

Original manuscript

Time for an Urban (Re)evolution – Negotiating Body, Space and Food

Abstract

This paper explores the artistic method of butoh dance in order to bring the body into the process of shaping the urban environment through techniques such as: rebellion, interaction, mimesis, agro-roots, transformation, metamorphosis and reflection. Placing the body at the centre of my methodology, through performance and an experimental-making of the stage, I explore its negotiation with time, space and food. The Japanese spatio-temporal concept *ma* – an interval, awareness – is used to understand the relationship between temporal and spatial progression, awareness and the potential in this ‘interval’. From within architectural research I pose the question: How can the interaction of the body in butoh practice and food production, set in relation to one another, improve understanding and handling of urban space where time is an aspect in design? The use of butoh exposes a ‘time’ orientation in space, and on the transformation of everyday ‘rhythms’ and behaviour with food.

Keywords

Embodiment, butoh, everyday rhythms, urban food production, Imagineering

Introduction

Food reoccurs everyday in urban lives. It is rhythmical and occupies a major part of everyday life, yet it is rarely considered in the urban design process. A further knowledge gap appears when we extend the link between food and time to encompass space. The food-to-time rapport within urban space, and how the body relates to it, creates an opportunity for architectural investigation. This paper explores and evaluates the artistic method of butoh, studying how the inclusion of embodiment within imagineering can emphasize the timely aspect of urban space and food production as a cyclical process. It looks at how the interaction of the butoh body can articulate space in a physical manner, in its time/space and rhythmic aspect, and as a (re)creation and (re)establishment of meaning and values for urban green space. The concept of temporality has been concealed from daily experience. This becomes clearer when food is examined within the context of urban space: where it comes from, when it arrives, what is offered to eat, and when it is eaten.

By placing the body at the centre of my methodology through use of butoh dance, I explore the negotiation it takes with space, food and time. I pose the question: How can the interaction of the body in butoh practice and food production, set in relation to one another, improve the understanding and handling of urban space, where time becomes an aspect in design? Similar to the transformation technique used in butoh, imagineering is a technique in design used to generate an imagined emergence through living systems, designing for evolution rather than solution through the form of a narrative.

My approach is framed in micro and macro perspective lenses in a case conducted at the 2014 AHA Festival hosted by the Department of Architecture at Chalmers University

of Technology in Gothenburg, Sweden: a workshop and a butoh performance. Each lens resides in the overlap between art and science, positioning the time|space|body rapport in an ‘evolution’ orientation, where the artistic form of the butoh body is brought into the process of urban design. The macro lens is implemented in the ‘Paperscapes’ workshop, an experimental-making of the stage for the performance in an imagined foodscape inspired by natural farmer Masanobu Fukuoka. Chalmers BA architecture students construct a site using trace paper to represent time, food and spatiality. The micro lens is explored through the bodily choreography and detail of body technique in a butoh dance performance entitled ‘Organoleptic Interfaces.’

Working with the dancer Frauke, I decipher the butoh body through its origin techniques such as: rebellion, interaction, mimesis, agro-roots, transformation, metamorphosis and reflection. In addition, I relate this to the Japanese spatio-temporal concept of *ma* that supports the spatial-to-corporeal correlation, and which has been numerously applied in discussions about architecture in Japan. *Ma* is an interval, gap, opening, awareness which helps me to further understand how temporal progression relies on space awareness, spatial progression relies on time, and the potential transformation which exists in this ‘interval’.

The aim is to provide alternative methods for using the body in urban design that can create a potential for transforming everyday collective ‘rhythms’ and behaviour with food consumption. In order for this to occur, a time re-construction needs to happen – an urban (re)evolution. One in which circular time and behaviour, an ingredient in natural evolution, is an urban design consideration. In my research, I explore what occurs when the body is placed at the centre of urban design methodology through techniques used in

butoh dance and how this may inform the process of shaping the urban environment and transformation of the everyday rhythms associated with food.

The Rotten Foodscape

Many of the behavioural challenges associated with accessing urban food stem from the clash between a different strata of time and scale, where food is produced in mass quantities and eaten out of season and geographic location. The intimate contact with how a city feeds itself and where our food comes from is lost. In order to think of food as a building block, I suggest that a deeper understanding of the bodily experience and its relation to time in a foodscape is necessary. If we view a micro to macro spectrum of using the body as a key instrument, different layers of time occur: metabolic time, biological time, rehabilitative time, dynamic time, consumption time, social time, decomposition time, seasonal time, ecosystem time and so forth. Each of these ‘times’ varies in scale, bodily contact and length, which need to be considered. However, the concept of temporality and circular time has been hidden from the daily urban experience, especially when it comes to accessing and dealing with food.

