

Paper proposal for the conference “Transgression – a new paradigm?”  
(ENSAB, Rennes, 17-21 November 2021)

**Crossing and placemaking:**

**Dimensions of transgression in the practice of Stalker / Osservatorio Nomade**

*Patrick Düblin, PhD candidate, ETH Zürich*

The word ‘transgression’ in its original sense has a performative meaning. Etymologically, *transgressus* signifies ‘to step across’, ‘to climb over’—in other words, the act of a body overcoming a physical boundary. It is precisely at this threshold where the practice of the Italian group of architects, artists and activists Stalker / Osservatorio Nomade originates. Since 1995, the group has been performing collective walks off-track through peripheral urban spaces, using barriers as passages, and in so doing, establishing connections regardless of public and private spheres and boundaries. What started as a hybrid between performance art and territorial research evolved a few years later into a more socially engaged practice. It shifted from this distinctly corporeal way of transgressing territories towards strategies of overcoming social confines relating to marginalised groups. Hence, instead of the heroic act of crossing, subtler means became crucial to overcome prejudice and fear and eventually to allow for transformations of precarious places. Nevertheless, their interventions—such as establishing a Kurdish cultural centre, a neighbourhood-based TV channel in a giant housing complex, or building a house in a Roma camp—all at some point came into conflict with official or unwritten rules. While their projects aimed at changing society for the better, they raise the question of whether such micro-utopias inevitably require transgressive acts. Through analysis of Stalker’s practice, I aim to investigate, on the one hand, whether and how these two dimensions of transgression—the performative crossing and the utopian placemaking—interrelate. On the other hand, I intend to examine the extent to which transgression can be regarded as a value in and of itself in Stalker’s work, or whether it is merely a side-effect of underlying anarchist principles.

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**Education**

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M.A., Art History (Major) and Philosophy (Minor), University of Basel, 2016  
Thesis: *Lafayette Park, Detroit als moderne Version einer Gartenstadt?* [Lafayette Park, Detroit as a modern version of a garden city?]

Erasmus study stay, Free University of Berlin, 2014

B.A., Art History and Philosophy, University of Basel, 2013

**Research**

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Research Fellow, Swiss Institute Rome, 09/2020 – 06/2021

Doctorate, Department of Architecture, ETH Zurich, 2019 – 2022  
Dissertation Title: *Architecture as direct action: Stalker / Osservatorio Nomade*  
Supervisor: Prof. Christophe Girot

**Employment History**

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Research Associate, Chair of Prof. Christophe Girot, Institute of Landscape and Urban Studies, ETH Zurich, 09/2016 – 08/2019

Curator and Assistant to the Director, Kunstmuseum Basel, 01/2016 – 02/2018

**Teaching Experience: Seminars at ETH Zurich**

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“Draw a map to get lost”, 2020  
“Exklusiv Europabrücke“ [Europabrücke exklusive], 2019  
“Spaziergänge ins Ungewisse“ [Walks into the unknown], 2018  
“Das Monster im Garten“ [The monster in the garden], Seminar Week Italy, 2017  
“Das Labyrinth als Motiv und Metapher“ [The labyrinth as motif and metaphor], 2017

**Language Skills**

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German (native), English (fluent), Italian, French (intermediate), Serbo-Croatian (basic)

## Exhibition

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*Basel Short Stories. Von Erasmus bis Iris von Roten* [Basel Short Stories: From Erasmus to Iris von Roten], Kunstmuseum Basel (with Josef Helfenstein and Maja Wismer), 10.02. – 21.05.2018

## Selected Publications

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### Articles

- Düblin, Patrick. 'Was ist ein Umweg?' [What is a Detour?] In *Exklusiv Europabrücke: Auf Umwegen durch Zürich-Altstetten*, edited by Patrick Düblin, Isabelle Fehlmann, Christophe Girot, and Myriam Uzor, 19–28. Pamphlet+. Zürich: gta Verlag, 2020.
- . 'Entwurf eines Gartens im Massstab 1:1: Anmerkungen zu Friedrich Ludwig von Sckells «Methode, in der Natur zu Zeichnen»' [Design of a Garden on a Scale of 1:1: Notes on Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell's "Method of Drawing in Nature"]. In *Auf Abwegen*, edited by Christophe Girot, Patrick Düblin, and Isabelle Fehlmann, 73–80. Pamphlet 23. Zürich: gta Verlag, 2019.
- . 'Mythos Roden Crater: Sieben Perspektiven auf das Hauptwerk von James Turrell' [The Myth of Roden Crater: Seven Perspectives on James Turrell's Magnum Opus]. *Archithese, Landart | Erdarchitektur*, 48, no. 4 (December 2018): 70–80.
- Girot, Christophe, and Patrick Düblin. 'Le Corbusier Evergreen'. In *Nature Modern: The Place of Landscape in the Modern Movement*, edited by Christophe Girot and Albert Kirchengast, 4:67–85. Landscript. Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2017.

### Edited Books

- Düblin, Patrick, Isabelle Fehlmann, Christophe Girot, and Myriam Uzor, eds. *Exklusiv Europabrücke: Auf Umwegen durch Zürich-Altstetten* [Europabrücke Exclusive: Detours through Zurich-Altstetten]. Pamphlet+. Zürich: gta Verlag, 2020.
- Girot, Christophe, Patrick Düblin, and Isabelle Fehlmann, eds. *Auf Abwegen* [Off the Beaten Track]. Pamphlet 23. Zürich: gta Verlag, 2019.
- Helfenstein, Josef, Patrick Düblin, and Maja Wismer, eds. *Basel Short Stories: Von Erasmus bis Iris von Roten*. Kunstmuseum Basel. Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2018.

### Interviews, Blog Contributions

- Düblin, Patrick. 'Stalker: Expédition dans la périphérie romaine' [Stalker: Expedition through the Roman Periphery]. *Arts et sciences en Italie* (blog), 26 November 2020. <https://blogs.letemps.ch/istituto-svizzero/2020/11/26/stalker-expedition-dans-la-peripherie-romaine/>.
- . 'Letter from Rome'. *The Urban Transcripts Journal* 2, no. 2 (October 2019). <http://journal.urbantranscripts.org/article/letter-from-rome-patrick-dublin/>.
- Careri, Francesco, Lorenzo Romito, Patrick Düblin, and Isabelle Fehlmann. 'Waste Time, Gain Space: Stalker in Conversation with Patrick Düblin and Isabelle Fehlmann'. In *Auf Abwegen*, edited by Christophe Girot, Patrick Düblin, and Isabelle Fehlmann, 41–51. Pamphlet 23. Zürich: gta Verlag, 2019.