

# Four wooden walls and a displaceable roof

The event and a practised, multiple object

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***Socrates: “To ti ēn enai”.***

***What it was for that thing to be.<sup>1</sup>***

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<sup>1</sup> Long, C.P. (2004)

## **Abstract**

Heritage is a widely researched and differently addressed concept. Nowadays more and more attention is given to the “social forces” that practise heritage into a multiple and complex social phenomenon. This thesis aims to address this multiplicity by describing one object. What it was for “barrack 57” to be. An object that in 2009 was planned to be reconstructed on memorial site camp Westerbork but which was set on fire before this could be realised. This chain of events led to much media attention and discussions. “Barrack 57” was practised intensely. I have tried to collect texts that resulted from these practises by analysing news items, documentation and interviewing actors. Texts that were produced during and after the chain of events in 2009. Texts that could help to describe the multiplicity of “barrack 57”.

By foregrounding Actor Network Theory’s groups of actors, associations, practises and connectedness; and relate them to elements out of Social Systems Theory respectively environments and their recursively produced reduced complexity of them; I argue that multiplicity is formed out of the continues co-evolutionary path between groups of actors and their observed environments. A recursively produced object that changes with its environment. By addressing to events, indicative for a rapid observed change in these environments, this co-evolution can be described within a relatively short period of time.

**Key words:** multiplicity, events, associations, practises, connectedness, co-evolution.

## Foreword

Much research has been, and is being, done about what heritage is, what it entails and how we use and shape it. About how heritage helps to establish individual, community and national identities<sup>2</sup>. How modernisation, while changing societies, helped shape our pre-occupation with the past<sup>3</sup>. Or how heritage can be contested or dissonant, for instance in social or ethnical multidimensional societies<sup>4</sup>. More recently, projects such as *'The Dynamics of Memory'*<sup>5</sup> divert their focus into the realm of meaning, agency, communities, practises and politics. Heritage in its actuality.

Heritage appears to be a social and complex issue. In order to try and attempt to contribute, if only a bit, to understanding the “social forces” behind this issue I have written this thesis. A thesis that will focus on only a fragment of this complex issue. A thesis that will focus on the different practises that make “one” object alone, already multiple in nature. I aim to describe this multiplicity. The multiplicity of “barrack 57”.

In order to do so I was highly dependent on people that were willing to share their stories with me. First of all I want to thank Memorial centre Camp Westerbork, especially Mrs Gemma Groot Koerkamp who has helped me considerably in reaching these people and Mr Guido Abuys for his openness to provide me with information. I furthermore want to thank Mr Lampie, Mrs Josephus Jitta, Mr Schwarz, Mr Schelvis, Mr Gelber, Mrs Weijl and Mrs Dresden. They have all stayed in camp Westerbork during the Second World War. Their personal stories have all been impressive and shocking. By focussing on “barrack 57” in its actuality I somehow feel to neglect the load and impact of the objects historical context. Writing this down would however greatly exceed the ambitions of this thesis. I furthermore want to thank Mr Vis, secretary of the Central Jewish Council (CJO).

I am furthermore greatly in depth with my thesis supervisor Dr Martijn Duineveld who has guided me through the many and complex theoretical approaches and the realization of this document. And last but not least, the members of my family, friends and colleagues who have been very much involved.

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<sup>2</sup> Davis, 1979: 122 as cited in Timothy & Boyd, 2003: 89

<sup>3</sup> Brett, 1996: 15 as cited in Timothy & Boyd, 2003: 89

<sup>4</sup> Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996: 20 as cited in Timothy & Boyd, 2003: 264

<sup>5</sup> Van der Laarse & Van Vree, 2007-2010

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# 1. Introduction

I will start this thesis by introducing two news items. One released two months after the other. These two news items are amongst many others that were released during the spring of 2009.

*19-05-2009 VEENDAM/WESTERBORK – A historical barrack, one that already functions for decades as a farmers shed in Veendam, will this year return to Memorial centre camp Westerbork. Camp Westerbork, from where more than a hundred thousand Jewish Dutch citizens were deported once contained hundreds of barracks. In the barrack, known as “barrack 57”, batteries used to be dissembled during the war. It is one of the few remaining constructions out of that time. The barrack will be carefully broken down, plank by plank, and re-constructed and restored on the former site of camp Westerbork<sup>6</sup>.*

*20-07-2009 VEENDAM/WESTERBORK – Just as barrack 57 was to be reconstructed it has burned down. More than fifty years did it function as a farmers shed in Veendam. But on Sunday morning the entire barrack was destroyed in a fire. Once, Anne Frank like many others, had to disassemble batteries in it. What remains is a few meters long photograph of the building and many stunned visitors that talk the director of camp Westerbork<sup>7</sup>.*

For days, it was an important item in newspapers and journals. It was given a name “barrack 57”. It was placed into historical context and it was connected to Anne Frank. It was the first time I personally heard about this “barrack 57”. All of a sudden “barrack 57” had become famous. People talked about it. There had been a chain of events about “barrack 57”. But what was it? What was all the fuzz about? In order to investigate this object, “what it was for that thing to be”, I wrote down a few “seemingly” simple questions that came to mind:

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<sup>6</sup> Rtv Noord, news item (text underneath audio sample: 19-05-2009

<sup>7</sup> NOS, news item (text underneath audio sample): 20-07-2009

- What was this object?
- What did it mean for people?
- Why did it become so important?
- What was who planning to do with it?

In order to answer these questions I had to collect stories. Stories of people. People that had something, anything to say about “barrack 57”. Stories aimed at answering one or more of the questions presented above. Stories that could describe how it could be possible “barrack 57” was such an important object. I wanted to focus on the period in which the newspaper articles appeared. The events that made “barrack 57”, for me, a known object, a discussed object, a social object. I wanted to approach “barrack 57” and what happened to it through social theory. Social theory that would not just focus on the object itself, or how it was perceived, but rather on the people that acted, re-acted and interacted upon “barrack 57”. I wanted to focus on the social business that was “barrack 57”.

In fact, in case of “barrack 57”, its sudden importance and discussed relevance seemed to be entirely embedded within the social. Its relevance and importance did, at least for me as an observer, not exist before the events, before the news items and before the discussions that followed. Through social actions, re-actions and interactions, this object emerged and existed to me. I became curious. I started to investigate. However in my attempt to answer the previously stated questions, which I asked many different other observers, I encountered there were many others for which the object existed differently. Who had different associations with it. Who acted, reacted and interacted differently. It made and, as I will argue later, until this day makes “barrack 57” not only a social but also a multiple object. In order to describe this multiplicity in this thesis, I am focussing on Actor Network Theory and Social Systems Theory. Theories that both approach the multiplicity of objects, yet in different ways.

Problem statement: *What it was for “barrack 57” to be*

Objective: *Better understand the multiplicity of “barrack 57” during and after the chain of events that took place in 2009.*

In order to reach this objective and answer the problem statement I will, in the next chapter, start by describing my theoretical framework. It is the result of a discovery phase through social theory. Therefore I will start by generally introducing some different main approaches in social theory, respectively: positivism, essentialism, realism and constructivism. Then I will shortly discuss Foucault's ideas about subjectivity for they are by many considered fundamental to elements out of Actor Network Theory. Thereafter I will introduce and describe Actor Network Theory and how it approaches the multiplicity of object. However beyond Actor Network Theory, I will also introduce several elements discussed in Luhmann's Social Systems Theory. Elements I learned about during my discovery phase of the different social approaches. Elements which might be compatible with Actor Network Theory and which, as I argue, cannot be ignored when describing the multiplicity of "barrack 57". In chapter three, the methodology, I will describe how I have put theory into practise. How I gathered data and the way this data has been used to reflect upon theory again. In chapter four I will describe my empirical results. A chapter that will describe more profoundly what it was for "barrack 57" to be. In chapter five however, I will reflect these descriptions back to theory. This in order to not only describe what it was and is for "barrack 57" to be, but also understand the multiplicity and social forces behind its "existence". In chapter six I will shortly sum up and conclude about "barrack 57" and its multiplicity and in chapter seven a discussion will follow about the theoretical compatibility and wider relevance of this thesis and its findings.



## 2. Theoretical Framework

As stated in my foreword, part of the preparation of this thesis has been a personal discovery phase through social theory. More specifically the social about objects. What will be described in this chapter comes forth out of that discovery phase. I will start by introducing the concept of “observing object” and how this is generally “theoretically” approached. Then I will shortly introduce Foucault’s ideas about “observing object”. Ideas that have been fundamental to the notion of object formation and many other approaches in constructivism and post-structuralism. Based on that I will introduce Actor Network Theory. However beyond Actor Network Theory there where some elements out of a different theory of which I think they could be compatible with, or cannot be ignored when “barrack 57” as a multiple object. Elements described by Social Systems Theory and will be introduced lastly. Together they will shape the way I will approach “barrack 57”.

### 2.1 Introducing “social theory and object”

In order to describe the observing of object, and thus “barrack 57” lets first introduce the concept of object itself. What is an object? This question has dazzled us for over thousands of years. In ancient Greece, philosophers already wrote, lectured and discussed amongst each other in order to relate to societies, politics ethics and laws, to nature, universals, rules and essences<sup>8</sup>. It was there were the first relativists and essentialists argued , on record, about the subjectivity and objectivity of observing; observing objects<sup>9</sup>.

In sociology this discussion continues. There are positivist, essentialist, realists and constructivists among many others which all try to explain and/or describe the social about observing objects. According to positivist and essentialist stances, one can objectively observe “things” thus also objects, both natural as well as social as long as the observer distances him/herself from that which is observed. *‘There are ‘facts’ which we can gather on the social world, independently of how people interpret them’*<sup>10</sup>. It means an observer is able

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<sup>8</sup> *Protegoras versus Socrates in Plato’s Theaetetus*

<sup>9</sup> *Durant, 1939*

<sup>10</sup> *May, 2001: 11*

to see objects as they really are. There is a reality to observe. He/she is able to see truth, cause and effect as well as logic, as long as the observer is not directly involved in the object under observation. In contradiction to this claim, a realist *'would not necessarily assume that we can 'know' the world out there independently of the ways in which we describe it'*<sup>11</sup> meaning that according to realists, an observer is subjected to social processes when observing object. However, in realism it is not denied that there is a world out there, a world with essences and universals. A world of truths. A reality, and thus one real object. *'Normally to be a realist in philosophy is to be committed to the existence of some disputed kind of being (e.g. material objects, universals, causal laws; propositions, numbers, probabilities; efficacious reasons, social structures, moral facts)*<sup>12</sup>.

Constructivism on its turn however challenges these truths and notions of world and object. One of its basic principles, one that is shared throughout different constructivist approaches is that dualism, the dualism between the biophysical reality and the social experience or observation as previously described according to realism, is challenged<sup>13</sup>. Instead and according to Freudenburg, Frickel & Gremlin (1995) "constructivists" call into attention: *'mutual contingency or conjoint constitution: what we take to be physical facts are likely to be strongly shaped by social construction processes, and at the same time what we take to be "strictly social" will often have been shaped in part by taken for granted realities of the physical world'*<sup>14</sup>. In this sense, the boundaries between the world out there, the objective object, the truth, the physical, the universal; and our understanding of it, the observation, the interpretation, the subjective; is crossed. This crossing means that every aspect of life, every truth, every logic, every essence and every taken for granted rule as well as object is constructed. Constructed through social processes. Instead of a dialectal process of one territory, the physical, the world out there; versus the other territory, the social; there is no territory. There is no dialectal process. All is intertwined, all are "social constructions". "Things" are social constructions. Truths, explanations, logic, everything. Object thus as well. But what than is object? How to describe the construction or formation of object?

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<sup>11</sup> May, 2001: 13

<sup>12</sup> Bhaskar 1993: 308 cited in May, 2001:12

<sup>13</sup> Freudenburg, Frickel & Gremlin, 1995

<sup>14</sup> Freudenburg, Frickel & Gremlin, 1995: 361

Describing “constructivism” more generally than above is hardly possible. Describing “constructivism” more extensively is however tricky as well. It is a point of departure. From this moment onwards, quit soon, scientists start describing constructions by mentioning relationships<sup>15</sup>, semiotics<sup>16</sup>, power/knowledge<sup>17</sup>, systems<sup>18</sup>, and actors<sup>19</sup> amongst many others. All with their own focus, their own explanations, their own stand-points, discussions and their own language.

In this thesis I will select one of these approaches. An approach compatible with the concept of object formation<sup>20</sup>, called Actor Network Theory. I will however start the next sub-chapter by introducing Foucault. His Power/Knowledge approach which describes social processes of observation are the foundation of, or parallel many other constructivist theories, including Actor Network Theory<sup>21</sup>. Furthermore I will later on in this chapter discuss some elements out of Social Systems Theory which might be compatible with that of Actor Network Theory; although between many other elements in the three different theories , controversy in their way to relate to and describe the social exists.

## 2.2 Foucault’s social world

In this sub-chapter I aim to explain some of Foucault’s ideas about objects. About knowledge, power and observation. Many of these ideas have been fundamental for later work on object formation; also in Actor Network theory. However before introducing some of his ideas, I will first of all shortly introduce Foucault himself.

