



Real Theatrical Transformations In European Theatre In Rimini Protokoll's *Karl Marx, Das Kapital, Erster Band And Call Cutta*

Katharina Pewny

European theatre is in the tradition of oral theatre where actors embody characters and bring the written texts of plays onto the stage. The separation between art and everyday spaces, and between the play and the audience experiencing it are also part of the structure of classic oral theatre, which is constituted by the four elements of actors, play, co-presence of the actors and the audience, and the separation of the theatre from everyday space. Theatres representing so-called high culture were, from their founding in the second half of the 18th century, tightly woven together with the raise of nation states and their languages. Although this is the beginning of theatre today, theatre's preferred form – the bourgeois tragedy – can nevertheless be tracked back to antique tragedy.

High culture theatre still remains the dominant form for the general public, and is certainly privileged when it comes to public funding, but clearly it is not the only existing theatrical form. In the succession of artistic avant garde in the first half of the twentieth century, and again in the 1960s and 1970s, manifold forms of performance developed out of the meeting of visual arts, oral and dance theatre. Often within the spaces of the everyday performers made use of their own bodies, and video was

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their favoured medium in which to radically question the separation between art and the everyday, their social role and identity. After thirty years of performance art its practices have now reached the big theatres of the German speaking world, coming into focus for its more engaged audiences. The four basic elements of bourgeois oral theatre mentioned above – stage-play, drama, co-presence of audience and actors, and the theatre space have been increasingly transformed. In other words, what is now at stake is the relationality of the theatre and other realities, or how the one relates to the other. How does the theatre of illusion, which traditionally represents a world which it does not embody but represents, relate to a reality which threatens to overrun it?

In contrast to theatrical representations of a world and its actors – both have to be represented – performance art has influenced theatre forms which work with the production of ‘presence’, and where relations between the theatre and other realities become unclear. The theatre of presence does not represent a world which is to be aspired to or criticised, but produces its own specific reality whose status as “real” has to be determined anew. These artistic developments are mirrored by changes in the questions and methods guiding theatre studies, which developed out of Literary Studies and is thus traditionally concerned with dramatic texts and their embodiment by actors on stage. Since the 90s there has been a performative turn in cultural studies that has brought an increased interest in the methods of theatre studies, coinciding with artistic developments in theatre, performance art and dance. In this sense, Hans-Thies Lehmann’s notion of “post-dramatic theatre”, which became widely known both nationally and internationally after its first publication in 1999, represents a basic change in paradigms away from the drama text as a basis for the stage-play, and towards an acknowledgement of a manifold of pre-texts, aesthetics and dramaturgies within the performing arts in and since the 20th century.

In the light of this, but also in the light of an increasing theatricalisation of what is commonly called “reality”, directors, dramaturgs and theatre scholars have been increasingly focussed on the relation of theatre and reality in the last ten years. In 1998 the title of a conference organised by

the dramaturgy association in Basel was 'How to bring reality into theatre?' Two years later the title of a conference in Leipzig asked: 'Everyday life is becoming theatrical – what does theatre do?' And the magazine *Theater heute* (Theatre today) started a series with the title 'Theater as real life' in 1998.

One form of the blurring of theatre and reality is participatory theatre, where "real people" are on stage rather than trained actors, telling stories from their lives, and performing. This often happens in the context of a discussion of social circumstances. The first performance of this type that made an impact in Germany was *Passion Impossible – 7 Tage Notruf für Deutschland* (Passion Impossible – 7 Day Emergency Call for Germany) at the Hamburg Schauspielhaus in 1997. Starting from the location of the theatre building opposite the train station, director Christoph Schlingensief established a train station mission that functioned as a "meeting point and action space for homeless people, drug addicts, theatre audience and artists" (Matzke 184f). In this way the city and the theatre space mix, as well as the functions of actors, audience and performers which are staged in a new way. *Passion Impossible – 7 Tage Notruf für Deutschland* kicks off a long series of productions from the last ten years which have questioned the political and social fields in the light of their theatricality, by bringing their subjects into theatre and theatre into the public space of the city.

