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Accomplices, Gangs, Teams, Couples, Collaborators...

Or: How can we predict productive (working-) relationships?

In an age where practically everything is predictable, with "relative certainty," it seems a justified critical reflex to encounter such predictions with a certain amount of scepticism. Many such predictions, with the wisdom of hindsight, are proven false. This is evident when we think of the many strains of diseases that have developed contrary to predictions, or even when looking at the stock exchange which remains unpredictable, despite foresighted analysis. The durability of relationships is another field in which we like to form predictions. We certify relationships between people as being either long, short or possessing or no future at all. Such predictions not only concern private relationships but also those formed between colleagues in a working environment. Literature written for those in management positions is full of tips and tricks concerned with how to predict an optimal team formation. With the help of concepts that are often very mechanistically developed, one hopes to offer support in creating a productive, as well as creative team.

I will base this paper on a research project I am currently conducting in the Institute of Theory (ith)¹ at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste.

This is concerned with the question of how, within today's working environment, individuals are able to form productive working alliances. These alliances do not necessarily have to be held over a long period of time but they must have an enervating effect on all participants of the alliance who are following a particular goal, from the moment of its formation. What I am interested in is a specific social type that I have analyzed under the title of complicity. My theory is that complicity between at least two, but often more people is a specific form of union that is both productive as well as effective. Those who find the correct accomplices achieve their goals. The social fields in which I will be moving are the arts (especially dance and music), business and the sciences.

It is important to highlight that, especially within the field of the arts the social praxis of complicity is carried out in a varied and matter of fact form. It is for this reason that I will take the social structure of this field and its originalities as a basis to compare these with structures in the sciences and areas of business. My

methodological approach will therefore lie less in a distanced criticism of the cultural tactic of prediction, as in the launching of a promising social praxis which, I believe, differs from the technocratic team coaching concepts of the present.

What/who are accomplices? Accomplices both in the positive as well as the negative sense are allies; People who come together to form a strong bond in order to jointly complete a task (*com plecter*). Be this task legal or illegal – complicity contains energy, fantasy and a subversive force. Accomplices often create an alternate order that is difficult to distinguish and considered conspiratorial and clandestine for those on the outside, in which to achieve their goals. They create their own laws and regulations beyond those already in place, strengthening their own bonds through these. They act within the Arts, Business and Politics, in private and public areas and across linguistic and social spheres as long as this serves their common purpose. They initiate wars create social networks; act as economic criminals and murderers. They work as successful artists, launch economic networks and act both virtually and within reality. They appear from obscurity and are visually a matter of fact within our daily working and living environment. A glance, a gesture, a code: We all act – more or less consciously – as accomplices. Complicity is usually used in a derogatory fashion to refer to a sense of connivance or participation in an illegal act. In the area of business we associate it with sleaze, (male-) leagues or confederations. In a national or global context complicity is associated with crime and war. When talking within the frame of complicity the themes of secrecy and the anonymity of crimes are often referred to as accomplices tend to disappear without a trace leaving only their deeds behind. Within my research I decriminalize and reinterpret this term to describe and personally apply a productive and thoroughly enjoyable method of work.

The origins of this research are social structures found within the area of the arts. While searching for structures of complicity and its specifics, we especially came across the fields of dance and music. Since complicity here is based on aesthetic criteria, questions of perception arise in the foreground. Such sensual “moments” require a sensual medium for reflection and we have thus created not only texts but also a research film. The protagonists of this film are: Anna Huber

(Dancer) and Fritz Hauser (Drummer), Daniel Jositsch (Professor of penal law, Uni Zürich), Beat Bag Bohemia (Drummer quartet), Paola Ghillani (entrepreneur and consultant) and Martin Heller (cultural entrepreneur). We have edited their performances and statements on complicity into a research film from which I would like to show a five minute extract. This constellation holds out the prospect that movement, in this case, plays a large role as a technique in prediction.

What does this research imply for the prediction of team constellations?

- 1) Communication: Accomplices do not look for each other, they find each other. This is due to their ability to communicate at lightning speed. The musicians formulated this fittingly: "Do I initially hear something and then play it or do I play it first and then hear it? I can't discern between the two." Action and reaction occur simultaneously and this form of communication is more rapid than any form of speech.
- 2) Hierarchies: Accomplices profit from differenced traits which are not fixed on their roles. They are experts in role changing. One of the musicians in the film says: "It is precisely this which makes a quartet dangerous." Complicity is not a social model free of hierarchy but one that operates with changing hierarchies. Accomplices have the ability to rapidly and surprisingly change their function within complicity.
- 3) Body: Functioning complicities are based on "bodily moments". They function due to precise rhythms in which a group reacts. These have to match not only on stage but also during a bank heist. The dancer Anna Hubert says: "When I work with Fritz Hauser it is underground strings that connect us. Each one of us is autonomous and yet we are synchronised. We do not touch each other and yet we are on stage in unison."
- 4) Informal "moment": Accomplices communicate in "different" ways. A strong informal "moment" that lies outside of predetermined structures binds accomplices. We can all imagine what the members of a band, who have been on tour for two weeks, have experienced beside the stage.

Within this experience however, is always a non-transparent and clandestine "moment" of complicity (between only those in the band) that must be upheld.

Can we transfer the artistic model of complicity onto other social spheres? Can we describe the workings of gangs, teams, couples, collaborators through complicity? Could art in this way take over the "mandate of predicting the future"?

Gesa Ziemer, November 2007