TELEVISED

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The televised is no longer the one seen on television, but the one seen by it.[1]

Television

Televised is an ongoing artistic investigation into television. It grew out of a long-held interest in the phenomenon we often simply refer to as "TV", and the way in which its publics are imagined, projected, constructed and perceived.

When I first began producing works addressing aspects of television, they were made in isolation to each other. On reflection, these projects and activities all came together within the framework of an extended investigation into television. I began using the headline *Televised* to frame a number of projects, but this is not to imply that the research has ended.

In the following pages I will summarise some of the thoughts and methods I have employed when producing work addressing aspects of television, ending with the current project I produced for *Visible Blindness – Investigating the Investigation*. I will not describe the pieces themselves in too much detail, but will try to describe some of the backgrounds, thought processes, raw material and issues surrounding them.

I.

What is Publicness?

In 2003, I produced a work for Munich Kunstverein in which the planning of the Olympic Village for the 1972 games in Munich served as my point of departure. I was particularly in-

terested in how the media was imagined within this planning, and how these imaginings produced certain spatial logics.

The 1972 Olympic Games was the first event of international significance hosted by Germany after World War II. It was, therefore, of prime importance for the organisers to consign Leni Riefenstahl's mediation of the 1932 German Olympics to history, and instead project an image of a new, tolerant, heterogeneous and open-minded Germany to the world. Moreover, the 1972 Olympics was to be the first international event to be transmitted across the globe on *live* television, since broadcast technology that was being tested in The West in the late 60s was promised to be ready for the event at the time that Munich was selected as the host-city. The idea of not only transmitting globally, but also live, became central to contemporary perceptions of the future at the time. Marshall McLuhan coined the term, 'global village',[2] pointing towards a new paradigm in which the immediate, omnipresent and multi-directional visibility produced by new media-technology would generate a new kind of communality between people, globally. The notion of broadcasting *live* was essential. It seemed to promise a virtual collapse of distance in time and space, proposing the possibility of presence in different places simultaneously, un-edited, and thus somehow closer to reality; a sense of "truth" and transparency obtained through technology. The idea of a new democratic omnipresence was celebrated, an idea in which the violence and unjust that was imagined to be hiding, would be exposed, and in which images could no longer be manipulated before being published, but would reach the eye ideally the same instant they entered the camera, and without interference; a promise of "truer" images.

This new form of visibility was considered central for the way in which social relations would be shaped in the future. Thus, considerations about television and its mechanisms were taken very seriously in the planning of the Olympic Village. As such, the site was not only developed to contain and frame the events for those present in the tribunes, but also, indeed, for those "present" around the world by virtue

of the broadcasted image. In that sense, the process of planning and designing the Olympic Village also became a process of attempting to predict what effects the new moving image technology would have on space not only globally, but also locally. There was an increasing awareness of the architectural staging of these new and "truer" images.

As we now know, Munich's Olympic Village did indeed become world-famous for its framing of certain "truths", making them visible through instant broadcast, though in a very different way than expected: it became the site for the first so-called "international terrorist event", when Israeli athletes were taken hostage by Palestinian gunmen. Because of the presence of live television, the event was broadcast to a global audience as it happened, directly, non-stop and from location. Even the kidnappers could follow the attempts of the police to rescue the hostages live on television, and prevent them from succeeding. One could say that not only had a new 'global village' and its already existing modes of violence become visible through live satellite television, this new visibility also generated new forms of violence.

My project for Munich consisted of several parts: an intervention in the Olympic Village, the production of a video, and an installation of the video in the Munich Kunstverein. The video consisted of recordings of the Olympic Village shot from above, from the perspective of the many roof-tops and viewing-platforms built to accommodate the multitude of cameras that were expected to cover the games. From here one overlooks the public spaces of the village underneath, and it was from these platforms that the majority of the broadcasted footage from 1972 was shot. The views from these positions constituted what "the public" would see, and in addition, it constituted a thoroughly designed image of "a public" itself. In my video, I ask passers-by the question 'what is publicness?' (In German, the word *Öffentlichkeit* does not have to describe specifically space or spectators like the English word *public*). To the people I approached, I appeared to be a reporter or researcher of some sort. They all responded as best they could, with answers spanning from descriptions

of the state, to impressions of people around them, to ideas of rights and visibility. In the installation, my video was projected (also directly from above) onto the floor in the middle of a specially built tribune-like structure. Viewers could thus sit within the architecture that surrounded the projected image in order to watch the video from all sides.[3]

tv-tv

Alongside working on projects *about* television, I became interested in working on projects *for* television. I became involved in an alternative local TV-station in Copenhagen called *tv-tv*. The station was (and remains) collectively run, aiming at producing and broadcasting material not seen on other channels, both in terms of its local context and the politics behind the images.

