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ATMOSPHERES
AS EXPRESSIONS OF MEDIAL POWER.
UNDERSTANDING ATMOSPHERES IN URBAN
GOVERNANCE AND UNDER SELF-GUIDANCE

An atmosphere is the respective mirror of what encompasses us. Therefore atmospheres are also ubiquitous phenomena. They give a *feel* of what cannot be easily explicated in words. Especially in cities, atmospheres are occasionally subject to rapid change; they are situated next to each other, lie on one another and adhere to places as well as to situations. A post-modern villa in its appearance reveals itself in a different manner than a terraced house. *New* atmospheric spaces of the city often come into existence due to large spatial downtown-extensions, for example the one's created during the course of harbor revitalizations in the last 10 to 15 years across numerous cities. Atmospheres dispose the appearance and experience of urban spaces and convey themselves not so much by images, than by bodily felt qualities of space.

I come back to my first sentence, where I have defined atmosphere as the respective mirror of what encompasses us. For instance, a tree in an urban space is not merely any tree, but *this particular* lime tree differs in its current appearance situationally – e.g. as a noisy lime tree on a warm spring morning, or a leafless, frozen tree on a snowy day in February. What we emotionally feel on our 'being-with' [*Mitsein*] the situation of the lime tree – in its vicinity – is what we call an atmosphere. The lime in its atmospheric appearance goes beyond itself proper, for it is *this particular* tree above all the others and, if we are in its surroundings, also in our experience. The interplay of expressions and impressions is far more confusing within complex objects or even entire neighborhoods. We are confronted with equally chaotic situations while dealing with the atmospheric experiences of cities, urban neighborhoods, districts or revitalized ports, like in Hamburg and Rotterdam. Thus, the Hamburg HafenCity does not only expand the

city, but also pluralizes its physiognomy and its architectural form. With Kop van Zuid, in Rotterdam, a similar project was initiated approximately 20 years ago for the development of former port areas in proximity to the city centre.

In Hamburg, as in Rotterdam, the newly developed metropolitan effulgence represents the utopia of the 21st century European city. It is primarily the atmospheres, which attune the city in a new age, in terms of their programmatically intended path of innovative emergence. This 'attuning' is more than a simple 'regulation', as it is known in technical devices. The atmospheric *mood* of the city aims at the 'retuning' of its perception. New medial ways of identity-attribution also open up through the aesthetic language of the structure of houses, bridges and streets. Thus, atmospheres lift the image of a city, hold it down, raise or reduce the attractiveness of it as a living space.

What are atmospheres?

What are atmospheres, what do they communicate and how do they exercise power? The term atmosphere in a scientific sense denotes a fragile climatological layer of gas, which surrounds the earth. But we also speak of an atmosphere, when a 'surrounding vital quality'¹ is perceptible as an affective tone of a place. As we breathe the air, feel the temperature, humidity, and wind as powerful impressions, in similar ways, the atmospheres of a city envelop us as somewhat cloudy. In that they communicate something about the distinct qualities of a place in a perceptible manner, they tune us to its rhythm. They let us comprehend without words how something *is* around us. Therefore atmospheres are also indicators of *social* situations. In such 'display' something is revealed that is not expressed in a visible, countable or a measurable shape, but is still influential and significant. What occurs in a city at certain times and at certain places is often atmospherically perceptible even before something precise can be said about it. Besides the term 'atmosphere' there are a couple of other names which refer to the same thing, such as *vapor*, *climate*, *ambience*,

¹ Original: «herumwirkliche Vitalqualität». Graf K. von Dürckheim, *Untersuchungen zum gelebten Raum* (1932), ed. von Jürgen Hasse, mit Einführungen von J. Hasse - A. Janson - H. Schmitz - K. Schultheis, *Natur - Raum - Gesellschaft*, Bd. 4, Frankfurt am Main, Selbstverlag, 2005.

impression, 'beclouding'², aura or mood. In a metaphorical sense, I have elsewhere addressed atmospheres as the 'skin of the city'³. All these terms refer to something which is immediately present and to that, which withdraws from asserting itself in the accustomed language. Likewise, the current (socio-)economic crisis of the European city, which is worsening in the course of bank-capitalistic neoliberalization, is reflected in the medium of atmospheres.

