Maier

Photo Essay: After Life --- Survival of a Ph.D.

by Joachim Maier

ABSTRACT
Ben Walker's work (issue 4.2) is focusing on peculiar encounters within the process of writing seminar work. My big pictures will be relating to life after the accomplishment of an academic work: my PhD project at the Humanist University, Utrecht, Holland. My AFTER PhD LIFE displays the organising fabric of community --- through mean(ing)s of self-descriptive practices --- map-making, as Karl Weick would attribute similar kinds of radically contextualizing maneuvers. In order to answering the proverbial After Life (1998) quest follow up on what I have been doing: pick one image, the only image you can take to eternity! However, as you will experience in the course of Hirokazu Koreeda's movie: Imagining your coming memory takes careful preparation. But, don't be afraid --- everything is taken care of...

EDITOR'S NOTE: The order of the piece is in accordance with postmodern disbelief in beginning, middle end. The paper is plates 1-15 counted upwards: 1,2,3,...,15 --- and plates 16-27 are counted downwards, 10,9,8,... 0 - like in a hypnotizing session, and in the billy idol song 'adam in chains' that marks the related pop culture reference. You will find the title page somewhere in the middle.
SO, TO TRANSFORM A LONG STORY INTO ANOTHER NARRATIVE, LET'S SAY IT LIKE THIS: IF UP TO NOW, YOU HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO CLUE, WHAT ALL OF THIS IS GOING TO BE ABOUT, GO AND WATCH THE MOVIE 'AFTER LIFE' MADE BY HIROKAZU KOREEDA IN 1998. FOR ONCE, BECAUSE SEEING IT MAKES PART OF THE PROCESS THAT IS GOING TO BE DISPLAYED...
As people die and journey to their next world, they are stopped at a sort of postmodern rest area. 22 dead arrive that week. At an interstation where they are greeted by counselors who help them pick one memory, the only memory they can take to eternity. They describe the memory to the staff who work with a crew to film it and screen it at week's end; eternity follows. A girl in her teens is accompanied to choose a memory other than Disneyland. One old man cannot find a memory, so he watches videotapes of his life. Others pick their memory quickly, and the film crew gets right to work. For one teenage boy the acceptance of the task to choose a lasting image of his past marks an impossibility, because he insists on choosing a memory from the future...
...the other day, I have been granted my PhD in humanist studies, with a piece revolving around organising and philosophy. Still, time after time whilst partaking in academic, private or business situations, I encounter a similar kind of feel:

AFTER LIFE

SURVIVAL OF THE PH.D.

How will all of this writing help me gaining a-life, focus and momentum through my endeavors in global capitalism?
BY CREATING A PHD-THESIS WHICH OPERATES AS DIFFERENCE, IT IS ALWAYS DIFFERENT FROM A PHD-THESIS. THE TEXT IS CONSTANTLY AND SELFREFERENTIALLY INVOLVED WITH ITS OWN DIFFERENCING. IT NEVER WANTS TO BE. IT IS EXPLICITLY CONSTANTLY SAYING 'I AM SORT OF WRITING A PHD-THESIS', AND 'THIS MAYBE WILL BECOME A PHD-THESIS', BUT IT IS NOT ACTUALLY AN IDENTICAL OR EVEN SIMILAR REPEITION OF A NORMAL ACADEMIC SENSE OF BEING A PHD-THESIS. SO, YOU ARE CONSTANTLY PLAYING ON A PER-FORMATIVE TEXTUAL LEVEL, AS THE PHD-THESIS, THAT GAME....

...WHICH IS ALSO QUITE A NICE POINT ABOUT THE DEATH, YES, BECAUSE IN A SENSE OBVIOUSLY YOU, I AND HUGO WOULD LIKE YOU TO GET A PHD. AND AT THE END, WHEN THE PERFORMANCE IS COMPLETE, AND WE STAND THERE IN OUR BAT-SUITS AND THEY HAND YOU THE DEGREE....

...NO, IT IS EVEN WORSE: I HAND YOU THE DEGREE...