Michel Foucault was ‘a French historian an philosopher associated with structuralist and post-structuralist movements<sup>22</sup>’. During his live (1926-1984)<sup>23</sup> he published many critical and controversial ideas about an enormous range of subject matters such as: ‘the history of

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<sup>15</sup> Gergen, 2009

<sup>16</sup> Fairclough, 2003

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, 1980

<sup>18</sup> Luhmann, 1984

<sup>19</sup> Latour & Woolgar, 1976

<sup>20</sup> Duineveld & Assche, 2010

<sup>21</sup> May, 2001: 16

<sup>22</sup> Gutting, 2011

<sup>23</sup> Gutting, 2011

science, the history of sexuality, European legal, political and institutional history<sup>24</sup> amongst many others. And like the diversity of subject matters *'his discussions range across disciplines as diverse as psychiatry, medicine, economics, linguistics .....geography, philosophy and ethics to mention only a few'*<sup>25</sup>. Often considered, by others, as a critical philosopher<sup>26</sup> he states in his discussions about these disciplines that they often *'purport to offer scientific thrust about human-nature that are, in fact, often mere expressions of ethical and political commitments of a particular society'*<sup>27</sup>. Thus truths that vary with their society. Truths as being discursively "produced" in them. In this notion of truth he states about his own work, *'I do not write a book so that it will be the final word; I write a book so that other books are possible, not necessarily written by me'*<sup>28</sup>. But what exactly did Foucault write?

According to Foucault rules and truths embedded in the social are formed through power/knowledge relations. These relations are by Foucault (1975) explained as follows: *'We should admit that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'*<sup>29</sup>.

It is in these relations that truths, or better said 'claims to truth'<sup>30</sup> are formed. In this power/knowledge relationship, power and knowledge depend on, and support each other. Rules and truths are not only produced through the power administered to a certain discourse, through a discourse's social position in the system. But also, discourses themselves gain and "possibly" maintain a certain position through the claiming of absolute truth<sup>31</sup>. Discourses in their doing, *'refer to a group of statements which structure the way a thing is thought and the way we act on the basis of that thinking'*<sup>32</sup>. They are the structures behind socio-cultural expression. Discourses produce the world for those subjected to them.

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<sup>24</sup> O'Farrell, 2005: 3

<sup>25</sup> O'Farrell, 2005: 3

<sup>26</sup> Gutting, 2011

<sup>27</sup> Gutting, 2011

<sup>28</sup> Foucault, 1971:162 cited in O'Farrell, 2005: 9

<sup>29</sup> Foucault, 1975:27

<sup>30</sup> Rose,2001:144

<sup>31</sup> Rose, 2001

<sup>32</sup> Rose,2001:140

They do so productively. Not, by imposing truths and regulations about the way to relate to the world upon those subjected to them, rather, they offer the very foundations of the way, those subjected to them, relate to the world. If discourses produce the world as the ones subjected to them know it. Than “all”, including discourse itself, are under their spell. Truth, things, objects, they all are produced, they all are socially constructed.

If truths, things and objects are all defined in, assembled by and observed through social structures, through discourses, producing the world for those subjected to them, how then exactly does this producing take place?

According to Foucault in his study of the prison system *‘a corpus of knowledge, techniques, ‘scientific’ discourses is formed and becomes entangled with the practise of power to judge’*<sup>33</sup>, the power to observe, to do, to be. In this sense, knowledge becomes more than a passive reflection about our understanding of the world. It becomes knowledge through discourse, through its thoughts and acts, through its technology, and by doing so it is inherently entangled with the power that enables, supports, acknowledges, privileges it. Discourse is a political and technological matter of knowing. Foucault stretches as well that discourse, in its politics and technology: *‘is diffuse, rarely formulated in continues, systematic discourse; it is often made up of bits and pieces; it implements a disparate set of tools and methods’*<sup>34</sup>. It cannot be localized in specific institutions or apparatus. What institutions, organisations and apparatus do according to Foucault is regarded as *‘micro-physics of power’*<sup>35</sup>. In other words, institutions, organisations and apparatus exercise parts of discourse rather than that they are discourse.

Techniques within these micro-physics of power are used as strategies in a sense *‘that its effects of domination are attributed to dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics , techniques and functioning’s;.. one should decipher in it a network of relations’*<sup>36</sup>; society. This network is not a homogeneous group or one minded set of observers, groups of observers or institutions dominated through discourse. Rather, it is constantly in tension, in struggle in contradiction, in question. Therefore, power has to be exercised rather than possessed. Exercised through techniques. It furthermore is not given to certain classes within society

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<sup>33</sup> Foucault, 1975:23

<sup>34</sup> Foucault, 1975:26

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, 1975:26

<sup>36</sup> Foucault,1975:26

but is exercised through society as a whole. *'Power is articulated through a whole series of complex mechanisms'*<sup>37</sup>, in it institutions, organisations, apparatus, humans, they all play their part, exercise and are subjected to it. They are part of discourse.

In order to decipher the politics and technology of knowledge in power/knowledge relations in other words, in order to decipher and approach discourse one has to: firstly, regard all "things", even "truths" as "complex social functions"; secondly, see "acts" as techniques of the exertion of power; thirdly, assert that these "techniques" lay at the basis of "knowledge", of "truths" of our understanding and approach of "things", of our understanding of "objects"; and fourthly, therefore approach "all known" as the intersection between power and knowledge<sup>38</sup>.

By describing Power/Knowledge relations as fundamental to our way of observing and approaching the world, Foucault introduced complex social process behind "all known". Social processes in which observations emerge out of the intersection between power and knowledge. Power and knowledge as discourse. Discourse which on its turn is not a static and stable body of knowledge and power but rather; diffuse and made out of bits and pieces, parts of it exercised by institutions in networks of relations. Political networks of relations in which there are struggles, manoeuvres, techniques and dispositions. According to Foucault, one has to decipher the acts and techniques, which are used by different institutions in their networks of relations, in order to decipher the discourse of which they are part. To decipher the structures behind socio-cultural expression. This however implies that according to Foucault there are still structures to be unravelled. As we will be moving from Foucault's discourse analysis into the realm of Actor Network theory, these structures will however be more or less abandoned<sup>39</sup>. Through Actor Network theory, it will not be discourse that behind <sup>40</sup> institutions, bits and pieces implemented in their "practises". Neither will there be one single discourse, or one order of socio-cultural expression to be deciphered. Through Actor Network theory, one foregrounds practises and associations in order to approach the social. By introducing practises and associations, I am moving into the Actor Network domain.

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<sup>37</sup> Foucault, 1975:27

<sup>38</sup> Foucault,1975:25

<sup>39</sup> Mol, 2002: 63

<sup>40</sup> Mol, 2002: 64

### 2.3 Multiplicity according to Actor Network Theory

Actor Network Theory developed during the eighties amongst French scholars as Michel Callon and Bruno Latour. It was later adopted by other researchers such as John Law and Annemarie Mol. Originally it was aimed at describing technological innovations and scientific knowledge creation<sup>41</sup>; the processes of observation, however quickly advanced to explain many social phenomena.

The first thing I notice when reading about the Actor Network Theory is that there are different interpretations of the word “social” in social sciences. There are scientists who use “social” as the outcome of variances in their fields of study, variances which can be explained as “social”; and there are other scientists who, like Foucault, take-up that where the previous scientists stop and focus on approaching “social” concept itself. They try to do so by ‘*tracing associations*’<sup>42</sup>; associations of “things” and the way they are assembled and related with other “things” in “social” processes. It are these assemblages of associations to which these other scientists are bound. This on the one hand limits their scope, but on the other broadens the possibilities in which the relevance of doing so is revealed. For them, this is the true science of the “social”. They are doing Actor Network Theory.

Actor Network Theory focusses on: ‘*trails of associations between heterogeneous elements*’<sup>43</sup>; which shift or better said, are assembled, accordingly, possibly and irregular at any given state, event or discovery. Instead of having as a starting point “social ties” in order to demonstrate the world out there, Actor Network theory investigates ‘*the traces left by the birth and producing of associations and the assemblages and re-assemblages of these associations and their heterogeneous elements; and ends, in most fortunate cases with describing some “social ties” making up, and within: “a world of realities”*’<sup>44</sup>. Law (2004) describes this world as ‘*a generative flux of forces and relations that work to produce particular realities*’<sup>45</sup>. A world which can be messy, irregular, beyond our understanding and constantly changing, but in which entities can still be made definite<sup>46</sup>, or non-social<sup>47</sup> or

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<sup>41</sup> Learning theories.com

<sup>42</sup> Latour, 2005:7

<sup>43</sup> Latour, 2005:5

<sup>44</sup> Latour, 2005:8

<sup>45</sup> Law, 2004:7

<sup>46</sup> Law, 2004:2

physical or characteristic. However, in this world of entities, there are no structural divisions. It is when distinctions, inclusions, exclusions and other rankings are created, or named, or better said assembled between heterogeneous elements<sup>48</sup>. They are associated. But who is doing the associating? According to Latour (2005) it are observers who assemble and observers who associate<sup>49</sup>.

Observers on the one hand assembling, and the way entities are assembled and associated in relation to other entities in order to become, on the other, is by Law (1999) described as “performativity” and “relational materiality”<sup>50</sup>. He calls them the “two stories” of Actor Network theory in which the central question is raised: *‘how it is that things get performed (and perform themselves) into relations which are relatively stable and stay in place’*<sup>51</sup>.

How than can these “two stories of actor network theory” help me to describe the multiplicity of object?

According to Mol (2002) and related to the “two stories” described by Law previously, objects are enacted<sup>52</sup>; they are practised. *‘If practises are foregrounded there is no longer a single passive object in the middle, waiting to be seen from the point of view of seemingly endless series of possibilities’*<sup>53</sup>. Instead, objects become objects of “manipulation”<sup>54</sup>, multiplied through practises. Practises, all with possibly another manipulated object. An object that is practised through assembling and associating; through “relating” between heterogeneous elements of humans and non-humans, agencies and structures, bigger and smaller, blacks and whites, truths and falseness’s<sup>55</sup>.

Although these practises and relations could lead to differently “manipulated” objects, objects of differences, there are ties between the practises<sup>56</sup>; the practises themselves are “related”. They are in networks. They describe, interact, react, cooperate, contest; they

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<sup>47</sup> Latour, 2005:5

<sup>48</sup> Law, 1999

<sup>49</sup> Latour, 2005:153

<sup>50</sup> Law, 1999

<sup>51</sup> Law, 1999:4

<sup>52</sup> Mol, 2002

<sup>53</sup> Mol, 2002:5

<sup>54</sup> Mol, 2002

<sup>55</sup> Law, 1999

<sup>56</sup> Mol, 2002:5



practise, not “just alone” but with each other. Practises somehow ‘*hang together*’<sup>57</sup>. They hang together around an object, an object of relations. They perform on a stage. Thus, “performativity” is or can be more than a set of operations reducible to a homogeneous group of observers or practisers. Instead “performativity” can be seen as the hanging together, practising and manipulating of an object, and each other, between heterogeneous groups of observers. Practises that could be routinized, practises as culture. And while they perform, on stage, the act is reality. There is a truth, and object, and it is enacted.

However this hanging around and maintaining or bringing into existence an object means there needs to be something to “hang together” around about. There needs to be a stage. One cannot have practises and network of practises without having an object. And this object needs to be something more than just something to cast a glances upon. Something that would trigger possibly an endless array’s of possible perspectives, something that could never be touched or smelled or manipulated or practised. Something more than perspectives on objects triggered by the internal system specific operations of observers. If objects are to be practised and manipulated, we need objects that are there, possibly coming from the past (although we come back to that later), restricting our present, objects coming into existence, objects that are reachable, touchable and objects, past and present, which cooperate<sup>58</sup>. Objects in this sense act as well and they do it not alone. Objects just as observers “hang together” with other objects and elements. They too are the heterogeneous group of elements. There is “relational materiality”.

But even now, by having described “performativity” and “relational materiality” there still is a problem. It is not just that “relational materiality” is performed. Nor is it just the case that “performativity” is the enactment of related material elements. There is no dialectical process. There is no territory of the one, and territory of the other. As I could recall, Law stated there were no blacks and whites, there were no distinct features. When I previously mentioned practises as the assembling of heterogeneous elements, these where human- as well as non – human elements just as is the case with objects in their “relational materiality”. Practises consist out of human and non-human things just as objects do. They need messengers, receivers, personal interpretations, skills, techniques, languages, texts, papers, pens,

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<sup>57</sup> *Mol, 2002:5*

<sup>58</sup> *Mol, 2002:24*

computers, satellites, money, food and so on. It means crossing the subject/ object divide twice<sup>59</sup>. It means that objects are part of practises. Objects perform, they are enacted through and are part of “performativity” and “relational materiality”. And it means there is no more a division between the knowing and the known. Between subjects that know and objects that are known<sup>60</sup>. It means a flux<sup>61</sup>.

