heterotopian possibilities. It is time that the other I in this I& I speaks/writes.

3. Another I that is (not) I/eye

This is the other I, who like Francio Guadeloupe did research into the conviviality lived by those we associate with the street and street-soccer. I learned the basics from Edje and Leny after which I went out onto the street. As I entered the game, I was a rookie, a newcomer unable to talk the talk or move appropriately. I needed to spent time, to play, in order to become attuned to the ball; to its ways of relating and to the myths of conviviality that erupt when we start to play.

The tale I will tell here today is my story of becoming street-able and the story of the meaning this word street-ability has attained as I learned to play. It is a response to the voices of the street, in which I recount the unmaking of a particular 'I'. It is the story of becoming skilled, as another 'I' in the multiple construction of I&I. This myth begins with the observing anthropologist, the distancing and distant I/eye, the visually amputated I/eye walking the earth.

Anthropology's newest romantic, Tim Ingold (2011, 2007), echoing Merleau-Ponty (1970) with a difference, would probably describe that I/eye as a visual becoming, as an I/eye who is used to look and thereby distances herself from the world. This I/eye walking the streets of Amsterdam encounters young children. They are five small boys, running and shouting at one another, as they kick the ball around. They all have different shades of dark hair and matching almond skin. They wear rugged jeans, old sneakers, and the thick jackets with fur lined hoodies that are commonly worn by people who have migrated here from Morocco. Is what I/eye see a trace of them being partially Dutch and partially Moroccan? (As in Peters en de Haan 2011, Van der Pijl et al 2009).

The myth-fact of cultural differences enters my mind. The myth of state managed multiculturalism shapes our togetherness as primarily divided in different cultures with particular features, living next to but separate from one another. I hear this myth and should know better. Clearly these words of Ingold (2003: 387) echo in my ear "[c]ulture, as a body of context-independent, traditionally transmitted knowledge, encoded in words or other symbolic media, can exist nowhere except in the mind of the anthropological observer. It is derived by abstraction from observed behavior." Odd abstraction I am performing here. I have only to recollect a little bit to know that these clothing styles are typical for youngsters of all so-called ethnic types. And to remember that appearances tend to trick the most well-trained I/eye.

Nevertheless I/eye have the ability to know and not to know. And as I/eye recollect I/eye can still proceed with the stereotype. This term 'stereotype' derives from that odd machine invented in the 18th century that produced seemingly identical images. Dead images. Abstracted images. The observing I/eye today does that same operation. Could it be that the observing I/eye, too has become a stereotype? Montaigne long ago argued that the person who stereotypes shows to the world his or her self-alienation forgetting that to be human is to be movement (quoted in Fumaroli 1997). S/he is therefore unable to appreciate Baudrillard's provocation that 'I' is an Other (2007; 2005).

4. A stereotypical street image

The five youngsters I observed playing with a ball, the youngsters that made me recollect the stereotype, were showing particular skills on the day that I recollect most vibrantly. Because of the enduring winter cold, the municipality of Amsterdam had turned the soccer square on the KarelDoormanplein into an ice-ring. The boys thus needed to play otherwise; sliding instead of running, spreading their arms slightly, pulling in their heads. The game is altered by the weather-world and new arrivals who are attracted to the square.

As I step onto the converted soccer field, careful not to fall, I smile at a cheerful, pink skinned woman. She is in her mid-thirties and she is here with her young son, who is walking and talking but can't be much older than two. The mother is wearing white ice skates that remind me of the many cold hours I spent gliding when I was younger. She tells me: "Ik dacht, ik ga hier even oefenen want ik heb al zo lang niet meer op schaatsen gestaan. Hier is ertienminstenietzoveelpubliek!" ["I thought I should practice a little bit here. I have not been on skates for such a long time. At least there aren't so many people watching me here."] She makes a pirouette and giggles "het gaat best goed he!?" ["I'm doing pretty well right?!"] While mom skates, her son is looking at the boys on the square. He seems to be interested in the ball only and even though his mom tries to encourage him to put on the skates, he refuses. The little boy reminds me of Edje, little Ed, the street legend, who played the ball no matter the expectations or circumstances. I will name the smaller echo of the legend after him; little Edje.

