A piece of land that only exists while the fiction is played

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Introduction

I write about the architecture of simulation. I explore replicas of urban landscapes in which various types of interventions are staged, from rescue missions, to police and military exercises. In this specific context, buildings, structures, and scenographies are designed in order to provide a specific fictional space for the representation and the drills to be performed as realistically and efficiently as possible. The services and forces of professionals and trainees are given a space to test and train the efficacy of exercising control or fighting speculative scenarios. Similarly, this space allows them to fully demonstrate the destructive potential of their armor and weaponry.

As soon as I started digging into these spaces of *training and rehearsing fiction*, the more I began to apprehend a vast hidden and twisted scenario where the practices of power and control are literally translated into space. The opaque cloud of mystery around the actual politics and purposes at stake within these camps suggests that these places are not only intended for 'training', but that a larger scheme of offensive and defensive speculation is developed within these simulated territories.

But, overall, a more structural approach is what I intend to approach with this work. The text is a reflection on the limits of representation in this particular context of production: Not only about the kind of content that is played in there - from accidents to terrorist attacks - but the choices around how it is played. What kind of decor is designed for it? What is the extent of the training that the professionals need in order to learn how to face a specific threat? Which is the model of reality that is followed or copied in the staging, and how is it translated into a fiction? In all of these choices which shape the reality in these camps, there is implicit an unavoidable relation to modern societies.

Preface

In order to expand upon this statement, I collected different testimonies from people who are currently, or have previously been involved with these places with different kinds of responsibilities. I also spoke with designers, rescue and security professionals, and external people who collaborated as actors playing the roles of victims or civilians. From all those voices and my impression about the facilities I have been able to visit, I will break down the key parameters that are hidden in these exceptional scenarios.

My first encounter with the first drill space was in San Sebastian during the summer of 2018, when I was struck by those towers at the fire stations that were rising above the heights of the city. So I started asking cadets and professionals about the drills they were practising in those

spaces. I moved to Amsterdam where I continued collecting the visual material from the different fire brigades. In October of the same year I had already visited some of the oldest facilities and got access to the city's historical archive thanks to the veteran Inspector of the Fire Service of Amsterdam. In the Netherlands the format of the towers used in Spain were obsolete, and they had designed larger and more equipped spaces to house the different firefighter departments of the different districts.Therefore I arranged a meeting in BOCAS, the Fire Service Training Center Amsterdam-Amstelland Schiphol. Every year, thousands of firefighters and emergency workers at our center follow a training, education or exercise. In December I visited the Training Center of Crailo, Netherlands, where besides the firemen, police and security forces train there. I got to know about the methodology of the Lotus association that is in charge of hiring civilians to provide victims during the simulation. By this period the focus of my research had turned towards the acting and scripting of the accident and started researching about military camps, due to the complexity of matters that were implied. Because of the strict privacy policies I could not visit any camp, so I made the exploration via online about the different camps in the Netherlands, Spain and Germany. The investigation brought me to Hohenfels, Germany, where I heard about a giant camp that was well known for working with civilians. Finally, in November of 2019 I was able to interview two people that had worked in that camp.

In order to respect and not compromise the position of some of the persons i interviewed, I decided to be cautelous and not to reveal specific or personal information about them.

Designed ruins

I want to start this journey by speaking about the experience I had when I visited one specific large scale training camp for fire services and police forces. I had already seen some before, but what I saw in this particular place sparked most of the key questions I have proposed in this research, some of which I have not yet answered.

One of the managers from the training camp picked me up from the fenced entrance in a van. It was an armored police car, from which I enjoyed a private Universal Studios '*behind the scenes*' styled tour of the grounds where the training *sets* were. It was a strange position to look from, as I was in the front seat and I could not even open the door unless the driver unlocked it with a button. I found it was an interesting starting point for a journey through simulation.

CRAILO Training Camp. December 2018.

We stopped by each area where the interventions were practiced, while he was describing the function of each scenario they had designed and staged in detail. I could even witness some of the action performed in real life by rescue corps, but I was forbidden from seeing the exercises that the police were practising. Most of the designs were actual buildings, so often there were places in the field where one could not discern whether the houses were part of the decor or whether they were real common suburbs. As Umberto Eco describes his impression of the recreational parks in America, "Here the whole trick seems to be exposed; surrounding city context and the iron fencing (as well as the admission ticket) warn us that we are entering not a real city but a toy city. But as we begin walking down the streets, the studied illusion takes over."*1*

Nevertheless, it doesn't take long until the illusion starts turning. By paying close attention to the details of the buildings, one could find that the doors are armored, the windows boarded, that a bunch of debris lies at the corners, and that scars are visible on the facades. Instead of a normal neighbourhood, a post-war scenario appeared in front of my eyes, one which was a result of a war that never happened in reality. It reminded me of the words of Robert Smithson in his essay *A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic*, "the buildings don't fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built."*2* The ruins don't contain any aura from before. They don´t hold "*the present form of a past life.*" 3

Fire Service Crailo Training camp. December 2018. A plane crashed into a house. This particular exercise consisted in stabilizing the plane and rescuing the victims.