In this flux there is no order, but rather, modes of ordering<sup>62</sup>. Observers, or for the simplicity of it, groups of them, hang around the object and interact with it and with each other and change or enact, accordingly or are being erased. They, the observers are constantly associating, ordering and communicating.

They are doing so in networks. Networks which are open and in which new links and associations are made constantly<sup>63</sup>. As already stated previously, the groups of observers however do not slowly converge into a homogenous group of observers through these networks. Inside each group there is connectedness. Connectedness with theories, connectedness with past practises and connectedness with what makes sense. The group, or paradigm, or culture or (..) is the easiest way to connect for an observer and there is cleavage. It takes translation to bridge this cleavage. This does not only take linguistic skills, but also needs technical adaptations and different states of mind<sup>64</sup>. The connecting as well as the bridging, they all take practise.

By using the Actor Network approach, practises are foregrounded. I am altering my scope from looking at possibly endless “systems” of perspectives, to looking at events, practises, performance. Events in which objects are enacted and manipulated. Events in which objects practise and are practised. Events which depend on the “nature” of the object as well as the nature of the practitioners while they are together “hanging around” that object. While they practise in networks.

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<sup>59</sup> *Mol,2002,40*

<sup>60</sup> *Mol,2002:46*

<sup>61</sup> *Law,2004:7*

<sup>62</sup> *Mol,2002:70*

<sup>63</sup> *Mol,2002*

<sup>64</sup> *Mol,2002*

### 2.3 Multiplicity according to Social Systems Theory

In Actor Network Theory, objects, things, humans and non- humans, *'take their form and acquire their attributes in relations with other entities'*<sup>65</sup>. They form and are in dynamic networks of associations. But as discussed by Stadler one might question *'why they develop at all. Why does an actor act and why are networks dynamic?'*<sup>66</sup> According to Couldry *'ANT's spatial virtue is connected with a limitation, which is ANT's relative neglect of time, at least as a dynamic process that continues to transform networks after they have been formed'*<sup>67</sup>. These are questions that deal not only with a description of the actuality of associations in networks, but rather with the continuity of them. Where they came from and where they are going. Why do they "transform"? Moreover the connectedness, as explained by Mol as the reason why networks do not turn into a homogenous group of observers is still not thoroughly discussed. Something that might be of considerable importance when describing the multiplicity of objects.

Therefore, in this subchapter I want to introduce some elements out of Social Systems Theory that according to Fuchs<sup>68</sup> are compatible with some parts of Actor Network Theory and which add descriptive power about the social processes behind object with the emphasis on a network's continuity and connectedness. However before doing so, I will first more broadly introduce Social Systems Theory.

The father of Social Systems Theory is Nicolas Luhmann (1927-1998)<sup>69</sup>. He was a German scholar that wanted to design a theory that could approach and describe all "social" about society including truth's, essences, logic and observations.. In order to do so Luhmann approached society as:

*'a complex system of communications which has differentiated itself horizontally into a network of interconnected social subsystems. Each of these systems reproduces itself recursively on the basis of its own system-specific operations. Each of them*

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<sup>65</sup> Law, 1999:3

<sup>66</sup> Stadler, 1997

<sup>67</sup> Couldry, 2003:6

<sup>68</sup> Fuchs, 2001

<sup>69</sup> Huysmans: 2009

*observes itself and its environment, but whatever they observe is marked by their unique perspective, by the selectivity of the particular distinctions they use for their observations*<sup>70</sup>.

Society thus as a complex system of communications. But let's start by explain what a system entails.

*'Environments are seen as overly complex and systems continue themselves by a selective internal reconstruction of this complexity. Because the environment always contains much more possibilities than the system can respond or adapt to, systems have to make this complexity accessible by 'reducing' it, and by selective transforming the undeterminable complexity of the world into a concrete meaningful complexity*<sup>71</sup>. It appears that according to Social Systems Theory, systems emerge out of their continues interaction with the environment. A system's attempt of approaching it, understanding it or maybe even being in it.<sup>72</sup> As explained by Van Assche and Verschraegen, *'a system differentiated itself from a more complex environment and constituted an internal state of reduced complexity. The (maintenance of the) boundary between the system and its environment is therefore the hallmark of every kind of system*<sup>73</sup>. In order for a system to endure, it thus needs to set its boundaries and produce or reproduce them constantly. Boundaries to their internal state of reduced complexity. *'They are being forced to select. Every complex state of affairs is based on a selection of relations among its elements, which it uses to constitute and maintain itself*<sup>74</sup> There are thus boundaries towards a systems way to be in an overly complex environment, boundaries to what is being selected. Therefore, and in order for a system to continue an internal state of reduced complexity, *'it needs to reproduce itself from itself by its own elements*<sup>75</sup>. A system reproduces itself recursively through system specific operations. This concept is called "Autopoiesis".

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<sup>70</sup> Luhmann, 1984: 12

<sup>71</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 266

<sup>72</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 266

<sup>73</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 266

<sup>74</sup> Luhmann, 1984: 25

<sup>75</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 266

A biological cell is produced and reproduces through a network of cellular reactions and interactions. As long as this reproduction of cells out of other cells continues the organism lives, the organic system exists. Thoughts just like cells are produced from previous thoughts and will form the basis for new thoughts. They together form a system, the psychic system; consciousness. Like the organic systems, the psychic system will continue as long as thoughts can be produced from previous thought and will form the basis for new thoughts. These thought are always reproduced from within the system. One is not able to be in another person's consciousness. There is a recursive chain of operations specifically tied to a specific system. But what then is this chain of operations that represents social systems.<sup>76</sup>

In social systems emphasis is put on communications. In order for one psychic system to "transfer" thought to another psychic system, one has to communicate. It are communications themselves which *'according to Luhmann constitute a further kind of operation giving rise to a further kind of system'*<sup>77</sup>. The social system. Past communications that are used in present communications and which will form the basis for future communications. Like thoughts, there is a recursive chain of operations regarding communications. It is important to take into account that according to Luhmann, communications are produced through previous communications and not on thoughts. To keep a separation between the psychic and social systems and their recursive operations. *'What one says or writes can be interpreted in a way which is new and independent from the intention of the utterer. In this sense, a communication cannot be reduced to the transfer of a mental representation from a sender to a receiver'*<sup>78</sup>. It can however be used in future communications. Just as I have done now. Although physic and social systems reproduce themselves independent of each other and are not determined by each other they do depend on each other. They are part of each other's environments and it are these environments which systems turn into a concrete meaningful complexity. As Van Assche and Verschraegen state: *'psychic and social systems co-operate within the same medium of meaning and, owing to the use of the medium of language in both systems, they 'irritate' or affect each other'*<sup>79</sup>. They evolve.

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<sup>76</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008

<sup>77</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 267

<sup>78</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008:267

<sup>79</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 268

However, in order to describe social systems we have to take another step. As already mentioned previously according to Luhmann society is divided into social subsystems. Subsystems determined by functional differentiation. *'Society's functional differentiation, the different systems involved in spatial organization (politics, economy, architecture, etc.) are subject to their own different logics and they are driven by their own coding'*<sup>80</sup>. According to law, one is either innocent or guilty. In science something is true or false. Each system is thus producing its own distinctions and produces its own boundaries to what was, is or can be communicated. These subsystems can thus be approached as self-referential and operationally closed. They use their own logic and communication internal to their subsystem. All other social subsystems are therefore, like thoughts and organic systems, parts of the sub-systems environment. Each system creates its own reality, its own distinctions and blind spots through its own coding, logic and observations.<sup>81</sup>

Luhmann's, system specific operations and autopoiesis as well as the systems maintenance of its boundaries producing an internal state of reduced complexity are a somewhat different approach towards society when compared to Actor Network Theory's assemblages of associations, of observers that hang around an object and enact it whilst constantly, interacting, reacting, cooperating and contesting; Observers that practise, not "just alone" but with each other as a set of heterogeneous elements. If according to Luhmann society consists out of sub-systems in networks that observe and make distinctions through system specific operations, how then can we relate Social Systems Theory to object formation.

In order to approach object formation through Social Systems Theory, a system could be considered an observer. The system observes its environment through its internal logic and coding and by doing so produces a reduced complexity of what is observed. All within the maintained and produced boundaries of the system. Observations are thus made by the system whilst, by that same system connected to other observations that are already part of the system<sup>82</sup>. The observation of "physical" objects thus *'depends on its relations, not essential properties'*<sup>83</sup>. In this sense objects *'do not assume a fixed and constant position in*

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<sup>80</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008: 264

<sup>81</sup> Van Assche & Verschraegen, 2008

<sup>82</sup> Fuchs, 2001:3

<sup>83</sup> Fuchs, 2001: 9

*the network because of their essential properties'... rather they are... 'a field of relationships between... objects...that vary with their relationship'*<sup>84</sup>. According to Luhmann, observations of and distinctions given to objects are therefore dependable on that which has already been observed. That which is already part of the system's coding and internal logic. Distinctions are made. A system applies these distinctions to a certain part of the world; a certain environment, to which it relates.

Observations are therefore ordered and bound by the same evolutionary, self-referential path<sup>85</sup>. Each system, with its own internal logic and coding produces a different object within the boundaries of the system. This path gives "*meaning*"<sup>86</sup>; meaning to realities and meaning to objects. These meanings themselves lead to, but also need other meanings to connect with. Through paths of self-reference, re-actualisation, and connections to other meanings, a meaning, for some, changes into a reality: *meaning becomes the form of the world and consequently overlaps the difference between system and environment*<sup>87</sup>.

Luhmann thus describes that observations and distinctions are dependable to that which has already been observed. That what was already part of the system's borders, its reduced complexity of its environment. Something that could lay at the basis of what is by Actor Network Theory described as connectedness. In other words, the assemblage of an object and the meaning ascribed to the object depends on the actualities ascribed to these objects in preceding assemblages of associations. In this sense all meaning is dependable, and some connections are more probable than others. There is a certain kind of path dependency, evolutionary; always from within the system; or in case of Actor Network Theory, group of observers. Within this group, and by means of its internal logic and coding, distinctions are made and it are these distinctions that together shape what is observed. On its turn, the observation itself, coded accordingly and embedded within the internal logic of the system will be used to relate to new observations. It becomes entangled; a reality. A foundation on which new observations are assembled. A group of observers and its assembly of

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<sup>84</sup> Fuchs, 2001:16

<sup>85</sup> Luhmann, 1984

<sup>86</sup> Luhmann, 1984:59

<sup>87</sup> Luhmann, 1984:61

observations *'condenses and converges, in its core, on analytical truths, institutions, and other blind spots'*<sup>88</sup>.

## 2.4 Conclusion

So here we are, the end of my theoretical framework. A personal result of my discovery phase through some of the social theories. But how can I use these theories in order to reflect upon a multiple "barrack 57".

Actor Network theory describes that all observations are based upon assemblages of associations. These assemblages emerge out of the arranging and re-arranging of heterogeneous elements, human and non-human. All truths, essences, universals and objects are therefore considered as the outcome of such arrangements. Arrangements of elements which can still be made definite, but in which each division, inclusion, exclusion or connection is an enactment that produces these arrangements. In this line of reasoning one could therefore state that; objects consist out of, but can also be a part of other related elements; in Actor Network Theory called "relational materiality". And that this "relational materiality", the arranging of these related elements, is the enactment of that relationship by observers; in Actor Network theory called "performativity". It are thus observers as actors which are doing the enacting; they practise. Through the arranging and re-arranging of heterogeneous elements, objects exist; or better said are assembled. It could lead to differently assembled objects. Multiple objects. It does however not mean that that objects only exist in homogenous groups of observers. Instead, groups of actors describe, interact, react, cooperate, develop, interfere, contest; they practise, not "just alone" but with each other. It means their practises "hang together".

Moreover, there are no structural divisions between "relational materiality" and "performativity". Between groups of actors and object. Groups of actors and their practises can be elements themselves in the arrangement of another actor. Related elements and objects on their turn can influence the way they are arranged; object perform. It means a flux. A flux in which actors as well as objects perform and are performed through arrangements and re-arrangements.

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<sup>88</sup> Fuchs, 2001:11



In this flux there is no order but rather there are modes of ordering. Modes of ordering that emerge in networks of groups of actors which are constantly, observing, associating and communicating. It is an open network in which new elements can be introduced. However this does not mean that these actor converge into one homogenous group of actors enacting one and the same object. Through there typical arrangements of heterogeneous elements; their owns assemblages of associations, actors connect observations. It is called the connectedness in a group of actors.

Actor Network Theory focusses strongly on actualities. The actual arrangement and re-arrangement of associations. However in this last insight, that of connectedness, it appears there are always some kind of arrangements already established. There is some kind of continuity. It is this last insight that I use in order to introduce some elements out of social systems theory.

According to Luhmann environments are overly complex and a system can be approached as, and continue themselves by, reproducing a reduced complexity of that environment. They can be recognised according to their self-referential, system specific operations. Society is by Luhmann approached as a system in which communications are the self-referential, system specific operations. Communications that are based on previous communications and which will form the basis for new communications. Society is according to Luhmann however furthermore made up out of many and complex social sub-systems. All with their own reduced complexity of their environment. A reduced complexity with its own logic, codes and boundaries. In order for the system to continue and be in its environment it needs to set its boundaries and produce or reproduce this internal logic and coding constantly.

