

The Public Sphere in the Digital Age
An Examination of the Digital Works of Alexander
Kluge

by Laura Wiegand

Leiden University
Film and Photographic Studies
Dr. Eric de Bruyn
lawiegan@gmail.com

Laura Wiegand
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<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. Introduction	3
2. The public sphere and the concept of a counter public	7
3. The public sphere in the digital age and the potentials of the Internet	26
4. The DVD as artistic medium of expression	40
5. Conclusion	51
6. Bibliography	54
7. Filmography	58

Introduction

Alexander Kluge, born in 1932, is one of Germany's most prolific cultural figures and representatives of German New Wave cinema since his participation in the Oberhausen Manifesto in 1962.¹ Since then, he is active as an author (short stories, novels, essays), film director and producer (short films, feature films, collaboration projects), television maker and online contributor. With his intellectual ties to critical theory, that have influenced his media and cultural critique, his leftist and social interest in the public sphere have led to two major social treatises, which he has co-written with the philosopher and sociologist Oskar Negt. As the first volume "Public Sphere and Experience" from 1972 responds to the social movements of the 1960s, Kluge and Negt's publication gains importance in academia in the following years mostly due to their designated concept of a so-called counter-public sphere. In the middle of the 1980s Kluge becomes an independent producer of his 'cultural windows' for German private satellite television. In the 21st century, he goes online with his homepage dctp.tv, which is named after his television production company. Parallel to this digital work, Kluge uses another digital medium for his artistic expression, the DVD. In each of the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 he publishes one major DVD production; major in the sense of duration, as the running time of the first two DVD's is up to ten hours. Short versions or excerpts were shown after their publication on DVD in selected cinemas.

The 20th century has demonstrated an intensified political and cultural usage of diverse forms of mass communication. The notion of *Öffentlichkeit* is of utmost importance for Kluge, as it is not only a place, where all kinds of media productions emerge to help people to communicate with each other, but can be considered by him to be a political space where public opinion is shaped and made. This thesis shall focus on Alexander Kluge's understanding of the film medium as a political and social instrument. I shall concentrate on Kluge's theory of cinema that is interwoven with the concept of the public sphere back in the 1970s and his contemporary understanding of the film medium, now it has entered the digital era. In which terms

¹ The Oberhausen Manifesto was an initiative to found a German New Wave Cinema similar to the French Nouvelle Vague of the 1960s. Kluge was one of the initiators and supporters of the demands of independent production means for filmmaking.

does Kluge define and understand the public sphere of film generally and in particular in the current age of digitalisation? How can the public sphere in the digital age be described? Can one still speak of one public sphere or are there several? What kinds of possibilities are there for shaping the public sphere in the digital age and how does Kluge contribute to this public sphere? This thesis shall try to give answers to these questions by presenting Kluge's theory on cinema, by analysing his homepage dctp.tv, the possibilities of working online and his digital DVD works.

As Alexander Kluge has been active in expressing himself through diverse artistic means and co-writing two social treatises,² there is a wide field of scholarly discussions about Kluge's theory of media, history and film. His interest in history, especially in the course and impact of the Second World War³ and his own approach of writing history in a textual model resembles the one of Walter Benjamin. As both authors focus on the technique of montage that is characterised by a flexible usage of traditional historical materials such as old drawings, manuscripts or photographs, instead of following a linear narrative of historical moments, scholars have discussed this approach of using historical material that are specifically arranged⁴. Others have focused on his approach to the intermedial nature of the interplay between literature and film and/or intertextuality in literature.⁵ Kluge's mixing of genres within one work, which is attributable to his combination of documentary and fictional material and his interrelated concept of realism has also been a part of research. Further discussions concentrate on his concept of storytelling. In connection to his hybrid use of material, Kluge's specific way of assemblage, his concept and technique of montage has been a central concern in most of this scholarly research, both in literature and film/media studies. It is clear that his experimental style in both media, film and literature, makes a classification of Kluge's work difficult.

² His second treatise is called *Geschichte und Eigensinn* – History and Obstinacy from the 1980s.

³ This interest can be attributed to his own biography as he survived as teenager one of the last air raids on Germany in his hometown Halberstadt.

⁴ More information about this specific approach to history can be read in Kai Lars Fischer's *Geschichtsmontagen: Zum Zusammenhang von Geschichtskonzeption und Text-Modell bei Walter Benjamin und Alexander Kluge*.

⁵ To this topic, one can look further in Andreas Sombroek's *Eine Poetik des Dazwischen. Zur Intermedialität und Intertextualität bei Alexander Kluge*.

Though this thesis will incorporate parts of those discussions about his approach to a non-linear understanding of history, multi-faceted and media-crossing usage of visual and auditive material in the analysis of the selected works (in particular his concept of montage), this paper will extend its focus from Kluge's artistic production to the given conditions of artistic expression in our contemporary digitised society. Therefore, I will combine a media and film-theoretical and a social-scientific approach in order to appreciate the complex development of the public sphere in a digitally shaped environment. As we live today in a society, in which the public sphere is steadily changing and transforming, this paper will not concentrate solely on a single characteristic of his work, but aims at understanding Kluge's whole approach to the role of art in connection to those circumstances. Another focal point of this discussion will be the new possibilities and challenges that come along with changes in media production such as the democratisation of the medium and the danger of regression in media production and reception.

As Kluge's concept of the public sphere is interwoven with an understanding of the public as social horizon of experience, as a place where the individual's experience is being shaped, it is important to discuss the influence of Walter Benjamin. I shall consider the latter's conception of experience in modernity. As Kluge's formulation of a theory of cinema has been affected by the notion of 'experience' in the public sphere, I shall use the concept of experience as formulated by Benjamin and re-formulated by Kluge as a method of analysis of Kluge's digital works. The investigation of the visual experience of technologies of reproduction in mass media will be based on Benjamin's analysis of the age of technological reproducibility as well as the nature of human experience. The presentation of Kluge's approach to the film medium and his idea of experience will be discussed in respect to the human subject's social embedding as well as its sensual embodiment, which entails the capacities of memory, phantasy and imagination.

The first part shall focus on Kluge's theoretical approach towards the public sphere in the society of the 1960/70s, his formulated 'threat' of the so called new media⁶ and his counter-concept of media production that would result in the creation

⁶ Kluge considers at that time the new mass media television, the continuation of the process of industrialisation, as the new media that exerts its influence on human experience.

of an alternative public sphere. I shall illustrate which conditions Kluge imposes on the functioning of alternative media productions that considers an emancipation for the receivers as it enables the viewers to take part in production processes. In the foreground shall stand Benjamin's concept of experience, which is connected to his conceptualisation of memory, and Kluge's adoption of these terms in his theory of cinema. It will present the theoretical idea of the emancipatory idea of the receiver as his or her own producer of experience. Analysing Kluge's contribution to the collaborative film project *Germany in Autumn* from 1978 as well as his work as author for television shall investigate the possibility of the viewer's authorship. This will be scrutinised by applying it among others to Benjamin's concept of the *mémoire involuntaire*.

The second chapter proceeds to an analysis of the public sphere in the digital age, focusing on the Internet and movements that resulted out of its invention like social media. It shall resume different critical voices on the new power relations that can be detected in the Internet and shall present Kluge's stance towards the possibilities of filmmaking and artistic expression in the Internet. His approach will be explained by his assessment of dealing with the Internet. I shall analyse his homepage dctp.tv and illustrate Kluge's specific approach to his online works. This chapter discusses in general his organisational principle of digital media, while revealing the advantages as well as inherent dangers of working on the Internet. I shall also present Kluge's solution for the disintegration and aberrancy of the subject and his answer to the newly shaped usership online. It shall thus be discussed if the Internet can be seen as a 'successful' public sphere that respects the responsibility and sovereignty of its users: the members of society. In this respect I shall analyse the role of online providers as well as the role of social media.

The third chapter shall focus on Kluge's digital practice with the medium of the DVD in order to investigate in depth his organisation of this digital medium. The chapter will explain why Kluge has decided to work with the DVD as medium of artistic expression as well scrutinise his method of montage and its applicability to the presented concept of cinema. This chapter will focus on the last DVD project that overtook Adorno's theoretical concept of coldness on earth. It shall explain why Kluge's DVD is devoted to the topic of coldness and present its dealing with the metaphor of coldness that responds to current, globalised, capitalism.

First Chapter: The public sphere and the concept of a counter public

What do we understand by the notion of the public sphere? Most generally, it can be described as the opposite of the private sphere. But it is more than that: The public sphere is a space that is separated from the private sphere, as well as it is separated from the State. Its existence can be attributed to a generation of a place where people come together to discuss public issues. The notion of the public sphere is shaped by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who coined the term in the 1960s by retrospectively defining its emergence with the western European bourgeoisie and its shaping of European national States: Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, written in 1962 and translated from German into English in 1989, defines the public sphere as a domain of our social life in which public opinion can be formed and where access to the public sphere is in principle open to all citizens.⁷ Habermas had a major impact on Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt's examination of *Public Sphere and Experience* from 1972. But how do they redefine the term?

Before presenting their analysis and critique of the dominant public sphere of the 1960s, it is crucial to understand Kluge's interest in the public sphere in general. An interest that can be attributed to Kluge's practice as filmmaker and leftist critic as well as his preoccupation with the organisation of the mass media. The dangers of such mass-mediated representation of the public lie in the hegemonic rather than democratic structures of the prevailing media sphere. The organisation of the media in Germany had resulted by the 1960s in a public, which is shaped by media groups that incorporate all forms of mass media. This development in the mass and consumer culture was intensified by the emergence of the so-called new media, such as videotape and laser disc, cable and satellite broadcasting, computer and telephone technologies.⁸ This resulted in a formation of the public opinion, which is dominated by a private media culture that owns the major media and publishing houses. Kluge as independent filmmaker and producer promotes the urgency of an alternative film and

⁷ Habermas 1991.

⁸ Hansen 1993, xxiv.

media practice, which would be independent from privately owned media groups such as Bertelsmann in Germany or Berlusconi in Italy. This struggle to establish a counter-public was already launched with the *Oberhausen Manifesto* that was declared by a group of young German film directors at the 8th West German Short Film Festival in Oberhausen. The principal demand of the group of representatives of the German New Cinema, with Alexander Kluge as leading member, was launched to achieve an unrestricted independency of production means. In this fashion, the Oberhausen group wanted to free themselves from both “Papas Kino”⁹ and, in a larger sense, from “corporations, censorship and authority”.¹⁰

Alexander Kluge and Oskar Negt formulate a theory of the public sphere that adopts Habermas’ historic analysis of the formation of the public sphere. But Kluge and Negt’s examination must be differentiated from Habermas’ study not only due to their Neo-Marxist adoption of his analysis,¹¹ but also because of their conceptualisation of experience. Their understanding of the structure of the public sphere that distinguishes itself from Habermas’ formulation is thus rooted in the term experience. As for example Frederic Jameson states as follows:

What is significant about Negt and Kluge’s extension of the notion of the public sphere [...], is that they seek to widen the notion in such a way as to secure its constitutive relationship to the very possibility of social or individual experience in general. The structure of the “public sphere” is now seen as what enables experience or, on the other hand, what limits and cripples it.¹²

In other words, the structure of the public sphere is interrelated with the organisation of experience, which in turn is interwoven with the organisation of media. As they consider a subject’s possibility of experience anchored in the individual’s context of living, the development of mass media in the 20th century has led to an oppression of the possibility of gaining individual experience out of media productions, resulting

⁹ Papas Kino refers to the German Nachkriegsfilme (post war films), which are characterised by a superficial narration of joy and happiness and forgetting and neglecting of the cruelties of the past.

¹⁰ Kluge 2012, 41.

¹¹ In 1967 Habermas’ warning against the fascists of the left from the extra-parliamentary opposition shows that he does not share Kluge and Negt’s approach fully congruently.

