

## Training the Political Imaginary

Approaching the Discussion about the Emergency Laws  
through a Civil Defense Exercise (Germany, 1966)

JANDRA BÖTTGER

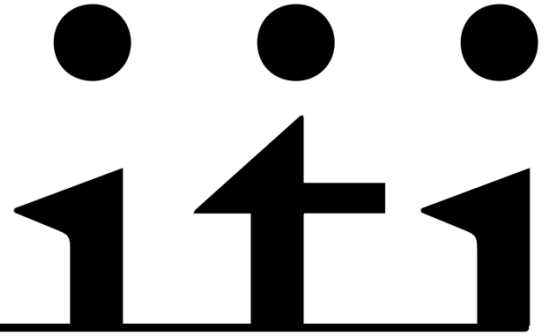
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## Training the Political Imaginary

Approaching the Discussion  
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Exercise (Germany, 1966)

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*The 1966 German civil defense exercise Fallex 66 differed from other military exercises held on a regular basis during the Cold War. Firstly, because it took place in the recently completed government bunker. And secondly, because the intensively disputed Emergency laws should be tested by a fictional «emergency parliament». This paper follows the hypothesis that the fusion of fictional and real elements in the exercised scenario, combined with a bodily and emotional immersion, had the power to influence the discussion about the Emergency laws. At the cutting surface between Aesthetics and Political Theory, this paper attempts to disentangle the complex net of fictional and imaginary dimensions at work in the exercise Fallex 66 and its reception.*

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## I. Introduction

On a global scale, the 1960s are associated with the «hot phase» of the Cold War. The Western transatlantic relations were about performing diplomacy and making plans for the worst case – a nuclear war between the Members of the Warsaw Treaty and the NATO. In the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), however, it was not only a possible future, but also the National Socialist past troubling especially younger generations. Just then, they realized the extent to which the generation of their parents was involved in crimes against humanity.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, two imaginaries were prevalent at the same time: the scenario of a nuclear «Third World War» and the fear of a reemergence of fascist politics. Both imaginaries collided in the debate about the Emergency laws, as they triggered both those fighting for German national sovereignty as well as those fighting potential «fascist»<sup>3</sup> structures.

In this paper, I analyze the German civil defense exercise of 1966, in which the Emergency laws' application was simulated with 33 members of the FRG's government (hereinafter: Fallex 66). I claim that an exercise like Fallex 66 can be used to convey images because the exercise works with aesthetic-theatrical means. In a situation where rational arguments did not help much anymore, the exercise created a place where a certain complex of issues could be approximated physically, mentally and affectively. It thus operated not on a linguistic-symbolic level, but on an imaginary one. But the anal-

ysis of the exercise also helps to understand the imaginary and affective dimensions at work in this complicated time, as in the given scenario a certain imaginary was spelled out. Following DIANA TAYLOR, a «scenario makes visible [...] what is already there: the ghosts, the images, the stereotypes. [...] Sometimes they are written down as scripts, but the scenario predates the script [...]»<sup>4</sup> As I will show, it not only surfaces the undercurrents of a society's debate, but it also carries the presumptions, and repeats them. The notion of the «social imaginary»<sup>5</sup> as coined by CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS enables an analysis which takes the given arguments not at face value but focuses on the *images* underlying the debate.

### A. Emergency Laws

Although the General Treaty (1952/55)<sup>6</sup> almost fully restored West Germany's sovereignty, any resemblance to Emergency laws was actively left out. Because of the traumatic experiences with art. 48 para. 2 of the Weimar Constitution (WC), there was disagreement about whether and how Emergency laws should be conceptualized. Art. 48 para. 2 WC allowed the president to take emergency measures without prior consent of the *Reichstag*<sup>7</sup> and has been used about 250

<sup>2</sup> MITSCHERLICH ALEXANDER/MITSCHERLICH MARGARETE, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern: Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*, München 2007.

<sup>3</sup> RUSINEK BERND-A., *Von der Entdeckung der NS-Vergangenheit zum generellen Faschismusverdacht – Akademische Diskurse in der Bundesrepublik der 60er Jahre*, in: Schildt Axel/Lammers Karl Christian/Siegfried Detlef (eds.), *Dynamische Zeiten. Die 60er Jahre in den beiden deutschen Gesellschaften.*, Hamburg 2000, p. 114 et seqq.

<sup>4</sup> TAYLOR DIANA, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham 2003, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> CASTORIADIS CORNELIUS, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge 1974.

<sup>6</sup> See the [Convention on the Relations between the Three Powers and the Federal Republic of Germany, May 26, 1952](#), orig: Vertrag über die Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und den Drei Mächten vom 26. Mai 1952, in: [Zusammenstellung des Deutschlandvertrages und seiner Zusatzverträge](#), Bundesgesetzblatt (BGBl.) 164 II, Bundestag-Drucksache (BT-Drucks.) 1000, Deutscher Bundestag 2. Wahlperiode 1953, p. 57 et seqq.; See also Revision of the General Treaty in the Bonn-Paris-Conventions, implemented October 23rd, 1954; taking effect on May 5th, 1955, BGBl. 1955 II, p. 306.

<sup>7</sup> «The Reich President may, if the public safety and order in the German Reich are considerably

times in the causal chain leading to the National Socialists seizure of power.

Many feared that with the reissuing of the «Weimar dictatorship article» an explosive device would be deposited in the German Constitution and argued against them.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the legal blank space also left open the possibility of the Allied to intervene in the case of the FRG deviating from the proposed policies, thus symbolizing a lack of sovereignty.

