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Nomadic scenography and fictional space-body

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Spatial relations, directions, and distances have always been among the most important basic units of my scenographic expression. Lines are endlessly interesting: they twist, turn, roll, and lead. They avoid permanence by generating movement and orientation towards something, but they also arouse curiosity by referring to something that is *not yet here*. The distances between the spaces, on the other hand, are full of tension and attraction, which *activates action*. While the physical scenographic composition always consists of directions and distances, I will now examine them as a source or foundation of artistic expression that precedes all design and decision making. I will open a view to the artistic experiment, in which I strive to experience distances and directions sensory-wise and find such an approach to the spatial composition that would both be bodily and resonate with an environment. I bring to light the creative work phase that usually remains hidden from the end result, the goal of which was not to do spatial planning itself. It was a pure attempt, inspired by the phenomenon of distance, to find an alternative approach to my scenographic practice. By connecting my physical experiment to the wider philosophical discourse, I learned to understand how the mentioned spatial attributes are not only narrative, action-producing, and movement-directing, but also innovative and world-revealing (Figure 2.1).

A journey to the periphery of design

I wanted to explore distance through my own physical involvement by focusing on its ability to make scenographic suggestions in the creative process. In summer 2020, I carried out the one-person *Nomadic Scenography* research project, which focused on distance as a starting point for scenographic expression and on wandering as a place for creating scenography. Through physical hikes, I tried to

deconstruct the permanence of space and time in my scenographic work and to give scenography the opportunity to emerge in the constant variation of the space-time relationship. The digitalization of scenography has been doing the same on stage for a long time, while designers' working methods have developed to be largely technology-driven. In addition to the changes produced by the dematerialization¹ of stage, my experiment raises a more ontological question of the space, place, or placelessness of the working process itself. I am asking how far scenographic work, conventionally understood as a proactive design work or a creative collaborative process, can break away from its own accustomed operating models. Is it possible for the scenographic work to distance itself from its typical event spaces – both the designer's desk and the artist collective – and literally wander into a changeable and unpredictable space-time that has no evident connection to performance context or a space of performance? At the same time, my experiment also combines a wider philosophical question of the meaning of the environment and abandons the scenographer-subject. To what extent could scenography emerge, as if peripherally, by being located away from the conventional design practices and taking place as an author-independent event?



Figure 2.1 The rippling pulse of the water surface in the first hike in Varpusenlinna Island, Lake Päijänne. Photo by the author.

Scenography as bringing-forth

My artistic research experiment was about rethinking the creative work process and questioning the position of desk work as the default for a scenographic process and scenographer's work. By the 2000s, I had already examined the formation of performance scenography when working with process-based methods. In the spirit of Martin Heidegger's late-period thinking, I pondered what kind of foundation would hierarchically free and equal scenographic work require in relation to collective creative work. I wanted to find an alternative way of working, where the scenography was not conceived for a pre-planned

performance but could take shape or reveal itself more on its own terms. In this frame of reference, creative work appeared, above all, as a listening and receptive world relationship, along with the artist's involvement in the emerging work. I equated scenography with the concept of *tekhne*, that does not refer to making in the sense of manufacturing, but rather something that guides the *physis*, the all-encompassing being, to manifest as art in the event of *bringing-forth*.² My aim was to consider scenography in terms of a disclosure, rather than imitation or representation. It was also a way of thinking about art and truth together, and a commitment to the notion of truth, where truth is not the correspondence of knowledge and object but an event of disclosure.

Connection to the art of walking

With nomadic experiments, I continue to examine scenographic bringing-forth, but in another way: as an event preceding the design, without an artistic collective, and more in the context of expanded scenography than the realm of performing arts.³ I approach scenography freely as a process of wandering and formation. In choosing hiking as a scenographic method, I join the broader discourse of art-travelling. Hiking and walking have long been part of the contexts of not only art but also cultural-historical observation. The art of walking can be considered to have been inherited from the Grand Tours of early Romanticism and the thinking of the philosophers of that period like Henry David Thoreau and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who praised freedom of movement. However, it has also been influenced by numerous other forms of observing nature and the landscape.⁴ The art of walking has developed into its current form, especially in the works of the early land artists of the 1960s, such as Richard Long's long-distance walk, which can also be called embodied sculpture. Long's artwork was formed from the totality of his own bodily experience, walked distances, and later gallery works conceptualizing them. The author Paul Moorhouse, who is extensively familiar with Long's career, states that Long's works imply that walking is essentially practical, but it is also a way of engaging and interacting with the world.⁵

The connection of my experiment with the wider art-travel discourse can be found in the comprehensive world relationship and corporeality of wandering, but also in the art-motivated gaze, and the fact that what happened to an individual may later return to the art community through scenographic deeds. Whereas Long made sculpture by walking instead of working with materials and forms, I think that scenography can also be not only space and place but also placelessness, and it can also deny the permanence of place. In my hikes, it was essential not only to surrender to nature but also to replace the artist collective with a non-human environment.

