

Composing Collaborationist Collages about Commercial Security

Since the end of the cold war military and security matters have been profoundly and deeply commodified and commercialized. Whether public or private, national or international, involving the military or the police, and whether located in Global North or in the Global South, they are increasingly conceptualized, run and evaluated through commercial technologies. A microcosm of this is on display at the yearly *Security and Counter Terror Expo* (SCTX).¹ The exhibitors include specialized travel agents, NATO, sponsored privately run robotics programs, construction companies, university project managers, the SansInstitute, national police and armed forces and much more. Who exactly exhibits varies from year to year. Cybersecurity occupied an entire floor section at the 2016 SCTX cybersecurity companies. It had all but disappeared from the 2019 SCTX. The SCTX is but one of the many more or less specialized military/security trade-fairs and conventions that facilitate and ritually reinstate the legitimacy of commodified commercialized security. Commercial security also takes less showy and public forms than those at display in trade-fairs. It includes for example in-house security, customer tailored, discreet consultancies, secretive, often informal arrangements, through which the “intelligence community” works with contractors, cybersecurity/data safety contracts, or the deals between mining companies and the public forces, militias and/or rebel groups that guarantee the security around their compounds. This motley and shifting world is that of commercial security. *Commercial* because it is held together by commercial logics. *Security* because security has become the term used to refer to the (intertwined) military/security related.² This article is about a research strategy that I have come to consider helpful for exploring the politics of this wondrous world of commercial security, but also for other worlds: a strategy of *composing collaborationist collages*. The ambition here is to introduce this analytical strategy.

At the core of doing research by *composing collaborationist collages* is a refusal to work in an “applicationist” manner that is to resort to ready made, off-the-shelf, analytical frameworks or concepts to “apply” them in analysis.³ Applicationist research operates through the trilogy: theoretical framework, methodological operationalisation, case study. It is mostly introduced as

¹ This microcosm of trade fairs (including specifically on the SCTX) is described in detail in Anna Leander, “The Politics of Legal Arrangements: The “Duty of Care” Justifying, Extending and Perpetuating Public in the Private Forms of Protection” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 25, no. 1 (2018); Anna Leander, “Le Souci de Soi: The Duty of Care and the Humanitarian Politics of Life,” in *The Duty of Care in International Relations: Protecting citizens beyond the border*, ed. Nina Græger and Halvard Leira (London et al.: Routledge, 2019). For a general introduction to commercial security see Rita Abrahamsen and Anna Leander, “Introduction,” in *Routledge Handbook in Private Security Studies*, ed. Rita Abrahamsen and Anna Leander (London et al.: Routledge, 2016).

² I adopt the term as the one conventionally used although it is deeply problematic. The emphasis on security is politically charged, I would say biased. It obfuscates that we are *also* talking of a commodification of matters military. In most contexts, commercial security is accepted while commercializing the military remains controversial and contentious. The decision to leave out fame everything in terms of security, skirting over the military is a way of biasing the discussion and depoliticizing it. It bolsters the case for normalizing commercialization and makes any critique of it appear unwarranted. Anna Leander, “Mercados transgresores de seguridad: una mercancía en disputa y sus prácticas de mercado | Transgressive Security Markets: A Contested Commodity and its Market Practices,” *Relaciones Internacionales*, no. 30 (2015),

<http://www.relacionesinternacionales.info/ojs/issue/view/30.html>; Anna Leander, "Militarization Matters: Naming the Material Politics of Contemporary Violence," *Critical Military Studies* under review, Special Issue: Everyday Modalities of War in the Global South (2020).

³ William Walters, "The power of inscription: beyond social construction and deconstruction in European integration studies," *Millennium* 31, no. 1 (2002).

do the literature review, *derive* a hypothesis, core process/logic or central concept and then *apply* it to a case study to check if it holds or should be further elaborated. Its aim is mostly empirical generalizations of the kind if A then B under scope-conditions C-Z. But it also haunts critical work of the kind intentet to apply Foucault to show the that biopolitics is at work in the umptieth context. Applicationism is implicit in the research design models most students are presented with, most professors look for in their student papers and many reviewers use in their commenting. The problem with applicationism is that it makes knowledge conservative. It works to justify, reinforce and perpetuate the exclusion or marginalization of concerns (such as those related to gender or commercial security) and approaches (invented to deal with them) that are not *already* problematized in existing theories. It makes raising such concerns an uphill, uneven, and mostly vain struggle. They have to be raised with concepts obfuscating their existence and studied through theoretical frameworks leaving them no place. The consequence is that concepts become blinders rather than glasses and theories obfuscate rather than clarify.

Alternatives to applicationism move away from the idea of applying concepts and theories and instead work with them. There are different ways of doing so. One can take a theoretical route and work with conceptual imaginaries as political theorists or philosophers are prone to do. The strategy of *composing collaborationist collages* presented here takes another sociological or anthropological route inspired by new materialist research strategies, and more specifically by their feminist articulations. These all make space for the observed to speak back and transform the theoretical frameworks and concepts. As Mol insists “even if there is a lot of empirical material” in her depiction of how bodies are enacted in Dutch hospitals, hers “is not a field report, it is an exercise in *empirical philosophy*”.⁴ It is inductive research with empiricist overtones. Thus, making space for the observed changes the status of theory and concepts. These no longer tower above and without. Rather, they are contextual and anchored. Concepts are

“‘working’ in several senses of the terms: concepts we *work with*... concepts that *do work* to destabilize received historical narratives; concepts that are working in the sense that that they are *provisional* rather than placeholders, subject to review and revision rather than fully formed; concepts that invite scrutiny rather than block it. The most important notion of working concepts... is that they promote analytic openings and are subject to change.”⁵

Concepts cease to be fixed entities that can be taken from somewhere, pasted together in an analytical framework, eclectically or otherwise conceived, and then applied in view of possibly being transformed afterwards. Instead they do work. They are part of the recursive processes through which observers and observed co-produce eachother. The standard do-derive-apply-revisit research logic geared to empirical generalization is replaced with a mobilize-invite-scurtazine-change one geared to promote analytical openings and conceptual development.

The road that leading me to work with concepts and theories by composing collaborationist collages has been longwinding and slow, involving many useful detours. It has been marked by the groping, pragmatic search for ways of exploring a politics of commercial security mostly written off the agenda. Applicationist “cookbook approaches” have not merely been unhelpful. There have been no cookbook recipes to follow for me or for anyone else.⁶ I therefore experimented with many anti-applicationist research strategies, drawing inspiration and support from where it was available, building alliances and collaborations within and without

⁴ Anne-Marie Mol, *The Body Multiple* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).: 37 emphasis in original

⁵ Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: Race and the intimate in colonial rule* (Univ of California Press, 2010).: 206 emphasis in original

⁶ Anna Leander, “From Cookbooks to Dictionaries in the Making: Methodological Perspectives for Research of Non-State Actors and Processes,” in *Methodological Approaches for Studying Non-state Actors in International Security. Theory and Practice*, ed. Andreas Kruck and Andrea Schneiker (London: Routledge, 2017).

my own academic discipline.⁷ Tracing this trajectory backwards might be useful for an auto-“analytical sketch”⁸ highlighting developments in the field of International Relations (IR). Such a sketch would reveal the transformed topology of IR where anti-applicationist work is now familiar to the point of being mainstream. However, such an exercise is not what I engage in here. Rather, the aim is to introduce an analytical strategy. The examples are drawn from my work on the politics of commercial security is serving that end. It therefore is secondary that the research strategies originally informing this work were often different.⁹