Whereas for the one side, the implementation of the Emergency laws in the German Constitution was seen as the last missing piece towards full sovereignty, the other evoked imaginations of a «Second 1933», a re-emerging of fascist movements and technocratic government policies.<sup>9</sup>

The discussions about the Emergency laws led to large demonstrations comprising students, labor unions, intellectuals and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).<sup>10</sup> Emergency laws would not protect the people, the then active philosopher and writer KARL JASPERS proclaimed, but the rulers. Instead, the Emergency laws take away «the means of resistance that remain to the people (...) which are legitimate, but then

no longer legal.»<sup>11</sup> Similarly, writer CHRISTA WOLF called out for active resistance against the Emergency laws.<sup>12</sup>

The ten-year lasting struggle about the implementation of the Emergency laws shows that neither the parties opting for, nor those fighting against the Laws would step back from their goals. One reason, besides strategic and political interests is, I claim, the existence of two diverging imaginaries enfolded at the object of the Emergency laws.

## B. The Social Imaginary

According to CASTORIADIS, the term «social imaginary»<sup>13</sup> denotes the image underlying a debate or institution that cannot be conclusively explained, but is constituted by real experiences, memories and collective traumas. It is – like the individual imaginary – structured visually and is composed of experiences, desires, hopes and dreams that cannot be made linguistically explicit. Following him, the imaginary is essentially related to the power of imagination as «the ability to evoke an image».<sup>14</sup>

As soon as ideas are to be expressed in words and language, the level of the imaginary is left and one enters the realm of the

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disturbed or endangered, take such measures as are necessary to restore public safety and order. If necessary, he may intervene with the help of the armed forces. For this purpose he may temporarily suspend, either partially or wholly, the Fundamental Rights enumerated in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153.» [Art. 48 para 2 of the Constitution of the German Reich August 11, 1919](#). For the discussion see: ZWITTER ANDREJ, *Notstand und Recht*, Baden-Baden 2012 .

<sup>8</sup> STERN KLAUS, *Das Staatsrecht der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Bd. 3/1, *Allgemeine Lehren der Grundrechte*, München 1988, p. 1315–1319.

<sup>9</sup> STALLMANN MARTIN, *Krise und Protest: Signaturen eines westdeutschen Jahres*, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 2017/67, p. 10 et seqq.

<sup>10</sup> See [Notstandsgesetze: Testfall für die Demokratie](#), Bonn 2018; see also STALLMANN (Fn. 9), p. 9 et seqq.

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<sup>11</sup> JASPERS KARL, *Wohin treibt die Bundesrepublik?*, München 1966, p. 165.

<sup>12</sup> «The citizen is responsible for where he has confidence and where not. When the reality of political conditions demands complete mistrust in order to get out of disaster, then the basically trusting presence becomes an unconscious collaboration with the devil, and conformist thinking becomes self-deception. Both force the question of moral guilt and political liability», JASPERS KARL, *Antwort. Zur Kritik meiner Schrift «Wohin treibt die Bundesrepublik?»*, München 1967, p. 111 et seqq.; See WOLF CHRISTA, *Deutsch sprechen.*, in: Wolf Christa (ed.), *Lesen und Schreiben. Aufsätze und Betrachtungen.*, 1<sup>st</sup> Ed., Berlin/Weimar 1972, p. 7 et seqq.

<sup>13</sup> CASTORIADIS CORNELIUS, *Gesellschaft als imaginäre Institution: Entwurf einer politischen Philosophie*, 4. Ed., Frankfurt am Main 1990, p. 218.

<sup>14</sup> CASTORIADIS (Fn. 13), *ibd.*

symbolic, the sphere of exchange and communication, but also of social institutions. Here the imaginary must «use the symbolic, not only to «express» itself [...], but to «exist at all.»<sup>15</sup> At the same time, the symbolic level presupposes «the power of imagination [*capacité imaginaire*], because it is based on the ability to take one thing for another.»<sup>16</sup>

In 1966, two conflicting imaginaries («Second 1933» vs. «Third World War») were being projected not only on the Emergency laws, but also on the exercise Fallex 66: In midst of the biggest protests after Second World War directed against the Emergency laws, members of the government simulated their application in the NATO's fall exercise Fallex 66. The participation of German politicians in the exercise adopting a nuclear World War scenario was seen as a big provocation.

Fallex 66 especially serves as microhistorical case study, as in the operative scenario, the imaginary of a possible course of a Third World War was spelled out. Regarding the critique of the exercise, much about the complementary imaginary of the Second Weimar can be learnt. Thus, Fallex 66 works as a *Rorschach* test, indexing who would see the Laws and their exercise as a source of order and a promise of sovereignty; and who on the other hand criticized it for being an intransparent, elitist circumvention of democratic deliberation. Those protesting against the Laws accused the organization of the exercise as manipulative form generating

prejudice, whereas those favoring the Laws perceived the exercise as a chance to test the Laws and optimize their applicability.<sup>17</sup>

But as Fallex 66 used aesthetic means to deliver images to the participants, and affective means to relate to the participants individual imaginaries, it also actively intervened in the social imaginary,<sup>18</sup> thus contributing to the question of what was *real* and what was *not perceived as real*.