As little Edje voices his will to play with the ball, his mom refuses to give up on him ice-skating: "Kijk, mama is aan het schaatsen. Ik heb voor jou ook schaatsen mee. Wil je het niet proberen?" ["Look, mommy is ice-skating. I have brought skates for you as well, don't you want to try?"] Little Edje ignores his mom however and runs towards the boys who are playing with the ball. But the young boy is unfamiliar with the icy underground and does not yet know how to run and play on it. He slips. The boys who were playing leave their game for a moment and come over to help him up. As little Edje returns to his feet, he reaches for the ball, ready to play again.

Mom has made up her mind though. If little Edje won't try ice-skating, he will have to leave the ice. While Edje's face turns to thunder his mother helps him off the field and into the snow between the street-soccer field and the community centre. A gentleman in his twenties walks from the community centre towards the boy and kicks a ball at him: "Kijk, de bal, schop maar!" ["Look, the ball, kick it!"] Little Edje cheers up and plays, but the older man

is soon distracted by his cell phone and forgets the ball. Little Edje's attention thus quickly returns to the boys on the ice. He ignores his mother, gets onto the ice and calls out the boys again: "naarmijschieten!" ["Kick to me!"] He laughs and plays and, even though it seems unlikely for his age and inconsistent with the expectation I/eye gathered from his looks, he becomes part of the game of street-soccer.

Little Edje does not fit the stereotype that the I/eye had created. Little Edje seems to be the vice versa of Shani Davis. This atypical ice-skating hero has the looks and guts of Francio Guadeloupe's Frazier. When Davis won the kings number (speed skating 1500 meters) as the first Afro-American he became a legend. Like Shani Davis, little Edje troubles the stereotypical expectations.

My 'one trick mind' (Harris in Camboni 2004: 25) explains what I/eye see, based upon expectations informed by the stories that touch/inform us from the government, media and (pseudo) academia. The stereotype that I/eye produce of the game on the square fits smoothly with the often depicted image of the street. The presence of migrant children playing ball, their older brothers racing their scooters, and their mothers wearing headscarves is as expected (for me). Just like the presence of little Edje, and myself, might be a surprise (for me, but of course I attribute this 'for me' as for them. This is the magical work of self-alienation, where I can read the mind of others without having to ask them!).

The lady on ice-skates, little Edje and I/eye myself look less street-able than the (assumingly) migrant kids and (assumingly) Muslim women around here. 'Assumingly'. What a wonderful word and reminder. Just like the 'for me'. Both insertions allude to the I/eye that begins to doubt; that puts itself under erasure as it is challenged by what Harris has called 'the stranger in ourselves' (in Camboni 2004: 14)). This stranger, this other I in I&I recognizes the partiality of identities. The stranger's voice, partially rational cognition partially intuition, touches me in the sense that I/eye as I/eye re-read my notebook and return to different squares, realize that in *some* instances I/eye did hear traces of the stereotypes. But in many instances I/eye did not.

5. Becoming street-able

As I spend time on the street and reflected on the notes in my diary I am becoming street-able. The stranger's voice speaking through me invites me to investigate the word as it might be a gem among debris. Street-ability recalls Gilroy's anti-anti-essentialism (in Scannell 2009). This position is one that claims that you can become something by doing it. So in doing essentiality, never a given that some people have and others don't, this essentiality emerges. The term 'street-able' works in a similar fashion. One has to learn street-ability. Visual markers of ethnicity do not automatically translate into having street-ability and credibility.

What is considered street-able is dependent on the players involved and the game that evolves. It is reworked in each story in and about the game. On the ice square, Little Edje by no means looked street-able. He did however hear the call of the ball. Little Edje was learning the ways of the ball by playing with bigger and smaller Edjes, Orries and Alis. Players who themselves are all in different stages of growth. Just like me. We were becoming skilled.