Urban society lives in a linear ‘now,’ where most produce is available (to eat) all year, forgetting that nature does not function in this manner. It needs an appropriate cycle of production, death and rebirth. In bringing the body into the centre of these dialogues, the time factor as well as a confrontation with the physical nature of space become increasingly apparent. An awareness of what is available when, and what form it takes in order to be in equilibrium with nature’s cycles, is introduced. These are not just questions of eating seasonally and locally, but rather a deeper corporeal desire to understand why, be aware, and rhythmically follow this longing. In essence, the use of butoh has allowed

me to examine a bodily choreography of space that begins to answer this question. It allowed me to find a method to reflect on this awareness that occurs at a metabolic level. Simultaneously, it also became an intimate reflection to the way I feed myself personally.

John Berger traces eating habits to two traditional views of the value of food: the significance of the meal and the act of eating. One view stems from the bourgeois, where meals were regular, everything was served and eaten as separate distinct activities, and the meal represented a series of discrete untouched gifts. Here food was considered a commodity which was purchased and usually overeaten. On the contrary, the second view stems from the peasant that relates to 'labour' and to work accomplished during the work day. Food was served all together on one plate with bread as a cleaning device, usually in the kitchen near the place of cooking, and represented work done and therefore earned repose. In addition, the food was produced close to home so its origin was known and based on seasonal availability. For the peasant, 'his food is familiar like his own body. Its action on his body is continuous with the previous action of the body (labour) on the food' (Berger, 2009, page 61). What Berger (2009) is alluding to in his essay is that there was an inherent connection and awareness of food in the latter class that is missing in the bourgeois and in today's mentality. Urban access to food is predominantly empowered to the shop, and this relationship to it as purely a commodity creates a disconnect not only with its source, but also with its 'timely' presence. Furthermore, Berger underpins this by exemplifying a temporal significance: 'For the peasant, what he eats and how he eats daily are continuous with the rest of his life. The rhythm of this life is cyclic. The repetition of meals is similar to, and connected with, the repetition of the seasons (...) it becomes clear that the peasant way of eating is centred on the act of eating

itself and on the food eaten: it is centripetal and physical.’ This provides a leap to why I choose to use butoh as a tool and as a physical practice to revitalize the nature and perception of food in the contemporary urban condition also within a framework of time.

In Butoh, Hijikata’s dances were not just sensory feasts even though they certainly were that. They explored sensations associated with social problems: gay men being beaten, and spouses abused (Baird, 2012). In essence, the same thing can be done using butoh to unearth contemporary societal challenges: ethics, migratory tensions, and dwindling resources to name a few. My research explores an alternative approach to confronting the ecological challenges associated with urban food behaviour and space in how butoh can be used as an instrument. As stated in the film ‘Butoh – A Body on the Edge of Crisis: ‘Butoh helps to confront the reality of the human condition in contemporary time’ (Blackwood, 1990). I believe that using butoh as a research methodology can help in confronting the ecological challenges on a bodily level. Sustainability is not only a technocratic challenge; it is one that rests in individual behaviour and in the body. The body needs to be included and on alert, on par with the understanding of nature’s metabolism. The easiest way to bring about this use of the body is to trace food consumption behaviour. In an interview, Tim Jackson, a professor of sustainable development states: ‘Creating a truly sustainable society needs more than technological progress, it also requires a change in how we live’ (EU Plan, 2011). The next section clarifies the potential of butoh as a research and method tool.

Corporeal Rhythms: the Butoh Body

diagrams of intensities

at the intersection of all the scenes of the possible

choreography of desire's throw of the dice
on a continuous line since birth
Becoming irreversible of rhythms and refrains of a
Haiku-event
I dance not in the place but I dance the place ¹
(Guattari, cited in Genesko 2002, page 122)

Guattari highlights butoh's ability to be choreographed by place, rather than creating a choreographed piece for a place. The butoh dance is simultaneously instructed by the place that is chosen. It is site-specific, allowing place to be danced. One of Butoh's primary founders Hijikata Tatsumi began exploring with contemporary dance during a turbulent historical period and transition for Japan. The Asia Pacific war 1941-1945 sparked a strong nationalistic environment that led to unprecedented economic growth, resulting in protests and consumerism for the following decades. Throughout, Japan was thrown into the grasp of modernization and grappled with a crisis of identity and a rapidly changing culture, set between the contemporary and the archaic. This struggle for identity occurred in all the arts, and also in architecture. Hence, Butoh dance was an expression that came out of this shift in Japan (Reynolds, 2015). I believe it was a protest in itself, of a form of activism and a coping mechanism.