To introduce the *composing of collaborationist collages* as an analytical strategy, the first section of this article delves on its three core building blocks: composing, collage and collaborationist. I begin by situating compositional research strategies that have a long pedigree in materialist theorising, where I find the feminist variants particularly inspiring. I then proceed to suggest that specifying that what is composed is a collage is helpful. It directs attention to the heterogeneity of the compositions I have in mind. I do so drawing inspiration from and building on Strathern’s patchwork concept. The section concludes with a discussion of what, following Haraway, I term collaborationism underscoring that collaborationism is integral to this research strategy. It is necessary for composing collages and because it is a check on the positionality of the composer more effective than the obvious alternative, namely sociological reflexivity. The second section focuses on the (dis-)advantages of composing collaborationist collages. It emphasises that doing so is helpful for highlighting disconnections and hence have a relational ontology beyond connections, structures, systems, lines and the like. Moreover, composing collaborationist collages has the virtue of directing attention to non-linear, complex, materially entangled and ongoing socio-material processes and the open-ended emergence these generate. I then proceed to discuss some of the discomforts tied to this approach because of the many uncertainties associated with it. These include fundamental uncertainties regarding epistemology, ontology and axiology. I leave these aside. Instead, I focus on the practical, sociological uncertainties. True to form, I write this introduction to the composing of collaborationist collages as a collaborationist collage. I draw examples from my own work, but I

⁷ I worked with anti-applicationist approaches ranging from those developed by IPE scholar Susan Strange (who insisted that theory was a “Procrustean bed” to those advocated by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (who relentlessly argued for treating theories and concepts as “thinking tools” and adopting an irreverent attitude of “thinking with a thinker against that thinker”. For Strange see e.g. Stefano Guzzini et al., “Introduction: New Ideas for a Strange World: *Mélanges for Susan*,” in *New Diplomacy in the Post-Cold War World: Essays for Susan Strange*, ed. Roger Morgan et al. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993); Anna Leander, “Dependency Today: Finance, Firms, Mafias and the State,” *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2001); Anna Leander, “Strange Looks on Developing Countries: A Neglected Kaleidoscope of Questions,” in *Strange Power. Shaping the Parameters of International Relations and International Political Economy*, ed. Thomas C. Lawton, James N. Rosenau, and Amy C. Verdun (Aldershot et. al.: Ashgate, 2000).. For Bourdieu see e.g. Anna Leander, “Do we really need reflexivity in IPE? Bourdieu’s two reasons for answering affirmatively (contribution to a colloquium on Pierre Bourdieu),” *Review of International Political Economy* 9, no. 4 (2002); Anna Leander, “The Power to Construct International Security: On the Significance of Private Military Companies,” *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005); Anna Leander, “Securing Sovereignty by Governing Security through Markets,” in *Sovereignty Games: Instrumentalising State Sovereignty in Europe and Beyond*, ed. Rebbecca Adler-Nissen and Thomas Gammeltoft-Hansen (London: Palgrave, 2008); Anna Leander, “The Promises, Problems and Potentials of a Bourdieu Inspired Approach to International Relations,” *International Political Sociology* 5, no. 3 (2011); Anna Leander, “Interviewing Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) about Bourdieu and International Relations,” in *The Return of the Theorists*, ed. Richard Ned Lebow, Hidemi Suganami, and Peer Schouten (London: Palgrave, 2015).

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Paris: Seuil, *Raisons d’agir* edition, 2004).

⁹ The privileging of examples from my own work — and the consequent extensive self-referencing for which apologies are due — is an original sin. I wrote a substantially different version of this article as contribution to an edited volume in Danish was conceived. See the excellent introduction by the editors and Anna Leander, “Skabende Samarbejde: Om at Komponere Kollarager om Kommerciell Sikkerhed,” in *Eklektiske analysestrategier: Problemorienteret samfundsvidenskab på tværs af perspektiver*, ed. Justine Grønbaek Pors and Emil Husted (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 2020)..

collaborate with feminist science and technology scholarship as well as with the installations by Martha Rosler and Hito Steyerl displayed in the exhibition *WarGames*.¹⁰

Three Building Blocks

The research strategy I am introducing is a general one even if I anchor the discussion of it with references to the politics of commercial security. It is about generating images of how politics works, of the processes and actors involved in a context where there are no obvious ready-made theoretical frameworks for asking questions about it. Its aims are similar to the “repair, take care, assemble, reassemble, stitch together” put forward in Latour’s *Compositionist Manifesto*.¹¹ Composing is a good term for capturing the first building block of this strategy. However, the term composition may be promising something too neat for the kinds of messy images that emerge when one begins pulling together the radically heterogeneous. “Staying with the trouble”¹² of (shifting) contradictions and incompatibilities is necessary if the pieces of the compositions are to remain visible. To emphasize this, it is helpful to recall that a composition is often a *collage*. Finally, serious engagement with heterogeneity requires collaborationist work. The heterogeneous material joined in the collage are no longer only, or even mainly, data, sources, material or something similar. The pieces themselves collaborate in the composing working as a check on the positionality of the researcher in the process.

Composing

A detail from Martha Rosler’s photomontage series *Home Beautiful: Brining War Home* (figure 1) shows how composing works. By juxtaposing things usually kept apart — elements of the suffering in war and consumerist American interiors — and by doing so in disregard of the temporal, spatial, cultural and social distances, Rosler shows, or perhaps better creates, an image of possible and partial dis-connections of the relationship between war and home. She is prompting unease through an aesthetic of the home disturbed, inviting reflection and perhaps engagement. In so doing, she is striving to enhance our grasp of the issues at stake.

This is also how, following inspirations in existing literatures, I have worked with compositions to get a grasp of the politics of commercial security. One such inspiration has been compositions made in the tradition of Bruno Latour and the Actor Network Theory he is associated with. In that context the heterogeneous things brought into the composition are the “missing masses” of material objects and science as he would say.¹³ Bringing them in shifts understandings of how science develops and particularly of the role of material instruments, objects and devices. These acquire the status of “actants” doing things fashioning scientific developments. Following analogous lines of thought, I have included objects in studies of the politics of commercial security. For example, in the context of the US drone programme, I showed how drones were reshaping the field (in a Bourdieuan sense) of legal expertise and shifting the terms of the debate. Instead of extrajudicial assassinations, the program became one of targeted killings (Leander, 2013b). The shift was legalizing pre-emptively killing people on

¹⁰ The exhibition displayed works by Martha Rosler and Hito Steyerl at the Kunst-Museum Basel Gegenwart (5. Mai 2018 — 20. Januar 2019). The figures below are drawn from the exhibition “Manual n° 9” all reproduced with the permission of the curator.

¹¹ Bruno Latour, “An attempt at a” compositionist manifesto”, *New Literary History* 41, no. 3 (2010): 475. The big difference is that unlike Latour (and reconnecting to feminist thought) that I see no opposition between composition and critique. Latour’s manifesto indeed presents composing as an alternative to critique. It is written as proposing a solution to the problems Latour sees with obsolete critical approaches. On the contrary, composing for me is a way of deepening critique, taking it further by consolidating the place of the discontinuous, dispersed and heterogeneous in it.

¹² Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the trouble : making kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

¹³ Bruno Latour, “Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts,” in *Shaping technology/ building society: studies in sociotechnical change*, ed. Wiebe E. Bijker and John Law (Boston: MIT Press, 1992).

the fragile grounds of suspicion. Understanding this shift and acting to counter it, required tending to materiality which I did drawing inspiration mainly from Karen Barad and her concept of in/tra/ction which I connected to field analysis.



Figure 1 Martha Rosler, *Home Beautiful: Bringing War Home, Detail* (2004-2008)

The heterogeneities brought into a composing go beyond the missing masses of material objects. Drawing inspiration from practice theorists such as Reckwitz and Rosa¹⁴ I have included a different range of heterogeneities beyond objects and technologies. In my case it has been mainly about the aesthetics, affects and emotions that Austin makes definitional to compositional approaches.¹⁵ For example, the advertising of tracking devices is constantly working from the murky within of the embodied and affective. It anchors security ever more deeply and firmly. It makes it “sticky”.¹⁶ To see this is to gain a better grasp of the politics of tracking-devices. This grasp is a precondition for pondering how this politics might be intervened. I have worked with other heterogeneities. Other scholars would certainly want to work with

yet different ones. A long and open list of possible heterogeneities could be drawn up. The core principle of that list would have to be that it was open to additions — as lists often are¹⁷ — so that things could be added to it depending on what proved pertinent and important to the context so that the composing can evolve and be adjusted to the objects of study. Composing is attractive precisely because it makes it possible to connect an undefined and potentially indefinite range of things, including as in the examples above objects such as drones and embodied affects such as those of the tracking device advertising. Composing “allows and requires one to take objects and events of all kinds into consideration when trying to understand the world. No phenomenon can be ignored on the grounds that it belongs to another discipline”.¹⁸

¹⁴ Andreas Reckwitz, "Affective Spaces. A praxeological outlook," *Rethinking History* 16, no. 2 (2012); Hartmut Rosa, *Resonanz: Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Suhrkamp Verlag, 2016).