The exercise can either be analyzed as manifestation of the current imaginations, or be treated as active means of governance, insofar as in these times, a fight was fought about which imaginaries were legitimate and *real*. Therefore the exercise's potential to produce an immersive atmosphere is analyzed, whereby *immersion* denotes the moment in which the medium becomes forgotten and the offered content perceived as reality, as I will show in more detail later. Immersion as production of a *feeling of reality* is in the context of Fallex 66 used to *realize* the scenario of a Third World War, and complementary, to *de-realize* the scenario of a fascist resurrection, as pictured by protesters against the Emergency laws.

## II. Fallex 66: Staging a Scenario

The NATO maneuver Fallex 66 consisted of three chapters, with the German Politicians participating only in the first one. Here, an increased tension between Warsaw Pact-states and NATO-states was staged to be the advantage point of an escalating spiral, in which within four days all officially available alert levels were called out – «peacetime conditions», «military vigilance», «simple

<sup>15</sup> CASTORIADIS (Fn. 13), *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> «But, conversely, symbolism too presupposes an imaginary capacity. For it presupposes the capacity to see in a thing what it is not, to see it other than it is. However, to the extent that the imaginary ultimately stems from the originary faculty of positing or presenting oneself with things and relations that do not exist, in the form of representation (things and relations that are not or have never been given in perception), we shall speak of a final or radical imaginary as the common root of the actual imaginary and of the symbolic. This is, finally, the elementary and irreducible capacity of evoking images.» CASTORIADIS (Fn. 13), *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> RIDDER HELMUT (ed.), *Notstand der Demokratie*, Frankfurt am Main 1967, p. 9 et seqq., p. 20 et. seqq.

<sup>18</sup> This is documented by an extensive journalistic discussion dealing with the exercise, mirroring a heated debate. For further information see Bachab schicken, in: *Der Spiegel*, November 6, 1967, p. 33 et seqq.

alert», and «reinforced alert». With the last level permittance for the use of nuclear weapons on German territory was requested.<sup>19</sup>

### A. Content Analysis

In the first chapter of Fallex 66 called «Top Gear», the conflict was settled with a diplomatic solution, when the USSR drew back at the fourth day by asking for a peace summit. However, the second chapter played the scenario of a General War following the official strategy of NATO as proposed in MC14/2, where a slight aggression on USSR side would prompt a «massive retaliation» on NATO-side.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the second chapter ends with a mutual destruction of both parties, and the third chapter simulates a reconstruction scenario.

The German civil defense exercise was only associated to Top Gear, where a diplomatic counteracting could preserve the world from mutual nuclear destruction. The other two parts were disguised to the general public. This leads to the conclusion that only a positively charged scenario should be object of the general public's attention, in which politicians had the power to change war into peacetime by deliberative means and especially with the application of the Emergency laws.

<sup>19</sup> «Gedachter Verlauf – Einlagenliste» des Bundesministeriums des Innern und des Stabs für Studien und Übungen der Bundeswehr, 10. Juni 1966, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv Freiburg (BMF), BW 24/741, Tgb.-Nr. 650/66.

<sup>20</sup> «In case of general war, therefore, NATO defense depends upon an immediate exploitation of our nuclear capability, whether or not the Soviets employ nuclear weapons. [...] if the Soviets were involved in a local hostile action and sought to broaden the scope of such an incident or to prolong it, the situation would call for the utilization of all weapons and forces at NATO's disposal, since in no case is there a NATO concept of limited war with the Soviets.» NATO ARCHIVE, MC 14/2, [Revised], Enclosure, p. 9 et seqq.

I claim that this cut-out is not randomly chosen. It does not provide a test environment but sampled only what was compatible with the exercise planner's world view: General (ret.) THEODOR BUSSE and the German ministry of defense worked closely together to realize their ideas not only on NATO-level, but also to assure that the scenario simulated in the German Civil Defense exercise would be aligned with the Emergency laws.<sup>21</sup>

### B. Script Analysis

The first-level scenario provides the narrative basis for action, while the Emergency laws represented the instrument with which problems occurring in the scenario should be remedied. An exemplary text passage shows the compatibility between scenario and Emergency laws explicitly:

*«Agitators called on the workforces of various companies and the population to rallies «Against the war and for the united action of all peace forces». At these events, riots broke out against the weak police forces, which were subsequently withdrawn. The state government of Baden-Württemberg cannot deploy any more state police forces in the REUTLINGEN area, since the available police are tied up in other parts of the state.»<sup>22</sup>*

It is remarkable in this context that the mentioned demonstrations are classified as disturbances with no ambivalence regarding the motives of the demonstrators. The portrayal of the police forces as being too weak and the impossibility of compensating at the

<sup>21</sup> The NATO-maneuver Fallex 66 was based on a scenario developed by the Fallex Working Group, led by Lord Richard Coleridge at NATO level in consultation with national representatives. Coleridge, at that time, was Secretary of the NATO Board of Directors and was responsible for setting up a Civil Emergency Planning Committee, implemented by NATO in the 1950s. Lord Coleridge Leaves NATO After Eighteen Years Serving as Executive Secretary, in: NATO Review, Focus on Nato, NATO-Letter XVIII (9. September 1970), p. 25 et seqq.