Not only artistic but also political and social developments are the driving forces behind questions of the social in theatre. The decrease of the Welfare State in Europe has caused an increase in precarious existences – from the illegal cleaning lady to the freelance designer. Europe, critically referred to as "Fortress Europe" by the anti-globalisation movement, has decayed in its very centre, in the so-called middle class. In reality theatre the traditional theatre audience experiences a drastic upsetting of its own existence, which can be seen as an expression of contemporary tendencies towards the precarity of artistic ways of life.

Those social developments are the materials of a re-writing and new staging of literary classics that thematise financial problems and processes of impoverishment. For example, in Germany several stagings of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* were shown. Thomas Manns

novel *Buddenbrooks*, which tells the story of the decline of a wealthy northern German merchant's family, was re-written into a stage-play by the well-known author John von Düffel and is currently showing in five large German theatres. Second, these themes are also emerging in new German drama, especially in the work of young authors like Anja Hilling, Martin Heckmanns, Margareth Obexer, Moriz Rinke and Johannes Schrettle. Third, other authors have used published material from debt advisers or management offices as material for theatre texts (for example, Kathrin Rögglä or Falk Richter), offering a self-staging of the so-called "precariat", the people who work in the arts and culture without security. Other examples are a 2003 video by the group 'Kleines postfordistisches Drama' (Small post-fordist drama), and a video by the Spanish network 'La Precarias' from 2004. In both videos visual identities are created which make the working and living methods of their producers visible. The performer Jochen Roller takes a similar approach in his dance piece *Perform performing* from 2004 which is about the insecure work conditions of artists. Jochen Roller became very famous with this production and now has fixed employment as a dance dramaturg at the renowned Hamburg performance venue Kampnagel.

Out of this wide range of text and theatre forms investigating economic realities – from classic stage theatre to self-interviews – the German-Swiss directors' collective Rimini Protokoll became the most well known, at least in terms of the number of prizes and amount of public recognition they gained. The name Rimini Protokoll refers to an international agreement for the securing of oil resources, and the directors' collective has recently attracted a lot of attention in Germany and internationally. The three directors describe themselves like this: "Helgard Haug, Stefan Kaegi and Daniel Wetzel studied at the Institute for Applied Theatre Studies in Gießen and work in various constellations under the label Rimini Protokoll. They are the "protagonists and founders of a new reality trend on stage" (Theater der Zeit), that is shaping the young theatre scene. The works take place in the colourful zone between reality and fiction, and have gained international recognition. Since 2000 they have been developing their experts-theatre on stage and in the city space by focusing on experts



and not laymen.”

In the following I will introduce Rimini Protokoll's award-winning production *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* (Karl Marx, das Kapital, First Volume), and then proceed to discuss their performance *Call Cutta*. I will do this by discussing Rimini Protokoll's aesthetic transformations of the four elements I have described as constitutive of the history of European theatre: First, the actor; Second, the drama text and its connection to the institution of the author; Third, the disappearance of the co-presence of actors and audience; And fourth, the blurring of theatre and everyday spaces. I will continue my discussion by starting with the first issue – the transformation of the institution of the actor into an “expert of reality”.

I. From the theatrical deception contract to the authenticity contract, and back.

The German culture channel 3sat first showed *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* on the 15th of June, 2007. Rimini Protokoll's work approach is described like this: “The group Rimini Protokoll stands for the so-called reality theatre. They always work with real stories that come from everyday life. There are no actors, only lay actors who have experienced the stories themselves, or professionals who have been engaged with the subject at stake.” In *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* eight protagonists who are afflicted persons, witnesses of historic events, or members of specific segments of society, talk about the role the book *Das Kapital*, or money in general plays and has played in their lives. In the following I will describe the protagonists in order to show the aesthetic modes they perform.

The film maker Talvaldis Margevics recounts how his mother almost offered him as a commodity in exchange for food when they fled Riga. His narration functions to explain to the audience what a commodity is. He finishes his story by saying: “That was how I had to be a commodity once before in my life.”

Jochen Noth, who was a participant in the German students' movement in the 1960s, and is now a China expert and corporate adviser, talks about his life in Germany and China. He explores both the relations of



money to state communism in the People's Republic of China, but also the flourishing Asian capital markets.

The statistician and economic historian Thomas Kuczynski lectures from an original Marx text – more about this later.

