

# Cinematic Perception and the Image by Proxy

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## Abstract

*This paper describes a research project that aims to contribute to the further development of a new tenet in the taxonomy of the image. Driven by the appearance of (the role of) images generated by newideo-technological developments – set against an emerging awareness of the implications of the agency of the Anthropocene - this research will build upon the existing classifications of the image. This new type of image has qualities that do not fit into the current understanding of (or any classification) of the image, yet it is operating on our awareness daily. However, the goal is not to forefront the taxonomy as main mode of output, rather the emphasis should be on the interplay between the image and its setting that produces and is produced by its relational qualities. In order to understand the role and significance of this type of image in ‘the making of reality’ - with bifurcations into technology, ideology, inclusivity, empowerment and factuality - they need to be studied and classified in order for scholars and students to further their understanding of the agency arising from what is now provisional named: The “Image by Proxy”. A crucial key to develop an understanding of the workings of the Image by Proxy, is to instrumentalize our knowledge of the construction of cinema and extrapolate its premises to a level of population thinking. On this level, cinematographing perception implies that the creation of a reality includes both actualized and non-actualized components, that constantly act, intertwine, disrupt and otherwise modulate each other’s existence. This paper will examine how this construction of reality is produced in the imagescape, in which the journey to create the scape itself has bifurcations in both enlightened and mundane acts of codification, situation, commodification and signification, whilst its affects call for an expansion of our existing taxonomy of the image.*

**Keywords:** Affect, Philosophy, Perception, imaging, Cinema-theory

## Introduction

This research project entails the (further) development of a new tenet in the taxonomy of the image. Driven by the appearance (and the role) of images generated by new material-discursive developments – set against an emerging awareness of the implications of the agency of the Anthropocene - this research will build upon the existing classifications of the image. This new type of image has qualities that do not fit into the current understanding of (or any classification) of the image, yet it is operating on our awareness daily. In order to understand the role and significance of this type of image in ‘the making of

reality a.k.a. the process of worlding’ - with bifurcations into technology, ideology, inclusivity, empowerment and factuality - they need to be studied and classified in order for scholars and students to further their understanding of the agency arising from what is now provisional named: “*The Image by Proxy*”.

Before going into the research question itself, it is wise to familiarize ourselves with some key-concepts and (meta-) frameworks that are imperative in the next step of this research. Although this research has its origins in Deleuzian scholarship, it departs from what is currently referred to as the ‘affective turn’. Affect theory is a way of understanding domains of experience that fall outside the paradigm of representation. These experiences are coextensive with our mental and bodily experiences yet are not reducible to them, and, as such, do not depend on any signifying instrument. Experience is never of something, rather it *is* something in itself and, as such, irreducible to what we call ‘lived experience’. Affects cause auto-responses in the body and thus circumvent consciousness. This research is closely connected to my educational practice. Based on an extensive succession of educational programmes I developed a series of ideas and propositions that aspired to counter some orthodox modes of thinking within the field of media theory and design philosophy, that partly dealt with the supposition that the role of and interplay between media can best be measured on the basis of their affective capacities (iso-affectiveness) rather than on their epistemological setting. In my view, it is more important to focus on what media *do* rather than on what they are. Working with the affective capacities of media and their collaborative function with the ‘artist’, a framework originated that would become a core research topic in my book: “*The Desire of the Medium*”.

## Framework

The quest for what is “*The Desire of The Medium*” is a conceptual framework that I have formulated in order to open discussion into new modes of considering human–nonhuman interactions in design processes – including the design of these very processes. Its goal is to encourage the introduction of a different paradigm, one that could encourage a better understanding of the role of art and design in society. Alternative ways of thinking about the structure of design education can contribute to the development of new modes of dealing with the immense economic, environmental, geopolitical and anthropological problems the world faces. Anthropocentric thinking has produced most of these problems, and the search for alternative modes of departure has therefore both academic as societal implications (Boumeester, 2017). The desire of the

medium covers a specific field within affect theory and media philosophy, and its dealings require a specific vocabulary. This vocabulary is not something I have invented alone: it stems from Deleuzian scholarship and its propagation under the affective turn and its key concepts are frequently used in my publications and education. The most crucial of these concepts are: *Agency* (is not being, it is becoming), *Assemblage* (works with capacities, not properties), *Energetics* (deals with the intensive, not with the extensive), *Exteriority of relations* (eliminates all ego in favour of ecology), *Asignifying* (is nonrepresentational, yet non-trivial), *Heuristics* (not a method but an approach through trial and error) and *Affordance* (does not describe a function, yet it allows for functionality). On basis of these lemmas, I have successfully developed and applied modes of thinking and teaching in various fields of art and design, varying from architecture, fine art, moving image and theatre to graphic-, crossmedia- and communication design.