¹⁵ He distinguishes it from approaches focused on post-humanist, socio-material assembling. This makes for an elegant and clear distinction worth adopting even if it sits uneasily for example with many compositionist approaches including that embraced by Latour in his *Compositionist Manifesto*. See Jonathan Luke Austin, "Security compositions," *European Journal of International Security* 4, no. 3 (2019): 255 and passim

¹⁶ Anna Leander, "Sticky Politics: Composing Security by Advertising Tracking Devices," *European Journal of International Security* 4, no. 3 (2019).

¹⁷ Marieke de Goede, Anna Leander, and Gavin Sullivan, "Introduction: The politics of the list," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 1 (February 1, 2016 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775815624561>, <http://epd.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/34/1/3>.

¹⁸ Mol, *The Body Multiple*: 158

This openness, the refusal to accept the policing of disciplinary boundaries is something I have come to think of as crucial for the politics of commercial security (see also the editorial introduction). This politics is often missed because each academic subfield is only, logically, interested in its own questions and in working with the concepts developed for answering them. Scholars of marketing, accounting, organizational theory etc. are not mostly not interested in the politics of commercial security, except possibly if it has a bearing on how accounting, marketing or organization work. The politics they export to political science/IR. The trouble is that most political scientists are no more accustomed to taking marketing, accounting or organizations into consideration except if it affects politics as they have defined it. This is comfortable. It makes it possible to export responsibility for looking at anything that does not fit the own context to other disciplines and to stabilize the own knowledge in the process. At best, this fragments analysis: bits and pieces of the politics commercial security appear in different contexts. However, often the result is no analysis because it is nobody's responsibility.¹⁹ Composing is helpful as an antidote. Reiterating Mol's formulation, it allows and requires us to proceed otherwise.



Figure 2 Location of *Home Beautiful* in relation to Hito Steyerl *Hell Yeah We Fuck Die* (also figure 3)

Collage

The next building block is the collage. Contextualizing Rosler's *House Beautiful* is a way of explaining why. The picture makes sense as a heterogeneous composition. However, the composition emphasizes not only the relation between heterogeneous elements but also on their disconnectedness. *House Beautiful* is drawing connections between American interiors and war *and* showing their disconnections. It is drawing the partial connections. The picture reproduced here is itself part of a series of pictures each of which shows the partial connections between American interiors and war. This series in turn is a sequel to a previous series. These compositions could be (and are) partially connected into future series as well as into other contexts emphasising. The detail is reprinted on the cover of Shapiro's *Trans-disciplinary Method Methods*²⁰ as well as in this article. Moreover, in the exhibition *WarGames* the series *Home Beautiful* was connected to the work of Hito Steyerl. From one perspective it was interlaced her installation *We Fuck Die* (figure 2). From another it was unrelated (Figure 3). When the exhibition ends, these partial connections live on through images in the catalogue. They are mobilized in this article. They may be partially connected to further conversations with other exhibitions and genres. The point is that the detail from *House Beautiful* is partially

¹⁹ I continue to be amazed by how, even when the commercial is obviously there, it is excluded on disciplinary grounds. By way of example, when I asked a colleague who presented her research on civil-military relations in Afghanistan why the contractors were not part of this (at times there were as many contractors as soldiers in Afghanistan), the answer was that did not fit the approach. She insisted that work on contracting tended to be critical and since this was geared at policy-makers that was problematic. The US (GAO) Government Accountability Office at the time had published a string of reports on the issue.

²⁰ Michael J. Shapiro, *Studies in Trans-Disciplinary Method: After the Aesthetic Turn* (London: Routledge, 2012).

connected in a wide range of shifting ways. Composing is not once and for all. It is an ongoing process extending in multiple directions and involving many different kinds of (changing) materials.



Figure 3 Hito Steyerl, Hell, Yeah, We Fuck Die (2016)

This is also how research on the politics of commercial security has evolved, including in my own research. For example, in a project focussed on Duty of Care and its implications for the protection of citizens abroad²¹ my responsibility was to research the legal and commercial aspects of this. To do so, I in effect composed three partially connected collages showing the disconnections between the Duty of Care and central political problematiques. I traced the processes through which the Duty of Care was deepening the dilemmas posed by the humanitarian politics of life. I showed how its connections to the decreasing pertinence of the state monopoly on the legitimate use of force as a practical category. And I showed how it was consolidating the centrality of public private legal arrangements in governing the use of force.²² As Rosler's *House Beautiful* I could have composed other collages drawing other partial connections, the collages I did compose could have been taken into other contexts or connected differently to other political problematiques elsewhere.

This emphasis variability, context and openness makes the idea of composing sit somewhat uneasily with the connotations of a composition that are more disciplinary and disciplining. A

²¹ See <https://www.nupi.no/en/About-NUPI/Projects-centres-and-programmes/Duty-of-Care-Protection-of-Citizens-Abroad>. The project results were published in Nina Græger and Halvard Leira, "The Duty of Care in International Relations: Protecting citizens beyond the border," (2019).

²² Respectively: Leander, "Le Souci de Soi: The Duty of Care and the Humanitarian Politics of Life."; Leander, "The Politics of Legal Arrangements: The "Duty of Care" Justifying, Extending and Perpetuating Public in the Private Forms of Protection "; Anna Leander, "Making Markets Responsible: Revisiting the State Monopoly on the Legitimate Use of Force," in *Sociology, Privatization, Global Conflicts* ed. Tom Crosbie and Ori Swed (Palgrave, 2019).

frequent reference point for reflecting on compositions is the work of the Russian born painter Wassily Kandinsky. He not only made a large number of compositions but also wrote theoretical treatises about the logic of composition and the grammar of form.²³ For Kandinsky, as for theorists ranging from Spinoza to Deleuze, composing is an exercise that promises to reveal general laws. However, this may be a promise composing cannot deliver on empirically, theoretically or otherwise and that it may not be desirable to make. Insisting that what is composed is a collage is to take distance from these connotations of the composition.²⁴ It is a way of accepting the messy, sprawling and evolving aspects of composing. For work on the politics of commercial security such distancing is important. It fends off the many constructive suggestions to turn situated arguments into “a case of” something else. For example, I was repeatedly advised to subsume my arguments about the Duty of Care under some more overarching logic.²⁵ However, my ambition was to create images that provided a better grasp of the possibly singular and certainly contextual processes at work. If followed, the “case of something” would make such realizations impossible. The, usually well-intended patronizing, subsumptions of arguments into some theoretical world are highly problematic. Drawing attention to politics necessarily requires fracturing the neat grammars of abstraction so that an image of the different pieces of the composition, in all their variety remain visible. Rosler’s *House Beautiful*, works because of the multiple, shifting dis-connections showed. With Law and Mol, I find “sensitivity to the possibility that social and material relations don’t add up. Or hang together as a whole. Semiotically or strategically” and that this “leads us to the logic — the multiple logic — of the patchwork, in which we move from one place to another, looking for local connections, without the expectation of patterns ‘as a whole’” which requires that we “ask about the possibility that there are partial connections. Partial and varied connections between sites, situations, and stories.”²⁶

Patchwork is the term Law and Mol adopt to convey how this image of social and material relations that possibly don’t add up. Following, Marilyn Strathern, they suggest that it may be helpful to think of quilting, where different materials are patched together. However, collage, rather than patchwork may be a better image for analytical strategies intent on capturing these partial and varied connections between sites, situations and stories. Collage directs attention to the variable qualities of “patches” that are not only made of different kinds of cloth as well as to a multiplicity of possible techniques of composing well beyond sewing. We may think of Rosler’s and Steyerl’s installations as collages. We would not call them patchworks. They are made with a range of varied techniques depending on the materials involved, but certainly not limited to a singular technique. Analogously, in the work on Duty of Care, I did not rely on relatively homogeneous sources equivalent to patches of different materials but rather on a wide range of different sources that I connected in various, shifting ways. For example, to show how the Duty of Care was reshuffling political subjectivities, I showed how a the power-point image of a red corseted woman with black gloves and a whip, the Voluntary Standards on the Duty of Care, the connotations of “care” were partially connected. They were part of I termed the “legal arrangement” through which the Duty of Care was performing the political effects I was observing.