<sup>22</sup> Bundesministerium des Innern (Fn. 19), p. 92; original emphasis.

level of the federal states suggests the necessity of adopting para. 115d, sec. 3a of the 1965 Emergency laws draft (IV 3494). This clause empowered the federal government, «to deploy the armed forces within the Federal Republic of Germany for police tasks, in addition to the Federal Border Guard and the police forces of the federal states, where these are not sufficient.»<sup>23</sup>

There was only minimal room for deviating from the proposed procedures and suggested interpretations for the practitioners, which can be seen as another important feature of a scenario:

*«If the scenario is to be made convincing, in an attempt to reinforce the «reality» of the unhappy proposition upon which it is based, then it must be dramatized and enacted by those who are meant to lead any «real-world» response. There is a catch, however, because the exercise must maintain its distance from the real, since the point of the training is to present participants with a limited perspective – they are there to carry relatively simple tasks, not to think about the morality of what they were doing.»<sup>24</sup>*

The limitation of the possibilities of action seems to be crucial for an exercise in order to promote a certain scenario and predetermined values, which makes it a politically questionable strategy.

### C. Political Implications

The scenario «Top Gear» took up elements of the present. Aiming at creating a test situation, it was designed to report an image as close to reality as possible, with only the Emergency laws added as a «fictional» layer.<sup>25</sup> However, not only adding something

makes an information become fictitious, but also singling out elements and re-sorting these isolated bits of information.

By sketching demonstrations as «communist-inspired unrests»<sup>26</sup> that involved proactive aggressive individuals which had to be violently disbanded, an unmistakable negative image of the protesters was produced. By these means, the reality was represented not only overly-simplified, but the scenario becomes attributable to a politically conservative camp classifying the manifold protests as mere disturbance.

Also, a weekly journal pointed out an ideologically biased passage in the

*«fictitious newspaper commentary (on the first day of the exercise) [that] puts the assembled federal parliamentarians in the right mood: Yesterday they protested sitting in front of the barracks of our armed forces, tomorrow they will already prevent our soldiers from defending their homeland by sabotage. It is time to put an end to this activity.»<sup>27</sup>*

That part of activist reality was left out, which delivered a serious critique on the Emergency laws: peaceful protesters – prominent intellectuals such as HEINRICH BÖLL or KARL JASPERS, students, unionists and others – signaled their unease towards the Emergency laws in well-organized fora, where the pros and cons of the Emergency laws were discussed.<sup>28</sup>

### D. Affective Exercising

Carrying political implications and values, the scenario temporarily realizes a certain cutout of reality with theatrical means. As an

<sup>23</sup> BT-Drucks. (Fn. 6), IV/3494.

<sup>24</sup> PRICE STUART, *Worst-Case Scenario?*, New York 2013, p. 124.

<sup>25</sup> In a correspondence between the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Economics of the German federal government, it is stated: «In Fallex 66, apart from the imputation of the Emergency Laws, the aim is to play with as few assumptions as possible», in order to create an experimental situation in which the Emergency Laws were the only parameter to be changed.

BA-MA, BW 2/52824, Dok. VII B4-726 112-66-4/66, 11. Mai 1966, p. 2

<sup>26</sup> Bundesministerium des Innern (Fn. 19), p. 20 et seqq., 58 et seqq.

<sup>27</sup> Spiegel (Fn. 18), p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> Two congresses took place in 1965 and 1966, organized by the Kuratorium Notstand der Demokratie. See BAUER WILHELM/WEGELEBEN GUNTER (eds.), *Demokratie vor dem Notstand, Protokoll des Bonner Kongresses gegen die Notstandsgesetze am 30. Mai 1965, Frankfurt am Main 1965*; see also RIDDER (Fn. 17).

exercise is a time-based practice, it involves the parameters of space, time and bodily involved actors. In this case, it also involves a scenario, i.e., a narrative dimension, which is not necessarily a standard feature of an exercise.<sup>29</sup> If scenario, space, time and actors relate with each other, a feeling of reality can be produced by means of immersion. I will show in the following, how in an exercise the feeling of reality is produced and the imaginary shaped, however fictitious the content.

CHRISTIANE VOSS proposes a concept of «fictional immersion»<sup>30</sup> following WOLFGANG ISER and HANS VAHINGER, which elevates the *as-if mode* to be the ontological status of a subject in immersion: In this «fundamental and non-genre sense [...] films are also fictional insofar as they present something to us as appearing evident – only under the conditions of suspended reality tests [unter den Bedingungen suspendierter Realitätsprüfungen].»<sup>31</sup> Immersion in a cinematic experience, to which VOSS refers, requires the active «suspension of reality» on the part of the viewer. This can be described with JANE MCGONIGAL as «immersive efforts»,<sup>32</sup> denoting the subject's own activity during an immersive experience: In viewing an aesthetic work, e.g., a picture or a film, the relative abstractness of the depicted elements is not perceived as unreal but is sup-

plemented by the viewer in a creative-projecting act.<sup>33</sup> VOSS describes this as the effect of an aesthetic illusion-making process that takes place on the part of the viewer:

«Where aesthetic representation succeeds, it understands, according to Musil, how to narrow the viewer's consciousness via discipline-specific procedures of condensation, displacement, rhythmicity, and monotony to such an extent that (similar to a state of mild hypnosis) <[t]he suggestion presented is rendered superfluous by depressing the mental environment.»<sup>34</sup>

Perception is challenged by means such as a condensed action in a movie, resulting in a breathless, oblivious tracking of the illuding medium. This is reinforced by artistic-theatrical means such as rhythm or monotony, triggering a focus on what is presented, leading to the fact that the «difference between the presence of the screen event and that of (empirical) reality (...) [remains] latently knowable, [...] but is pushed away in the viewer's consciousness [...] in favor of the projected imagination.»<sup>35</sup> A hyper-tonic relationship between the (aesthetic) inner and (real) outer world produces a «super-valence» [«Überwertigkeit»] of the (cinematic) event as a whole, which «assumes the position of the dominant environment for the spectator for the period of the film screening, with which the spectator psychophysically interacts.»<sup>36</sup>

