

# Drifting Bodies in Cities

## Disoriented Dance on Streets

Liang Shiyuan

Student Number: 7059353

Supervisor: Dr. Konstantina Georgelou

Second Reader: Dr. Laura Karreman

Contemporary Theatre, Dance, and Dramaturgy 2021-2022

Utrecht University

“You have to love dancing to stick to it. It gives you nothing back...nothing but that single  
fleeting moment when you feel alive.”

Mercy Cunningham

## ABSTRACT

Living in hyper-modern cities, urban space directly influences the body and these influences are materialized as rigid movement patterns. This thesis discusses that through a choreographic lens, drifting with dynamic moving rhythms can be artistic practices as everyday resistance in urban space. By generating bodily acts of improvising dance on streets, the process of dancing changes urban space into a playground and challenges rigid movement patterns. This thesis starts with the analysis of visual perception pattern and rigid movement pattern in urban space in chapter 1. It explains the features of movement pattern of pedestrians, like limited space, fast speed, and linear routine, are addressed by the ideology of efficiency and consumption. In chapter 2, the theoretical framework is constructed through notions of performativity, *dérive*, and urban choreography across theoretical bodies from cultural study and performance theory. I position drifting as a way of challenging the dominance of visibility and speed within the movement pattern in a societal context of consumption through the lens of urban choreography. In doing so, I also indicate the political potential of drifting and dancing on streets, examining its capacity to question everyday habitual modes of moving in the urban space. In chapter 3, I uncover the choreographic logic within *Stadterweitern* by Sabine Zahn, examining political meaning of the reinvented playful urban space to question functional and efficient movement pattern. By analysing choreographic tactics in *Stadterweitern* as an example of alternative movement pattern, I assert that structured urban space can be changed as a playground with dynamic rhythm and critical awareness through everyday artistic bodily practice in a neoliberal context.

265 words

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

During the six-month journey of writing this thesis, thanks so much to my supervisor Konstantina Georgelou, for her encouragement and recommendation of books and articles; and artist Sabine Zahn, with who I spent an afternoon on Rotterdam's streets together and several hours of inspiring discussion. Also, thanks for my second reader Laura Karreman provides useful suggestions in my thesis plan. Furthermore, I receive such generous help and support from my classmates. Jasmijn edits this thesis from the first sentence until the last. I cannot imagine without her help, question, and golden laughter on this journey that I could insist until the end. Eedi shares wonderful writing tips of structure; Vivian and Alysa, both of them give me their hands when I was depressed. Of course, tons of thanks to my dearest family who always stand beside me.

# CONTENTS

**Introduction** ..... 6

**Chapter 1 Choreographed Norms in Urban Space** ..... 11

    1.1 *Visual Perception Pattern: Commercialized Visuality* ..... 11

    1.2 *Rigid Movement Pattern: Narrow Space, Fast Speed, and Linear Routine* ..... 13

**Chapter 2 Urban Choreography** ..... 17

    2.1 *The Production of City as Performative Bodily Acts* ..... 18

    2.2 *Dérive: Making Urban Space as Playground* ..... 20

    2.3 *Urban Choreography: Dynamic Movements of Bodies in A Situation* ..... 24

**Chapter 3 Case Studies: Stadterweitern (2020-2021)** ..... 28

    3.1 *Introduction of Stadterweitern (2020-2021)* ..... 28

    3.2 *Description of Stadterweitern (2020-2021)* ..... 29

    3.3 *Analysis* ..... 32

**Conclusion** ..... 37

**Works Cited** ..... 39

**Notes** ..... 40

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to explore the improvisation of movement in urban environment through a choreographic lens. This discussion is centred on the insights that choreography can provide a perspective to realize the possibilities of movement in urban spaces. The theoretical framework of the analysis is structured by two thresholds: the concept of *dérive* and urban choreography. *Dérive*, or drifting, is theorized by the international collective Situationist International, which consists of avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and social theorists. The term *dérive* is used to describe the aimless drifting in urban space as an everyday act of resistance against modern society. Urban choreography, which can be understood as a social situation by corporeal interactions and aesthetic practices, is described by German scholar Gabriele Klein, who analyses public protesting and artistic interventions in urban space. Gabriele's understanding of choreography is an expansive term, and it can address the order in which interactions with bodies and objects are generated in a real-time composition. By illuminating the performativity of urban space as a process of bodily acts, I argue that *dérive* and urban choreography can provide a different perspective in witnessing how bodies engage in free space-making. In a highly controlled environment in urban space, the practice of *dérive* and improvisation dance can provide insights on breaking boundaries between spaces, creating a dynamic rhythm of speed, and interactions with the surrounding environment. Therefore, the practice of drifting and urban choreography can question and might even have the potential to change these unwritten codes of movement in the space. Through analysing the selected case, the choreographic tactics of organizing bodies that interrupt the urban linear flow can be revealed.

In 2021, while moving from China to Netherlands, as well as traveling to Berlin, I realized that my way of moving is influenced by the architecture and traffic systems of different cities. For example, there is a big difference between the kind of transportation of taking the subway or riding a bicycle. When sitting still on the subway in a restrictive tunnel, the body itself is carried from one station to the next station. While riding a bicycle across different streets, the speed is dynamic and organic. The bike paths invite a smooth speed and brick pathways carry vibration. The bike rider decides where to slow down to enjoy the dance of shaking shadow or speed up to greet a friend. Another example is the height of buildings. Different heights imply the human body to stand at various distances to look at them. In order to see the whole picture of a skyscraper, it means standing from a far distance; but a door just

above one's head invites people to come in personally. Even the different widths of streets and the addition of pedestrian roads have influences as well. The development of vehicle roads in urban space is enormous, but at the cost of pedestrian roads, as they shrink and people need to walk on narrow streets. These differences in urban environment address a moving body with significantly different attitudes: some invite, some reject, some bring a sense of belonging and some bring distance. These attitudes imply that there are different movement patterns present as well: to go forward, to drift around, to speed up or slow down. This experience of moving in different cities is intriguing: in what ways does the scenography of urban planning shape the body's movement? To give a specific example, when I stepped out of a dance studio and enter the urban space, with its straight streets, shining red traffic lights, and rows of houses, it seemed as though the magic of inviting a dancing body disappeared immediately. This experience sparked a question: What is the logic behind the movement in the city? How are bodies organized in the urban space? Carrying these questions, I searched for participatory performance works happening in public space and attended the workshop by German artist Sabine Zahn who combines urban space-making with a somatic approach. One of the key outputs of her research of the urban space is the art project *Stadterweitern* (2020-2021). During the workshop, the experience of improvisation on the pedestrian roads inspired me, and showed me that dance improvisation can inspire a different moving pattern in the more restrictive flow of urban space. Therefore, I started to examine the intersections between urban theory and choreography, as well as the possible ways that choreographic lens can explore alternative movement patterns in public urban space.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Inspired by my prior questions, I started to search for the unwritten codes and sequences of urban planning. Utilising my experience of moving among different cities, dancing in studio or on streets, and my own journey of reading performance theory, this leads me to my research question:

How do choreographic tactics of organized movement re-evaluate the functional and efficient movement pattern in order to free the body in urban space?

In order to answer this research question, there are three sub-questions that will be further investigated:

1. What are pre-existing orders of movement in modern urban environment?

2. How do artistic tactics, especially dance practice question the pre-existing codes of urban space and free the body in space-making?
3. How does the selected case study apply dramaturgical choices of choreographic tactics in order to free the moving body in urban space?

## CASE STUDY

The case selected in this thesis is *Stadsweitern* (2020-2021), which is formulated by four experiment labs that are mainly organized by German artist Sabine Zahn. In this work, she applies a somatic approach in urban space, and explores the public urban space in a sensory way. In *Stadterweitern*, the dancing participants are moved from an enclosed studio into the architectural urban space. For example, somatic approaches such as feeling gravity of different objects are applied to interact with urban space. Participants feel the gravity through touching and observing, and they move to respond with objects to keep balance between forces between objects and their body. The four labs of *Stadterweitern* all have different topics, and during the labs its participants are invited to improvise within the provided urban space. *Stadterweitern* happens in the urban public space rather than in a theatre. The displacement of this performative artworks reframes the public space in city and repurposes it as a stage for performance, allowing for the performance to be a process- and site-based artwork. There is not a dualistic mode of performers and viewers. The medium of the work is formed by the bodily participation of its participants, and *Stadsterweitern* addresses the awareness of sensory input in order to fully experience the urban space. As *Stadterweitern's* participants get directly involved in the artwork as experiencers, there is no distinction or boundary between the different people as performers and spectators. This method allows the participants to build a connection with the surrounding environment, including human and non-human beings.