Moving from composition to collage opens for cultivating variety in modes of composing and in materials. It turns variety into a heuristic device. As Max Ernst, put it when clarifying the

²³ Wassily Kandinsky, "Point, ligne, plan, pour une grammaire des formes," *Paris: Denöel* (1970); Susan Laikin Funkenstein, "Engendering Abstraction: Wassily Kandinsky, Gret Palucca, and "Dance Curves"," *Modernism/modernity* 14, no. 3 (2007).

²⁴ Leander, "Sticky Politics: Composing Security by Advertising Tracking Devices."

²⁵ I was advised to think of it as a case of a Marxian military-industrial-complex, as an illustration of a Foucauldian neo-liberal or bio-political governmentality logic, as an instance of principle agent problem and beyond..

²⁶ John Law and Annemarie Mol, "Notes on materiality and sociality," *The sociological review* 43, no. 2 (1995): 275, 288 and 290 respectively

centrality of collage in his oeuvre: “I found figural elements united there that stood so far apart from each other that the absurdity of this accumulation caused a sudden intensification of my visionary facilities and brought about a hallucinating succession of contradictory images”.²⁷ This should sound provocative to the social science reader. Should we let ourselves be guided by hallucinations? Here I am suggesting that perhaps, indeed, we should be more open learning from ways of thinking and learning in the arts. Perhaps indeed we do need to become better at imagining things differently, to work in less disciplinary and disciplining fashion. Perhaps we really do need to revalue the place of the affective and experiential not only as it is at work in the observed, but also in us as observers. So perhaps we should follow the suggestions of the advice of likes of Gadamer, Whitehead or Dewey (no revolutionaries academically speaking rest assured²⁸) and question the boundaries between the (social) sciences and art. Perhaps we do need to tend more also to aesthetics as reflected for example in the growing interest in political design?²⁹ Certainly, it would be important to do so when studying the politics of commercial security. In my studies on the Duty of Care, I was experimenting with such ideas. I used the absurdity of accumulating far apart, contradictory, elements to grasp the politics of commercial security to speak with Max Ernst. This is the reason I suggest that more generally we move away from thinking that composing will generate compositions revealing general, abstract, laws, and instead move to composing collages attuned to the situated, material, anchored multiplicity and the possibility that we are indeed observing multiple worlds. Following this route is joining contemporary art to a place where “the mixedmedia collage, the found object, and the readymade] occupy center stage ... while optically and pictorially oriented modes such as abstract painting [of which Kandinsky is an undisputed master] have moved to a distinctly minor position”.³⁰

Collaborationist

Adopting an analytical strategy of composing collages with a messy, multiplicity of heterogeneous materials necessarily has a bearing on the answers one would give to standard research design and methods questions such as “on what basis did you chose this case?”, “why did you look at these sources rather than those”? Or “how can you justify your interpretation of them”? If the whole point of the analytical strategy is to avoid an applicationism that blinds us to the situated, unique complexity, the answers to these questions can hardly rest on the assertion that the case is a case of something. Nor can they derive from the adoption of an authoritative standardized procedure of observation and interpretation invented by some preferably dead, white, male theorist. This is not to say that there are no answers. It means that the answers are different.

In a strategy that provides insight by making situated and often unexpected dis-connections the answers, quite logically, have to be related to how fruitful the connections made turn out to be. This is not something that be decided upon ahead of the research processes nor is it independent of the pieces that go into the collage and on the process itself. Borrowing from Haraway’s characteristically insightful formulations, one way of putting this is to insist that the

²⁷ cited in Barbara Berger, "Collage, Frottage, Grattage... Max Ernst's Artistic Techniques," (2008). <https://www.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/max-ernst/collage-frottage-grattage/>.

²⁸ Obviously submitting the urge to mobilize the authority of dead white men. Similar suggestions are central to the works of the scholars I build alliances with here including Braidotti, Haraway, Hayles, and Stengers.

²⁹ Arturo Escobar, *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds* (Duke University Press, 2018); Walter D. Mignolo, *Local histories/global designs: Coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking* (Princeton University Press, 2012); Tony Fry, *Design as politics* (Berg, 2010).. For an in-depth discussion of this trend Jonathan Austin and Anna Leander, "Designing-With/In World Politics," *Forthcoming* under review (2020).

³⁰ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics* (University of Chicago Press, 2015): 152

analytical strategy therefore has to be “relentlessly collaborationist”.³¹ The answers to questions about cases, interpretations and positionality can only be articulated in collaboration with the observed and (therefore also) with the help other genres. They are never final. They require relentless reformulation as the contexts and aims of research shift. As Haraway formulated the point in the poem (sic) opening one of her books:

...
Crystals, Fabrics, and Fields was my passage point
Always the critters
Semiotics
The form is always in-the-making
Making connections is itself a methodology
Articulating clusters of processes, subjects, objects,
meanings, and
commitments
SF is a methodological proposal³²
 ...

Relentless collaborationism is at the core in the exhibition *WarGames*. Each installation works as a form of collaboration with that which is engaged in the installation itself and does so in a manner that makes clear that this engagement is part of a relentless ongoing process. For example, Rosler’s installation *Reading Hannah Arendt* (figure 4), collaborates not only with Hannah Arendt, her political theory, and the philosophical genre, but also within the exhibition with Hito Steyerl’s work and the problematic of *WarGames* as well as with the visitor who is literally brought into the installation as s/he walks through it. It also makes clear that this is not where the process of Reading Arendt ends. This is only part of a reading (see figure 4), an extract, that can and should go on, and be taken in different directions by political theorists who picks up other passages, by the visitor that walking through, in the context of other works of art.



Relentless collaborationism informs the case selection, observation and interpretation in my work on the politics of commercial security. For example, the argument that whitelists do regulatory work in security by carving out regulatory spaces and generating

Figure 4 Marta Rosler, *Reading Hannah Arendt (Politically for an American in the 21st Century)* (2006).

³¹ quoted in Nicholas Gane, "When we have never been human, what is to be done? Interview with Donna Haraway," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7-8 (2006): 156

³² Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan@_Meets_OncomouseTM* (New York: Routledge, 1997): xvi

regulatory competencies,³³ emerged out of a collaboration with people interviewed, with white-lists, with websites hosting them, with Umberto Eco's work on lists³⁴ and with the contributors and my co-editors of the special issue of which the article was part. The editors and reviewers of EPD that published the article were also participating in giving shape to it. Their presence is visible in the article through citations but also pictures of the webpages. This collaboration was not intended to provide the one and only approach to lists. Rather it contributed to an ongoing debate about lists as political technologies. The collaboration could evolve and move elsewhere, including for example to explore the link between lists as political technologies and the evolving rule of law.³⁵

This relentless collaborationist approach is no marginalia to the composing of collages. On the contrary, it is a condition of its possibility in three ways. First, it is a condition of possibility of observation. Visiting those involved in a composition "politely" is a condition of possibility for hearing them.³⁶ It is a way of remaining "curious" about them and willing to make what Haraway terms "oddkin"; odd kinship relations crossing species. Whether they are critical geographers, whitelists, or Arabian babblers (as in Despret's case) this is a prerequisite for even beginning to include them in a composition. Second, a relentless collaborationist stance is a necessity for theorizing involving "working concepts". By allowing shifting theoretical and empirical contexts to speak back to the concepts, it works as a protection against the "blanket" of grand theorizing that "suffocates" the observed.³⁷ Instead, it opens up space for integrating the categories of the observed and to effectively draw on them not only as cases but as co-producers of knowledge.³⁸ It ensures the "subject- and object-making dance" in which "the choreographer is a trickster" rewriting the stories.³⁹ Lastly, a relentless collaborationist approach works as a check on the own positionality.⁴⁰ By bringing varying perspectives into the core of the work, it makes positionality visible and constantly confronts the researcher with it. It does so by bringing in arguments, concepts and ideas if the collaboration is with other academics and social scientists. But if the collaboration extends beyond this and includes also the observed or other forms of knowledge such as the arts, we quickly find ourselves on a terrain beyond language, where we are grappling with the Arabian babblers of Despret, the installations of Rosler and Steyerl, or the fungi of Anna Tsing. This considerably enlarges the repertoires through which our positionality is reflected back at us.