We can find phenomenologically remarkable references on the nature of atmospheres in Willy Hellpach's *Senses and soul*⁴ from the year 1946. For instance, Hellpach speaks of a 'weather image'⁵ and 'sound image'⁶ of a landscape. As in climatological weather, where many situations caused by the 'weather' merge into *the* weather, likewise many situations, facts and manifestations in city experiences also combine themselves into an atmospheric 'chord'⁷. Contained in it are – apart from the weather and sound images – situation-specific movements, olfactory and shape images, which are constantly in motion. One can neither dissolve a chord into individual sounds without destroying it, as one can make a shadow lighter in order to have a better view. That irreversible wholeness, which reverberates in the metaphor of the chord, is intrinsic to each atmosphere. A sentence from Georges Perec substantiates this: «I love my city, but I would not be able to say precisely what I love about her»⁸. Those spaces, to which one already has a relationship, because one has learned to live with and in them, adhere the atmosphere to recurrent situations. Once again Perec, who even wrote about the atmosphere of a village, gives *no* definition of it, and yet conveys a situational image of it, when he talks about space-bound feelings and the attentive way of being in the surroundings of a village: «one will know the places, where crabs would still be»⁹, «every Monday, Madame Blaise

² Original: «Umwölkung». Tellenbach used the term in a psychiatric sense. It can however be applied seamlessly to the characterization of atmospheric experiences of the city. H. Tellenbach, *Geschmack und Atmosphäre*, Salzburg, Otto Müller Verlag, 1968.

³ See J. Hasse, *Die Wunden der Stadt. Für eine neue Ästhetik unserer Städte*, Wien, Passagen, 2000, pp. 118, 133.

⁴ Original: *Sinne und Seele*.

⁵ Original: «Witterungsbild». W. Hellpach, *Sinne und Seele. Zwölf Gänge in ihrem Grenzdickicht*, Stuttgart, Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1946, p. 46.

⁶ Original: «Hörbild». *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷ Original: «Akkord». *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁸ G. Perec, *Träume von Räumen* (1974), trans. by E. Helmlé, Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994, p. 80.

⁹ Original: «Man wird die Stellen kennen, an denen es noch Krebse gäbe». *Ibid.*, p. 88.

would come for washing»¹⁰. And finally: «One would wait for the return of the seasons»¹¹.

An atmosphere can transpose us to another world, if it has attuned the subjective state of being in its impressive power. Then, it does not only influence the experience of the actuality around us, but is also reflective of the way one *feels* in an atmospheric milieu of a space. With the term 'being-in' [*Ergehens*]¹², who's meaning is largely alien to us today, Willy Hellpach spoke of 'being-with' spatial environments. What he meant by it is similar to what Dürkheim expressed with the concept of 'lived space' and which was already not understood by Bollnow, because he was of the opinion that one can only *experience* a space¹³. Bollnow's *non*-metaphorical thinking fails to recognize the potential of the performative dynamics of personal and common situations, yet it is the 'lived' vitality of a city, which brings the ever contemporary urbanity forth as a vital quality of space. Because Bollnow only validated *experience* as having a theoretically and practically *imagined* relationship with space (here the city), he evaded the characteristic unit of event and action, which exemplifies the 'lived space'. In this unit a certain milieu is constituted, that tunes the personal 'being-in' to a 'situational' space and can also simultaneously be understood as an active as well as a passive disposition. The Hellpachian 'being-in' [*Ergehen*] on the one hand has the quality of an experience, but on the other hand it also refers to the 'going into' and 'merging' into something. Thus, both terms have a pathic and not a gnostic emphasis¹⁴ and represent a perceptive mode of existence in surroundings. In particular, the pathic dimension of the noticeability of atmospheres raises the question of their spatial character: where is the atmosphere while we perceive it? The answers that will be discussed briefly in the following will sometimes vary greatly from each other, depending on the epistemological perspective.

¹⁰ Original: «Jeden Montag käme Madame Blaise zum Waschen». *Ibid.*, p. 89.

¹¹ Original: «Man würde auf die Rückkehr der Jahreszeiten warten». *Ibid.*

¹² W. Hellpach, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

¹³ See O.F. Bollnow, *Mensch und Raum*, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer Verlag, 1963.