The revolutionary media salesman Azubi Sascha Warnecke throws his fist in the air and wants a revolution.

The electrical engineer Ralph Warnholz talks about his former life as a gambling addict. Now healed, he would like to help other people to get rid of their gambling addiction. As a former gambler Ralph Warnholz, according to Jean Baudrillard's theory of "Consumer Society", embodies a lack of the incapability to spend lots of money. According to Baudrillard the simultaneity of the production of lack and superfluity materialises in modern economies, which produces excess as well as shortage. Seen in this way the former gambler Ralph Warnholz is the perfect post-capitalist subject.

Apart from these experts, and their testimony of everyday life in late capitalist economies, there are two figures who thematise the economy of perception, and thus theatrical perception and cognition processes: Christian Spremberg, a blind call centre agent and collector of records, and Franziska Zwerg, a translator born in the former German People's Republic. In the 13th scene of the production Spremberg tells us how his blindness saves him from being overloaded by advertisements and TV. Thus he is portrayed as resistant to the "Society of the Spectacle". Christian Spremberg's dramaturgy creates a time line through the decades in a linear chronology. He brings records to the stage from his vast collection, playing some songs to contribute to the acoustic background of the production. We can hear advertisement jingles from the 1950s as well as the song "Der Pleitegeier sitzt im Portmonnaie" ("The vulture of poverty sits in my purse"). What Spremberg actually invokes in this acoustic sphere are the countless theatre and performance productions of the last years which bring the dispersal of service within call centres to the stage, for example Arjun Raina's *A terrible beauty is born* (Vienna International Festival 2007), Jochen Roller's dance piece *Perform performing* (Kampnagel Hamburg 2004), or Rimini Protokoll's *Call Cutta* (Hebbel Theatre Berlin 2005), which I will discuss at the end.



The “experts of the everyday”, as Rimini Protokoll’s protagonists are sometimes called, not only tell about their past, but in the last scene they also formulate their plans for the future. When towards the end of the production everyone asks each other about their life after the year 2015, the translator Franziska Zwerg answers, she “still won’t have read *Das Kapital*”. Her function is not the reading of Marx, but the demonstration of labour. At the same time as all the other figures “have” their monologues, Ms Zwerg repetitively appears in the execution of her professional duty – translation.

At first sight the production may appear as a loose succession of scenes featuring the eight “experts”. At a second glance it shows a clear dramaturgy which both leads through the decades, from the 1950s to the present, and develops from clearly marked scenes to a fast change of scenes, to the simultaneity of several actions to achieve a condensation of tension. In the second half of the production readings from *Das Kapital* alternate with groupings of the figures according to specific categories, and with the narrations of Mr. Harksen. Mr. Harksen introduces himself as a “legasthenic and child of an unemployed alcoholic” and reports from his job as an investment consultant, where he accumulates capital at the expense of the people he is investing money for, until the whole construction of deception and financial tricks collapses. The tax office is on his back and the investors realise that they won’t get their money back with the promised profit. Jürgen Harksen then leaves Hamburg for Cape Town. The moment of the narrative unmasking of Jürgen Harksen as a swindler also takes place on stage: Harksen is handed a book and Ralph Warnholz takes a stand next to him, wearing a bold mask. The supposed Harksen turns out to be Ulf Mailänder, author and coach, and biographer of the real Jürgen Harksen who was serving a non-custodial sentence in Hamburg until February 2008.

This scene is represented as the climax the production has been leading up to. It is constructed as a surprise effect, because who would expect to see a theatrical representation where someone plays someone else in the work of Rimini Protokoll, who are known for their work with “experts of the everyday” and for their theatre of presence? More so, because



in the TV interview mentioned above Rimini Protokoll reaffirm their concept of the production: "The protagonists bring their biographies to the stage, they do not act. ...That's what makes it so real but also so difficult for everybody involved." Here the authenticity contract Rimini Protokoll's works are so famous for is consciously called up, only to be surprisingly broken and transformed into a conventional theatre contract – into the so-called deception contract of illusionist theatre. The signifier of representational theatre since antiquity – the mask – therefore appears precisely at this moment of the de-masking of Jürgen Harksen, and his appearance as Ulf Mailänder. In this way the theatrical deception contract, which requires a mutual agreement between audience and actors that the stage figures are who they say they are, is explicitly thematised. The play is transformed into reality, and this refers both to the "player" and the excess and annihilation of money. The theatrical deception is thereby put on the same level as the deceptions involved with capital accumulation, and both are simultaneously de-masked as make-believe. Theatre is not as "real" as it appears to be. If this is also true for capital, then what is hinted at here is the virtuality of capital.