In order to approach object formation through Social Systems Theory, a system could be considered an observer. Like groups of actors. The system observes its environment through its internal logic, coding and boundaries and by doing so observes object according to this reduced complexity. Observing the objects is therefore dependable on that which is already translated into the system's logic, coding and boundaries. That which has already been observed and which is already part of the reduced complexity of the system. Luhmann thus

describes that observations and distinctions are dependable to that which has already been observed. Something that could lay at the basis of what is by Actor Network Theory described as connectedness. In this sense all meaning is dependable, and some connections are more probable than others.

If groups of actors as well as social systems both can be approached as observers, could I then approach assemblages of associations as a system's reduced complexity of an environment with its logic codes and boundaries. They are both composed out of elements which are related to each-other by observers. If so, could I then also relate between the practises of groups of observers and system specific operations? System specific operations, in case of social systems, are composed out of communications. Practises are often approached as; descriptions, interactions, reactions, cooperation, contested claims; they are communications. If I continue comparing it would lead to the idea that groups of actors and their assemblages of associations that emerge in actualities and create modes of ordering would resemble social systems and their reduced complexities. However, modes of ordering are diffuse and emerge out of a flux of observers that constantly observe, communicate and assemble their associations. It therefore doesn't create order, but rather, modes of ordering, temporarily. This whilst systems are approached to reproduce themselves constantly by system specific operations; communications. The reduced complexities, there is continuity in them. Something that however might help us better understand the connectedness that exists in groups of actors and their assemblages of associations.

For now, and to establish common ground, I will focus upon practises that produce assemblages of associations. And while doing so, I will interpret them as addressing to similar phenomena as system specific operations which produce reduced complexities of their environment. On this common ground I have designed and will describe my methodology. Where the two theories "seem" to continue into differently explaining the social forces behind the formation of a multiple object will be used, in chapter five. This difference will be used in order to discuss how the multiplicity of "barrack 57" could be explained.

### 3. Methodology

As has been introduced previously, the objective of this thesis is to *better understand the multiplicity of “barrack 57” during and after the chain of events that took place in 2009*. But how exactly could this objective be approached.

#### 3.1 How to trace associations.

In a study based on Actor Network theory Tatnall stated: *‘the main advice on method suggested by the proponents of actor-network theory is to follow the actors’<sup>89</sup>*. Actors, or groups of them that make their presence individually felt<sup>90</sup>. Groups of actors that *‘compare, produce typologies, design standards, spread their machines, their organisations, their ideologies and their states of mind’<sup>91</sup>*. Groups of actors that practise. Through their practises I should be able to, for a certain extent, describe associations that together shape a multiple “barrack 57”. What I should be doing in this thesis is thus follow these practises in order to, as Latour described it: *‘trace associations’<sup>92</sup>*. But how exactly could I trace associations?

As Latour stated, *‘good inquiries always produce a lot of new descriptions’<sup>93</sup>*. Moreover and according to Lemke, interviews are a widely used method to clarify social processes in a detailed way<sup>94</sup>. However instead of asking a question, record the answer and move on, I wanted to encourage respondents to talk and explain their answers<sup>95</sup>, observe their practices, trace their associations. It were the interviewees that I considered to be the expert about the way they practiced “barrack 57”<sup>96</sup>. Experts on how they arranged and re-arranged their associations. I therefore did in-depth, unstructured interviews.

However, it were not only inquires that could tell me something about the way “barrack 57” was associated. I started this thesis by introducing two news items. News items that

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<sup>89</sup> Tatnall, 2002: 185

<sup>90</sup> Law, 1987 as referred to by Tatnall 2002: 184

<sup>91</sup> Latour, 2005:150

<sup>92</sup> Latour, 2005:7

<sup>93</sup> Latour, 1995:146

<sup>94</sup> Lemke, 1998

<sup>95</sup> Veal, 1992: 132

<sup>96</sup> Latour, 1995

described “barrack 57”; that included actor’s descriptions of “barrack 57”. Associations practised in the realm of media. According to Matheson, media is studied because of an *‘assumption that television, newspapers, texting and other widely used available communication forms play an important role in mediating society itself’*<sup>97</sup>. Mediating meaning. It allows us to analyze *‘how meaning is made differently in different media texts and therefore what different ways of seeing and thinking tend to be found there’*<sup>98</sup>. It thus seems to be rather good place to trace associations.

There is however also a critical notion about such an approach. According to Couldry in a discussion about the compatibility of Actor Network Theory with media studies he stated: *‘the special status given to ‘live’ media can be understood in actor-network terms, as the time when media’s status as mediation is most effectively black-boxed, because of the ‘direct’ link to events as they happen’*<sup>99</sup>. In other words, and although the quote is specifically aimed at live media, through media, actors can have “direct” access to events as they happen. This gives actors access to observe events but also provides opportunities to practise associations. For the sender to practise their own associations. This whilst naturalizing media, an actor on its own, as mediation. As Latour states: *‘mediation (in the general sense of the process of constructing technological--social hybrids) is both essential to modernity and rendered invisible, unthinkable, unrepresentable within it’*<sup>100</sup>. And as Couldry continues, *thus the mystification of media’s social function, which elsewhere I have analysed as the myth of the mediated centre, is not accidental but part of the effacement of technology’s embedding within the social that is characteristic of modernity itself’*<sup>101</sup>. It implies that an actor’s practises are not just communicated through media, but that media itself is an assembly of heterogeneous elements, an assembly of associations that include actors, tools and techniques which are part of the network itself. By analysing media, I was not only looking at one group of actor’s practises, but rather, I at different actors in a network practising. Nevertheless and when I approached it in this way, a good place to trace associations. Besides in depth interviews, I have therefore also gathered by the media

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<sup>97</sup> Matheson, 2005: 1

<sup>98</sup> Matheson, 2005:1

<sup>99</sup> Couldry, 2004:10

<sup>100</sup> Latour, 1993: 34 as cited by Couldry, 2004:4

<sup>101</sup> Couldry, 2004:4

practiced associations. By using these different techniques to gather data I was basically doing ethnography<sup>102</sup>.

### **3.2 Who's associations did I trace?**

In order to trace associations I had to follow actors; follow their practises. Not only would I be able to gather information about "barrack 57", but I would also be able to gather information about other groups of actors that were associated as being part of the network. About other actors that "hang around" the object. That formed network. In a sense I needed to penetrate this network. I needed to be introduced into it. During the spring of 2009 it was often "Memorial centre camp Westerbork", hereto forth "the memorial centre", which appeared in the news. They seemed to be firmly networked. They were by me considered a good point to start. From then onwards, and with the help of the memorial centre, I tried, and was allowed, to approach other actors in the network.

In this way I have interviewed Mr Guido Abuys, conservator of the memorial centre. I have interviewed survivors respectively; Mr Lampie, Mrs Josephus Jitta, Mr Schwarz, Mr Schelvis, Mr Gelber, Mrs Weijl and Mrs Dresden. They have all stayed in camp Westerbork during the Second World War. I have interviewed Mr Ruben Vis, secretary of the Central Jewish Council, hereto forth "CJO". All these people provided me with yet other actors to interview.

However, besides these people, and in order to try and include yet other actors with differently assembled associations, I also traced practised associations in "social" media. Media such as websites, newspaper items, you-tube and books.

### **3.3 How to analyse associations**

I recorded the interviews on tape and tried to collect as many practised associations as possible derived from written and broadcasted news items. Moreover I collected letters and other documents. Practises that in one way or another constituted associations that I could

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<sup>102</sup> Veal, 1992: 140

connect to “barrack 57”. In this ethnographic approach I considered them all as text. The term text is therefore used to cover printed materials, but also pictures, recorded music, film, and television..... basically any “cultural” product<sup>103</sup>. Fairclough approaches the way people act and interact in the course of social events as text. They either speak or write and this can be gathered by analysing both interviews and written documents<sup>104</sup>. All gathered information could thus be considered as text as the product from practises. Practises that constitute associations. I wanted these practised associations to speak for themselves, to present them not as mine, but as those from the interviewees. I will therefore, in chapter four, and in line with an ethnographic approach, extensively use quotations<sup>105</sup> in order to describe what it was for “barrack 57” to be.

### **3.4 Barriers and constraints**

By using an ethnographic approach I had two different kinds of data; interviews and data from “social” media. I was making choices what to include and exclude from analysis. What to ask about and what to ignore. By listening, reading, asking and interpreting, as a researcher, I was constantly evolving my understanding about the topic<sup>106</sup>. According to my own logic, with my own codes and boundaries. I was imposing my own view on the situation<sup>107</sup>. What I will thus present later-on in this thesis, for instance which actor is presented in which chapter, or which quotations are combined to tell a story, is the result of me practising “barrack 57” while observing and translating other actor’s practises. All my gathered texts have been in Dutch. It means that all the quotes I used, all the text I interpreted, needed to be translated into English. This of course enlarged the influence of my own practises regarding the data. Moreover, as I have been writing this thesis, new developments continue to change the situation at hand. What has been written down to describe the multiplicity of object in its actuality has thus, to some extent, already changed again.

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<sup>103</sup> *Veal, 1992: 141*

<sup>104</sup> *Fairclough, 2003*

<sup>105</sup> *Veal, 1992: 140*

<sup>106</sup> *Veal, 1992: 140*

<sup>107</sup> *Veal, 1992: 129*

### 3.5 Reflection on my research

Although the discussed barriers and constraints could be considered a part of the problems I encountered while doing research. Problems such as: how to translate Dutch expressions, how to ask good questions without following my own structures, or how I had to combine the different forms of data into one empirical story; there is one particular “thing” I want to focus upon when reflecting upon my research. It is the very fact that I tried to penetrate the network with the help of the memorial centre. It meant that all the interviewees were more or less part of that network. They represented groups of actors that were aware of each other. Although on the one hand this meant that I could better understand the way this object was formed within the network, I was not able to describe the way this object was formed out-side the network or in other, not connected groups of actors with different networks. Or if it was observed outside this specific network at all. At first I thought that, by analysing “social” media I could be able to identify groups of actors in these different networks. Networks with differently practised associations. However as it turned out, media itself was as a practitioner very much a part of the network that I tried to penetrate in the first place. As such, most of the messages that were published or broadcasted included the practises of already networked groups of actors.

It does however not mean there are no other groups of actors or other networks that have practised “barrack 57”. What about the police and the fire brigade, or all the other people that have a place in the history of former camp Westerbork. A camp which later on, after the second world war, turned into a prisoners camp, a repatriation camp, and even changed name from “Westerbork” into “Schattenberg” when it was used to “house” peoples from the Moluccas. I can conclude that the multiplicity of “barrack 57” in historical as well as temporary context greatly exceeds the scope of this thesis.

## 4. What it was for “barrack 57” to be

In this chapter I will present empirical data. The results of my ethnographic research. A presentation of texts which, according to me, describe what it was for “barrack 57” to be during and after the chain of events in the spring of 2009.

### 4.1 The owner of a functional object

On 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2009, somewhere around Veendam and in the middle of the night, a large agricultural shed burns down. The owner of the former shed is called Mr Eggers. The next day he explains to a television crew that the fire destroyed all his agricultural tools including two tractors and a shovel. As he states: *‘It is very painful because all my materials, all those things, all in once they are gone. I had tools of my grandfather, just simple things, but it means a piece of my personal history is gone’*<sup>108</sup>. The agricultural shed seemed to store valuable items, not only economically, but also personally. It functioned as such, a storage place. What was lost in the fire were the valuable items that it stored.

Mr Eggers wanted to build a new shed for his tools. A year before the fire he described the shed to a visiting television crew: *‘the front is rotten, the sides are rotten, the windows are broken. Through the middle is a gutter that leaks, consequently the roof trusses are rotten. Because of that the whole structure is out of balance’*<sup>109</sup>. The shed needed to be replaced and after many legislative difficulties in which replacement was, at first, denied<sup>110</sup>, Mr Eggers recently received a licence to do so. The old shed would on its turn go to the memorial centre who had expressed their interest in it. However before the old shed could be broken down it was lost, with everything in it.

Two days after the fire, in Gees, a group of people is gathering in Mr Oldejans’ backyard. There is a television crew, there are experts, members of the local historical society, bystanders and of course Mr Oldejans himself. They are all looking at a garage. There is something about it.

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<sup>108</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 21-07-2009

<sup>109</sup> Rtv Noord, news item (video sample): 19-05-2009

<sup>110</sup> NOS, news item (audio sample): 20-07-2009



Mr Oldejans explains: *'imagine, it is over 50 years old. It already stands for 50 years in Gees'*<sup>111</sup>. It functioned as a reformed association building and school before being replaced by a new building. At that time, the father of Mr Oldejans still saw use in it and placed parts of the building in his garden. It became a garage.<sup>112</sup> Now, many years later that garage is nearing its end<sup>113</sup>. In the long run I was planning to remove everything from the garage<sup>114</sup>. *'As long as it is not empty I will not break it down'*<sup>115</sup>. Also Mr Oldejan's garage was old and used to stored "things". And like Mr Eggers, Mr Oldejans eventually wanted to break it down<sup>116</sup>. Demolishing the garage however turned out to be not that simple.

