

# Time, non-representational theory and the “performative turn” – towards a new methodology in qualitative social research

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**Abstract:** Because of their constitution, the usage of performative techniques in qualitative social research must deal with a paradox. Acting as performance takes place in the present and it takes place just once. One result of this is that every representation of a performance be it as text, discussion or film refers to the past. Performative social research solves this paradox by conceptualising performance as a kind of liminale phase of a ritual. Our thesis is that by simple outsourcing the problem of present in the theory of ritual, performative techniques commit the logical mistake of *genetic fallacy*, i.e. the mistake of forgetting that the primary value or meaning of an event has no necessary connections with its genesis in history. Therefore, a new methodology for qualitative social research after the performative turn requires a theoretical position which does not fall back to a position of causality as the temporal consequence of a cause and effect, as maintained by ritual theory. In this essay we suggest a ‘non-representational theory’ for this venture, and point out how a methodology for qualitative research could be constituted ‘after’ the performative turn.

**Keywords:** *performance theory, non-representational theory, time, ritual, methodology*

## 1. Introduction

If “all the world’s a stage and all the men and women merely players” (SHAKESPEARE 1880), then social research has a lot to discuss with performance studies. Yet, social life is neither mere comedy nor drama. Societies are not (solely) to be understood as theatre stages with various casts, characters, and narratives. Nevertheless, in the last decade or so social research has worked a great deal with metaphors of performance and methodologies of the ‘performative turn’. In this paper we scrutinise the fruitfulness and necessity of a performative methodology in social research from a very specific perspective – non-representational theory. We examine the differences in concepts of time in performance theory and social theory suggesting that performative social science suffers from a methodological misunderstanding due to concepts of ritual time.

The ‘performative turn’ in qualitative social research focuses on the exercise of verbal, bodily and multi-modal performances of artistic or social practices, e.g. art, drama etc. and therefore on the exercise of singular and temporary events. The ‘performative turn’ in the methodology of qualitative social research draws on a shift from the paradigm of ‘representation’ to techniques of art/performance. A performance takes place as a staging in front of an audience or with an audience at a particular time. For a short time a performance abolishes the order of the normal course of life and imparts new insights to the audience. The basic precondition for a performance is a specific ‘framing’. An audience must be there, either physically or virtually, and the performance needs a constitutive meaning for this special audience. Thus, frequent collocations of performance are dance, arts or play. The concurrence of physical presence and representation causes an extreme reference to the present in the context of performance. Therefore, performative techniques like acting, dancing, painting, photography, music and video are an art in the present of production. They are “one-time-only” phenomena (THRIFT 2000, p. 237). Performance as ‘meaning in motion’ (DESMOND 2003) loses by recording much of what performance is really about. Representations of performances as video, records or films filtering out exactly the entity which make performance unique – the temporal immediacy.

Because of their constitution, the usage of performative techniques in qualitative social research must deal with a paradox. As performance takes place in the present and it takes place just once. One result of this axiom is that every representation of a performance be it as text, discussion or film refers to the past. From a semiotic perspective ‘performance text’ means “every unit of discourse, whether verbal, nonverbal, or mixed, that results from the

coexistence of several codes (and other factors too...) and possesses the constitutive prerequisites of completeness and coherence" (DE MARINIS 1993, p. 47). The main point of scientific research in the context of performance is the transformation of the past of 'research' into present of reception by dint of representations as a way of informing the future. But even as representation - past still remains past. Performative social research solves this paradox by conceptualising performance as a kind of liminal phase of a ritual. According to Victor TURNER (1969) the difference of time in the context of ritual compared to a lineal conception of time lies in the concept of liminalis. In this perspective the liminal phase of a ritual is displaced out of time and constitutes its own "*ritual-time*" (TURNER 1969, p. 94-130).