This temporary suspension of the memory of the outside with simultaneous active-projective completion of the situationally given narrative signifies the possibility of the experience of something fictional as real, but without having to place the one with the other in a probing, mutually exclusive relationship. Rather, the aesthetically perceived

<sup>29</sup> See for example the non-narrative exercises by Yvonne Richter, NACHTIGALL JENNY/WALZER DOROTHEA, *The Rehearsal as Form: An Essay on Yvonne Rainer's Lives of Performers*, in: Buchmann Sabeth/Lafer Ilse/Ruhm Constanze (eds.), *Putting Rehearsals to the Test. Practices of Rehearsals in Fine Arts, Film, Theater, Theory, and Politics*, Vienna/Berlin 2016, p. 10 et seqq.

<sup>30</sup> VOSS CHRISTIANE, *Fiktionale Immersion*, in: Es ist, als ob. Fiktionalität, in: Gertrud Koch/Christiane Voss (eds.), *Philosophie, Film- und Medienwissenschaft*, München 2009.

<sup>31</sup> VOSS (Fn. 30), p. 128.

<sup>32</sup> MCGONIGAL JANE, *A Real Little Game: The Performance of Belief in Pervasive Play*, Berkeley 2003.

<sup>33</sup> VOSS CHRISTIANE, *Filmerfahrung und Illusionsbildung. Der Zuschauer als Leihkörper des Kinos*, in: Koch Gertrud/Voss Christiane (eds.), *... kraft der Illusion*, München 2006, p. 71 et seqq., p. 76.

<sup>34</sup> VOSS (Fn. 33), p. 77.

<sup>35</sup> VOSS (Fn. 33), p. 77–78.

<sup>36</sup> VOSS (Fn. 33), p. 78.



object is brought to life through the affective-projective transformation of the spectators, whereby fiction and reality or deception and truth are no longer thought of in a dichotomous relationship to one another, but instead the «plastic-living» challenges the «abstract-unliving»:<sup>37</sup> More affective weight is credited to the fictive situation, as it *feels* real. From this, the possibility of ascribing a *reality character* to the exercise arises. «Real» then does not mean withstanding any checks and comparisons with empirical reality, but instead denotes the ability to produce an affirming illusory experience.<sup>38</sup>

However real the bunker or the politicians, however probable the scenario, the iteration of reality becomes fictional, as only some elements of reality are selected and thereby reinforced. Something perceived as real is woven into a fictional context and becomes «irreal». Something known to be irreal on the other hand is perceived as real. The narrative plot thus becomes the «temporarily focused matrix of our involvement»<sup>39</sup> and what thereby takes on an «experiential and also affectively effective form is an imaginary.»<sup>40</sup> The production of an imaginary in the medium of an exercise is what is politically problematic, if unregistered: As the philosopher and theater scholar JULES BUCHHOLTZ describes a scenario as moving between reality and fiction because of its composition of real and fictional elements. It combines «besides scientific methods of representation such as drawings, graphics, texts [and] tables»<sup>41</sup> also time-based elements such as lecture and speech. BUCHHOLTZ describes this performative dimension as a theatrical staging of knowledge, which «without having to prove facts in a strictly scientific way» is capable of «creating facts by influencing the

perception of present reality through strong drafts of a future.»<sup>42</sup>

*«Just like the theater, the scenario repeats reality or refers to a reality lying outside of itself, adding something to it in the act of its representation that reality does not initially contain. In the process, what occurs outside of the scenario as the real world is transformed into an unreal, performed form and, on the other hand, the unreal, i.e., the imaginary, is transformed into a representational and symbolically ordered fictitious reality. [...] Irreal is thus not to be understood as necessarily fictitious, and the fictitious reality is not to be understood as necessarily in sharp contrast to the non-fictitious, real reality.»<sup>43</sup>*

CLAUS PIAS' extensive research on the technique of the scenario locates its extended use in the 1960es – especially promoted by HERMAN KAHN<sup>44</sup> – at the conjuncture of military strategy planning and the rise of statistics.<sup>45</sup> The nuclear bomb forced to develop an entirely new method of thinking: more than ever, military strategy depended on the fact that *no* war should break out. The combination of performative strategies with scientific knowledge evolved into a powerful technique that tried to circumvent the scenarios it was actually designing – scenarios of a nuclear exchange leading to a mutual destruction of not only the belligerent parties.

As shown, scenario «Top Gear» implicitly conveys political values degrading the protesters by simplifying their aims and stylizing them as violence-prone mob. By stylizing the scenario as neutral and as test environment, the political bias was fogged. By claiming that the Emergency laws are the only fictional element of the exercise, the *fictionalization* of reality in a scenario was not considered. Although all elements in the

<sup>37</sup> VOSS (Fn. 33), p. 76.

<sup>38</sup> VOSS (Fn. 33), p. 79.

<sup>39</sup> VOSS (Fn. 30), p. 137.

<sup>40</sup> VOSS (Fn. 30), *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> BUCHHOLTZ JULES, *Wem gehört die Zukunft? Wissen und Wahrheit im Szenario*, Berlin 2019, p. 52. This and the following quotes are translated from German.