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1. Eco, Umberto. *Travels in Hyperreality.*1990. UK, Mariner Books, p.41

2. Smithson, Robert. *1967-1979, The Monuments of Passaic. Lefebvre A. Bobadilla, N. et Mairesse P. 2015 Cahier 2006-2015 ANR-ABRIR, p.55*

3. Simmel, Georg. *'The Ruin' .1911, In Kurt H. Wolff (ed.) Essays on Sociology, Philosophy and Aesthetics by Georg Simmel et al*. New York, Harper and Row, p.25

After checking several spots where the drills were practiced, I noticed how the majority of them looked like very purposeful representations. There was no accidental randomness to any aspect of their cracks and burns, the damage was evidently provoked and designed. Furthermore, the realness was disrupted by the radical difference in the aesthetics of the diverse areas. There was an obvious contrast between the appearance and functionality of the buildings. Despite how jarring this contrast was, it might not be so far from what is happening in postmodern cities. Racial and class boundaries are created by architecture due to the increasing privatisation of public space. "Here, as in other American cities," Michael Sorkin writes, "municipal policy has taken its lead from the security offensive and the middle class demand for increased spatial and social insulation".4

Regardless of what scale we are analysing within, each spot is independent from one another, so there is no need to correlate different representations between the different spaces. Each fiction exists in its own plane. As a result, the camp becomes a heterogeneous mixture of dramatic scenarios, a design fair of accidents, or, as Paul Virilio might describe, a "*Museum of the Accident*"5. A museum commemorating the contemporary drive towards horror and violence, where our daily overexposure to terror is not due to a preventative war, but rather a preventive intelligence that could help the state deal with both natural and artificial disasters.

These training areas are concealed beyond the outskirts of cities, far from completing or interacting with any other landscape around. It is difficult to establish any contact with such zones as a regular citizen, due to the strong access restrictions imposed around them. These restrictions might apply to avoid any dangerous interference or attempt to disturb, as well as to keep secret the power strategies or speculations of one's state, or to prevent any valuable leaks to potential political rivals. Evidently, the ones that are occupied by militaries are the most invisible ones. Even the pictures taken from the satellite are edited in order to make the information unrecognisable, or to just make it disappear.

There are facilities that are trained by not only locals, but from different international origins. Here I realised the other main reason for the secrecy of these places: not only in order to hide the control mechanisms from your own population, but to compete in the public and private security market. Among the mysticism that I felt when contemplating the accident-containing zones of these fields, I had not noticed the economy behind it all.

> The "we do not show what happens here to citizens. Beyond obvious
> reasons, for confidentiality of police interventions and security precautions,
> we host forces from other

4. Sorkin, Michael. *Variations on a Theme Park. The new American City and The End of The Public Space.* 1992, New York, Farrar,Straus and Giroux, p.173

5. Virilio, Paul. *The Original Accident.* 2007, Cambridge: Polity, p.85.

countries who come specifically to ours in order to train and learn from us. So there is a certain competition and we have to look out for our own interests compared to other competitors." (Coordinator, Fire Service Training Center Crailo, Netherlands, December 20 , 2018)

The buildings inside are made out of cheap but robust materials, decorated with basic or even symbolic ornaments on their faces in order to suggest different atmospheres, depending on the fiction they are meant to depict. Metal and concrete are the common finishes for the inside in many cases, making them capable of withstanding high temperatures and bruises. The appearance and the condition of the interiors of the spaces is far from representing any conventional domestic space.

Pre-production work for a video tutorial for training with Lotus actors in Fire brigade Training Center Amsterdam-Amstelland Schiphol.

For instance, in the spaces related to the firefighter training, you can find different abstract forms made out of metal sheets that represent the furniture which have become completely blackened by the smoke of the incessant staged fires. Basically, when the fires are on, the firefighters are not able to see anything because of the heavy smoke, so it is about working with orientation through space rather than accurately representing it.

The structures remain empty most of the time, with their metal shields still warm, waiting for the endless loop of interventions to continue. They provide the staged space with an added layer of real danger. They live as long as the accident is running. When the fiction goes off they are just ruins again.

The scenography for the representation

There is a particular relationship between the copy and the real. I am referring to the connection of urban representations within these enclosures and their model of reference in the outside

world. Even if the scale and materials that are used to recreate an environment are often faithful reproductions of contemporary urban architecture or landscapes, there is always a thin layer that reveals its condition of being fake. Nevertheless, when the drills and simulations take place, the physical intensity, the high technical level, precautions, and focus required from each participant often goes to the extreme. Therefore, the limits between reality and fiction are not clearly drawn.