Our argument in this essay is that by simple outsourcing the problem of present in the theory of ritual by TURNER, performative techniques commit the logical mistake of *genetic fallacy*. Genetic fallacy is the forgetting that the primary value or meaning of an event has no necessary connections with its genesis in history (BRADLEY 1998, p. 72). From the perspective of performative techniques the past determines the present and the present determines the future as to-be present. But this paper argues, against this kind of genetic conception of developmental time, instead it sees events as not causally determined. Every event, performance, ritual etc. must be seen as an autonomic and contingent occurrence with its own conditions and its own time-structure. The meaning of the past for the present, in respect to the event or performance, is not fixed but radically ambiguous. Here, with phenomenological non-representational theory cultural geography offers a theoretical approach since the 1990s, that conceptualizes the problem of the singularity of an event in time (THRIFT 1996). Non-representational theory is concerned with the flow of practices in time, with the 'presentations' produced by acting in the present rather than with the *post-hoc* reconstructions of the event which are studied by many of the social sciences. Non-representational theory attempts to do two related things: firstly, to provide an ontology which takes mundane practices seriously and, secondly, to provide various means of amplifying the creativity of these practices through various performative methods. This article attempts to excavate the methodology of the 'performative turn' in terms of highlighting the consequences of a genetic conception of developmental time for any performative social science and, secondly, we show the possibilities of non-representational theory instead of the methodological limitations of ritual theory.

## 2. Performance

The term performance is not very uncommon in social science. One of the first who used it expressively was Erving GOFFMAN. For him 'performance' refers "to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (GOFFMAN 1969, p.19). First we will be examining the different meanings of performance in this article and show their consequences for our argument on the genetic fallacy. In most basic terms performance can be understood as a "showing of a doing" (GRIMES 2003, p. 35). Such a view allows for ritual, in the arts and theatre to be subsumed under the uniform term 'performance'. The ambiguity of this minimum definition generates much debate around the concept of performance. A valid semantics, which would connect performance in relation to its content more closely, does not exist. According to Richard SCHECHNER performance occurs in various situations which are not always discriminated from each other. Performance occurs in everyday life, like cooking, socializing, or maybe drinking, in the arts, in sports and other entertainments, in technology, in business, in play, in sex and in rituals either sacred or secular (SCHECHNER 2006, p. 31). The semantic confusion becomes evident if one asks the questions, 'what makes a 'performance art' performative?' or only 'what makes the particular performance performative?' The answer to these questions commonly steers in the direction that performance draws on physical presence of humans, whose demonstration of their doing in front or even in the middle of a public is the 'performance'. However, the recognition that our lives are ordered pursuant to repeated and socially sanctioned patterns of behaviour, i.e. norms, leads to the possibility of considering all kinds of human activity as performance (CARLSON 2004, p. 2-3).

A characteristic of performance is that it exceeds borders between different media due to its aesthetic encounter. In contrast to the 'happening', which places the artist or the viewer into an open, not repeatable situation, in order to blur or smear the distinction between life/art, performance draws on a distance between art and everyday life and creates in this way a definable interior space in social reality. Following SCHECHNER, therefore any human expression could be recognized as performance. Beyond that the artistic performance exhibits a meticulously planned dramaturgy and is analytically interfused. This analytic structure is to be arranged for the public in the performance. The Illustration below clarifies this framework of the performance.