¹⁴ According to Erwin Straus, the gnostic moment emphasizes «only the *what* of the objectively given, and the pathic the *how* of the given». E. Straus, *Die Formen des Räumlichen. Ihre Bedeutung für die Motorik und die Wahrnehmung* (1930), in Id., *Psychologie der menschlichen Welt. Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin, Springer Verlag, 1960, p. 151.

According to the constructivist view, which in present times almost dogmatically directs the thinking of the social sciences, an atmosphere would be a mental image that we *project* on to the perceived, to then only recognize it again by sensual perception. The 'place' of these mental representations would be inside the brain, in which the reconstruction of physiologically-abstract and intrinsic-bodily construction processes would shed light on the course of neuronal processes. However, simple examples such as the following by Hellpach on sensual perception of the quality of air are already indicative of the limitations of such abstract and simplistic thinking:

Prior to heavy snowfalls the air often has a strange 'harshness' and thereby a 'leadens', namely, a 'heavy' oppressive character; after the snowfall it is perhaps much colder, yet it now has a 'stimulating' effect, 'like champagne', almost 'sparkling', invigorating.¹⁵

It is evident that here the concern is not on projections, but on sensually interrogated, bodily felt impressions of climatological characteristics of air, which transmit themselves synaesthetically into an emotional weather-experience. In experiencing *urban* atmospheres, it should principally not be overlooked that also (and often especially) images and ideas mediated by mass media are 'seen into' the atmosphere. Thus, especially in the domain of social atmospheres¹⁶, (constructed) attributions of identity are related with such identifying features that *constitute* themselves currently and situationally.

In the phenomenological view, *organic* formation of ideas in the cerebrum (those extracted from every conscious experience) would not matter as much as the understanding of bodily felt atmospheric contacts. Gernot Böhme, who in his approach to atmospheres relies on Hermann Schmitz' ideas, speaks of atmospheres as 'in-between phenomena'¹⁷, which cannot be fully attributed to the side of a subject, nor can be completely assigned to an object¹⁸. Since the idea of the 'interspatial' nature of atmospheres,

¹⁵ Original: «Vor großen Schneefällen hat die Luft oft einen merkwürdig 'rauhem' und dabei 'bleiernem', also 'schwerem', drückenden Charakter; nach dem Schneefall ist sie vielleicht wesentlich kälter, trotzdem wirkt sie jetzt 'animierend', 'wie Champagner', fast 'prickelnd', 'belebend'», see W. Hellpach, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁶ See G. Böhme, *Asthetik. Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre*, München, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001, p. 89.

¹⁷ Original: «Zwischenphänomene», see *ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁸ Cf. *ibid.*

considering at least the potentially powerful communicative dynamics of atmospheres, appears too indifferent to me, I would like to describe the atmospheric space in a procedural sense as a 'switching space' that transmits the perceptibility of a space into the situative experiencing of being-with (the space). In this manner, atmospheres in an ephemeral sense are part of our surrounded actuality – as an expression of the objectively given, to which we can subjectively relate ourselves. Unlike Böhme, Hermann Schmitz understands atmospheres as spatially extended feelings, which are neither to be found 'inside' subjects nor in the 'in-between' sphere, but which lie on the object-side, so that individuals can emotionally relate to them. Such relatedness-with includes the possibility of identification as well as dissociation. «Thus, one has to distinguish between two meanings of 'feeling': feeling as perceiving an emotion as an atmosphere and feeling as an emotional affectedness thereof»¹⁹. I will therefore in the following distinguish between atmospheres and moods.

Atmospheres and moods

Hellpach's reference to atmospheric moods²⁰ calls attention to the fact that mood only in a singular sense does not exist. There are rather diverse origins and meanings of mood which should be taken into consideration. At this point I differentiate a mood from an atmosphere²¹, even though mood is understood as a special case of atmosphere by Gernot Böhme, as well as by Hermann Schmitz²². However, a differentiation of moods is favored, since its analytical separation clears the way for critical reflection on the *communicative* function of atmospheres, as media of architecture and

¹⁹ Original: «Man muß also zwei Bedeutungen von 'Fühlen' unterscheiden: Fühlen als Wahrnehmen des Gefühls als einer Atmosphäre und Fühlen als affektives Betroffensein davon». H. Schmitz, *Gefühle als Atmosphären und das affektive Betroffensein von ihnen*, H. Fink-Eitel - G. Lohmann (hsg.), *Zur Philosophie der Gefühle*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993, p. 47.