Umeå 2004 – Research-Project

While teaching at the Umeå Academy of Fine Arts, I was invited to conduct a research project. I formulated a proposal with my colleague Ashley Hunt in which we boldly stated that we wanted to research "television", whatever that might mean. Our proposal was intentionally vague and even naïve, since we did not wish to conduct an overview nor define a field of study that could be mapped out by that term, but rather to find a route *through* it and remain open about where it might lead. In conducting our artistic research, we wanted to allow ourselves the space to tell the stories of our journey, rather than attempting to plot academically rigorous maps. As a starting point, we compiled a reading list, the contents of which mostly addressed social, cultural and historical aspects of television. We planned dialogues with students as well as a number of study trips – some to the area in front of the screen, some to local video rental stores, and some into homes with televisions.

This Thing We Call Television

A television set is, of course, a familiar object found in most homes, something almost all of us grew up with. As part of our research, Ashley and I wanted to talk about what relationships exist with this apparatus in the intimacy of the private home, to take into consideration its relationship to place, to address it as a screen producing presence as well as absence, and producing different positions from which to see and be seen: Television is more than just an object, and it operates way beyond the home. We wanted to investigate television not only as an apparatus standing in front of us, but also as a technology surrounding us – as a *mode of transmission*. We wanted to look at the ways in which viewers negotiate these transmissions, and the ways in which the viewers are negotiated by these transmissions. As an artist, I am particularly interested in the idea of spectatorship, for example how an "audience" takes shape and place, what this taking shape and place means, how it becomes visible and what this visibility means. These ideas were influencing our discussions.

Recognising this thing called "television" as a social, economic and technological image-producing system made us want to question the ways in which these images are produced, distributed and consumed. In general, we feel we know television, not only as something existing outside of us, but also – and maybe much more so – as part of our way of understanding the world. It lives in our bodies and our senses, in certain areas of what we can see and, as such, it becomes integral to the production of visibility itself – in the negotiation of how something becomes visible.[4] Perhaps in this sense the word "television" can be understood as a *relationship*, a relationship between things and between people. In his book *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord describes a culture in which relationships between people are mediated by images.[5] An *image-based sociality*, so to speak, in which relationships exist in images; by what can become visible and what cannot.

Obviously, television encroaches on much more of our lives than we could ever hope to chart, especially in a research

project lasting only a couple of months. This soon became the very problem that interested me – TV is too big, too broad, too all-encompassing to even begin to talk about. How did television become so enormous? Why is it so difficult to find its outer limits? How does it manage to project the idea that it can contain everything? How do we negotiate that which becomes visible through television? And that which cannot? Or to put it another way, what are the conditions for visibility in this specific relationship?

Imagery as Modulation

Debord's notion of images as mediators of social relationships was formulated alongside his critique of capitalism and the state of consumer society in the 1950s and 1960s. He called it a state in which 'social life is not about *living*, but about *having*'[5], and in which a feeling of *must-have* is no longer created by commodities, but by their *images*. He was, of course, referring specifically to advertising images here, but today it might be interesting for us to understand imagery in broader sense, as the *act of producing something visible*.

For Debord, it is important that the desire *to have* is not only reproduced in images, but also produced *through* images, and is thereby transformed into a desire to become visible, to *appear*. This desire is conditioned by the status of the image itself rather than the depicted commodity. Debord argues that the image and the commodity blend, one becomes the other, and *having* becomes *appearing*.

The relationship between image and commodity that Debord suggests is one in which representation of value becomes value itself through circulation. He thereby aligns *images* with *money* (the monetary system); both are *representations in circulation*, needing to be in constant flow in order to be considered valuable. The faster the circulation is, the higher is the value of each form of representation. Likewise, the value decreases or even disappears if circulation stops. As we know, money that cannot ever be used loses its value

as money and becomes mere paper. Through their constant movement, these forms of representation become instances in which social relationships are not only mediated but also produced. And just as the value of money today is constantly negotiated through floating relationships to currencies and the act of buying and selling money itself (rather than being locked into the gold standard), images are – if we follow Debord – equally unlocked from that which they represent, being desirable in themselves simply by virtue of *being images*.