Guattari's poem cited above honours Min Tanaka's 1984 butoh performance in Paris. It alludes to butoh's intensity, spontaneity, emergence, rhythm and spatial concepts as the foundation of this art form. The space-to-body connect is a strong underpinning in butoh movement. Hijikata, with butoh's other primary founder Ohno Kazuo, established unique

¹ Original excerpt from '*Présentation du programme de danse Buto de Min Tanaka.*' (Min Tanaka, The Body Weather)

methods for generating a movement vocabulary and layered choreography, which for me exemplifies a type of conversation and negotiation between space and body.

In its origins, butoh performance and choreography was often accompanied by Hijikata's surrealistic poems that reflected the world around them. For Hijikata, the body is a metaphor for words and words are a metaphor for the body. 'He said that the brain is merely a part of the body' (Nanako, 2000, page 16). Cognitive scientists, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999, page 5), support this approach when they state, 'the mind is inherently embodied, reason is shaped by the body, and since most thought is unconscious, the mind cannot be known simply by self-reflection.' Therefore, in applying this thought to the urban food challenge, the awareness necessary to comprehend food from a different perspective, lies in embodied knowledge and it is a dynamic process. A process which is awakened by experience.

The techniques created in butoh have several states that support the aim in my research for a negotiation of time, space body and nature. These states set the stage for the experience that ignites awareness. They are:

- **Corporeal Rebellion** – A resistance to authority and established convention. In essence, the butoh body aims 'to free itself.' It is resistance to an overload of information and mass production. Baird (2012, page 11) states 'to accomplish this rebellion, Hijikata would need to create techniques to expand the capacities of the body and mind, techniques to understand the world better, techniques to navigate the world during moments of uncertainty, and techniques to understand others better and communicate with them more effectively.' This corporeal rebellion

could also be seen as an act against normative urban behaviour and a way to negotiate space with an increased consciousness.

- Three Elements of Interaction – One element is a form of a body language used to converse between site and body. Another element, extends to the interaction between dancer and observer. A third element, is the metaphorical perspective of the dancer during the performance: it can be taken from within, aside, or from a bird's eye view (metabolic, physical, systematic).
- Agricultural Roots (Agro-roots) – Butoh has agro-roots as a method, in its origins and in its underpinning. These beginnings have remained in butoh's close relationship of being practised in and with nature. Since 1978, Japanese butoh dancer Min Tanaka instructs and investigates the butoh in a rice field environment through the act of farming in a project entitled 'Body Weather.'
- Mimesis – Hijikata's earlier dances were mimetic narrative performances (Baird, 2012). He often used words and metaphors to create a character and narrative-based dance. In my research, mimesis strongly underpins the link to imagineering and biomimicry.
- Transformation and Metamorphosis – Butoh method defines a state of embodiment, emergence and change. A full spectrum dance form with permeable boundaries. 'Butoh metamorphosis or the body that becomes,' also grasped the irreconcilable poetics of Hijikata as 'the nature that bleeds.' Morphing, melting figures permeate butoh. Their meaning is not literal, but ongoing and open to interpretation' (Fraleigh and Nakamura, 2006, page 13). Conceiving space in this

manner has potential to envision urban form and living as a non-static and timely entity. Flexible, conscious, resilient and adaptable.

- Reflection – A technique used for coping with the volume of information. Baird states that Butoh dancers can ‘practice the skill of organising and coping with the volume of information and stimuli that the urban space provides (Baird, 2012, page 182). Baird sees butoh artists, especially Hijikata, ‘responding to that of worlds of increasing but incomplete information and information of varying strengths by developing ways to be attentive to all sides of an interaction and also as developing ways to cope with either an overload or lack of information’ (Baird, 2012, page 3). Such moments entail a reflection, a pause and a coherent filtering of information in order to move onto the next stage. The butoh body offers reflection psychologically and physically brought about by its spatial contact. Creating the potential for choice, value-building and ethical manoeuvring.

Butoh choreography is based on instruction. An instruction may include a physical directive (i.e. a cow with left leg raised), a tone or quality (i.e. softness from below), a movement or posture (i.e. Float), an indirect and abstract instruction (i.e. infinitely transparent), a mood (i.e. feeling of light or ethereality), and/or a dispersed direction (i.e. from a bird’s eye view) (Baird, 2012). In the same manner, urban space can also be based on instruction. My research assumes that an urban foodscape could also be seen as an ‘instruction’ to everyday urban behaviour. Because butoh is essentially an act of transformation and therefore a shift in behaviour, it is interesting to view a physical place also as a catalyst in transforming everyday behaviour.