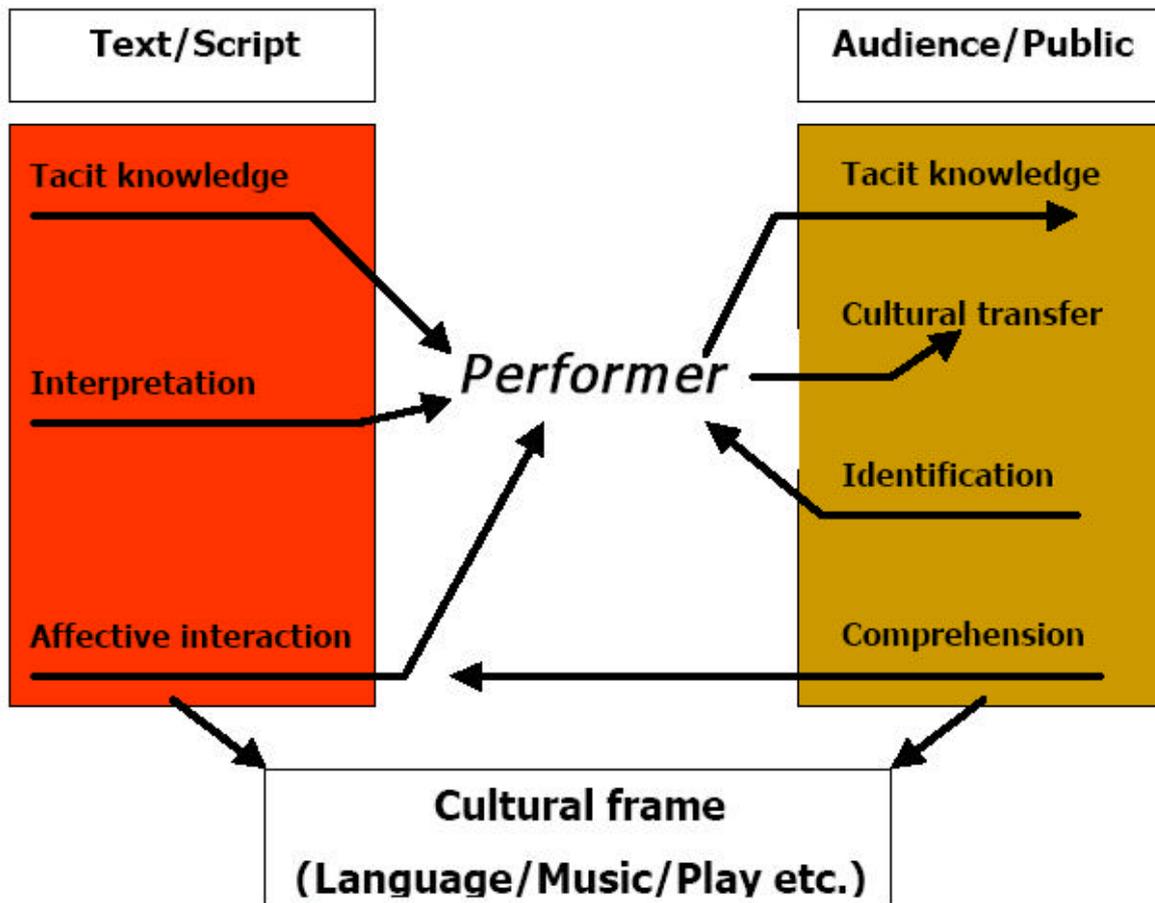


Illustration: Model of performance

Essentially there are three different conceptions of performance which can be differentiated. In its most general sense performance is the doing or showing of a certain ability or skill for example. The theatre in some forms, notably more modernist, falls into this category like other forms of entertainment, for example arts, sports and other (CARLSON 2004, p. 4). A second conception of performance encloses the showing or the conscious presentation of an observable and culturally coded behavior pattern for example. Examples of this form of performance are the 'ritualized' fistfights between male visitors in the bars of the rural Middle West of the USA. Here originally violent and unforeseen fights between bar visitors were normalized into a semi-violent form of semi-theatrical bar-performance. In this case a subliminal script exists, which guarantees, that in these fights, which are produced particularly for the other bar visitors, nobody is seriously hurt and, more important, everyone gains an increase in reputation (LEARY 1976, p. 39). The third conception of performance aims at the general success of an activity in the context of a given standard, which does not even have to be articulated precisely. In this case the task of the evaluation of the success of the performance is given to the audience and does not remain with the performer. Forms of this

kind of performance are, for example, ritualized actions with a collective goal, beyond entertainment and artistic experiment. The *masu sema* ritual (chain prayers) on Fiji is an example of such a performance. In this process the power of ancestors that is regarded to be potentially dangerous is to be dammed by dint of prayers etc. and the power of living persons, who conceive of themselves as powerless, is strengthened (TOMLINSON 2004, p. 6). Another example of this conception of performance is the organized foxhunt with hounds in rural England. The performer transfers the decision about the evaluation of the event, whether the performance is succeeded or not, to the audience, mostly rural and conservative people of the villages who participate by watching the slaughter. They act as audience and participants who immerse themselves in the brouhaha, the disenchantment and sometimes the boredom foxhunting creates (MARVIN 2003). In the context of the performance the meaning given by the audience is thereby not simply due to its framing function as an addressee of the cultural meanings or message/information, but also in the transmission of the responsibility of the success of the performance, i.e. the communication process between performer and audience. The public is an equal partner and sine qua non of the performance (CARLSON 2004, p. 14).

