



# The Real Law

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## Abstract

Three movements that trace a certain understanding of law, from textual to spatial/material to spectacularised. The passages between the three movements are performed with the help of a visualisation that keeps on evolving, following the narrative of the legal understanding. This is accompanied by a thick description of instances from various iterations of an art performance/participatory game I have been performing in the past few years at various art and law institutions called *escaping the lawscape*. These hermeneutic tools help me situation the law from a critique of Habermasian rationality to a critique of Luhmannian functionality, only to arrive to a full aestheticisation of contemporary law as a spectacle that needs to prove its validity through social media and other techniques of packaging.

**Keywords** Lawscape · Atmosphere · Materiality · Law · Body · Movement · Spectacle · Luhmann

## 1 Introduction

Law as practical reason: hidden. Law as morality: hidden. Law as discourse: hidden. Law as rational consensus: hidden. Law as rights, law as communicative reason, even law as legal system: hidden.

But law *qua* law: hypervisibilised, shingly omnipresent, photogenically central, iridescently dominant. Law *qua* law: an explosion of packaging, a selfie thirsty for our likes. This is the *real* law. We know it because its Instagram account is a tabloid-darling, graduated in the Tweeter school of Trump and Elon Musk.<sup>1</sup> Law's posts

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent analysis on twitter and legality, see Cassandra Sharp, 2022. *Hashtag Jurisprudence*, London: Elgar.

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are great polarisers, bigger and brasher trivia treasures of facile emotions. And here we are, all law's 'followers'. We will never stop following the law, liking its posts, trying to understand it, figure it out—because we also play the game of law. We are part of this vast institutional affect that law is. We are complicit with its emergence. We are complicit with its hiding. We are complicit with its self-legitimation. Press like. Add heart if truly passionate.

This binary, where being hidden is the precondition for law's hypervisibility, is the current state of law's legitimation. We are faced with full Habermasian circularity,<sup>2</sup> where rational consensus is now social media-driven, easily constructed and just as easily collapsing, radically algorithmic, fashionably posthuman, riotously irrational.<sup>3</sup> In the core of this circularity, Luhmann-on-acid: the legal system is manically whirling, taking even greater distance from the humans that, in theory, create it and keep on legitimising it.<sup>4</sup> Not only that: law has lost its self-reference, that last bastion of legal independence, at least according to Luhmann.<sup>5</sup> Law now has to *show* itself as law, and must communicate to the world that itself and none other *is* the law. It has to stage itself in a consumer-oriented way, to market itself in a socially engaging way, and to package itself in a media-appetising way.

There you have it: normativity and validity warped in one perfectly circular viral tweet.<sup>6</sup> We know law is valid because it has been posted by the one and only law. And that can only be the one with the little blue tick of authenticity next to its name ("the real law").

Things have not always been like this. There is a story of law I would like to narrate here, that starts with a rational consensus delusion and its neat little categories of facts, laws, norms, rules, texts, objects, bodies, human and nonhuman, and so on; and ends with the commodification of law as spectacle. I attempt to show this through three movements: Movement One on lawscape; Movement Two on materiality; Movement Three on the spectacle. The tripartite structure sets the conditions for an embedded theoretical discussion on the movement of law from text (and neat separations) to commodity (and neat spectacularisation). In each movement, I focus on a particular aspect of the lawscape, which is, briefly put, the tautology between law (broadly understood) and materiality.

<sup>2</sup> Habermas [12]. *The theory of communicative action*. Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press.

<sup>3</sup> "Too many of us buy into the old, and slightly vain, liberal idea that good and rational speech will always win out over bad and logically incoherent speech. And that people who disagree with us are less complex and more stupid than we are. Freedom of expression is critical to democracy in its own right, but insights from cognitive psychology put paid to the idea that the truest idea will win out, particularly in a world where social media platforms make most profit out of the stuff that hardens our views by making us angry." Sonia [39]. Question Time showed that you can't counter anti-vax myths with cold reason alone, *The Guardian*, Sunday 06 02 22.

<sup>4</sup> Luhmann, N. and Albrow [23]. *A Sociological Theory of Law*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis.

