

Some tools—the graphic press, a firearm or an oil-platform—takes the mechanical notion of technology to its outer limits, where a lack of control can be compensated with transactions of practise (inventive repetition). Photo: Th. Barth

An evocation of the contemporary ethos might be that we are somehow *amazed*: we experience reality as a *maze* and we are caught in it. Our chances of finding our way are likely linked to our *pursuits*: following *hypes* likely brings us deeper into the maze, while following *hints* will orient us differently. Following the hypes we will (pace Bruno Latour) end up vouching for a mass-exodus to Mars, for those who can afford (e.g. Elon Musk). Or, we could build a home *in the maze*.



Illustrative foldout by Statoil, in the National Library of Norway's collections of small prints. (Photo: Th. Barth)

Being content with *hints* of **1**) where we have been, **2**) how we are moving, and **3**) where we are going, will guide us differently than following the hypes of the historical past, fashionable present and technological future. Building a home in the maze is a life in pursuit of *weak signals*. Amplifying such signals and bringing them down again to *ground zero*, before we pick up new signals and move on. It is a *design* for living that begins and ends with *nature*; tuned in and moved on with some *art*.

How does life in the maze *repeat* and *evolve*? If we accept a locus repetition and evolution as the definition of a home, we may ask: do we start the day in the maze with art, continue with poetry and making, extend it with scientific investigation and research, more poetry and bodywork, search their foundation in philosophy, round up with poetry and music and conclude with art. Of course, there would have to be time for food and sex. Perhaps within the framework of Charles Fourier's [phalanx](#).

People have tried not only to think this but to do and live it as well. In some communes and collectives are still running on such ideas and practices. Such attempts tend to be sectarian rather than societal. However, in our time and day, there is a basic problem that keeps us globally *amazed* (to continue with [Bruno Latour](#)): the two

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orders of addresses that we have to manage in one way or the other: our *IP-addresses* and our *metadata-addresses*—computers and environments.

As users of mobile digital units—phones, iPADS, laptops—we are each of us involved in a collective dilemma: that the set from the traffic on our mobile units and the traffic in our daily environments is semantically *empty*. In principle, there is no such traffic between the two, and consequently that they have *nothing* in common. The one is *mobile* and the other is *contingent*. That's all. The *digital unit* is mobile in relation to the environment, the *environment* contingent.

That is all that we can know at a general level. Which means that the unit can be docked in a certain environment; and this environment can, in turn, be rigged. *If they are docked to and rigged for one another then*—given a certain number of work-sessions with this arrangement—the iterations will yield a work of time: at this point constraints, playful obstructions or *real-time* challenges will hatch new repertoires of communicative interaction, minding/crossing the *gap*.

Gaps do not only exist between mobile units and daily environment, but in any kind of relation involving spectatorship: the gap between the stage and the floor is a case in point. Or, the gap between office documents and personal diaries. This kind of gap also exists between image and text. Once these meta stable equilibria have been reached, the question is how we think of them: which we do when we realise that they hold a certain potential for learning outcomes.

In the mobile unit and the contingent environment we have all of these gaps packed. In a broader theoretical framework we are dealing with the following problem: *if* technological equipment interfaces between humans and their environments by the action of a lever—that is, a rod divided by a *fulcrum* into a short and a long end—*then* we have a definition of a *mechanical* tool; then we have a class of tools where the fulcrum to *exist*, must be *invented* and *sustained* (i.e. *media*).

That is, it requires a certain amount of creativity in combination with the work of time (recurrence/iteration): at some point this combination will cross a critical threshold where it becomes stable enough to be included into a communicative repertoires with a cultural reach. An example of this, is *reading*: that is, as a rigged activity taking place under acceptable/designed conditions. In the latter case, as *scenography*, evolving—following the logic of [criticality](#)—into a *performance*.

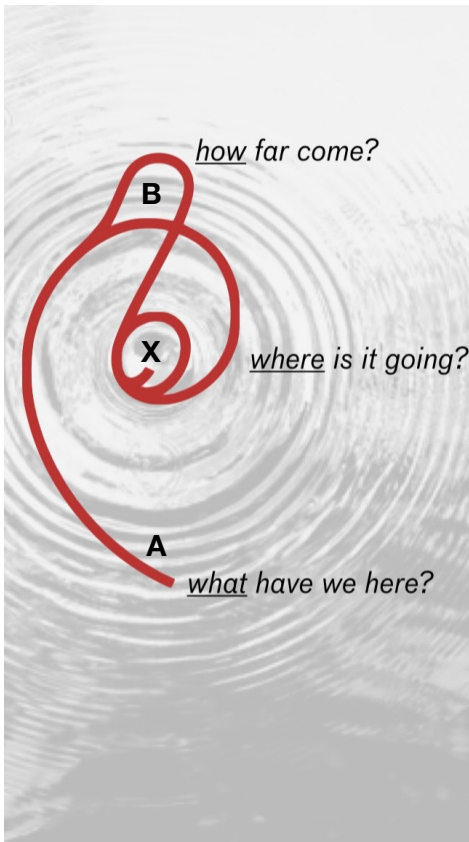
This protocol is *fictional* because it has to be invented, while it also depends on being marked by reality. It is *not* a world unto itself that contains its own reality. Though it is created it is also tested. Crossed a critical threshold, it communicates—at a cultural level—with other fiction. And so it becomes part of the medial zone that constitutes a heritage, and is what we call culture. Trans-posed *from* a readership, conceived in these terms, to *usership* we are in the realm of *media*.

A *medial zone* where what we call *communication* manages a *technological* and *transactional* operation combined: that is, frontally and laterally in the trans-individual dynamics that we are dealing with here, in a realm where Max Weber's notion of [mechanism](#) applies: *nomothetic* ('natural laws') and *ideographic* ('historical occurrence') in *combination*. The point being that such mechanisms are always *specific* and subject to [precision](#): clarification of the semantic terms.

Hence the interest of Edmund Leach's definition of *ritual* as behaviour in its *communicative* aspect: or, what we in the art-world understand as *performance*. If **A** is a mobile unit

(*media*) and **B** is a contingent environment (context), and **X** is a performative semantics (ritual), then the expression  $/\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B}i = \mathbf{X}/$  can be written  $\{\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B}i = \mathbf{X}\}$  if it relates to the usership

through *metonym*, or  $\}\mathbf{A} + \mathbf{B}i = \mathbf{X}\{$  if it relates to the usership through *synecdoche*. [{}: Gottlob Frege's empty set](#) (commonly denoted with  $\emptyset$ ). SWIRL: read the legend *bottom-up*.



The SWIRL: a key to semantic evolution as *fiction* is marked by reality/the real