The actor or performer functions as medium of this communication shown above. The performer as a medium translates art into reality, into perceptible and decipherable information. The performer's principal task consists in the transfer of the idea of art, e.g. the play, drama or the installation into a three-dimensional (in the case of the film two-dimensional) form and into time. Thus, in a performance of the first type shown above a performer/actor translates an idealistic, purely mental or, textual script into 'experienceable' reality, which is recognizably, perceptible and noticeable for an audience at the time of the performance (SIMMEL 1968, p. 75).

Despite the 'semantic width' of the performance metaphor, performance theory has entered into sociological theorisation and methodology since the mid 1990s. This is generally described as the 'performative turn'. The first attempts to connect performance theory with social sciences states began in the mid 1970s. Richard SCHECHNER recognized seven fields, which must be on the one hand essential components of each performance; and on the other hand sketches and overlaps ranges of social science and performance in order to connect both fields. SCHECHNER identifies performance in everyday life, the structures of sports, ritual, play and political behaviours, in analyses of different modes of communication, connections between human and animal behaviour patterns, aspects of psychotherapy that emphasize person-to-person interaction, ethnography and prehistory and the construction of unified theories of performance as theories of behaviour (SCHECHNER 1973, p. 3). Performance as an event crosses borders, which distinguish art against everyday life and different scientific categories. As a consequence of these transgressions the social sciences started to think about performative behavior, e.g. like humans 'playing' gender, stressing their designed identity or presenting different self drafts in different situations (SCHECHNER 1998, p. 361).

Parts of the social sciences regard performance theory as a metaphor which has methodological possibilities. Performance as metaphor refers to the evolution of the thesis "life is theatre" to a view of "life as a performance" (THRIFT 2000, p. 225). The metaphor of performance reflects a growing discontent within the traditional social sciences and their understanding of practices as texts or representations of genuinely symbolic concepts. The metaphor is the expression for the reversion from systems of representations to processes of practice and performance. In contrast, notion of performance theory aims rather at actions than at texts, rather at physical habitus than at symbol structures. It aims rather at the active social construction of reality than its representation. For this reason THRIFT recognizes six characteristics of performance to show (THRIFT 2000, p. 225). Performance is an increase of everyday behavior and acting; it is liminal in its internal structure (TURNER 1977, p. 43). As one of the first anthropologists exploring the notion of "performance", TURNER combines his structured model of the ritual with a performance-based structure and extends structuralism. However, he does not succeed in the overcoming of 'structuralistic' thinking although implements for the first time a notion of the performative character of ethnography (TURNER & TURNER 2007). Performance is involved in the construction of unstable times; it is involved in the construction of unstable spaces, spaces of the possibility or "as if spaces" The performance

can be connected with transgression, however it is just as normative. Finally, there is the problem of the illustration of the expression and contents of the performance exists in words and in the writing, not in performing (THRIFT 2000, p. 233-235). Two examples illustrate the broad definition and 'semantic width' of the term performance connected with this last characteristic of the linguistic representations of performance. The Dutch cultural scientist Johan HUIZINGA (1943) understands the work of the historian as a performance, since the researcher is forced to make conceptions of social life, events and entities of the past by himself. This conception is comparable to those of the dramatist, who writes a play. An historical book is thereby a script of a performance of the historian and his conception of history (HUIZINGA 1943, p. 218). Exactly in the same way Michael HATT describes the lynching ritual of the American South in 19th century as a performance with a fixed script, which translated a racist ideology into an absolute rejection of the constitutional rights of African Americans and into the negation of black subjectivity (HATT 1999, p. 80).

This semantic scope and the process-character of performance theory has been interesting for the social sciences since the "complexity turn" (URRY 2005), because it recognises the social and physical complexity of the present and the need for a corresponding methodology for social research. The 'complexity turn' is a reaction to the general observation in the social sciences that processes cannot be explained by simple cause/effect mechanisms. Therefore, the social sciences are compelled to develop new methods in order to deal successfully and productively with the complexity of the present time. For this reason LAW & URRY (2004) demand the elaboration of '*messy methods*' in the social sciences as a methodical evolution. Classic methods of the social science are not adapted to the conditions of the present society, since they are performative, i.e. they even have effects of their own. These methods make distinctions, and they help entities to an existence, which just exist due to the research process (LAW & URRY 2004, pp. 390-393).