Gilles Deleuze has referred to this state of permanent floating and negotiation as a 'state of *modulation*'.[6] He describes this state as being different to a state of *control*; i.e. a state of fixed categories and borders, of differentiations and transgression. He suggests that a state of control is a condition of late capitalism, whereas a state of *modulation* emerges towards the end of late capitalism. Capitalism now, Deleuze suggests, can be understood as a *logic of modulation*, rather than a logic of discipline or control.

Debord published his book *The Society of The Spectacle* in 1967, while Deleuze published his text *Postscript on Control Societies* in 1990. Although Debord's text was published long before Deleuze coined the term *modulation*, it is interesting to read the former as pointing out the way images exist in and through mass media – thereby also through television – as part of a *state of modulation*. Furthermore, Deleuze notes in his text: 'Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society – not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating them and using them.'[6] Perhaps, along with Debord and Deleuze, we could understand television as one type of machine marking the shift from a state of control in late capitalism to a *logic of modulation*?

As capital, television is a logic of modulation that assumes universality; it claims that anything can be turned into an image, and that it can transmit any image from anywhere to anywhere else. It provides us with a horizon called "nature" (if in doubt, just watch the Discovery Channel) and suggests that it is the very premise for any investigation of the world,

thus becoming something that seems incapable of investigating itself. If television describes the world, and seems to do it well (at least that is what it repeatedly tells us), then it is hard to describe television: Where *does* television end and the world begin?

Understanding television as a *relationship* or *modulation* – a way of forming social life through flow and velocity – makes it difficult to look at television itself. It exists only *through* and *between* instances, objects, moments, events, actions and rhythms. Perhaps, instead of asking, "*what* is television?", we should ask, "*how* is television?". We may have to perceive television not as a noun, but as a verb: *to be televised*.

The investigation into these questions which I would like to propose can perhaps only be attempted from an embedded position, a position that is in itself also produced by television. The following projects continue the lines of thought I have sketched out above. In these projects I am investigating evaluations, relations and modulations carried out by television in its widest sense, rather than investigating television as a particular object.

II.

Place of Speech – The Newscast

While conducting our research in Umeå, Ashley and I also used the material gathered to pursue our individual interests, and much of the results of the research can be found in our other projects. A year after the research period ended, we both became involved in a collaboration with three other artists: Andrea Geyer, Sharon Hayes and David Thorne. The five of us worked together on a very different project, but as is often the case many interests and ideas travel from one working situation to the next.

I continued to be interested in questions relating to television, as well as in trying to narrate some of its specific circumstances and to point them out from within. In our

group collaboration, we began discussing how the current war in Iraq was put into discourse, how it was negotiated and described through different kinds of address and speech, and how the speaking subject was positioned in relation to the war described.[7] During the process of developing a discussion about how positions were produced and negotiated, we began investigating places and situations from which different kinds of speaking subjects emerge. One place that piqued my interest in particular was the central historical institution of television – the newscast. (The very first broadcasts were, indeed, nothing more than the radio news being read aloud in front of a camera. A so-called "talking head"). Today, the newscast remains a central institution to the way in which war is communicated and made visible to those who are implicated (for example through citizenship) but not "there".

The news is a mode of television through which we hear about war and instances of violence as part of a description of the world around us in its current state, its current modulation. The news happens at every moment of every day: On television, the passage of time itself automatically produces "news" just like images in this system constantly reproduce themselves as "new". You only need to watch CNN for a couple of hours to see how the same stories are continuously repeated – sometimes as headlines and sometimes as comments, notes or streamers – with small changes slowly filtering into the circles of repetition. Details are added, some stories develop while others disappear, nothing really ends or begins, but all are presented as "news" in one constant flow, one constant modulation within which neither breaks nor peaks can appear outside of the established format. In the news nothing can appear outside of a "story", outside the constant flow of change; nothing can break the articulations in place and actually appear to be *new*.

It is interesting that CNN was developed mainly for the travelling businessman staying in hotels. Deleuze described the twentieth century disciplinary man – the man of control and production – as 'a discontinuous producer of energy', whereas the man of later capitalism – the man of modulation

– is a man 'in orbit, in network, in constant modulation, under constant change.'[6] Today's travelling businessman is more likely to be dealing with evaluations, financial investments and ever changing differences between currencies (i.e. relationships *as* commodities[8]), than with the production of objects from raw materials as the twentieth century businessman did.