Another vital aesthetic form of butoh is to erase the body and to go beyond it. This is achieved by painting the body white to delineate a clear canvas for metamorphosis and to erase the social body. Dancer Akaji Maro states: ‘You have to kill your body to construct a body as a larger fiction. And you can be free at that moment’. When the body is erased and juxtaposed inside a narrative, it needs support from something that lives inside it. A recognition of time, or a timely awareness? This awareness can be encapsulated in the Japanese term of *ma*. This is a spatio-temporal concept signifying an interspace, a gap, and thus a potential for awareness. ‘Butoh’s exploration of the body bears in mind the inner contradictions of the body of every human being: between light and darkness, and between life and death. It is the ultimate contradictions of this kind that create movement; no life without death, no creation without destruction’ (Bergmark, 1991). Thus the form of butoh movement in space is also connected to a temporal setting that is circular. Baird elaborates on this transformation and on Hijikata’s method, ‘He sought to dissolve the strong distinction between the inside and outside of the body – to render the body more receptive to what was outside it’ (Baird, 2012, page 179).

In a foodscape setting, could I extend the idea that grown produce defines in-between space, not as a void, but rather as a potential for transformation? This potential is in the ‘instruction’ which I mentioned earlier. If the aim is to transform behaviour of how we access and consume food, shouldn’t this shift exist in the body rather than in the intellect? Nordic butoh dancer SU-EN writes: ‘the butoh body is charged by its own necessity. It recycles its environs. It is an organism, not a shape. Butoh dares to transform the initial reality of the body and passes the contagion to the spectator. The viewer again recycles this received statement of existence into owned experience’ (SU-EN et al., 2003, page

69). I think that the relationship of dancer to audience points out a significant reality also in the activity of communal gardening. It is a small number of individuals who are the gardening stewards, however the remaining members (the audience) can still be affected by this bodily dynamic to a certain degree. If this dynamic is repeated as a regular rhythm, at what point in time does it also begin to influence the passer-by, the extended audience? SU-EN (2003, page 70) further states: 'To work with the body is to challenge our behavioural patterns.' In essence, all bodies in the surrounding space enter a state of heightened awareness, and, 'by recapturing the power of the living body and transforming it into other existences, we can address the basic values of life; compassion, respect and responsibility' (SU-EN et al., 2003, page 78). These are the necessary ingredients for shifting an urban lifestyle towards ecological awareness.

When I first came upon this technique of transformation, it highlighted the potential for using butoh as a method, and I wanted to create interventions that could explore this realisation. My collaboration with Frauke began in 2012 when she asked me to conceptualize biomimicry for her performance for Göteborg Konsthallen. My involvement was to provide research for the choreography script featuring different organism behaviours linked to verbs in her text. In exchange, Frauke gave me butoh lessons in Gothenburg's Botanical Gardens. This initial experience encouraged me to explore butoh in my own intervention linked to my context of study of productive urban food gardens – foodscapes. Min Tanaka's description of the butoh body confirms a link to nature, 'the body that measures the landscape, the body in intercourse with weather, the body kissing mass of peat, the body in love-death relation to the day. For me the dance has been a symbol of despair and courage' (Body Weather, 2009). In my

methodology, butoh practice provides a bodily measure of the site, referred to as bodily cartography. The opportunity to examine butoh came in 2014 when I was organising the AHA Festival at Chalmers University of Technology, a festival for investigating the border between art and science. The first part of the intervention, entitled ‘Organoleptic Interfaces,’ was to structure the narrative into a physical format by constructing a stage set for the butoh performance. Chalmers BA architecture students were invited to a workshop called ‘Paperscapes –the imaginable territory of farming’ in which they were acquainted with the work of Masanobu Fukuoka through excerpts of his book ‘One Straw Revolution’ (Figure 1). [insert Figure 1.]

Figure 1. The Making of Paperscapes setting at the AHA festival in 2014. Image Source: Milad Abedi (top 2 images).

Fukuoka (1978) created the method ‘natural farming’, sometimes referred to as ‘do-nothing farming’, because it relies on nature to do the work. This farming typology is in step with nature: no tillage, no fertilizer, no pesticides, no weeding and no pruning. He grew all sorts of produce year-round without the techniques used in traditional farming, especially avoiding chemicals and fertilizers of scientific agriculture. In order to get the students to understand this scientific construct of agriculture, I asked them to capture the knowledge in a physically built landscape of trace paper rather than just read about it. The challenge was to build a landscape reflecting time by representing the four annual seasons in relationship to farming.