My research of this case will address the written codes of movement patterns and explore the intersections between urban theory, space theory, and dance studies by discussing the practice of dance moved from a studio into urban public space. Researching this case study is also possible to rethink everyday artistic practice through a choreographic lens in current society. In the 20th century of European art history, the discussion of everyday artistic resistance can be dated back to theories and artistic practices by Situationist International from the 1950s to the 1970s. Situationist International has started to notice the phenomenon of urban space influencing movement and theorize the urban planning with ideology of



capitalism. They also propose everyday movement in urban space as an artistic form of resistance. According to SI, the practice of *dérive* takes an important role in specific artistic tactics to create emancipatory urban space. *Dérive*, or the practice of drifting, is a passionate movement pattern and adds to the discussion of the spectacle, labour, and capital. The politics within this concept has had influential effects on movements of taking up streets and cultivating May 1968's civil unrest in France. However, with the development of the fast speed and rhythm in urban environment, the concept of speed and passion in the theory of *dérive* proposed by Situationist International needs to be reconsidered. In this thesis, I would like to rethink and recontextualize the fast-moving speed of the urban environment and discuss the dynamic rhythm of movement and dance.

## METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to answer the research questions, it is necessary to combine qualitative research method with literature research. Most of the texts that are used in the following research are accessed through the Utrecht University library searching engine WorldCat. I have also attended an extended workshop with a similar research method of *Stadterweitern*, which will be useful for reconnecting personal experience with my research. The primary research sources come from the artist's websites, including digital footage like photography, videos, and a published book.

The theoretical framework for this research is based on literary sources of culture theory, urban theory, and performance theory. Chapter 1 provides a theoretical framework in which the movement pattern in the urban space is analysed and its complications are explored. With the ideology of efficiency, the movement pattern in urban space is rigid, functional, and linear. Chapter 2 serves as a further exploration of the production of urban space as performative situation and as a process of bodily acts. In this discussion, the performative theories by John. L Austin and Judith Butler, and urban space theory by Henri Lefebvre will be utilised. Following this discussion, I will analyse the concept of *dérive* and urban choreography and its effectiveness as artistic tactics to intervene in the urban space. Instead of using the word "strategy", this thesis will utilise the term "tactic". This is because the understanding of the phrase "strategy" refers to the calculation or manipulation of power relationship, while tactic refers to "a calculated action determined by the absence of proper locus" (De Certeau 35-6). Situationist International imagines that *dérive* could be a resistance to controlled environment, however, instead of receiving more free space to move, the

moving body in the city is more and more controlled by its environment. Makers and scholars of theatre and dance also reflect on how artistic intervention is possible in public space, merging the boundaries between art and everyday life. Chapter 3 zooms in the proposed case study *Stadterweitern* by German artist Sabine Zahn. It examines how choreographic strategies challenge specific codes of rigid movement patterns in urban locations, providing an alternative way of moving to create emancipatory space.

With the development of urbanism, in 2020, over half of the global population lives in cities and it is necessary to explore the possibilities of movement in this highly controlled environment. My analysis contributes to the discussion of sensory perception of the urban space that is dominated by visibility and interactive touch to find the underlying meaning of our surrounding environment through the lens of choreography. The multi-sensory perception of a body in the urban space creates a feeling of disorientation, which serves as a reason to delve further into the unwritten rules of movement in public urban space: Who can take the space? How does one move in streets? When do these movements happen? These practices open the imagination that frees the body in a controlled urban environment with specific codes of movement. Furthermore, in this thesis I rethink the movement quality in *dérive* which is focused on space and passionate moving speed. I will further introduce the concept of urban choreography combined with practice of drifting. The previous research of urban choreography by Gabriele Klein is focused on the analysis of artistic intervention as performative protest in public space. In the field of performance theory, Gabriele Klein brings the concept “urban choreography” and explores figuration in choreography as it creates a micro-structure of social place and orders of macro-structure social space. In order to explain how urban choreography and *dérive* can intervene the urban space, I examine the politics within changed mode of perception and movement when moving in urban space. Using choreographic tactics as an unfolding process of moving in urban space, the techniques of choreography are combined with *dérive* changing urban space into a playground.

## CHAPTER 1 Choreographed Norms in Urban Space

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter's aim is to answer the first sub-question: what are the problems of existing movement patterns in urban space, especially considering busy commercial areas like city center or transport station? In this section, two complexities of the unwritten codes of movement in urban space will be discussed. Firstly, it is important to mention the phenomenon of the interaction with urban space in highly mediated areas and consider them to be based on a spectacle, in which visibility dominates the capital force. Secondly, I will discuss the rigidity of movement patterns and their speed, influenced by fixed time schedule and linear routine on streets. The underlying complications of mediatized spectacles with rigid movement patterns reveal the logic of consumerism and efficiency, which creates a conflict-free image of order and rational organization.

#### 1.1 VISUAL PERCEPTION PATTERN: COMMERCIALIZED VISUALITY

The influence of visibility in urban space addresses the efficiency and functionality of linear movement. The apparent visibility of urban planning has a close relationship with the development of consumption and the ideology of capitalism. The chapter explains how awareness of visibility is designed for financial consumption and social interactions, which has influences on the movement pattern in urban space. Through the display of visual spectacle, the perception pattern in urban space is cemented and reproduced by consumption and the urban space may become a controlled site alienating its inhabitants.

Stepping into the urban space, visibility dominates the urban design. The natural landscape is immediately altered decreasing during the expansion of the urban space. Instead of considering creating an environment that aligns with the natural shape and fauna of the land, with proper humidity and temperature, urban design prioritises open views as a base structure of a commercial area design. For instance, the visual perception pattern in urban planning can be recognised in the scenography of a shopping mall. Usually, in front of the shopping mall, there will be open spaces to display signs or billboards, and also for social gatherings. The architectural style of this kind of building reveals visual perception patterns in its design. Many modern shopping malls are designed in simple geometric shapes, covered

by glass and metal materials. For many cities, modern shopping malls usually are the highest buildings and are centrally located. On sunny days, it is easy to see the light reflection of the glass and metal from a far distance when people are standing in other places. Moving closer to the shopping mall, billboards, LED screens, and neon lights of brands or slogans dominate the space. Taking a look at these decorations, these advertisements use distinctive, loud colors and bold fonts to attract attention from pedestrians. When people stepping into the shopping mall, they find themselves to be surrounded by goods, which are behind automatic doors and glass showcases. These images cultivate an artificial place for shopping. When thinking about relationship between visual perception and the materials used within the space, the patterns of social interaction are also manipulated by visual perception. In the urban space, the modernity and the aesthetic of everyday life is highly mediated. Debord addresses this and describes how “the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relation between people mediated by images” (92). The body itself is presented by privileged objects like owning cars, designer brands and so on to reveal one’s superficial identity. The body is not a moving body, but it “is produced as the object of the figuration” (Dasgupta 92). The everydayness of modernity is defined both as “a set of social practice mediating individual participation in the world of consumption and as an object of commodification in itself” (Dasgupta 109).

The reason why visual perception pattern has close relationship with consumption and capitalism is that visual perception is the fastest way to gain information. The visual perception can reach wider receivers from long distance than other sensory patterns. Advertisements on billboards or LED screens and outlook of design style are the easiest way to produce information and propaganda. With the development of consumption, “a consumer society marked by a surfeit of images” is developed under the logic from “being”, “having” into “appearing” (Dasgupta 91). This causes the effect that human beings are not treated as a whole being, but as potential consumers moving in the space, that must be addressed through their gaze. The body wants to move as efficiently as possible, to reach the destination as fast as it can. The body neglects other sensory patterns and pays less awareness to other sense to feel the surrounding environment. Therefore, the pattern of visual perception also limits the body in its overall experience of living, as the space becomes increasingly alien to the moving body. When the space is covered by dense concentrations, designed for displaying advertisements, and the customer’s eyes are attracted by colourful billboards with consciously designed fonts and style, neglecting the effect of temperature, the urban heat islands have caused negative effects. The relationship between the body and objects around it

is alienated by consumption.

Therefore I argue that visual senses strongly influence the perception patterns in urban space. The dominating visual senses are inherently part of urban architecture and planning, which can be recognised through examples such as the architectural design of shopping malls. The visual perception pattern is not only embedded in architecture, but also in mediated social interactions with other bodies. In the mediatized space, the manipulation of perception is designed to entice consumption, and the mode of perceiving is influenced by forces of capitalism. As a result, human beings are addressed by the surrounding environment as potential consumers rather than be treated a subject with multi-senses to explore the environment.

## 1.2 EFFICIENT MOVEMENT PATTERN: RIGID TIME, NARROW SPACE, FAST SPEED, AND LINEAR ROUTINES

Then, how does the body move in urban space surrounded by advertisement slogans, glaring neon lights, glass walls, and tall, imposing buildings with clean straight lines? How does the visuality of the urbanised space influence the movement pattern in urban space? In other words, what is the body's movement pattern in an environment surrounded by the temptation of consumption?