Wandering room and speculative middle

I carried out the *Nomadic Scenography* project in Finland, Päijät-Häme, in the area of Päijänne National Park, in the ridge landscapes formed by the Ice Age, and in the archipelago surrounded by a large body of water, where the boundaries formed by nature caused resistance and friction to movement and thinking. I worked within the framework of artistic research, which enabled

methodical freedom and artistic knowledge to emerge from my own experience. According to Henk Borgdorff, artistic research essentially involves something he calls *material thinking*, the articulation of non-propositional knowledge and experience embodied in artworks and creative processes. He has described the thinking related to artistic research as thinking about not-knowing and the not-yet-known, that ‘creates room for that which is unthought, that which is unexpected – the idea that all things could be different.’⁶ Like the philosopher Juha Varto, I think that the emergence of such unpredictable artistic knowledge requires special recognition, which must take place in the context of art itself.⁷ Such knowledge is either the artist’s personal bodily, sensory, or material knowledge, which precedes all contextualization and conceptual divisibility. Artistic research can therefore only become communicable through reaching and identifying this knowledge. Varto speaks of this kind of individual knowledge as *a singular*. According to him, being singular in the world is never being alone in one’s own world but being in the same world with others.⁸

Nomadic Scenography was guided by the principles of artistic research, and my own artistic process formed the path through which new knowledge emerged. I was also inspired by the methods of (post)qualitative research, particularly from Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman. In their book *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World: WalkingLab* (2018), they suggest walking and moving as a method for conceptualization and creative problem solving. The authors raise questions about thinking in motion and the intertwining of thinking and doing. They emphasize the suggestive nature of the method and state that it is *the proposals* that act as hybrids between the real and the possible.⁹ Central to the thinking of Springgay and Truman is also queering and examining familiar expressions from unusual perspectives and in unusual contexts through walking.¹⁰ Then conventional human perspective is often challenged by the non-human influence as well. Both the investigated phenomenon and the route have appeared in a new way and in relation to each other. The authors emphasize the nature of research as a speculative event and locate speculative ‘what if’ thinking instead of a proactive plan based on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, leaning on the *speculative middle* in a situation where research is already underway and the researcher is inside the event with their thinking and doing.¹¹ Springgay and Truman’s methodology approaches artistic research or creative process in that it maintains openness to the gradually revealing phenomenon, rather than shackling it with pre-defined or restrictive questions. As artistic research, nomadic scenography differs from that. The hiking method does not focus on anything outside itself, but the new creative scenographic thinking emerging during the research is in itself both the object of the research and the objective. The building of the method was therefore based on methodological pluralism. According to Borgdorff, different approaches that emerge from the other sciences can be part of artistic research, but they should only complement it. The research itself must take place in and through the creation of art.¹²

My hikes commenced without a specific design goal, and my experience was that the creative thinking inevitably centred itself in the middle of the process. It happened, not in anticipation, but as the walk progressed and the route took shape, as events in the environment and its various temporal layers were juxtaposed in

my perception. I began my research by transforming scenography in the spirit of Springgay and Truman and combining it not only with hiking but also with fiction. The phenomena of presence and absence, which are central to the distance, wandered with me in the form of a fictional room. The room was a pocket-sized piece of folded cardboard or a scale model, the essence of which was defined by the unfinished. As a physical object, the room was on the one hand present, real, and material, but at the same time also incomplete in its unfinishedness, something that exists as a possibility yet is not yet existent. The unfinishedness of the fictional room, as well as its ability to wander and change its location, drew the thinking to a speculative middle (Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.2 The starting points for the fictional room: Field tools and cardboard materials found in the nearby environment. Photo by the author.

Antihumanism and distributed agency

I look at scenographic formation primarily as an artistic question related to distance and placelessness, but also as a philosophical issue about the manifestation of art and its relationship to *distributed agencies*. With the hikes I made, my own spatial-temporal being intertwined with diverse nature, and there were also non-human perspectives involved.

The idea that scenography can be formed by wandering and in an ever-changing relationship to all kinds of materialities brought alongside the Heideggerian background-horizon the vital materiality theory by the social philosopher and theorist Jane Bennett. My reflections on distributed agency also received conceptual support from American professor Stacy Alaimo's theory of trans-corporeality, in which any human or non-human entity is seen as a body that participates and influences other bodies.¹³ I also thought of a room from the basis of trans-corporeality as a body, and more as a thing than an object that would settle in relation to other bodies on a journey. In Alaimo's theory, bodies are porous and permeable; the theory emphasizes non-human perspectives as well as interactions between different bodies and a fundamental interdependence that

humanism, for example, does not recognize.¹⁴ When I thought about the agency of scenography, I thought of both the scenographer-subject and all the environments shaped by nature or culture that I encounter on hikes, and the different materialities they contain as permeable bodies in the spirit of Bennett and Alaimo's theories. However, I was also still committed to Heidegger's late-period thoughts, which have also become detached from man's intentional world relationship and more attached to an anti-humanist way of listening to the world. I am thinking of bodies as Heideggerian things that need to be listened to and that must be confronted according to their own essence, unlike objects, which are always determined by a goal set from outside.¹⁵ Bennett also emphasises the human-independent power of bodies, which he speaks of as *thing-power*.¹⁶ For me, Bennett's theory continued, refined, and took forward the discussion opened by Heidegger and his late thinking that was inclined to a poetic or even mystical manner of speaking.