In order to create a meta-framework for the investigation of the desire of the medium, I often use the concept of the *Grey Mouse*: a mouse-grey element that appears light against a dark background and dark against a lighter background. This element acquires its visual properties in relation to its setting without losing any of its capacities. The mouse may be a metaphor, its affects certainly are not. What it produces in this relationship can be detected as a shadow of its being, yet without it having a body to produce that shadow. Therefore, my grey mouse can be seen as a placeholder for the desire of the medium, even if it is never replaced by an actual definition. For regardless of whether or not I find a proper and conclusive definition, the effects of the interplay between the mouse and its background are very real (exteriority of relations). As we can only see the subject through its encounter with its environment (the grey mouse), and as the environment changes by definition, the system can never be arrested in time. This a-temporal mechanism is a means of revealing what I refer to as the bodiless shadow (Boumeester, 2014). To this end, I adapted a model used by social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai to create a specific context (Appadurai, 1996). Consequently, I converted Appadurai's 'scapes' into four perspectives or 'modes of thought', distinguishing between *ethoscape* (affect), *ideoscape* (concept), *mediascape* (form of expression) and *technoscape* (form of content). The Grey Mouse is located in the middle of our chart of revised scapes: between affect, concept, expression and content. These *scapes* are each governed by one of the concepts introduced earlier. Ethoscape is connected to affect; ideoscape is dominated by assemblage. Mediascape and technoscape are two sides of the same coin: the first looks at the form of expression and the second examines the form of content, hence they both deal with asignification. This earlier research has produced a number of outcomes that aided the understanding of the roles and actions of the *medium*, the *image* and the *sign* in society.

## Cinematographic machine

Recently I have endeavoured to develop a new model based on these foundations for describing how *perception* comes into existence through the allegoric concept of the *cinematographic machine*, which can be seen as autonomously constituted entities that are embedded in the phylum that construct the interplay between non-anthropocentric agency of media and human perception, in which images play a significant role (Boumeester, 2022). These cinematographic machines not only aid the understanding of a particular area in human sensitivity that deals with the urban every day, but also play a crucial role in establishing the existence of such area all together. Their capacity to act stems from a recursive function consisting of anamorphisms (unfolding outcomes without a concept) and catamorphisms (folding outcomes into a concept), based on cinematographic percepts and agencies. Within this intensive and continuous process, coagulations of actualizations arise that the human sensorium can detect as densities (Boumeester, 2019). In this context, the city - for instance - shows a certain 'iridescence' of its urban agency: often densities (effects) are perceived as causes, and vice versa, whereby the elements perceived are not the elements that act by default (Boumeester, 2019 II). Elements that construct our perception of the (built) environment can be measured categorically, cartographically, volumetrically or in any other type of analytical scheme, yet that surpasses the most important elements that are being 'mapped' by our soma-aesthetic perception. Architecture as a "force majeure" in the constitution of the urban, has been challenged by a rapidly shifting field of premisses. Alternations in function (digitation of labour), structural demands (climate adaptation), demands of structure (flexibility), density (urbanisation) and the 'general state of crisis' (social imbalance, daunting future scenario's, unexpected conflict) solicit a transition to a flexible, scalable and temporal *mediality* of architecture. Therefore, the boundaries between *image* and *imaging* have become increasingly opaque. This perceptual playfield of the perception of urban daily life consists of a balanced, yet precise and subjective critical distances between on the one hand approaching life too near (with keywords such as perversion and melancholia) and on the other hand getting too far away from it (utopia/dystopia and indifference) (Boumeester, 2021). Both positions are aionic states of time in the virtual, whereas the area in-between is an intensive and actualized becoming, including, but not equal to what is colloquially known as the aesthetic. Given that daily life is the exception, rather than the norm of an outcome of all potentiality, it needs to be produced by a type of double helix of existence: one strand of actuality twisting around another strand of virtuality, both producing each other (both domains folding into each other co-constitutively). We - the mundane human receptor - can perhaps only witness this process if we keep equal distance to both strands: that of getting too close and that of getting too far away from the exceptional state of