¹² Jameson 1988, 157.

in mass mediated forms that destroy experience. As Kluge and Negt promote an organisation of a public sphere that enables a democratic mode of experience, they promote a public sphere that “engages the viewer on the level of his/her own experience.”¹³ They propose a public sphere in which the individual can autonomously regulate experience, meaning that individual’s experience can be created independently from public and professional opinion makers. But this condition of a critical and self-determined experience is, according to the two scholars, unsettled in the public sphere of the early 1970s.

Before subsequently explaining how an independent media practice could work, that would, according to Kluge, guarantee the individual’s experience making, it will be necessary to introduce the notion of experience more in depth. The term *Erfahrung* was one of the theoretical key words of the 1970s and shows Alexander Kluge’s affinity to the thoughts of Walter Benjamin, the latter formulating his concept of *Erfahrung* in the 1930s. In order to approach Kluge and Negt’s concept of the public sphere it is thus essential to recapitulate briefly Benjamin’s thoughts about this concept as well as his conceptualisation of the function of the film medium.

Benjamin associates modernity in his essay “On Some Motifs on Baudelaire” with a crisis of experience.¹⁴ According to him, the living conditions in industrialised capitalism have led to a historical decline of *Erfahrung*, which can be summarised as a continuous, profound, non-diverted or non-distracted and lived through manner of experience. For Benjamin, *Erlebnis* in modern capitalism, an isolated and abrupt form of experience has replaced *Erfahrung*: “The quintessence of a passing moment [*Erlebnis*] that struts about in the borrowed garb of experience.”¹⁵ *Erlebnis* is for Benjamin the symptom of a fragmentation and disconnection of the modern human being to his or her surroundings in the capitalist system, in other words to its technology. Benjamin identifies the social and economic conditions of the different stages of capitalism that shape the prevailing technology. *Erlebnisse* are moreover considered as symptoms of technology. The above-introduced term experience shall be understood and will be used from now on based on the Benjaminian definition of *Erfahrung*. But it is crucial to mention that Benjamin’s contribution to Kluge’s

¹³ Forrest 2012, 17.

¹⁴ For Benjamin, the understanding of the term modernity is inseparable from capitalism.

¹⁵ Benjamin 2007, 185.

thinking does not end here. Benjamin claims in his famous essay *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*: “The mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses towards art.”¹⁶ Experience (Erfahrung) has become impossible due to the disintegration of the aura of an artwork: “That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.”¹⁷ Yet a film perception that would entail a loss of art’s uniqueness and authenticity because of its base in mechanical reproducibility has a potential for functioning in a political manner. As Benjamin’s dialectical approach to the concept leads him to theorise a possibility of coping with the lost Erfahrung by the very conditions of the film medium that have led to its decline. Film, as the new, reproducible mass media of the 1930s (when Benjamin wrote the essay), should operationalise the *collective* organisation of human perception, as he hopes for “the desire of contemporary masses to bring things “closer spatially and humanly.”¹⁸ For Benjamin, the modern human subject must adopt himself to the new environment in capitalist life as he hopes the loss of aura would in return induce political change.

This countering of the usage of the film medium as an *'aesthetics of politics'*, as detectable in the Nazi propaganda films, to a *'politicisation of aesthetics'*, is for Benjamin inevitable if social change is to take place. As the medium’s potential for emancipation lies in this very condition of technological reproduction, film experience could become a liberating process that would eventually lead to social transformation. In spite of the danger of cinema’s *Erfahrungsarmut*, its impoverished mode of experience, he sees a revolutionary potential in the medium. Benjamin considers film as the medium of redemption for the lost *auratic* experience, because it marks a possible transformation from individual, fragmented perception into a new, collective experience where it heightens the presence of the mind. Kluge shares this dialectic as he also considers the revolutionary potential of the film medium as indispensable presupposition to modify the given situation in capitalism. But in contrast to Benjamin, Kluge does not identify the loss of aura as the trigger for a revolutionary situation in the film watching process but maintains the idea of advocating the possibility of experience.

¹⁶ Benjamin 1969, 234.

¹⁷ Ibid., 221.

¹⁸ Ibid., 223.

Kluge's stance can be perceived in his and Negt's observation of the demise of the so-called classical public sphere that finds its basic structures in the bourgeois culture. In accordance with Habermas, they consider the origin of the public sphere in the emergence of the bourgeoisie from the late 18th to the middle of the 19th century and critically examine the interweaving of the public sphere and the mass media in 20th century. Yet in a supplementary fashion, Kluge and Negt designate the contemporary development of the classical bourgeois public sphere as superseded by a new, industrialised and commercialised public sphere. They call this public sphere the *new public sphere of production*¹⁹, whose integral part is the *consciousness industry*²⁰ that appears in form of the new organisation of media:²¹ the new media. For Kluge, media forms such as television induce a presence of media dominance that represses the public through enforcing patterns of consumption and entertainment.²² The substantial characteristic of this capitalist public sphere that is formed by the market driven media, is discovered in its instability and 'threat' to the public, as it would appropriate and de-substantialise human experience. So according to Kluge, its problematic lies not in the fact that it excludes public from private as the previous *classical* public sphere of the bourgeoisie used to do, but that it conversely "incorporates private realms, in particular the production process and the context of living" into shaping process.²³ But the context of living is neglected and misrepresented in the new media that "unlike classical media, [...] do not merely produce an ideological surplus but directly exploit, as their raw material, the living experience"²⁴ of the individual. This exploitation takes place because the industrialised public sphere is grounded in profit making and the promotion of consumerism.

The mechanism behind the production of mass media reveals that the *new public sphere of producers*, which additionally operates on a transnational and global scale, annihilate the distinction between private and public life. It operates from above without any possible interference from the receiver. The interrelation of private and

¹⁹ Kluge and Negt 1993, 13.

²⁰ A term that is originally coined by Hans Magnus Enzensberger in the 1970s.

²¹ Von Bismarck et al 1985.

²² Kluge 1988, 40.

²³ Negt and Kluge 1993, 12.

²⁴ Hansen 2012, 52.

public in the new public sphere of producers is thus considered problematic because of the fact that the components, which produce experience and the ones that produce public life are one and the same: namely major media groups, instead of the individual people, which dismantle the possibility of keeping one's intimacy. But in order to establish a self-determined and richer public sphere that saves the individual experience from being capitalised and commodified, the privacy of the individuals have to be integrated in the shaping process of the public sphere in a different way. Not every form of a public sphere must diminish an individual's intimacy. While forms of mass media require the individual's intimacy as its 'human capital' in order to function, a public sphere that works in a collective manner does not expose individual feelings and thoughts. Neither does it target at isolating the individual nor constrain a fusion of private and public life. It rather aims at pursuing an integration of the individual into the public life that is based on voluntariness and openness. A good public sphere would be a place where the circle that comprises any broadcast medium, the privacy of the individual and the collectivity of the people would be compensated. That means that the individual can contribute to as much as it can profit oneself from the media.

This is the reason, why Kluge and Negt declare the necessity of a counter-concept of a public sphere, an utopian idea, which is still worthy of reflection today. They propose a public sphere that stands in opposition to the one of the producers and provides an alternative organisation to induce 'real' experience. By appreciating the existing alienation and fragmentation of experience in the tradition of Benjamin as part of experience itself, they propose a confrontation of the established public sphere with its *proletarian context of living* that should eventually lead to a formation of an autonomous organisation of experience through collective forces.²⁵ A social organisation of experience, which is considered as *the* condition of the production of a counter public: "A type of public sphere which is changing and expanding, increasing the possibilities for a public articulation of experience" and which nevertheless appreciates the "right to intimacy and private ownership of experience."²⁶ In other words, a public sphere that is not owned by media groups, but that would function on a communal, public ground, in which individuals' experiences are shared through

²⁵ Negt and Kluge 1993, 76.

²⁶ Kluge 2012, 38.

exchange. As Kluge defines the public sphere as the “locale where personal experience is transformed into self-consciousness, because it is shared with others”²⁷, it becomes clear that the communal and collective aspects of experience are promoted. Though Öffentlichkeit is considered as a phenomenon oppositional to privacy, it must be filled with ‘private’ experience in order to become a potential production sphere for resistance. They pursue an opposition against an organisation from interest-steered modes of public relations that derive from the State and the media industry. In addition to this problematic, they consider a decay of the public into different parts. Those can be detected in the so-called *Teilöffentlichkeiten* that pretend to represent the public as a whole.²⁸ This decay of the public sphere is also the reason, according to Kluge, for the contemporary disintegration and isolation of the individual.²⁹

But how can experience emancipate itself from the seemingly omnipresent public opinion that is represented by the mass media? What does the detachment of prefabricated experience look like in practice? How can a counter-public sphere be created? The answer for Kluge lies in the notion of an alternative media practice, which would have the capability to democratise the public sphere. And as the institution of cinema is one part of the existing diverse public spheres³⁰, it is one of those possible fields of media production that could conduct the demanded transformation of the existing public sphere and its extension into a counter-public sphere. But a possible counter concept first of all needs a space where the communal exchange of experience can take place and where the reciprocity of the medium can develop. A place that is found in the auditorium, the film medium’s place for a collective film watching, in which experience of individuals can be brought together under one common social horizon. Only when a collective watching takes place, can

²⁷ Ekardt 2012, 124.

²⁸ Kluge 2002, 169.

²⁹ In contrast to other political theories of the 1960s as for example the cultural revolution that was based on the deconstruction of inherited modes of identity, Kluge promoted an ‘integrated personality’. One can say that in this sense, Kluge belongs to an older generation of Marxist thoughts, the 1930s, when Brecht communicated his notion of productivism (the viewer as producer).

³⁰ Von Bismarck et al 1985, 55.

an interaction between the diverse viewers' experience be guaranteed.³¹ Kluge's promotion of a recuperation of a self-determined experience in this *collective* manner is seen as one solution to establish a counter force of film experience where individual experience can flourish and as a consequence thereof creates a capacity for the induction of social change: "This use value, this product, which is the 'public sphere' is the most fundamental product that exists. In terms of community, of what I have in common with other people, it is the basis for the process of social change."³² Miriam Hansen summarises Kluge's encouragement of an autonomous movement of the collective viewership as 'other viewer', which oscillates between concrete experience of empirical spectators and the single spectator that would eventually result in an unpredictable state: "It is the unexpected, almost aleatory, component of collective reception which makes the spectating "public" (Publikum) a public sphere (Öffentlichkeit) in the emphatic sense."³³ In other words, a public sphere for Kluge cannot be 'programmed' externally but is generated by a principle of contingency that implements the necessity of the viewer as producer.³⁴ This stance towards a collective viewership also indicates at Kluge's adoption of the idea of an *authorship* that is solely possible in a collective way.³⁵ It eventually contrasts to the prevailing programming control system that was established in German television in the 1970s which is until today characterised by a prevention of unexpected proceedings as its strategies are based on easy consumable and simplified programmes.

To this very day, Kluge does not tire of underlining the importance of an alternative *Gegenproduktion*, which according to him is the only solution for establishing a counter public opinion.³⁶ At the beginning of the 1980s, twenty years after the foundation of the New German Cinema and reminiscent of Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Culture Industry*, Kluge reformulated his reflections upon new media and television in another collaborative theoretical publication, the *Industrialisation of Consciousness*. Here, Kluge reformulates cinema's situation as a possible public force

³¹ This relates to the brief popularity of the so-called 'discussion film' during the 1970s such as McCall and Tyndall's film "Argument" which was meant, purely, to trigger a public debate.

³² Kluge 2012, 41.

³³ Hansen 1988, 185.

³⁴ I will shortly come back to this idea.

³⁵ I shall explain how this functions for Kluge at a later point.

³⁶ Kluge 2012.

against the publicity of the new media, which is in the 1980's more and more ruled by the global market. Kluge takes leave of the classical critical theory Adorno's,³⁷ who has condemned all sorts of mass media, especially film, as products of a predominant 'culture industry'. Adorno degrades all spectators to consumers and proclaims an impossibility of any alternative media production within the system due to its capitalist basis. In other words, technology is subject to capitalism's doctrine and Adorno's estimation of the capitalist system of the 1940s and 50s sees few options of resistance as long as it prevails.³⁸ Accordingly, mass media within the culture industry serve a principle of mass deception.³⁹ As explained above, instead of sharing Adorno's critique of technology that has turned against humanity, Kluge embraces the medium's technological and artistic possibilities, in order to enable an alternative experience for the audience. He is thus situated in Benjamin's, rather than Adorno's tradition that is also detectable in his belief in the viewer's authorship.