One aspect of the narration of war that our discussion focused on was the way in which different positions are addressed and produced as either involved in, or distant to, events. Or to put it another way, how involved we are as citizens in whose names acts of aggression are carried out, but at the same time being detached and *elsewhere*, witnessing images of violence and their value in circulation rather than witnessing the violence first hand. Television places the viewer in a position of presence and absence simultaneously, both *there* – seeing what's happening, as if witnessing the acts – and *here* – secure, anonymous and witnessing images in flow, rather than the acts they supposedly depict.

Bucharest 2006 – Televised 1: The Anchor, the I, and the Studio

I was interested in the way this double position, the *here* and the *elsewhere*, is inhabited partly by the viewer who cannot speak (at least not to television, it won't notice), and partly by someone *in* the images who *does* speak, and who, moreover, describes these images for us – someone who is not at home with us, but also not entirely *elsewhere*. Television acts as the instance, or modulation, between these different positions, connecting them and placing a voice between them. But where is the *here* of television? And more importantly, who speaks from that *here*? What subject? How does that *here* function? On what premise and with what consequences?

In a very literal understanding of television, the place of the *here* in the case of the news is, of course, the television news studio. It is here that the stories arriving from the world

– from elsewhere – are talked about and told; this is where they are *anchored*. But what is a TV news studio? What kind of speech can emanate from this space? And what kind of subject? What does it mean to "anchor" the news? How does one ask a news anchor this question? In other words, how does one get a news anchor to speak about her/his own position in the news? These were the questions upon which the work *Televised 1: the Anchor, the I, and the Studio* were based.

During a residency in Bucharest, Romania, I began interviewing news anchors about their on-air roles.[9] The interviews took place in their respective studios, in which they sat in their normal places and positions while being filmed by the studio camera as well as by my own camera. The studio camera produced the image broadcast on our screens every evening, while my camera was filming the whole set, lamps, technicians, other cameras etc.

– Do you use the word "I" when you are on air?

Beginning with this question, I engaged each news anchor in a conversation about their own role in the news they present – whether they see themselves as a part of, or apart from, the news; whether they are inside the story or outside of it? And if they are outside of it, where exactly is this outside place located?

– Where is the "I" located?

In everyday speech, one tends to use "I" quite often. This is not, however, the case with most news anchors who will, in general, refrain from using this tiny pronoun. This is enough to suggest that the speech situation of the anchor is something other than everyday speech. Yet, generally speaking, the news anchor appears on television every day, typically at the same time and of course in the same place. What *is* this place that allows the anchor to engage in such a unique kind of everyday speech?

We all know that the anchor reports from a news studio.

But what exactly is this thing that we call a news studio? Why are all news studios around the world generic, why do they all look more or less the same? Why is this special typology necessary? What does it allow to be said? What does it allow to be seen? And perhaps more importantly, what kind of relationship does it allow to be established between what is seen and what is said? If the utterance of "I" is avoided by news anchors, then what takes its place? What relates the seen to the said if not "I"?

I interviewed four anchors at the Romanian Public Television network, and the result is presented as a multi-channel video piece, in which each interview appears on two synchronized TV screens, one playing the images from the studio camera and one with the images from my camera.

Below is the full list of questions I asked the anchors:

– Do you use the word "I" when you are on the air?
– When watching television for a whole day, one encounters a number of different figures. Some of them are obviously purely fictional, such as a character in a soap opera, while others are not, for example a journalist, an interviewee, a politician, a witness, a translator, etc. How would you describe your own role among these?
– Do you read from cue cards, a monitor or a teleprompter?
– Do you think viewers notice that you're reading a text?
– If yes, what do you do in order to make it seem like direct speech?
– What do you see when you look up?
– When you look at the camera, do you imagine a person?
– Who writes the stories you read?
– Do you read through the stories before going on air? If so, are there sometimes stories that you would prefer to not read aloud? Why?
– Are you sometimes surprised by a story while reading it aloud to the camera? Do you think that the surprise shows? Should it show?
– Can we try to put an "I" in a story, any news story?
– Where is that "I" located?

– What is the difference between the place of the studio and the place of the story?
– What about field reporters?
– What is the difference between using the "I" in the studio and the "I" in the field?

– How would you describe the television studio in relation to using the word "I"?
– Can you describe some routines concerning your body, just before you go on the air?
– How is your name attached to your appearance on screen?