Students were divided into three groups: air, ground and edge. Similar to an instruction given in Butoh choreography, they were given keywords for surface materials which alluded to seasonality: leaves, crunchy, freshly fallen off, puddles, wetness -

(autumn), snow, slush, fresh snow, ice, soil frozen, slippery - (winter), fresh plant, seed, mist, droplets, flowers, fresh soil, mud, moss, fruit, vegetables (spring and summer). These metaphors were accompanied by Derek Gripper's (2014) music installation with keywords: seeding, constellations, phasing, rhythm, parallel harmony, overlaying permutations, companion plantation, diverse arrangements. Gripper is a South African musician who has used Fukuoka's philosophy in his composition. What emerged was a collapse of time into one space in one afternoon around the context of a built food garden paper sculpture. The stage was now ready for the butoh performance (Figure 2). [insert Figure 2.]

Figure 2. Organoleptic Interfaces Butoh Performance at the AHA Festival in 2014.

Image Source: Milad Abedi (top 4 images) and David Relan (bottom 2 images).

The construction of the stage linked to Hijikata's concern with creating opportunity for seeing the world from other perspectives, and creating this physical narration, similarly to what imagineering can provoke. Imagineering allows for the deep knowledge to emerge and become visible through the construction of a spatial narrative. In my research, the butoh dance is brought into the context in order to understand the landscape as a dynamic and interactive process. Here, both time and space provide the setting for this encounter. This bodily cartography becomes a method to investigate transformation, both in behaviour and in the potential for reshaping urban green spaces. It allows the body to experience time in a 'garden' space.

For the second part of the intervention, the butoh performance 'Organoleptic interfaces,' placed the body in negotiation with space, time and food constructed in the paper site (Orrù, 2015). Frauke performs, entering into a bodily dialogue with the crafted

space, and in butoh style activates the voids around her body as she gets to know the constructed world through her body. Here, 'organoleptic' refers to the capability of stimulating the senses; 'interface' refers to a surface forming a common boundary between adjacent regions, bodies, substances, or phases. The senses become the measuring ingredients for bodily engagement, a space is negotiated and can be viewed as form of communication, whereas space influences the body and the body influences space. My idea with setting up a metaphor around organoleptic interfaces was to examine the construct of transformation in butoh and investigate this bodily dialogue with space.

In discussion with Frauke. She explains the time, body, space relationship in butoh:

“Time is considered as a physical experience, and based on a reflective perspective of space. In the practice of butoh, the body is carried by the space. Butoh dance studies nature's conditions, processes and cycles. To understand a physical condition, the dancer uses their body to study the journey of a movement. The aim is to master the cycle of arisen conditions - to send out a movement into space and in return, be able to bring it back. The aim is also to know the route back. This is considered one of butoh's 'invisible' techniques. ”

In an interview with her after the performance, she describes her understanding of the setting as 'a memory of a garden.' Metaphoric images that she received were bees, slime mould, salad, light, tree, algae, sunflower, curling flower, fire, ash and volcano. What I found interesting was that her metaphors were completely different from the ones given to the students who constructed the stage which illustrates the notion that butoh can generate multiple understandings and transformations. However, both the making of the Paperscapes and Frauke's performance conjured up images of organic substance, even

from a very dry medium – paper. This speaks to the power of imagination and to the imagery that it can evoke. The use of metaphors and butoh can create empowering pedagogical methods for enabling the understanding of ecological atmospheres both for students and artists.

Embodiment within Biomimicry

To Hijikata a direct experience of nature was very important. He declared that from his birthplace, Tōhoku, the ‘spring season with its abundance of mud taught him to dance’ (Nanako, 2000, page 24). Butoh’s techniques with its agricultural roots and mimesis connects to its vital relationship with nature. Hijikata instructed his dancers not just ‘how to move, but what to imagine while they moved in order to alter their performances’ (Baird, 2012, page 7). In this imagined state, he often suggested a mimesis taken from nature, such as a rock, wood, wind, mist or light, or from nature’s organisms, such as a snail or bird. Hijikata states, ‘Butoh plays with time; it also plays with perspective, if we, humans, learn to see things from the perspective of an animal, an insect, or even inanimate objects. The road trodden everyday is alive ... we should value everything. It is a question of tearing down the division in humans and animals and other species.’ The dancer’s form is inspired by the environment. Nordic dancer SU-EN also relies on this butoh method to connect to nature:

“To train butoh is to train one's abilities to intensify sensory experiences. It is a violent strive to come closer, closer to the environment, all objects, bodies, by taking them into your mouth, really taste the leaves, the rocks, the dirt, the water, feel the coldness of the wind, the hardness of the trees, the sliminess of the animals, to do it

from the outside, with one's real skin, and then take in these things inside oneself' (Bergmark, 1991).