Collaborationism is not only one alternative way among many for handling the intractable issue of positionality. It is a more effective and realistic one. It creates a sound distance from the scientific (and authoritarian) pretensions of dealing with positionality by "objectifying the objectifying subject".⁴¹ It also dispenses with the shallow, narcissistic, exhibitionism involved in

³³ Anna Leander, "The Politics of Whitelisting: Regulatory Work and Topologies in Commercial Security " *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 34, no. 1 (2016).

³⁴ Umberto Eco, *The infinity of lists* (Rizzoli New York, 2009).

³⁵ Anna Leander, "Whitelisting and the Rule of Law: Accountability in Contemporary Commercial Security," in *Global Governance*, ed. Monika Heupel and Theresa Reinold (London: Palgrave, 2016).

³⁶ Vinciane Despret, "Domesticating practices: the case of Arabian babblers," in *Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies* (Routledge, 2014): 41-56

³⁷ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 59

³⁸ Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *From the Enemy's Point of View. Humanity and Divinity in an Amazonian Society* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992); Marilyn Strathern, *Partial connections* (Altamira: Rowman, 2005).

³⁹ (Haraway, *Staying with the trouble : making kin in the Chthulucene.*: 127

⁴⁰ The "positionality" of the observer (in terms of race, class, gender etc.) deserves checking because of its implications for research including for the choice of topics, the gathering, analysis and interpretation of information, for the communication of results and for the impact of the research Anna Leander, "Reflexivity," in *Encyclopedia of International Relations and Global Politics*, ed. Martin Griffiths (London and New York: Routledge, 2005)..

⁴¹ "Dealing with" because as Bourdieu insisted his "reflexive" approach of turning the sociological tools onto the own sociological work can direct attention to and analyze the sociological/intersectional hierarchies built into knowledge production and hence help deal with it. It cannot (obviously and

dealing with positionality by “situating the author in the text”. Such an approach is not only pointless — in what way does it tackle the conundrums of positionality? — but also ultimately locates texts on the border of the boring and the unreadable.⁴² In short, a relentless collaborationist approach is a safeguard against the “risks of writing” applicationist texts obfuscating, distorting if not outright obliterating the observed. Put in the positive: it is a condition of possibility for writing “apotropaic texts” deflecting misfortune and ward off the evil just as would the apotropaic magic of the Shamans in the Western Amazon Taussig has in mind when using this expression.⁴³ Texts of the kind intended when composing collaborative collages.

In sum, a relentless collaborationist approach is not mainly a matter of gathering ever more interesting and increasingly varied information about a problem. It is at the core of defining the problem as well as how it might be analysed. It helps delimit the case, the information needed to analyse it and the form the analysis takes. Collaborationism is necessary for the composing of collages. As Stengers puts it, we can cultivate our ability “to interpret conjointly (that is, without opposition, hierarchy or dis-connection) what we usually describe in mutually contradictory terms, for example, freedom and determination, cause and reason, fiction and reality, or mind and matter”.⁴⁴ I have come to think that for getting a grasp of the politics of commercial security, such work across is essential. It is also increasingly common. However, I see this work as just beginning.

The Discoveries and (Dis-)Comforts of Composing

Getting a better grasp is what scientists strive for according to Stengers.⁴⁵ It also how Reckwitz suggests we understand the aims of the “heuristic theorizing” in practice theoretical work.⁴⁶ So if the composing of collaborationist collages offers a grasp, this may be good enough? Stengers proceeds to insist that what is central to grasping are stories. They, according to her, make the difference between what is accepted as scientific knowledge and what remains “mere fiction”.⁴⁷ Abbott goes further insisting that what is needed is not the narrative, but the lyrical, the metaphors and affects which makes the “story” persuasive.⁴⁸ In the line of what has just been argued about the centrality of composing collaborationist collages, I have to insist that what is at stake here is not just stories but “world-pictures”⁴⁹ and, even more strongly and precisely, sense-making broadly defined. So what kind of grasp does the analytical strategy discussed

Bourdieu never claimed otherwise) solve the conundrums of positionality. It is a way of “dealing with” it. Its major drawback is practical. If taken seriously, objectifying the objectifying subject is an impossibly ambitious project that paradoxically ultimately reinforces the navel gazing scholasticism of which Bourdieu was relentlessly critical. See for instance Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000): chapter on scholastic fallacies in particular.

⁴² Michael Lynch, “Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 17, no. 3 (2000).

⁴³ Michael Taussig, “The Corn-Wolf: Writing apotropaic texts,” *Critical Inquiry* 37, no. 1 (2010).

⁴⁴ Isabelle Stengers, “A Constructivist Reading of Process and Reality,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 4 (July 1, 2008 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408091985>, <http://tcs.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/25/4/91>: 100

⁴⁵ Isabelle Stengers, “Another Look: Relearning to Laugh,” *Hypatia* 15, no. 4 (2000): 45

⁴⁶ Reckwitz, “Affective Spaces. A praxeological outlook.”: 243

⁴⁷ Stengers, “Another Look: Relearning to Laugh.”: 47

⁴⁸ Andrew Abbott, “Against Narrative: A Preface to Lyrical Sociology,” *Sociological Theory* 25, no. 1 (Mar 2007 2012-07-24 2007).

⁴⁹ For a longer discussion of the place of images, their connections to Heidegger’s notion of world picture and the links between pictures, texts and images see W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).. An excellent exploration of the political significance world pictures are offered in Mitchell, *Image Science: Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics*: Chapter 8 focussed on William Blake and Sheila Jasanoff, ed., *States of Knowledge: The Co-production of Science and the Social Order* (New York: Routledge, 2004)..

here provide? What sensemaking does the composing of collaborative collages leave us with, what sensibilities that it generate and why is that helpful? To answer, I pursue my collaborationist collage with feminist science and technology studies and the exhibition *War Games*. Contextualizing my experience with the politics of commercial security, I will suggest that it produces images that are particularly conducive for raising two types of questions: the politics generated through the dis-connections between the pieces of the collage and that generated through the constant shifting and recombining of these pieces. A range of uncertainties around the standing of (academic) knowledge plagues composing collaborationist collages. While these uncertainties may be both unavoidable and desirable, they are also deeply discomforting for those who works with the strategy, and perhaps more generally for anyone concerned with the politics of knowledge.

Dis-connections

Composing a collaborationist collage is a way of directing attention to and therefore making it easier to problematize not only connections but also disconnections. For example, connecting commercial security to the de-securitizing potential of Acts of Citizenship (and more specifically to the limits of this potential⁵⁰), is a way both of showing connections usually overlooked *and* the disconnections that remain essential.⁵¹ Doing so reveals (among other things) the centrality of imagination and potential in commercial security as illustrated by the many open-ended images of puzzles, empty boardrooms, and question marks in the advertising by *Control Risk*.⁵² This open-ended form enrolled the situated histories and dis-connected ways of relating to security of the potential clients. It was placing these dis-connections at the core of the relationship between commercial security and the de-securitizing potential of Acts of Citizenship. Composing a collage was a way of showing both the connections between the pieces of the collage *and* their disconnections. Each piece, each relation to security was connected to commercial security *and* at the same time disconnected from the other pieces.