²⁰ Original: «atmosphärischen Stimmungen». W. Hellpach, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²¹ See J. Hasse, *Atmosfera e tonalità emotive. I sentimenti come mezzi di comunicazione*, «Rivista di Estetica» 33 (2006), 3, pp. 95-115.

²² Böhme distinguishes the following atmospheric characteristics: social, synaesthetic, communicative, motion-impressions and moods (see G. Böhme, *op. cit.*, p. 89). Accordingly, mood is a form of atmosphere. For Hermann Schmitz also, atmosphere is a substrate of the mood (see H. Schmitz, *System der Philosophie*, vol. 3, *Der Raum*, part 2, *Der Gefühlsraum*, Bonn, Bouvier Verlag, 1969, p. 216). He conceptualizes *mood* as feelings of distance, e.g. the way it represents itself in the feeling of senseless emptiness (see *ibid.*, p. 227), and in contrast to that *excitations* as feelings directed (to something). See *ibid.*, p. 264.

urban planning (at least implicitly) are directed towards stirring the people on an affective mood-level. But also atmospheres – for instance as such of the weather – that situationally constitute themselves on this side of the action and interest, communicate meaning. Individually, they take hold of a mood only if they insert themselves (mood-)logically into the personal situation.

To begin with, moods are ‘basic affectivities’ [*Grundbefindlichkeiten*] of human existence²³, thus they are also an expression of human nature. Since an individual (in states of consciousness) is always in a mood, it follows for Bollnow that the world is always affectively construed against this background²⁴. Affects in their increased forms of excitement are also based on moods²⁵. When Hellpach speaks of an ‘atmospheric mood’²⁶, it then, in contrast to a basic affectivity [*Grundbefindlichkeit*], refers to an affective overprinting by an *atmospheric* impression, in other words, it refers to an expression of atmosphere that influences the prevailing mood. In an individual state, this then settles down as a feeling and becomes an atmospheric *mood*. Retuning of a mood through an atmosphere can occur in unforeseeable ways by events and happenings; and in social contexts, they are often staged intentionally and are interest-based. When mood contrived in this sense ‘aims at the turbidity of critical consciousness’, then Bollnow speaks of ‘propaganda’²⁷.

Sedative atmospheres of manipulation do not appear in the social world as the atmospheres of weather do. They are *fabricated* dissuasive media of communication that constantly have to prove themselves over again, e.g. when applied by individuals, collectives or institutions (those on this side of the persuasiveness of arguments), in order to exercise power. The systemic success of culture-industrial arrangements is in particular owed to the manipulation of moods through atmospheres. The olfactory capture of the consumption willingness of department-store customers also proves this (within a highly diversified spectrum of interior design instruments of atmosphere-designs), as does the postmodern-comfortable illumination of metropolitan city areas in times

²³ Bollnow here refers to Heidegger. O.F. Bollnow, *Das Wesen der Stimmungen* (1956), Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1995, p. 34.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

²⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 159.

²⁶ W. Hellpach, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

²⁷ Original: «[die] auf eine Trübung des kritischen Bewußtseins zielt»; «Stimmungsmache». O.F. Bollnow, *Das Wesen der Stimmungen* cit., p. 146.

of neoliberalization-caused divisions of socio-economic living conditions.

But even without the immediate economically-motivated interests, urban atmospheres are created qua architecture or also simply by means of an identity-attributing discourse. In this manner, at least from 1920s onward in the city of Hamburg, the cultural-politically invoked ‘amphibious character’²⁸ (today it is more common to talk of ‘maritime atmosphere’) could still be present in many places of the city as a perceptible surrounding quality. But in its diffusivity and generality it does not a priori already amount to the substance of a mood. A maritime atmosphere can turn into a mood at such places, where the holistic character of the maritime appears so impressively powerful that it seizes the individual condition. Atmospheres have this optional mood-stagnating power not because of their environmental spatiality, but because they have the character of a world-with-others [*Mitwelt*]. When we speak of ‘environment’, we think of ourselves as givers and takers; however, when we speak of ‘world-with-others’ [*Mitwelt*], we think of ourselves as interrogators. In the mode of interrogation, an impulse to change the environment is overlaid by a sensitive tracing of being-with [*Mitsein*]²⁹. Although, atmospheres are also equally founded by the appearance of environmental things (e.g. by architecture); they themselves are not things, but emotions that we are affected by as essences of the world-with-others [*Mitwelt*].