These learning methods for butoh hold parallels with the discipline of Biomimicry, where nature is seen as inspiration in our challenges to design sustainably. Butoh, however, adds a new layer of complexity to the discipline where it takes the inspiration with nature through actively engaging with it. Biomimicry provides a canvas to explore living systems, also used in imagineering, as an emerging complexity-based approach to design. Diane Nijs refers to imagineering as having an evolution orientation, 'as the complexity-inspired design approach that makes use of the narrative mode in order to strategically ignite and frame collective creativity' (Nijs, 2014, page 5). Therefore, instead of designing for solutions, we can design for evolution where the core of complex issues surrounding urban food calls for a behavioural shift. Therefore, in creating opportunity for a spark in imagination and creativity for urban inhabitants, there is the potential of reaching wider audience. In studying the mimicry of nature further, the origins of the word Biomimesis is necessary – *bio* for 'life', *mimesis* for 'to imitate'. The term was coined in 1997 by Janine Benyus, whose institute has become a resource for designers, architects, and other disciplines that invite biologists to the design tables for nature's solutions to their dilemmas. These solutions for evolution take into consideration nature's 3.8 billion years of a research and development period (Benyus, 1997).

Biomimicry uses a design template on 3 levels – form, process and system. The form of an organism, or a place, adapts to its natural setting over long periods of time. There is a metabolic sequencing in this (process) of evolution, and it relates entirely to the living ecosystem (system). In nature, space has been created and the organism body adjusts. The

techniques utilized in butoh echo this construct. By placing the butoh body ‘organism’ in the space, it is able to decipher the tacit spatial knowledge and design accordingly through the dynamic enactment of the metaphor that it is mimicking. For example, the butoh body enacting a stone on a windy winter beach. The intervention ‘Organoleptic Interfaces’ proposed an imagined garden site where the butoh dancer could take on various organism forms conducted by the space. When in discussion with Frauke after the performance, she stated that the site did not conjure images of a produce farm, but rather it evoked memories of any garden configuration. It leaves me to think that unless a partial mindset of the food challenge is not conditioned into the metaphor used for the choreography prior to the butoh performance, it will be very difficult for the dancer to understand it, especially since Frauke was not familiar with the Paperscapes setting until the moment she arrived to perform.

Butoh’s three elements of interaction – body to site conversation, dancer to observer relation, and dancer’s metaphorical perspective – also set up an interesting method for a systematic approach from two vantage points: that of the dancer and that of the audience. From the perspective of the dancer, I investigated three aspects of the dance and training techniques taken from Hijikata’s mature butoh phase – transformation, emergence, and the choreographic structure. The first two are geared to achieving maximum ability for the body-mind practice. Initially, ‘Hijikata had advocated the technique of imitation as a survival tactic, but over time, he came to prefer the techniques of transformation as a way to surpass the limits of imitation’ (Baird, 2012, page 13). In relation to biomimicry, butoh allows for the body's ability to explore basic elements along with nature's patterns and strategies for emergence. The method provides tools to create shape, design, movement,

choreography and a structure to relate to during the creative process. This becomes interesting when you relate butoh to biomimicry as a *dynamic* process, rather than only a mimesis. In essence, butoh does not mimic space, but in its interaction with time and space, it can be used to (re)articulate, form and produce new meaning for architectural space and for environmental urban rhythms. A process and emergence signifies a change, similar to an organism that becomes activated by nature and transforms into its evolved form over a period of time. Min Tanaka states:

“There are many important aspects to Hijikata’s dance, but for me, the most important was his belief in perpetual change, like in the movement of nature. Trying to bring the earth to life again is my purpose. I want to make dances that are based on natural phenomena. I strive for a sense of fear or danger” (Blackwood, 1990).

If one of these parts of the butoh technique is to relate the human species to other species without differentiation, then a question could be posed to understand human’s behaviour with food. If humans have a tacit evolutionary mechanism just like any other species, why do we eat out of season? Have humans masked their evolutionary design mechanism, one that is so deeply embedded in other species? It is my view that evolution is directly linked to space and in how it is used. In order to design with this intention, an awareness needs to be raised that is part of the body and embedded in and through the body, and in space. Therefore, the design of a spatial embodied evolution creates conditions for the time, space, body relationship.