The stage figure Jürgen Harksen continues his narrative even after his unmasking as Ulf Mailänder, and after his unmasking by the German tax office Jürgen Harksen moves to Cape Town. He invites old and new investors to Cape Town and uses the theatre there as a way to transform the symbolic capital of his name back into money. He employs people to play bankers and capital investors, in order to emphasise his respectability. He becomes so successful that he lives very luxuriously from 1993 until his extradition to Germany in 2002. Capital and theatrical illusion mutually support each other in this passage, which demonstrates not only how money is transformed into capital, but also how capital is transformed back into money.

Thus capital and theatre are intertwined in many ways. So far I have shown this in relation to the production of *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band*. In the following I will investigate it in terms of the transformation of the institution of authorship it involves.

II. The deconstruction of the author as the becoming collective of mental ownership.

The above described a change of paradigms from the stagings of drama texts to post-dramatic theatrical questions about the profession of the "dramatist". These questions led the authors Rolf Kemnitzer, Andreas Sauter and Katharina Schlender to publish an *Authors' Manifesto* in September 2007 with the title "To attend to ourselves means to attend to you". There they call for a public debate about the social functions of, and the working conditions necessary for dramatists: "an open debate with all theatre makers about the existing structures and the future of theatre, and the question, if theatre would be possible without dramatists." This is the final request of the "10 requests for a way to deal with theatre authors" in the *Authors' Manifesto*. The urgency of this ironic appeal was confirmed by Helgard Haug and Daniel Wetzel from the directors collective Rimini Protokoll receiving the renowned Mühlheim Dramatist Award for the production of *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* a few months earlier.

Although Rimini Protokoll's staging practice questions the individual authorship of dramatic texts, they install the traditional author position of the Gutenberg Galaxy – i.e. typography and printing – in the title *Karl Marx, Das Kapital, erster Band*. In this way a specific ownership of the author's thoughts is implied: "Print is the very ground of intellectual property, and the reading of it as the performance of the social nature of ideas rests on their presentation as private property."

Now Karl Marx does not stand for the accumulation of private ownership but for the democratic distribution of resources. Accordingly, parts of Marx' "private ownership" are being animated by the protagonists in the course of the play – in the shape of a book, which is distributed amongst the audience and collectively read, and so appropriated. The author, Karl Marx, is symbolically present at the production, but absent at the same time. He does not hold any authority over the interpretation of his thoughts as they are "played out" and collectively put to life in the production. Not only throughout the production, but also during the rehearsals those parts involving Marx's text were fused with the "experts'" stories. Out of this a protocol evolves which precedes the theatre text.

The instalment of the "author's position" in *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* is thus to be understood as a performative quote which uses the authority of the author, but alters and multiplies it. This is in accordance with Michel Foucault's outline of the author's position in his essay 'What is an Author?' from 1969, a year after Roland Barthes' equally famous essay 'The Death of the Author'.

The quoting and transfer of the author's position in the production are based on academic authorship but also imply the institution of the dramatist. It is thus not only controversial but also unclear who actually won the "Mühlheim Dramatist Award" in 2007. Was it the directors' label Rimini Protokoll? Was it the protagonists who told parts of their biography, thus contributing to the theatre text? Or was it Karl Marx, posthumously? The symbolic capital of the award (and the prize money) went to Rimini Protokoll, who collectively act as a "label". This is possible because a written text version of the production exists. Although the order and authority of the printed words remains, this is not implicitly presupposed but explicitly performed and transformed – the same is true for the mechanisms of the allocation of an art award – as the allocation of the Mühlheim Dramatist Award 2007 reveals. Individuality becomes collectivity and authorship becomes directing – because it is the directors collective Rimini Protokoll who accumulate the symbolic capital of the award. They use specific conventions of the symbolic order of letterpress printing and of the sciences: the naming of the author, the title and the volume number.