I asked a firefighter cadet about his perception of reality during the training,
> "*The feeling of reality is quite high. For the exams, they left us into a four-floor building near the airport. What they do is light fires inside that produce a lot of smoke. Basically we have to enter the building and recognise the rooms and reach a specific point of departure. You don't see anything and the heat is unbearable. It is a great challenge not to get lost in there".* (Firefighter, Bocas Fire brigade training center, Netherlands, November 28 , 2018)

Thus, in many cases it is not so relevant to be detailed as regard to the scenography, but in the way in which it is activated. Those extreme conditions such as fire and heat are the ones that transform or level up the scene to be close to reality. The performance or choreography in the intervention is one of the main elements for constructing the fictional space as well.A specific space is not necessarily assigned to a particular type of training, and vice versa. It is normal to use the same scenography in order to represent different fictions and different types of training. They can be staged with the same aesthetic or spatial elements but achieve versatile goals of representation. In one of the interviews I did about a military training camp, I was told about a case where the very same café from the very same *recreated* town, was used as to stage scenarios from completely different and unrelated conflicts. At one point the space was part of a scenario representing Kosovo, and, in another round of training, the café was based in Iraq. Apparently, they related an interior from the Middle East with one placed in the Balkans, with a little rearrangement of some symbols and carpets to conceal their trick. It sounds logical from a practical point of view, when the aim of the drill is focused at a specific threat and requires a really quick intervention, but looking from the front seat of an armored police vehicle I prefer to embrace another kind of perspective.

Back when I was in a camp in the Netherlands I saw a brick facade that was partly demolished. The damage was severe and waste was covering all the area surrounding the building, adding a dramatic and realistic layer to the scenography. The quality of the materiality of the assemblages was better than the rest of the drill spaces in the camp. It was performed in several ways. It was used to understand which way the building was in danger of falling based on the direction of the cracks forming in the walls. It was also used as a stage for rescuing people inside a house that could suddenly fall. But, in an exceptional situation, it was used as a

cinema set to represent a scene of a war movie based during World War II. It provided a forensic approach, a performative one, and a cinematographic one.

Fire Service Crailo Training Camp. Two different settings of the same building.

As far as I am concerned, the flexibility of the different depicted fictions supported by the same space, stretch the limits of representation. This statement might be more consistent, as I mentioned before, in the cases where the geographical locations represented in the same camp differ culturally with one another, due to the potentially controversial nature of the shifts that occur to an *audience,* who finds themselves absent. And even more, when what is represented in these scenographies is an actual conflict abroad, in response to an occupation that is currently happening, we are talking about another scale here. Several nations are represented in the same landscape.

"The field is divided into several areas where different countries are represented. I've only been in two so. As far as I know the Balkans and the Middle East were represented. As we were transported by bus from side to side, I could not distinguish the others properly". When she was telling me about the overall picture camp, I projected my memories when I was driving around the *ruins.* But in my case, I was not gonna play any war game afterwards. (Coordinator of the camp, Netherlands, January , 2019)

On the contrary, I heard about an exceptional case where the fiction depicted was site specific and unique. It was a decor that had a more representative approach than a functional one. In order to simulate a flood in an European country, they moved the camp into the sea. They arranged several ships and fixed roofs of buildings on them, so that from the aerial view the staged flooded town would look like an ideal picture of a catastrophe.

Staging the otherness

According to the typology of the fields, the simulation might totally surpass fiction, especially in the places where the duration of the simulations extends up to days and even weeks. In these sorts of situations, the psychological factor reaches another level of closeness to reality. These types of scenarios represent the civilian population in order to simulate casual interactions. They are usually staged as actual regions in conflict in the world. Everyday life is played by actors that are hired to repetitively and continuously play as normal people, targets, or victims on these sets. Producing this context provides the Army with a very realistic training scenario and therefore an ideal preparation for an upcoming deployment of troops to conflict regions. Their objective is to familiarise soldiers with the language, religion, customs, and morals of foreign cultures in different countries. Regarding the actors, they learn about the lives and surroundings of the citizens they are to play, and are briefed on the hazards that exist in the maneuver area. As a result, the soldiers are sensitised to a 'new' location and its specific problems, bottlenecks, and conflicts. This can teach the distinction between military threats from civilian matters.
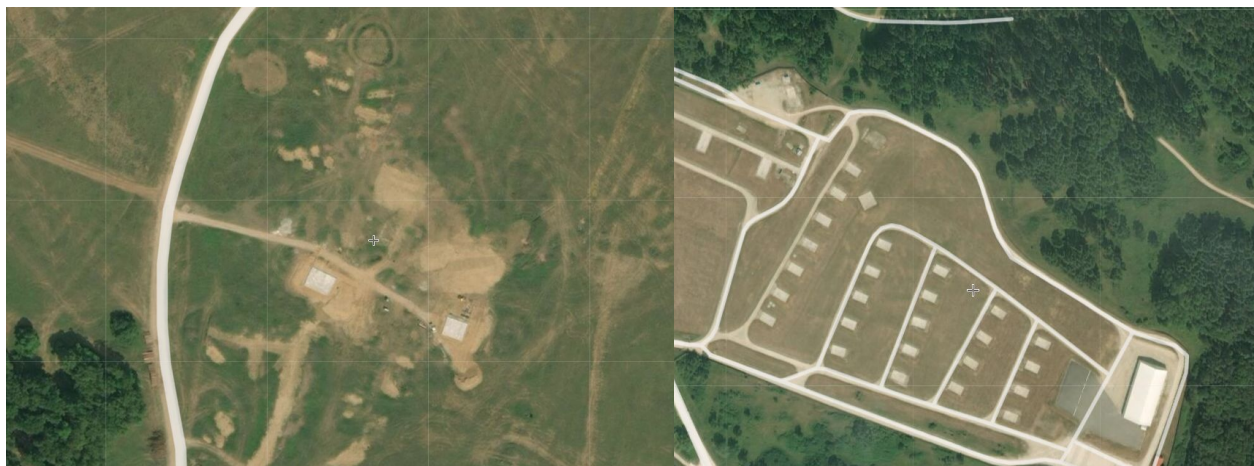
Satellite captions from the military training area of the US Army in the Upper Palatinate Hohenfels, Germany.