This duality of connection and disconnection that collages direct attention to opens up for investigations of what Mol appropriately terms “the politics of what” that is the politics of how these dis-connections are rendered (in-)visible, handled, and hence come to make up the *what* of e.g. of bodies, spaces, temporalities or indeed security. It is a way of deciding what stories, images, sounds and other material becomes part of an account. In that sense, composing collages is a way of abiding with the fifth principle of Ahmed’s *Feminist Manifesto* which reads:

“I AM NOT WILLING TO GET OVER HISTORIES THAT ARE NOT OVER”⁵³

As Ahmed, the researcher composing collages can actively take a position of which histories are pertinent and not to be forgotten. Locating the clients and their relations to security at the core of commercial security as I did in the work on *Control Risk* marketing just cited is a way of refusing to “get over” histories that are not yet over. It is a way of working against the glossing over the specificities of these histories *and* the obfuscation of their link to commercial security and of their implication, through this, their connection to the possibility of de-securitizing through Acts of Citizenship. It is a way of resisting the amnesia that conveniently allows us to

⁵⁰ This was a collective project formulated around the hope the editors — Jef Huysmans and Xavier Guillaume — initially had placed in the political potential of “Acts of Citizenship” through which a right to rights are claimed to break the “securitization” processes through which existential threats are produced and exceptional politics legitimated as theorized respectively in: Engin F. Isin and Greg M. Nielsen, eds., *Acts of Citizenship* (London: Zed Books, 2008). and Ole Wæver, “Securitization and desecuritization,” in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995)..

⁵¹ Anna Leander, “Marketing Security Matters: Undermining De-securitization Through Acts of Citizenship,” in *Security and Citizenship: The Constitution of Political Being*, ed. Xavier Guillaume and Jef Huysmans (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁵² Ironically, the editors did not let me include the images. They did not see what work these images were doing for my argument.

⁵³ Sara Ahmed, *Living a feminist life* (Duke University Press, 2017): 262

overlook the way in which deeply anchored, historically generated specific, injustices (notably those pertaining to class, gender, or race) can be, and are, re-enacted in an advertising that plays on potential and imaginaries through puzzles and question-marks. Perhaps most importantly, it is a way of recalling that these injustices differ fundamentally depending on whose relation to security is in focus and that therefore neglecting the contextual nature of “the histories not over” by framing arguments in general terms may be fundamentally misleading.



Figure 5 Hito Steyerl *Strike*, 2010 (Videostill)

Tending to how these dis-connections are enacted is essential. Mol concentrated on coordination, distribution and inclusion (these are the titles of three core chapters of *The Body Multiple*⁵⁴) as ways of enacting the dis-connections between the multiple bodies in the Dutch hospitals. Analogously, although I did not use that language at the time, when working on citizenship, my argument focussed on the place of contractualization and technocratization in enacting the dis-connections between the multiple insecurities implied by the puzzles, question marks and empty boardrooms in *Control Risk* advertising. These references to general forms of enactment are only possible because of the prior work done in creating an image of the dis-connections involved. Moreover, there is no assumptions that these various general forms are universal or even general. They merely put words on enactments of dis-connections helpful for reflecting on the politics-of-what. The general forms are part of the conceptual work through which the composing of collaborative collages provide a grasp. Strathern puts it “to draw a comparison, or make an analogy, [working with general forms] is not necessarily to impute connection: it may indicate a resemblance, rather than a relation, and the resemblance may be fantastic, rather than real”.⁵⁵

Collaborating again. Steyerl’s video *Strike* makes the point about the import of showing and problematizing dis-connections with exceptional clarity (figure 5). In it, Steyerl protests the conditions of artistic labour. She strikes the liquid crystal display of a black monitor standing on a museum style plinth. This brings forth an image recalling the aesthetics of the factory in

⁵⁴ Mol, *The Body Multiple*.

⁵⁵ Strathern, *Partial connections*.: 51

Eisenstein's *Strike*⁵⁶ but the screen remains intact. Steyerl walks away. As this makes clear, the video recalls the dis-connections of the conditions of contemporary artistic labour. It contrasts its heavily mediated, individualized present, conditions with those of collective, labour in the physical factories of the past. At the same time, the film recalls the continuity of exploitative, uneven conditions governing it. In protesting, by striking the screen, Steyerl cannot reframe the dis-continuities. On the contrary, her dissent not only reinstates the connections to the exploitative conditions through the reference to Eisenstein's *Strike*. Her video enacts the contemporary conditions as it is exhibited as part of *War Games* and digitally remediated. The video re-enacts and reinforces the conditions of artistic labour it protests. Steyerl can do little but distance herself as she does in the video. But she does so, having provided a grasp of the dis-connections and opened up the politics-of-what surrounding artistic labour. This is close to how I see writing about why *Control Risk* marketing matters for the de-securitizing potential of Acts of Citizenship. Even if my aim is to protest the dis-connections it creates, my writing about it may not be apotropaic, however much I would like it to be so. But more fundamentally, my role and impact is limited. No "academic hubris" here. I can do little but move on. However, before I do so, I have at least tried to provide some general forms that help grasp the dis-connections involved in the politics of commercial security and hence pave the way for a politics of what; that is a more realistic version of politics I would contend.

Emergences

Composing collaborationist collages offers a grasp of a second, related, issue namely that surrounding the politics of temporality. Along very similar to the argument just made for dis-connections, composing a collage is a way of drawing attention to the multiple, often non-linear, and contradictory pieces of a collage, including the temporalities involved. It is also a way of sensitizing us to the emergent quality of the collage whose temporal constellations and effects can be — and are — constantly redrawn through a wide range of socio-material practices including those of observers, such as academic researchers, but of sensor technologies or regulatory innovations and ethics codes. In the politics of regulating commercial security, this dual emergence has been particularly pertinent.

To the first point, and again reading backwards with the intent of highlighting why thinking in terms of composing collaborationist collages is helpful, I made an argument showing how commercializing risk resulted in unaccountable markets, I placed the main emphasis on the politics of the contradictions between the temporalities of risk and the temporalities of justice involved.⁵⁷ More specifically, I showed that in what journalists then referred to as the "CIA killing program" the prevalence of future oriented, possibilistic understandings of risk generated a "preventive imperative" to act immediately. This future orientation clashed with the slower temporality of political deliberation and the orientation of conventional judicial procedure towards past occurrences and probabilistic reasoning. The consequence was that it became very difficult to politicize contracting in view of shifting (or simply questioning) the direction of regulatory developments. The result was what I termed an "accountability paradox" whereby the search for accountability generated impunity as regulatory measures tended to push steadily further in the direction of confirming the legality and legitimacy of commercial contracting for future oriented, possibilistic strategies that ultimately undermine contractor accountability.⁵⁸ Arguably, an analogous paradox was at work generating impunity more generally, as the future oriented focus on the potential of commercial security tended to pre-empt the pursuit of legal accountability not only in the US context and with respect to the CIA

⁵⁶ Eisenstein's 1925 avantgard film *Strike* focuses on the conditions of (im-)possibility to strike in Russia epitomized by an iconic sequence blending scenes of the Tsarist army shooting the striking workers with scenes of cattle being slaughtered.

⁵⁷ Anna Leander, "Risk and the Fabrication of Apolitical, Unaccountable Military Markets: The Case of the CIA "Killing Program", " *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011), <http://openarchive.cbs.dk/cbsweb/handle/10398/7965>.

⁵⁸ Anna Leander, "The Paradoxical Impunity of Private Military Companies: Authority and the Limits to Legal Accountability," *Security Dialogue* 41, no. 5 (2010).

killing program but in the market more generally.⁵⁹ In varying contextual versions, the contradictions are inscribed in the technical devices and legal technologies that form the infrastructures of governance.