Qualitative social research has been so far methodologically based on the rejection of the singularity of an event and aimed instead to gain a broader understanding of the social world. But, if qualitative social research methods focus on clarity and precision and minimizing uncertainty they become restrictive. The dictum of precision/security in the generation of representations of social reality, we argue, should be replaced by a moment of contingency (NASSEHI & SAAKE 2002), i.e. through acknowledging of the complexity of the social world, which is multi-layered and cannot be illustrated by representations precisely and through the use of art-informed approaches. Categorizations and unanimity must yield to an understanding of openness, reflexivity and recursiveness during the research process, in order to provide qualitative research that 'approximates' the complexity of social reality (DAVIS & DWYER 2007, p. 258). Qualitative methodology, therefore, requires a change of perspective which can draw on the idea of performance to meet these requirements of complexity. Participative and open methods of performance, such as theatre, dance and pantomime should be favoured over traditional methods of the generation of representations like the interview, group discussions or ethnography, as the centre of the method spectrum.

### **3. Time**

The 'performative turn' in the methodology of qualitative social research, the turn from the paradigm of 'representation' to techniques of art/performance, poses the problem of 'synchronisation', i.e. past and future co-ordinated with application of a chronometric time measure (LUHMANN 1993). A performance is carried out itself only once and in the present. All recording are therefore inevitably representations. However, the principles of methodology aim at a transfer of knowledge. Methodological procedures transport research 'events' into a storage medium, e.g. the transmission of the knowledge of a person given in an interview in text. Only the stored information, i.e. the representation, is evaluated and afterwards methodically controlled. More recent work in the social science criticizes this paradigm of representation in scientific data analysis (for example THRIFT 2000; CRANG 2003). The focus on the illustration or representation of social reality ignores reference to objects, artefacts or

instruments in analysis, i.e. the material aspect of the environment. This tapering causes a possible distortion, since the material environment can of cause exert influence on the social environment of the participants and their acting (NERSESSIAN & OSBECK 2006, p. 141).

The antonym of the term representation - "intervention" - may help to develop a possible alternative which is able to include the material aspects of social life here. A conceivable method must intervene, by an experiment or a performance, while according to 'traditional' 'representational' methodology research only 'reflects' or illustrates what is 'there'. A reactive method only illustrates (RHEINBERGER 2001, p. 57). A necessary intervention is not achieved through a simple documentation of the performance, as in video films or in photography and audio recordings, performance would lose its character and its physicality - during recording - it loses in this way its immediacy.

The problem of synchronisation in the context of the performative turn becomes clearer in regard to the time-theory of the German sociologist Niklas LUHMANN. According to LUHMANN, evolution was under the given conditions on earth only able to build systems, e.g. plants, performer, sociologist, technology, nation states, animals, enterprises etc., which can treat their environment as a simultaneous environment. All operations of systems are only perceptible at the same time. All systems can operate only at the same time. From the point of view of one system no other system is able to act in the future. It is this absolute simultaneity of all terrestrial systems that creates terms as uncertainty, risk, fraud or refinement (LUHMANN 1993, p. 99). Niklas LUHMANN's philosophical argument describes exactly the paradox of performance theory, which occurs when a performance is understood to be more than 'pure' performance. Performance takes place just once and is not reproducible. Through recording and representation it loses its immediacy and the information which is linked to it. Conventional qualitative research methods analyse the present only via representations. In this way the past is linked to the future by a storage of representations in the present which can be understand as the unit of the difference before/afterwards, i.e. the current moment, and by applying these representations to the future. Thus, qualitative research has predictive statements or forecasts on collective acting or the use of technology etc. However, these kind of "tactics" (DE CERTEAU 1988, p. 23) of qualitative research fail in the case of performance, since physical presence and immediacy cannot be stored (in time) directly as representations, i.e. extend into the future, without losing 'immediacy'.