Mr Hilbrands, chairman of the local history association, explained he was one of the members to demolish a camp Westerbork building in 1959 and re-build it in Gees. A building that would eventually wind up in Mr Oldejans backyard. Mr Oldejans and Mr Hillbrands always knew where the gardening shed came from. As Mr Oldejans explains *'I knew it (referring to the garage) came from camp Westerbork. In the long run I would ask them if they would be interested in it. However due to the fire in Veendam, everything went much faster than I expected'*<sup>117</sup>. Indeed, within three days after the fire that almost entirely destroyed "barrack 57" Mr Hilbrands, contacted the memorial centre. As Mr Hilbrands explains: *'I was afraid that the memorial centre would be disappointed. After all, there just a few rotten wooden window frames. Most surprisingly they were very enthusiastic'*<sup>118</sup>

Within a few days, the conservator of the memorial centre Mr Abuys, is visiting Mr Oldejans and his garage. He is looking for original traces of the former Westerbork barracks in it. He focusses not on the garage entirely but on pieces of it. The original pieces. The windows, they might be original, *'we can see that there is no other colour underneath the paint, I therefore think it is the original paint. I also think the windows are original, but it all takes further investigation in order to be sure'*<sup>119</sup>.

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<sup>111</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 23-07-2009

<sup>112</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 23-07-2009

<sup>113</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 23-07-2009

<sup>114</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample) : 23-07-2009

<sup>115</sup> NOS, news item (video sample: 23-07-2009

<sup>116</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 23-07-2009

<sup>117</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 23-07-2009

<sup>118</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 23-07-2009

<sup>119</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 23-07-2009

For Jan Eggers, his agricultural shed functioned to store valuable machines and tools that had personal significance. As such it was of importance. It was however old and rotten and ready to be replaced by a new shed. A shed that would take over the old shed's function and with it, its importance, to store "valuable things". Jan Eggers was however aware that the old shed was valuable for others. As he stated himself *'if you see how much value is attached to it on national level, then there is still a function for it'*. Although the old shed lost its function for Mr Eggers, it was planned to fulfil a new one. To become something else, for someone else. Also Mr Oldejans had a similar object in his garden. And also in Gees it was used to store things. Due to what happened to Mr Eggers' shed, and all the news items that followed, Mr Oldejans and Mr Hillbrands contacted the memorial centre. They somehow became aware, like Mr Eggers before, about that different function the object "might" have. Moreover, Mr Oldejans and Mr Hillbrands were not the only ones. After the fire more owners contacted the memorial centre.

## 4.2 Visiting the barrens

Two years after the events described above I am walking with Mr Lampie, who lived in camp Westerbork before being deported to Theresienstadt during the second world war, on a concrete path which leads through a grassy field. Here and there is a tree and there are mounts that create patterns on the field's surface. Small signs on the site of the concrete path indicate why the hills are there. When I am in the middle of the field I can see a watch tower all the way on the other site. Beside it are tracks of rails, symbolically curled up, and on the opposite site, a big wooden house. The commandants house. The field is bordered by forests on all sides. Here and there barb wired fences appear at the forest edge. On one side of the field immense radar disks are aimed at the sky. Where we are standing, in the middle of it all, is a monument made out of 102.000 stones<sup>120</sup> that represents all the people that have been deported from Westerbork during the Second World War. Mr Lampie explains, they are placed there to symbolise the terror that this field was once part of. There are more symbolic objects we encounter when walking over the concrete paths that cross the field. As we continue or walk over a cycling road, which is running straight through the whole scene,

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<sup>120</sup> [kampwesterbork.nl](http://kampwesterbork.nl)

we pass a maquette. It depicts the way this field once looked like. Mr Lampie explains. *'These days this place is almost park like. It is serene, quiet and green. There are people walking about. However, when I am walking here, the only thing I hear is noise'*.

As we walk on he stops at the side of a hill and states: *'this is where I lived. About a thousand of us. Now'*, while Mr Lampie is pointing at the hill, *'it looks big, but in fact, it was very small. They do not know the sizes. You get an impression in the museum. But that room is much too spacy. However, I cannot say what the actual spaces are. It was most certainly much too small back then'*.

As Mr Lampie points out, it is hard to get an impression about what former camp Westerbork was like. According to him something is wrong with the sizes. The hills are too big and the re-constructed room in the museum is too spacy. Too spacy when compared to what he remembers from the days when he was brought to Westerbork in 1943. The hill nor the room can describe living with almost a thousand other individuals in one barrack.

Nowadays the memorial centre attracts over 100.000 visitors a year. However the former site itself, where I am walking with Mr Lampie, attracts more than 300.000 visitors a year<sup>121</sup>. It is located a few kilometres away from the memorial centre. When visiting that site visitors often expect to see something of the former camp<sup>122</sup>. However as Mr Lampie already explained previously, it is very hard to get an impression. In a study conducted by TNS/NIPO in the spring of 2011, two years after all the commotion around "barrack 57", many visitors respond similarly when answering the question what could be improved by the memorial centre. What follows are some of these responses:

*'When possible, re-construct a few barracks for better insight about the camp'. 'Just like camp Dachau/ Sachsenhausen and several other camps, the re-construction of barracks even if they are not original. It gives a better understanding of structure, ambiance and overview of the camp'. 'Improve the experience of the camp site, also on the road to the site... to stimulate the senses'. 'Construct complete barracks, including their interior'<sup>123</sup>.*

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<sup>121</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item( video sample): 25-05-2010

<sup>122</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item ( video sample): 25-05-2010

<sup>123</sup> TNS/NIPO, questionnaire responses: 2011

The list goes on. It appears that visitors miss something when visiting the site. They do not see, hear, feel nor sense the same noise which Mr Lampie senses. The erected mounts, created 20 years ago in order to visualize where once buildings stood, do not longer serve as contextualisation. Some visitors therefore mention to place photos and more concrete information to support an impression of the site. But many more however upper the idea of reconstructing a barrack.

### 4.3 An object of monumental value

*'By losing the barrack, a piece of Dutch cultural heritage of historical and monumental value has been lost'*. This is what the Central Jewish Council hereto forth CJO, wrote to minister Plasterk of the ministry of Education, Culture and Science hereto forth OCW, after "barrack 57" burned almost entirely down on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2009. As representatives for the Jewish community in the Netherlands, they described "barrack 57" as an object of monumental value. An object that represented Dutch heritage. A cultural and historical object. In that same letter the CJO stretched that: *'by losing the barrack it has become harder to make history more tangible on the site camp Westerbok itself'*<sup>124</sup>. "Barrack 57" was considered as a tool, a means to make more tangible what camp Westerbok was like, during a particular period of time; the second world war. As Mr Vis, secretary of the CJO explains: *'there is almost nothing left out of that period. That makes it very hard to imagine what it was like back then, especially if you come there now and you only see a grassy landscape and radar disks'*. For the CJO, restoring and re-constructing an "original" barrack is of importance to create a "real" impression of what the camp was like. Such an object enables to make more tangible what people experienced back then. It adds value to the stories that have been written down. In a newspaper article shortly published after the release of the letter to minister Plasterk, the CJO continued adding value to "barrack 57" and stated it was significant to keep alive the memory of the Sjoa (holocaust)<sup>125</sup>.

The commotion around the loss of "barrack 57" resulted in chamber questions to Minister Plasterk. One of these questions entailed if "barrack 57" had monumental status and should

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<sup>124</sup> CJO, Letter to minister Plasterk: 20-07-2009

<sup>125</sup> NIK, news item (text sample): 20-07-2009

have been protected accordingly. Minister Plasterk responded that: *'the by fire destroyed barrack was not protected according to the monumental regulations from 1988. This barrack has not been recognised as a national monument in previous inventories. Neither was it protected by the province or municipality'*<sup>126</sup>. During further questions it became clear that there are more barracks known. If these barracks should be reconstructed on the former camp Westerbork site however not only depends on future assigned status (monumental or not) but also on the owners of these (parts of) barracks and the memorial centre camp Westerbork. Further discussion entailed the role of the municipality of Veendam which as I wrote earlier at first denied Mr Eggers a replacement for his shed. According to minister Plaster however the municipality followed its regulations accordingly and responded to the proposal in time. He adds that the building license was at first denied because the owner wanted to construct a new building that, on the basis of its new used surface exceeded the recently by the municipality determined development plan. Only after consultation between the municipality and the owner it became clear the remains of the old building would go to memorial centre camp Westerbork. On the basis of this knowledge did the municipality agree.<sup>127</sup> As he stated: *'My impression is that the municipality has agreed upon the construction of the new building by taking into account the cultural historical context of the barrack'*<sup>128</sup>. *'The municipality has responded to the owner's proposal within the lawful space of time..... there is thus no sign of any bureaucratic linger'*<sup>129</sup>.

#### **4.4 Visualization**

When State Mrs Veldhuijzen Van Zanten visited the memorial site of camp Westerbork on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January 2011 she stated:

*'What has happened here, we have to stay remembering. We cannot and may not forget; cannot set it aside neither. This place is the link between now and then, between good and evil. And because of that, and with that aim, this place has to remain. We did not*

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<sup>126</sup> Plasterk, R. H. A., Response to questions raised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chamber (text): 25-09-2009

<sup>127</sup> Plasterk, R. H. A., Response to questions raised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chamber (text): 25-09-2009

<sup>128</sup> Plasterk, R. H. A., Response to questions raised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chamber(text): 25-09-2009

<sup>129</sup> Plasterk, R. H. A., Response to questions raised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chamber(text): 25-09-2009

*understand that 40 years ago'. When all remaining parts of the camp that could be sold where, according to Mr Abuys as conservator of the memorial centre, shovelled into ditches in order to equalise the ground 'And 60 years ago we wanted to leave all memories behind and clear this place. Start over. This way a lot of remains of the camp have been cleared and lost. We now better understand that it has much more impact if you can see with your own eyes what happened then.* <sup>130</sup>

As further support, she offered to invest 1,6 million dollars in the restoration and conservation of the former camp commandants house, one of the few remaining “original” constructions of the former “durchgangslager”. “Barrack 57” was, like the commandant house also a still remaining object out of that time. It was, like the commandant’s house part of a bigger plan to adapt the former camp Westerbork site in such a way that visitors could better understand what it once was like<sup>131</sup>. That is, until it was lost in a fire.

The following anecdote, between a NOS news respondent and Mr Mulder as director of the memorial centre, shortly after the fire occurred, describes the way “barrack 57” was fitted into the same category as the camp commandant house. How it was considered to support the “visualization” of what happened as addressed by the State Secretary and previously by the CJO and why “visualization” was and until today is considered to be worthwhile, even highly important to realize.

*‘Why? Why did you want to reconstruct barrack 57 on its original location? There was a time when this was not the usual thing to do right?’ asked the news respondent. Mr Mulder responded: ‘I have changed my mind as well. Fifteen years ago I would have said, that is shoddy, we shouldn’t do that. This place has changed so dramatically. There is nothing there no more. All around us were plains and drift sands back then. Now it is “beautifully” hidden, the word beautifully I have to leave out, but it is totally hidden in the forest.* <sup>132</sup>

In this first part of the anecdote a few things happen. First of all, an idea has changed. Now, compared to fifteen years ago. Then, they wanted a place of significance, of symbols, a place to pay respect to what happened, but not a place reconstructed to become what it once looked like. Now, they do want to reconstruct objects on the site. Why did it change?

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<sup>130</sup> Veldhuijzen Van Zanten, speech at Westerbork (text): 18-01-2011

<sup>131</sup> Rtv Drenthe, news item (video sample): 25-05-2010

<sup>132</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 19-07-2009

Secondly, a bit of a side-track but possibly of importance, demonstrated is the weight of the place. The word beautiful to describe the place's surroundings are considered inappropriate. An inappropriate description due to the place's past. Observations and descriptions are limited because of the place's past, and what it stands for. Like Mr Vis pointed out previously, it's an emotionally charged concept.

Mr Mulder continues: *'We used to think that placing one object back in these "totally changed surroundings" would be like, "a flag on a mud ship"'. 'Why than did that idea change?', asked the respondent. 'It has changed because you can notice in the responses of visitors that they miss something. That it is very hard for them to imagine what it was like. Certainly the new generations which are more visually orientated. We have to do something with that. Moreover, the distance till the period of war means we are losing the eyewitnesses. An then in the end, the only witnesses that are then remaining are the place itself, but also the photos, letters and the still remaining parts. Furthermore, because we have the house of the camp commander, symbol of the SS in charge, we have to have something symbolic for the people in the camp as well.'*<sup>133</sup>

In this anecdote it becomes clear that visualization, as addressed by Mr Vis previously, is also considered highly important by the memorial centre. It is a rather new concept, at least considering what has been done in the past decades, linked to the need of new generations to be able to see what it once was like. With these new generations and their needs, the directors view about the barracks has changes as well. The object has changed into something to preserve, to re-construct. It is assigned with a role. It becomes an asset that supports the need to remember as addressed by Mrs Veldhuijzen Van Zanten previously. It is furthermore related to other objects such as the camp commandants house, photos, letters and other remaining parts.