As I played the game, it was changing me. My relation to the ball, to other players, the sounds around the field, the grandmother on her balcony, all were changing my becoming. And as those places changed, through weather conditions, angry neighbors, newcomers, the bystanders and the clever ideas of the municipality, I adapted. But the places we played at, were also becoming street-able because of our activity there. Mohammed, another street-soccer player in league with Edje and Orry tells me about a good street-soccer square:

It has to do with the ambiance, not much with the square itself. It can be a square of ten by ten meters, but if we all decide to go there, then that is the street-soccer square. Everyone will know; this one is popular. Some other squares are really beautiful, but no one wants to go there.

The proper street-soccer square is not some existing place, but becomes street-able, because of peoples' movement. This relation between player, play and place is echoed in Edjes words:

It didn't matter if all the tiles were crooked, you know, players would break their neck, but that was where we wanted to play. You were in between the high flats

and the people were watching us from their balconies the whole night. It felt as if you were in your own stadium.

Have these boys read Tim Ingold's work on lines and movement? (2007; 2011) They sound as an echo of his ideas. Ingold claims that in movement we inscribe place by practice. Space thus becomes a specific place because of people's activities there. The lines we inscribe while moving are both part of the creation of place and of our own becoming. Our lines meet and cross but never merge. This does not mean we cannot connect. I&I exist as individually experiencing and connected social beings, living with many others in 'an on-going polyphonic composition of multiple lines in counterpoint' (Ingold 2011: 325).

In an ungraspable entanglement the space shapes the different lines of becoming as the game makes and unmakes the players and play. This casts doubt upon the common academic tendency to *order*. This order needs a division between the world and the one who can oversee and thereby creates order out of that world. But as a player I become inside the game. The question thus becomes how I can relate both *within* and *apart from* the world.

6. My common myth

The way I make sense of the relation between myself and the world depends on the way I tune in. Making sense, in academia however implies that thought mediates the relation. My one trick mind disentangles. It thinks order, names, labels and hierarchy. This particular modus operandi seems shaped by an inherited history of science. This modern and realist inheritance is one in which I continuously *look for order*.

This inheritance is not just a story I hear, but, as Foucault reminded us, it is also the order that constructs the way I am able to think (1966, 2003). It is the myth of scientific wo/man who replaced the Christian believer. This Christian wo/man believed in things s/he could not see and listened to a God that remained invisible. Since the acclaimed death of religion and the rise of scientism, we now claim that what we see is what we believe. From engaged listeners and speakers, we turned into silent scanners of written words (Schmidt 2005). This birth of scientism went along with the rise of literacy enabling the clever minds that started

to understand and describe the world, to put those clever thoughts on paper and share them with an ever increasing crowd (Ong 2012).

These clever minds were dependent on the body and the senses, but they were also disconnected from their bodies. The knowledge of the mind, as a separate entity, could thus gain a particular status. The skills learned through training and repetition, non-sharable in words on paper, diminished in importance. The educated man of science thus created a place for himself apart from the general folk. And also apart from nature. The academic positioned himself as the onlooker; the one who can oversee and master the world. S/he is able to study other human beings, beings who thus become objects and part of the world of nature.

The clever academics subdivide the world of human beings, mammals and flowers, towards the smallest atoms and infinitely smaller, all in the name of finding the ultimate Truth. Others however started to doubt the ways in which these realists framed the relation between the world and the human being. These clever minds, in an idealist or Kantian tradition, introduced another framework in order to open up the world in new ways. Their framework construes reality as dependent upon the mind of the human being that observes it. Outside of the idealist's own sense making, nothing can be known. The world thus only exists as it is experienced by a human being.

Both idealism and realism tell a myth of the construction of 'I' and the way I can relate to a world that is separate from me. They both align with the Western paradigm that shapes the mind, the sensual body and the world around us, as separate things. All forms are separate, whole and processed. Moreover, they look for truth and tell processed stories of which the mythical nature is denied. These grand theories trick me into believing that there is an *explanation*, that there is a way to *understand* the world. It makes me believe that the better I look, sense or think, the closer I come to the real Truth. This is what Baudrillard (2012) has called the 'perfect crime'. It is the fatal strategy that I&I, based upon the voices of the street-soccer players, wish to undo.