Recognising the 'threat' deriving from the new media, Kluge tries to counteract the prevailing media from within by actively undertaking critique in form of alternative media productions. He not only produces and directs short films, documentary, feature films and television programmes, but also takes part in collaborative projects. The collaboration of the New German Cinema directors film *Germany in Autumn* from 1978 is a result of a seditious transition time in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s that was characterised by all kinds of 'failed' protests, like the student movements' (APO, SDS) attempts to challenge the conservative press, most notably Springer. The formation of the RAF that has followed its own (anti-) spectacular media strategy is one result of these incidents and one reason for the 'decline' of the German leftists. *Germany in Autumn* is a direct response to the happenings during the climax of the German Autumn in 1977.⁴⁰ The debate about the

³⁷ I call it classical because Adorno has revised his opinion about filmmaking which can be read for example in his essay "Transparencies on Film".

³⁸ The only option Adorno considers as redemption from capitalism is the relative 'autonomy of art' that was however criticised by students from the 1960s movement who rather promoted (as Kluge) a direct engagement with the mass media.

³⁹ Adorno, 2001.

⁴⁰ The kidnapping and killing of Hans-Martin Schleyer, leading German industrialist and businessman who was chief executive of Mercedes Benz at that time, the hijacking of a Lufthansa plane and its subsequent recapturing in Mogadishu and the ostensible suicides of Baader, Ensslin and Raspe in the high security prison in Stuttgart-Stammheim.

permission of a funeral for the terrorists, Schleyer's burial and state ceremony for, the disputed burial of the terrorists that turned into a police trap for the attendee have led to an overall political tension of state supervision and fear of future terrorism in the whole country. But the film is not only a response to the aftermath in the German public sphere, but one attempt to present a different view on the fiercely debated topic, in other words to establish a counter public sphere. As the whole atmosphere in Germany was saturated by a feeling of insecurity and suspicion, the identity of a German nation and its represented public sphere was threatened. Miriam Hansen explains, "the catastrophic concatenation of events [...] seems to have lifted, for a moment at least, the veil of historical amnesia which had protected the growth of German self-confidence since the early 1950s."⁴¹ *Germany in Autumn* is a collage that as Hansen further assesses, "does not offer a collection of individual episodes and statements", but rather offers "an overall yet open structure, interweaving documentary and fictional passages, personal and impersonal points of view, historical perspectives and unresolved bewilderment in the present tense."⁴² Its montage further indicates identification with the "Soviet tradition of newsreel, surveys and chronicles, e.g. Vertov's *Kino Pravda* and *Kino Eye* series."⁴³

In contrast to other news coverage of the German Autumn, *Germany in Autumn* demonstrates a gathering of diverse point of views on the topic into one merged product that does not take a pro or contra stance towards the happening. It rather aims at evolving an observatory mode of expression that conducts a combination of assembled perceptions. This aims at arousing the viewer's attention by enforcing an extension of artistic expression. Kluge's contribution to the film bears his signature as filmmaker as his part refines his idea of a counter concept that leads to a film form that encourages reflection and curiosity. The first sequence of the film shows self-shot documentary footage of the funeral of Schleyer whilst Kluge's voice over reads the farewell letter Schleyer has written to his son. Later sequences by Kluge are a collage of historical and self-shot material in which the German history as important reference point becomes clear.⁴⁴ In a recent interview about the German Autumn Kluge states: "There were barely authentic images. What one sees in the television,

⁴¹ Hansen 2012, 56; 57.

⁴² Ibid., 58.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ I will come back to analyse in depth his contribution to *Germany in Autumn* later.

reads in the newspaper or discusses with friends, those are all indirect experiences. This seems to me retrospectively as characteristic for the German Autumn.⁴⁵ The specific filmic compilation of diverse perspectives and more complex perceptions from different directors reveals the importance of an assemblage of different point of views if one wants to collect a proper experience. A public sphere in the Klugian sense needs in order to function a community where different voices can be heard and where the perception of the people is sharpened and challenged.

A decade later when governmental decisions have cut down subsidies for independent filmmaking, Kluge undertakes a new approach of countering the established public sphere. He decides to work with the commercialised satellite television in order to provide it with his so-called 'cultural windows'. Due to a media law in Germany that furnished every broadcaster with a cultural programme as well as investigative journalism, Kluge has used this juridical foundation in order to get his own irredeemable licence as television producer. He thus founds the production company dctp.tv in order to produce for private German television at the end of the 1980s. Twice a week, Kluge broadcasted his late night programmes *10 vor 11*, *News&Stories* or *Prime Time* in which Kluge enjoys a complete independence over the organisation and content of his programme. This decision to work within the scope of the media that he previously condemned shows Kluge's determinacy to counteract the new media. Kluge's *Kulturprogramme* that is part of the work of *Fernsehen der Autoren* (television of authors) demonstrates an effort to work against established consumption habits of television viewers. This is supported by the idea of the audience's experience as the maker of the medium. This means the medium would not exist, if there were no audience to receive or watch it. As Kluge notes, "Nothing exists objectively without the emotions, actions and desires, that is without the eyes and the senses of the people involved."⁴⁶ So as mentioned before, Kluge's film and alternative public sphere concept does not solely refer to the relation and social exchange between the various spectators, but also focuses on the development of the relation between the spectator and the film. Also in his television programmes this approach can be detected in heterogeneity of the integrated materials that are assembled in an open structure in which the viewer can intervene and select

⁴⁵ Interview Tagesspiegel.

⁴⁶ Kluge, 2012, 33.

independently as much as he wants to, as it should be conditioned in an open and free public sphere.

This is why Kluge underlines the importance of the viewer's capacity for fantasy. Kluge has repeatedly stated over the last decades that it is the fantasy, which means the activation of the viewer⁴⁷ that he considers as sole condition for the functioning of the whole apparatus.⁴⁸ The film experience should not be forced onto the individual, but be created by the audience members themselves. In Alexander Kluge's concept of cinema, it is the spectator who is the producer of experiences as he or she "constantly recreates the cinema's experiential horizon"⁴⁹ by memory, imagination or association. Those images that have always been in the head of people, contribute to the creation of the film experience:

Film takes recourse to the spontaneous workings of the imaginative faculty which has existed for tens of thousands of years. Since the Ice Age (or earlier), screams of images, of so-called associations, have moved through the human mind ... Laughter, memory, and intuition, hardly the product of mere education, are based on this raw material of associations.⁵⁰

For Kluge, it is the filmmaker's task to create an alternative film practice that responds to these raw material and associative images in the 'spectator's head'. The raw material corresponds to the "more-than-ten-thousand-year-old-cinema to which the invention of the film strip, projector and screen only provided a technological response."⁵¹ It is considered as the filmmaker's obligation to fulfil this potential role of cinema to contribute to the transformation process of the public sphere by responding to the already existing images and experiences in the head of the spectator. Understanding this conception of film reception should make it finally clear, what Kluge means with his conception of experience and how he expects the audience to experience film in general, and specifically when it comes to perceiving

⁴⁷ Kluge considers fantasy as a capacity that is universally employed and its usage beyond social control. Though fantasy is according to Kluge kept out of the public sphere and can escape domestication to some degree, there are elements of fantasy that are made to conform. See for more information: *The Significance of Phantasy in On Film and Public Sphere*.

⁴⁸ Kluge 2010.

⁴⁹ Kluge 2012, 34.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 37.

⁵¹ Ibid.

his own films. His theoretical stance of the 'film in the spectator's head' underlines, emphatically, his consideration of the individual's experience as inevitable contribution to an alternative media practice. This is the reason why Kluge's films are seldom narrated in a coherent and continuous manner. As Anton Kaes explains by reference to his film *Die Patriotin* from 1978 Kluge's way of filmic expression:

Fragments of several stories seem to lie around, isolated parts of different puzzles. It is up to the viewer to piece together the various parts, a process that liberates the imagination but also demands considerable associative aplomb and a willingness of the part of the viewer to collaborate in the construction of meaning.⁵²

One can find those fragments also in his television programmes that are characterised by a structure that calls upon the viewer's autonomy. It is thus the spectator's fantasy and imagination, which according to Kluge animates the screen. One can see the main function of an alternative public sphere in this creation of experience from 'below', from the standpoint of the individual perceiver. As fantasy, for Kluge, entails the capability of the spectator's stream of associations that is conditioned in turn by their faculty of memory.⁵³ I shall demonstrate how this idea looks like in practice by illustrating a sequence that Kluge has contributed for *Germany in Autumn*. The sequence starts by showing re-filmed paintings of landscapes and an emperor on a horse, accompanied by the German national anthem in Haydn's version. Images of Gabi Teichert, the protagonist of *Die Patriotin*, refilmed drawings showing castle Mayerling, a portrait of the lover of the crown prince Rudolf (son of Archduke Francis Joseph), a depiction of their suicide and the father praying at the open coffin of his son and finally drawings of a girl committing suicide by letting her head be chopped off by a train. Kluge's voice over comments on the content of the images and explains that the exclamation "*Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser*" (God preserve Francis the emperor) as urtext of the German anthem. Those images are followed by historical film material of the fascist German propaganda *Wochenschau* that depicts scenes of the funeral of general field marshal Erwin Rommel. This excerpt shows, in a close-up, the son Manfred Rommel who will become the mayor of Stuttgart during the RAF

⁵² Kaes 2012, 96.

⁵³ Ibid., 36; 43.

terror time.⁵⁴ After a short switch to Gabi Teichert in which Kluge explains her problems with the school authority due to her own understanding of history and its teaching, Kluge quotes Teichert: “*Ich versuche die Dinge in ihrem Zusammenhang zu sehen.*“ (I try to see the things in their relation to each other), Kluge integrates self shot documentary material of the memorial service for Schleyer in the St Eberhard’s cathedral in Stuttgart where, among others, images of the then chancellor Helmut Schmidt sitting in between Schleyer’s widow and children are shown. This scene is followed by combining historical film footage that portrays an assassination (from Kluge’s explanatory voice over we get to know it as a deed from the German intelligence service 1938 in Marseille) with footage of an arrest of a Turk with a rifle with which he wanted to shoot himself a pigeon for lunch.⁵⁵ The last images of this sequence go back to the ceremony and include among others images of the minute of silence in the automobile factory, the subsequent resumption of work, lectures during the ceremony and a behind the scenes footage of the catering service of the event.

Kluge connects the above described events in a way so that one can conjure up memories and associations not only of similar theatric happenings in history, but also of mythologies, fairytales or classical, Greek or Roman literature that deal with the human nature and the idea of a State as human representative. In an interview, Kluge proposes possible connections that could be drawn upon in relation to the tragic character of the events, which took place during the German Autumn. In the figure of Schleyer, Kluge sees Siegfried from the Nibelungen saga, which his family had also lost due to reason of state, and in Erwin Rommel he detects a Shakespearean character.⁵⁶ Kluge is generally offering the viewer to draw their own associations and relations out of the happenings of the German Autumn and similarly to his television work prompts to the individual concerns.

⁵⁴ Erwin Rommel was killed by the Nazi regime because of his knowledge about the conspiracy from the 20th of July 1944, in which military resistance, among others count von Stauffenberg’s, attempted coup on Hitler failed. The Wehrmacht honours the very same person that they have killed. The son Manfred is the senior mayor of Stuttgart 35 years later who permits the terrorists a funeral. His statement that enmity ends for him with death, wins significance here.

⁵⁵ In an interview, Kluge tells that their film crew left once only shortly the cathedral during the ceremony of Schleyer, to accidentally witness this coincidence.

⁵⁶ Kluge 2007.