<sup>42</sup> BUCHHOLTZ (Fn. 41), p. 52.

<sup>43</sup> BUCHHOLTZ (Fn. 41), p. 52 et seqq.

<sup>44</sup> KAHN HERMAN, *Eskalation, Die Politik mit der Vernichtungsspirale*, Berlin 1966.

<sup>45</sup> PIAS CLAUDIUS, «One-Man Think Tank», Herman Kahn, oder wie man das Undenkbare denkt», in: *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte* 2009/III(3), p. 5 et seqq.

scenario are either real or realistic, the mere praxis of resembling, cutting out and re-narrating reality *fictionalizes* a scenario. The fictionalization of reality is analogue to the realization of fiction in a realistic scenario, as fictitious events are set proximately to existing events, fears and wishes. Both movements, the fictionalization of reality and the realization of fiction go hand in hand and let the scenario become an affectively intense hybrid.

### III. Training the Imaginary

The social imaginary builds not only on the imaginative power, and the capability to produce an image, but also on rather passively working forces, as a reservoir of memories, desires and ideas that however passive still play a very important role in our perceptions and reactions. Scenario «Top Gear» addresses both dimensions of the imaginary.

#### A. Spatial Affection

*«Scene denotes intentionality, artistic or otherwise (the scene of the crime), and signals conscious strategies of display. The word appropriately suggests both the material stage as well as the highly codified environment that gives viewers pertinent information, say, class status or historical period. The furnishings, clothing, sounds, and style contribute to the viewer's understanding of what might conceivably transpire there. The two, scene and scenario, stand in metonymic relationship: the place allows us to think about the possibilities of the action.»*<sup>46</sup>

With this explanation, DIANA TAYLOR not only points at the entanglement of space and body, but also hints at the mnemonic and psychological consequences emerging from a certain architectural setting. As IAN KLINKE shows, the happening of the exercise in an actual bunker setting reproduces Second World War traumata of the total

destruction of German cities, when nothing was left besides keeping calm in a bunker.<sup>47</sup> By addressing the subconscious and thus evoking an imaginary, the exercised scenario merged memory with the present context. On the other hand, the scenario stipulated the individual power to imagine, to project the given scenario into one's own future, and to complete the fragmentary information delivered by the scenario. Thus, scenario «Top Gear», had the power to actively produce an image and connect it to given imaginaries.

By placing the scenario in an authentic bunker, which actually was built to protect Germany's members of the legislative and executive branch in the case of a nuclear fallout, the narrative dimension of the scenario was complemented by an architectonic one. WALTER BENJAMIN described architecture to be the most manipulative form of art and communication, as it is *used*.<sup>48</sup> By using it, you *get used* to the message sent implicitly by the architecture – in the case of the bunker, a threatening, apocalyptic feeling is transported.<sup>49</sup>

Additionally, the bunker performed the function of symbolizing order and control, as it stylized an outer political atmosphere of absolute chaos, amid which the bunker would have been the only place, where a certain order could be upheld.

#### B. Emotional Immersion

The bunker worked as «heterotopia»<sup>50</sup>, as no comparison between the inside and the out-

<sup>46</sup> TAYLOR DIANA (Fn. 4), p. 29.

<sup>47</sup> KLINKE IAN, Bunkerrepublik Deutschland, Bielefeld 2019.

<sup>48</sup> BENJAMIN WALTER, Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 40 et seq.

<sup>49</sup> VIRILIO PAUL, Bunkerarchäologie, München/Wien 1992.

<sup>50</sup> FOUCAULT MICHEL, Andere Räume, in: Barck Karlheinz (ed.), Aisthesis: Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik; Essais, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., Leipzig: 1993, p. 34 et seq., p. 39.

side could be made: For four days, only curated messages inside the fictional narrative reached the participants, no contact with the outside could be upheld, not even a window existed. Also, with regards to the narrative density suggested by the great quantity of news to be worked, the participators of the exercise got *immersed* in the scenario, i.e. a narrative density evoked an emotional state of oblivion – of one self and of the operated media.<sup>51</sup>

Sucked into an activity or a narrative, one suspends the knowledge of an outside, with the narrative interior becoming the ultimate orientation system. For instance, in a computer game, an abstract graphic is ignored for the sake of staying in the flow, as a certain mission needs to be accomplished feeding the player with a system of recognition. Depending upon the narrative density and emotional involvement, the player happily suspends outside values for inside recognition. This emotional embroilment evokes a *feeling of reality*, letting a logic considered from the outside as fictional seem to be real from the inside.

In scenario «Top Gear», the bunker worked on the one hand as immersing media, but on the other as symbol. It represented not only order and control, but also a regressive conception of democracy, where a political elite tries to unite all state power in one point. Thereby, it symbolized the fear of many anti-emergency-laws protesters: a state that tries to secure its own power position while leaving the majority of the German people on their own.

### C. Bodily Transformation

Additionally, the participant's play in a real setting and in real time meant the involvement of the bodies of the politicians. As JENNY NACHTIGALL and DOROTHEA WALZER have shown, the room of an exer-

cise can be seen as a virtual room, in which gestures can be rehearsed before they are, by media of the body, being carried back to the outside real-life world.<sup>52</sup> The exercising bodies work as media for what they call «quotable gestures»,<sup>53</sup> an internalization of movement related to a certain setting. This is also described in the term «*Leibkörper*» [loan bodies],<sup>54</sup> conceptualizing the body as complementing recipient of the suggested narrative. The scenario couples not only with the individual's imagination, but also with their bodily sensation, and hereby, as small subjective transformations, finds its transfer into reality.