A key shift in perspective, supported by both theoretical approaches, lies in the fact that the scenographer-body is no longer more active than other bodies in its environment or as an actor at a hierarchically higher level. Artistic formation does not require either the artist's intention or proactive decision making, but rather reception and interaction with other bodies. Background theories challenged scenography as intentional design work and provided concepts with which to speak of it as movement, change, and formation. The hikes were aimed at a new way of working and, only after that, on knowledge building and practice.

Place of emptiness and state of lack

I approached distance as a physical, conceptual, and experiential phenomenon, but I thought of it above all as an intermediate space, and a state that always includes difference and thus also lack. As I began my wanderings, I thought of the lack as a scenographic potential and approached distance as a separating – but at the same time, porous – dimension. My goal was to bring these two different spatial relationships, *presence* and *absence*, into encountering in this porous zone. I presumed that the constant change in the spatial-temporal relationship caused by the hike would place me, as a hiker, in a kind of non-place that would be neither pure presence nor pure absence. The non-place, or place of emptiness, paralleled my understanding of Heideggerian *releasement*, a space where a person is neither active nor passive, but open and sensitized to different encounters. The defining feature of releasement is a waiting and listening attitude, an attitude that does not focus on anything that is known in advance.¹⁷

Now I wanted to find out how the physical strain caused by the hikes, the heightened sensory awareness, and the directions guiding the walk would affect this and what kind of spatial experience it would produce. I sought experiential information about how the shapes of the terrain, or the tensions created by the distances would tune my experience. Philosopher *Timo Klemola* parallels releasement to the Japanese philosopher *Kitaro Nishida's* way of thinking about the breakdown of the dualistic subject-object world relationship, where ego-awareness fades and body-awareness increases. The self then moves to a kind of place of emptiness, where subject and object are no longer separate, and the world expresses itself through our body. This is accompanied by a dampening of

active activity and a strengthening of intuition. However, the dimming of activity is not passivity, but rather a kind of allowing.¹⁸ This is essential in the creation of experiential artistic knowledge and is related to what Varto writes about the ontology of singular. He argues that something revealed by void can only be singular.¹⁹ In his analysis, Klemola still refers to the Chilean philosopher and neuroscientist *Fransesco Varela*, who also talks about the corporeality of the mind and the intertwining of the body and the world. Varela sees human consciousness as a complex interaction process between the world and the mind, instead of consciousness being a representation of a pre-given world. The key thing is that the mind, or consciousness, is not located in the head, but is created through action in the world. Varela describes the mutual relationship between different actors with the concept *interbeing*, which is stronger than interaction, and emphasizes the equal and simultaneous manifestation of different entities.²⁰

Wandering towards assemblage

Getting to know Heideggerian releasement had already taught me the importance of relinquishing active will as part of the creative process. Bennett's theory of *vibrating matter* also brought alongside it a view of the environment and the non-human as a *distributed agency*. In Bennett, non-human agency is always associated with the impulse or driving force of action, which he speaks of as the concept of *actant*, originated from Bruno Latour. An actant is a source of action that either acts independently or is given activity by others.²¹ According to Bennett, alongside individual human actors, there are also multidisciplinary actants that can have partial, overlapping, and contradictory *efficacy and power*.²² At the start of my wanderings, the lack of defining the distance was for me the primary and clearest source of scenographic activity – an actant. I assumed it would settle the room that wandered with me into various changing power relations with other impulses and ongoing processes produced by the advancing hike. Bennett describes the actor giving up the subject as a distributive event, in which the most diverse human and non-human things and phenomena can act as a source of actions that create *an assemblage*. With the concept of assemblage deriving from Deleuze and Guattari, Bennett describes a network, or meshwork, that emerges as a kind of part-whole relation to a volatile but still functional whole.²³

I quote the concept of assemblage to use it to describe the formation of nomadic scenography. By assemblage, I mean both the temporal and the spatial relationships that arose when wandering – that is, in spatial instability that is not attached to a particular place. Distributive agency is realized through the interaction of numerous spatial and temporal bodies on a different scale. Thus, the assemblage is a kind of ever-changing event space. According to Bennett, what is central to the assemblage is that it consists of a collaborative action in which each component has its own pulse that differs from the common rhythm of the assemblage. Thus, the assemblage takes shape and eventually ceases to exist, as determined by the sum of vital forces and effectivities that each component considers.²⁴ In nomadic scenography, distance and hiking regulated how different spatially and temporally varying materials and pulses affected the observations of the assemblage.