But how can one argue that Kluge does not retain control over the 'proper' interpretation of his assembled material? One answer lies within the possibility that Kluge's idea can be transferred to Walter Benjamin's concept of *mémoire involuntaire*. Involuntary memory is a part of the human faculty of remembering which arises when visual cues that one runs across conjure unconscious recollections of past times. As Benjamin states that in his essay on Baudelaire

memory fragments are often most powerful and most enduring when the incident which left them behind was one that never entered consciousness. Put in Proustian terms, this means that only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience, can become a component of the *mémoire involuntaire*.⁵⁷

As Benjamin's dialectical conception of experience not only "mediates individual perception with social contingency and collectivity", but also "conscious with unconscious processes" and he claims that mass media, like the newspaper paralyse "the imagination of their readers through isolation of information from experience."⁵⁸ Benjamin accordingly considers "experience as the capacity to see connections and relations."⁵⁹ In other words, experience (Erfahrung) enables to counteract the levelling of experience by capitalism, which makes everything equivalent.⁶⁰ So Benjamin's conceptualisation of recapturing the lost experience must result in an unconscious deployment of the individual's memory. He states furthermore in the same essay: "Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in a collective existence as well as private life. It is less a product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data."⁶¹ Thus the faculty to connect sensual perceptions of the present with images of the past and the human capability to relate those past events with the present is necessary, in order to regain the capability for imagination.⁶²

Interpreting Kluge's sequence in *Germany in Autumn* from this perspective can cast a different light on the comprehension of the employed material. It initiates one

⁵⁷ Benjamin 2007, 160; 161.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 159.

⁵⁹ Hansen 1988, 184.

⁶⁰ The commodity is based in a principle of pure exchange value.

⁶¹ Benjamin 2007, 157.

⁶² For Benjamin, to imagine a better future.

for example to think about the usage of the German national anthem: When and on which occasions is the anthem played, how much did it enter into the collective memory of the nation, does one still hear it when it is being played or did its melody become so familiar that it has unconsciously anchored itself in the German consciousness? One could conclude that specific feelings arise when the anthem is being played without the listener's awareness of it or that certain feelings are being associated with the melody and lyrics without knowing its descent. So Kluge not only communicates and hints at hidden relations between historical facts and at that time present situations such as the motivation of Martin Rommel to condone the terrorists and grant them a funeral. His compilation of diverse images of a historical assassination, a funeral, suicides, a ceremony and an arrest also establishes a connection between daily routine (the arrest of the Turk) and big events that one can call into question or associate with rationality and jurisdiction. His approach furthermore demonstrates on the one hand how much such images have entered the collective consciousness as we see them everyday on television which categorises them as normal or on the other hand how history seemingly repeats itself.⁶³

Anyhow, the faculty of historical memory has, according to Benjamin, been lost in the film experience. As the temporal disjunction of the film medium is restricted by its technological reproduction, the recollection of unconscious past times, the archive of *involuntary memory*, is limited for the viewer. But for Kluge, film has also to operate on this level of the involuntary memory. As he shares Benjamin's belief in the medium's revolutionary potential as well as he allocates a capacity to experience. The example from above detects Kluge's challenging of the logical writing of history and his specific incorporation of historical material. As Anton Kaes argues:

Kluge's films do not reconstruct the past as a backdrop for stories of love and suffering; nor do they relate tales and historical events in the past tense. Instead, his films deal with history from the perspective of the present, shedding new light not only on the past (as a prelude to the present) but also on the present itself in its historical dimension.⁶⁴

⁶³ This approach to history can also be discovered in both Benjamin's and Kluge's literary dealing with history. Both authors' writings conduct a non-linear style and open narrative that is obtained by using a specific montage as constructing method that denies fixed meanings. Historical material is not converted into definitive historical facts, but remains indeterminable and rectifiable.

⁶⁴ Kaes 2012, 96.

As Kluge's social, utopian idea of a counter-public sphere considers the viewer to be able to mobilise his or her own past experience via fantasy and memory, the public sphere of the new media as Kluge has described it, has led to a support of the fragmentation of the individual's experience. It moreover has led to a disintegration of the subject comparable to Benjamin's declared decay of experience in modernity. Kluge similarly aims at using the medium in a socialistic manner, which can be detected in his stance towards the public sphere as a political space where the individual's experience could sustain the dynamics of the mass media with the help of imagination. This would take place between the film on the screen and the film in the *spectator's head*. So best-case scenario for watching *Germany in Autumn* is to get one's own idea about the German Autumn by memorising related self-experiences. And this is meant for audiences of today as much as the past or future times as each's own present will always add a different horizon of experience to those past events.

Correspondingly, this understanding of experience (the film in the spectator's head) can, additionally to the communal aspect of the medium, be considered as its inherent reciprocal power.⁶⁵ A condition of the medium that is necessary to persist in its fight against mass media and which can be discovered in Kluge's promotion and practice of its alternative approach. An alternative usage that, as shortly mentioned before, can be based in a practice within the same media and with the same technical tools. In this sense, Kluge stands more in the tradition of the new German leftist media theories, like Hans Magnus Enzensberger's theory of a communicative reciprocity or feedback that he has formulated in his *Baukasten der Medientheorien*; a theory, which is influenced by Bertold Brecht's idea of the reversibility of the media that he formulated in his radio theory of the 1920s. Enzensberger promotes the democratic potential of media technologies, as he considers the reproductive media "to be transformed from an apparatus of distribution into an apparatus of communication."⁶⁶ This has an impact on the idea of a public sphere, which no longer is associated with terms of manipulation or disintegration directed from above, but which is characterised through a creation and reception of media from the receiver. Those, as Miriam Hansen has formulated, "new and potentially democratic

⁶⁵ Walter Benjamin saw the reciprocity of the medium in its returning the gaze, which emerges in the above explained concept of the involuntary memory.

⁶⁶ Enzensberger 1970.

formations of publicity that emerges within the very media of consumption”⁶⁷ mark the very core of Kluge’s idea of media production in a public sphere that would be “defined by openness, freedom of access, multiplicity of relations, communicative interactions, self-reflection.”⁶⁸ This would be a public sphere that enables a direct contribution and participation from everyone.

This first chapter has approached the description of the public sphere of the digital age by introducing Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge’s adoption of the definition of the public sphere from Jürgen Habermas and their subsequent differentiation of the term. I have explained that their contribution to the debate derives from a discomfort about the structures of the media landscape in the 1960s and 1970s, which is evaluated by them as externally controlled by media corporations. I have clarified that the utopian idea of a counter-public sphere that is characterised by an engagement in a thorough independent media practice, derives from their assessment of this prevailing structure of the public sphere. I have moreover indicated that their approach interacts with absorption of the possibilities of *Erfahrung* in times of capitalism. Their analysis of a commercialised public sphere of producers has led to pursue Brecht and Enzensberger’s stance of the viewer as becoming a producer. Kluge’s idea of a revolutionary usage of the technical media, in particular the film medium, comprehends a counteraction to the exploitation of the privacy of the individual by the mass media and a resulting emancipation of experience that lies in the reciprocal power of the medium. The last part of the first chapter links therefore Kluge’s approval of a counter force to the prevailing public sphere to the relation of the film and the spectator. I have illustrated that the deployment of fantasy, the human faculty of association as well as human collectivity and (un) conscious memory are indispensable characteristics for the achievement of a counter force in capitalism and an understanding of Kluge’s films.

The next chapter processes Kluge’s standpoint to the public sphere in analog times in order to understand his point of view in the digital age. It shall introduce and assess the new prevailing public sphere of digitalisation, the Internet, by involving Kluge’s stance and other critical voices. I will discuss the Internet’s potential of

⁶⁷ Hansen 1993, xii.

⁶⁸ Hansen 1988, 184.

supporting the idea of an alternative public sphere by scrutinising its democratic potential of alternative media production.

Second Chapter: The public sphere in the digital age and the potentials of the Internet

What and where is the public sphere today? What does the reception of technology look like in the digital age? Is the potential involvement of every citizen in the shaping of the public sphere, which has been formulated by Kluge as utopian idea, accomplished in the digital age? Can the Internet be described as a successful public sphere? If yes, how does the Internet answer to the required distinction between public and private in order to keep one's right for intimacy? And how could an adequate theory on the contemporary public sphere of the digital age be described? Rosalind C. Morris stated that a theory of the contemporary public sphere "must be able to think publicness beyond the public sphere, in the non-space of a networked world."⁶⁹ Does the public sphere today in the 21st century have the potential to resist the leading media corporations of today like Google or Amazon? If yes, how can the digitalisation of our lives, especially the Internet, be considered as offering a new contribution to the shaping of a counter-public sphere? A public, which is created by the people themselves, created by their own experiences? And if not, what do forms of repression and regression look like? Are forms of a counter-public sphere nowadays possible or necessary after all? And if yes, is the Internet the place where this counter public sphere can be established?

The beginning of digital technology, especially the proliferation of the Internet in the 1990s, was accompanied by an optimistic estimation in the medium's potential. On the one side there were beliefs in the Internet's capability as an 'automatic', democratising effect in the Enzensbergian and Brechtian sense, where the production means of public speech are at disposal for citizens.⁷⁰ The new connected digital world promised likewise technological innovations before (transport, radio, television, telephone) to serve solely the people's good. The Internet ideology stood for a non-commercial, free exchange and endless amount of knowledge, information and communication. It thus created a hope for closing the 'gap' between democracy and technology. But the course of the 21st century has converted this unilateral assessment by classifying the situation as far more complex. This new concept of

⁶⁹ Morris 2013, 100.

⁷⁰ A development that was seen supported and increased in the upcoming social media and grassroots movement. For more information see *Demokratisierung durch Social Media? Mediensymposium 2012* edited by Kurt Imhof et al.

communication and participation does not solely function on an independent and free level. It is not a mode of mass broadcasting, but subjected to valorisation and optimisation that create new forms of power relations instead a more democratic system.⁷¹ In this sense, the Internet's structure resembles more classical mass media forms of communication and interaction. Critical voices such as Alexander Galloway came up to challenge the function of the Internet in society. In contrast to assessment of the Internet that consider it as intangibly and uncontrollable due to its magnitude, Galloway describes the founding principle of the Internet in his publication *Protocol - How Control Exists after Decentralisation* in its control mechanism. As he treats its coded technological language as natural language, he investigates through this materialist analysis the Internet in a cultural and literal analysis. Accordingly, he considers the Internet not as "an unpredictable mass of data – rhizomatic and lacking central organisation" which would result in a "disappearance of control as such"⁷², but as a highly organised and managed technological system that is based on the controlling power of the technical protocols regulating the connection of the network.⁷³ Following Morris's consideration that comprehends the force of a resisting public sphere in "remarking the limits that constitute a given space of discourse"⁷⁴, I shall investigate if Kluge's stance towards the digitalised public sphere approaches such borders of the new cyberspace public sphere that seems to be endless and incalculable or if he rather follows Galloway's argumentation that indicates at a counter force in the cyberspace that achieves in opposing the newly established power relations online.

In the following, I will discuss Kluge's position towards contemporary developments in the digital media and present his work with the online digital media. Kluge's idea about the Internet implies, that it has, similarly to the film medium, a certain use value in creating an alternative public sphere. I will explain how Kluge detects in the Internet the fulfilment of the emancipatory potential of the media. Kluge

⁷¹ Tendencies of censorship, surveillance, data collection and disposal of private information of Internet users and general inclinations of counteracting independent pages and organisations such as open source are exposed to enhanced regulations and commercialisation.

⁷² Galloway 2004, 8.

⁷³ Galloway's analysis is linked to the work of Deleuze and Foucault and not to the critical theory tradition of Kluge.