By producing such a narrative, bodily and emotional entanglement, the scenario draws the participants in and lets the scenario feel real for four days. As a consequence, the threat of a nuclear war temporarily affects the politicians directly:

*«A good scenario, similarly, asks people to suspend their disbelief in stories long enough to appreciate their impact. [...] Stories have a psychological impact that graphs and equations lack.»<sup>55</sup>*

The performative power to affect in combination with the politically biased screenplay, constitutes a form of political manipulation: the cut-out reality of the scenario is not proposed as one of many, acknowledging that it could be very different, but it is the only one (in the following years repeatedly) simulated in such an aesthetically and affectively impressing manner.

### D. Scenario as Symbolic Power

By means of the politician's bodily involvement in the exercise, the bunker's immersive atmosphere and the scenario's affecting capabilities, the exercise was able to deliver

<sup>51</sup> VOSS (Fn. 30), p. 127 et seqq.

<sup>52</sup> NACHTIGALL/WALZER (Fn. 29) p. 10–20.

<sup>53</sup> NACHTIGALL/WALZER (Fn. 29), ibd.

<sup>54</sup> VOSS (Fn. 33), p. 71–86.

<sup>55</sup> SCHWARTZ PETER, *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World*, Reprint, New York 1996, p. 37.

precisely the image underlying the arguments why Emergency laws are needed. The arguments employed images of chaotic and brutal times, when a shielded cadre is the last hope a society can resort to, picturing the general public as immobile mass appreciative of paternalistic gestures. By employing 33 high rank politicians, the exercise granted the simulated scenario public significance and charged it with authority, aiming to reallocate the distribution of fear: The Emergency laws are not a source of evil – as pictured by protesters –, but are a promise for the better. Hereby, not only the individual's imaginations were directly addressed, but the social imaginary of the Emergency laws was given a very specific scenario.

The politico-aesthetical power of a scenario is also shown in regard to PETER WATKINS BBC-issued production *War Games* (1965). As one of the first filmic montages, WATKINS combined found footage from the bomb attacks in the Second World War (Dresden, Hamburg, Darmstadt, Hiroshima, Nagasaki), to tell the story of a supposed nuclear attack on the south east of England:

*«The *War Game* is more than a diagnosis: it is a work of art. It precisely communicates one man's vision of disaster, and I cannot think that it is diminished as art because the vision happens to correspond with the facts. Like Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, it proposes itself as an authentic documentary image of the wrath to come – though Michelangelo, of course, was working from data less capable of verification.»<sup>56</sup>*

WATKINS' production was not shown until 1985, as his production was seen as to powerfully questioning the existence of nuclear bombs. Although many knew about the film, the BBC prohibited its distribution. As Fallex 66, it employed real and fictional elements and merged both, producing a realistic projection of the close future. Yet, it employed the counternarrative, in which neither a diplomatic force could help avoid, nor a

military unit restore the country in the aftermath of a nuclear exchange.

The prohibition by BBC shows the power associated with such an aesthetic staging of a possible future. BUCHHOLTZ describes this homogenization of the imaginary in regard to future projections as harmonization of expectations.<sup>57</sup> Further stretched, it denotes the capability to implement a new normal, as it shapes what is perceived in line to the expectations, and what waits outside a society's imaginary horizon.

Not only are the Emergency laws built on the distinction between order and exception, but also do they shape what is regarded as possible future threats. By normalizing the state of exception, also the order is stabilized, following CARL SCHMITT: «The norm needs a homogenous medium. [...] The order has to be established, if the legal order is supposed to make sense.»<sup>58</sup> What seems to be a tautology is what actually was pursued in the exercise: The imaginary, against the backdrop of which the laws were drafted, needed to become harmonized, before the implementation of the laws on a juridical (e.g., symbolic) dimension could take place.

The image underlying the Laws was exchanged in the medium of the exercise. Thus, it became standardized and started to work as a symbol. The exercise did not only bring to consciousness the underlying elements of a society's debate, but also carried and repeated its assumptions unacknowledged, and repeats it.

#### IV. Prospect

As TRACY DAVIS shows, more extensive research on the medium of exercises in a political context should be done. Focusing

<sup>56</sup> TYNAN KENNETH, A Warning Masterpiece, in: The Observer of February 13, 1966.

<sup>57</sup> BUCHHOLTZ (Fn. 41), p. 173.

<sup>58</sup> SCHMITT CARL, Politische Theologie: Vier Kapitel zur Lehre von der Souveränität, 10. Ed., Berlin 2015, p. 19. This quote was translated from German.

on the continuity of Cold War civil defense exercises and contemporary War on Terror simulations in the medium of the exercise, she explicates the power lying in exercises as governmental techniques:

*«Cold War civil defense has several things in common with the new generation of security rhetoric. The enemy is demonized, its leaders inscrutable and elusive, and its followers unreasoning ideologues. Patriotism is the measure of active resistance, and short of actual involvement, expressions of patriotism are an incontrovertible assertion about a common national, or even international, purpose.»<sup>59</sup>*