When the news respondent enquires about how Mr Mulder would describe the destruction of the barrack set on fire he states: *'It's an unbelievable loss on behalf of our war heritage. We do not have a lot of them and if you then loose such a significant part of which we were certain it could play a major role in the transference of the significance of this place to visitors here, than it means a great loss. It however also means this should not happen again.'*

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<sup>133</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 19-07-2009

In another news item, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, Mr Mulder elaborated: *'People react on what happened to barrack 57. It had an impact. There appears to be a general awareness that it is very sad this happened. Fifteen, twenty years ago this awareness was not there yet. But now there is more realization that we do not have a lot left out of that time and that we have to conserve what still remains*<sup>134</sup>. .... The fire has been a reason for the memorial centre to make haste tracing the last remaining barracks<sup>135</sup>. Because of the publicity around the fire, the memorial centre received a lot tips considering barracks that once stood in Westerbork; like the story of Mr Oldejans.

Although the existence of "barrack 57" was already known to the memorial centre for a longer period of time, they were never able to re-construct it on the original location before. According to Mr Mulder, the owner of "barrack 57" was permitted a licence to de-construct the barrack, but was denied a license to re-construct another building to replace the old one. Because of that, the owner of "barrack 57" could not replace the building<sup>136</sup>. *If we find a similar object in the future, then we should be generally prepared to say, all rules set aside, they do not matter right now, we have to protect it*<sup>137</sup>..... *We know the existence of another barrack. I am convinced that after what happened now there is more willingness to cooperate and act more pragmatic*<sup>138</sup>. However Mr Mulder also elaborates in another news item: *'I am dependant on many other stakeholders. I have to say that the ministry of Public Health, wellbeing and Sports hereto forth VWS, is very conscious about the importance of these objects. But there are more ministries and social organisations involved. As long as we have a general tendency to say this is important, let's do it now.... We want to investigate on short notice were the still remaining barracks are. We were already planning to do so but it has become important to do it now'*. *'And then, if you find any?'*, asks the respondent. *'I would say as soon as possible, when we have a better understand of what still worth saving, deconstruct, store, prepare and reconstruct it here'*.<sup>139</sup>

Losing the barrack had an impact. People seemed to be aware of its loss. Yet before the fire, it had been very hard to obtain the object. Bureaucratic institutions were partly blamed by

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<sup>134</sup> NOS, news item (audio sample): 20-07-2009

<sup>135</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 19-07-2009

<sup>136</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 19-07-2009

<sup>137</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 19-07-2009

<sup>138</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 19-07-2009

<sup>139</sup> NOS, news item (video sample): 19-07-2009



their unwillingness to give “barrack 57” owner a licence to construct a new garage. To give it priority. Somehow, in these institutions there were different processes going on. There were procedures. The problem appeared to have been perceived differently; there was a licence problem. Mr Mulder hopes the chain of events that happened to “barrack 57” will ensure barracks will be processed differently in the future. Different associations, different procedures. Different awareness of its importance, publicly and institutionally. For the memorial centre itself, the events surrounding “barrack 57” changed things as well. In a personal conversation with Mr Abuys, the conservator of the memorial centre, two years after the fire, he stated: *‘It is after the fire in Veendam that everything was “caught in a rapid”. When there was so much attention put on it by the press, we said: we have to do everything we can to preserve whatever remains of these barracks. It’s like that, an old Dutch expression, if you say A you have to say B too. If you want it or not, you are caught in the rapid. And you do not earn any credibility if you then say that is not important, that is not valuable. We furthermore received a lot of tips of still remaining parts and tools’.* In the memorial centre’s interaction with- and the actions of: the press, owners, visitors and other institutions, the importance of what was “barrack 57”, visualization and how still remaining parts should be perceived, grew. They influenced each other in the process. Actions of one determined partly those of others. The fire, the event, had acted as a catalyst. Something that speeded up this process.

However in the sequence of events described in the introduction, it was not the fire but the re-construction of “barrack 57” that was first published by the press. The role that “barrack 57” was planned to fulfil, that of visualization, had a more profound history. As Mr Abuys explains: *‘From within our organisation a tendency grew to re-construct a barrack on its original location. The war is getting more distant from our and future generations, and because of that, these new generation want a more concrete picture of it. The present infrastructure of the memorial centre does not meet that need. We have to be more tangible. Because of that, we wanted to re-construct barrack 57 on its original location. The more because it was planned to be removed by its owner anyway. That was already planned some time ago. We distributed questionnaires to visitors how to redesign the memorial site to make it more tangible, more concrete.* It appears that “barrack 57” was already assigned a specific role before the fire. For the memorial centre, it had to fulfil the visitor’s needs to

make history more tangible. To make it visible. Just as had been discussed by Mr Vis and mentioned by Mr Mulder previously. It where thus visitors that where partly responsible for the change in the memorial centre's attitude towards the barracks; from a flag on a mud ship to an important tool to help visualize what it once was like.

Visualization appears to be a highly important concept that was connected to "barrack 57" and prioritized after the sequence of events that occurred.

When I ask Mr Abuys if visualization is still considered important he replies: *'Indeed, it is very hard to get an idea about what the camp looked like. The first time I encountered a barrack myself I was amazed by how big they actually were. At the moment visitors cannot image that. The current situation does not render that effect..... the hard en inhuman conditions people had to face in this camp'*. This is the reason the memorial centre thinks about visualization. To add context to what visitors, when they go to the site itself, have read, thought and seen on photos and in the museum. To translate to visitors how big these barracks were. What the conditions might have been for those people that had lives just as anybody else and that were put into these "barracks".

Mr Abuys however also stretches that *'for many visitors it is not enough. They have to touch. They want to see its interior. Some even want to hear voices. But then it almost becomes Hollywood.... That goes too far'*. It thus appears that for the memorial centre, there are borders. Limitations to the possible ways in which one can render imagination about what it once was like. To make history more tangible. Other "senses" such as touch and hearing are by them considered out of bound. Distinctions are made. Maybe visualization would then change into sensation. Something that doesn't match the weight, and emotions ascribed to the place, and possibly than also to the object. Something that overrules "remembering".

## 4.5 Symbolism

In the previous subchapters the object is constantly discussed in one way or another. It is related to pasts, presents and futures and discussed by actors and groups of actors accordingly. Although many of them share similar associations there are however also people who discuss and relate to these objects differently yet again. I have spoken to several eye-witnesses about the reconstruction of barracks on the former camp Westerbork location. Many of them share the idea that the location has changed dramatically and that re-construction might help to visualize what it once was like. There are however also some eye-witnesses who approach this idea differently.

By re-constructing barracks you assign a symbolic value to them. As Mr Schwarz explains: *'for me they did not have such significance'*. Mrs Josephus Jitta explained *'they do not stand for anything, they were like many other things, just there'*. She questions if it is right to reverse a chain of events that has taken place in order for society to remember. Should the barracks be retrieved, re-constructed and displayed. Should it be necessary for visitors to have a real live experience about what happened? She fears that the original "function" of these barracks will be changed. That their purpose to "demonstrate reality" will change into a different one. One with different meaning. That it will be replaced by a certain other, a slightly different kind of performance such as: excitement, a rush, imagination, a destination to visit, a place of "dark tourism". Something to stimulate the senses.

However there is more. Mrs Josephus Jitta stretches there is a difference between freezing time and trying to re-construct it. An attempt to preserve objects, for the sake of history, in the environment in which they are encountered at the moment this realization of the need to preserve occurs, is different from and will have different "meaning" in comparison to; trying to re-construct an environment that has changed, trying to retrieve original elements and blend them together for the sake of remembering, for the sake of being able to imagine what it was like. In that case she states: "we are re-writing history, re-designing it. What is displayed is false-history". People will say while walking through the camp: "imagine that it has always been this way". "Something that has once been a part of reality", something for many who lived in it without specific meaning or symbolism becomes for others, "something symbolic". And people will not remember but will imagine.

She does not fear that what happened will not be remembered, that it will just become another chapter in the history books. That is just the way things go. What happened will always be present in the form of accounts, writings, books, and film. For those that are interested, it will be there. Mr Schelvis stretches that it will be almost impossible to reconstruct the past in such a way people can see how it once was. What actually happened is not “imaginable”. Instead, having a place that offers the opportunity to remember and to realize that there are still people who lived this period is enough.

Mr Schelvis has been one of the founders of the Sobibor foundation. This foundation has supported acknowledgement, developments and maintenance of the former camp Sobibor site. Also at this site re-construction is considered. The governments of Poland, Slovakia, Israel and the Netherlands have agreed that the site will always be a place of respect for the dead and their relatives. A place to visit and remember but which also offers information about the history of the site. However, this re-construction has to incorporate what happened there after the war and therefore has to include the ash hill, Polish monuments and memory lane<sup>140</sup>. Apparently logical although some of these items, such as the ash hill, after investigations and according to Mr Mulder appear to be not entirely made of ash at all. An observation that however, and according to Mr Mulder, is not aimed at overriding the great symbolic value attached to these post war monuments<sup>141</sup>.

It seems that symbolism, remembering and historical information are considered as very important issues when discussing the reconstruction of camp Westerbork. A discussion to which also “barrack 57” has been subjected.

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<sup>140</sup> Stichting Sobibor, news item (text): 13-10-2008

<sup>141</sup> Stichting Sobibor, news item (text): 13-10-2008

## **5. Back to theory**

Based on the previous chapter I will now begin my “reflecting of empirical results back to theory”. I will do so by starting to describing practises and associations according to Actor Network Theory. Associations arranged and re-arranged by groups of actors into a “multiple” object. I will then continue by approaching this multiplicity according to Social Systems Theory in subchapter 5.2. I will however not stop there and will try to describe in chapter 5.3., by addressing to the event, how multiplicity can be approached by rendering elements out of Actor Network Theory and Social Systems Theory.

### **5.1 An associated, practised object**

For the CJO, as representatives of the Jewish community, “barrack 57” was mentioned as an object of monumental value. An object that could make a particular time more tangible. That particular time was the second world war. An object that could help us all better understand what it was like back then. By losing “barrack 57”, other, still remaining “barracks” were considered as very important objects to trace and preserve. “Barrack 57” was therefore moreover considered as an example. An example for future situations. In line with these associations they practised “barrack 57”. They assigned value to the object, wrote letters and raised awareness about its value and the nature of its loss.

The memorial centre, visitors and many eye-witnesses shared similarly arranged associations. For them, “barrack 57” was an important tool to visualize what it once was like. Something that visitors could very hard relate to. Something that had changed so dramatically over the years. By the memorial centre “Barrack 57” was related to the camp commanders house as a counterpart to tell the story of the camp itself and it was related to many other elements out of the camps history. A witness out of that time. It could tell a story. In one way or another, “barrack 57” had an act of its own. To help and connect to a time long gone. In line with these associations they practised “barrack 57”. They investigated and reported, raised awareness, negotiated, raised funds and planned its re-construction. After the fire, they furthermore diverted their focus to any other still remaining original (parts of) barracks.

Yet again, there were also those for which “barrack 57”, just as any other barrack out of that time, had less value. For them “barrack 57” was associated with what happened but not as having any symbolic value. It was just another part of décor. For them it was and continues to be highly questionable if it is possible to visualize how it was back then. To visualize what they have been through. Some fear that visitors would wrongly associate what exactly happened at camp Westerbork. What is important is a the maintenance of a site in line with remembering and paying respect to what happened. That is enough and nor “barrack 57” nor any other barrack is by them considered part of it.

These different associations however not necessarily implied controversy. Groups of actors interacted with each- other and by doing so not only observed the object, but also each- others practised associations. They “hung around” the object together. They formed a network. However this network was bigger than the object itself. The object was part of it. Groups of actors not only observed the object, “barrack 57”, but also, or maybe even only, each-others practises; communications. The memorial centre, visitors, eye-witnesses, the CJO, the government, owners of these objects; they described, interacted, reacted, cooperated, contested and translated each-others practises into their own associations and practises. The memorial centre associated and continues to associate communicated visitor experiences into a plan of re-construction, and, the eye-witnesses fears into boundaries to what could be reconstructed. Some eye-witnesses associated and continue to associate the practised visualization as a “potential” threat for the location as a memorial site. The object was thus placed between related objects; not only physical, such as the camp commanders house; but also human, to other groups of actor’s practised associations. Groups of actors therefore appeared to affect each-others practised object, continuously.

Indeed, for Mr Eggers and the municipality “barrack 57” was, at first, approached differently. Mr Eggers needed a licence for a new building because “barrack 57” was in a very bad shape to store his things. This license was denied. According to the municipality Mr Eggers plans where against the development policies. However, as soon as became clear that “barrack 57” was to be given to memorial centre, it appears the municipality agreed with Mr Eggers building plans. Relating the object to historical context and to other group of actor’s practises appeared to effectively re-arrange the way the object was associated by the municipality.