These infrastructures do not produce a uniform, continuous, politics. The tensions and frictions generated by the contradictions in temporality and beyond constantly redefine infrastructures. So do the effects of the mundane everyday activities. The “frictions” generated by the “awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference”⁶⁰ are a source of constant change and instability. This is true also of infrastructures that therefore are constantly evolving in ways infrastructuring the world.⁶¹ Their continuous morphing, assembling and disassembling “infrapolitics” may suddenly refashion the world (or indeed fail to do so). The consequences of this insight for researching politics are far reaching. This includes the politics of regulating commercial security. The accountability paradox just discussed keeps shapeshifting amongst other things because of the many codes of conduct, benchmarks, best practices and standards, developed that do regulatory work redefining not only legal space but also the meaning of the rule of law.⁶² Working with collaborative collages is a good way of capturing this open and ongoing emergence through many processes including infrastructurings. In making the frictions and contradictions driving emergence visible, it also lays bare the fissures and cracks where there is room for political agency and change.

⁵⁹ Anna Leander, "What Do Codes of Conduct Do? A Question to the CSR Debate" (The Surveillance and Society Annual Conference, City University London, 13-15 April 2010); Leander, "The Paradoxical Impunity of Private Military Companies: Authority and the Limits to Legal Accountability."

⁶⁰ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An ethnography of global connection* (Princeton University Press, 2011): 4

⁶¹ Anna Leander, "Parsing Pegasus: An Infrastructural Approach to the Relationship between Technology and Swiss Security Politics," *Swiss Political Science Review* (2020).

⁶² Leander, "Whitelisting and the Rule of Law: Accountability in Contemporary Commercial Security."



Figure 6 Martha Rosler, *Theatre of Drones* (2013/2018)

Rosler's installation *Drone Theatre* (figure 6) conveys a sense of how this works. The installation displays banners Rosler posted in front of the Charlotteville City Hall as part of the 2013 LOOK3 Festival of Photography. On the banners are citations and images — drawn mainly from documentary work but also from SciFi — about the role of drones in war as well as in civilian crowd control and surveillance. Together they give a sense of what we might, with Mol, term “the events” through which “something comes to matter for something else” and that are crucial for understanding “the ‘universe in the making’” (2016: x). “In the making” because it is constantly evolving and shapeshifting in a manner inscribed in the socio-technical processes producing this universe in a manner that exceeds the intentions, reasons or prior properties of the people and objects involved in the process. Just as in theatre, jazz, art installations or tango improvisation and staging will always make the performance exceed the script and the intentions of those involved (e.g. Sparti, 2010 and 2017), so Rosler's *Drone Theatre* conveys a drone politics in the making in excess of the scripts, strategies and singular acts of those involved. Since the installation itself circulates, is inserted in new contexts, changed and indeed resorted to as a reference point, *Theatre of Drones* can itself be seen as one of “the analytical resources for an exploration of the contingent politics of what we may term the ‘unfinalizable’ composition of events” to speak with Day and Lury (2017: 66).

Rosler's installation *Drone Theatre*, underlines a basic characteristic of the collage: it does not assume linear or smooth relationships between the pieces. In fact, they may be connected only through the collage. They can be anchored in and convey different temporalities. Collages intensify vision by collating the absurdly far apart also temporally to recall Ernst. In composing a collage, there is no reason to adjudicate among the possible politics of temporality at place. Is it of the past *or* of the future? Is it of catastrophes *or* of incremental mundane change? In

composing collages it makes sense to replace *or* with *and* in answering. It makes sense to focus on, rather than smoothen over the contradictions and tensions the “and” generates. Collages usefully accommodate what Gumbrecht (2014) terms our “broad present” merging past-present-future. Collages show rather than obfuscate the politics of coexisting, multiple and heterogeneous temporalities inherent in emergence. In so doing they help avoid what Fabian terms “allochronic discourse” locating “other men in anyonetime” present in most anthropological writing (and even more strongly elsewhere one suspects) (Fabian, 1983: 144). They direct attention to the politics of temporality and emergence, collages at least potentially pave the way for what Fabian terms “coevalness” that is for a sensibility and awareness of the politics of time anchored in socio-material practices.⁶³ In sum, composing collaborationist collages has some rather considerable advantages: it offers a grasp both of dis-continuities and of emergences.

Uncertainties

Working with collaborationist collages also has drawbacks and most notably the uncertainties surrounding the status of the knowledge produced. As the preceding discussion makes clear, this analytical strategy is radically open. The collages “relate like the pages in a sketch book. Each new page may yield a different image, made with a different technique and in as far as a scale is recognizable, it may again, each time, be a different one” (Mol, 2002: 157). This generates uncertainty for academic authority structures. By what criteria do we judge the sketchbook pages? How do we decide what page to develop further in our work? In a research strategy that is deliberately anti-applicationist the answer obviously cannot be a readymade off the shelf one. I develop this page because it is a case of something. Or, I use these criteria because that is what established academic authority says. One can of course, fall back on some notion of “rigorous reasoning”. However, references to rigour in academia have an unfortunate tendency to (at best) stifle creativity and at worst induce a state rigor mortis. As Czarnizawska writes:

“the etymology of the term ‘rigor’ indicates that it simply means ‘stiff’ — as opposed to flexible, adaptable, and lively (thus rigor mortis). What, then, is seen as ‘rigorous scientific conduct’ — not in philosophy but in the practice of science? Mostly, it is understood as following to the letter a set of rules imposed by (some) scientists on other (usually younger) scientists and sometimes even on themselves. Deviations are seen as flaws in self-discipline, as poor professionalism, as incompetence”.

Therefore, we may do well to accept and perhaps embrace uncertainty. The consequences for the standing of academic knowledge. Speaking with Mol again “the crucial philosophical question pertaining to reality was: *how can we be sure?* Now, after the turn to practice, we confront another question: *how to live with doubt?* It isn't easy” (Mol, 2002: 165 original emphasis). The reasons “it isn't easy” are manifold. Here I will pick up just one. Remaining consistent with the discussion and the emphasis on practices so far, I will leave aside the range of epistemological, ontological, methodological, and axiological uncertainties of anti-applicationism and focus only on two practical reasons composing collaborationist collages analytical strategies “isn't easy” in the contemporary world of research.

The first of these is that the composing of collaborative collages breaks with the disciplinary and disciplining organization of research that is unlikely to disappear however much homage is paid to creativity and multi-, trans-, inter-, and anti-disciplinarity. Universities were never particularly hospitable to open research strategies valorising innovative and creative work. They are the site of re-production of authoritative knowledge and the socio-political hierarchies

⁶³ As Fabian puts it, “the term coevalness was chosen to mark a central assumption, namely: that all temporal relations, and therefore also contemporaneity, are embedded in culturally organized praxis.” Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983): 34.

associated with it (Bourdieu, 1984, Collins, 2000). They have created a vast “cemetery of practices... unable to defend their obligations” (Stengers, 2010: 18). The neo-liberal cult of creativity and innovation has generated a veneration for inter- or non- disciplinarity also in the university world (Reckwitz, 2012b). However, this cult confronts the disciplinary and disciplining traditions of this world. Anyone striving to work in anti-applicationist fashion (and that presumably includes most readers of this journal) will therefore no doubt share experiences that may be intimidating or enraging, energizing or disillusioning such as those when their superiors asking them to finally return to work on serious/pertinent/strategic topics of concern to “our” discipline⁶⁴ or journal editors reject their manuscripts because they did not see the pertinence for their discipline.⁶⁵ Such disciplining matters profoundly for careers that depend (obviously) on the approval of superiors and publications in top ranked journals. It is doubly important as it feeds into and accentuates the challenge of funding projects based on anti-applicationist strategies (and funding has become core criteria of for evaluating research quality in its own right). These uncertainties around careers and funding are no marginal matter even if, obviously, they can be — and often are — successfully handled. We are seeing a mainstreaming of anti-applicationist research that brings with innovative curricula, exam formats, book series and journals. This publication is a case in point. But a survey of recent syllabi of IR theory courses I undertook to plan one of my own revealed an impressive range of innovative approaches to theory teaching, particularly for post-graduate level courses (outside the US). However, even if a diffuse and decentralized academic “tinkering” is creating an environment decidedly more amenable to the composing of collaborationist collages, the pressure of disciplining disciplines in the university remains well in place. “We see both a tendency towards the nomadic abandoning of disciplines and also towards the generation of ‘grand challenge’ style problems that provide the appropriate mise en scene for the disciplines to array themselves within unchanged but interlocking corrals” as Braidotti and Fuller observe.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ The people asking me these questions include (among very many) a former head of department, a dean of research in the context of a job-talk and the head of one of my research groups.