These questions remind me of the time when I was travelling in Berlin and waiting for the traffic light to turn green. I looked at people that exited the metro station which is decorated with colourful billboards, who were avoiding the rush of cars and the crowd. They automatically gathered around the traffic light in silence and waited for the flow of cars to stop. With more and more people adding to the gathering, the group was growing bigger, until the traffic light turned green, and the crowd started to move. People went forward with a fast speed and walked in a similar tempo. The memory of this experience of movement in Berlin reminds me of walking on Nanjing East Road, one of the busiest streets in Shanghai. Waiting for the traffic lights during peak time combines all these sensorial elements: the sound of the flow of cars, the human current, the silent crowd, counting the seconds of waiting, and the shopping mall's billboards as the background. This scene reveals the mechanical and rigidity of movement in urban space.

Manipulated by the ideology of consumption, the perception pattern in urban space is dominant by visual sense, and this has directly influenced movement patterns. It is important to analyse the complexity of pedestrian movement patterns in limited moving spaces, the

speed of movement, and its linear route. Guy Debord's critiques of modern urbanism in post-war Europe provides an insight to these issues: in which promotion of a conflict-free image of order and rational organization. Furthermore, based on the discourse of urbanism by Danish architect Jan Gehl, I would like to expand the critiques of developing speed in urbanism design. Speed as proximity in urban design causes the ignorance of human dimension on streets, which is reflected from vehicle system's invasion and skyscrapers in city center. In this section, I propose the features of moving in cities are rigid time, narrow space, fast speed, and linear routines

In urban space, the time schedule is fixed and rigid, especially during the process of commuting. Since the working hours in society are planned, people need to take transport for commuting at specific and fixed rush time. When people are moving on streets, the rhythm is mechanical like the tick-tock sound of a watch, and the time is represented as a smooth measurement. People need to stop when the traffic light is red and wait for the green light to walk. In the busy city center, the pace of passing through is determined by the human current, and it is very hard to suddenly stop in a crowded and busy city center. People who stop will immediately influence others. During peak time following the human currents, people don't have free space and time for exploring the possibilities of moving in urban space, and they are carried by the speed of the moving flow rather than one's psychological and emotional needs at that moment. But the psychology of one's experience of time is different per person, and it fluctuates with each emotion. In this quick-paced movement pattern, time is experienced as separated and rigid, according to productivity and efficiency rather than experiencing a natural flow of time. The rigidity of schedules when and how to move in urban space is opposite to the dynamic rhythms of the psychological experience of time, and it may cause the experience of a boring and tiresome urban life.

The development of car traffic system is enormous and invades the space for pedestrians who move at a slower pace. The idea of increasing the movement speed in cities has caused the invasion of car traffic globally. During planning, the development of speed is prioritised and traffic infrastructure becomes designed for commuting by car. Reasons of developing vehicle transport system have close relationships with the development of consumption. Owning a car can be seen as a symbol of personal status since it means has the possibility to move in fast speed. It means quick-paced movement is central and the city is further developed to a system of car traffic. The proximity of developing traffic and increasing the number of roads causes people who enter the urban space are treated poorly with limited space, obstacles, noise, pollution and risk of accidents (Gehl 3). Since the idea of

the proximity of speed in current urban designing ignores the need of moving freely for city dwellers, pedestrians are limited to narrow pedestrian roads. With the idea of developing speed in urban space, the traffic system influences the movement pattern for pedestrians, and this reveals the unequal economic structure.

The movement of speed in the urban space is very quick and people move in a linear pattern. In the human current, the goal for a moving body is to arrive at the destination on time as soon as possible and overcome each other. The traffic system is designed for speed, no matter of car roads or pedestrian paths. The design of the street also addresses the flow of human current. The speed also can be observed in the phenomenon of advertisement. For example, For an effective commercial strategy, the advertisement will be very short and repetitive. Billboards with shining LED screens play advertisements as short as a second, as it is likely of the period of attention. The pedestrians or spectators can easily receive the information in a very short time, as they are exposed to the environment of an informative explosion. This explosion of information made up of advertisements attracts people's attention, and it provides constant new stimulation instead of leaving time for people to think and reflect the logic of these provided information. When exposed to this environment, the spectators become passive consumers. The vast modernity of this space also creates the feeling that it is not a space made for people, but for power and capital. The linear moving pattern is normalised in the structure of cities. When people are moving in a modern city, the movement routines are usually in a linear pattern. Contrary to the roads that are designed for productive movement focusing on car traffic, in areas focused on commerce, the pedestrian roads are wide and open, designed to invite a large human current.

In conclusion, the ideology of efficiency decides the proximity of the vehicle system and the fixed working schedule mode. Influenced by urban space, the mode of movement is in a rigid schedule, fast speed in limited space. This movement pattern reveals the rationality, efficiency, and functionality of urban life and urban planning. The control of capitalism is materialized in the body's movement pattern.

## SUMMARY

Perception and movement patterns in the urban space are discussed in this chapter: the visuality as dominant sense and the functional moving pattern. Since the modern urban planning is dominated by the stimulation of consumption, the urban space is designed for advertisements, billboards, and the display of goods, and therefore one's perception pattern of

the space is dominated by visual senses. The body is seen as a potential customer rather than a whole being. This phenomenon causes an alienated relationship with the present objects and surroundings in urban space. The rigidity of moving pattern in urban is the second problem discussed in this chapter. Since traffic system of vehicles provides the acceleration of speed in urban space, the slower pedestrians are neglected in urban planning. Since the commuting time is fixed, the movement in urban space has a repetitive and linear pattern. With crowded human currents during the peak time of commuting, people are carried and even pushed by the human flows. This highly controlled and rigid movement pattern limits the moving person in their exploration and does not allow for new possibilities of interaction with their surrounding environment.

However, city is a paradoxical place that is controlled and emancipated at the same time. On the one hand, the city is a place for control, alienation, and fixity, on the other, through emancipatory practices and bodily participation, questioning unwritten codes of movement, the urban space can be a temporal playground for creative moving that gives space to fluidity and freedom.



## CHAPTER 2 Urban Choreography

### INTRODUCTION

Now poses the question of how a choreographic lens can contribute to the interruption of rigid movement patterns in urban space. There are many unwritten moving patterns in urban space, but the city is also a scene in which it is possible to interact with creative everyday practices by challenging its order. When bodies are moving through urban spaces, the social order is being rehearsed and reaffirmed, while also opening up space for the creation of a new spatial formation with dynamic rhythm, being a piece of urban choreography.

The paradoxical urban space as a controlled site as well as a site of emancipation, and its performative elements will provide the frame of the later discussion. Firstly, it is important to mention the theoretical background of the apparent performativity of urban space. Urban space is not only a material space, but it is a performative space consisting of bodily acts. Through the physical engagement of those that are present, the space is re-invented. The art practice of “*dérive*”, or drifting, which originated from Situationist International in order to resist neoliberal society, is introduced. It inspires moving bodies to question the linear, functional and one-directional movement pattern within urban planning and architecture. Although *dérive* was discussed in the 1950s, it still has fundamental and relevant influences on contemporary artistic practice and performance theory when talking about artistic resistance in urban space. Through aimless wandering urban space, the purposelessness of the un-productive bodily act challenges the efficiency of other movement patterns. Furthermore, the concept of “urban choreography” by German Gabriele Klein examines how improvised movements help free the moving body during the process of drifting. Although drifting can combine various art forms, the political meaning within specific movements or gestures generated during drifting or *dérive*, has not been fully discussed. While using the analysis of cultural gathering and artistic protest by Gabriele Klein, the discussion in the following chapter will provide a perspective on everyday artistic practice rather than during political protests. This concept highlights the aesthetic experience of specific movements that do not reflect any specific political meaning, but rather, the politics of a freeing movement pattern. This kind of inherently improvised movement pattern combats societal context of consumption. By looking at this movement with a choreographic lens, this theoretical structure locates the body as the medium of artistic practice through movements in the space-

making process. By dancing with a dynamic rhythm while drifting with un-productive agency, the rigid movement pattern is challenged, and these bodily acts transform the urban space into a playground.

## 2.1 THE PRODUCTION OF THE CITY FOR PERFORMATIVE ACTS

The city is not only a physical space with materials, but is a performative situation consisting of bodily acts as well. The movement pattern of bodies in urban space is structured by economic codes and structures these codes at the same time. As chapter 1 reveals, the perception pattern and movement pattern are addressed by consumption in an efficient and productive way. The scripted codes of urban space are not fixed, and the body is not merely a passive subject to accept all these unwritten rules. The production of urban space is a process of bodily action, and through these movements, it will create interruptions. Based on the theory of performativity and Henri Lefebvre's socio-spatial theory, bodily acts is located as a starting point to detect the production of urban space as a reinvented process. This section asserts that the lived urban space can be understood as a performative situation, in which reaffirmed and rehearsed processes are displayed by performers and spectators. To maintain the space, it needs repetitious and continuous spatio-temporal practices, and there always is a possibility to interrupt repetition and elaborate on the repetitious pattern. The artistic interventions in the space can bring new interruptions into the pre-existing urban choreography.