For Mr Oldejans and Mr Hilbrands something changed as well after sequence of events around “barrack 57”. They had observed about what happened to “barrack 57” and the way it was practised by others. Somehow they related these observations to their garage in Gees. By these new observations and by relating these to what was already observed about the garage, that some of it was also from Westerbork, the garage was re-associated. Or better said, associations were re-arranged. Re-arranged as the same garage, but possibly something valuable. It made them contact the memorial centre. Indeed, after the fire, many other owners of many different “things” contacted the memorial centre as well. Somehow, by the media, a practised “barrack 57” was effectively networked. It reached larger groups of actors which re-arranged and practised and continue to practise their associations.

This re-arrangement of associations not only support the notion that actors interact, share, cooperate, contest and act upon each other’s practises. It furthermore appears events can boost the above described practises and associations. All of a sudden “barrack 57” was practised by the media, and through these practises they mediated their own but also other actor’s practises. It created access for other groups of actors to observe each other’s practises, observe them and associate them according to their own practises. Meanwhile new groups of actors were networked and also their practises regarding “barrack 57” were consequently, also after the loss of “barrack 57”, observed and associated. It created a turmoil of practises, communications and associations. *‘We were all caught in a rapid’*.

By approaching “barrack 57” through Actor Network Theory it becomes clear that practises are networked and observed as well as translated into the associations of other groups of actors. Events and the attention given to them by the media and their practised “barrack 57” supported the networking of “barrack 57”. Therefore practises were observed by more and/or larger groups of actors. Together they “hung around” the object, although “barrack 57” itself as physical object was almost entirely destroyed by fire, and practised not just alone but with each other what the object was, is and should be. Until this day they continue to do so.

It suggests that not only the group of actors that “hang around” an object are diffuse and constantly changing in networks, it furthermore suggests their does not need to be a physical object in the centre of these turmoil of associations and practises. Also after “barrack 57” was destroyed, practises continued to be observed and continued to affect other actor’s practises and associations. There was continuity and it was somewhere else than in the object itself.

However, by describing “barrack 57” as such, it is still hard to describe it as a multiple object. How do groups of actors translate observed practises into their own associations and practises? Why is there connectedness in a group of observers? Moreover, what can there be said about this continuity? Therefore, and in order to highlight both the internal connectedness of groups of actors and the continuity of a practised “barrack 57” I will start the next sub chapter by describing logics, codes and boundaries of “barrack 57” derived from Social Systems Theory.

## **5.2 Logic, codes and boundaries**

In the previous sub-chapter I have tried to describe the different ways in which “Barrack 57” was associated and practised between groups of actors. I will in this sub-chapter focus on the multiplicity of the object as it was practised, and until this day is practised, by groups of actors according to Social Systems Theory. I will do so by describing a “logical” and coded object “recursively produced” within the boundaries of (a) “supposed” system(s). “Recursively produced” through self-referential, system specific operations; communications. Groups of actors will thus, in this subchapter, be approached as social systems.

Mr Eggers could only give his shed to the memorial centre as soon as he was allowed to replace it with a new one. He needed something to store his tools. Many other owners encountered and continue to encounter similar situations. In these cases, the object is part of something, the farm, the house, the business. It functions there. In a news item released in 2009 it is evaluated as such. Mr Eggers talked (communicated) about a rotten shed when a film crew visited his property. It could no longer fulfil its function “to store things”. According



to him, the shed however could still have another function for the Memorial centre. The object was coded into either functional or not functional. The function itself that it fulfilled for Mr Eggers however, that of “storing things”, had to continue. Only by replacing the object with another one that could take over such a function could this specific object be relieved of its “storing of things”. Although many owners, like Mr Eggers, but also Mr Oldejans recognised the memorial centre’s interest in the object there was, and continues to be, a “logical” issue, things must be stored.

This object has been recursively produced as something to store things. It is called as such, a shed, a garage, a stable etc. It was furthermore coded into functional or not in doing so. It was observed in this way. The object was old and rotten. It was thus evaluated negatively in its storing of things. It could however, logically, only be replaced if there was another object that could take over its function. It was thus observed and recursively produced within functional boundaries.

There are however many more codes and logic that can be described. For the municipality, it was for “some time” not possible to allow Mr Eggers to construct a new shed. For them, the replacement of the object was something to approve or disapprove of through legislative procedures, through the municipalities logic. Planning policies. Replacement could either be approved or denied. It is codified as such. Moreover and according to minister Plasterk the municipality acted accordingly by acting within on behalf of these legislative procedures.

Regarding policy there was however another issue. One that could influence the nature of the procedures that were followed by the municipality. One that questioned if “barrack 57” was or wasn’t considered a monument. For the CJO, as representatives of the Jewish community, it was considered strange that remnants of former camp Westerbork are just rotting away and too little is being done to preserve them. “Barracks” should be protected and preserved. They are by them considered and mentioned as national monuments. According to minister Plasterk however, the object had never been recognised as national nor local monument and consequently was therefore not protected.

The object is by the municipality and ministry of OCW recursively produced through policy. There were or weren’t procedures that have or have not been followed correctly. It was coded and observed in this way. The object was not assigned with monumental status,

moreover, the municipality reacted within legal time. By evaluating procedures, logically, what happened was not part of governmental responsibility. It might however be possible that procedures and the assigned status to similar objects in future situations will be changed. The object thus was and continues to be discussed and recursively produced within the boundaries of policy.

Nowadays new generations of visitors to the camp Westerbork site continue their need to sense what it once was like in order to connect with the past. Nowadays, on the former camp Westerbork site, there is nothing there. This nothingness denies their connection. The lack of points of reference. Visitors thus appear to be bound by senses. They can either sense, or not sense something and thus have a satisfactory or non-satisfactory visit (although with satisfaction I do not necessarily mean a happy or good experience). This at first appears to be a rather individual observation. An observation based on expectations and thoughts thus more at place within the psychic system. Someone's consciousness. However there is something strange going on about the way visitors communicate this problem of nothingness. Of lack of context. As soon as they express these thought in surveys, they become communications open for researchers to interpret. Moreover the visitors tend to speak a shared language. Many of them appear to advise the reconstruction of barracks. At least in the surveys conducted after the event that took place in the spring of 2009. As such, the (re) presentation of "barracks" are observed and communicated as a rather uni-vocal tool to accomplish visitor satisfaction. Would this have something to do with all the attention given to these objects after the fire in "barrack 57"? An observation that is consequently recursively produced as a tool that will enable to connect with the past. A shared and communicated observation that evolved in a psychic environment, the lack of points of reference? Or is it a thought in a psychic system that developed in a social environment; the commotion around "barrack 57"? As Luhmann already stated, psychic and social systems affect each-other. They share similar mediums, language. However psychic systems are recursively produced by thoughts and social systems by communications. This would assume that if the answers in surveys are based on previous communications, for instance the news items addressed to "barrack 57", these communications are now recursively produced in the visitor's answers to the survey question about what could be improved on the site. Consequently barracks seem to be a rather logical means to ensure a

connection with the past. To be able to imagine what it once was like. They are communicated as such and this communication is observed and reproduced within the boundaries of visitor's experiences.

In sharp contrast too, but equally a rather difficult to point out communication is that of some eye-witnesses. During my interviews I noticed that according to some eye witnesses, it are not barracks that should be fundamental to the stories told and documentation written down and collected about the second world war. They do not assigns symbolic value to the barracks nor see them as fundamental to any stories. They think of Westerbork as a place to remember. It should remain as such. Re-constructing something that is not there anymore not only interferes with what happened, it creates false history. Reconstruction of a barrack furthermore assigns symbolic value to an object that it doesn't have for them. Moreover they fear that the site as they know it, a place to remember and be conscious about what happened, will turn into a place to imagine what it was like. To stimulate the senses. The barrack has been nothing more than a part of the camp, a part of décor. Again, like the visitor's experience these thoughts appear to be part of psychic systems; of someone's consciousness. However, sometimes discussions are raised about these ideas.

In these discussions objects become recursively produced as representative for what happened. They are coded as such, symbolical or not. An object can be assigned with symbolic value without historical correctness and an "historical" object can be assigned as symbolical for what happened without being symbolical. Objects are observed as such. Objects are discussed within symbolical and historical boundaries.

It seems the memorial centre is confronted with many logics, codes and boundaries. They act not only as a visitor centre but also as a memorial site, a research centre and a platform. They investigate, mediate educate, support victims, raise awareness, and support/plan developments and policies. They are networked to many others systems. Therefore they observe all kinds of logics, codes and boundaries. In order to deal with this complexity, and as a "multifunctional" centre, they themselves produce their own logics, codes and boundaries. They observe the visitors not being able to connect with the past, to imagine what it once was like. They had done so in the 90's when it was decided to raise hills to provide context. Now, 20 years later these hills are not sufficient anymore and new steps

have to be undertaken in order to provide for visitor experiences; but also to raise awareness and support education. It is observed that people are nowadays much more visually set. As such, and to provide for visitors, raise awareness and support education these new steps are called under the name visualization. Objects can or cannot support visualization. The hills cannot. The barracks are seen as potential alternatives.

However, because it is not only about the experiences but also about investigation, they not only focus on possibilities to visualize, but also on historical documentation and correctness. Objects as such have to be investigated, documented and evaluated on their historical correctness. When Mr Abuys visits the garage of Mr Oldejans he observes as a conservator. What is and what is not original. What is the state of the object. Objects are by the memorial centre thus furthermore evaluated as original or not.

Moreover, as memorial site, not all possible options to provide for visitor experiences are appropriate. As already discussed previously there are eye witnesses that express certain fears about these new developments. Mr Abuys moreover explained that although visitors need more context, they have to take into account ethical considerations.

As a multifunctional centre, the memorial centre observes a complex environment of logics, codes and boundaries. In it, they recursively produced “barrack 57” as a tool to visualize what it once was like. It was moreover observed as interesting to do so because it was still in a “rather complete” original state. With the loss of this object, other barracks are evaluated according to the same codes. How visualization will exactly take place is however not only dependent on visitor needs and the state of possibly suitable objects. It is furthermore observed and approached as appropriately or not. “Barrack 57” but after it any other potential “barrack” is observed within these boundaries.

In this sub-chapter I have tried to describe logic, codes and boundaries which demonstrate how “barrack 57” has been observed and produced in distinct, system specific ways. Logic, codes and boundaries that furthermore continue to observe and re-produce “other” objects, also after the fire in “barrack 57”, in this distinct way. As such, the way “barrack 57” has been observed continues to be recursively produced constantly. This might be fundamental to connectedness as described by Actor Network Theory.

It furthermore appears there is more than just a physical object that is observed. The memorial centre for instance not only observes the object but also other systems (social and psychic) with different logic, codes and boundaries. Systems with different practises. Something I have already described in the previous sub-chapter. They together, the object and the other systems shape the environment of a system. The environment which the system observes and which it reduces into a meaningful reduced complexity. Of course the memorial centre is not the only system or group of actors which is observing other system's logic, codes and recursively produced observations; its practises. However I will go into this more profoundly in the next sub chapter.

### **5.3 The event as a changing environment.**

In the previous two chapters I have tried to approach the way "barrack 57" has been observed according to associations and practises (Actor Network Theory) as well as according a system's reduced complexity (Social Systems Theory). What if I approach groups of actors as social systems? Like I proposed in chapter two. How could I then explain the differences between Actor Networks Theories modes of ordering in actualities and Social System Theories recursively produced reduced complexities. Maybe the event can help better understand the this differently explained stance between observers and their environment. In both cases the fire that almost entirely destroyed "barrack 57" seems to have affected observations.

The CJO as well as the memorial centre observed the problems around the approval of a license for the construction of a new shed as bureaucratic linger. They expressed their hope that the event on the 19th of July will help to change the way observations and logic are produced by municipalities and the government in future cases. Due to these expressions, questions were asked in the second chamber that were aimed at evaluating policy. Although in the governmental system observations remained within the borders of policy and were coded as such, the very fact that questions were raised came from the observing of the environment; respectively expressions communicated by the memorial centre and CJO. It thus appears environment and groups of observers affected each-other.

The memorial centre expressed their hope that next time municipalities will take into account the historical context of similar cases. That procedures will be interpreted more appropriately. A little shift in the municipalities boundaries of observing though policy that will incorporate for instance the historical context. That next time, replacement will be more easily approved. Indeed afterwards, in the chamber, questions were raised if, or if not, still remaining barracks should be considered national monuments. If so, next time procedures will be different. These buildings will be slightly differently processed by the municipality. Although the observations will still be recursively produced through policy, next time, they might slightly be adapted. Adapted to incorporate the objects historical context. It thus appears that groups of observers constantly reproduce the boundaries of their assemblage of associations by observing their environment. The group of observer's practises thus appear to be self-referential but also tend to evolve with their observed environment. For the memorial centre themselves, re-constructing a barrack back on the former camp Westerbork locations appears to have evolved from considered as: a flag on a mud ship, into a highly potential object to realize visualization. Evolved as such by observing visitor experiences.