The symbolic order of letterpress printing is not just performed by the title of the production but also by the stage design and by involving the audience as readers. The stage, which was designed by Helgard Haug and Daniel Wetzel, in collaboration with Daniel T. Schultze, is dominated by the back wall. The back wall is made of an over-sized book shelf where most of the performers sit. Everybody has their own space within the book shelf where Marx busts and other utensils are also arranged. In between there are open spaces from which monitors will later flash, showing the names of the figures, the years of their stories, excerpts from films, and text passages from *Das Kapital*.

In the sixth scene the statistician and economic historian Thomas



Kuczynski sticks his head through the book shelf and announces, as if from out of a frame or monitor, the distribution of *Das Kapital* to everyone. Thomas Kuczynski is the son of Jürgen Kuczynski, the founder and head of the department of economic history at the Institute of History in the Academy of Science of the German People's Republic, a man who was extremely famous and popular after 1968. In the following part of the production people walk through the theatre isles and distribute a volume of *Das Kapital* to everybody in the audience. The audience can thus follow Kuczynski's reading of the book on stage. The text passages also appear on monitors and the passages read are highlighted with markers. The audience holds the books in their hands, read the passages and find themselves in a university-like situation, which is further underlined by the ascending rows of seats.

In *Das Kapital, Karl Marx, erster Band* the audience become readers: they consume text passages in three different mediums. They can read the book they hold in their hands, they can see the text passages on the monitors on stage, or they can listen to Thomas Kuczynski's voice. Seeing and hearing are simultaneously called upon and interlocked. Rimini Protokoll's intermedia dramaturgy stands within the tradition of theatre that trains the audience's perception for the use of different, and always new media, or rather, for the use of multiple media arrangements. This training does not only function on the level of rational knowledge, even if the common reading of the academic book *Das Kapital* would suggest that. What is also remarkable here is the touch and connection of the medium of the book and the audience's bodies: the text, and thus *Das Kapital* is touched by the hands and legs of the audience. This placement of the book evokes new media technologies by echoing that of the everyday use of portable computers, or lap tops. The book is placed where the laptop often, and not only in universities, finds its place: on the laps and thighs of the audience. By this physical placement Marx's *Das Kapital* becomes a lap top: *Das Kapital* tops the lap, it sits on top of it. *Das Kapital* touches the bodies of the audience and affects them, in the society of the spectacle the "bodies" are both capital and the preferred consumer object, according to Jean Baudrillard.



III. Transnational aspects of the production.

Rimini Protokoll are not only very well known in the German speaking world – in April 2008 they received the European Theatre Award “for new theatre realities” in the Greek city of Thessaloniki. I would therefore like to continue by describing the transnational aspects of their productions. These are especially interesting within the context of the discussion of Marx's *Das Kapital*, because transnational money flows are a signifier of the contemporary globalised accumulation of capital.

Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band clearly plays with the German past and present. In addition, it stages the augmented borders of the so called New Europe (post-1989) in the story of the flight from Riga. In Jürgen Harken's story Cape Town is established as a hospitable place for German tax refugees. Besides these explicit gestures within the paradigms of “nation” and “transnationality” the absence of a discussion of globalisation and neoliberalism is especially apparent. Global developments like increasing poverty and migration, the evacuation of service industries from the rich countries, the increasing shortage of natural resources, and the virtual, but nevertheless enormous profit increases achieved by the transnational circulation of capital are not thematised in this production. These phenomena make up the invisible frame around *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band*. Only with the Attac-member Sascha Warnecke, who is introduced as a “revolutionary and Azubi media salesman”, do we find hints to any of this, but very soft ones.