⁷⁴ Morris 2013, 101.

considers for example a value in new types of cinema that begin to exist in the Internet on online-platforms such as YouTube or Vimeo.⁷⁵ Those platforms function, according to Kluge, in an Enzensbergerian sense, as they provide clips that are uploaded from users: “On YouTube there is, though very scattered, brilliant things, and those are invented in a complete new manner, without any program management.”⁷⁶ But this new type of public sphere is nevertheless exposed to a challenge. Although online contributions appear as a potential of “raw material”⁷⁷, films that are provided and uploaded in the Internet do respond to the public’s requests. A public interest that results in programmes that, as Kluge claims, conform with the head of people that would still be stuck in conservative patterns of ideological programmes: “The majority wants to see always the same, as for example pornography. Pornography in the Internet is reactionary down to the bone, without any sign of Enlightenment and ability of distinction, and this is even worse than in television, because of the missing censorship.”⁷⁸ Yet the coexistence of a plenitude of different clips on the Internet shows a diversity that arises out of the new possibilities of democratic filmmaking: Due to digital technology, not only independent non-corporate film production is made possible but also the possibility of distributing and showing those films online. Yet online programmes do not defeat television only because they offer an immense variety of films and clips (a variety that Kluge has tried to approach on television before), but because they provide the audience more freedom in choosing the duration and time of the watching process. As Kluge remarks: “In parallel to the economic crisis, television also undergoes a crisis, because the advertising money is becoming less. Young people do not put up with fixed programming schedules. When eight minutes of advertisement appears on the Internet, everybody clicks away.”⁷⁹

But those new opportunities do not solely exist for the user, but also for the provider. In comparison to Kluge’s programming for television, the Internet’s

⁷⁵ Ekardt 20122, 122.

⁷⁶ Kluge, 2010.

⁷⁷ Raw in the sense as unaffected from corporate decisions.

⁷⁸ Kluge, 2010. Translated by author.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Translated by author.

possibilities of programming seem to be endless.⁸⁰ Kluge starts to go online in 2009 with his production company *dctp*. The homepage can be considered as Kluge's online playground, as it provides myriads of montage essays in film form. The homepage, which has a permanent link to the German weekly news-magazine homepage of *Der Spiegel*, is equipped with diverse film material in clip form that relate to various topics and themes. It provides the user with thematic loops consisting of diverse videos about specific social, political, economic or philosophical topics on which one can click and watch in any variable order. What differentiates *dctp.tv* from other news homepages is that the provided subjects are not selected concerning the novelty and actuality of the topics, but can be considered as a comment on omnipresent themes and political issues of society like education or labour. This diversity of topics can moreover be read as an offer for the individual user/viewer to choose the topic he or she might be interested in the most:

We want to try to create a connection, a context [...] there is as we know nothing more inventive as daily news. And it then stands close to topics that do not change every day, well love does not change every day, it does not solve its problems either.⁸¹

Kluge tries to offer an online programme that is not as short lived as common news to current happenings. Although he considers the invention of the Internet as revolutionary in regard to the crowd of potential users/watchers that one can reach – in short, its vast potential of publicness⁸² - Kluge does consider many of those uploaded clips (additionally some contents) problematic in the sense of their ephemerality. The fleeting nature of these clips could cause a disturbed relationship of users who are reading and experiencing news or similar programmes online, as the possibilities of more recent news and happenings occurring is constantly present. This fact could cause restlessness and a feeling of disorientation on the part of the user.

After some years of experience in the world of the Internet, Kluge formulates those concerns in an assessment of the potentials and possibilities of the new connected and globalised age that finds expression in his essay *Die Entsprechung*

⁸⁰ Uploading programmes online and independently deciding over content and form is nevertheless not principally guaranteed anymore.

⁸¹ Kluge *Fakten*, 2010

⁸² Kluge 2010.

einer Oase. Essay für die digitale Generation (The analogy of an oasis) from the year 2013. This analysis of the digital culture calls attention to the challenge of reaching a proper appreciation of, and coping with, the Internet's diversity. By this Kluge means not only being able to choose material online, but also the intensified possibility of social participation. All the possible contingencies of either gaining access to knowledge or encountering other people have to be balanced with each individual's necessity. Surfing the Internet everybody should follow his or her own need of withdrawal from a possible information overload. As the Internet has become *the* public sphere of the 21st century, in which opinions are being shaped and experience is being collected, Kluge advocates a caesura, a stable place for every user where he or she can recover from an online 'superfluity':

On the Internet, which constitutes our lives stream to a part, I admire this diversity, this dissonance. However, it brings everyone who deals with the Internet, with a part of his heart to say, "Actually, I would like fixed points which have to do with me."⁸³

This place to recover could be for Kluge a Web page that offers to comply with each individual's genuine interest. Kluge follows here again Benjamin's caution against a disintegration of the subject and the lost experience in society. Similar to Benjamin's promotion of a protective shield against the fragmentation and over-exposure of daily life due to technological developments⁸⁴, Kluge's proposal renders cyberspace into an environment that is counteracting the unification of the public.

So for Kluge, the problem of the Internet lies not in the abundance of provided material, but in the user's challenge to use it appropriately regarding his or her own interest, to not let oneself be distracted from the myriad online seductions. That means to gain control and be able to manage the digital medium *consciously*, as Benjamin has proposed previously for the perception of film. Kluge's proposal thus reveals his strategy in times of the Internet to make *Erfahrungen* possible despite the omnipresent confrontations of absent minded *Erlebnisse* online. As his proposition counteracts the potential loss of gathered experience, one can say furthermore that Kluge proposes that in the digital era each individual is responsible for securing the existence of a

⁸³ Kluge 2013, 6; 7. Translated by author.

⁸⁴ See Walter Benjamin's concept of shock that can be found in his essay on Baudelaire.

counter public sphere by protecting themselves and their private sphere. Kluge's call can furthermore be regarded as drawing attention to a feared loss of *memory*, which is endangered by an uncontrolled usage of the Internet. One can interpret this stance towards the Internet, which adheres to the social critique of the 1930s as slightly outdated. In this sense, Kluge seems to be incapable of converting the mass media / political relation from past ages to the present digitalised one. The problem of disintegration contracts immensely compared to the incisions of freedom of speech or personal liberty that is at stake online.⁸⁵

Yet loyally to the dialectical tradition of the Frankfurt School, in the sense of Benjamin: considering the capabilities of technological media as boon and bane, he also promotes a way of dealing and employing the Internet so that one can profit from it. Although calling the Internet a "constellation of autonomous celestial bodies that can't be connected by fixed relations"⁸⁶ (which opposes Galloway's stance), he offers a solution for an integration of the individual and the restoration of the subject's unity. Even though the respective parts in the Internet may be hard to connect, a homepage like Kluge's very own wants to demonstrate a response to this by offering a safe place to rest in for a while. However, at first sight, Kluge's homepage in the year 2015 could be described as an overloaded assemblage of material. Equipped with a rotary knob on each of the four edges of the screen, by the name of *Große Themen* (Big Topics), *Nachrichtenwerkstatt* (Newsworkshop), *Gärten der Neugierde* (Gardens of Curiosity) and *Partner & Events* (Partner and Events), providing access to the loops, those wheels consist of such a variety of choice from diverse clips that one can feel lost immediately. This is why it is on the one hand hard to clarify if users of his page can find the declared 'personal page' where one could find some rest or if it, on the other hand, it only serves Kluge himself as a refuge.

It is nevertheless detectable that Kluge also here follows his idea of the viewer/user as author as his homepage's open structure again appeal to the user's individual usage and composition: Each of the four categories provides clips and information according to their heading. In the section *Große Themen* one finds assembled material to historical, social and scientific topics gathered into one sheet of the wheel. One can find themes such as Fukushima, the cosmos, the solar system, the

⁸⁵ I will shortly come back to this critique.

⁸⁶ Ekardt 2011, 129.

First World War, the blitzkrieg, capitalism or Tchernobyl.⁸⁷ When one clicks on a section, three small windows appear, one comprising a short summary of the topic, one exemplary screen shot and one consisting of a media player that states the number of clips to the selected topic and starts to play the clip when one clicks on it. Once the player is activated, the other clips (each with its own title) emerge underneath the main media player window in a loop arrangement to be further selected. The clips consist of a combination of a diversity of gathered material, normally into a short film of maximum 30 minutes. Those include documentary material in form of moving or still images (graphics, photographs, re-filmed drawings etc.) that can be of (film) historical or contemporary news report character. The self-shot material mostly shows experts of any kind (he also uses comedians that play a role as expert) that Kluge interviews himself and eventually Kluge's trademark, the colorful and multifaceted inter-titles that describe, inform, or tell a story. The form of the other wheel *Gärten der Neugier* is equally arranged. Instead of commenting on general topics and world events, it, according to its title, rather informs and educates about diverse scientific topics. The wheel consists of different sections, that include, for example: Mathematics, Darwin's evolution theory, Napoleon Bonaparte, the antiquity of Greece, Biology, viruses and bacteria or Byzantium. The other two wheels *Partner & Events* and *Nachrichtenwerkstatt* also follow the same scheme, whereas the former presents partners and friends of Kluge (mainly actors, directors, writers) like Rainer Werner Fassbinder or Christoph Schlingensiefel or provide clips about conferences, retrospectives or festivals such as the conference about digital culture *re:publica* in Berlin or the *Chaos Communication Congress*. The latter comprises clips to such a diversity of contemporary and past events, topics and circumstances that makes it difficult to outline here. All those categories and topics serve to illustrate the complexity and multifaceted aspects, not only of the world and its writing in history, but of the new cyber-world of the Internet. In this sense, Kluge's online representation of a variety of topics functions to administer knowledge for everyone who is interested in experiencing more than the daily life experiences.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ The wheel also consists of subcategories as connected topics appear on the same coloured leaf as for example topics related to war, diverse world crises or space.

⁸⁸ Kluge homepage also provides some 'entertaining' factors, as his sense of humour is apparent especially in his deployment of comedians and actors that ironically reenact situations.

This way of providing a homepage is a reaction to the already mentioned *viewership* of the Internet: A film audience that has turned into an online *usership*, which implies an amplified control of the consumption of media online. The viewer can decide what to watch, when to watch it, how many breaks to take, to iterate watched material, and so forth. The audience has achieved a complete new authority in the figurative sense. This freedom of the user⁸⁹ is one of the essential ingredients of the Internet and is considered by Kluge as its greatest potential: In an avant-garde and critical theory tradition that privileged the idea of an activation of the spectator, Kluge's homepage demonstrates not only an attempt to take the existence of the user's diverse fields of interest seriously, but further supports this freedom by supplying a lot of material to choose from. He further indicates the importance of the time factor when providing media online. As the emergence of *short* clips and films here is for Kluge not entirely attributable to the democratisation of the medium,⁹⁰ but also to the changed behaviour of the user. In this sense, during the search for a place to rest every homepage would only be given a limited time of attention. Kluge cautions against a user's online activity that is characterised through restlessness where single contributions of texts and videos are not always given the fullest attention, the longer the article or video, the shorter the amount of time spent on reading or watching entirely. Kluge sees this as the result of impatience with the work of others.⁹¹ This is why Kluge is providing film clips online that are mostly short similar to the minute-films in the beginning of film history.⁹² Moreover Kluge justifies this approach of brevity as having a long tradition in the arts and gives the example of the laconic style in rhetoric, where the articulation of short *flashes* interrupt long periods, which would be more difficult to *memorise*.⁹³ By underlining the importance of being able to remember in the context of the Internet, Benjamin's concept of *Erfahrung* resurfaces and puts Kluge's online approach ultimately in his tradition of an understanding of art as being responsible regarding the dealing with

⁸⁹ As long as the user is not located in a restricted and totalitarian regime where the access to Internet is either regulated or entirely prohibited.

⁹⁰ Film production before the digital age was very expensive and only conducted by 'professionals'.

⁹¹ Koch 2010, 361.

⁹² This form of the minute film is also a major part in his DVD productions, which will be in focus in the next chapter.

⁹³ Ekardt 2011, 122.

society. Moreover, being short and direct in the Internet does not mean that Kluge does not believe in the viewer's ability to memorise. Rather it answers to this policy of a fast-moving nature.

Of course you may upload your ninety-minute film, but your audience has to understand what your film is about after the first three minutes. A filmic opening sequence in the cinema, where you present an introduction, the names of the cast, etcetera. You can't make promises online, and exposition is practically forbidden because it is perceived as a moment of retardation.⁹⁴

Organising uploaded clips and sequences under thematic loops should make it therefore easier for users to decide in which clip to indulge and which contributions rather to avoid. By following this law of brevity, Kluge not only adopts tradition of the early days of cinema where people "were impatient with anything that lasted longer than one to three minutes"⁹⁵, but also answers to his designation of the Internet, the newly arisen digital environment where the subject has to decide consciously in what to indulge.