7. Listening as embracing

To inhabit the multiplicity of cultural borders, historical temporalities and hybrid identities calls for a state of knowledge, an ethics of intellect, an aperture in politics, able to acknowledge more than itself. . . . In the dispersal of a single History, whose omniscient word legislates the world, I begin to hear composite voices crossing and disturbing the path and patterns of the once seemingly ineluctable onrush of “progress”. In the movement from concentrated sight to dispersed sound, from the “neutral” gaze to the interference of hearing, from the discriminating eye to the incidental ear, I abandon a fixed (ad)vantage for a mobile and exposed politics of listening—for a “truth” that is always becoming. (Ian Chambers, quoted in Khochhar Lindgren 2006: 426)

As the world of ball draws me in and makes me player, that player increasingly unworks the anthropological I/eye whose mind so easily plays the trick of the visually based separation. Like Ian Chambers in the words above, I wish to opt for a politics of listening. Our shared language sounds the strength of the visual. We *see*, *reflect* upon or *picture* something. In a (still panoramic) description Ong has recounted a history of the visual that has triumphed over the listening human (Ong 2012, see also Corbin in Schmidt 2005). According to Ong, this change has altered the way we engage with the world nowadays. However, as Chambers reminds me, dispersed stories can challenge this single History.

The reign of the eye is both there and not there when I become player. Players listen. The sounds of sneakers on gravel, the ball bouncing off metal wire, the cheers of the audience, these are essential aspects of the streets. These sounds however cannot so easily be shared and interpreted by a crowd. These sounds, (like words, but we tend to forget this) have multiple meanings. As I become sensible for sounds, I recognise again their tremendous qualities.

As I start to listen to the world, the experienced reality is different. Sound is always related to a particular clash, to a vibration created in movement which is only here for an instance. Sound is only movement which creates sound, which is infinite relation. For its becoming sound is always depended upon the way it relates to everything around it, troubling the distinction between the one who listens en the one who is listened to, between the world and ‘I’ within it. Its untraceable movement in dispersed directions troubles linearity and related assumptions of progress – some of the principal guidelines for a realistic approach.

Sound is entanglement and when we start to listen to the outer world, the lies we hear mingle with the voice of the stranger within.

These combined voices trouble listening as common sense listening. Listening within the world cannot be the other of looking. In likeness of the work of Kochhar-Lindgren (2006), who studied listening bodies in deaf theatre, the street-able listener recognises its inclusive and overflowing capacities. It transforms the body into a sensorial extension, occupying a space that Kochhar-Lindgren called the third ear (ibid.). Listening in this sense draws in the entire body, resembling listening-as-embracing, an ethics that philosopher Martin Buber professed (1967, 1988, 2002). For Buber listening is a way of relating to another that dissolves all distinction between subject and object. This embracing is thus not a knowing about the other. All that can be known of one another is everything.

Listening thus becomes a metaphor for a way of being in the world that I was guided into by listening with my ears. It must be the prerequisite for what Francio Guadeloupe before has called musicking. This listening constructs me and the lifeworld around me in ways that do not last and that cannot be *understood* in any way.

But I do try! I do aim at writing the world that I hear, the world that touches me. To write a new framework that is not realist or idealist, and thus not aims at writing a grand theory of truth. In order to be faithful to the voices that touch me on the street, I choose to write partial voices of becoming, drawing on Henry David Thoreau's game of poetic realism that plays with two distinguishable but entangled dimensions of being human (in Tauber 2009). In this redescription, I am unprocessed experience, without beginning or end, without form, without boundaries. Just like the ball is movement and sound all in one. And at moments, I start processing and take on a form that is *also* me. This form erupts when unprocessed experience, noise among noise, meets and collides. In that collision it is still unknown and uncommon. But after, when processing of the eruptions starts an 'I' is born. The wild, unprocessed experience, the noise and silence that are not either of these things, thus speaks to all else that is neither silent nor noise. And conform its own (non)rules, out of that, I become. And I try to make sense, giving voice to yet another lie.