the everyday. This 'area of operation' has no fixed or quantified demarcation, its definition is self-referential: it always contains more and less than the elements that are contained in its definition. This 'impredicativity' of perception thus simultaneously never and always defines what is the area. The cinematographic machine can aid us in that understanding, as it filters or polarizes the field of potential by adding a plenitude of dimensions, surprisingly reducing the number of outcomes dramatically (enabling constraints) (Radman, Boumeester, 2016). As the role of the *image by proxy* plays a significant part in the existence of the cinematographic machine, my next step will to explore this field more intensively (Table 1).

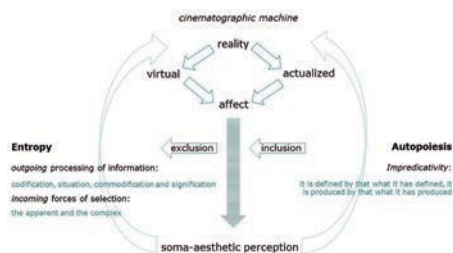


Table 1 – Schematic of the cinematographic machine.

### The current state of the research field

Within academia almost all existing research has been focused on the *meaning* of images, the *interpretation* of images, the (disciplinary) *classification* of images or the *comparative* studies of images. Little attention has been given to the questions, what an image actually is and how it acts. The role and influence of images have been increasingly become more 'political' in many societies, which has bifurcation in several disciplines that deal with the ontology of the image. Roughly speaking (and purposely simplifying), the perception of the image has transformed from being a reproductive instrument which has a prerogative on veracity ("Vide et crede"), through being in a state of illusionary influence (projections of (social/capitalist) ideologies) towards a state of gaining independence (What Images Do!). Analog to this, technological progression has aided the 'democratized' the production, editing and distribution of images to such extent that the credibility of their signification has increasingly become more questionable. This has several effects: the societal awareness of the role (and purpose) of image making has increased, leading to public debate on their authenticity (deepfakes), their political placement (asymmetrical representation/non-representation), their historical value (canonical validation), their psycho-behavioral effects (algorithms and worldview connections) and their ontological setting (a shift to the non-anthropocentric). This has dislodged several of the 'traditional' schools on semiology and made way for new entry points: the prerogative of semiotics is being challenged in several

ways and invites new frameworks to underpin the question of signification.

The current discourse on the ontology of the image can be set in a two-tiered progression: the *political tier* (freedom from) and the *empowering tier* (freedom to). The political tier has its bifurcations into the discourses on inclusion, engagement, governance and diversity. This tier has its rightful debate starting with the appearance of the image as an actor in the public domain, the power structures that determine which images are placed (in what way, where, how and when) and challenges the question of semiotics from a shifted perspective on normativity. Underneath (or above) this tier lies the empowering tier, that enables, but not engages with the first tier. It does not judge, dogmatizes, stigmatizes or values acts of politics, yet it enables multiple world views to be expressed in a non-conformist and non-normative way. Therefore, it supports the development of the aforementioned political debate without steering it directly. This emerging field is part of the larger philosophical movement that falls under the umbrella of Affect Theory.

The discourse on affect is an intrinsic part of research into the ways in which contemporary political, cultural and economic transformations and their ramifications in the social domain operate. Affect theory can be situated alongside the discourse of new materialism, which advocates the conceptualisation of interchange and fluctuation in between the realms of nature and culture, and thus dismantles or deterritorialises former distinctions between these realms. Both affect theory and new materialism are platforms for several reinterpretations of the (supposed) culture-nature schism. Therefore, they form a strong meeting point for the ongoing development and expansion of queer theory and the decentralization of human exceptionalism in general.

