

# Place and Event:

## Exploring Methods of Transformative Research

*Conference and workshop at Foldsae, Norway, May 21<sup>st</sup> - 24<sup>th</sup> 2010*

*We usually consider an art performance as something given, independent of the scene where it is performed. But can the room in which the work is performed and the work itself really be considered as separate? In pedagogy the learning process is mostly looked upon independent from the room where learning takes place. But is the arena of learning really separated from the learning process? A significant event has taken place: Is the place still the same after having housed this event?*

### **Place and Event**

The conference is an invitation to explore a particular connection: *the connection between the event and the place where the event takes place*. The event could have art as its point of departure: a work of art performed in a particular physical/social room. It could be an event within a pedagogical framework, a learning situation taking place in a specific learning arena. Or it could be a general human experience and be considered philosophically: a particular act or event which comes about. In every situation the same question can be posed: What happens *between* the event\*\* and the place\* where the event takes place?

This is the phenomenological research question behind the title of the conference: Place and Event. However, it needs a method and a methodological stance to be researched. This method is not given, it also has to be developed and researched in encountering the material, in the workshops.

(\*) There are many ways of understanding the word «Place» in relation to this. It may point to a connection between what *takes place* and the geographical place where it happens. It could also refer to a 'room' or space between human beings where it becomes possible for something to take place. Further we can look for the «place» in ourselves where transformation happens

(\*\*) The word «event» also has more possible meanings. From the «ordinary» meaning: something that happens, or takes place, to something *in* what happens. In the postmodern, French philosophical tradition «event» has a special position and meaning(s): Event is becoming and transformation; what might happen, *may-be*.

## **Research as transformation**

We often consider method as something given, something which is there, independent of the material to be researched. This position has been challenged from three different streams: (1) With thinking as a point of departure: the stream of French postmodern philosophy, (2) with action as the point of departure; the stream of Anglo-Saxon action research and (3) with the point of departure in the senses: German phenomenological oriented research traditions. All these traditions have in common: (1) the recognition of the participative role of the subject and (2) the extension of the researcher's responsibility as to include his/her participation and make it transparent.

Method is the path from question to answer, where the steps are taken and their reason is made clear. The conference is an invitation to explore this path and to describe it, based on concrete cases or «laboratory exercises». The laboratories will have different materials, which are connected to the different approaches in thinking, sensing or action. This will lead to a common text workshop on Monday, where our experiences related to the different methods will be put together in a collection of text fragments.

## **About the workshops**

The frame of this conference will be workshops where we explore these questions with three different points of departure:

**Sue Reed and David Crouch.** Sue Reed is from Ruskin Mill, England (<http://www.rmet.co.uk/>). She works with the place and landscape from a practical (walking as a method) and artistic approach. David Crouch is artist and Professor in cultural geography at the University Of Derby, UK. He works with landscape and space from a post-structural perspective. Saturday workshop: Self navigation individual in group: walking in the landscape with pattern and lines along an old track which was re-opened last summer. It goes over «Nanneberget» a hill/stone with names written on it, and up to the cow's summer dwelling («Fjødidi»). We will collect stones and (possibly, if time) draw the walk from memory. Questions to explore: Does the information from our shared experience of Friday evening inform our walk on Saturday? What is it that we take with us? Can I walk with a blank canvas? What are my encounters, obstacles and exits?

**Rigmor Haugen Jensen's** approach is philosophical (postmodern): walking in an inner landscape; trying to prepare a place for the Event/transformation. We will work with the last essay written by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) «Immanence: A life ...». As a background and preparation a part from Yeshayahu Ben-Aharon's lecture from Colmar, «Anthroposophy and post-modern Philosophy in Dialogue: Observations on the spiritualization of Thinking» and from *The Philosophy of Freedom* by Rudolf Steiner will be sent out, all of these texts exploring the borderline

between (ordinary) consciousness and (supersensible) Event. After a short introduction to Deleuze and some concepts in his text as a rough «map» we will explore our experiences walking in the (more or less foreign) landscape of this text.

Beside the two working groups, a third approach is represented by **Eli Beate Hestnes** (film) and **Torbjørn Eftestøl** (musician). They will try to research into specific appearances of hearing and sight and how these two senses relate to each other. Taking the water element as their point of departure they will each give a contribution, to let this element express itself through quiet film and sound improvisation, where picture and sound meditations based on the specific character and appearance of water will be explored. No finished piece of art will be presented at the conference, but we hope that the participants at the conference can take part in the process towards a artistic product: an expression with a great deal of improvisation and listening towards a possible «event» both in the encounter of performer/audience, and in one's own creative process.

*Method harvest:* After the workshop groups have shared their work with each other, we end with a writing session, where we will gather the findings related to method: The texts will be put together to a first sketch of a position-paper on transformative methods. **Aksel Hugo and David Crouch** will have the main responsibility for this writing workshop on Monday. Aksel Hugo is particularly interested in the concept of space and how this concept may be explored and re-examined within natural science, education and everyday life.

### **A continuation**

This second international conference furthers the impulse from “Doors to dialogue» (August 2008), which attempts to connect anthroposophy and postmodern thinking.

The dialogue which was started opened new doors to new dialogues, and made possible an exchange and a co-work between the more philosophical approaches which work towards spiritualization of thinking and more practical and artistic approaches taking their point of departure in the love to the earth, landscape and the local environment.

### **Cain and Abel**

In the process of planning the conference an image appeared related to a twofold path of transformation. This is the image of Cain and Abel; an Abel continually becoming Cain and thus gaining consciousness, and a Cain in the process of becoming Abel, reaching out for the spiritual. The question connected to this image is: *Could it be possible to become Cain without killing the living, to become Abel without thinking dying?»*