The terms *actant*, *distributive agency*, and *assemblage* describe the involvement in relation to unfolding scenography that takes place during my wanderings, as well as Heideggerian *releasement*. What they have in common is thinking of the whole of being as a dimension beyond the control of the subject. Creative scenographic thinking arises from the combined effect of several events that start and take place at different times. Hiking is determined not only by my own progress and the change it produces, but also by the changes that take place in the time-space of the surrounding nature. My involvement arises as a bodily, somatic experience, joining an event that is wider than me, even though my experience or perception does not extend to the source that caused them. The time perspective of thousands of years prevented me from reaching the start of the processes shaping the landscape and climate, but I was still a part of their events through interbeing, and so was also my fictional room. I positioned myself as part of an assemblage of various animate and inanimate bodies, which materialized in my bodily and sensory presence, shaping my creative activity at the same time. Even though I wandered in national parks, I still encountered numerous signs left in nature by the industrial world. Some of the signs were random; some were intentional, such as the route markers painted on the bark of trees that were hundreds of years old (Figure 2.3). The question was therefore not only about the authentic but also about the presented nature, whose pulse was formed depending on the routes, initiated by very different actants.



Figure 2.3 The pulses of authentic and performed nature meet in a blue route mark on a pine tree trunk. Päijätsalo, Päijänne National Park. Photo by the author.

Varpusenlinna

I had my first hike in the middle of the most beautiful Scandinavian summer on 25 July 2020 in *Varpusenlinna*, a small island on the border of *Päijät-Häme* and Central Finland, and *Kellosalmi* and *Kuhmoinen*. The island was so small that it could have been circled in ten minutes if the steep terrain to the west had not made movement challenging. My day of hiking was dry, but cloudy and calm. The temperature was 17 degrees Celsius. As I approached, my first view was of a high, vertical cliff. I took a boat ride behind the island and landed on the west side, moving through a rocky shoal. My arrival was surrounded by silence. The calm of the lake, with its immobility, intensified the experience of silence and tuned my being to listening to the environment. The island had a strong character. The shady west slope was occupied by huge boulders that seemed to stop on the slope as if they had been stopped in time while rolling down. I ascended from the middle of the pine-dominated forest to the highest point of the island. I was the only representative of the human species, but numerous birds, whose song I did not recognize, registered my arrival. From the clifftop, the view of the lake stretched to the horizon, and I felt I was at the centre of the universe. The experience of distance was strong and empowering. The intermittent rupture of the water surface revealed a momentary intensification of the wind, or alternatively, drew visible the routes of passing boats.

Although I stood at the highest point of the landscape, I could not see the shape of the rock beneath me. I was emphatically aware of the limitations of my observation, as well as the simultaneity of presence and absence. I tried to locate areas I knew far away on the winding strip-like coast. A desperate attempt to see made the distance a bodily experience. I realized the limits of my senses: On the one hand, the opportunity offered by a high and open place, but on the other hand, also the inability to see far. The body, the senses, and the environment formed a whole, and the boundary between them became porous in my experience. At the same time, the relationship of my own presence to the absent also became porous. As the distance closed the details of the landscape, the event evoked instinct, intuition, and imagination. Although the absent was invisible and hidden, the spatial experience was strongly determined by the awareness, or instinct, of being surrounded, included, and in relation to the absent as well. The wandering room did not get any clear form in this environment. It was still raw material, cardboard, and paper, waiting to be sized, shaped, and assembled.

When I consciously took the lack inherent in the distance as the source of action, it began to emerge from the corporeality that I realized in a new way. I filled the gap for the absent not only by trying to see, but also by moving and advancing. The experience of the moving body from the surrounding space was constant reaction, sweating, shortness of breath, increased heart rate, and heartbeats. The distance travelled felt like strain and lactic acid in my muscles, and my body gradually began to anticipate repeated ups and downs. I tired, slipped, and fell. The moisture on the ground rose through the clothes onto the skin, and the low-growing lichen pressed its image into my palms as I took support from the ground. Immediately, the sensuous confronted the temporality of matter. The rock formed by the Ice Age was steep and resisted my passage. The shape of the island guided my course into a circular motion,

even though there were no ready-made paths there. The surrounding body of water opened in a different view at each point of the compass, always in relation to the observation site, either open or framed in different ways. When I tried to place the spatiality of the island in the room that roamed with me, it simply fell apart. The space took the form of holes, incisions, and openings that were constantly organized in different ways. The room was not created by building or adding, but by receiving and bringing-forth. It came to be a reflection of assemblage (Figure 2.4).