This is what PETER GALISON called an «enemy ontology»: the practice of sketching the political enemy as «cold-blooded, machine-like opponent».<sup>60</sup> This dichotomy was favored and pushed by scenario developer HERMAN KAHN, as a binary system of good and bad could better be calculated with, as PIAS showed.<sup>61</sup> The political staging of absolute enemies is what connects the Cold War to the War on Terror. The applied measures are highly performative and work with threats and preemptive strategies. This is why simulations and exercises are necessary to supplement the law in both cases: By simulating terror attacks, which could hit us anytime and everywhere, a new biopolitical regime is installed, following JORDAN CRANDALL:

*«Unlike disciplinary control, this security-modulation does not seek to eliminate the ‘dangerous’ excess that threatens the coherency of a body. Rather, it seeks to manage the excess, or to produce it as manageable. It sets forth dispositions as much as positions, works through readiness as much as regulation.»<sup>62</sup>*

Best known for his analysis of what he called «Biopolitics», MICHEL FOUCAULT conceptualized the exercise as a political medium which lies at the heart of the biopolitical *époque*, as it serves to *train* bodies and minds of a society in a certain way, rather than working *qua* reward and punishment:

*«The disciplinary power controls the bodies by exercising them: The exercise is in fact the technique by which one gives the bodies tasks characterized by repetition, difference and gradation.»<sup>63</sup>*

Building on MICHEL FOUCAULT, JUDITH BUTLER describes subjectivizing mechanisms leading to an incorporated law by means of repetitive (re-)enactment:

*«That law is not literally internalized, but incorporated, with the consequence that bodies are produced which signify that law on and through the body; there the law is manifest as the essence of their selves, the meaning of their soul, their conscience, the law of their desire. In effect, the law is at once fully manifest and fully latent, for it never appears as external to the bodies, it subjects and subjectivates.»<sup>64</sup>*

Law and its application are being ascribed in the politicians’ body and cognition *qua* the medium of the exercise. Although this is not the only way how processes of incorporation take place, this intentionally staged moment offers the opportunity to analyze its elements – abstract from the historical situation and following tendencies into our time.

Laws thus are by no means neutral and eternal givens, but rather materio-semiotic practices of instituting state agency indivisible from the instituting people, with their vi-

<sup>59</sup> DAVIS TRACY C., Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense, Durham 2007, p. 334.

<sup>60</sup> GALISON PETER/NAJAFI SINA, The Ontology of the Enemy: An Interview with Peter Galison, in: *Cabinet* 2003/12.

<sup>61</sup> PIAS CLAUS (Fn. 45), p. 5 et seqq.

<sup>62</sup> CRANDALL JORDAN, Bereitschaft, in: *Multitude e.V/Unfriendly Takeover* (eds.), Wörterbuch

des Krieges/Dictionnaire of War, Berlin 2007, p. 62 et seqq.

<sup>63</sup> MENKE CHRISTOPH, Die Disziplin der Ästhetik, Eine Lektüre von «Überwachen und Strafen», in: Koch Getrud/Schwarte Ludger/Sasse Sylvia (eds.), *Kunst als Strafe, Zur Ästhetik der Disziplinierung*, München 2003, p. 109 et seqq., citing: FOUCAULT MICHEL, *Überwachen und Strafen, Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*, Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 207 et seqq.

<sup>64</sup> BUTLER JUDITH, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York/London 1999, p. 171.

sions, behaviors, rhetorics, political styles and affiliations.

## V. Conclusio

The period of the 1960s is way too complex to claim that the four-day exercise brought about radical change in the political and legal landscape. The SPD and the unions were slightly maneuvering towards a pro-Emergency laws position already before, just like the Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP) was fighting against it for quite some time.<sup>65</sup>

Yet, I attempted to show how reality is being created by temporarily *realizing* a given narrative, and how a narrative density, an emotion intensity and a bodily involvement can craft a *feeling of reality*, that, however rationally implausible, still leads to the creation of quasi-memories. Thus, the necessity to use an exercise as political means hints at what MITSCHERLICH and MITSCHERLICH call process of realization and de-realization,<sup>66</sup> and what CASTORIADIS denotes as lacking «reality criterion» [«Realitätskriterium»].<sup>67</sup> In these times, and in the discussion about the Emergency laws and Fallex 66, the question of *reality* is at stake: What is real, what is legitimate, what is normal? Fallex 66, as I showed, takes exactly the same line as it moves between reality and fiction, presence and future and thus works on the homogenization of future expectations and what is counted as legitimate fear facing the future determined by the scenario.

Thus, I claim, the exercise left various imprints on the political situation. Firstly, its aesthetic power addressed the imaginary capabilities of a person and affected the images and feelings connected to provided information. Secondly, by pushing one spe-

cific scenario in the exercise, scenario «Top Gear» influenced not only the participating politician's imagination, but also the societal perception of the Emergency laws. Both conflicting imaginaries of that time – a re-emergence of autocratic politics vs. the fear of a nuclear war – can be described as social imaginaries, as they determined the perception of the Emergency laws, albeit in two conflicting alignments.

Additionally, this paper contributes not only to the question how an exercise serves as a valid resource for the analysis of operative imaginations, but also crafts an attempt to use aesthetics, affect theory and political theory to analyze different categories from those common in political theory and contemporary history.

<sup>65</sup> SCHNEIDER MICHAEL, *Demokratie in Gefahr? Der Konflikt um die Notstandsgesetze: Sozialdemokratie, Gewerkschaften und intellektueller Protest (1958–1968)*, Bonn 1986.

<sup>66</sup> MITSCHERLICH/MITSCHERLICH (Fn. 2), p. 35.

<sup>67</sup> CASTORIADIS (Fn. 13), p. 199.