These camps are located in regions and countries where they are far from the places that are depicted in them, geographically as well as culturally. The way in which the decisions are made about how the foreigner/*the other* is represented — from a great cultural and geographical distance — contributes another layer of fabrication to the process. For instance, when a foreign language is represented in these recreations, it is not always the same language from the region that is actually being referred to. I am pointing out the fact that people who are part of recreation and whose purpose is to interpret the roles of a foreign culture do not speak the language of the culture they are representing, but their own. It is only needed for the simulation that they do not speak the same language of the soldiers. What is required is a form of difficulty in communicating between the *occupiers* and the *occupied*, because of the disparities in the languages. It is curious how a European language is used to represent Arab for instance. If the fiction had already been built regarding the stereotypes of the Middle East from a Eurocentric perspective, using German as the language spoken by the *locals* reveals the partiality of the decisions taken in depicting the fiction.

I stand in here, in front of one of the most compelling aspects I found during my research of the simulation camps. I find in this case of representation an exceptional example of the socio-political phenomenon of constructing the *other*. In other words, the manner in which occidental knowledge defines what is *different.* The mechanisms that have been and are becoming popular again in western societies consist of creating enemies by dividing the population with unidirectional understandings which sow the seeds of fear about the unknown.

*"*Having an enemy is important not only to define our identity, but also to procure an obstacle with which to measure our value system and show, when is faced, our value*,"* writes Umberto Eco *"*Therefore, when the enemy does not exist, it must be built [...] Well, this time we are not so interested in the natural phenomenon of identifying an enemy that threatens us as the process of production and demonisation of the enemy itself.*"* [6] This construction of the enemy that Eco describes above asserts both social and individual levels. The psychological needs and emotional responses can be socialised as well. As well as the limits of our identity are broader than our body and experiences, the identity of a nation is not only about its terrain and habitants. Maybe since having such a complex identity border we need the border of the *other* as a limit. The contingency of 'Like me but not me' that is translated in those territorial conflicts with other nations.[7]The encounter with the *other* is an issue we experience in our everyday life. The impression we have about ourselves and what we project on the other from it, is an essential aspect to form one's identity [8] . Goffman speaks about how the dramaturgical perspective interacts with the cultural one:

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6. Eco, Umberto. *Inventing the Enemy. 2012* Transl. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, p.8
7. Watch the interview with Derek Parfit in the documentary *Brainspotting .* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B64XTV6JNHA
8. Goffman, Erving. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959, New York, Doubleday, p.2

"The cultural and dramaturgical perspectives intersect most clearly in regard to the maintenance of moral standards. The cultural values of an establishment will determine in detail how the participants are to feel about many matters and at the same time establish a framework of appearances that must be maintained, whether or not there is feeling behind the appearances ."[8]

It reminds me of a story I heard from one of the actors I interviewed who was part of the simulation that staged Kosovo. This person was supposed to be an Albanian and Muslim habitant, her role was to serve as an intermediary with the soldiers who temporarily occupied the city. According to the description of the character given to her, she had to be friendly with the soldiers in town. Because of that, she was a reliable source of information for them, providing clues about the opinions of the locals, the different ethnicities, and the conflicts that were being generated between the Albanians and the Serbians.