Yet a visit on Kluge's homepage demonstrates that this usage of the Internet can become a difficult task here. As above mentioned, one can get easily lost in the abundance of provided clips and material as well as overwhelmed in terms of choosing what to watch. And besides the provided 'freedom' on deciding on a clip is conditioned on every homepage per se, there is no possibility in becoming interactive by writing comments or other forms of online participations. Kluge relies thus here solely on the reciprocity and communal force of the authorship in the spectator's head. The second way would of creating a collective online experience where viewers/users can exchange their opinions about the provided material is not given. I am arguing that by denying further participation, Kluge runs the risk of annihilating one reciprocal power of the Internet that he has argued so strongly for the film medium. Although the page is 'public', one has the impression that it also serves Kluge's private Erfahrung.

However, assessing the gained possibilities of online based communication and interaction, prominent in diverse forms of social media, one has to evaluate those reciprocal powers as not only supporting a user's activity. Although social media

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Koch 2010, 361.

proceeds in the user's freedom of the selection of the online material, facilitate leaving comments online or publishing and uploading own material, which would alter the user into a provider, it can also promote a user's passivity. Through short news contributions on platforms such as Twitter, users become 'followers' instead of creators. This is important to mention, in order to understand Kluge's concept of the Internet in its fullest. Equally for his idea of the film in the spectator's head, Kluge aspires to prompt the Internet's user as being responsible for the shaping of their own experience. But as I have explained, the responsibility lies not exclusively with the user, but also with the online providers that provide alternative programmes such as Kluge's. As the Internet has become the public sphere of the 21st century, Kluge's online approach confirms his emphasis on the necessity for an alternative media production that creates an environment where a counter public opinion *independent* from the big mass can be shaped. Despite the overload, pages like dctp.tv do not follow mainstream or current news flashes but aim at creating a 'context' with which the viewer can actually work. Thus one can argue that Kluge's homepage must in this sense be considered as a small contribution to a public sphere that focuses on the protection of the privacy of the individual users. In this respect it does prevent personal disclosures when people write comments and critiques.⁹⁶ Kluge's decision can not only be considered as respecting the distinction between private and public, which answers to the debate about the possibility of privacy in the Internet, but can be considered as saving the intimate sphere of the users by not giving them a platform to expose themselves. The kind of self-display and information revelations that can be found in social networks such as Facebook or various Apps, which are used for example for self-optimisation, can easily lead to an abuse of the individual's personal information.⁹⁷ Those examples show an economic motivation that enforces data collections that are being sold to companies and confirm an intervention with the individual's integrity. Kluge's homepage does not inhibit this delirium of data

⁹⁶ The Internet provides one with anonymous username that could be opposed to this argument.

⁹⁷ Recent news reports about Facebook reveal its claim of the right to sell personal information for targeted ads. Facebook also tracks the online behaviour of anyone who has visited Facebook, for two years.

assemblage and valorisation⁹⁸ but establishes a stance against the mounting techniques of online surveillance and control.

At the end, Alexander Kluge formulates an opinion about the Internet, which is rather optimistic in comparison to other voices like for instance Galloway. His practice in the digital media environment and his proposal of an escape from unrestricted information that is bustling around online, demonstrates his belief in the possibility of a manageable communication process. As explained above, Kluge sees the control factor in the users themselves. Self-control that acknowledges the potential educational character of the Internet that, in the likeness of Benjamin, is induced from and through the technological media. It gets, thus, even more important to see the urgency of Kluge's concept of an alternative media production in the new context of digital media, where on the one side more democratic co-determination and participation for users as well as providers is made possible but also on the other side those newly won liberties can also induce dependencies, nonage and heteronomy. Kluge's exclamation for the necessity of the establishment of a counter public sphere hence became true with the Internet in a sense, as it seems to offer facilitation of his lifelong aspiration of securing complete independency for artistic expression. And this seems to be at least the case in western countries like Germany where access and interaction on homepage's are possible and not being restricted by governmental decisions and the freedom of expression appears to be ensured in the public space of the Internet.⁹⁹ Yet the liberalised process of the shaping of public opinions by members of the society through the Internet did not globally result in benefits for the population. Restricted regimes, such as China or even Turkey, for instance prove that the democratisation of the digital media can backfire and only encourage stronger repressive and regressive reactions. Developments that resulted in refusals of access

⁹⁸ What I mean by this is the fact that user's online behaviour provides free labour in the assembly of big data, which companies, such as Facebook, sell to other companies.

⁹⁹ Yet no governmental restrictions do not ensure a liberation of restrictions at all. If one follows Galloway's argumentation for example, these sites implement nevertheless protocols that frame our possible action online. One can barely know to which degree our online behaviour is influenced by unobtrusive power relations online.

or complete liquidations of homepages, which can be considered as another setback for the success of the digital public sphere.¹⁰⁰

So these development of communication in social media demonstrate the insufficiency of the Internet to establish itself as a new public sphere following Habermas' definition as his structural transformation of the public sphere designed an ideal type that strictly separates public from the private sphere.¹⁰¹ The examples of China or the Arab Spring reveal nevertheless what kind of influence the new mass media of the Internet can have on the connected and networked population. But as already explained, opinions on the role of social media are very divergent among scholars. On one hand, if one follows Kluge's stance, digital media can establish a connection and exchange between the people, without necessary being forced to come physically together at one place. On the other hand, social movements and digital broadcasting are not always meant to unify people; Rosalind C. Morris sees the function of such protest movements nowadays in the public sphere not aiming for a consensus but to "specularize the capacity for communication while severing it from any structures of reciprocity, however deferred. In doing so, these movements mark the transformation of *Öffentlichkeit* and perhaps the concept of the political itself."¹⁰² So comparably to RAF's employment of media, one could argue, the hype around the medium of social media is destroying the possibility of communication itself as it draws too much attention to the mean itself. And as it is further intensively used in a political manner, uploaded images and contents become difficult to distinguish between true and false.

But maybe the digital *Öffentlichkeit* demonstrates finally that there cannot be one single, but only several *Teilöffentlichkeiten* each striving for their own consensus. As Morris further states digital "*Öffentlichkeit* can be thought as a form of address rather

¹⁰⁰ In the last years, Chinese have used social media to distribute and raise awareness of violations as abuse of administration, patronage and so forth. A critical and social movement that has been suppressed by the Chinese government after some years of thriving activism.

¹⁰¹ Habermas also criticised the mass media as being incapable of keeping a critical distance and exchange of political ideas alive, which are seen as condition of an ideal state of the public sphere.

¹⁰² Morris 2013, 99.

than intention toward agreement."¹⁰³ She moreover defines the difference towards the bourgeois form of the public sphere. In the digital media

the exhibition of oneself takes place not in relation to those who resemble oneself but in an expanding realm of anonymous receivers whose listening takes the form of overhearing and whose seeing consists in voyeurism.¹⁰⁴

Ambivalently, this idea of a Big Brother is not a new one and has existed long before the invention of digital media. So although Morris puts hope in the proposed proletarian public sphere of Kluge and Negt that is characterised by an open and collective communication, she considers these conditions as being eliminated within the latest media movements.¹⁰⁵ So accordingly, she considers social movements emerging out of electronic media as

enabling (enable) communication without relation, or connection without mediation [...]The most notable feature of these movements is their ambition to access the media immediately. They assume force (to influence events) not through a dialectic of recognition but through an anonymous circuiting of their (digital) image through the global media. [...] In the return of its image to itself (in a circle but not a dialectic), the rallying crowd assumes its possible identity as a collective subject.¹⁰⁶

Morris identifies this new digital public sphere with Kluge and Negt's pseudo-public sphere of producers that generates its force directly out of capitalist production. In this sense, the digital public sphere operates opposed to Kluge's idealised concept of montage and filmmaking that he applied to digital media production. But this also affects the possibilities that social media entail which eventually leads to generate a failure of mass (protest) movements elicited by social media. Evaluating most generally the outcome of the Arab Spring for example shows that in the end capitalism and capital itself remains well maintained. But it also indicates that Kluge highly overestimates the democratic character of the Internet. Although his and

¹⁰³ Ibid., 101.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 102.

¹⁰⁵ Morris uses the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement as main example to investigate the 'crowd' and the relation between media and politics in the new public sphere of the digital age. For more information see "Theses on the New Öffentlichkeit".

¹⁰⁶ Morris 2013, 106.

Negt's drawing attention to the unforeseeable dynamics of mass-mediated publicness can be applied to the current rapidly shifting public sphere of the digital age, latest development of 'failed' revolutions and overexcitements of digital and online connections that have "come to stand for communication"¹⁰⁷ expose the dangers of the new system that the two scholars did not predict to such an extent.

This chapter has shown that despite the above introduced problematic of the new digital media and its adaption and integration into the capitalist system, Kluge considers the Internet's as potentially establishing and creating horizons of experience. He considers it as the fulfilment of the Enzensbergian emancipatory usage of media. But such an optimistic stance towards the Internet does not help to understand the swift shifting transformations in the contemporary public sphere of the 21st century to its fullest as the new possibilities of using the media and its potential for the individual do not automatically enhance change in the current capitalist system. Nor does the digital age's achievement in terms of the democratisation of the media entail a securing of the reciprocal powers of the medium as it depends even more on the viewer's/user's ambition for not letting their experience be appropriated and exploited. The answer to the question if the Internet has the potential to counteract prevailing forces has to be answered with a no as it does not alter existing capitalist power structures and even exploits more the privacy of the users. On his homepage, Kluge tries to prevent on a small scale such an infringement. The next and final chapter shall examine Kluge's artistic expression with the digital medium of the DVD and search for the applicability of a counter concept of the public sphere with this medium. The chapter shall focus on the last DVD project from 2010 that deals with the topic of coldness. It will analyse if Kluge's optimistic stance towards the digital media is also valid for this project.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 109.

Third Chapter: The DVD as artistic medium of expression

Why did Alexander Kluge choose the DVD as artistic medium? How does the working with the DVD differentiate from working online? What kind of artistic strategy does he follow in those projects and do they differ from his previous one? Does Kluge eventually succeed in establishing a counter-public sphere with those projects? In 2007, Alexander Kluge published his first DVD production *Nachrichten aus der ideologischen Antike. Marx – Eisenstein – Das Kapital* (News from Ideological Antiquity), which is inspired by Sergei Eisenstein's unrealised project from the 1920's of filming Marx' *Das Kapital*. The DVD set consists of a booklet written by Kluge, and a three disc set with a running time of 570 minutes. In the two following years, Kluge publishes two more DVD projects, the four-disc set and 658 minutes long response to the financial crisis of 2008 *Früchte des Vertrauens* (Fruits of Trust) from 2009 and the project *Wer sich traut, reißt die Kälte vom Pferd* (Who Dares Pulls the Cold off its Horse) from 2010. In his latest project *Wer sich traut*, the accompanying booklet has been given the title *Stroh im Eis* (Straw in Ice), whereas the 180 minutes long running disc set is called *Landschaften mit Eis und Schnee* (Landscapes with Ice and Snow¹⁰⁸). The project can be considered to have been initiated by the collaborative book *Dezember* from the year 2010, in which Kluge contributed short stories, and the painter Gerhard Richter photographs of icy and snowy landscapes.¹⁰⁹ This chapter shall limit its analysis on Kluge's last DVD project *Landschaften mit Eis und Schnee* because of its chosen topic of coldness. Kluge's devotion to this topic can be attributed to Theodor Adorno's occupation with the topic. Shortly before his death in 1969, he envisaged an essay that researches human coldness. This interest can already be detected in his earlier works (*Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia*). In an essay about Kluge's latest DVD project Nora Alter, Lutz Koepnick and Richard Langston explain Adorno's essay "Education after Auschwitz" from 1966 as a project in which

¹⁰⁸ In the following I will call this project shortly *Landscapes*.