Indubitably, resources of urban planning, architecture and spatial planning offer themselves in order to attune urban places for certain situations and atmospheres that follow them. Such planning interventions are not purposeless, but have the intention of evoking situation specific experiences – and that of ‘being-in’ [*Ergehens*]³⁰. The place thereby is usually only a situational stage, in which atmospheres turn out to be the media of communication. I therefore in the following want to emphasize the communicative function of atmospheres.

²⁸ Fritz Schumacher (Chief Planning Director in the 1920s) saw the city of Hamburg as characterized by an ‘amphibious character’. See D. Schubert, ‘Neues von der Waterkant’. *Stadtumbau am nördlichen Elbufer in Hamburg*, in Id. (hsg.), *Hafen- und Uferzonen im Wandel. Analysen und Planungen zur Revitalisierung der Waterfront in Hafenstädten*, Berlin, Leue Verlag, p. 135.

²⁹ See L. Binswanger, *Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins* (1942), München - Basel, Ernst Reinhardt Verlag, 1964, p. 513.

³⁰ See W. Hellpach, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

Atmospheres are media of communication

If one generally understands communication as produced by social relations, then this understanding goes far beyond that of direct speech and habitual gestures. Communication now includes all forms of expression that convey meanings. Therefore, any architectural construction is an aesthetic communication. Although such atmospherological stagings follow a programme, they strive for *certain* affective dispositions. However, the desired effects already withdraw their linear predictability on the scale level of structural ensembles – all the more on that of a whole city. In atmospheric ‘construction’ there is neither direct planning nor such an understanding of it, as it is the case with the production of sites and neighborhood-related atmospheres. Nonetheless, particularly in inter-municipal competition of cities, the implementation of collective modes of perceptions, interpretation and experience are *strived for* with the help of the creation of atmospheres, in order to occupy the symbolically coveted places in the rankings.

Using the example of the city of Hamburg, the *cliché* of ‘maritime atmospheres’ communicates an *element* for attributing a city-specific identity: Hamburg should be perceived as a port to the world, as a city at the water of sea-going vessels. But maritime atmospheres cannot be staged in a direct manner. They owe themselves to complex effects, which Hellpach refers to as a *chord*, and convey themselves e.g. by creating open spaces on water – in Hamburg’s HafenCity they are in the range of promenades beneath the mounds – or by the production of aesthetically exciting architectural spaces, in which the historical as well as the current vitality of the port city is perceptible – in HafenCity through the spatial and atmospheric neighborhood of postmodern architecture and the warehouse-district (*Speicherstadt*) of imperial times. By means of atmospheres, desired programmes related to competition-policy are communicated – as that of the innovative, creative or future-oriented city. But such ‘images of experience’ remain *cliché* as long as they are not substantiated by local atmospheres, e.g. by that of neighborhood residents with positive residing and living qualities, or which are associated with desired local characteristics by young entrepreneurs. Hellpach appropriately spoke of such pathic realization in the milieu of a space with the term of ‘being-in’ [*Ergehen*].

Even through norms (e.g. that of building or regulatory authorities), atmospheric qualities of space are induced, because

they influence the performativity of the lived city. Through normative regulations atmospheric qualities can change, be given as well as be nullified. The closing down of areas that are close to water for pedestrians, or the setting up of protective grids can lead to a reprogramming of an originally openly-accessible area into an area of security. Its specific organizing programme then overprints other possible vital qualities.

It is obvious that successful urban planning complies with the constitution of communicative atmospheres and it creates milieu qualities, in which people do not turn away from one another and isolate each other, but are open for productive encounter. Alexander Mitscherlich, in his *Inhospitableness of cities*³¹, lamented the functionalist rationality, which had a destructive effect on social and affective relationships of people³². Alfred Lorenzer shortly thereafter noted more specifically: «If the constructed urban environment is appropriate, because it corresponds to the imaginary needs of the individuals, then a personal and affective lively commitment is possible – as then, the individuals open up to their environment as well as to the world-with-others [*Mitwelt*]»³³. Successful urban planning leads to the development of an ‘appropriate’ urban environment. It is appropriate for the residents of the city if it creates spaces of emotional identification – and not only machinistic city modules – and, in doing so, gives rise to communicative atmospheres. In these latitudes such power is unfolded, which strengthens the individuals for a life of public spirit.