<sup>5</sup> Luhmann [22]. *Social systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> I am referring of course to Habermas [11]. *Between facts and norms*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Each movement is further divided into three sections: first section, a visualisation task for the reader.<sup>7</sup> In this case it would of course be just an exercise in visual fantasy while reading, rather than ideally following instructions with your eyes shut. But it will have to do. Second section, a discussion on how law has been developing. In those sections, I draw some but not all possible connections between the visualisation and the analysis, since I would like to encourage the reader to reach different conclusions if they so wish. And third section, a thick description of some instances of an art performance/participatory game I have been practicing for a while now with various audience, in which the attendants were given a series of tasks that would allow them to position themselves in relation to law. We can broadly call it *escaping the lawscape*, which was the title we gave to it when in 2017, along with artist Julius Colwyn and urban planner Liu Yang, we set it up and performed it in London, part of the Crowd Control festival curated by Heather Barnett and Arebyte Gallery.<sup>8</sup> This was preceded as well as followed by several instances of similar events I performed at various places in the world, whether in art or academic institutions. The efforts culminated in 2019 when, during the opening of the 58th Venice Art Biennale, and as part of the British Council's initiative of Britain in Venice and the Dallas Pavilion action, I was invited to contribute with a performance on the lawscape.<sup>9</sup>

A parenthesis might be useful here: I have repeatedly written, worked and performed on the lawscape, itself an evolving narrative tracing the way recent legal theory has evolved in terms of its interdisciplinarity. The lawscape's first iteration was in early 2000s when I edited a volume on Law and the City, and published a monograph on environmental law and the city. Lawscape at that point was the tautology of law and the city, where the concept of the city was the entry point to discussions on globalisation, public and private, feminist and queer legal studies on urban identity, belonging and spatialisation. Later on, in line with questions of spatial turn and legal geography, I started defining lawscape as law and space, where space was seen, following Doreen Massey, as a product of interrelations and practices, a sphere of possibilities, and a plane of chance and undecidability.<sup>10</sup> But then the definition moved on, incorporating Deleuzian and post-deleuzian conceptualisations of space and such currents of thought as the affective turn, corporeality, sensoriality etc. In that iteration, the body became central to the lawscape. The space became densely inhabited by the movement and pause of bodies, in turn inhabiting, becoming and generating law and space. Lawscape in other words became *lawscaping*: a verb, a process of generation and a movement across. It finally reached a place where space

<sup>7</sup> I first presented a visualisation of the lawscape for an online performance lecture for *Friction Atlas*, subsequently followed by the publication "Imagine a Lawscape" in *Friction Atlas*, 2022. Giuditta Vendrame and Paolo Patelli (eds). Eindhoven: Onomatopee.

<sup>8</sup> For a video of the performance, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhNg1HrccTw> For an article analysing the process from an urban planning perspective, see Yang, L., Zhang, L., Pashukanis, A., Chappin, E. and van Dam, K., 2020. Integrating agent-based modeling, serious gaming, and co-design for planning transport infrastructure and public spaces. *Urban Design International*, 26(1), pp.67–81.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://andreaspm.com/show/escaping-the-lawscape-58th-venice-art-biennale/> I am grateful to Jasper Joseph-Lester for curating and inviting me.

<sup>10</sup> Doreen Massey. 2005. *For Space*. Los Angeles: Sage.

and embodiment were mere elements of a larger and more complex movement, that of materiality. Bodies became posthuman, movement became permanent, law became one of the agents in the vast assemblages between the various bodies. Lawscape had reached its full materialisation and, unsurprisingly, its full immateriality. It has become elemental.

At this stage, lawscape's elementality returns as a social media aura, an algorithmic imperceptibility, an ontological stage where the façade *is* the thing. In this text, I am continuing the development of the concept by focusing on the spectacularisation of the lawscape, namely the way law employs its materiality in order to legitimise itself.