### Non-Dogmatic Taxonomizing

In this research project, I shall be building upon a taxonomy of the agency of the image – especially in relation to their capacity to interact with specific dimensions of time. The ground for taxonomizing images lies in the discourse on their presence and effects in society. The vocabulary to discuss images-although ubiquitously present – lacks far behind their significance. Clouds, for instance, have been taxonomized into ten main categories and have been typologized into over a hundred variations, yet images have so far only been given a very banal division into two types: static and moving images. In order to aid the understanding of the effects of images in a larger societal context, a more refined vocabulary needs to be available, especially in the context of (art and design) education. An iteration on the proverb already states that 'you are what you see', but what happens when you don't 'see' the image, yet your constitution is still predisposed by it.

This research proposes a new category in the tenet of *imaging*: *The Image by Proxy*. In this taxonomy, the *static image* deals with representation and the inclusion of time (Krauss, 1979), the *dynamic image* has become independent and suggests time (Baker, 2005), the *moving image* creates time and becomes autonomous (will) (Mitchell, 2005) and the *material image* transcends signification and acts on its own behalf (desire). The next stride in the development of this taxonomy is to examine how we can classify images that arise from the machinic, images that surpass physicality and time altogether, whereby content and form fully converge. These images I have tentatively dubbed *The Image by Proxy*. This taxonomy is not constructed to 'sort' types of images, rather it is meant to study the effects and roles of potentially the same image set against different backgrounds (scapes). With the risk of oversimplifying the concept in this short text I will give an example. A random photo taken of the Eiffel tower in Paris could have a place in all categories, albeit its situation (and scale of perception) determines where it sits in the taxonomy. The image of the tower itself can be seen as a representation (static), when sent to a friend in a greeting it becomes independent of its source (dynamic), its place in a certain narrative about this particular visit to the tower makes it part of a *montage* (moving) and when used in a classroom to sketch French cultural expression it becomes iconic (material).

In earlier research made a classification of the saturation of information in images (their infoductive qualities). Hereby I distinguished four stages of the amount of information given by the image, in relation to the way the image is perceived: Undersaturated <> Saturated <> Oversaturated <> Hypersaturated (Boumeester, 2017). This set of relations is merely fuelling the process of thought. It is less important to determine how it relates to someone else's set of relations than it is to establish how this set of relations is transduced into another set. When we compare this to a discussion about size, big or small are relative, but bigger and smaller are not. The properties of the image may remain unchanged, but its infoductive qualities change constantly because they *also* depend on and engender the observer. That is why it is in my view impossible to speak about an image outside of this *assemblage*. I will align this model with the aforementioned taxonomy of the image to have a cross-referenced model of understanding: the one stemming from the infoductive quality of the image, the other from the non-anthropocentric nature of the image itself. In table 2 the relation of its theoretical and philosophical setting, the various (meta-) frameworks and the ontological position of the Image by Proxy is schematized (Table 2).

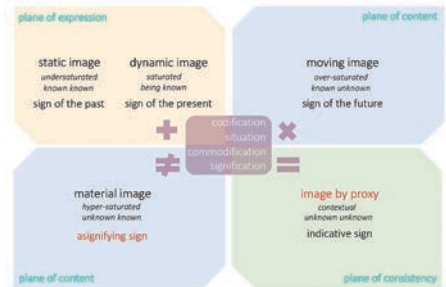


Table 2 – Schematic of the order of the Image (by Proxy).

The Image by Proxy is a term that holds together a variety of expressions beyond these stages: meta-images, images that are fully ungrounded in the subject they portray, images that conjure without meaning and images that work only on expectancy without the obligation to fulfil. These are not images *out of data*, these are the images *in data*, expressing themselves only against a specifically chosen background that creates a narrowly defined and temporary perception. This does not entail that these images are 'invisible'; rather they render visible which is otherwise not seen, without the of presence any human interference. Unlike the first four elements in this progressive taxonomy, the Image by Proxy is fully machinic, with the purpose to remain machinic. If we would subjectify the earlier mentioned photo of the Eiffel tower in the context of the ontology of the Image by Proxy, questions would arise as: with what purpose or validity do these images exist, in what way they shift our perception of a world unseen and how can we create gateways for these image-thoughts that enable unprecedented and surprising experiences, even for those that create them (eye of the beholder)? Does the image of the Eiffel tower have more validity than the structure itself? Such questions set in the context of the act of (machinic) experiment makes them highly political, albeit not in a dogmatic manner, as the relation between the image and its observer is always including more than only themselves (assemblage). The 'eye' of the beholder is a constant reminder of the relative position of the observer in the *assemblage* of the observer and the observed. In addition, philosopher Manuel DeLanda defines the concept of assemblage along two dimensions, a stabilising and a destabilising direction (DeLanda, 2006).<sup>2</sup> The stabilising processes are referred to as territorialisation, and the destabilising processes as deterritorialisation. It will always be crucial to include the actuality and temporal conditions of the *author* and the observer and their existence in the assemblage. This means that we always need to be aware of the following: the order in which the observer is exposed to images; the observer's frame of reference (e.g., the influence of the observer's age or gender); the observer's degree of receptiveness (e.g., the difference between seeing the first and the last image in a collection, or the first encounter