The central body of the landscape, Lake Päijänne, began to form as the continental glacier consumed rock fractures during the last Ice Age.²⁵ Freezing, thawing, and flowing have changed its pulse in a millennial perspective, and humans have had to settle into this environment on non-human terms. I got to know later, after my hikes, that Varpusenlinna presumably housed a later Iron Age fortress associated with tribal wars. According to the local village history, *Kellosalmen historiaa*, forts were built between 1000 and 1300 on difficult-to-navigate islands and cliffs that were easy to defend.²⁶ Varpusenlinna seems to be well suited for this, thanks to both good visibility and a sheltered slope. I had encountered remnants of the rock formations of the fort on the island, and my experience of the space resonated strongly with the history of the place. The shape of the island responded to the spatial needs of attack, defence, or protection. It was literally a kind of state of being caught or encountered. The island continued to form a continuous event space for numerous vital bodies and their assemblages. The pulses of the assemblages were long-lasting, continuing to materialize in the rolling and corrosion of the rocks or in the growth and twisting of the stunted trees.

It was not possible for the distributed agency to open to my observation as a whole, but I was still part of the same event and the same swarm of vitalities. The pulse set off from the continental glacier extended to me, my life, even to the coffee water I carried in a thermos. The shared pulse was both a poetic idea and a concrete fact. According to YLE, Finnish Broadcasting Company's online article *Päijännetunneli*, the drinking and domestic water of one million inhabitants of the Helsinki metropolitan area is diverted from Päijänne via a 120-kilometre water tunnel.²⁷ Some of the pulses in the assemblages were related, time-wise, to considerably shorter natural processes – nesting, wilting, withering, and decay – but at the same time, also to momentary situations and various technological corporealities and materialities. Such were the passing motorboats and their petrol-powered engines with their emissions, which have both immediate and long-lasting effects. The lure pulled behind the boat had its own space and pulse, as floats floating on the surface had theirs (Figure 2.5).



Figure 2.4 The opening of distance in a fictional space-body. Varpusenlinna Island, Lake Päijänne. Photo by the author.



Figure 2.5 The rock formed by the Ice Age was steep and resisted wandering. Varpusenlinna, Päijänne National Park. Photo by the author.

Päijätsalo, Pulkkilanharju and Kelvenne

I completed the rest of the project's hikes on *Päijätsalo* on 1 August 2020, on *Pulkkilanharju* on 6 August 2020, and on *Kelvenne* on 7 August 2020. The fictional room had become an instrument through which I was connected to my surroundings. I likened the pocket-sized apparatus in my mind to Claude glasses, the black mirrors used by the 18th-century English upper class on walks for nature observation. However, my room did not function as a means of capturing or representing the picturesque views, but rather as a different pulse

matter – a Heideggerian thing. The experience of distance was by no means limited to the route I took, but it expanded radially around me. The present and the absent began to merge more and more conceptually and experientially. What was absent was not just things behind or in front of me, but a kind of network of locations that my own body and the fictional room constantly related to differently. An image of a network was strengthened when I became aware of the interrelationships of my routes and the temporal connections going back to the Ice Age, as well as the map formed from them. The environment began to materialize as relationships, networks, and directions. Arrivals and departures by speedboat contrasted with the physicality of the hikes along rocky coasts and ridges, as well as the quiet agency of the meltwater that shaped the landscape.

According to *Juotavan puhdas Päijänne* webpage, Päijätsalo located on the eastern shore of Lake Päijänne, is a rugged island whose rocky peak is a remnant of the corrugated mountains that formed almost two billion years ago. The bare-rock top of the island rises 85 metres above the surface of Päijänne.²⁸ The altitude differences seemed considerable, and my progress was again challenged by the terrain's response to body movements. The island was dominated by spruce forests, where the forest had long been allowed to develop in its natural state. Where the trees in Varpusenlinna were shallow and stunted, the trees in Päijätsalo were correspondingly rugged evergreen forests. Thus, the pulses of ecological processes also differed from each other. The different processes of growth and decay manifested themselves in a variety of encounters, strata, and conformations. The pulses were constructed from variability in decay and growth, but also from interrelationships of species, resistances, and adaptations, but they were also intertwined with vibrations from new technological and material processes brought by people and the assemblage was guided by many different sources of power – actants. However, the recreational use of Päijänne had a long-lasting pulse, and the signs of 19th-century villa life were still visible. According to *Päijänteiden kansallispuisto, Päijätsalo* webpage, at that time, people from *Pyydyniemi* had climbed to the mountaintop, *Päijätsalonvuori*, to admire the lake landscapes of Päijänne and the waters of *Tehinselkä*. At an early stage, an observation tower had been built on the highest point of the island, which later also functioned as an air surveillance tower during the war.²⁹ Through their height and good visibility, Varpusenlinna and Päijätsalo had an interesting common feature in relation to distance and ambush. According to stories, Päijänne is said to have been named after an ambush, which is described by the word *päijäys*. Gaze, gazing, or *päijäys* appeared as one historical measure of distance, and earlier ways of looking at the landscape encountered my own way of looking at, or rather experiencing, the environment through, or with, my fictional room. Modelling or wandering with the fictional room meant an attempt to participate in an environmental event and move towards the scenography revealed by the hike. Thinking of a vague cardboard form as a fictitious and reactive room-body or as a Heideggerian thing was at the same time an attempt to liberate creative thinking and also to achieve something hidden from perception.