Stockholm 2006 – Visible Blindness

When invited to participate in the project *Visible Blindness – Investigating the Investigation*, I decided to use the framework to continue my research into television. Since my work with the news anchors in Bucharest, I had wanted to carry out more interviews with a variety of people inhabiting different positions modulated by television. Having simultaneously become even more entangled in the New York-based collaboration concerning the war, the situation of the correspondent in the field, which I had already touched upon with the Romanian anchors, had become increasingly interesting to me.

Through *Visible Blindness* I was put into contact with Morgan Olofsson, an experienced foreign correspondent working for the Swedish Public Television network. Olofsson has reported from several war zones, including Chechnya as well as from Washington and Moscow during the Cold War. He has reported both "back" to Sweden, but also – being one of the few reporters present in Chechnya when the war broke out – to a variety of international news outlets.

I decided to stage the interview with Olofsson in the same way a foreign correspondent normally appears on the screen: central and facing a single camera, outdoors, "on location" and visibly holding a microphone. Normally, the questions asked from the studio would be audible to a television viewer, but since I had separated the image of the correspondent from the framework in which it normally appears and is anchored (the news studio), the questions Olofsson was asked were kept inaudible to everyone but him.

Being positioned by television as the "witness" of actual events, *on location*, as the quintessential speaking subject, the correspondent can, of course, use "I" in a very different way than that of the anchor. To ask the correspondent about her/his use of the word "I" would not be interesting at all. However, it was still very much the relationships between the possible modes of speech and the kinds of subject-positions made possible through these modes that were central.

The relationship between the correspondent and the studio is crucial because it renders someone who is elsewhere, present: We see not only the correspondent speaking, but also – and more importantly – we see the correspondent *being seen* and *being heard* (i.e. anchored) through the set-up of the studio. The anchor links the correspondent elsewhere and the audience in their homes, guaranteeing both as present in relation to each other through this framework.

In light of our investigations into the war, it was interesting to us that the correspondent is "on location", i.e. more or less directly in contact with the acts of violence, and that it is important that her/his speech is understood to be located there. What does this mean in relation to what can be said? What becomes visible in this set-up? How is the violence put into speech? What subjects can be seen and heard? Who can speak, and how is their position articulated? In the narration of war a certain position is always necessary: "The enemy". However, "the enemy" can never have a voice guaranteed by the anchor in this intimate relationship between the elsewhere and the home. The word "enemy" and the way it was used became crucial to us, since it is a notion that constitutes a radical difference to the speaking "I". It is also a notion that immediately produces those named "enemy" incapable of speaking as anything else in this set-up: if they *do* appear speaking, it is only from the position of the "enemy", as an ex-

ample hereof, and can only be heard as such, i.e. as an object constituted by the discourse, and never a subject constituting the discourse, like the anchor and the correspondent.

The questions I asked Morgan Olofsson in autumn 2006 were:

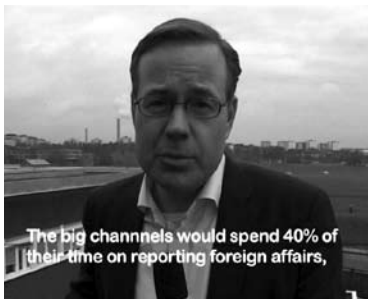
– What defines a place as important enough to have a foreign correspondent there?
– How do you know when something happens?
– What qualifies as "news" – can you describe the premises you consider?
– What is the first thing you do when arriving at a place where "something happened"?
– How do you choose your background image?
– Have you ever used the word "enemy" when reporting?
– Have you ever been named an enemy?
– What does one do after being named an enemy?
– Do you recall specific instances of negotiation of terminology? Can you give examples of words or notions that have been discussed?
– Who do you feel you speak to?
– Do you feel you speak on someone else's behalf?
– What does presence mean? What does it mean to report "on location"?
– What does it mean to broadcast live?
– Do you know how you appear on the screen?
– Will we see Saddam Hussein be hanged on TV? *

One of Olofsson's responses regarding the speed of images and its political consequences, can be found in the series of stills taken from the interview.

* We now know that Saddam Hussein was indeed filmed while hanged. The official broadcast only showed the execution to the point where the noose was placed over Hussein's head and tightened around his neck. No audio was heard. However, unauthorized videophone recording of the hanging showed him falling through the trap door of the gallows. Symptomatically, this footage was first broadcast on YouTube, and it was the story of this broadcast that brought its images to the news on television. It was by then not a story about violence *elsewhere* (in Iraq), but rather a story about violence *here*; violence through the status of the images circulating on our very own screens.