with a style and/or subject as opposed to previous familiarity) and so on. Within the assemblage, all these forces lead to shifts towards and away from (personal) codification, situation, commodification and signification. These movements can be named respectively the territorialisation and deterritorialisation of the assemblage. Infoduction itself is unstable in terms of Dynamic Systems Theory: once something is produced, it cannot be produced again in the same way (Thelen, Smith 2006). Systems of codification, situation, commodification and signification mask and confuse direct perception, or at least the perception of that perception. Hence, this type of aesthetic encounter is never context free. This context can be seen as the assemblage, and it includes all four of the aforementioned systems: codification, situation, commodification and signification (Boumeester, 2017). In theory, one could claim that any capacity to affect counts as direct perception. The anticipation of any encounter charges the field of potential to be affected, which in turn is conditioned by motives stemming from a system of codification, situation, commodification and signification.

Therefore, the search for the Image by Proxy acts as a place for occupation by thought that consists only out of images of those who experience them (*enabling* tier), not by that what produces them (*political* tier). The higher goal of this mapping lies in its anti-anthropocentricity and anti-hylomorphism; it will be simply be impossible to sustain a position that allows for human exceptionalism after accepting the rationale of having un-curated image making in building modes of perception. As we already limit the actualization of the mundane perceptible - equal to the way a montage produces cinema (the cinematographic machine) - by the elimination of the majority of events and the privileging of certain impulses and viewpoints, the emergence of the Image by Proxy can only bring new modes of seeing, encountering agencies and desires of other elements (human, non-human, biological, non-biological, actualized, non-actualized) in the area that defines itself (*autopoiesis*) (Boumeester, 2019). It brings in two taxonomies of the image stemming from earlier research and its research goal is to add a new typology to this classification. This has the aim to aid scholars and students to refine their vocabulary and understanding of the acts of the image in order to enrich the engagement in the societal discourse on the role and influence of the image.

## The research questions

The main goal of my research is to develop a new tenet of the ontology of the image. As mentioned, it will draw on the emerging school of affect theory to enable multiple entry points into the understanding of perception and signification. Building on an existing ontology of the image it will propose a new addition to the classification. This is set against a larger development of a philosophy (affect theory, more precisely new materialism) that advocates abolishing

the dominance of systems of representation. Systems of representation dominate our worldviews through semantics, semiotics, symbolism and so on. Worldviews based on these systems cause many of the cultural, economic and ecological difficulties that we face. In order to change these outlooks, we need to change our ways of 'communicating' with the world, which in my view means that the focus of scholarly research should be directed towards this communication on a level that transcends representation. This is embedded in the view offered by new materialism; it offers an enticing alternative by opening up theoretical formulations in which matter is a very strong actor. Thus, the prerogative on agency shifts from the anthropocentric to a shared domain (matter, medium, mind, body). Images have both material and communicative components; research has been mainly focussed on either the former or the latter. In my research I will start from the exact point where both meet. Matter itself acts in very physical ways; it shows a remarkable autonomous agency, which political theorist Jane Bennett describes as "the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi-agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own" (Bennett, 2010). The search for the Image by Proxy has a hinterland in this emerging philosophic discourse and it can add to the understanding (and visualization) of that field, which has both scholarly and societal effects. The main research question is: What does the Image by Proxy do? The objective is to formulate a (new chapter in) the theory of the ontology of the image. The main hypothesis is that the expansion and refinement of the taxonomy of images leads to a better understanding of their workings in society. This project will deliver a comprehensive overview of the taxonomy of the image as the basis of the development of a new theory of its most contemporized anisotropy. The subsequent research questions are: are their properties of the Image by Proxy? How do they relate to 'earlier' stages in the taxonomy of the image? Do they pave the way to new categories in this taxonomy? How can the understanding of the Image by Proxy be utilized and implemented in education?