¹⁰⁹ In 2013 Kluge and Richter published a second collaboration of 89 stories and 64 pictures under the title *Nachricht von ruhigen Momenten* (News from silent moments).

social coldness and indifference are described as the anthropological byproduct of how human beings have come to embrace instrumental reason and strategies of self-objectification in order to survive a world of competition, commodification and conflict.¹¹⁰

In short, Adorno searches for an explanation of human behaviour in modern capitalism. Kluge's engagement with the topic of coldness can therefore be regarded as following his critique on the influence of the prevailing economic system of our time. In contrast to his first two DVD's where Kluge's criticism on capitalism is blatant in his analysis of Marx' treatise on capital and his examination of the latest financial crisis of 2007, the last project tries to illustrate the consequences of capitalism in a metaphorical manner. Kluge retells fairy tales where humans have suffered from coldness and presents historical facts of cold winters and weather conditions that have had diverse impacts on human life: He depicts people ice-skating or holding frost fairs on river Thames in the historic winters in the 17th century and presents how weather conditions of strong fog, snow fall and depth of snow influenced the course of the Second World War in the area of Volgograd.¹¹¹ Eventually, his interview with polar researcher Dr. Artur Tschilingarow indicates (at Kluge's interest), the effect that capitalism has had on the modification of the planet earth: As the melting of the ice and the diminishment of the poles are one indicator of global warming, which is a direct implication of globalisation, it is relevant to categorise Kluge's approach to coldness as result of global capitalism.

Why does Kluge choose the medium of the DVD at first place? By using the DVD, Kluge's acknowledges on the one hand recent developments of the digital era that are not reduced to the possibilities of the Internet, and on the other carries on with securing his independent film production. Philipp Ekardt describes the usage of the term 'publish' in connection to these DVD productions¹¹² as distinctive for Kluge's approach of "commercially mediating his time-based visual work that allows him to bypass the film and television industries."¹¹³ Kluge has resolutely followed

¹¹⁰ Alter et al. 2013, p. 61.

¹¹¹ Kluge shows and interview of hydrometeorologist Emma Romanovna analysing the alterations of the weather conditions by means of the analysis of surviving cards.

¹¹² All DVD's have been distributed under the same publisher, the Frankfurt based publishing house Suhrkamp Verlag – the publishing house who is also home to all of Kluge's literature and theoretical work.

¹¹³ Ekardt 2011, 110.

throughout his career to work independently outside the influence and interests of money-giving companies or opinion-making institutions. But besides securing his artistic independence, one can say that through these DVD's works, Kluge has continued and elaborated his very own 'style' of working with visual media. As his television programmes for example have resulted in a shaping of a form that was born out of a shortage of time where Kluge was bound to produce an abundance of material every week without substantial financial means, the form of the DVD suggest a similar approach. A strategy than can also be seen in his adoption of interviews as a major component of the DVD's. Those interviews that are held with scholars, experts and professionals from different social, economic, political or philosophical fields, and conducted by Kluge himself,¹¹⁴ have emerged in his television programmes for the first time and have become one of *the* characteristics of Kluge's work.¹¹⁵

But there are more similarities to his online work that can be detected. Also the general structure of the DVD's resembles the one of his homepage, as they consist of a myriad of clips assembled together in enormous projects. So this can be comprehended as the reason why Kluge choses the form of the DVD. As the Internet can be considered as one huge DVD, Kluge artistic expression has become adjusted to this freedom of gathering such an amount of clips together. By using the DVD as medium, he also continues appreciating the digital viewership. By supplying the viewer with a vast selection of short clips, Kluge answers to the contemporary audience that is accustomed to Internet surfing and channel-hopping and whose attention is limited. But he also provides this audience with a new challenge to choose and focus on given material, to take time to concentrate and reflect upon one's own position as a spectator in the digital age. At best viewers think about what a spectatorship has become that can gain access to everything, at all times.

But why publish on DVD when there is the World Wide Web? Kluge defends his cluttering of material as providing a contextual mode of information. A depicting of a nexus that complies with the newly arisen spectatorship that is not entirely congruent

¹¹⁴ Kluge himself is hardly seen within the frame, but always present due to his asking and commenting voice-over.

¹¹⁵ The interviews are also exemplary for his work as their form is 'alienated'. Instead of following an angle/reverse angle, Kluge himself is never shown in the image but remains in the off. Alienation of images is one of Kluge's strategies to draw the attention, as I will explain shortly more in depth.

with an online spectatorship. Viewers who buy a Kluge DVD *are* interested in his work and do not only surf randomly around. The DVD simply represents a more constrained occupation with a given topic.

This way of digital filmmaking enables Kluge furthermore to continue the way of working as he has always done in his analog films and on his homepage. He recycles his personal archive, snippets of film history and other documentary material in order to recombine and reconfigure the selected material and put them into a new context. On his DVD project *Landscapes* one encounters for example clips of silent movies or film/television documentaries, re-filmed footage of old drawings or photographs from history or storybook, outtakes from seemingly self-shoot material depicting wintertime scenery of falling snow or footprints in the snow, outtakes from his first feature film *Abschied von Gestern* (Yesterday Girl, 1966), self-executed interviews and found interviews, self-made animations and onscreen lettering. Kluge reuses for example in the clip titled *Ein Mammot das im Eise steckt* (A mammoth that sticks in the ice) an outtake of *Abschied von Gestern* that shows the protagonist Anita G. (played by Kluge's sister Alexandra Kluge) as she is lying on bed with a melancholic expression on her face.¹¹⁶ Kluge's voice over, where one can hear that his voice is younger, the recording thus archival, cites the Heinrich Hoffmann poem *The Mammoth* whilst showing footage of re-filmed drawings from Hoffmann's story about a revived mammoth and the two boys, Walter and Eduard. Towards the end of the story, Kluge cuts back to the questioning eyes of Anita G., juxtaposed with the previous outtakes. Kluge's clip is set into a new context within the film by connecting the two stories and transferring the general topic of coldness (the conditions of capitalism and effects on human beings) into his new project.

This is just one example of how Kluge puts his selected elements into relation, and how he applies montage in his DVD projects. In the following, I will present Kluge's concept of montage, that aims at creating alternative ways of perception and challenge the viewer in terms of triggering their imagination. By analysing selected parts from his last DVD project, I will discuss how Kluge attempts to engage the viewer's 'raw material' with the material on the screen and how he intends to

¹¹⁶ She has previously stolen a jacket because she was cold and is now in detention. The protagonist of *Yesterday Girl* is a Jewish girl that is incapable of integrating herself into the postwar society in West Germany.

encourage them to make their own meaning. Hereby it is important to state that Kluge also continues to defamiliarise the filmic images. Likewise on his homepage, Kluge alienates images electronically by using diverse techniques as for example split-screen, framings, time lapse or diverse apertures (mostly circle). This manipulation of images is mostly evident with the graphically alienated inter-titles with which Kluge leaves his fantasy free run. Words are tilted, coloured and displayed on different fonts. Such images create besides reminding of the silent-film era, pictorial riddles that invite the viewer to ascertain their possible meaning. Kluge shows in *Landscapes* for example a manipulated picture of the interlocutor's head Helge Schneider being digitally implemented in a picture showing a person sitting on a dog sled in a winter landscape. As Schneider's head clumsily replaces the head of the person on the original photograph - the digital process looks deliberately unprofessionally.¹¹⁷ One can see that Kluge does not aim at presenting the audience a finished product, but hints at the construction and potential openness of the given material.

Again reminiscent of the structure of his online clips, Kluge's deployment of montage on DVD also aims at raising questions and breaking with linear narrative patterns of reception in order to provoke the viewer's fantasy.¹¹⁸ Through declaring filmic montage as the "morphology of relations"¹¹⁹, the "theory of relationships" or "contained in the cut, at exactly that point where the film does not show anything"¹²⁰, he considers montage as the art to create proportions. Proportions that can be generated when *unrelated* elements are put together into a connection. Kluge presents this idea in an interview by explaining the function of his homepage, where under the topic 'education' one can find, under the programme loop *Man kann nicht lernen, nicht zu lernen* (You cannot learn not to learn) different clips as film excerpts from, for example, his short film *Lehrer im Wandel* (Teachers in Transition) from the 1960s that are presented alongside other documentary clips, such as an interview with an expert on the Latin Middle Ages. Though Kluge considers this confrontation and juxtaposition of clips that "have no immediate relation to the current news of our

¹¹⁷ Kluge's if I may call trash-like style that hints at a wilful amateurish interaction with the digital media. A style that is mostly detectable in his on screen lettering that is often employed.

¹¹⁸ This style of montage is not new, but has been employed by Kluge throughout his career as filmmaker and can as well be detected in his online clips.

¹¹⁹ Kluge 2012, 33.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

present“¹²¹ as creating “new capacities for the imagination“, he acknowledges this process not to be the result of his artistic strategy but as “a fact generated by the real circumstances“. Circumstances that are supplied by the spectator whose social and collective horizon conditions the creation of those ‘proportions’, which according to Kluge, are solely “successful if the spectator can distinguish ... between two radical poles, two designations of time and place“. ¹²²

So Kluge’s concept of montage aims at encouraging the viewer to see relations between the shots that are actually separated through time and space and are therefore not implicit or explicit in their meaning. They are open for individual interpretation and should contribute to the spectator’s unconscious memory and experience which endorses Kluge’s adoption of Benjamin’s involuntary memory. The viewer’s ability to mobilise individual past experiences could lead to a distinctive interpretation, in order to relate those to the present images on the screen, but also to the present time. So Kluge’s strategy of montage functions at providing images whose connection seems fragmented, unpredictable and interrupted, but wait to be filled with individual experience and various analogies. Referring again to the *Abschied von Gestern* example can help verifying those reflections. Kluge juxtaposes images of Anita G. reflecting on the coldness of her surroundings with images that illustrate Hoffmann’s poem. Whereas the mammoth is presented as ‘survivor’ of the Ice Age as it was preserved by ice over time and can happily eat ice cream in the present, Anita struggles because of her historical suffering as Jew and is unable to integrate herself into German postwar society. One can further associate her destiny with the information that is given in the previous DVD sequence, in which Dr. Ulrike Sprengler presents H.C. Andersen’s fairytale *The Snow Queen* explaining the ethics of the story as to not let yourself be captured by any humanly made (cultural) system (in this story the two opponents poetry and rationality) that would lead to a forgetting of one’s own biography. As Sprengler considers this as the source of all coldness and oblivion on earth, one can interpret not only the Holocaust and its attempted obliteration of the Jews, but also postwar Germany as times in which the population was caught in heteronomous systems (fascistic and denying/regressive) that aim at destroying the individual. But one also has to think about contemporary conditions

¹²¹ Ekardt 2011, 126.

¹²² Kluge 2012, 47.

and developments of capitalism in Germany or Europe, where increasing 'problems' with refugees could be associated with Anita's situation as strangers and unwelcomed guest.

Although montage involves suggestions, which "are basically contained in the cut"¹²³ this example shows that the viewer has to be familiar with Kluge's film (here *Abschied von Gestern*) so that one is able to work with the 'offered' hints. It remains therefore unclear if Kluge's respect for the audience that can be detected in his belief in their power of associations, can justify a rejection of totalising claims for truth from the creator's side, as the viewer's 'power' depends on a specific knowledge about his oeuvre.¹²⁴ So although Kluge's envisaged effect on the viewer that Miriam Hansen describes as

not a dialectically predetermined third meaning, an abstraction, resulting from the juxtaposition of separate representations, but rather an indeterminacy of meaning, a suspension of traditionally fixed associations,¹²⁵

the viewer can be left in the dark.