Atmospheres exert power

All measures of direct and indirect urban design that influence the change, overlapping or construction of atmospheres unfold power in a specific sense over the *experiences* of the city and over the *being-in* [*Ergehen*] a city. In this sense, administrative decisions also emanate atmospherological power, when their implementation affects the actuality of atmospheres. Power here is not re-

³¹ Original title: *Unwirtlichkeit der Städte*.

³² A. Mitscherlich, *Die Unwirtlichkeit unserer Städte* (1965), Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972.

³³ Original: «wenn die gebaute Stadtumwelt angemessen ist, weil sie den Phantasiebedürfnissen der einzelnen entspricht, dann wird ein persönliches, affektiv lebendiges Engagement möglich – dann öffnen sich die Individuen ihrer Umwelt und auch ihrer Mitwelt gegenüber». A. Lorenzer, *Städtebau. Funktionalismus und Sozialmontage? Zur sozialpsychologischen Funktion der Architektur*, in B. Heide - A. Lorenzer - K. Horn (hsg.), *Architektur als Ideologie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968, p. 72.

flected in a disposition over material things or rights, but in the capacity of 'oscillating'³⁴ existence in particular places. In this synaesthetic way, Buytendijk spoke of an atmospheric experiencing quality, which for Hubert Tellenbach had an affectively 'beclouding'³⁵ character. In the milieu of such a 'beclouding', the power of an atmosphere is unfolded.

Here, power does not refer to the probability in the sense of Max Weber, where «one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests»³⁶. In contrast to this political science and sociological concept of power, there is a philosophical understanding of the concept, wherein power is comprehended as a capacity which has influence on something or someone³⁷. Power then also emanates from gestures, which do not require the intentionality of an assertively-interested will and is more or less impressively conveyed by every building. Such gestures of buildings³⁸ are also used intentionally by architects and builders, e.g. they are used as media intended for purposes to impress, for directing the attention, for subtle suggestions, for ideology-constitution. For this very reason, with regard to Foucauldian understanding of governance, it is necessary to direct the attention towards aesthetic gestures of power that express themselves in atmospheres. The Foucauldian understanding of governmentality signifies «a strategic field of power relations in the broadest and not merely political sense of the term»³⁹ and thus includes aestheticization as a (dispositive) medium of power. Often knowledge of the design, like the implementation of atmospherological calculations, has a more implicit than a consciously differentiated and theoretically reflective status. Still, producers of urban atmo-

³⁴ Refers to the smell. F.J.J. Buytendijk, *Vorwort*, in H. Tellenbach, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

³⁵ Original: «Umwölkung». With this term Hubert Tellenbach describes the effect of atmospheres. While doing so, he uses the term in a psychiatric sense; but it can be applied seamlessly to the appearance of atmospheres. H. Tellenbach, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

³⁶ M. Weber, *Economy and society. An outline of interpretive sociology*, vol. 1 (1922), Los Angeles, Guenther & Claus Wittich, 1978, p. 53.

³⁷ Hermann Schmitz defines power as «the ability to set a supply of movable something's in directed motions, to lead them in this process or to stop the movements». H. Schmitz, *Die Legitimierbarkeit von Macht*, in H.J. Wendel - S. Kluck (hsg.), *Zur Legitimierbarkeit von Macht. Neue Phänomenologie*, vol. 11, Freiburg - München, Bouvier Verlag, 2005, p. 5.

³⁸ A. Jäkel, *Gestik des Raumes. Zur leiblichen Kommunikation zwischen Benutzer und Raum in der Architektur*, PhD thesis, Karlsruhe, Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, 2010.

³⁹ M. Foucault, *The hermeneutics of the subject. Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (1981-1982), New York, Picador, 2005, p. 252.

spheres interfere as actors in urban actuality. All the more, the sensitization towards aesthetic processes in construction and in experiencing the city, which evade from the largely unknowing yet 'touched' recipients, demands a heightened attention. Such sensitivity is (at least an optional) basis for producers of atmospheres to ethically legitimize the affecting accesses on individual affectivities and moods. Only an affected individual, in pathic terms, whom the atmospheric arrangement almost unnoticedly gets 'under the skin', has such sensitivity whilst being a political agent, because it holds at least the option of criticism aimed at power calculi who produce urban spaces, through planners, politicians, architects and economic players. Explicit knowledge of the experiencing effects of aesthetic practices can temper the gestures of atmospheric power.