YEAH, THAT DIFFERING PROJECT IS THEN DEAD, BECAUSE IT HAS BECOME THAT PHD-PROJECT FROM THAT IT WAS SEEKING TO DIFFER. AND I GUESS THAT KIND OF DEATH-GAME IS PARTLY WHAT IS GOING ON...
Joachim Maier

L’humanizing organ(s)ing in_difference

community mid-field

transformation in the sense of the currently moving & touching present

AFTER ALL, WHAT IS REALLY THE USE OF DAYS, WEEKS, MONTHS AND YEARS OF THINKING AND WRITING AND EXPERIMENTING, IF NOT TO MAKE ONE’S PARTICULAR EXPERTISE PRODUCTIVE --- IN AN(Y) DESIRABLE FORM AND FASHION...

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LOST IN TRANSFORMATION?

...MY BIG PICTURE WILL BE RELATING TO THE ORGANISING FABRIC OF COMMUNITY --- THROUGH MEAN(ING)S OF SELF-DESCRIPTIVE PRACTICES --- MAP-MAKING, AS KARL WEICK WOULD ATTRIBUTE SIMILAR KINDS OF RADICALLY CONTEXTUALIZING MANEUVERS. IN ORDER TO ANSWERING THE PROVERBIAL AFTER LIFE QUEST: PICK ONE IMAGE, THE ONLY IMAGE CAN TAKE TO ETERNITY! HOWEVER, AS WE EXPERIENCED IN THE COURSE OF THE MOVIE: IMAGINING YOUR COMING MEMORY TAKES CAREFUL PREPARATION. BUT, DON’T BE AFRAID --- EVERYTHING IS TAKEN CARE OF...
Maier

Weick aka the 'sense-making dude' in organisational studies would frame (y)our point of departure along the lines of the story of...

Mad-making in action

...the young lieutenant of a Hungarian detachment in the Alps --- sent on a reconnaissance unit into the icy wilderness. It began to snow immediately, and unexpectedly continued to snow for two days. The unit did not return. The lieutenant feared that he had dispatched his own people to death.
THEY DID NOT HAVE ANY MAPS, COMPASSES OR OTHER EQUIPMENT WITH WHICH TO ASCERTAIN A POSITION OR A PROBABLE ROUTE OUT. BUT THEN ONE OF THE CREW FOUND AN OLD TATTERED MAP IN A SELDOM-USED POCKET. THAT CALMED THEM DOWN. THE MAP DID NOT SEEM TO QUITE FIT THE TERRAIN BUT EVENTUALLY THE UNIT DISCOVERED THEIR BEARINGS. FOLLOWING THE MAP DOWN THE MOUNTAIN AND AFTER A FEW WRONG TURNS EVENTUALLY FINDING A WAY. THE LIEUTENANT BORROWED THE MAP AND HAD A GOOD LOOK AT IT. THIS IS NOT A MAP OF THE ALPS, HE SAID. IT’S A MAP OF THE PYRENEES. THIS STORY RAISES THE REMARKABLE IDEA THAT...

...WHEN YOU ARE LOST, ANY MAP WILL DO!
(A) THIS REMINDS ME OF AN OLD SAYING: WHEN YOU DON’T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING, ANY PATH WILL TAKE YOU THERE. :-) MAX!

(B) THIS REMINDS ME OF WALTER BENJAMIN SAYING: THE LABYRINTH IS THE RIGHT WAY FOR THE ONE, WHO IS UP TO BE ARRIVING EARLY ENOUGH. ANYWAY, THE MARKET MARKS ITS DESTINATION.
IF MAXI, AN ADVOCATUS DIAVOLI OF THE GLOBALLY INTEGRATED AND CREATIVE SOCIETY (CURRENTLY BASED IN BEIJING) GOT IT RIGHT ---- AND ANY PATH WILL DO, IN CASES OF TRANSITION...

...THAN GIVEN SUFFICIENT CREATIVE AND PER-FORMING MASS, CERTAINLY ANYTHING GOES...

...WITH IN STATES OF EMERGENCIES SUCH AS BJÖRK SONGS, THE EMERGENCE OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM OR A COMING THIRD AFFIRMATIVE SCIENTIFIC PARADIGM --- DIFFERING FROM POST-, AND MODERN AND OTHER -ISMS...

...THIS PAGES LESSON HOMES IN IN HEINZ VON FOERSTER’S STYLE: (1) MAKE YOURSELVES LOST AND LOOSE YOUR MIND IN TRANSFORMATION (2) TO GET BACK ON A DIFFERENT MAP IN ANY WAY YOU PLEASE. BUT FROM (T)HERE-ON, (3) RESPONSIBILITY IS GOING TO BE ALL YOURS!
AND IF WALTER AND MYSELF GOT A POINT, THE MARKET MARKS THE UBQUITOUS VANTAGE POINT. THE FINAL PROVE FOR (Y)OUR EXISTENTIAL DWELLINGS, ANSWER TO THE ULTIMATE CONSTRUCTIVIST QUEST: 'WHAT IS THIS, THAT YOU ARE UP TO PRODUCE AND MARKET'...