⁶⁵ By way of example (but I could provide a much longer list) I have three rejections from *European Journal of International Relations* on these grounds. One of the manuscripts was later published in the *European Journal of Social Theory*, the other was published in *International Studies Review* and the third (written 2012) I never found the time to resubmit elsewhere.

⁶⁶ Rosi Braidotti and Matthew Fuller, “The Posthumanities in an Era of Unexpected Consequences,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 36, no. 6 (2019): 7



Figure 7 Hito Steyerl, *Is the Museum a Battlefield?* (2013)

Second, the process of mainstreaming anti-applicationism generates its own uncertainties and most obviously the uncertainty about how to handle the paradox of standardizing anti-applicationist, creative, research. This preoccupation, which necessarily haunts all and any work with critical ambitions, is particularly acute in a context where the standing of academic and particularly humanistic knowledge is intensely contested and the practical reality of most academics is that of the mass university. It is at the heart of Deleuze's "letter to a harsh critic" who suggests that he faces the choice between impotence and withdrawal on the one hand and hypocrisy and contradiction on the other. The critic argues that Deleuze has become a "teacher" authoritatively professing an anti-authoritarian philosophy. Deleuze answers by introducing movement; suggesting that he has "moved elsewhere" and is "hiding" to avoid becoming a celebrity.⁶⁷ This is perhaps a solution for Deleuze, but it is hardly an attractive alternative for most scholars and particularly not for those less established than him. Steyerl tackles the same paradox in her work *Is the Museum a battlefield?* (figure 7) focussing specifically on the material/funding side of the paradox. In it, one screen displays a lecture Steyerl gave at the Istanbul Biennale 2013 where she reflects on how her critical work *November* (2004) was absorbed into the processes it contested to the benefit of the very actors her work critiqued. On a second screen facing it, Steyerl displays material from her research for this lecture. *November* was about how her friend and PKK member Andrea Wolf was killed during the battle (or in the captivity following it). The material on the second screen reveals that the munition used to killed Andrea came from Lockheed Martin and that Lockheed Martin a sponsor of the Istanbul Biennale as well as a patron of the Art Institute of Chicago where Steyerl's work *November* had been exhibited. The visitor is seated in the middle. On the sandbags between the screens, we are left with Steyerl's question. Steyerl provides no more of a way out of the conundrum's of

⁶⁷ Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990* (Columbia University Press, 1995): 9-10

standardizing creativity and innovation strategies than does Deleuze. Perhaps because no escapes are readily available?

Composing collaborative collages land us in an uncertain place, grappling with practical issues such as those related to doing anti-disciplinary work in disciplinary contexts and to rendering anti-authoritarian knowledge authoritative. This is discomfoting for everyone who needs to publish not to perish or who need a certainty that their research will have “impact” or that the diplomas they invest in will serve as a capital for their careers. It also a place where the uncertain status of knowledge is uncommonly clear. This is discomfoting for everyone concerned with knowledge and not only those who consider analytical strategies as rubber-stamps guaranteeing the superiority of knowledge. It is important to realize however that here is no other place where the status of knowledge is more secure. While it is of little comfort that proponents of other analytical strategies can offer no more certainty (however loudly they claim the opposite), it may be comforting to recall that uncertainty may be a condition *sine qua non* for working innovatively and perhaps for knowledge more generally.

Conclusion

This article introduced an eclectic analytical strategy resting on the composing of collaborationist collages arguing that such a strategy, even if marred by uncertainties, has the advantage of drawing attention to dis-connections and emergences of politics. It has insisted on the import of the openness this leaves for imagination and creativity. This includes the political creativity necessary for imagining and enacting different political agendas, that is for “alterpolitics”.⁶⁸ This kind of analytical strategy shifts the standing of theory. It gives rather more importance to the development of ideas, concepts, and especially images (or world pictures) that can help make sense of the multiple, heterogeneous and shifting worlds, bodies, or securities. It therefore embraces and works with “fictioning” or “worlding” and more generally of experimental and creative expression in academic research and writing.⁶⁹ It shifts the focus away from theorizing understood as tying politics down in singular, linear logics or systems, let alone pre-established analytical frameworks or other Procrustean beds. Instead, it has its point of departure in the assumption that often the observed may not form a system or whole at all and that dis-connections and emergences (rather than say empirical generalizations or overarching systems or epistemai) are therefore core to understanding politics and acting politically. I have introduced this kind of strategy as inspired by the new materialist tradition and especially the feminist science and technology. However, the responsibility for articulating this research strategy as drawing on three building blocks (composition, collage and collaborationist) to make visible dis-connections and emergences is mine. It derives primarily from my work on the politics of commercial security that has provided the examples above.

So what is the heuristic value of this sprawling, undisciplined way of approaching knowledge? What does an anti-applicationist strategy of composing collaborationist collages add to knowledge? What can its conclusions about the politics of commercial security add to international relations scholarship? As argued above, composing collaborationist collages can provide a grasp of the multiplicity of worlds and of their dis-connections and emergence. In so doing, it opens for an exploration of the politics-of-what sensitive to the role of temporality. This is no minor achievement. “Learning to stand in the tensions created between worlds can help

⁶⁸ Ghassan Hage, “Critical anthropological thought and the radical political imaginary today,” *Critique of Anthropology* 32, no. 3 (2012).

⁶⁹ Simon O’Sullivan, “Deleuze Against Control: Fictioning to Myth-Science,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 33, no. 7-8 (2016); Pinar Bilgin, “Worlding Conflict Resolution and Mediation Expertise in the ‘Global South,’” in *Assembling Exclusive Expertise: Conflict Resolution Knowledge in Practice*, ed. Anna Leander and Ole Wæver (Routledge (Worlding Beyond the West): 2017).

us hone the skills we need to move more effectively between them”.⁷⁰ For my research, this possibility to stand in the tensions and to move between worlds is fundamental. It is a condition of possibility. Commercial security spans the worlds. Standing in the tensions and moving between is therefore a condition for seeing the politics of dis-connections and emergences illustrated in the many examples above including those drawn from my work on risk, tracking devices and legal technologies such as whitelists, codes of conduct or the Duty of Care. However, and more generally: perhaps standing in the tensions between and/or moving between is (or should be) a fundamental concern for all research? The current focus on (fetichization of?) impact and relevance in university hierarchies and funding schemes make the tensions between worlds omnipresent in research and forces us to move between them. Moreover, and perhaps more interestingly, standing in the tensions and moving between is an invitation to take research beyond the borders of the own turf; to develop and transform research agendas. This is empowering for those who enter research as well as for those already involved in it. Knowledge becomes something one can contribute to, not only learn about. One is invited to innovate and create rather than faithfully apply existing frameworks and reproduce already thought thoughts. The ambition here has been to propose an analytical strategy geared to make such an approach to knowledge a real possibility. A strategy I have used to engage the politics of commercial security. The aim with presenting it is to “induce, suggest, and infect” (as Stengers et al. put it in their conclusion of *Women Who Fuss*⁷¹) others with the thought that this strategy may worth pursuing, transforming and rethinking.

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⁷⁰ Tamara Trownsell et al., "Recrafting International Relations through Relationality," <https://www.e-ir.info/2019/01/08/recrafting-international-relations-through-relationality/>.

⁷¹ Isabelle Stengers, Vinciane Despret, and April Knutson, *Women Who Make a Fuss : The Unfaithful Daughters of Virginia Woolf* (Minneapolis, UNITED STATES: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kbnnhh-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4391647>.: 87

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