Place of emptiness and scenographic assemblage

The state of lack I identified as an actant was a pure starting point, a vacuum, not a place, between the counterforces formed by presence and absence. I recognized several moments in the middle of my hikes at which action and intuition intertwined and where active action changed to allowing the environment to unfold in my bodily experience. The fictive space that I had thought of as a room disintegrated time after time and followed the directions formed in the landscape.

The distributed agency, which Bennett speaks of as swarm of vitalities, was realized as tensions between different bodies and space-times. My own agency was the involvement of hikes in these events. The hikes themselves were physically tough, and while enhancing bodily consciousness, they also produced experiences of the disappearance of the boundaries between the body and the environment, or between the self and the world. Involvement in changing the space-time-matter assemblage further enabled the emergence of *scenographic assemblage*. By scenographic assemblage, I am referring to a space that can only arise from experiential inclusion and distributed agency. The hike can be seen as a method for revealing or bringing-forth that implements the Heideggerian non-intentional, waiting, and listening attitude: releasement. Philosopher Miika Luoto interpretes this as a creative event. People open up to the unknown that reigns through them, and creativity arises when they learn to face what governs them.³⁰ On the hikes, this was involvement in an event where different bodies interacted and influenced each other. Hiking then takes place as *tekhne*, a method that allows for the disclosure of the *physis* and furthers the formation of scenography. Nomadic scenography emerges from physical exertion and excitement on the journey, a kind of thinking in motion, more of an inclusion and a process of free formation, rather than active doing. This was also reflected in the formation of the fictional room. The room remained unfinished to the end, shapeless, and disintegrated in different ways with each hike. However, the disintegration was not insignificant, but rather an opening towards the spatial rhizome (Figure 2.6).



Figure 2.6 The wandering room closes the horizon. Photo by the author.

By nomadism towards the rhizome

My experience of progression was not as linear as a hiking trail itself but was surrounded by numerous simultaneous and disparate events. Getting lost cut off the experience of intervals and distances and drew attention to directions and instincts, into a spatial state of knowing without knowing. Successive hikes began to intertwine and open an event space that was more of a network than anything that could be set in clear boundaries. The recognition of distributed agency as a space-producing, or rather space-revealing, factor changed my attitude towards presence and absence. I no longer thought of them as locations, distances between things or phenomena, or anything that would be relative to immediate sensory experience. Presence and absence appeared as temporals operating in different pulses and vibrating through each other. They showed up at the same time in all the wear, recesses, traces, and vegetation I encountered while hiking. They were continuous events of intrusion and permeation of disparate bodies of different ages.

Spatial networking or spatial diversity can be described not only as an assemblage but also by Deleuze and Guattari's concept of rhizome.³¹ The rhizome is seen as a kind of irreversible structure. Finnish TV production designer and researcher Kimmo Turunen has described the rhizome in a media space as an event in which ideas, thoughts, or forms move and manifest in endlessly changing contexts with no direct and clear cause-and-effect connection between them. Instead, there is, as it were, an invisible thread in their inter-relationships for all temporal and spatial locations and events. The rhizome can open or close from any point in time or space and still connect different levels to each other. From this moment and situation, I can touch the past or the future, located there or here.³² This also describes my hiking well. Hiking constantly changed the relationship to both space and time. At the same time, bodily and sensory events network into non-human processes in the environment. The hikes revealed the distance as a rhizome of various permeable and stratified bodies as well as temporal influences.

In the Alaimo theory of trans-corporeality, the prefix 'trans' refers specifically to movement between bodies and emphasizes transitions between different human and non-human actors and ecological and chemical processes. Central to the theory is that bodies participate in each other and change each other.³³ Bennett's thing-power also contains an aspect that emphasizes the sociality and unification of objects. Based on the theories of Bennett and Alaimo, as well as my hiking experiments, I think that the porosity, permeability, and alliance of bodies are events that produce or reveal a space defined by plurality, simultaneity, and unpredictability. My fictional room also reflected this as it constantly evaded one permanent form. Thus, the spatial composition revealed by the hikes appears just as a rhizome, which consists of several intersecting space-times and the intersecting effects of various human and non-human processes. This becomes visible in Päijänne lake itself. The surface formation of the large lake-body varies drastically. The different variations, from calm to storm, all have their own pulse, which still have their own actants. Still, the condition of the surface is always created by distributed agency. The surface mainly follows the direction and strength of the wind – in other words,

temperature and air pressure differences – but also the friction caused by the surrounding nature, such as ridges shaped by the ice age or manmade structures. All of this still has its impact on life below the surface and, for example, on the movements of fish-bodies in the water, the movements of boat-bodies on the surface, and the human bodies travelling in boats. It is a question of a kind of part-whole relation to a volatile but still functional whole.