The production of space has close relations with the body, and Henri Lefebvre is one of the key theorists to articulate this relation. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre proposes the theorization of three types of space: conceived, perceived, and lived space (40). This module of analysing space provides a useful perspective to examine why through changing the movement pattern on the streets, it is possible to change the structured and choreographed space. In this trilogical mode, conceived space means the conceptualized space (Lefebvre 38). It is the space with inscribed and structural norms in scientific calculation. The perceived space is the material space and contains all sense data, meaning the aesthetic experience of the space. It includes the experience of colours, shapes, and also tactile senses of texture of architecture material, temperature and smells. Finally, the third lived space is the space emerging with the perceived space and conceived space, in which "the imagination seeks to change and appropriate" (Lefebvre 39). The lived space is the intersection of sense and imagination, for having a place to feel alive, to live. In this lived

space, life, work, and art are mixed. Lefebvre asserts that “(social) space is a (social) product” (30). The production of the space is created through bodily acts to map and to experience. The perceived-conceived-lived triad is not an isolated and abstract mode, rather, three realms are interconnected. Taking the urban space as an example, the construction of buildings in central space with relative outstanding height is inseparable from the status of having power. How the moving body reaches further, higher, and occupying wider space is determined by the position within a power structure.

The production of the city is the performative process created by inscribed and structural movement norms and bodily practices. In the city, the design space implies perceived affordance—that is the implicit understanding of how to interact with an object or subject according to social characters. The invisible texts written in the organization of the urban planning address specific permitted or forbidden behaviours according to social characters of bodies in certain areas, and performers enter this stage in different ways: wearing stiletto high heels or dragging soft slippers, rushing or slowly drifting, sneaking under shadows or marching with hard sounds and a fast beat. With the intentions of urban planning, such as the width of roads, the number of traffic lights, the height of buildings, the materials used for covering the surface of the building, and the transport paths for separating pedestrians and cars, all address different movement patterns and behaviour in the urban environment. The differences between standing, walking, running, waiting, sitting, looking, taking a break, or having a meeting all are a part of the performative body. The urban space can be seen as not only a physical space, but as a performative social space with bodily engagement by inhabitants and users.

These bodily acts by all the different social characters within the scene form the performativity of the urban space. The term “performativity” was first discussed in the context of the “performative utterance”, by language philosopher John L. Austin, who unfolds the relationship between speech and the bodily act. With performative power, linguistic utterances do not only reveal one’s experience with the pre-existing world, but the success of the performative utterance is also embedded in social situations. At the moment of speaking words, it becomes also a social action and has effect in reality. To satisfy this linguistic utterance, social conditions as a social act is the key element. In other words, the key to a successful statement is stated by the specific performed social character in the coordinated situation. With the development of the theorization of performativity, not only speech acts but also nonverbal communication is considered socially performative. In the 1990s, the phrase “performative” was given a reconsideration when relating to bodily acts

outside of language philosophy field. During the speech act theory's second heyday, the condensed notion "speaking as acting" became famous in cultural studies and cultural theories (Fischer-Lichte 26). Philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler introduces the term "performative" in cultural philosophy and bridges performative acts (as continuous bodily acts) with the gender identity (Fischer-Lichte 27). Austin examines the moment of the performative utterance is successful or failure, and furthermore, Butler rethinks the relationship between identity and the body in a revolutionarily way. By extending the temporal dimension, Butler considers the identity is maintained by a series of "stylized repetition of acts" in everyday life (qtd. Fischer-Lichte 27). In a word, performativity includes several features: the repetitive bodily acts with other subjects or objects by certain social characters in a social situation. To maintain the urban space function as the place for work and consumption in current social structure, it consists of everyday bodily acts in separated zones by urban planners, salesmen of property companies, cleaners, building workers, bank officers and so on. Containing a process of bodily acts, and therefore, urban space can be identified as a performative situation.

In conclusion, the process of bodily practices forms the urban space as a performative situation. To maintain the city as a performative situation, it needs continuous spatio-temporal bodily acts to be performed. When the body is moving through the urban space, on the one hand, the social order is rehearsed and refined; and on the other hand, the moving body creates a new spatial formation in the space. By changing one's bodily acts the urban space can be changed as well. Through the bodily practice of waking up to a new awareness of one's surroundings, artistic tactics have the political potential to interrupt the rigid everyday movement patterns and change the urban space to a lived space with a rich poetic flow.

## 2.2 DÉRIVE: BREAKING RIGID MOVEMENT PATTERN IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The everyday artistic practice to interrupt rigid movement pattern has been discussed since Situationist International, a collective from the 1950s to the 1970s. One of their key artistic practices is based on the concept of "dérive". Dérive, or 'drifting' in English, means to wander aimlessly. The validity of drifting is the response to the rigidity of modern life in city and the practice of drifting provides a chance for someone to "observe surroundings", break boundaries between separated zones, combining various art forms, and start a "conversation with passer-by" (Debord "Theory of the Dérive"). In the following

section, I will outline the comparison between SI and contemporary drifting practices, and reflect the passionate moving quality of drifting by SI in a neoliberal context. It also explains the importance of practicing drifting as an everyday resistance to change urban into a playground and as a game for the collective in public space.

The movement of drifting differs from just a stroll or a journey. A stroll is aimless as well, but it is not an active action, it might be a passive status that there is no need for much effort. However, although without a specific aim, during the act of drifting, someone has a specific goal in mind, which is to wander and to recognize the lived space in everyday life. Drifting aimlessly with a poetic and sensitive purpose, it opens one's perception and inspires the moving body to use a new perspective to rediscover a familiar world. Drifting differs from a journey as well. Instead of a flowing adventure of everyday life, a journey is a movement with specific aim and a destination to leave everyday life and the aim of a journey is to search for a spectacle. In "Theory of the *Dérive*", Guy Debord proposes that drifting as an artistic practice is a "technique of rapid passage", and it has fast moving speed, shifting between streets and streets, blocks and blocks. According to Debord, the practice of drifting has some particular features. For example, *dérive* alone is a good practice, but the most fruitful arrangement consists of a small group of people coming together for the practice. The period of *dérive* can be varied from lasting several hours, or three to four days, or even to two months. Weather is an important factor, and a storm would be the best for a drifter. The spatial field is diverse as well, the scale of moving can start from an apartment to a whole city. *Dérive* is not only a method of observation, but also a "passional journey with practice" (Pinder 113). The drifting process could be seen as a psychogeographical research, which is "the study of the specific laws and specific effects of geographical environments whether consciously organized or not", in other words, this research examines effects of urban space "on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (Debord "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action").

Why is practice of drifting important for breaking the rigid movement pattern in modern cities? Firstly, since it breaks boundaries of different areas, like consumption places, pedestrian roads, and cultural institutions, that are separated artificially, drifting is a necessary practice for emancipatory space. While drifting in different areas of urban spaces, its inherent fluidity and flexibility will lead to the question of "mainstream planning practices in defining spaces in the city", which is "divid[ing] functions strictly into separate zones, including those of work and residence" (Pinder 116). Through drifting, urban life could be re-imagined from

how the public space is currently constructed. “It was necessary to challenge everydayness and routinization of situations, with their accompanying sense of limited possibility, and to construct situations actively and consciously” (Pinder 1114). Lavery mentions that “[f]or the SI, drifting was advanced as critically informed walking practice, a collective device for infusing life ‘with a superior passional quality’” (2) Therefore, it breaks the boundaries between work, life, and leisure, which is strictly separated during the post-war industrial urban life in Europe.

Secondly, in terms of aesthetic method and artistic practice, drifting can combine different art forms as well. The aesthetical aspect of drifting as a “paradigm for composing, experiencing and theorizing heterogeneous forms” (Lavery 3). In order to create an emancipatory space for its residents, Situationist International brought up the theory about unitary urbanism, which focus is to use all art means in urban space. Guy Debord introduces “unitary urbanism” in “Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency’s Conditions of Organization and Action”, and he asserts that unitary urbanism is “the use of all arts and techniques as means contributing to the composition of a unified milieu”. According to his description, the unitary urbanism even determines the acoustic environment and the distribution of variety of food and drink can be considered as an important category in this construction of situations, which stands outside of the traditional aesthetic categories. Drifting is one of the key tactics to practice unitary urbanism to re-invent the urban space through considering the multi-sensory perception in urban space.