## 2 First Movement: on the Lawscape

### 2.1 Visualising the Text

You are walking in a familiar urban environment. Yet something is different: you are surrounded by constantly flashing words, numbers, whole paragraphs that float about, almost obscuring your view. These writings are next to each object, human body, animal on the street, bench, shop window, plant pot, café table. You go a bit closer. You see that each one of these signs contains a law or a norm that determines your movement and the movement of others around you. Endless lists of property laws, planning laws, contract laws, criminal laws, commercial laws, environmental laws.

In your visualisation, you are welcome to use either digital inscriptions that appear as soon as you move closer to the object, or a Tokyo-like hyper-neon plethora of fluorescent inscriptions, or even a more arts-and-crafts steampunk approach like street signs where all public and private individuals, from the local authority to you personally, would have to display the laws in some characterful hand-written way. Feel free to choose! You are also free to choose whether the whole statute would appear on the text or just a code word that would remind everyone already familiar with the laws (everyone would since this would be your natural ambience) of what one can and cannot do.

Look at the bodies around you: they all look like flag poles bending under the weight of strips of text fluttering about them. Each strip a declaration of a legal right: the right to life and property, non-discrimination, dignity. Each strip proudly waving freedom from discrimination, whether religious, ethnic, gender, sexual—whatever applies to each body. Please go all intersectional: add multiple strips for all the legal causes that need protecting.

Carry on walking in that legal landscape. See how you feel. Is it liberating or claustrophobic? Is it easy to navigate or causes you trouble? You might feel a comforting certainty in where you go, each step sanctioned by a law that clearly differentiates between public and private property, time spent in cafes and restaurants under contract of consuming food and drink, ticketed gallery entries that determine very clearly the route of visit. Or you might feel that the law is a little too much, that you need a space where the world can shine through, free from the obsessive textuality of the law.

## 2.2 Is Law Lawful?

Why do we follow the law? Why do we obey that ubiquitous textuality that floods our visualisation? To put it slightly differently, how do we know that law is lawful? Amongst the array of attempted answers, I will focus on perhaps the most counter-intuitive of all, that offered by Niklas Luhmann's systems theory.<sup>11</sup> I focus on this approach because, first, it allows us to collapse the distinction between normativity and facticity (and indeed validity, albeit in an unorthodox way); second, because it remains the most radical critique of anthropocentric control of social processes; and, third, because it is the closest to what I eventually try to show in this article, namely a posthuman spectacularisation of the lawscape.<sup>12</sup>

Validity first: according to Luhmann, law is a self-legitimising social system.<sup>13</sup> Law's validity comes from the process of superimposition of laws onto themselves, whether as precedent, repetition, professional insecurity or procedural habit.<sup>14</sup> There can be no Habermasian rational consensus since humans are not part of the system. Indeed, humans are not part of Luhmannian society at all, which is a closed system consisting not of human actions, actors or agents, but of systemic communication (or simply put operations and processes). This is perhaps the most radical element of systems theory: it asks us to relinquish the illusion of human control over social processes.

And then, the tautology between normativity and facticity: just as with any other social system (such as politics, religion, media etc.) in Luhmann's theory, law's closure means that its only contact with its environment (namely, other systems) is through the system's own internal self-construction of that environment.<sup>15</sup> Like a fahidiot who knows everything that he thinks there is to know and absolutely nothing of what he ignores, the system is a self-enclosing universe containing all available knowledge in its tightly controlled boundaries of ignorance. To put it simply, law does not know what it does not know.<sup>16</sup>

This tightly controlled ignorance is not a whim but a necessity for any system whose identity is threatened in late modernity.<sup>17</sup> Luhmann's most cherished normative command is one lifted directly from Weber: systems must remain functionally differentiated, even in times when economy or politics threaten to flood everything.<sup>18</sup> The legal system must remain the legal system (retain its identity and its unity) at all costs. There are several ways of safeguarding this but an important one

<sup>11</sup> See Luhmann [22]. *Social systems*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

<sup>12</sup> See my work on Luhmann in Pashukanis, A., 2010. *Niklas Luhmann: Law Justice Society*. London: Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> Luhmann [19]. Law as a Social System, *Northwestern University Law Review* 83(1–2), 136–150.