This absence is especially apparent, because plays engaging with migration to Europe or Middle Europe are currently booming in the German speaking theatre. For example there is *Letztes Territorium* (Last Territory) by Anne Habermehl (Thalia Theater Hamburg 2008), the theatre text *Dein Projekt liebt dich* (Your project loves you) (Schauspielhaus Graz 2005), Margareth Obexer's text *Das Geisterschiff* (The Ghost Ship) (Stadttheater Jena und Düsseldorf 2007 and 2008), and the winner of this year's Mühlheim Dramatist Award Dea Lothar's play *Das letzte Feuer* (The Final Fire), directed by Andreas Kriegenburg (Thalia Theater Hamburg 2008). Migration and de-territorialisation as drama subjects also appear as theatrical engagements with the social decline of Europe. Further,



the lack of references to the limited political circulation of humans and the unlimited economic possibilities of capital is even more striking, as Rimini Protokoll thematise the mechanisms of the neoliberal economy in other productions, especially in *Call Cutta*, which I shall discuss in the following part of this text.

Now what makes *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* a European production? The production, which was celebrated together with Rimini Protokoll on the European level for its performance of “new theatre realities”, performs Europe’s cultural capital in front of the backdrop of the omissions described above. To be more precise, the production was European, first, in referring to the German nation state, and second, by constituting itself via the described omissions. Third, *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* is European by quoting and transforming specific conventions that have grown out of the traditions of so-called European “High Culture”.

To summarise the points so far: 1) Illusionist theatre is enchanted by the “experts of the everyday”, but with an ironic blink of the eyes, which makes its self-aware reflection about its own shape apparent, and which also includes its use of new media and its fusing with popular culture (TV) formats. 2) The intellectual property of the “author” is collective, and the proper name is replaced by the “label” Rimini Protokoll. 3) The symbolic order of the sciences and of letterpress printing, as well as Franziska Zwerg’s refusal to read and Christian Spremberg’s blind hearing, are prominent topoi of the production.

However, the two elements constitutive for the theatre of co-presence – performers and audience, and the staging of the production in a theatre space – remain. In another production by Rimini Protokoll – the transnational performance *Call Cutta*, those elements are no longer in evidence. To tie things up, I will now discuss this performance.

IV. Transnational space transferences: *Call Cutta* (Berlin 2005).

The production *Call Cutta* (Hebbel Theater Berlin 2005) consists in the audiences’ registration at the Hebbel Theater, where mobile phones are distributed to the audience at an appointed date. Prior to the actual



staging the members of the audience receive a phone call, and during the next hour they speak with people working in an Indian call centre, who give them instructions via the head-sets on their phones, on how to move through the streets of Berlin. With the head-sets on their ear, the members of the audience listen to the invisible voices of their phone partners. Those "theatre walks" Rimini Protokoll invented for the production of *Call Cutta* do not take place in a conventional theatre space, but turn the city into a theatre space. The recipients move through an alternative area of Berlin – Kreuzberg – with which many of them are already familiar. Their everyday paths turn into art paths. In this theatre walk the visitors become performers, because they move through public space and are perceived by others. Every once in a while they receive instructions to wave at someone or to carry out a specific movement. On the other hand, the people at the call centre become directors, directing the movements of the "visitors", who are now performers, in and throughout space.

Here, Rimini Protokoll not only play with the transference and mixing of the theatrical functions of director / actor / audience, but also with the potential of combining voices, language, and bodies. In *Call Cutta* the spoken instructions direct the movement of bodies and the direction of gazes. The bodies of the directors however remain absent, or rather, the directors are really far away – in Calcutta. In this way the co-presence of actors and audience, described by Berlin theatre academic Erika Fischer-Lichte as a necessary signifier of theatre, becomes obsolete, or rather, it is massively transformed. According to the possibilities of new technology this co-presence is freed from having a concrete place, and now takes place in a transformed shape through an acoustic presence. The sense of hearing gains prominence over the priority of seeing in conventional theatre forms. Accordingly, visitors can no longer watch actors or performers on stage, as *Call Cutta's* theatricality consists in a move back to the body through the visitors' bodies, their movements and sensory perception. The voice's potential as a connection of language and body is at stake here, its ability to link the sensation of movement with the sensation of hearing. The body of the absent other remains an empty shape, and the corporeality of the voice acts upon the bodies of the visitors.