Understanding atmospheres in urban governance and under self-guidance

The governance of a city never rests solely on political and economic power elites. The citizens and temporary residents also govern the city by living it. Governance is also not restricted to intelligible action. Governance is politically charged as well as subtle, especially in places where it unfolds itself in the force fields of feelings that are overshadowed by the utopia of *homo rationales*. The political dynamics of feelings thereby follow two opposing paths. On the path of political-ideological and economic colonization, individuals are entangled in situations *as objects*. This path requires (implicit) knowledge of the broad unconsciousness-raising instrumentalizing cause-and-effect chains of feelings, to which the culture-industrial or political-ideological programs are addressed as apparatus of power. On the second path, feelings are developed as a resource of one's self when the strategies to deal with them are alphabetized. Thereby, the individual subject becomes the focal point of self-referencing as well as of self-conscious governance. This is not a hedonistic subject that loses itself in the economy of desires, but a *self-ruling* subject, which in Foucault's term of governance formed the static function.

Since the time we reflect on the modern city, we not only know of the heterogeneity of its constructions, but above all, of the conflicting nature of its social forms and processes. In this way no city solely is the living space of its citizens – it is much more the

«assembly of citizens and deserters»⁴⁰. Therein already lies the reason that the city is not (solely) governed on the basis of predictable delineations of action; governance in a performative sense *occurs* with immense power in a bubbling cauldron, which Sloterdijk calls a «psychodynamic reactor»⁴¹. Since postmodernism, its affect-dynamics not only supply the discursive and productive conflict regarding the good shape of the city; it also *discharges* itself in ecstasies of veneer, in order to disperse all political power in an anesthesia. The «political city definitively [dissolves itself] in the aesthetic phenomenon»⁴², even though the political is especially up to mischief in the *métier* of aesthetics and atmospheres.

Atmospheres are media of communication, thus they do not only communicate milieu qualities, meanings and relationships in a linear sense, but in subtle ways also programmes to eliminate tensions, in order to seemingly neutralize social basic contradictions through aestheticising means. The postmodern illumination of a city also functions to this end, when it legitimizes itself with the aesthetic goal of increasing urbanity as well as with the ecologically pragmatic goal of energy saving. In their dissuasive effect, cozy atmospheres of twilight unfold a euphemistic power of dissuasion. And so they cover latent tensions that are beyond the atmospheric boundary regions, in which the socio-economically winning and losing quarters come into contact. Thereby, not only atmospheres of habitation are situated together, but also those of social dislocations.

As dispersedly the practices of power unfold their effects in the space of the city, equally 'dispersed' is also the governance. It takes place in an asymmetrical communication and can only sustainably approach an ideal of almost frictionless processes, when the citizens of the city are once more increasingly willing to participate in the governance and advocate the creation of atmospheres of communication that are more open for encounters. Therewith, the formal participation of citizens in planning processes does not gain center stage, but – following the Greek principle of the Stoics – the individual capability to take care of oneself on be-

⁴⁰ Original: «Versammlung von Bürgern und Deserteuren». P. Sloterdijk, *Die Stadt und ihr Gegenteil. Apolitologie im Umriss*, in Id., *Der ästhetische Imperativ*, Hamburg, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 2007, p. 185.

⁴¹ Original: «psychodynamischen Reaktor», *ibid.*, p. 221.

⁴² Original: «politische Stadt [löst sich] endgültig auf ins ästhetische Phänomen», *ibid.*, p. 186.

half of the society and its interests. «[F]or by teaching citizens to take care of themselves (rather than their goods) one also teaches them to take care of the city-state itself (rather than its material affairs)»⁴³. This implies the *self-reflexive* legitimization of the manners and ways to live the city.