<sup>14</sup> Luhmann [19]. Law as a Social System, *Northwestern University Law Review* 83(1–2), 136–150.

<sup>15</sup> Luhmann [21]. Closure and Structural Coupling, *Cardozo Law Review* 13(5), 1419–1442.

<sup>16</sup> Luhmann, N., 1998. *Observations on Modernity*. trans. W. Whobney, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Luhmann [20]. *Essays on Self-Reference*, New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>18</sup> Luhmann, N., 2002. *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, ed. and introduced by W. Rasch, trans. J. O'Neil et al., Stanford: Stanford University Press.

is an emphasis on the specific language of the system. Legal communication, while not strictly speaking a language,<sup>19</sup> is always filtered by the semantic binary code lawful/unlawful. The question of whether something is lawful or unlawful is posed by the system with regards to the rest of society and its elements. If the answer is positive, namely if something (an action, an object, an utterance, a person) is either lawful or unlawful, then it belongs to the legal system. The code operates like a watchdog at the edge of the systemic boundary, allowing in the system only what paradoxically can be identified by the system as *already* in. This form of semantic filtering is by necessity linguistic, especially when it comes to legal communication, which takes place almost exclusively on the linguistic domain. Law is text: statutes, conventions, caselaw, courtroom proceedings, jurisprudence, even legal theory.

Or so we are told when we are taught law in law schools across the world. This is the system talking of course (we are very much an operation of the legal system when we enter a law school: we leave our human mortal coil behind, becoming ethereal systemic communications). In this rather picturesque losing game, law is desperately holding onto its distinctions, its closure, its language. Law fills in the world with these mechanisms because it is the only world the law knows. Law fantasises about text, dreams in text, communicated in text. Text is indeed a necessity in law, but also a façade of objective language (i.e., male-gendered, binary, paternalistic, ex cathedra—yet for all these reasons, supposedly universal, abstract, equitable, fair, interpretable, accommodating, inclusive).

When earlier you walked around the lawscape, law's text was hypervisible, converting your own body into a singular textual response of compliance (or indeed disobedience, if you felt so inclined). You become absorbed in a potentially asphyxiating textuality—a little like in the Matrix films when the code is revealed and the phenomenal world collapses. This is the dream of a certain positive law, a law whose closure requires a strict separation between normativity and facticity, or to put it in Luhmannian terms, system and environment. This is the dream of a law that needs us to be complicit with its emergence. Law as Edenic garden: follow our command and you can stay enclosed in the safety of our certainty.<sup>20</sup>

This is a lawscape of pure textual violence, where our bodies are pierced by semantic arrows of decontextualised certainty, prepositional objectivity and sentential universality. It is the lawscape of the obsessive. It is what law makes of us when it brings us in before its Kafkian edifice. The most interesting aspect of course is our complicity: we happily exchange questioning for clarity, volition for safety, deviation for belonging (and end up in full atmospheric control as I show below in Part 3). This is the unbearable beauty of the rational consensus: even well-intentioned Habermasians end up full circle in a Luhmannian hell where humans become malleable tools in the wheels of the systems. Of course, on an individual level one can doubt, deviate, disobey. One can proceed to ignore the law, trespass, offend,

<sup>19</sup> See e.g., Luhmann, N., 1997. *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

<sup>20</sup> Mario Ricca [36]. Perpetually Astride Eden's Boundaries: The Limits to the 'Limits of Law' and the Semiotic Inconsistency of 'Legal Enclosures'. *Int J Semiot Law* 35, 179–229.

discriminate against. But all this is already prescribed. Remember: whether lawful or unlawful, it is part of the legal system.

Escaping the lawscape is proving trickier than initially thought. Let's try something slightly different. How about irony, theatricality, lightness?<sup>21</sup> How about repaying the law in the same way?