> "My task was to have conversations with soldiers in the café. In the beginning there were a lot of layers of distractions that made the acting more complicated. I was not immersed in my role at all. For example, I was not serving any drink or food, just performing all the rest of the actions and tasks of a waitress. Whenever soldiers came into the café, I had to serve them and answer their questions. In the beginning I was ashamed. The purpose of such an informal situation was still not clear for me. But as soon as the soldiers started to believe and even joke about the situation I started to engage more with my character." (Actress, Kassel, Germany, November 18 , 2019)

Otherness is the social edge from where our identity starts building and shame is one of our social relations. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre: *"Shame is, by nature, recognition. I recognise that I am like someone else sees me."*[9] It is through emotions and feelings caused by the presence of the *other* that freedom is narrowed to the existence of the other and the limitations that this recognition implies in actions and decisions. It implies the compromised acceptance of responsibility towards that relation. This implies recognizing that "conflict is the original sense of being-for-another". [9]. Goffman also writes about how disruptions that are inherent in our social relations" still it seems that there is no interaction in which the participants do not take an appreciable chance of being slightly embarrassed or a slight chance of being deeply humiliated".[10]

On the other hand, the physical aspect of the *other* is portrayed just by aesthetic accessories like clothing. Often there is no diversity within the extras in these simulations, so the scenes are played mostly by white people. Although the portrayal of the potential danger has to be rigorously theorised, because the real danger is sometimes confronted as soon as weeks after

8. Goffman, Erving. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959, New York, Doubleday, p.3
9. Sartre, Jean Paul. *Being and Nothingness.* 1956, transl. Hazel Barnes, Routledge. p.276, 431
10.Goffman, Erving. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959, New York, Doubleday, p.3

the training, the authenticity of the characters is limited. Often the one represented is the stereotype, there is no such specification in their ethnicity for instance. I wonder how this way of classifying is going to condition the soldiers at the time of identifying individuals in real life.

"Now, since the beginning they are constructed as enemies, not the ones who are different and who threaten us directly (as would be the case of the barbarians), but those that someone has an interest in representing as menacing even if they do not threaten us directly. So that what highlights their diversity is not their character of threat, but that it is their diversity itself that becomes a sign of threat."[11]

This ambiguity and flexibility of the characters' roles as victims, potential threats, and targets, performed by both civil and professional, once again makes closer the relation with the world of interpretation. Where, for the sake of representation, the reality is narrowed down. I insist that the reasons for these dynamics might be obvious depending on where you look at them. The detail of the characterisation should not be so realistic; there is a need for fast, flexible, and effective solutions when it comes to raising fiction. However, when control and fear are staged for the sake of a reaction that comes as close as possible to reality, this lack of precision in some details might evoke the most absurd situation. And indeed, it does as well in the minds of the people who act in the simulations. Often to those who do not belong to the professional corps, due to the fact that their commitment to the practice is more superficial. And this is the space that interests me, where real life and fiction meet: When the content exceeds the limits of the container due to the complexity of its nature.

After all, the actors' bodies are the tools that are needed. As far as I have discovered, bodies with Western civil rights in which they are subjected, at a certain level, given their consent to suffer a degeneration of those rights in differing levels, depending on the conflict in which they are immersed. In other words, they are included in a simulation in which they are excluded. From my point of view it's an intriguing fictional reflection of our societies, where it is the border of a country that determines which nationalities stand between what is considered real (white western society) and that which is understood as a distant fiction (anywhere not meeting those parameters). Giorgio Agamben addresses examples of *camps* as reception camps for refugees or Guantanamo in Cuba. The camp appears as a hidden paradigm of the political space of modernism. This becomes understandable when one interprets politics as biopolitics, which is about *naked* life, in contrast to a policy that regards the citizen as a subject. The camp refers to political structures of the state of emergency.[12]

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11. Eco, Umberto. *Inventing the Enemy. 2012* Transl. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, p.9
12.. Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. 1998 Stanford University Press

The real within the fiction

I was surprised when I talked to one actor about confronting a war scenario as such. She told me how different the experience turned out to be from what she had first thought while looking from the window of the bus, crossing the immense camp. Participating as a civilian in a fiction where war was represented was not so intense. Most of the extras seemed to maintain a distance of prudence and cynicism towards the content that was surrounding them. It could be a result of the game logics that make the condition of fakeness quite clear, as the complex laser tag devices they are wearing or the vague representation of the scenarios. However, the issue got complicated by the way her status was transformed concerning the character she played and how her subjectivity needed to be adapted. The most obvious example would be the case of interpreting the role of a woman in Afghanistan with her traditional religious clothing and customs.

> *"*Wearing a Burka that drastically limited my visibility, I was not allowed to speak to anybody and I always had to be accompanied to move anywhere. I spent most of my time at home…" (Actress, Kassel, Germany, November 18 , 2019)

Nevertheless, she experienced a less distant context where more subtle dynamics made her uncomfortable. The problem was with regard to her status as a waitress and how her *boss* took advantage of his fictitious work hierarchy and pushed her to work as hard as in real life for some cruel reason.