In the first sequences of *Landscapes*, Kluge combines the sad story of a girl freezing to death in the cold of *Das Mädchen ohne Schuh im Schnee* (The story of the girl without a shoe in the snow) with an outtake of a theatrical adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *Das Mädchen mit den Schwefelhölzern* (The Little Match Girl) and a 'found' interview¹²⁶ with the composer Lachenmann who talks about one of the German founders of the RAF; Gudrun Ensslin, whom he knows from his childhood. Lachenmann's interview is juxtaposed with documentary photographs of Ensslin standing in middle of crowd in a convention, of her stunted corpse, of an empty grave and of three coffins situated next to each other in a row. Although those images have already been employed in *German in Autumn*, this knowledge is not as decisive in terms of associating the young women's destiny as previously with Anita. Yet both examples show that Kluge is intentionally building relations between the shots that are not always as 'open' for interpretation (in the sense of the film in the spectator's

¹²³ Kluge 2012, 48.

¹²⁴ This is not always the case, but Kluge uses often references to his former films.

¹²⁵ Hansen 2012, 60.

¹²⁶ An interview that is not held by Kluge himself.

head) as he claims them to be as some connections can be considered as unmistakable.

As mentioned above, his montage style is furthermore characterised by producing multilayered images through a juxtaposition of 'old' and 'new' material. Through this, Kluge builds a connection of material from diverse temporalities in order to produce 'temporal gaps'. This visual strategy that was already utilised in the interviews for his television features, is also employed in *Landscapes*. Kluge uses this method for example in the interview with the famous German comedian Helge Schneider, who plays as travel book writer. Kluge's spatial arrangements show Schneider in front of diverse travel setting backgrounds, consisting of artificial comic style blocks of ice or the view out of an oculus from an airplane. During this interview, Kluge assembles documentary footage of snowy and icy landscapes, an avalanche and a shot of tents that are situated on a snowy mountain and exposed to strong wind.

This strategy of an assembly of diverse spatial material that leads to a layering of images from different *temporal* origins is brought to bear in the sequence where Kluge's paraphrases Casper David Friedrich's painting *Die gescheiterte Hoffnung* (translated as The failed hope, also called *The Sea of Ice*, from 1823-4). It portrays piled up ice floes in an Arctic landscape with a capsized sail ship at the bottom right. Kluge's montage within the frame shows different parts of the painting's floes superimposed on pictures of the Arctic Sea or city landscapes from all over the world, including such renowned sights like the Eiffel tower, the Golden Gate Bridge or Tiananmen.

The superimposed images of Schneider and the paraphrases of Friedrich's painting demonstrate Kluge's affinity to Benjamin's definition of the dialectic image, the image as constellation to trigger an unconscious collection of past events:

It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash of constellation.¹²⁷

Kluge's conjunction of pictures of 'contemporary sites' and a historic/past painting from the 19th century can be seen as a dialectical image in the sense of Benjamin,

¹²⁷ Benjamin, 1999, 462.

which pictures a constellation “between a “now“ and a previously obfuscated and forgotten historical moment of the past. The images are separated by a temporal gap, which is to say that the two points in time are not connected through a linear development.”¹²⁸ As Kluge’s intention is not to create a linear unfolding of time, his relating of events as well as the layering within the frame can be interpreted as following the logic of a dialectical relation of the past to the now, in which “the disconnected past reenters a present while still articulating the temporal caesura that marked it as a relation across time.”¹²⁹ Montage aims not at creating a flow of images where images stand in the service of the plot, but at creating flashes of images. Those flashes should emerge in the head of the spectator and could serve as interruption to help the audience to trigger their memory.¹³⁰ As Benjamin states: “The dialectical image is an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash. What has been is to be held fast - as an image flashing up in the now of its recognisability.”¹³¹ Kluge’s digital works strive to evoke those flashes or in the Klugian term ‘invisible images’¹³², by arranging archival and re-filmed historical materials into a constellation and making the viewer to engage their own archive. Kluge often takes this idea quite literally as he also shows in *Landscapes* a constellation of stars in one of the minute-films, in which he tells the story of a cold land (*In einem kalten Land, Jahr für Jahr*). Here Kluge connects re-filmed drawings from an old storybook showing interiors of a man with a candle and the outside of the town that is situated in an icy landscape next to a mountain area and the sea. A ship that is shown in the next cut and assembled into the re-filmed material is digitally mounted on the drawings and moves along on the water and shown ‘sailing’ in the sky in a starry night.

Besides encouraging a perception that creates flash-like experiences as it interrelates diverse temporal material, this arrangement furthermore promotes a film-perception that creates a heightened consciousness whilst watching. As the film is the

¹²⁸ Ekardt 2011, 114.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ For Benjamin the political purpose of the flash was for example to track the history of materialism and consumerism that can be detected in the Parisian shopping mall the Arcades.

¹³¹ Benjamin 1999, 472.

¹³² Kluge mentions this term in several interviews and essays as for example in an interview with Austrian director Michael Haneke that was part of a television programme.

medium of memory and real time, of the collective as well as private, as Benjamin has said, one can argue again that Kluge provides collective memories of historical material in order to offer the viewer to put in motion their own past memories and most importantly relate them to the present time. This new contextualisation and overthrow of material can create an experience for the audience that is based on a convergence of the visual material of the film with an unconscious data collected in the human mind. So when I as viewer perceive the above-introduced paraphrases of Friedrich's painting, Kluge provides on the one hand a collective association of the world turning into an icy and cold place. Or as Ekardt writes, Kluge pictures "the Earth thrown into the stasis of a new ice age...where human age does not emerge from the floods but reaches its frozen end."¹³³ Yet on the other hand, I may visit places of the world's famous sights by traveling through my personal memory.

Kluge's latest stance about the film medium "that we concentrate on images again"¹³⁴ is what differentiates Kluge's last DVD project from the two former ones. This tendency can be discovered in him showing a lot of simple motifs. Those still images that are mostly self-shot material, depicting winter landscape motifs like close-ups of footprints in the snow, leaves with a thick layer of snow or endless documentary footage of arctic landscapes showing blocks of ice or flows activate a connection to Benjamin's concept of the image as "dialectics at a standstill". As Benjamin's thinking is interwoven with movement and at the same time an arrest of thoughts, "where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions - there the dialectical image appears",¹³⁵ Kluge's last project accordingly enables his audience for the first time to rest, reflect and memorise a flow of thoughts. This tendency is already made clear in the very beginning of *Landscapes* where, compliant with the title, the first five minutes are dedicated to simple almost static shots of winter themes. Kluge not only determines the topic of the project, reflections upon ice and snow, but also purposely decides on the atmosphere in which the viewer should indulge in. He shows for example three images that depict each a hanging and melting icicle, in which with each take the audience is brought 'closer' to the icicle. *Das Ende eines Eiszapfen mit Himmelsgestirn in der Ferne* (The demise of an icicle

¹³³ Ekardt 2011, 113; 114.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 127.

¹³⁵ Benjamin 1999, 475.

with the heavens in the distance) is the title of this scene, in which the first two shots show the hanging icicle against a blue sky, with the sun coming from the right, reflected in the icicle and its water drop that swells every two to three seconds and reflects the topsy-turvy background. The third shot is such a close-up of the subject that only a flickering light in the dark is recognisable. Alter, Koepnick and Langston define those images by following Adorno's stance in coldness. In their opinion they bring the conditions of coldness to mind.¹³⁶ Or it could simply remind us of our own stasis in the contemporary capitalist system.

This chapter has illustrated Kluge's motivation on working with the digital medium of the DVD where it became apparent that working with this digital media provides similar (but limited) possibilities to working online. It has concentrated on Kluge's stylistic devices and presented his practical approach to filmmaking. The focus has been on Kluge's understanding of the *Verfremdung* of images and his specific montage that can be connected to Brecht's *V-Effekt* and to Benjamin's involuntary memory as well as his concept of the dialectic images and dialectics at standstill. It has been demonstrated that Kluge's DVD projects actively pursue a harsh critique of capitalism that makes a contribution to other critical voices. It yet remains to be determined if Kluge's optimistic stance towards the digital time is still detectable in his latest DVD project or if his specific interpretation can be understood conversely.

¹³⁶ Alter et al 2013, 66.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to approach an understanding of the public sphere in times of digitization. To this, it has presented Alexander Kluge's investigation of the public sphere in analog times and has analysed his stance towards the public sphere in the digital age. The focus has been on his declaration of the necessity of alternative media production in order to establish a counter public sphere that would respect each individual's integrity. According to Kluge, an alternative media production will only be successful if it provides the possibility of creating *Erfahrungshorizonte* for each individual. This is for Kluge, conditioned through the human's inherent capability to imagine, memorise and associate which he seeks to provoke in his media productions. I have moreover shown that his demand for the people's autonomy is still of importance today as his concern about the existing public sphere did not change in digitalisation. There is still the need for a counter force in the 21st century against established powers. Yet I have demonstrated that Kluge's stance is somewhat outmoded as he sticks to the social criticism of the 1930s, which can be detected in his affinity to Walter Benjamin and accordingly his stance towards the Internet and his postulation for self-protection online. In this respect I have manifested that though having rather an optimistic stance towards the Internet (considering YouTube as potential fulfilment of the Enzensbergian communication theory), Kluge's point of view overlooks important online developments such as newly established dependencies and exploitations from globalised corporations. Yet I have explained that Kluge's persistence and stubbornness in continuously creating and indulging in his alternative media production and his adaption to the changing conditions of time proves his belief in the medium as political instrument.

I have analysed this by applying Benjamin's diverse concepts, notably the idea of *Erfahrung*, to Kluge's thinking and media practice. This method has been successful in the sense of trying to understand Kluge's arranging of material and his organisational principle of media. To this, I have documented that Kluge's pursuit of the creation of individual experience derives from the idea to challenge the viewer through the creation of a more complex state of perception. The combination of alienated and manipulated images with an enigmatic and defying montage is considered as the trigger to encourage the viewer to become his or her own author.

For Kluge, the viewer has to become active so that the film is created within a collective authorship in the spectator's head.

This idea reveals an understanding of a public sphere that remains unalterable from analog to digital times and can therefore be considered universal. A public sphere that respects its members and which is based on collectivity. This understanding demonstrates a fight against consumerism and commodification in capitalism, which has only become more complex in the digital age. Kluge's struggle is contested with the technology of the film medium, where he, likewise Benjamin, recognises its power to induce change. One could argue that Kluge alienates images in order to not only make aware of the manipulation of the 'mainstream' public sphere but also of any kind of public sphere that uses images for communication. By this he draws attention not only to the manipulated images of mass media, but also to the characteristics of images as manipulated objects per se. This power of an elusiveness or fleetingness and deception of all images, moving or not, can be found in any occurring public sphere that is embedded in media usage. This understanding indicates for the necessity of critical and alternative voices at any given point in time. The example of Kluge finally shows that the only difference in the current digital age is that it has become easier to falsify images in order to make them easier for consumption.

Although Kluge's media production (analog or digital) aims at establishing a counter force, it is not really determinable whether Kluge succeeds in doing so. Statements of the exact output of neither his homepage nor his DVD projects cannot be made at this point as this would depend on statistic evaluations and analyses of the 'buyer-ship' of his DVD's and the attendance of his homepage. How 'successful' Kluge's counter production in supporting an alternative public sphere is, remains unknown to the public. But it is nevertheless crucial to underline that Kluge's formulation and undertaking of a counter-public sphere stands for an understanding of a committed and engaged public that should take responsibilities for its actions and critically position itself in opposition to society as a whole, no matter which system and form of government prevails.

It would be interesting to further research the digital public sphere by scrutinising its different parts, its Teilöffentlichkeiten more in depth or analyse if there is still such a thing as a public sphere at all. As public space moves, on the one hand, more and

more towards non-locatable cyberspace, it is being shaped more and more by impersonal and anonymous members. On the other, it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between the public and the private or the political and the personal. What exactly happens to its members, who is actually a member of it and how do they perceive themselves and their function? What does actually happen to democracy? How can it be understood under those given conditions?

Though this thesis has presented possibilities of approaching and shaping the public sphere in digital times, it could not find answers to a thorough comprehension and identification of the digital public sphere as such. By presenting Kluge as individual who is trying to actively engaging with the digital medium and critically assessing it, this thesis has nevertheless aimed at giving an idea about how a dealing and challenging of the public sphere in the digital age could look like.

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