My 'being human' is thus 'being unprocessed experience' that in non-form shapes in multiple relations, including the relation to the 'I' that was/is form. The 'I' that I was thus speaks also to the 'I' that I become, but is not the 'I' that I become. I continuously change into other. This 'other' that the unknown of the unprocessed entanglement is (not), demands a response, and as the response is shaped, I take on something of that other. Being/becoming human in this tale thus implies continuous responding to and giving voice to what cannot be given voice to. It implies becoming other.

In this rediscovery of I as other that echoes Thoreau's making of the self-positing-I (ibid.), there is thus the unprocessed and there is 'me', and together these interrelated processes make up my becomingness. This implies that there is thus no permanent distinction between the silence-which-is-noise-as-silence, the erupting 'I' and everything else. It implies that what 'is', is whole. Only when the flow of 'what is' is interrupted and processed, it becomes me, 'Jordi Halfman'. I then move, make choices, love and regret based upon an experience of this body as my body. I have an investment in this particular bodily form, which is Jordi Halfman. It is 'me'.

In this poetic rendition of 'me' in the world, I am thus like sound, materialising and moving away continuously. I as sound escape reality as I am, becoming anew through 'other' in related movement, just like sound.

8. Our common lie?

As they play ball, Edje and little Edje, like Hassan and Khalid, give voice to different tales of the street. They speak the stereotypical lies of state managed multiculturalism and the sweeter ones that unwork this myth. Becoming as part of this youthnicity that unworks itself, I/eye also become aware of, and challenged the assumptions and sensorial tendencies related to common-sense tribalism and the fatal strategy (of both realism and idealism) in which we aim to construct an all-compassing Truth.

Every I who contributed to this presentation, shapes their unique 'I' through each spoken word, each description of their own becoming in the world: their origin. 'I' is constructed out of the telling of yet another lie. Like the story of scientific wo/man and the exploration of the senses, I&I construct new myths. Sweet ones. Heroic, scary, sad and shared ones. My storytelling, based upon listening, distinguishes me from you, from Edje, Hassan and from the ball. The story I tell voices my singularity as it express my unique origin in this world.

Each story thus gives voice to the birth of another I. But our stories are also fundamentally social. They are shared, listened to, and take on particular features from our brothers' and sisters' stories. When we are no longer heard and responded to, we loose our humanity. I believe our stories resemble a ball. Anyone who has been around a ball, whether on a square

or on a field, knows how the ball draws one in, asks us to respond. Do you know how hard it is to resist the temptation to give that ball a kick? No matter where you have arrived from or where you will travel to, no matter what particular lie you (un)work, when you play, you respond and become part of our shared humanity. This is the same for our stories: when we respond to one another, we become as part of our shared humanity.

Each I thus listens and responds. I&I respond to each other and invite you as reader, listener, to do the same, thus recognising our shared response-ability. By responding we live together and share a game, and we become part of something resembling a 'we'. A 'we'? Did we not claim.... Yes I&I did. And now I speak of 'we'.

The youthnicity that emerges and unworks itself on the street lives a conviviality of 'we', of togetherness. This 'we' however differs from any 'we' of globalisation in which we all become alike. Nor does this 'we' present any fragment of society from which anyone could mystically claim a stable identity, be it ethnic, national or religious. This 'we' echoes what Jean Luc Nancy (2000) called 'being-singular-plural'. This 'we' is based upon a practice that dis-identifies itself from anything that could represent itself as subject (ibid: 71).

This 'we' is not represented in this lie that is the origin of an I. This 'we' however, is the fundament of my practice and ethos. It echoes the conviviality of the street and is expressed in our communication with one another: by our listening and responding, by the handshakes on the side of the square, the shouts across the field, the kicking back of the ball. By the sharing of a story. All this communication expresses our being-in-common as a mutual response-ability for one another. Therefore I&I invite you to respond, giving voice to your sweetest lies that expresses our shared humanity.

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