Thirdly, drifting changes the social encounter and is a collective device like games. Through stepping into public space, it is possible to change the urban space with social connections, encounter, and games. The idea of serious play is the key of *dérive*, and it is also the key of SI’s “construction of situations” and unitary urbanism. The game differs from a competition, and it is meant to be collective and participatory. Playing games is a collective activity with social interactions, then it changes the isolated situation in social life in urban space. Jean-Francois Lyotard also contributes discourse of drift in his book *Driftworks* (1984), in which Lyotard further emphasizes drifting is an action of intersections of multiple forces. Lavery cites Lyotard’s words: “Drift works in the plural... The plural, the collection of singularities, are precisely what power, kapital (sic), the law of value, the personal identity, the ID card, responsibility, the family and the hospital are bent on repressing” (2). Taking Lyotard’s perspective into consideration, the subject of drifting is not isolated; the subject is already a complex unity of intertwining political and capital forces to interact with environment. Debord even states that a game “is not distinct from a moral choice since it

takes a stand in favour of what will bring about the future reign of freedom and play” (Pinder 113). Situationists defines the collective and participatory game is the free practice of everydayness. It is not for producing products as working in the system of consumption. Finally, the process of participation is the goal of playing game itself. As a playful everyday practice, the bodily acts of drifting change the urban space into a playground. SI brought up the concept of psychogeography, which emphasizes the interactions between urban environment and behaviour (Pinder 113). As situationists put the game as the foundation of unitary urbanism, “unitary urbanism envisages the urban environment as the terrain of a game” (qtd SI, 116). Playground provides a relational space in which performers, spectators and spaces are “in play” and it is a negotiated roles and positions (Groot Nibbelink 29). It is a place that characters are subjected to experimentations and it emphasized as a process. Therefore, by changing the urban space as a playground, drifting has the political potential as an everyday resistance.

Although drifting is an important artistic practice, with the development of neoliberal society, the specific way of drifting needs more consideration. Differing from emphasizing the quality of passion and speed by SI, scholars are rethinking the concept of *dérive* in contemporary performance theory. In the theory field of contemporary performance practice, scholars offer analysis of how drift functions in the context of neoliberal society. As theorists in SI proposed, in a neoliberal society, life, work, and leisure time are mixed, yet in reality people still live while conditionally over-working. With the flexibility of labour in neoliberal working condition, the fast moving speed also causes a lot of questions, which let people cannot stop their work and their sleeping is deprived. Instead of emphasizing passionate quality and speed as SI, in current performance theory field, the non-productive action of drifting is emphasized because of the fast-paced urban lifestyle. It is also necessary to rethink the ‘laziness’ in the practice of drifting, and compare it to the speed tourist development and transportation which leads to serious pollution issues. In contemporary drifting practice, the quality of it “offers an aesthetic of non-productive behaviour, a mode of art making defined by ‘empty moments’” (Lavery 3). These ‘empty moments’ are important for the body to slow down, to question the ideology of developing speed. The movement of drifting “diverted from one’s immediate task” and the participant can “escape from fixed motions of identity” (Lavery 1;7). The political potential of drifting is to question the productivity of human agency and it has “resistant quality rather than its revolutionary ones” in neoliberal society (Lavery 3).

The practice of drifting as an everyday resistance in urban space, can be seen as a

movement against rigidity of modern life in urban space, first theorized by Situationist International. According to SI, the passional quality of drifting can break the boundaries of space, build connection with passers-by and change the urban space to a public playground. Drifting can be a way of observation, and it is also a practice and research to study the effect by geographical environment on emotions. Since drifting is a collective interaction such as a game, it changes the urban space into a playground through the playfulness of bodily acts. However, since the speed of movement is emphasized in neoliberal urban space, it is necessary to rethink the passional quality and the speed of SI's drifting. Contemporary performance theorist like Carl Lavery mentions that the "laziness" and "empty moments" of drifting are emphasized in current discussions. Therefore, the practice of drifting is also a way to question the lifestyle and power structure in urban space.

### 2.3 URBAN CHOREOGRAPHY: THE POLITICS WITHIN DYNAMIC MOVEMENTS OF BODIES IN A SITUATION

If drifting illustrates the alternative moving in the urban space, then how do specific ways of moving and figurations free the body and create political meaning? Drifting can combine different art forms, but how dance can be defined in this discussion still has not been fully elaborated on. Members of SI make films, write poetry and publish posters; performance theorists are inspired by the way of recording text. The ways of documenting textually and visually also inspire contemporary scholars to document and write about performance dynamically, which allows the readers to drift in texts, which is an interstitial space between experience and documentation (Lavery 10). Since drifting has the potential to mix other art forms, I would like to discuss how drifting combined with dance and its political potential is inherent to movements on streets. By adding a choreographic lens to look at drifting, this heterogeneous form breaks the boundaries between different art forms and frees the body from rigid movement pattern. The political meaning is not created through referring to political topics, but it is inherent within the everyday movement itself. Therefore, the concept "urban choreography" illustrates the political meaning of dynamic movement patterns of everyday performative practices in urban space.

Urban choreography is introduced by German scholar Gabriele Klein, which "can be understood as a social choreography in urban space, as a figuration that interweaves the macro-structure of urban space and the micro-structure of urban places" (141). Klein proposes there are two levels to understand the social space: one is on a macro-level of social



structure in terms of the materiality of urban space, another is the micro-level of social situation which in this case is created by participation by performers in performance (Klein 140). The discourse of urban choreography by Klein is focused on artistic intervention, which can be “understood as a form and an aesthetic reflection protest in public spaces” (Klein 135). The focus is political protest, and the political utterance closely relates to neoliberal urban space of segregation, marginalization of the outskirts, and privatization of public space like transport station (Klein 135). The theory of urban choreography draws on the theories of social choreography, which is mentioned by Andrew Hewitt, and he uses this concept as “an attempt to think about the aesthetic as it operates at the very base of social experience” (Hewitt 2). By asserting social determinants that are being rehearsed and refined in dance, this concept takes an interactive perspective to see the relationship between aesthetic and politics. Instead of taking dance as a metaphysical transcendence or only as a reduction to the specific social orders such as gender, race, and class, by using this term, Hewitt asserts that “the aesthetic will function [...] as a space in which social possibilities are both rehearsed and performed” (4). Dance has served as the aesthetic medium and derives its politics from its own status rather than as adherence from “outside” ideology (6). He locates dance in a broader history, arguing dance as neither “physical experience of metaphysical transcendence” nor a purely ideological reduction to social determinants (4). The concept of social choreography also highlights the interdependence of bodies, “social choreography refers to spatial and time-based organization of bodies, materialities, and objects, relating to each other in an interactive and inter-corporal manner” (Klein 31).

This perspective implies the political potential of choreography. Inspired by this concept, by asserting a more specific dance study and choreographic perspective, Klein asserts that the focus of the term urban choreography is to examine the “the materiality of the time-space relationship of bodies, their rhythms, dynamics, figurations and formations” (139). In the contemporary sense, the practice of choreography is not explained as manipulating fixed movements or dance notation, “but rather as a performative category, an order that is generated in practice, in the sense of ‘real-time composition’ simultaneous with performance” (Klein 30). Choreography here is not understood as the fixed notation or a set of rules, yet it is a “social situation” which is “generated by people as an emergent order” (Klein 140). Instead of seeing choreography as fixed notation of movement, the order can be seen as a process generated through bodily practices. The concept of urban choreography can be seen as contribution to the on-going debate of participatory performance projects which move the location from the customary space of the theatre to a public arena. Since it happens

in a situation within social context, the place for urban choreography is necessary to change into public urban space, and present the theatricality of the inscribed habit or social orders in everyday life (Klein 136). Urban choreography also provides a perspective to analyse creation of the space. Since choreography focuses on the relationship between bodies in spatial and time-based relationships, it provides insights into the possibilities of interactions within the urban environment. Instead of creating a physical product, the process is the key element for tactics of urban choreography. The experience and engagement of the participants are the medium of an artwork. Since the new social and political potential is produced during the participation and engagement of its audience, it merges the boundaries between life and art. By locating the urban space, it involves a process of bodily practices and actions as art interventions can contribute or interrupt this process of constituting the pre-existed and choreographed order in urban space.

Since the gestures and movement practice form the medium of artwork itself, urban choreography merges the boundaries among performers, producers and audiences. The performativity and theatricality embedded in urban choreography provide the freedom of playing and experimenting with the potential of moving creatively. The aesthetic experience of generating gestures and figurations is inherent within the politics, in order to question pre-existing order of movement patterns and to free the moving body directly.

## SUMMARY

To summarize, this chapter discusses the production of the city as a performative process consisting of bodily acts. Both the materiality and bodily acts are structured by economic and political codes. To interrupt the codes of urban spaces, by *dérive* or drifting, as an art practice could pose as an everyday resistance in neoliberal cities. *Dérive* as an important artistic practice is brought up by Situationist International, and it can change the space into playground, providing chances of playing collectively. The practice of drifting is not only a game, but also a political choice. While *dérive* is applied to analysed shifting routines in different blocks, urban choreography provides a framework of analysing specific figurations and movements. The dimension of movement patterns has not been fully unfolded in the discussion of drifting, and by the addition of the choreographic lens, the dynamic movement pattern of bodily acts can be highlighted. The concept of urban choreography provides a more insightful perspective to examine the relationship between movements and the politics, illustrating the political meaning of the aesthetic experience of dance, or moving

with dynamic rhythms in urban space.