The engagement that actors establish with their roles and with the imaginary itself is notable, not only because of the amount of time devoted to the performance (they actually spend the whole period living inside the camp). After finishing the schedule, they are carried back to the barracks by bus, to their '*backstage'*. There, basic food and accommodation is provided and there are no further parameters to follow besides the timetable. However, they are still *inside* a really specific institution, subjecting themselves to its limitations and restrictions, with strict schedules and alimentation. The rooms are shared with several people and are pretty raw. The food is the same that the soldiers have, conserved and full of calories, which has consequences for their bodies. But, furthermore, they are isolated from the outside.

> *"*We were warned that mobile phones and electronic devices were completely prohibited in the camp, as well as drugs or alcohol. During the two or three weeks that the simulation lasted we were disconnected [...] our equipment was inspected as soon as we got to the barracks." (Actress, Kassel, Germany, November 18 , 2019)

I assume that these measures might make people act with more focus or get involved with more tenancy when playing their characters. So the conditions in which the soldiers are induced, which prioritises security, is also applied to the external performers. Besides they are monitored by cameras and laser sensors 24 hours. As Foucault defines the camp as the ultimate format of exercising discipline, *"*An architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on

those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them."13

One of the goals at this camp is to simulate encounters between soldiers and civilians so that they are as spontaneous as possible. The actors do not know when the soldiers will appear, so their reactions are likely to be genuine. However, disconnecting too much from reality can blur the boundaries between the model and the reference, putting awareness about the position oneself has from those who act on *stage* at risk and even risking things turning unrealistic within the scenario.

> "I doubted if what was happening was real. I didn't know that this conflict was happening in Europe at that time. Already, I had little knowledge of the conflict and I had no access to any information from the exterior. I could not stop thinking about the aim of what was happening or the simulation itself." (Actress, Kassel, Germany, November 18 , 2019)

What I found interesting in this testimony was how easily she assumed the veracity of the representation of the Middle East, but not that of the Balkans. The lack of information about the context or maybe the lack of references made her question the whole purpose of the drill. She made a significant point regarding the representation of war in the mass media nowadays. The images of the occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq were much more familiar to her because of

the large presence of representation those contexts had in cinema and the news. The post-war scenario after the partition of Yugoslavia did not make for content as attractive in the eyes of the mainstream media.

In order to prevent the dangerous possibility of becoming emotionally hurt or traumatised during a conflict scenario, actors must keep their minds distanced from the fiction taking place.12 Because most of the extras which are hired do not have any previous acting experience, their position in their roles can be unpredictable. Even more, I wonder about the constant temporal fragmentation during the long shifts as a consequence of the *ons* and *offs* of the drills which disturb the normal stream of consciousness, as the mind flows with multiple transitions between the different contexts.

Augusto Boal founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed underlines the importance of rationalising emotions when acting: "*We must know why a person is moved, what is the nature of this emotion, what its causes are – not limit ourselves simply to the how. We want to experience phenomena, but above all we want to know the laws which govern these phenomena.*"14

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13. Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish. The birth of the Prison*. 1977, transl. Alan Sheridan. New York, Pantheon Books, p.171

14 Boal, Augusto. *Game for Actors Non Actors. 1992 , Trans.* Jackson, A. London, Routledge, P.36

I heard of a very interesting case in the Netherlands regarding the professional participants training at the fields (firemen, police or military professionals playing different roles). I met the training coordinator from a camp in the Netherlands who had more experience and responsibilities in the field than any other person I had interviewed during this research. He used to play several roles in the simulations. He not only trained cadets and rescue and defense professionals, but he was the architect of the simulations himself, the architect of the accident. He was the mind behind many of the choreographies and sets that were displayed. Due to his previous experience in special combat groups, he usually took part as an actor in the simulations in which the police and intelligence forces played the challenge of capturing an objective within a period of time. There, he played the role of the criminal, venturing into cat and mouse games with different police groups. This extended beyond the confined spaces within the park, to situations where he literally tried to escape from the country as fast as possible before the determined time of the game.

> "The simulations that I enjoy most participating in are the ones where I am engaged with police forces, they are the most exciting ones [...]For years we have been practising a fugitive exercise in which an objective or suspect, performed by myself, has to escape from the country within forty eight hours. Only between two and five o'clock in the morning there is an off lapse in which I can rest and the persecutor team stops working. For the rest of the time, my whereabouts can be traced and I can be arrested. I have a specific driver's license that allows me to exceed the speed limit and I carry some cash to spend… You know, try to avoid the cameras, not paying by card, booking a modest hostel [....]" (Driver, Fire Service Training Center Crailo, Netherlands, December 20 , 2018)