In performance theory two theoretical positions have addressed the problem of synchronisation. Until around 1990 the discussion of time in performance theory was based in ritual theory or in notions of social interaction, i.e. in the theory of the performativity of language (CARLSON 2004, p. 74). Ritual theory presupposes as given that each human culture knows linear and cyclic time conceptions. It interprets these as everyday and sacred time. The linear time is the time of everyday acting. Linear time remains relatively the same in spite of the variety of human cultures. In contrast, cyclic time terms have their place in sacred and ritual communication. Fundamental differences between time concepts of human cultures exist only here (BLOCH 1977). The function of ritual, today, is to establish within society a second level of understanding time separate from dominant, rational, calculative time - in the present society, everyday practice is subordinated to a rational understanding of time. Ritual implements a new sense and a new view of time detached from this abstract time (BRADLEY 1991, p. 209-211). A function of the ritual is the extension of the time structures of a society. Ritual time was never allowed to become 'past' in the modern understanding of the term, as historically superseded by the present, i.e. the unit of the difference before/afterwards (LOY 2001).

Because of this function of ritual as extending social time structures, performance theory could draw on the human experience and was not dependent upon the abstract logic of modern time. The ritual logic of time finds its empirical correspondence in symbolic and practical connections between time classifications of a given society and social stratification. Different conceptions of time in a society legitimize social inequalities. In traditional societies with traditional models of time computation a strong association of points of time of reference and economic activities can be observed. The time conception of these societies corresponds with special and

essential economic actions such as harvest, seed, hunt or fishing. The time conception of the rituals does not follow this economically oriented position, but functions independently of this framework. Thus, the participants of the ritual stand out of the social structure and position themselves as an elite (BURMAN 1981, p. 257). As outlined before all operations of systems can only be perceived at the same time. According to Maurice BLOCH in the context of ritual however the past operates in the present through a semantic relation. Semantics functions as a memory, which transfers meaning from the past into the present. Presence as the unit of the difference before/after is thereby only explainable through a synchronic view of the past. Therefore this semantic relation is causal for the fact that the past is always subject in the present (BLOCH 1977, p. 279). But in spite of this semantic relation one problem in this time-model still remains and is a reason for abandoning ritual time concepts in performance theory. Even in ritual theory diachronic time remains subordinated to the synchronic time, i.e. diachronic time as a historical development is only understandable as a comparison of earlier and later synchronous times (BARNES 1971, p. 546).

Performance theory has turned to the new concept of performativity which is derived from linguistics (CARLSON 2004, p. 74). According to AUSTIN (1962) performativity means the fact, that a linguistic expression does not simply take place, but carries out an action at the same time. For example the sentence "I declare you man and wife" is performative, because the goal is not in the sound sequence, but the action of marriage. Thus according to AUSTIN performative verbs can be isolated, which connect acting and speaking, e.g. swearing, promise etc. (CARLSON 2004, p. 61). Performativity in this view can be generally defined as the fact that signs do not simply describe the world; this designates its referential dimension, but changes it at the same time (WINKLER 2004, p. 19). An example of the performativity of the sign is the attempt to introduce normative behaviour standards on pollution in rural areas in England with the help of brochures, which give exact instructions for the 'correct' behaviour in the rural area. The brochures used the performativity of the linguistic expression and actually led to a reduction of the pollution in certain areas (MERRIMAN 2005). However, this theoretical construction of performativity is criticized particularly from sociology. Pierre BOURDIEU, for example, sees the reason for acting through language is not hidden in the language itself, but in the power of the speaker. The key to an understanding of the effectiveness of language is in the discourse itself, in the linguistic 'substance' of language. For the sociologist BOURDIEU power and authority in language are always derived from the social. It is exactly the power of the speaker. Language can only manifest, represent and symbolize this authority. Therefore the social context is central for any performativity of language (BOURDIEU 2005, p. 80-82).

Our thesis is that both basic theoretical positions of performance theory, i.e. ritual theory and the concept of performativity, do not escape the problem of genetic fallacy, i.e. "forgetting that the primary value or meaning of an event has no necessary connection with its genesis in history or its causal explanation" (BRADLEY 1998, p. 72) and they are, thereby, not suitable as bases for the elaboration of a methodology of performative social research. Both theoretical positions, ritual theory taken from social anthropology and the theory of the performativity of language, originating from linguistics, draws on causality, i.e. on a time distance, in which the cause is given before the effect (LUHMANN 1993, p. 102). In the case of performance studies, in our view, this means that a performance is analyzed above all temporally. Rather than performance being asked to take account of its endogenous chronology, instead an analysis of the meaning of events must be carried out in the present. In employing 'performance' in qualitative research, it is not the analysis of the sequences of the performance events in its temporal succession that is interesting, but the meaning of the performance in a certain social context. A qualitative social research which draws on performance must, henceforth, turn to the position of 'radical empiricism', which disposes the artificial border between observers and the observed. Radical empiricism tries to examine the meanings and experiences from actions, in which the observer and the observed participate. Radical empiricism opens qualitative social research to immediacy, activity, ambiguity, in other words to the 'holism' of performance theory (CARLSON 2004, p. 209). A new methodology for qualitative social research after the 'performative turn' requires a theoretical position which does not fall back to causality as the temporal consequence of a cause and effect, as maintained by ritual theory and the linguistics