The combination of drifting and dance techniques locates the body movement and practice in drifting, contributing to the discussion of contemporary artistic practice to interrupt urban movement patterns. The concept of urban choreography provides a perspective to examine that the political meaning is inherent within the unfolding process of gestures, movements and figurations in drifting, and improvisational movement could be a way of resistance. Therefore, it opens up the space for switching roles between performers, participants, and spectators, and also merges boundaries between life and art.

## CHAPTER 3 Case Studies: *Stadterweitern* (2020-2021)

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION OF *STADTERWEITERN* (2020-2021)

Since the urban space is a highly controlled space by the ideology of consumption and efficiency, it is necessary to practice artistic tactics to intervene the pre-existed orders in cities. To illuminate how specific dramaturgical choices such as *dérive* are applied in a site-based work within a specific social context, the following chapter will pose as an analysis of the choreographic tactics of *Stadterweitern* (2020-2021) by German artist Sabine Zahn. By addressing playful participation and choreographic practice, *Stadterweitern* opens up the potential to imagine the urban space as a playground through multi-sensory experiences and a dynamic movement pattern. By providing a dramaturgical analysis of the choreographic tactics in *Stadterweiten*, I propose that it provides an alternative way “to live exposed to the touch of outside” in urban space (Lavery 2).

The research sources of this art project come from the digital book *Stadterweitern: Tracing A Practice* which is provided by the project's website and my personal experience of research workshop “Choreographic Practice and Urban Space Making” which follows the similar practice logic in *Stadterweitern*. Two interviews with the artist are important resources as well for this analysis. The digital book *Stadterweitern: Tracing A Practice* documents the four experiment labs titled: ‘Sense and Sensibility’; ‘How To Be A Good Neighbour’; ‘Non-human Perspectives’, and ‘Body of Bodies’. The digital book includes instructions of the research process, pictures, and written feedback by the participants. *Stadterweitern* has is no final production, and the practice can be seen as a continuous research process. The workshop “Choreographic Practice and Urban Space Making” is on 7<sup>th</sup> May in Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, as a part of exhibition “In Search of the Pluriverse”. Participants work as a group or with pairs, wearing comfortable clothing that allows for easy movement. The participants and Sabine Zahn moved around HNI, moving around and across streets, ending with a painting session in which one could reflect on what happened during drifting process.

In following section, the analysis of this case focuses on the specific dramaturgical choices which reinvent the perception and movement pattern of the urban space and contribute to the discussion of how drifting and dance can change the urban place into a playground through bodily acts.

Sabine Zahn was trained as an actress creating physical theatre work, and she

gradually expanded her research interest into somatic approaches and everydayness in urban space. She works with an expanded definition of the term choreography, as choreography for her is a way to “suggest new linking and possibly new spaces” (Zahn). The work *Stadterweitern* can be seen as an amplified practitioner’s work, followed by exploration of architects, which was translated into the duet work *Fremdgehen-A Choreographic Expansion of City* (2019). In *Stadterweitern*, the choreography provides a lens to interact with numerous agents in motion through dance. In this work, Zahn combines choreography and somatic approaches like Contact Improvisation, and researches the interactions between the moving bodies of the participants and the urban environment. The Contact Improvisation is a style and technique based on improvisation through touch. Contact Improvisation was developed by artists such as Steve Paxton, Nancy Stark Smith in the 1970s in New York. The practice and performance of Contact Improvisation usually performed as a duet through touching, falling, supporting, leaning and sliding. By sensing the body’s weight and gravity, dance becomes the base philosophy of collective movement in CI. Differing from practices of Contact Improvisation, placed in the environment of a dance studio, Zahn moves contact practice into the public urban space. The art project *Stadterweitern* (2020-2021) is a manifesto for the artist to communicate the research about moving in public space she has conducted for previous years. The output of this project is aimed to provide a toolbox for people who are interested in personally exploring the urban space. As a process-based art project, Sabine Zahn defines this work as a collection of “participatory and public processes” (7).

### 3.2 DESCRIPTION OF *STADTERWEITERN* AND THE WORKSHOP

Standing beside the wide, newly built roads for cars around Het Nieuw Instituut, I was waiting for a suitable and safe moment to across the road. Standing beneath a small and newly planted tree which was shaking because of the air flow caused by passing cars, I realized the speed of the moving cars are part of an amazingly fast rhythm in urban space. I hear the roaring sound of passing cars that collaborate with the other types of sound: talking, sounds of the wind, stepping feet, shaking leaves, and so on. This moment reminds me that how contemporary cities arise from and are produced by polymorphous flows of everyday life. In the drifting process, the shifting and flexibility of moving between pedestrian roads and car roads juxtapose experiences of two type of rhythm and reveal the power structure of speed. This is part of the fragment of the workshop I attended with Sabine Zahn, which

explores moving Contact Improvisation technique into urban observation. After reading the digital version of *Stadterweitern: Tracing A Practice*, I attended workshop “Choreographic Practice and Urban Space Making” at Rotterdam’s Het Nieuwe Instituut. The workshop happens outside, around the place where Het Nieuwe Instituut is located. Facing the famous art museum Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen and talking 15 minutes by walk from Rotterdam Centraal Station, this place is located in a center position with a convenient transport system, surrounded by a shopping district. This is a newly built space, and the surrounding metal fences and other building materials show that this place has not been finished expanding yet.

Most of the activities of *Stadterweitern* happen at Alexanderplatz, which is also a busy public square and transport hub in the central district of Berlin. The busy streets are surrounded by shopping malls. Being next to Berlin Alexanderplatz Bahnhof and the iconic viewing tower Berliner Fernsehturm, Alexanderplatz is the place for travel and shopping. Like other city squares, the space addresses its visitors with specific aims: nearly all plants are removed to create straight roads and paved with flat bricks or cement for moving towards a destination in an efficient way. The flowing population of a station presents the efficiency of the society. Passers-by and transportation form efficient flows through these streets. In *Stadterweitern*, drifting happens between different areas of pedestrian and car roads, and its participants drifting evoke the use of different senses when encountering the urban space. Containing four labs, this art project explores a way to interact with the urban space and reinvents the rigid urban space through utilizing a choreographic lens.

One of the activities in *Stadterweitern*, is the task of following the sound of the wind, which provides a chance to question the affect of urban space. During the process, participants wear a device that mediates sound, so the airflow is more noticeable to hear. With this noise detector, the participant will move around the space and compares the noises of their surroundings with different sound volumes. When following the sound of the wind, participants do not move according to the usual aims of the urban space like shopping, working, and social networking. By following the sound of the wind, one’s moving speed is uncertain, and the participant might stop or continue moving at any time. This is a moment participants can escape from ways of moving in the urban space in the productive way it is constructed for, and introduces a different and purposeless way of drifting. The way of drifting in the city is a process of continuous questioning of productivity and feeling connections with surrounding environment.

To spark awareness of other senses, and feel disoriented within the experience is an important dramaturgical choice in the workshop as well. Another activity in *Stadterweitern*

was to use the body to make sounds. Instead of using my hand to touch the ground, I was trying to use my feet to touch and feel different types of texture of ground. Protected by running shoes, I used my feet to rub the sand ground to make sound. I was so conscious about my body pressing on the ground and every footstep, to make sure that the sound of every step is clear and was not flooded in the surrounding background sounds of the car flow. We went across blocks, and we stopped in front of wood fences. Zahn and I touched the texture of the leaves on the ground surrounding it. It was so soft, with a layer of fresh and tender hair-like texture covering the plant's leaves. The tenderness of this plant left a deep impression on me, about the vulnerability of organic creatures. This soft texture was juxtaposed with the textures of cement, metal, and glass, which are the main material of urban architecture. In this disoriented experience, I experienced the details of the urban space much more vividly, knowing there is another way to experience my surroundings with a different dynamic tempo, not to catch up with my schedule but to move with the desire of curiosity.

By switching different ways of moving gravity, it influences the way of shifting between different areas, and the boundaries of separated zones become porous for moving bodies to flow. During the moving process in the workshop, I was trying to change my ways of moving by focusing on gravity. For example, I sat down, walked, ran, jumped, and faced the ground by supporting my body with hands. The way of changing my gravitational pull to the earth, gave me more awareness of the surrounding environment. When other group members and I were walking towards the back of the building, I saw there were two construction workers lying under shadow of trees. They were taking a nap and they had tanned skin. The image of women wearing a bikini and sunbathing came into my mind. For whom is sunbathing rest and for whom it is necessary to find a shadow to rest? During the process, I questioned my surroundings and its inhabitants all the time. For example, where I can put my hands, is the ground clean? Or is it a safe place I can sit down? Will I interrupt others by sitting down? Is the place I was lingering private space or public space? How long can I rest on stairs in front of someone else's house? The space is not a place formed by channel and paths, but the vivid details I noticed when I was moving in a disoriented way. The way of moving influences the period of time I was going to stay in one place, and the choices of what I was going to touch, questioning the porous boundaries between private and public in everyday life.