WOULD YOU KNOW FOR YOURSELVES? ANY IDEA, WHAT YOU REALITY WANTED TO DO, IN ORDER TO BECOMING AN IDIOSYNCRATIC BEARER OF YOUR COMING LIFE?

YOU GUSSSED MY ANSWER, RIGHT? I AM GOING TO BE IN THE MAP MAKING BUSINESS, IN ITS SOCIAL VARIETY. CATERING WITH MAPS FOR MAP MAKING. STAY TUNED, GRAB YOUR COLLEAGUES FOR SOME EXPERIMENTING AND ENJOY THE PROCESS TO YOUR OWN MAP_OUT OF HERE.
THIS MAKES PART OF THE BIG PICTURE FOR ME. A 2ND ORDER MAP (FOR MAP MAKING). IT KEEPS ME GOING AND PROBABLY DOES NOT MEAN TOO MUCH TO YOU. WHICH IS FINE, BECAUSE BY THE END OF THE DAY, YOU WILL HAVE TO PRODUCE YOUR PROPER MAP.

HOWEVER YOU MAY ONLY ACCOMPLISH THIS, IF YOU ARE SEVERAL IN YOUR ROOM IN A PHYSICAL SENSE, OR SEVERAL IN YOUR MIND IN A DELEUZIAN SENSE. BECAUSE IT TAKES MORE THAN TWO, TO BE PLAYING THIS COMMUNITY GAME: THE PRESENT, AND THE ABSENT, ..., AND THE COMING OF AN(OTHER, OUT OF THIS IN_BETWEEN THAT YOU ARE MAPPING_OUT
THE MOST VALUABLE ASSET OF YOUR CURRENT GLOBAL-LIBERAL-OVERALL CAPITALISM IS ITS EVER RE-TOURING INTERCHANGEABILITY. AN IMAGE THAT RESULTS IN A MULTITUDE OF LIMINAL SPACES, THROUGH PERPETUAL MOVEMENTS WITHOUT BINDING COMMITMENT AND ETERNAL SUBSTANCE.

LET'S TAKE OFF BY IMITATING ITS PARADIGMATIC PRINCIPLES: EMPATHY, SEDUCTION, SUPERFICIALITY, ADAPTIVENESS, INDIFFERENCE, TRANSFORMABILITY, ETC. TO REPLICA YOUR DAILY MANEUVERING THROUGH A FLOCKING EXPERIMENT, THAT MAY—BE YIELDING TO AN IDIOSYNCRATIC RESPONSE, OTHER THAN REFUSAL, INTERPASSIVITY AND MUTE INDIFFERENCE.

FLOCKING SIMULATIONS DISPLAY THEMSELVES INFORMED BY THE FOLLOWING GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. SEPARATION: WHEN A BIRD IS TOO CLOSE OF A NEIGHBOR, IT CHANGES DIRECTION

2. COHESION: WHEN A BIRD IS TOO FAR FROM ITS NEIGHBORS, IT SEeks TO FOLLOW UP

3. ALIGNMENT: WHEN THE NEIGHBORS OF A BIRD ARE NEITHER TOO FAR OR TOO CLOSE, THE BIRD CHOOSES A DIRECTION WHICH IS FOLLOWING THE AVERAGE DISTANCE TO ITS NEIGHBORS.

12
COME HERE, AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN. TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND RELAX.
FOCUS ON THE VERY POINT YOU ARE STANDING ON. NOW, CHOOSE,
WITHOUT THEM NOTICING, TWO PEOPLE FROM WITHIN THE PRESENT CROWD.
FLINCH A FEW STEPS BACK. LOOK AROUND, AND START MOVING AS LONG
AS YOU ARE POSITIONED IN EQUIDISTANCE VIS-À-VIS YOUR TWO REFERENCE
FOLKS... THIS MAY TAKE A WHILE --- DON'T WORRY, GO ON ALONG AND DO
WHATEVER IT TAKES, AS LONG AS YOU REACH EQUIDISTANCE...