influenced term of 'performativity'. An enriched methodology must draw on the immediacy of an event in the present, i.e. in the unit of the difference before/after. In the final section we suggest a 'non-representational theory' for this venture, and point out how a methodology for qualitative research could be constituted 'after' the performative turn.

#### **4. Non-representationalism**

Non representational theory draws its inspiration from British cultural aesthetics. The disorienting optical art of the 1960s for example the paintings of Bridget RILEY, Jesus Raphael SOTO, and Victor VASARELY, which used a framework of purely geometric forms as the basis for its optical effects for the spectator, represents a form of experimentation, from which non-representational theory and its radical revisionism draw their inspiration. Non-representational theory is a theory of practices and focuses on repetitive ways of physical expression like gestures or other styles as transmissions of information and learned transfers of knowledge. According to non-representational theory performance is already immanent in actions and events (LORIMER 2007, p. 90-92). Performance theory has recognized this theoretical conception and registered that phenomenology and non-representational theory uncovered a blind spot in its own theoretical approach. The important contribution of non-representational theory to performance theory lies in that it directs attention to the fact that theatre and other forms of performance treat everyday and frequently observed objects, situations, texts and persons as rare raw material, as "the real in its most real forms" (CARLSON 2004, p. 49). Thereby, non-representational theory points towards a way of overcoming the assumption of representation in performance theory, in which words are proof for cognitive activities, which always develop only after the event of the performance. In that context 'words' can be understood as the 'spoken words' of a discussion or the 'written words' of documents of the research context – including the analysis, interpretation, research and reception of the whole research process. The words try to catch up with the event. The words try to shorten the distance symbolically, but nevertheless they always remain 'after-words'. Instead phenomenological non-representational theory focuses on performance practices such as dance, interaction, theatre, as the actualization of acquired knowledge – performance as used within research, gaining 'knowledge' (including the interaction between, the blurring of, the researcher and 'respondent' (LAURIER & PHILO 2006, p. 196). Thus, it moves a step away from techniques of reproduction, documentation and representation and back to "the real in its most real forms" (CARLSON 2004, p. 49).

If one summarizes the differences of representation and non-representational theory concisely, it can be seen that representation theory insists on the epistemological point of view that a direct access to ontology as being in the world is impossible. Non-representational theory designates the exact anti-thesis. It is the ontological point of view that experience precedes thinking and thus precedes all representing (HELBRECHT 2004, p. 194). Non-representational theory is interested in the flows of practices in time, in the presentations, which result from acting at the moment and not in post hoc reconstructions of further actions. These kinds of post hoc reconstructions are the predominant part of the social and philosophical sciences. In this context non-representational theory pursues essentially two goals. On the one hand it tries to sketch an ontology, which takes everyday practices seriously as incorporating culture. On the other hand it tries to make different means available to reinforce the creativity of these practices of different performative methods (THRIFT 1999a). It is thereby a theory of practice(s). By this incorporation of a methodology into the theory of non-representational it attains meaning. Non-representational theory focuses on ways in which the subjects 'know' something of the world in the form of intuitive understanding, without 'knowing' it in the scientific sense of the term. It aims thereby at tacit knowledge as incorporated knowledge of a subject (POLANYI 1966).