The interactions between different bodies is another key dramaturgical tactic of challenging the isolated moving and step into dialogue in public space. In the third lab 'How To Be A Good Neighbour', activities are organized from an interactive perspective. At first,

the participant develops a score according to multidirectional gravity, trying to use their body to sense the gravitational attraction by surrounding objects. Instead of seeing gravity as only a vertical force, the prompts remind participants to pay attention to different beings when moving their bodies. The final activity is to create a 'pigeon score' in a public square. The participant needs to follow a pigeon and find a suitable speed as to not scare it to fly away, but to walk with it continuously and create a kind of duet together. Following the pigeon, this can be seen as a kind of choreography and increase the awareness of non-human beings in the urban space. In the workshop, there is a practice about leading another body across the streets. Participants worked in pairs; one needed to put their hand on another's shoulder as a follower. The leader can change the tempo to carry the partner or to escape from touching, but the follower needs to keep touching. During the moving process, I always needed to take care of another body when I put my hand on the partner's shoulder. There was a dialogue between me and another body. I could feel its temperature and vibration. Sometimes I needed to catch up with the body, sometimes I felt invited, sometimes it guided me to a new path that I had not yet paid attention to, and sometimes it tried to run away. This practice was a way of embracing the disoriented feeling, since I could not expect what would happen next, and therefore I was fully alert, being completely present with the other body.

### 3.3 ANALYSIS

This project provides insight into two aspects: a new perception pattern and a new moving pattern through contact improvisation technique. One of the main goals of this art project was to reinvent the urban space by refreshing the senses and sensibilities. By detecting the airflow of daily objects like a piece of plastic or feather, these practices in *Stadterweitern* change the way of perceiving the urban space changes from visual to auditory and tactile sense. The 'touch' of the surroundings sharpened the participants' perception of being in the space and its fluidity. Drifting highlights the body being in a process of moving in urban space, and "to live exposed to the 'touch' of the outside" and how "subjects and objects are acted upon external forces" (Lavery 2). The physical experience of touching brings a lot of insight into thinking about connections between the individual and the collective. Ann Cooper Albright argues that through practice of Contact Improvisation, "intentional support could be supportive" ("The Politics of Perception" 233). Touching by skin-contact is a kind of body-to-body exchange, and it opens up an experience of kinesthetic empathy—the kinesthetic sensibility of moving together, and the practice of contact improvisation is "the actual practice of gathering as a community of live bodies" (234; 241).



By paying attention to other tactile and proprioceptive sensations, one can question the way of addressing visual attention by consumption in urban space. When the moving body becomes aware of other senses, it influences the movement pattern to work in a manner that is not specifically functional or efficient, but reveals the problems of perception patterns in urban space. Through drifting, the unequal structure between cars and pedestrians in urban planning is revealed, with more non-productive behaviour, pedestrians move in a slower speed in the space structured by capital forces. Through inspiring awareness of different senses, disoriented feeling in space and one's senses form the main experience of *Stadterweitern* and the workshop. Experiencing the city with different senses gives opportunity to open the space to imagine a city with architecture that is planned to address a different choreography. In SI's 'construction of situations' and unitary urbanism, it includes visual art and literature, like cinema, poetry and even food and drink. The introduction of dance and somatics will contribute a phenomenological perspective to look at the integral composition of different sensory input will challenge the pre-existing perception. The new perception experience makes the busy street and traffic roads a re-invented playground, and this experience questions the visuality of the urban design. Therefore, it reveals a unitary urbanism with auditory and proprioception sensation

*Stadterweitern* provides a specific dance perspective to question the movement pattern in public urban space. It is a work that combines walking, dancing, and drifting. In other words, this work asks how we can dance and drift with the city, and how dance practice changes the street into a playground. The activity of playing with gravity in *Stadterweitern* results in spatial disorientation that can be acquired by the exploration of new movement patterns in the public space. As Ann Cooper Albright describes, the process of structuring spatial orientation is "not simply a matter of choice", and the process of wandering is a process of break the habitual pattern of being oriented: "We turn toward certain things and directions, and away from others. Over time and with repetition, that turning becomes obscured and we end up seeing simply what is in front of us" ("Situated Dancing" 16). The experience of disorientation in urban space is an exploration of re-organizing the focus of orientation in urban space. The movement pattern of physically feeling how gravity plays a role in one's movement replaces the sense of sight with the attention to proprioceptive sensations.. Within the playground, the participants and spaces are free to play which means their relationship is in a process of negotiation and experimentation. Dwelling is important for setting inhabitation, as the practice of dwelling is "both the earthly and divine elements of humanities occupation of space" (Butler 122).

The experience of disorientation also influences the experience of time. The separated space as geometry is a reductive way of presenting the space, and the fragmented time as mechanical calculation of clocks is a reductive comprehension as well. By leaving and entering the space freely, the mechanical and rigid measurement of time is broken. Therefore, the time is experienced as “non-calculable”, and this understanding of time with dynamic rhythms is “resistant to abstracting generalisation and in need of being understood as ‘lived’” (Elden xi).

Within a wider social and cultural context, this dynamic rhythm within alternative movement pattern has a fundamental political meaning in everyday life. As urban choreography reveals the specific gestures that are already inherent to politics, the political meaning is inherent to the disoriented experience and interactions with other bodies. They are not just an aesthetic experience. In other words, when extending a hand to reach another body, it is already a political movement. In contact improvisation, touching is another way of listening and reveals the participants' agency to care about other beings in the same space. The first political meaning is that the experience of carefully moving on streets to avoid cars reveals the unequal power structure between car owners and pedestrians. In urban space, speed usually is connected with economic forces, as the one that can move in a faster speed in urban space reflects an economic and therefore political stance. It is a way to preset an unproductive way of moving, when commuting takes such a long time in everyday life in cities.

Drifting and dancing on streets is a way of touching outside world, as the process will lead the moving body into unnoticed places. Through drifting and dancing on streets, the body is changing their gravitational pull all the time, as the way of changing one's center of gravity requires the participant to be fully present in the disoriented experience. The body is ready to engage with surrounding environment. Similarly, the positions of the body are a way to question the boundaries of the concept of public and private, for example, which areas are prohibited and which part of the body is allowed to touch, sit, or move freely. The way of improvised dancing on streets differs from playing a choreographed piece as it is constantly readjusting to the new surrounding space. The liveness of the body brings fresh experiences and it is a way of making the space one's own space. The process of engaging with surrounding environment is very gentle, and it is a practice questioning the pre-existing movement pattern, and can be identified as an everyday resistance to change the urban space into a playground.

The city is not a pre-existing physical space but rather it is influenced by the physical engagement of its inhabitants. *Stadterweitern* stages encounter between human and other

beings in urban space, but also between dance and everyday life. In this work, by using different senses to interact with surrounding environment, it provides a new perception pattern of embodied experience. By giving tasks and instructions, participants pay attention to the scale of buildings, moving speed of different objects. These are moments that facilitate touching, and interacting with, the outside street scenes. The improvisational dance can free the body in space-making through multi-senses experience during the process of drifting, as the dancing body has not been fully illustrated yet, and still in an unclear situation. Furthermore, the experience of disorientation leads to question of pre-existed power structure, like the organization of traffic system in urban space. Moving in a different organization the perception of urban space differs from daily life, and it provides the possibility for participants to question functional motivation when moving in the space.

## SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have explored how drifting combined with choreography in the selected case *Stadterweitern* poses as an intervention in public space, freeing the moving body on the streets. This case provides a concrete playful dance practice and exemplifies how drifting and somatics in the urban space influence the perception and movement pattern. Informed by Situationist International and developed through dialogue with Gabriele Klein's "urban choreography", this practice is different from other artistic practices such as architecture, films or writing poetry by Situationist International's members. Instead, *Stadterweitern* provides examples of direct participation and seeks to change the visibility of commercialised perception and movement pattern in urban space.

In *Stadterweitern*, Sabine Zahn explores how dance and drifting is able to free the body in urban space with multi-sensory, dynamic movement, guided by the rhythms and interactions present in public urban environment. In the activities of *Stadterweitern*, people can turn around at any time, going back and leave the previously planned routine. The improvisational practices with wind, gravity, and the interaction with a pigeon can provide a new way to sense, enter, and leave the urban space. Improvisation provides a chance of acting on one's impulses at any time, to explore the uncertain, while contributing to a new perspective to research the relationship with the surrounding environment in urban space. The surroundings, animals and people that inhabit the surrounding space are not seen as obstacles, but rather actors that reveal the existing diversity in urban space. It is time to play with them rather than overcome them. The space can be fluid through the flexibility of crossing space. By changing the moving routines to not be merely a linear pattern, the space is not cut into

lines and squares as separated zones, but these present boundaries create places to play with, to enter and to drift. The work *Stadterweitern* explores the poetic way of drifting and explores a process of drifting among sensory experience as well as dancing freely with different objects in urban space.