## Case studies

In order to start this research, I will conduct a number of case studies to probe some of the concepts that are being developed. During the larger project, new types of case studies might come to light which stem from or bifurcate in (visual) data, interlocking fluxes, patterns, ethoscapes, techoscapes, finanscapes, ideoscapes and probably more. Case studies will examine how the construction of reality is produced by the imagescape (amongst other elements), in which the journey to create the scape itself has bifurcations in both enlightened and mundane acts of codification, situation, commodification and signification, and how the Image by Proxy emerges from these forces. In order to gain more insight into this methodology I

present here a case study of two places that act as an event-space.

This example study includes Checkpoint Charlie (Image 1), Friedrichstraße 43, Berlin, Germany, and the “Wake me up when I’m famous” work (Image 3), Frans Halsstraat 64, Amsterdam, Holland.



Image 1 – Postcard of Checkpoint Charlie, 1963, Kruger Verlag.

These two “landmarks” are for various reasons favourite as a travel destination, or at least as a place to visit when close by. Any journey with the aim to encounter a landmark has the intrinsic predestination of a fundamental reversal of means and effect in the proverbial pilgrimage. More interestingly is the search into how pilgrimages to non-embodied images act as the foundation of the creation of such images. In this context the journey is indeed more significant than the destination, as it is the journey itself that creates the destination. Building on Appadurai’s “Mediascape” (Appadurai, 1996), we could claim that any classic iconographic tourism is no more than a simple proof of concept, after all it is the iconographic aura that has beacons (and charged) its physical encounter. Images act as places and places act as images. This “Imagescape” creates significant flows of people and goods, that are mostly seen on a population level, yet are only to be explained on an individual level. As argued before, the cinematographic perception in the creation of a reality includes both actualized and non-actualized components, that act, intertwine, disrupt and otherwise modulate each other’s existence. Within this system the construction of reality is produced by the imagescape (amongst other elements), in which the journey to create the scape itself has bifurcations in both enlightened and mundane acts of codification, situation, commodification and signification (C.S.C.S). Elsewhere I have discussed the agency of the C.S.C.C at length (Boumeester, 2017), therefore I will limit here to a brief summary.

The system of C.S.C.S. is of relevance because it is the domain in which it is most likely to find the Image by Proxy. Whereas the Asignifying Sign (Guattari, 1996) has its domicile in the hyper-saturated information level

in the plane of content, the Image by Proxy has no predetermined form or medium to actualize in (Table 2). The Image by Proxy can therefore – at least at this moment in the research – best be seen as another variation of the Grey Mouse, rather than casting its bodiless shadow into the four domains of C.S.C.S. it is derived from them. It is the temporal embodiment of a system, actualized in the form of an image and is thus machinic. Therefore we can see the Image by Proxy as the ‘negative’ body of the Asignifying Sign: there where the Asignifying Sign escapes from signification by rupturing all known before (yet being recognized as a sign on an affective level, and therefore being an image), the Image by Proxy is only created as a result of the coalescent signification resulting in a temporal embodiment, that is for that reason never one fixated image. The “Meta” Image by Proxy is thus always a result of shadows casted from the domains, it is shadows embodied, rather than a bodiless shadow (Boumeester, 2014). A body (or nebula) of signification being portrait as a signifier which have a significant impact without ever having a final form of expression. We will examine some examples of these in order to understand how they act. Or to speak with Chun, we wonder “What do proxies do?” (Chun, 2021).

We will place the two case studies in the system of C.S.C.S. to analyse what is actually producing them. For this is it imperative to emphasize that this is not a semio-geis of the images at hand, these are merely representation for understanding what is the actual site and could easily be replaced by a number of similar images (which is the core of the argument). When we describe Checkpoint Charlie in terms of *codification* we can easily see that the encounter with the actual place is a pure ‘proof of concept’ as we are drawn to it merely on basis of its aura: its bodiless aura that is, as both the precise location and its physical structure have been altered several times over the course of history, even to a point that it was no longer there for almost ten years. The reproduction we can see today is thus an false artefact of an abstract element in history, which codes it as a significant “checkpoint” for those who want to complete their encounter with a history already known. Regardless of the meagre physical happenstance, the codification already has charged the place with the necessary sensation in order to create a “meaningful” event (Image 2).