There thus appears to be a kind of interaction between the observing of the environment (objects and practises) and translating these observations according the group of observers reduced complexity of that environment. There is change as well as continuity. The first implies change, the second implies path dependency. A stand-off between groups of observers and their modes of ordering and social systems and their system specific operations? Indeed, there appears to be a bit of both in observing and practising objects according to the systems logic, codes and boundaries in a changing environment. As Mr Abuys explained, after all the commotion surrounding "barrack 57" there was no turning back. Others had observed the memorial centre's practises and responded to that. The memorial centre had to take these responses seriously, not lastly because these responses arose out of observing the memorial centre's own practises. Visitor's afterwards linked visualization directly to barracks. The government discussed about the existence of any other remaining barracks. Owners of potential similar object made contact with the memorial centre. Meanwhile all was written down and published by newspapers and television programs. All, groups of actors, which observe and translate each-others practises

according to their own logic, codes and boundaries. By practising and observing they affected and continue to affect each-other. "Barrack 57", nothing more than a few surviving panels after the fire, becomes more than a physical object. It becomes part of practises that are observed and translated into other practises. It became recursively produced and translated into the self-referential "system" of groups of actors. Part of their logic, codes and boundaries. Part of their meaningful reduced complexity of endless connections, the environment.

Events such as the fire in "barrack 57" trigger, and allow, for larger groups of actors to network their practises. The memorial centre, owners, eye-witnesses, visitors, governments not to forget the media, which by practising network their own and other practises allowing for more groups of actors to be observed by each-other. Therefore the observed environment changes. Not only physically by the fire, but also due to the turmoil of networked practises to be observed. Correspondently, groups of actors translate these observations according to their own reduced complexity; policy, functions, experiences. They themselves practise whatever is observed accordingly. However in order to reproduce this reduced complexity a group of actors might need to "slightly" adapt the boundaries of that reduced complexity in order to exist in this changing environment. In order to let it be a reduced complexity of that environment. Of course always something that can be connected with and translated according to their already established logic and codes. How can it otherwise be observed? The connectedness. Groups of observers and their environments, they appear to co-evolve. Events, they can exhilarate this process. A catalyst.

## 6. Conclusion

I started this thesis by introducing two news items. News items which introduced “barrack 57” to me. I reacted to these news items by raising questions about the nature of the object which was described in them. As I started investigating, I encountered more than one answer to these questions. Therefore I proposed the following problem statement: *What it was for “barrack 57” to be.* This with the objective to: *better understand the multiplicity of “barrack 57” during and after the chain of events that took place in 2009.* In order to approach this objective I had to find theories that could help me describe the multiplicity of “barrack 57”. Theories that describe and thus help me better understand the social processes behind this multiplicity. I found these descriptions in Actor Network Theory and Social Systems Theory.

However in order to use both theories in order to understand and describe a multiple “barrack 57”, in order for each of them to have explanatory value in addition to the other, I had to write down their similarities and differences. I therefore approached assemblages of associations as a system’s reduced complexity of an environment. They are both composed out of elements which are related or associated to each-other by observers. It entails logic, codes and boundaries to what can be associated. I furthermore argued that practises of groups of observers and system specific operations can be approached similarly. System specific operations, in case of social systems, are composed out of communications. Practises are often approached as; descriptions, interactions, reactions, cooperation, contested claims; they are communications.

Although I considered the above mentioned elements as more or less addressing to similar concepts, the way in which these elements are used to explain the social forces behind the formation of a multiple object is different. Actor Network Theory’s groups of actors and their modes of ordering are diffuse and emerge out of a flux of observers that constantly observe, communicate and assemble their associations. It therefore doesn’t create order, but rather, modes of ordering. Modes of ordering in actualities. This whilst systems are approached to reproduce themselves constantly by system specific operations; communications. There is continuity in them. This last insight can however, according to me, be re-connected to groups of actors and their connectedness within that group.



In order to find out how these theories would support the multiplicity of “barrack 57” I had to gather empirical data. I had to find out how actors associated or re-produced a multiple “barrack 57”. The way to do so was by tracing their practises. In order to trace these practises, I interviewed actors and collected their practised associations (communications) as they appeared in, and were practised by different kinds of media. I was tracing associations and there where many to trace and follow.

Owners of “barracks” just like the owner of “barrack 57”, associated these buildings as objects to store things in. The municipality subjected “barrack 57” to procedures. This whilst by the CJO, visitors and the memorial centre, “barrack 57” was considered as a valuable object that could help visualize what it once was like. On the other hand there were also those who did not value “barrack 57” or any other at all. They themselves observe these associations as having nothing to do with what “barrack 57” was, just a part of décor.

These different associations however not necessarily implied controversy. Groups of actors appeared to hang around the object and interact with each- other. They created a network. A network maybe bigger than the object itself. The object was part of it. By doing so, groups of actors not only observed the object, “barrack 57”, but also, or maybe even only, each- other’s practises; communications. The memorial centre, visitors, eye-witnesses, the CJO, the government, owners of these objects, they all hang around the object together. They described, interacted, reacted, cooperated, contested and translated each-others practises into their own associations. The object was thus placed between related objects; not only physical, such as the camp commanders house; but also social, to other groups of actor’s practises. Associations were thus re-arranged constantly. Like Mr Oldejans, owner of garage in Gees, who contacted the memorial centre after having seen the considered value and impact of the loss of “barrack 57”. This re-arrangement of associations not only supported the notion that actors interacted, shared, cooperated, contested and acted upon each other’s practises. They practised the object together. It furthermore appears events can boost as well as network practises and consequently affect what can be observed. What followed after the event was a turmoil of communicated, practised associations *‘We were all caught in a rapid’*.

Mr Oldejans demonstrated that also after “barrack 57” was destroyed, practises based on “barrack 57” continued to be observed and continued to affect other actor’s associations. There appeared to be some kind of continuity in the way the object was, and thus is, observed and practised. Even after, or maybe even because, it was almost entirely destroyed. Furthermore, by describing actors that practise the object together, it was still hard to approach “barrack 57” as a multiple object.

In order to better understand these last insights I moved from Actor Network Theory into the realm of Social Systems Theory. I tried to describe logic, codes and boundaries which demonstrated how “barrack 57” continued and continues to be observed and produced in distinct, system specific ways. A group of actor’s ways. Logic codes and boundaries such as the way in which observations were produced and reproduced by the municipality through policies and procedures. The way visitors collectively mentioned barracks as important objects to help visualize what it once was like. The way Mr Eggers evaluated his object according to its functional properties. Logic, codes and boundaries that furthermore continued to observe and re-produce “other” objects, also after the fire in “barrack 57”, in these distinct ways. For instance in case of the government and municipality. Should still remaining barracks be or not be considered as monumental objects. It was discussed through policy. Or in case of the memorial centre. Still remaining “original” barracks should be re-constructed on the camp Westerbork site in order to “visualize” what it once was like. Although “barrack 57” is gone there are still other remaining barracks left which are discussed in the same way as “barrack 57”. Observing new objects according to established logic and codes. This observing according to a group of actor’s internal logic, coding and boundaries might be fundamental to connectedness as described by Actor Network Theory.

Both in Actor Network Theory and in Social Systems Theory it appears there is more than just a physical object that was observed. The memorial centre, the government, eyewitnesses and visitors not only observed the object but also each-other. Different groups of actors with different logic, codes and boundaries. Groups of actors with different practises. They together, the object and the other groups of actors shaped the environment of a group of actors as an observer. For instance the memorial centre’s environment was composed out of physical elements such as the barrack but also out of visitors, eyewitnesses, owners and the government. It is this environment which the group of actors

observed, continues to observe and which it continuously reduces into a meaningful reduced complexity.

I therefore argued that groups of actors might be approached as social subsystems. It would explain connectedness and continuity. I then however still had to explain the differences between Actor Networks Theory's modes of ordering in actualities and Social System Theory's recursively produced reduced complexities. I foregrounded the event in order to better understand the differently explained stances between observers and their environment.

An environment that appears to change constantly. Especially when I take into account the fire that almost destroyed "barrack 57" and the turmoil of networked and practised associations which followed. I argued that if we isolate the two, environment and system, we might be able to state there is change as well as continuity. The first implies changing actualities, the second implies path dependency.

Indeed, there appeared to be a bit of both in observing and practising of "barrack 57" according to a group of observer's logic, codes and boundaries in a continuously changing environment. Events such as the fire in "barrack 57" allowed for larger groups of actors to network their practises. Therefore observed environment changed. Correspondently, the groups of actors translated these observations according to their own reduced complexity; policy, functions, experiences. However in order to reproduce this reduced complexity; to make it representational for that changed environment, they needed to "slightly" adapt boundaries in order to exist in this changing environment. Incorporate or exclude something out of the environment into their own reduced complexity of that environment. For instance visitor's "communicated experiences" changed and continues to change the memorial centre's observation of re-construction a barrack from: placing a flag on a mud ship, into an effective tool to realize visualization. Of course an observation always according to the memorial centres own logic and codes such as originality, experiences and ethics. Or in case of the government, evaluated and changed procedures in line with changed status in line with changed environments. Adaptation to what a group of actors is capable of to observe according to their internal connectedness. While they adapt they change other group of

actors environments. Groups of actors and their environments, they thus appear to co-evolve.

If we translate these findings and theoretical discussion back to: *what it was for "Barrack 57" to be*, I would conclude that "Barrack 57" has been more than just a physical or even a multiple object. It has been translated into many different practises according to their internal logic, codes and boundaries ranging from storing things, to visualization, to policy. Their reduced complexities. The fire, that physically changed "barrack 57", but also the intensification and expansion of networked practises, in which different forms of media as groups of observers that practise over extensive networks played a significant part, rapidly changed the observed environment. Groups of actors translated these observations of a changing environment according to their own practises and reduced complexity of that environment. Like the visitors mentioning the replacement of a barrack in order to help imagine what it once was like. It became a translated part of their logic, codes and their boundaries. As long as these groups of actors continue to exist, "barrack 57" is and will be recursively produced as part of this logic and coding. As part of a group of actors reduced complexity of their environment. An environment that constantly changes. Changes that can be boosted by events and the networked practises in reaction to these events. Events as a catalyst. The fire in "barrack 57" as a catalyst. It is thus not only a multiple object, it is a recursively produced object that changes with its environment.

## 7. Discussion

In this thesis I have tried to trace associations regarding “barrack 57”. This in order to describe *what it was for “Barrack 57” to be*. I concluded that “Barrack 57” has been more than just a physical or even a multiple object. It has been translated into many different practises according to their internal logic, codes and boundaries ranging from storing things, to visualization, to policy. Their reduced complexities. The event (changed physical environment and in addition more intensely networked practises) changed the environment of the different group of actors that observed the object and each-other. They translated these observations of a changing environment according to their own practises and reduced complexity of that environment. It became a translated part of their logic, codes and their boundaries. A translation of an environment that constantly changes. It is thus not only a multiple object, it is a recursively produced object that changes with this environment.

But what about the elements; objects and practises, that cannot be observed by a system? That exist outside the boundaries of a system’s reduced complexity and/or which cannot be translated according to the systems logic and coding. Moreover what about the networks themselves? All those groups of actors that are not networked. Or only partly networked. Surely some groups of actors are better connected than others.

These question might imply that actors cannot only be miss understood or excluded because they cannot or are wrongly translated into a systems reduced complexity of its environment; they could be moreover un- intentionally ignored because of their un-observable nature. Because they are not part of the systems environment.

What if we would foreground multiplicity as it is explained in this thesis. If we would do so, multiple object would become something very different in comparison to for instance a controversial object. Something I thought, when starting my research, was important to be focussed upon in order to describe the difficulties and multiplicity about understanding heritage. Controversial would however imply the discussion about an object within the same boundaries of logic and coding. Different interpretations yet similar enough to point them as opposites of each-other. Interpretations of observers which are moreover firmly networked. Multiplicity on the other hand would imply a whole range of reduced complexities, networked and not networked, translated and not translated, observed and unobserved.

Multiplicity that is not static but which changes. As the environments change reduced complexities change and practises change. The co-evolution between groups of observers and their environments.

Events appear to be able to demonstrate that. They can boost changes in physical and practised, networked and observed environments. Groups of observers that practise these changes, such as media, might however be just as important as the events themselves because they make events as well as practises observable amongst greater groups of actors. They practise changing environments over extensive networks. Maybe it might be interesting to focus on the role events, and their practitioners, have in this co-evolution between groups of actors and their environment.

I am very much aware that this thesis has just focussed on one object. Moreover, I have just talked to some groups of actors that “hang around” the object. Describing history on local, regional, national or global levels would be, in this way, much more complex. Moreover, the combination of Actor Network Theory and Social Systems Theory allows for much discussion about the combination of elements which, in this thesis, are not accounted for. However, by considering approaching the temporary remembrance of history according to this notion of multiplicity we might be able to describe and understand the nature of its complexity in yet another way.

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