A rhizomical scenography formed on the basis of distributed agency could never arise from a single predetermined need, for instance, from aesthetics or functionality, but it should be able to emerge simultaneously from several different sources. Nomadic scenography is just this. I named my experiment *nomadic*, because I wanted to connect scenography with events related not only to hiking but also to the interbeing and distributed agency. The idea of collecting coincides with distributed agency. The individual vital bodies, each with their own pulse, come together in an assemblage. However, the compilation is not performed by the subject but is part of the events of the more-than-human world. So, it is a question of becoming a collection rather than actively gathering.

Return from the periphery to the centre

Distributed agency, thought in motion, made tangible in the fictional room, also gradually transformed into a proposal for a new approach to the scenographic assemblage. The hikes revealed the distance as non-linear, but also as non-vertical and non-horizontal, as if untraceable dimension, in which no deficiency other than that caused by the difference, was permanent. The lack steered towards something all the time. The particular effectiveness of the assemblage arose from the fact that, although my hikes always had a direction, the distributed agency of the bodies I encountered was revealed at the same time as temporal, differently stratified, and permeable processes. Distance no longer meant a measurable hike, an interval, but rather a place where spatial relationships are renegotiated each time. Constantly advancing, shaping, and disintegrating, nomadic scenography forbade a solution that would stop at just one permanent option.

I am now returning from the periphery to the conventional centre of the design and sitting at the desk I rejected. I am clearing space for a possible new practice. I am now sketching a space-body concept in which a neutral space opens to the agencies revealed by my hikes and implements the scenographic assemblage based on that, ripple, fracture, stratification, corrosion, and leaching. This takes place as space-compliant, rising and falling lights, colours, and graphic patterns, as well as changes in their intensity. The scenographic assemblage revealed by the hikes is not a formation of separate bodies, but an event based on distributed agency and a porous network opening in different directions. I am sketching the shape that the fictional space-body that wandered with me has gained, or rather lost. I will continue to sketch and consider both human and non-human actants. The fictional space-body of my sketch responds to impulses, touch, movement, and sound generated by presence. It responds to speech, shouts, and whispers, but also to breathing, body temperature, and heartbeat. It responds to the materials present and their movements, each of which has its own independent pulse. The effectiveness

of an assemblage varies with how it is in space and how its human or non-human bodies move and function in relation to each other. I will now leave my sketch on the table, at a stage that requires both a proper design task and further thinking (Figure 2.7).

I am still in the middle of the research, in the speculative middle. Yet, physical hikes revealed the phenomenon of distance in a new way, as an experiential inclusion and interbeing, and incorporated the idea of rhizome into my artistic work. At the same time, they produced artistic knowledge about distributed agency, a kind of scenographic bringing-forth that was singular in its nature. The artistic knowledge created from an individual experiment has a personal, but always at the same time, broader meaning than the subject. Artistic knowledge arises from the bodily and sensory experiences of an individual artist, as well as their choices, which also include the unconscious and thus the a-subjective preceding the subjective.³⁴ Thus, artistic knowledge is localized into both the human and the more-than-human world, and its application is its own unique event each time. This means that nomadic scenography also does not allow for generalizations, reproducibility, or direct modelling but always requires the involvement of the individual artists in their world. The scenography that my nomadic experiment has revealed appears as a network of relationships liberated by porous bodies, providing a basis for new thinking, new interpretations, and a new singular.