It has to do also with the way technology
is developing, which makes things so easy.

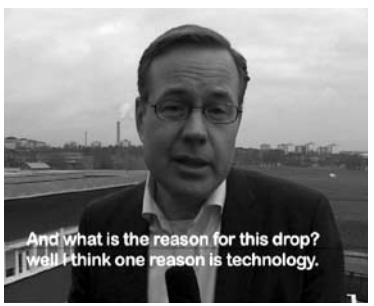

Take for example Walter Croncite, at the tim
when he was anchor on a big US-channel.


The big channnels would spend 40% of
their time on reporting foreign affairs,


simply describing the world which –
to a large extend – the US leads.


– Or at least influences very much...

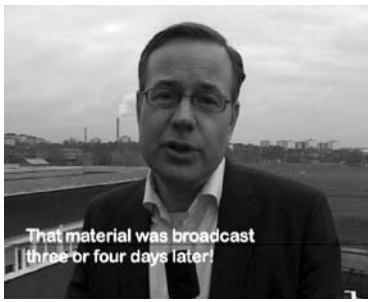

Today the latest numbers I saw –
early 21st century – are down to 8%.


And what is the reason for this drop?
well I think one reason is technology.


In Croncites time they had to shoot
on reel film in Vietnam,


then send the undeveloped
footage back to New York,


where they were developed and
edited according to instructions.


That material was broadcast
three or four days later!


But, none the less, this material became
so incredibly important for that war,


exactly because it had to be about
background and courses of events,


– not singular events in themelsevs –
made it possible for people to


understand much more of
what was going on


in this country very far away
which the US was involved in.


Today you can just plug in a mobile phone
and basically send directly from almost any


which moves the focus much more
towards the singular event,


it is so EASY only to describe singular
events, and so easy to NOT describe


the complicated circumstances behind
them – which then makes journalism


as such mean much less, since singular ev
you can't really effect or try to change,


whereas long chains of events can exactly
be reacted to, in order to try to change the


You feel you can react to things in time,
you can go to the street and protest,


or you can vote accordingly, if you
understand thing as happening over time


and not in sudden random ruptures.


Accumulating singular events give no
possibility for people to understand


their role in them, and how they can
potentially react or change something.

Notes

1. Jacques Rancière, *Film Fables* (Oxford & New York, 2006).
2. Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (Toronto, 1962). McLuhan's main hypothesis was that print culture would soon be replaced by what he called 'electronic interdependence', whereby electronic media replaced visual culture with aural/oral culture. In this new age, humankind would move from individualism and fragmentation to a collective identity with a 'tribal base'. In relation to this, McLuhan has been quoted as saying, 'At the moment of Sputnik, the planet became a global theater in which there are no spectators but only actors.' (1974).
3. More information about the project *Was ist Öffentlichkeit?* can be found at www.katyasander.net/works/wasis.html.
4. For the term "televised" as used in this context in relation to the notion of visibility, see Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Artforum, March 2007, 274.
5. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (Paris, 1967). The text is not copyrighted, and can be found in several places online as well as on paper. The version I used last was a translation into English by Ken Knab, which I found on Wikisource.
6. Gilles Deleuze, *Postscript on Control Societies in Negotiations 1972-1990*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990.
7. Our collaboration resulted in the project *9 Scripts From a Nation at War* and was exhibited at Documenta 12 in Kassel. More information about the piece can be found at www.9scripts.info.
8. Edward LiPuma & Benjamin Lee, *Financial Derivatives and the Globalization of Risk* (2004). "[P]roduction's most important product is rapidly becoming the production of connectivity itself" (21); "Space is no longer the raw material of international violence, in that the violence of finance is so far-removed and remote from both space and everyday life and the sovereignty of the states that it so profoundly affects.... [T]he power of the financial system depends greatly on its power to produce the categories through which it is grasped.... This cannot but lead to a naturalization of its conventions, an essentialization of its socially created ontology, and an externalization of its manifest social implications." (29).
9. The residency in Romania and the production of the piece was carried out in concert with the exhibition *How to Do Things in the Middle of (No) where…* 2005-06, curated by Dorothee Bienert and Antje Weitzel. In Bucharest, the director of the International Center for Contemporary Art, Irina Cios, made it possible for me to carry out the interviews.