In times of intensifying materialistic pleasure- and profit-excesses at the cost of increasing material needs of a third party, all hope of germination of a postmaterialistic care of the self finds itself on thin ice. But the desire of excess is ambivalent, for it carries in itself the concern over an unbroken continuation. The best preparation for unforeseeable events of life therefore is «knowing the principles that govern the world»⁴⁴. Undoubtedly, good knowledge of the world not only contains propositional knowledge of facts concerning objective worldly facts, but also hermeneutical knowledge of the affective entanglement in situations and the subjective reasons of atmospheric affectedness. At this point, the question concerning the interests in the growth of self-control through knowledge of the world almost loses its significance, for it depends on the *effect* of such a practice of 'anti-civilizing' attention. This lies in the increase of hermeneutic knowledge, without whose differentiation neither the winner can imagine his profits nor the loser can improve his situation. The latter does not firstly win power over himself in the institutional political struggle, but does that as early as he learns to trace what he needs for his and other's sake and in that way is in the position to immunize himself cathartically against dissuasive offers. By contrast, there lies a painful way ahead for the winner in its self-caring project, because what he has learnt as a deserter to call his own from a socio-economical unequal society loses itself in the questionable under the pressure of an ethics of the self. The dilemma between reflexive self-awareness and the deliberate decision to ethically legitimize the own life of the city was already noticed by Foucault. When he «promote[d] new forms of subjectivity»⁴⁵, he went beyond the traditional struggle and protest metaphors of emancipation from a repressive and panoptic state and relied on transversal self-practices of care of the self, which is only the consequence of an

⁴³ M. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 492.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

⁴⁵ F. Gros, *Course context*, in M. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 544.

altered «confrontation with the reality of the world»⁴⁶. Therefore, besides the cultivation of technologies of the self and the capability of self-awareness, he attached importance to the «making present of the future [...], to nullify that which could be envisaged as or considered to be an evil in the future»⁴⁷. With this he builds on the power of imagination and the power of meditation. The one who saturates himself at the expense of a third – that profiteer of neo-liberalization and other practices of hegemonic governance – encounters in the critical self-awareness the hegemonic principle of economization in the core of his own identity; he not only sees the objects and the social world as economized, but necessarily also himself, in his rationality and affectivity, as an economized subject.

The actual implementation of a reversal to ethically sustainable maxims of subjective life-forms however remains dependent on an affective impulse to pause in one's proper name [*im eigenen Namen*]. This choice also requires a normative orientation. Such an order of 'consideration' of subjectively produced relations-to-the-world was suggested by Martin Heidegger with the metaphor of the *fourfold*⁴⁸. It would provide for the ethical consideration of lived relationship between the social space of the city and the own self. Foucauldian governmentality, which especially in a caring (and therein reflexive) relationship to oneself builds a strong resistance to political power⁴⁹, touches on the incident of affective contact. Foucault summarizes his hermeneutics of the subject by way of the stoic Epictetus as an affective self-control «to know whether or not we are affected or moved by the thing represented»⁵⁰. Thus, Hermeneutics of the Subject in a substantial part amounts to the sensitization and alphabetization of the perception. The things and the body are not at the centre, but the affects and the felt body are crucial in their *impact* on things and body.

As long as individuals face atmospheres of their world as their own moods with a numb sensitivity, they follow the aestheticized traces of the seduction of culture-industrial suggestions

⁴⁶ M. Foucault, *Technologien des Selbst*, in Id. et. al., *Technologien des Selbst*, Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer Verlag, 1993, p. 46.

⁴⁷ Id., *The hermeneutics of the subject* cit., p. 471.

⁴⁸ Original: «Geviert». M. Heidegger, *Bauen Wohnen Denken* (1951), in E. Führ (hsg.), *Bauen und Wohnen. Martin Heideggers Grundlegung einer Phänomenologie der Architektur*, Münster, Waxmann Verlag, 2000, pp. 31-49.

⁴⁹ M. Foucault, *The hermeneutics of the subject* cit., p. 252.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

and still hold on to the thread of dissuasion even as they believe to follow their own paths. Urban governance is an asymmetric game; neither does it occur according to the plans of welfare nor in visible places, but in a diffuse chord of those, who live the city. Participation-oriented governance and intelligible governance thereby only form the one side. The other is that of the performative dynamics of the lived city, which never exists without the ephemeral vapor of the atmosphere. Intended production and incidental occurrences engage in this process equally as the intellect and the emotion. Especially in times of hyperaestheticization of cities, the care of the self provokes on the lines of an anaestheticizing intensification of the aesthetic. Power relations that reveal themselves bodily felt in an atmospheric space, shift with the remembrance and becoming aware of the affects.