SOMEONE WHISPERING... AND MOVEMENT CAME, AND FROM HERE-ON IS FLOWING THROUGH THE CIRCLE--- SLOWLY, PEOPLE SHIFT ALONG, TRANSFORM THEIR EN- 
CIRCULATION BY PERPETUALLY GENERATING IMPULSES FOR YET OTHER'S TO REST ON-LINE --- THE SIMULATION FOR SOCIAL ORDER IS GOING ON AND TAKING ITS TIME, UNTIL EVERYONE FINDS AND HOLDS A (STAND)POINT. LATER, IN THE COURSE OF THE DE-
BRIEF, I AM GOING TO SHARE MY SENTIMENT OF RELIEF; RELIEVED TO HAVE EXPERIENCED THIS STANDSTILL PERIOD, AFTER ALL THE COMMOTION AND INSECURITY THROUGH THIS FIRST PHASE OF THE EXPERIMENT.

--- NOW, WITHOUT ANY FURTHER COMMENTS, I CHOOSE SOMEBODY FROM WITHIN THE FROZEN CROWD, AND START MOVING THE PERSON AROUND. INSTANTANEOUSLY, THIS IMPULSE FROM OUTSIDE, IS TOUCHING, MOTIVATING AND MOVING THE SYSTEM FOR SOME TIME UNTIL IT RESTS, AGAIN --- THIS RESTING MARKS PRECISELY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS FLOCKING SIMULATION AND THE SELF-REFERENTIAL WORLD OUT THERE, BECAUSE REST...IN IS NEVER TO HAPPEN, 'CAUSE THE BANE WILL INCESSANTLY TRANSFORM ITSELF.
YOUR MAP-MAKING HAS JUST BEGUN. CREATE YOURSELF A PLAIN SURFACE ON A WALL AND CATER WITH LOADS OF POSTITS, EDGING MARKERS AND A4 AND A3 PAPER. I INVITE YOU TO ENTERTAIN AN AFFIRMATIVE POSTURE AND TAKE THIS EXPERIMENT FOR A VARIETY OF IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER --- FOLLOWING UP ON ITS GUIDING PRINCIPLE...

EMBRACE EVERYTHING THAT IS HAPPENING TO YOU!

STEP (2): GET BACK ON A DIFFERENT MAP IN ANY WAY YOU PLEASE. BUT FROM HERE-ON, STEP (3), RESPONSIBILITY IS GOING TO BE ALL YOURS! SUCH IS THE LAW OF LAWS OF RADICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM.
Now add some character and reproduce the flocking experiment in a di-similar way. But apart from flocking around as mere soulless adaptive fish, bird or boiD --- replay a bullfight. Enter the game as either torero (seductively waving a red flag), bull (horny attack moves) or display the inter-passive observer. And make sure to switch in between characters any way you please. Come here. As close as you can. Take a deep breath and relax. Focus on the very point you are standing on. Now, choose, without them noticing, two people from within the present crowd. Flinch a few steps back. Look around, and start moving as long as you are positioned in equidistance vis-à-vis your two reference folks...
WANNA STAY IN THE FLOW?
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS MOVE YOUR BODY IN WHAT EVER WAY FEELS COMFORTABLE FOR YOU. JUST LET YOURSELF SINK INTO THE GROOVE AND MOVE...

...LET GO OF WORRY AND DOUBT AND RELAX. IMAGINE A STAIRCASE STANDING IN FRONT OF YOU WITH TEN, WIDE, SAFE, STAIRS. DOWN, DOWN TO A PERFECT RELAXATION DOWN TO PEACE AND CONTENTMENT DOWN TOWARDS THE HAPPINESS THAT YOU DESERVE AND AS I COUNT DOWN FROM TEN TAKE ONE STEP WITH EACH NUMBER ONE STEP DOWN

10,

...OUT OF THE COMMUNITY MID-FIELD --- JUST LET GO AND FOLLOW AFFIRMATIVELY (Y)OUR TRANSFORMATION --- IN THE SENSE OF THE CURRENTLY MOVING AND TOUCHING PRESENT...
Fix your eyes on a spot. It doesn't matter where...

...and put your name on a Poste-it, onto the wall, onto one of the numbers --- and relate to your two flock-mates --- the ones that you have chosen to move in equidistance to --- take your time, a bunch of Poste-Its and begin to describing the resources, that your mates are moving into this --- Poste-it after Poste-it, onto the wall, (y)our map out of this into after life
JUST FIX YOUR EYES ON ON A SPOT
AND BEGIN TO RELAX
FEEL YOUR MIND AND BODY
BEGINNING TO WIND DOWN
WIND DOWN, WIND DOWN AND
RELAX...