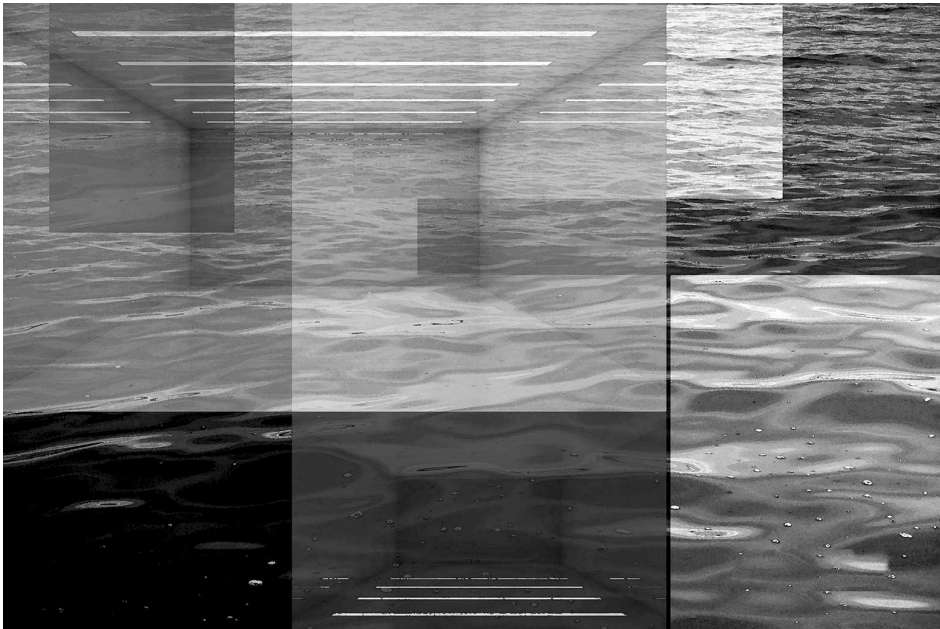


Figure 2.7 Transformation of a fictional space-body, a sketch. Photo by the author.

Notes

- 1 Performance theorist and historian Arnold Aronson (2012, 86–95) speaks about the change caused by digitalization as the dematerialization of the stage.
- 2 Heidegger (1998, 60–62) detached *tekhne*, in his own interpretation, from the craft-ontology and the idea that precedes the manufacturing, and he combined art and thinking. The concealed nature of the physis could appear as meaningful to man only with the help of *tekhne*. For Heidegger, *tekhne* meant above all knowing and *bringing-forth* (her-vor-bringen). Heidegger introduces the concept of *bringing-forth* in ‘The Origin of the Work of Art’ (1935/36).
- 3 Expanded scenography is an open-ended definition that emphasizes the increasingly independent role of scenography as a part of performance, but also the various applications of scenography outside the performing arts. See Joslin McKinney and Scott Palmer (2017) *Expanded Scenography, an introduction to contemporary performance design*.
- 4 Art pedagogue Anna-Katariina Keskitalo (2006, 37–57) has identified different approaches to travelling discourse and walking or hiking in nature. Her classifications include the eyes of an explorer, a geographer, an artist, a forest romantic, a national romantic, a flaneur, a tourist, and a wilderness hiker.
- 5 Moorhouse 2002, 33.
- 6 Borgdorff 2012b, 124.
- 7 Varto 2017, 55.
- 8 Varto 2008, 38 and 216.
- 9 Springgay & Truman 2018.
- 10 According to Springgay and Truman (2019, 2–3), they have organized several Queer Walking Tours for the big public, where the research topic has been explored during a particular route walked together, through discussion and speculation, pop-up exhibitions, and lectures along the route. Their Queer Walking Tours have always started from a proposal to queer also a place by approaching a phenomenon, under the study, from many frictional and oblique perspectives.
- 11 Springgay & Truman 2017, 1–2 and 4.
- 12 Borgdorff 2012a, 147.
- 13 See Jane Bennett (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*; Stacy Alaimo (2012). *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*.
- 14 Alaimo 2012, 156.
- 15 Heidegger 1991 (1959) writes in *Releasement* (Gelassenheit) about meditative thinking that approaches objects also belonging to the technical world with a new attitude, as ‘things.’ Heidegger (1996) had already described the essence of things in his essay *The Thing* (Das Ding) in 1954.
- 16 Bennett 2010, 9.
- 17 For Heidegger (1991) *releasement* (gelassenheit) meant a waiting and listening world relationship and meditative thinking – the opposite of goal-oriented calculative thinking.
- 18 Klemola 2005, 174–178.
- 19 Varto 2008, 112.
- 20 Klemola 2005, 156–159.
- 21 Bennett 2010, 9 and 34.
- 22 Bennett 2010, 46.
- 23 Bennett 2010, 48.
- 24 Bennett 2010, 48–49.
- 25 Rautio 2011, 6–9.
- 26 Hirvonen, Kinnari, Koski & Ruokolainen 2014, 63.
- 27 *Päijännetunneli*.
- 28 *Päijänteiden kansallispuisto, Päijätsalo*.
- 29 *Päijänteiden kansallispuisto, Päijätsalo*.

- 30 Luoto 2002, 97–98, 110 and 114; Ikonen 2006, 206.
 31 Deleuze & Guattari 2013 (1987).
 32 Turunen 2019, 118–119.
 33 Alaimo 2012.
 34 When Varto (2009, 39) speaks about artistic research, he emphasizes the solid connection between knowing and world relationship: ‘If I am immersed in everything, wrapped into, changing with it, often at my own different pace, no conceptual entity or similar, no know, can prove what something is. Only something revealed in the event itself, as an event, can prove what something is.’

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