The question of how *Stadterweitern* applies dramaturgical tactics of choreography is revealed in this analysis. During *Stadterweitern*'s continuous, improvisational dance, the surrounding rhythms are diverse. The habitual body frees itself from the urban space by moving from one site to another in an unusual way. Time is not a mechanical accumulation of seconds and minutes, as the practice of dance in the urban space creates a different experience of the flow of time, by accelerating and slowing down the speed of moving bodies in the space. Therefore, I argue that *Stadterweitern* reveals that improvisational dancing on streets is a way to free bodies in urban space.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to question how the urban space influences the movement pattern of the body in different ways. Based on my personal experience of living in several different cities, I still wonder what the logic behind to urban planning in cities is. Therefore, I started to search for performances and workshops about this topic. The workshop I attended with German artist Sabine Zahn inspired me to explore how dancing on the streets, and how I can actively question the pre-existing rigid movement pattern in urban space. When moving on streets, this workshop reminds me that instead of walking directly towards the destination, I am free to explore what other choices I have, to turn around, run away, take a seat, jump, and touch my surroundings. The different tempo and rhythm of moving, inspired me to feel the presence of surrounding environment much more thoroughly, motivating me to write this thesis.

With my research, I aspired to contribute an analysis on the choreographic perspective, rethinking the aimlessness of movement in drifting. The discussion about drifting sparks the question of why we move, and can be explained as an everyday artistic resistance in a capitalist-structured urban space. The choreographic lens of the case *Stadterweitern* proposes one of possible ways of “how to move” in a playful, freeing manner. Drifting as an artistic practice has been reinvented by Situationist International in the 1950's, and it still has influences in performance art. Passional moving speed proposed by SI poses a possibility of restructuring the development of vehicle transport system and tourism in a neoliberal society. Although this practice can combine different art forms, in the field of dance, the technique of moving on streets has not been fully discussed yet. The choreographic lens that *Stadterweitern* provides, gives a perspective to research the specific quality of movement, and the way of generating movement and experience, providing different rhythms in public urban space.

In the first chapter, I have explored the issues with moving patterns in the urban space. Caused by the ideology of consumption in a hyper modern society, urban planning is designed to address functional, linear and fixed movement patterns, restricted by the limited spaces for moving bodies. The second chapter provides a theoretical framework of *dérive* and urban choreography. *Dérive* and urban choreography provide a useful framework to analyse how artistic practices can interrupt the unwritten codes of movement in urban space. By using concepts of urban choreography and *dérive*, this framework provides a dimension of analysis

of further political meanings. These political attributes are inherent of the aesthetics of the normative urban space, as moving bodies are generating specific movements, gestures, figurations, and interactions with other bodies. By generating bodily acts, the playful body changes the urban space into playground, illustrating the possible movement pattern as a way of everyday resistance. Therefore, these artistic techniques are not just aesthetic experience, but are small political choices as well. The third chapter gives a further analysis of the case-study *Stadterweitern* by German artist Sabine Zahn. It further examines what dramaturgical choices were made for the activities in this art project, and how they create an opposing movement pattern as an everyday practice. In this case, the technique and activities of contact improvisation is moved from a dance studio into public space in order to merge art and life. Dancing on crowded streets, the disorienting experience brings awareness towards unnoticed details of the urban space. The disorienting experience of the space and senses allow for a break between the boundaries of different areas in urban space. By questioning the movement pattern of urban space, this artwork provides an alternative way of moving while the process of space-making. Contact improvisation forms an important part of this work, and it provides a chance to encounter other bodies in urban space and the participants can directly experience the sensory interaction with other bodies. The direct bodily engagement of its participants forms the medium of this artwork, and there is no separation between roles of spectator and performer, as it all works together as a whole. This case study shows that dance can free us from the fixed and mechanical patterns of urban life.

In this thesis I have centered the body to examine how the movement directly influences the process of space-making when moving in urban space, hopefully providing a hint to free the moving body in urban space. Through analysing *Stadterweitern*, it is possible to unfold the dramaturgical choices that allow this freely moving body. By touch and dance, the participants' experiences are influenced and inspire to further engage with the urban environment, and change the city into a playground. While it is not a great revolutionary act, it is a small, revolutionary, everyday practice that can happen during daily life by pedestrians.

## WORKS CITED

- Cooper Albright, Ann. "The Politics of Perception." *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*. Edited by Rebekah J. Kowal et al. Oxford University Press. 2017. pp.223-44.
- . "Situated Dancing: Notes from Three Decades in Contact with Phenomenology." *Dance Research Journal*, Volume 43, issue 2 winter, Cambridge University Press, 2011. pp.5-18. DOI:10.1017/S0149767711000027
- Butler, Chris. *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial Politics, Everyday Life, and the Right to the City*. Taylor&Francis Group. 2012
- Dasgupta, Sudeep. "'The Brilliance of Invisibility': Tracking the Body in the Society of the Spectacle." *The Spell of Capital: Reifiction and Spectacle*. Edited by Samir Gandesha and Johan Fredelik. Amsterdam University Press. pp.91-110.
- Debord, Guy. "Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action." Translated by Ken Knabb <https://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html> (accessed on 7 July 2022)
- Fischer-Lichte, Erika. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*. New York: Routledge, 2008. Gehl, Jan. *Cities for People*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2010.
- Hewitt, Andrew. "Introduction: Social Choreography and the Aesthetic Continuum." *Social Choreography: Ideology as Performance in Dance and Everyday Movement*. Duke University Press, 2005, pp.1-35.
- Henri Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*. Blackwell, 1991.
- . *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. Translated by Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore. Continuum, 2004.
- Klein, Gabriele. "Urban Choreography: Artistic Interventions and the Politics of Urban Space." *The Oxford Handbook of Dance and Politics*. Edited by Rebekah J. Kowal et al. Oxford University Press, 2017. pp.131-48.
- Lavery, Carl. "Rethinking the Dérive: Drifting and Theatricality in Theatre and Performance Studies." *Performance Research*, 23:7, 2018. pp.1-15. DOI: 10.1080/13528165.2018.1557011
- Groot Nibbelink, Liesbeth. *Nomadic Theatre: Mobilizing Theory and Practice on the European Stage*. Methuen Drama, 2019.
- Pinder, David. "Inventing New Games: Unitary Urbanism and the Politics of Space." *The Emancipatory City? Paradoxes and Possibilities*. SAGE publications, 2004. pp.108-

22.

Zahn, Sabine. Artist website. "about" <http://www.lovelabours.net/about-contact/> (accessed on 21 July 2022)

*Stadterweitern: Tracing A Practice*. <https://stadterweitern.de/publication> (accessed on 12 August 2022)



## NOTES

The process of writing this thesis was also a reflection of my everyday life while walking on streets in different cities. I wanted to figure out what I truly feel, and if my movement pattern does influence my emotion and mental status. By exploring Situationist International's theories, I realized that the practice of drifting has close relationship with the development of urbanism, and the lifestyles present in modern cities closely relates with the development of capitalism. When living in the city, I do feel there is something missing, and the lifestyle of living in urban space has not been fully satisfied my body's need, which I can find in living in the countryside. The experience of living in the countryside is guided by the rhythm dynamic of a relaxed, natural body and the deep consciousness about being present with one's surroundings. So, how do I change my urban surroundings into a flexible space with various rhythms to freely move as well?

This thesis was such a tough journey for me to write in six months. To name and describe precisely in English what I see and feel when I am walking on street is so difficult. But there are some moments surprise me, such as when I discovered the logic behind the urban planning and I found out the reason why I have fallen in love with riding a bicycle in the city Utrecht (the city I am living in right now). Riding bicycle is a beautiful way to touch the surrounding environment. When taking the bicycle, the weather, the temperature, the changing landscape, the smell lingering around a house at dinner time and any other things that may happen on the streets, are vivid and fresh. Touching, feeling, and being alive; this is what I have experienced while writing this thesis and having a life in Utrecht.

These inspirations are also cultivated by the experience of spending ten days in a summer workshop by Grotowski Institute and Studio Kokyu in Poland. Living in the house brought by Jerzy Grotowski, and experiencing the magic of living within a community is like a gift for me to feel the feeling of being again. The experience of walking in the forest with bare feet, touching different leaves and insects, breathing in the fresh air and listening to the singing of sky window in our room in rainy days, these beautiful moments have also inspired me to think about how I bring the experience of being alive into urban space.