In *Call Cutta* fantasy is produced via speaking and hearing, for example the fantasy of being individually addressed by the call centre agents. Their voices do not express the feelings of stage figures, but strive for a direct emotional connection with their phone partners by using specific codes. The critic Eva Behrend describes her experience of the "theatre walk":

"It is obvious that Sammy, who has never been to Berlin, reads his instructions and historical anecdotes from a written text. But does this written text contain his compliments about my beautiful voice? And the question, if I have ever fallen in love on the telephone? And his confession that his name is not Sammy, which is merely his call centre name, but Sagnik? And if I want to write an email to him? Of course all this is theatre. But it is the theatre of the happy consciousness of being part of a globalised world, a world still able to produce these strangely intimate moments. It may happen that one finds oneself all alone on the long overgrown tracks of the Anhalter station, from where trains left for Auschwitz. Standing there, a 23 year old student working at a call centre in Calcutta whispers from a very distant closeness in one's ear, that one should look for "three trees with sad eyes" – and then they are there, really, three trees with sad eyes. This moment alone makes it quite all right to have participated."

Here, the voice is a transference object between body and language, between Berlin and Calcutta, between the so-called first and the so-called third world. The voices of the performers in the call centre organise the perception modalities and body movements of the visitors in a specific way; the decisions of which direction one is to move is not (generally) made on the grounds of optical sensory perception received during the production, but on the grounds of an instruction coming from a head phone. A voice of someone in Calcutta says where the person in Berlin should move towards. In *Call Cutta* the voices bridge many thousands of kilometres, they bridge the separation between the local and transnational economic transactions of late capital. Mobile, cable free communication connects people who are physically absent. Optic and acoustic perception are disengaged, and communication techniques are adapted to the demands of mobility and flexibility. The voices bridge distance, they move together with the moving bodies, preceding them by directing them.



The separation between corporeal perception and the decision about the direction to move echoes the situation of the call centre agents. They carry out instructions, and answer questions they receive, from another continent. The decisions about the working situation of the call centre employees are also made on the other side of the world – their working situation is not collectively protected. On their website Rimini Protokoll inform us about the absence of trade unions for people working in call centres.

This production is unique in European theatre, but reminds us of the art practice of “Radio ballett”, where a group of people (performers) received instructions via head phones on how to move in public space. Radio ballets were invented by the Hamburg radio group ‘Ligna’ in 2002, and, at the intersection between artistic and political interventions in public space, have been staged by groups from the anti-globalisation movement to comment on specific political events, for example to raise awareness about consumption attitudes. In 2005 twelve performers moved through one of the main Viennese shopping streets Kärtnerstraße, knocking on the glass store windows and laying their ears on them. Employees of private security companies asked the performers to stop their actions. Different to the invisible theatre, radio ballets don’t aim at debate and conflict situations, but at interventions that simply make the circumstances visible. The privatisation of control in urban spaces is made evident in the shopping streets by radio ballet. Amongst other things this works to confuse the functions of performers and actors. It is unclear for a viewer if the actors are “real” or if they “play theatre”, and the viewers themselves, on their everyday paths, have become the audience of a performative art event, even if they are not aware of it.

Call Cutta differs from radio ballets, because the audience / performers are not simultaneously on the road as a group, but perform alone and at different times. But *Call Cutta* is similar to the radio ballets, inasmuch as it aims at making evident the invisible architecture of cities, because it works via hearing, and because both *Call Cutta* and the radio ballets focus our attention on the connection of contemporary communication technologies to *transnational* economies and neoliberal consumption techniques. The



similarity between radio ballets and *Call Cutta* show Rimini Protokoll's closeness to aesthetic modalities of public intervention utilised by the anti-globalisation movement, and so cannot simply be referred to theatre traditions. Radio ballets can be traced back to dance, because they copy the relation between choreography and the performing of movements by dancers. In contrast, *Call Cutta* relates to theatre mimetically by imitating and copying communication rules call centre employees receive as part of their training, in order to produce a highly personal situation and to facilitate the bonding of agent and client. If this fantasy is called upon – and according to visitors' reports, not only Eva Behrend's, this appeared to have succeeded – then it is precisely the neoliberal economy that is performed, which together with *Karl Marx, das Kapital, erster Band* offers the complete characteristics of current economies: the desire for more, not having this desire answered, which probably will bring the theatre audience back to the next production of Rimini Protokoll.