Time, Space, Body Relationship

The aspect of time differs based on space and the body’s position. Poet Morten Søndergaard (2013) relates position to time by means of three time/position metaphors –

vertical, oblique and horizontal time. My reading of his metaphors is: The ‘vertical’ position of moving is enacted through movement such as walking, dancing, gardening and thus collapsing the distance between places in different scales. The ‘oblique’ position is one of reflection that occurs while writing, speaking, talking, conversing, or even growing. The ‘horizontal’ position is a type of reflection, which comes in instances of rest, sleeping, sitting still, procreating and dying. The vertical and horizontal metaphors are opposites, the contrast of life in movement and life at rest or death, a metabolic process. The oblique metaphor lies in-between as a bridging role, for it is the position that essentially moves us forward or drops us to the ground – the decisive factor. It is in this oblique state, a *ma*, where the potential for transformation in everyday behaviour resides. In this reflective position, the opportunity for decision and choice emerges. In order to activate the oblique state, space needs to be embodied through presence and activity. Felix Guattari examines three ecologies in his thoughts on various ways of ‘existing that lie outside the realm of consciousness’ (Guattari, 1989, page 131). He upholds three ecology headings for the reconstitution of social and individual practice: social, mental and environmental. Once again, the parallel to butoh seems clear through themes of transformation and reflection. How does a space of this kind function?

It is helpful for me to bring in the Japanese spatio-temporal concept of *ma* which suggests a gap, opening, delay or silence to explain such spatial thinking. *Ma* can be understood as a demarcated in-betweenness in space or time. The ideogram for *ma* (間) comprises the character for ‘gate’ or ‘door’ (門) enveloping the character of ‘sun’ (日) – in this sense it refers to the interval between things, from which light can shine through. Light in this context refers to ‘potential’, or the reflection for an oblique state in

Søndergaard's poetic thinking. *Ma* can also be viewed in a temporal sense as the gap between seasons, for instance. According to scholar Sen Soshitsu XV, this interval in time 'allows all things the regulation and adjustment they require in their progression to' the next season (Di Mare, 1990, page 321). This concept of the interval can also be viewed as a spatial sequencing creating opportunity for change to occur guided by movements used in *butoh*. We are made aware of how temporal progression relies on space and spatial progression relies on time.

In 1979, architect Arata Isozaki curated an exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York called 'MA: Space- Time in Japan' (Big in Japan Contributor, 2011). Isozaki (1979) views *ma* as a 'natural pause or interval between two or more phenomena occurring continuously' which 'gives rise to both spatial and temporal formulations'. Therefore, time and space are measured in terms of intervals that are defined as cyclical rather than teleological and linear progression. Architecture can in essence provide markers in time that delineate a circular progression. The easiest way to comprehend this is to think seasonally, to examine how time can be expressed through different dynamic elements within the environment in which *butoh* can be used as a tool to trace. Natural light, shifting sounds and shadows, material decay and weathering are a few markers named by Veal (2002). Seasons create an awareness of transition, especially when they become visible to the eye in a foodscape setting, and are experienced by the body in the inside/outside seasonal transitions. However, the body's relationship to the site also demonstrates that the dynamic movement of tasting, gardening, touching and watching becomes a temporal opportunity and activity which changes seasonally. Similar to *butoh*, Japanese space and time concept of *ma* recognizes the relationship between objects. In

relation to the butoh concepts, the three elements of interaction come closest to *ma*. A conversation between Suzuki Tadashi and Hijikata Tatsumi revealed *ma* as an integral component in butoh when the body is used to experiencing the concepts, Suzuki states:

“On the whole, using the body for expression means there's a gap. There's a gap between the body and words and also a considerable gap between the body and space. And quite a wind blows between them. So you fill that gap with concepts and a desire to analyse. But the first time I saw Mr. Hijikata's butoh, I had the feeling that here was a space where there was no need to kill time like that” (Akihiko et al., 2000, page 62).

Butoh allows for *ma*, just as it allows for a reflection to take place. This reflection is necessary in order for transformation to occur. In this reflection, awareness grows as the space is re-imagined with a deeper embodied commitment. What does this mean in terms of creating urban space that instigates a reflection on ecological impacts? This type of urban context would support Søndergaard's (2013) oblique state in reflection with nature and with ourselves through our body. In order to allow for such spaces to emerge, design methodology also has to utilize the same method for reflection. In my understanding of butoh, both as an observer and researcher, it offers a practice for this type of design methodology. Experiencing space in a butoh state is only possible through a deepened reflection.