Image 2 – Instant photograph of Checkpoint Charlie, 2022, by the Author.

Similar, albeit from a different angle, is the encounter with the much more recently constructed “Wake Me Up When I’m Famous (WMUWIMF)” work with bench in Amsterdam (Image 3). This place grants its attraction largely (or solely) on basis of its appearance on social media. The setting is (coincidental or deliberately) designed and bunked for creating a (semi-)personalized image to be posted as part of a travel experience. In this case its bodiless aura is only created by its numerous appearances, not by any historical facts or positionings. Here, the proof of concept is actually in the proof itself: there is no other reason to go there then to proof that one has been there. Its codification is thus fully detached from its physicality, yet that could be said for Checkpoint Charlie as well. Both places derive their importance from the codification that have been invested in them, by the general (Checkpoint Charlie) or specific (WMUWIMF) image that we have of them, the images themselves do not provide with anything else than a viability study of the spectators expectancy. The collected (not necessarily collective) expectancies are part of the imagescape.



Image 3 – Photo of Wake Me Up When I’m Famous, 2018, by Kirstie Will Travel blog.

When set in the system of *situation* both places (or event-locations) grant a great deal to the specific city they reside in an act in a way as the metaphorical embodiment of that city. Berlin would not be Berlin without its specific history and the “tangibility” of its role in the Cold War is part of its attractiveness. Checkpoint Charlie could thus never be situated anywhere else, without losing most of its relevance. Even though the direct surrounding and the physical structure has changed, it still (or especially because of that) derives its aura from its sitting in the historical lap of the city. On another level, the WMUWIMF bench could also not be situated elsewhere, at least not outside the city of Amsterdam, but most likely it would thrive in many other spots in the city perimeter. The work on the wall was created by Rinus & Jurriaan van Hall in 2013 and has propelled a small and sleepy side street into the view of countless influencers and therefore into the view of even far more followers. As it has a small bench in front of it, it lends itself to create a perfect décor for a photo opportunity, whereby all visual information can be framed squarely so it serves the demands of social media (Instagram particularly) perfectly. A self-portrait on the bench in front of the work has thus become an must have for many social media users. This scene has all the “characteristics” of the (image we have) of the city: informal, cosy, small scale, slightly wonky and fun, albeit this is mainly the exo-identity that is framed on top of it (Boumeester, 2022). The exo-identity is- in short - the image and imago of a place that has been created over time and is kept vivid and stimulated or even been (re)created for a variety

of – mostly commercial – purposes. In both cases the exo-identities are feeding into and are being fed by the event-location as they have a mutual goal and ground: the image made possible by the event-location is feeding the exo-identity, and the exo-identity makes the existence of the event-location possible. From that point it is rather arbitrary what the exact nature or physique of the event-location is, as it is (the shadow of) the situation that determines its value.

In terms of the third of the four systems – *commodification* – both places have no direct commercial gain by their existence, yet their derived impact is measurable. It is probably the commodification of this identity that would be in most cases the paramount ground for cultivating an exo-identity. In the case of Checkpoint Charlie, there is a longer tradition of commodifying its portrayal: postcards with an image have been produced since the 1950's and numerous "souvenirs" have been derived from its fame. Closely to the location a small tourist industry exists that feeds of its visitors and on a larger scale the existence of the place plays a role in more formal city-marketing (leading to expenditure in other regions of the tourist industry). The latter is also applicable on the WMUWIMF bench, as it is often portrayed in (semi-) official marketing communication, yet its real force lies in the non-formal, yet dynamic propulsion of imaging in the realm of social media. In the slipstream of this free advertisement follows a trail of commodifying elements: social media thrive on advertisements connected to traffic and in therefore any topic that generates traffic generates income. As the work is copy-righted, direct merchandizing is theoretically not possible without negotiation, yet many items based on this work have been produced and marketed by third parties without consent, and sadly unsurprisingly also without sharing profits with the authors of the work.

When it was appropriated (or vandalized, depending on the differing viewpoints of the stakeholders) during the lock-down as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Image 4), its image was again rapidly transformed into a wall piece that is sold commercially. As a result of that, this particular merchandize cannot be shown here without permission from a third party, which is obviously the ultimate characteristic of commodification.