Just trying to visualise this man in my mind, driving fast in the middle of the road, pretending to be in such a situation of high tension, evoked in me a deep intrigue. But, one of the aspects that I found most compelling in his testimony was the matter of *time*. How *time* marked the shift from fiction to reality in this particular case. Training implies a standardised duration assigned to an exercise that teaches a particular skill but normally one is being observed by a figure that imposes discipline and validates the task. In the words of Foucault, "the exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation."[15]

This case really goes beyond. I can imagine him alone in the motel late at night, when an alarm determines when he may stop being a criminal and begin the break in his shift. The idea of conceiving this moment as a metaphor about life and its relation with labour appeals to me. According to the words of Ervin Goffman, *"all the world's a stage"* and full of ritual acts.[16]

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15. Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish. The birth of the Prison*. 1977, transl. Alan Sheridan. New York, Pantheon Books
16.Goffman, Erving. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. 1959, New York, Doubleday, p.5

I was unable to hide my emotion when I heard from him about these exercises. His responses were brief and dry in response, arousing no emotion in his tone of voice. And indeed, he had been practicing the same exercise for more than ten years. For him, it was just work.

> "The first few times my heart went to a thousand. I was really nervous. I felt the sensation of being persecuted. Over time, I stopped feeling it. I kept doing the best I could, but I was clear about my position in the fiction and didn't get involved emotionally at that level anymore," he says. (Driver, Fire Service Training Center Crailo, Netherlands, December 20 , 2018)

The loop or repetition of the same action becomes a factor that can bring boredom or flatness to the performance. With this same routine, the distance on the approach that participants take towards the fiction is wider. Concerning the amateur actors (the ones who are not firemen, police, or military) apart from repetitious acting, the moments of action are scarce. The waiting around for the intervention of the forces becomes endless; most of the time they remain inactive and boredom becomes the biggest challenge to face. [17]

> "The simulation of Kosovo was based on how to treat the local conflict between Serbs and Albanians, where at the end there was a great demonstration with altercations. The confrontation just happened at the end, a lot of days passed by just acting 'normal life'. Across the days, you could tell how tensions and emotions were growing in the air. Everyone was looking for the big day to happen." (Actress, Kassel, Germany, January 2020)

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17. Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. 2008, London: Penguin, p.121

Soldiers with the 1st Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment play the part of rioters during a civil disturbance simulation for soldiers preparing to deploy as NATO peacekeepers in Kosovo. The rotation, held at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, sought to mimic recent events in Kosovo, where ethnic Serbs created makeshift roadblocks to hinder the country's ethnic Albanian leadership. 18

Moreover, there is no audience to act for, which makes the scenes to be often confronted with reality, by the fact that there is nobody to assist them on stage. There are no clear indications about what to do; there is no script. But, as I said before, they spend a considerable amount of time with themselves, with no interaction with the professionals that are training. So in this lack of confrontation with any public or authority makes the fiction shift away from its intended context, thus producing a new one.

> *"*When wearing a Burka, nobody could see my face and I could easily hide what I was doing. I collected small objects that I was finding on the ground [...] The boredom we suffered was an issue, so people were looking forward to the danger, that they could be victims of a shooting or some attack.*"* (Actress, Kassel, Germany, November, 2019)

Staging the accident

The comparison I draw between these military drill spaces and more classical fiction production spaces such as cinema and theatre is unavoidable. In both, the components of space, time, and content are defined and shaped in order to produce new narrations. Compared to an audiovisual production there is no lens that narrows down the reality and there is no

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18. Beardsley, Steven. *Kosovo disturbances mimicked in training scenario.* November 18 2011www.stripes.com/kosovo-disturbances-mimicked-in-training-scenario-1.161166

post-production editing of the content. But, at the same time it makes the representation more difficult to recreate. Cinema tells us what the screen shows, but at the same time it creates the universe of what is outside of the shot.Instead, just like in theater, a drill or training simulation fully asserts itself in the present moment.[19]

> *"For representation it is not an imitation or description of a past event, a representation denies time. It abolishes that difference between yesterday and today. It takes yesterday's action and makes it live again in every one of its aspects— including its immediateness. In other words, a representation is what it claims to be—a making present."*[20]

Once again, spaces that do not bring any present from the past, they bring a new one . By which I mean, that at a certain level, these speculative places are not related to a specific location or context. I already gave some examples about how they work with a level of abstraction on their drills, in both their aesthetics and their narrative. They even develop their own codes, or in a more virtual lexicon, they build their own interface. They are not only represented but also produced in reality. As Harun Farocki says, "Filmmakers have hitherto only represented the world in various ways; the point is to generate worlds differently.*"* [21]

In this in-between representation, imitation, reenactment, and production, the camps become a particular example of the topic of the crisis *of representation* in postmodernity. "*Because," as Baudrillard* suggests*, "simulating is not pretending [...] simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false," the "real" and the "imaginary"."* [22] They are decors that recreate accurately the most chaotic and uncontrollable situations in reality, which of course is impossible. The very definition of the word 'accident' suggests it.