Geographer David Harvey (2008, page 121) takes the idea of Lefebvre's produced space a step further in defining three ways in which space can be understood; absolute, relative and relational. While absolute space is the measurable qualities, his conception of relative and relational space is more in agreement with the *ma* concept. ‘Relative space proposes that space be understood as a relationship between objects which exists only

because objects exist and relate to each other.’ In relational space, ‘space as being contained in objects in the sense that an object can be said to exist only insofar as it contains and represents within itself relationships to other objects.’ Thus, having an interrelationship between subjects and objects and able to produce new meaning relations. ‘The relational view of space holds that there is no such thing as space or time outside of the processes that define them’ (Harvey, 2008, page 123). Could this process be *ma*? In *ma*’s, the potential is provided through the activated body allowing for such reflections to take place. Harvey (2008, page 123-124) states that:

“Processes do not occur in space, but define their own spatial frame. The concept of space is embedded in or internal to process. This very formulation implies that, as in the case of relative space, it is impossible to disentangle space from time. We must therefore focus on the relationality of space-time rather than of space in isolation. The relational notion of space-time implies the idea of internal relations; external influences get internalized in specific processes or things through time. An event or a thing at a point in space cannot be understood by appeal to what exists only at that point. It depends upon everything else going on around it.’

This is what I had hoped to envision in the macro construction of the *butoh* performance space *Paperscapes*.

With the *butoh* performance submerged in the *paperscape* modelled space, would Frauke understand the macro construct in which she was supposed to react and reflect? The intention of the space was to set up a space-time construct which would be revealed through the activity of *butoh*. As an observer, it was difficult to tell. However, as a performer, I might have been able to make this assumption and draw stronger

conclusions. My assumption is that the butoh body critically analyses the distinction between time and space as it is an enactment of both congruently. It also deals with the perception of interfaces between time and space. Since behaviour is embodied, it is the body that allows for transformation to take place. Since the body's rhythm is cyclical and metabolic, how can urban space promote a behavioural metabolism as well?

Conclusion - (Re)evolution!

In my investigations, the butoh body form and process did succeed in conducting a theoretical discourse into tying together the negotiations I set out to examine: time, food, and space. The body movements and techniques allowed for embodiment to relate to time, in-betweenness (*ma*), food and space. However, the research aims to activate the body, make it dynamic and evoke imagined states in order to bring about awareness, is still in need of further exploration. Frauke's performance conjured up a metaphor, but it had not been the one I had imagined which could confront the challenge of urban food production. What is clear from this case intervention is that the underlying metaphor must be communicated more clearly prior to the butoh performance, and that there is a need for me to place my own body into the butoh form. My next steps in the research will therefore be to take further courses and workshops, and enact performances in foodscapes in which I can come in intimate contact with butoh. Even though the imagineering concept was touched upon in staging the narrative through metaphor construction, I find that it needs more investigation into its use around the collective, and not just the individual. If I apply this nature's lens into collective thinking, then instinctively the research needs to examine swarms. Swarming is a collective emergent behaviour by a species that does not have a central coordination or authority governing it, and it is of

interest to my research because humans also exhibit a collective mimicking that could be applied to sustainable peer behaviour. Could swarming be enacted through the butoh technique as a displaced perspective? Further theoretical underpinning is required, especially in understanding the arisen arguments in parallel with Henri Lefebvre's (2004) rhythm analysis where he uses the biological, social and psychological interrelation of understanding space and time in the comprehension of everyday life. In addition, I would like to look into Guattari's assemblage theory, especially given his interest in Japan and butoh, around the question of singularization as a 'self-organizing process' that ensemble into relational assemblages (Genesko, 2002).

However, this paper is not concerned with whether Butoh is a successful artistic practice. It rather shows the correlations between the choreography, conceptual underpinnings, and its potentials for ecological practice set against the parameters of time, space, and food (nature). I close with a quote from butoh researcher Baird (2012, page 183-184):

"It succeeds if it teaches us to spend our time, when we have either too little or too much information, sifting our way through what we have, gradually weeding out things that turn out to be dead-ends after a look from a second and third perspective. Hijikata's butoh offers both plenty of information and not enough. In participating in its invitation to co-creation, how we deal with that abundance and lack reflects who we are."

The same could be said for the experience of space and how we construct our ecologically-sound way of urban living as an expression of evolution.

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