Image 4 – Image of WMUWIMF after appropriation, 2021, by Hostel Coco Mama.

By this circumvention, the force of its image came truly to light: no longer did it have to be situated, its exo-genetic aura could carry both the original statement and its arrogation. Later appropriations underline this, as the event-space has detached itself from both the original intend and its viral application and has become a place of action *pur sang*, in which it functions as a placeholder for imaging context, making it an example of an image by proxy (Image 5).

It is the opposite of the aurification capacity of Checkpoint Charlie: where that place has to be situated in its historical setting, WMUWIMF finds its aura in its (literal and metaphorical) viral capacity of its imaging. Of particular interest is of course, how the intervention of placing the work in a public space has had a significant impact on its surrounding, its contribution to the imagescape and how these interactions have changed (not only literally) the work WMUWIMF itself. The exploration into these phenomena will be included in the outcome of the larger research project.





Image 5 – Image of WMUWIMF after another reappropriation, 2022, by the author.

The last of the four systems, *signification*, shows a variety of effects when these subjects are placed in it. On the scale of primary denotation on the one hand and secondary connotation on the other (Barthes, 1964), the event-locations differ in their setting. Whereas Checkpoint Charlie has become a landmark on its own, and thus its denotation can largely only be described as a reference to itself, the signification of WMUWIMF would stem mostly from its primary connotation, as most of the imaging on social media does. In terms of imaging (making a selfie), most representations of WMUWIMF would include the “author” of the image (although that is practically unlikely, as they would have to be in the image) making this an image much attached to its secondary connotation. However, as the goal of sharing on social media is largely directed to attach audiences to the personal world of the author, the deliberate attempt is made to “upgrade” this secondary connotation to the primary. My world becomes our world. This could not be the case with Checkpoint Charlie, as its significance lies in the closeness of its connotation and denotation: its cliché.

Another way to approach the question of significance is to look at the matter in terms of proofing and exo-identity. Albeit the historical significance can be seen fully differently, the significance for the visitor is self-created. As in the case of all exo-identity, it is the image that is created on “top” of the event-space which, as argued, can only be actualized by proofing the concept by interacting with it. Yet, as the collective

proofing of this concept is part of the actual formation of the exo-identity, the collected individual significations of the event create a significance on a much larger level. In this way ideology is always created on population level, yet can only be actualized on individual level (such as the American dream). Even – and perhaps especially – when the event itself is only creatable as “a shadow” of its context: the Image by Proxi.

## Conclusion

On basis of the framework, hypothesis and questions, I will conduct further literature and visual research, and I will test the accessibility of both the suggested taxonomy as well as the proposed extension of it. Visual artists and architects have an advanced understanding of ‘the image’ and well as an invested interest in the outcomes of the project itself. On basis of this document, I will engage with scholars and students during the project. Pedagogy, in the traditional sense, includes a methodology of transfer that relies a great deal on representation to be effective, which is why I believe we can only use pedagogy in its most *inessential* way: in other words, learning needs to be enabled by direct experience, allowing for a multitude of outcomes, rather than geared towards a predefined result (e-ducare). This type of learning is called a pedagogy of the senses. Philosopher Inna Semetsky draws on the work of Brian Massumi when she explains that “experience is not confined to a personal cogito of a Cartesian subject but represents an experiment with the environing world: we can, and should, learn from experience.” (Semetsky, 2009). This view on ‘learning’ is a crucial part of this research, as it is exactly the issue of representation that would hinder any type of accurate translation of visual information into textual information. Therefore, the use of images will play an important role in this research as part of the overview of the existing taxonomies of images (both in terms of their inductive qualities and their ontology) which I will connect to the overarching philosophical framework. As a result of these efforts, I aim to bring to light an uncharted (yet palpable) type of image: The Image by Proxy.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Marc Boumeester

<sup>2</sup> DeLanda adds: “One dimension or axis defines the variable roles which an assemblage’s components may play: from a purely *material* role at one extreme of the axis, to a purely *expressive* role at the other. [...] The second measurement defines “variable processes in which these components become involved and that either stabilize the identity of an assemblage [...] or destabilize it.” p.12.

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