Non-representational theory sensitizes us to processes which operate previous to consciousness and can be expressed in habitual actions e.g. dance. These processes enter social reality only later though reflection. Non-representational theory insists thereby on the

necessity of refusing to give representations a primary epistemological status, by which knowledge becomes only 'extracted' post hoc from reality. Performance as a resource on physical presence and immediacy is in this sense a non-representational process (McCORMACK 2005, pp. 121-122). Thus, at the same time, the paradigm shift for the methodology becomes clear. Non-representational theory is a methodology of the performance, since it is not like past methodologies of qualitative researching as a means to study the social reality but rather a request for the social science to engage itself within the social world. For example, in the frequent case of interviewing, non-representational theory is not interested in the representations which are produced, i.e. the transcript, but rather in the interaction process of interviewing itself. It postulates thereby a break with the dictation of the production of representations. A fruitful example for a non-representational approach is shown by studying outdoor management training. With the outdoor management training here, HINCHLIFFE (2000) gives the example of the employment of performance as method in the context non-representational theory as methodology. The relationship between the normal tasks of the managers and contents of the outdoor training is non-representational, i.e. the exercises to be implemented during the training stand in no relationship with the problems on the job. The performance of the training forces the manager to find a new style of learning, due to the fact that in an experimental situation a completely artificial problem is generated, e.g. a roping at a cliff. This situation of performance prevented the appeal to well-known and learned representations of knowledge, as it is made in everyday work situations, and produces an experimental experience (HINCHLIFFE 2000, p. 587). In these situations the habitus of the subjects reveals itself, due to the forced recourse to the incorporate knowledge, i.e. the tacit dimension of the subjects skills. Performance serves here as elicitation of the habitual dispositions.

A methodology on the basis of the non-representational theory aims to give a non-intentional view of social reality and tries to develop a manual approach, which is practical and not cognitive. THRIFT (1997, p. 126) observes the danger of an overemphasis on the intellectual separation of the researcher. A qualitative social research based on a methodology of non-representational theory, using performance as method, avoids this problem of overemphasis due to the fact that it permits new formulations of the nature of knowledge. Non-representational theory conceives the entire research process as a performance (LATHAM 2003, p. 1993) and extends the generation of knowledge beyond 'pure' data acquisition and evaluation. Its methodology blurs the separation of scientific observer and observed by a radical empiricism. Today this artificial and contingent border is obsolete due to the complexity, and thus, unpredictability of social reality (THRIFT 1999b). In conceiving of the entire research process as performance, as the example of the outdoor management training shows, a synchronisation of performance as method and parallel observation comes into existence due to a scientific observer being also part of the performance. Both involved participants, the subject of the observation and the observer him/herself have the same direct experiences in the context of the performance. This can be even in the participation in the theatre, drama, dance or outdoor training. The associated dissolution of the border between scientific and everyday life observations in one situation synchronizes the immediacy of the associated experiences without resort to the production of representations. The problem of *genetic fallacy* as a problem of causality disappears with the erosion of the temporal difference of carrying out an event (a cause) and developing the representation (effect). Performance as common experience of scientific observer and subject of the observation in one situation is on this sketched awkward methodological basis of non-representational theory a possible "messy method" (LAW & URRY 2004, p. 390) for the social sciences and opens new perspectives for a qualitative social research after the 'complexity turn'.

## 5. Conclusion

In this essay we have outlined the phenomenological non-representational theory (THRIFT 1996, 1997, 1999a, 2000) as a possible methodology for a qualitative social research that is provoked by 'the performative turn'. Non-representational theory functions as a methodology of

practice. The metaphor of performance as a summation of most diverse cultural techniques such as dance, theatre, pantomime and even outdoor training is turned by non-representational theory into a methodological cornerstone for the understanding of social life in the way that it postulates a break with the dictation of the production of representations. Performance then achieves a methodological status in social theory and it turns into a methodical instrument in social research. This is due to the fact that the performative turn abolishes the different points of reference of scientific observer and subject of the observation. The social scientific observer becomes even part of the performance him/herself. The research process as a whole is (part of the) performance. This 'holistic' conception replaces the "laboratory" situation for data acquisition with separate roles of the 'researched' person and research observer. With the inclusion of the researcher as an active part into the research process, the causality problem of *genetic fallacy* becomes redundant. Beyond that the performance as method is not 'performative' due to its direct character. "Performance", as argued in this article, does not create "representations", in fact it creates practices and, therefore, it does not create its own "research entities". On the methodological basis of non-representational theory performance turns itself into a qualitative method which is aligned to the complexity of social life in modernity.

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