8,

...AND BEGIN TO DESCRIBING YOUR OWN
RE-SOURCES --- WHAT
ARE YOU BRINGING TO
THE TABLE THAT MAKES
THIS COMMUNITY KEEP
ON MOVING,
TRANSFORMING, AND
FLOW... IN --- WRITE THIS
INTO THE CENTER, ONTO
THE WALL AND CLOSE TO
YOUR NAME --- WHAT
ARE YOU PARTICULARLY
GOOD AT: SOFT- AND
HARD-SKILLS, ANY?
TAKE YOUR TIME, AND SCREEN THE MAP
--- CAREFULLY USE SOME ADHESIVE TAPE
AND A LONG WOOLEN THREAD --- FIX ITS
BEGINNING AT YOUR NAME ON THE WALL,
AND START CONNECTING TO EACH AND
EVERYONE’S RESOURCES THAT YOU MAY
FIND APPEALING --- INDEX IN (Y)OUR
CURRENT WEB OF SOCIAL LIFE

BEGINNING TO WIND DOWN
WIND DOWN, WIND DOWN AND RELAX

7,
Imagine yourselves as gaming characters...

...think: card games, the ones you have been playing during your childhood, and describe your gaming character --- based on a visual representation of your choice and six characteristic attributes!

If you have any thoughts just let them drift through your mind like beautiful clouds across a clear blue sky.

6,
YOU MAY FIND IT FAR EASIER, TO WORK OUT A SERIES OF 3 OR 4 DIFFERENT CHARACTERS, INSTEAD OF LIMITING YOURSELVES TO JUST ONE AVATAR --- SINCE EVERY CHARACTER DEPLOYS A SPECIFIC SET OF CHARACTERISTICS, THE CORRESPONDING ATTRIBUTES MAY DIFFER IN ANY WAY YOU PLEASE...

5,

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operative strategic

issue 1
issue 2
issue 3
issue 4
issue 5
...

relating to what should already have been resolved in the past

Just through your mind and away from you through your mind and away as you relax deeper, deeper and deeper relax

4,

Now, in a joint effort, go about collecting all the issues, that should already have been resolved in the past --- and note them, issue by issue on the left part of your wallpaper
JUST LET GO OF STRESS AND TENSION
LET GO OF WORRY AND DOUBT AND RELAX
--- FOLLOW THE STAIRCASE IN FRONT OF YOU
AND...
3,

describe your after life memento that is going to outlive the present future
TAKE YOUR TIME AND PAINT ONE AFTER LIFE MEMENTO ONTO AN A3 PAPER, BEFORE YOU ARE PUTTING IT INTO THE AREA THAT CONNECTS YOUR COMMUNITIES MIDDLE-GROUND TO YOUR AFTER LIFE THAT IS GOING TO OUTLIVE THE PRESENT:

SEE, THIS IS MY PICK --- THE SINGULAR MEMORY, THE ONLY ONE THAT I CAN TAKE TO ETERNITY --- IT HOMES IN AS A FUTURE MEMORY, DESCRIBING WHAT I WANT TO EXPERIENCE WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY, BEFORE I MOVE ON...

DOWN, DOWN TO A PERFECT RELAXATION, DOWN TO PEACE AND CONTENTMENT, DOWN TOWARDS THE HAPPINESS THAT YOU DESERVE

2,
NOW, WHEEL IN THE BOSS
AND LET HIM HAVE HIS
TALK ABOUT YOUR
ORGANISATIONS
NORMATIVE STANCE ---
WHAT IS GOING TO
REMAIN OF YOUR
COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE,
AFTER THIS PLACE IS NO
LONGER IN BUSINESS?
TAKE WHAT-EVER YOU
HEAR FROM HIM ONTO
POSTER-ITS AND PUT THEM
ON THE FAR RIGHT END OF
THE WALL --- HOW DOES
THIS CHEF-TEXT RELATE
TO YOUR AFTER-LIFE
MEMENTO'S, THAT ARE
MARKING YOUR ULTIMATE
RELATIONSHIP TO (T)HIS
ORGANISATION?
And ultimately, how does (T)his child's text live up to (Y)our coming differentiating practice --- that is no longer an identical or similar repeat of what is already going on?
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Maier


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