Accident

 noun

> *1. an unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally, typically resulting in damage or injury.*

. > *2. an event that happens by chance or that is without apparent or deliberate cause.*

And it is in this contradiction where the seed of my interest resides: the fictions that try to control what cannot be controlled. I remember the provocative words of Virilio here:*"*Whether we like it or not, to create an event now means to provoke an accident."[23]

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19. Keiller, Patrik. *The view from the train: cities and other landscapes*. 2014, London, Verso Books, 2014, p. 148-157
20. Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. 2008, London: Penguin, p.188
21.Faroki, Haroun. *Serious Games I: Watson is Down. 2010.* Two-channel video installation, color, sound, 8 minutes.
22.Baudrillard, Jean. 1994, *Simulacra and Simulation*. The University of Michigan, p.3
23.Armitage, John. *Virilio Now: Current Perspectives in Virilio Studies.* 2011, Polity Press, p.234

It seems that the process of imitation and reproduction tends to unmask the superstructures of power that underlie the original concept. Thus, for example, the decisions that are made regarding representing a social conflict reflect the partiality of the perspective that is taken, or imposed upon the scenario. As it does to the way the *other* is constructed. This 'society realness' (imitation of society that these drills do as small social representations) reflects our 'social reality'.[24]

I started to imagine the *ultimate* composition of a training camp. Inspired by Tom McCarthy's book 'Remainder', Charlie Kaufman's film 'Synecdoche New York' and what the director Ilya Khrzhanovsky tried with his film project '*DAU'*.[24,25,26]

One of the film's 210,000 extras for DAU film production. [26]

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24. Thus, for example, a similar phenomenon happened in the "balls" of the drag queen culture of NY in the 80s, in which the queer black and latin collective participated in different categories of "realness" (for example, executive realness). Again, through that imitation process, although in this case carried out by the oppressed class, also exposes the power mechanisms that work to define those imitated concepts. For example, in executive realness they pretend to be executives, but it is clear that if a black person or a latino at that time was not going to be a senior executive, much less a gay one. In that case the imitation process, "realness" reveals the limits of what is possible and what it was. In other words, it is manifested in a level of fantasy by the fact that its impossibility, which reveals the mechanisms of power.
Livingston, Jenny. *Paris is Burning. 1990,* Off White Productions, film 78 minutes.
24 .'*Reminder*'s hero spends his time and money obsessively reconstructing and re-enacting vaguely remembered scenes and situations from his past[...]'
Macarthy, Tom. *Reminder*. 2006, Surrey UK, Alma Books.
25. 'The plot follows an ailing theater director (Hoffman) as he works on an increasingly elaborate stage production whose extreme commitment to realism begins to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality.'Kaufman, Charlie. *Synecdoche, New York* . 2008. Film, 123 minutes.
26. Most of the film was shot on a specially constructed set called "The Institute" in Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine. The Institute was the largest film set in Europe, the area totalling 12,000 m^2. The set was a dynamic creative reconstruction of a Soviet restricted-access Institute in 1938-1968, located in Moscow.
Idov, Michael. "*The Movie Set That Ate Itself*." October 27 2011, GQ.

It is a fiction where the drills start to last longer, with the aim of staging the realness of life and then surpassing it, staging a more real experience than reality itself. What is being trained and what is losing its opacity. The choreographed merges with the unscripted. In order not to get distracted from the *other* (external) world the fence enclosures get higher and hide the trick with increasing franticness. Thus, the synchronisation between the insides and outside contexts breaks down.

On an infinite derivation, the inner universe of the camp gets practically different from the external. Even if the original purpose has disappeared, the loop of drills keeps on running. Technology and content get obsolete. Forgotten conflicts are portrayed and unknown ones fighted. Dangers already defeated in the past are combated and new ones constructed. Professionals do not continue training for future or potential threats, they fight the simulation itself. Constructed characters become more relevant than the identities of the actors, until only the physical body remains from the past.

Society, instead of stopping the madness, decides to take an alternative position towards the unique situation. With fear of losing the ethnological treasure[1], where human behavior is exposed in a total virtuality, humankind decides not to intervene and thus keeps the quarantine active. Civilisation agrees to step back and draw another security perimeter around the camp in order to keep it intact. So the fiction keeps producing itself, staging a reality detached from the actual one, responding only to its own present. There is no *off* between any act anymore, otherwise walls would break down. 'A piece of land' that only exists when the fiction is played.[27]

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27. Reeves-Evison, Theo and K Shaw, Jon (Edit). *Fiction as a method. Texts by Justin Barton, Tim Etchells, Mathew Fuller, David Garcia, Dora García, M. John Harrison, Simon O´Sullivan, Jon K Shaw, and Theo Reeves-Evison, Delphi Cartens and Mer Roberts, Erica Scourti.* 2017, Sternberg Press, *p.7*

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