### 2.3 *The Semantic Lawscape*

One of the first iterations of the performance *escaping the lawscape* took place in the Federal University of São Paulo in Brazil, when I was asked to lead a workshop on my work for some criminology and law students.<sup>22</sup> I was given carte blanche and I was determined to make full use of it. I asked the students to choose a sign anywhere in the classroom. Having seen the classroom before, I had observed that there was a multitude of directions, recommendations and prohibitions all over the walls, whether about the use of AV equipment, general university matters, fire regulations, the ubiquitous way in/way out directions, and so on. The students were understandably perplexed. Sedentary university teaching structures are hard to shake off. But the students did get up and reluctantly moved to the sign of their choice. I then asked them to perform with their bodies what the sign was asking them to do, in which direction it was pushing their bodies, what activity it was asking them to do, what not, and how. I asked the students to follow the letter of the law even though they were not interested in doing it or thought it irrelevant. So, many people had to walk out of the room (they liked the EXIT signs), some people started playing with imaginary buttons, others meticulously kept some areas clear of chairs and other obstacles (it was the fire exit). I then asked them to keep on performing the movement, repeatedly. After a while, I asked them to increase the speed of their actions, thus adding another layer of directions on top of the existing signs. Their movements were faster and faster. The bedlam that ensued brought some members of staff at our door enquiring what was happening. We were all laughing hysterically because of the absurdity of the task, the manic velocity, the inanity of it all, despite my trying to keep a straight face throughout (the face of the law).

This was one of the first times I tried to perform in a participatory way the absurdity of the law, digging into its inherent irony and humour,<sup>23</sup> despite its strict façade. In subsequent iterations, the participants had to *hypercomply* with the law. So not just heightened speed, but overblown body movements, with an intensity that belied the banality of the signs. As Paul Souriau writes “we always make an effort to exaggerate the importance of our intention. The player's hand trembles when he makes a decisive move in a game of chess... A walk in the forest becomes an exploration... It is, then, essential to the enjoyment of play that we build up fantasies, that

<sup>21</sup> Leiboff [18]. *Towards a Theatrical Jurisprudence*. London: Routledge.

<sup>22</sup> Footage uploaded by participants across the various iterations can be found on the facebook public group <https://m.facebook.com/groups/1872931942928658/media/videos/> as well as on Instagram #lawscape.

<sup>23</sup> Goodrich [10]. Proboscations: Excavations in Comedy and Law, *Critical Inquiry* 43, 361–388.

we imagine that this thing we are doing on a small scale is being done on a larger one.”<sup>24</sup> The lawscape is reaching its ironic hysteria of hypervisibility. Materiality is swallowed up by textuality, and this latter becomes so detached from matter, bodies and facts, that it is plainly absurd. Our bodies are often wrapped in a frantic mania of obeying – and in their compulsion to obey, they expose the absurdity of the law.

Neither the earlier visualisation, nor the lawscaping task are so different to the way in which law (certainly positive law) understands itself: as a text that commands obedience. No doubt, one could argue that there are many ways already prescribed by law itself to avoid the mindless repetition and blind compliance to absurd demands: the law is always subject to interpretation; it operates in conjunction to precedent; it changes according to social conditions. All this is true. But we cannot rely on that. There are countless examples of laws (one can think of the case of English obscenity laws) whose textual validity has been retained despite the fact that the law ends up unenforced in practice. The threat, however, remains that at any point, the law will be revived subject to the regime’s demands. Text trumps custom.

One of the most striking moments was when one of my students at my own law school, when performing some of the lawscaping tasks, came to the sharp realisation that “law’s presence at that particular space is ‘utterly pointless.’”<sup>25</sup> When law students come to realise the not infrequent absurdity of law, the largest and perhaps ultimately taboo question inevitably arises: is law lawful? The legal system itself avoids asking the question because it would threaten its very cornerstone.<sup>26</sup> Society at large avoids asking the question because it would threaten social stability. But explorative pedagogy and art can and ought to ask. The question can only be answered with levity, irony and sharp playfulness that critiques law’s authority while at the same time respecting the need to carry on with law. This is a rather complex call. The liminality between respecting and doubting legal authority cannot easily be achieved. In fact, the more spectacularised law becomes, the harder the task is.

### 3 Second Movement: on Materiality

#### 3.1 Visualising Materiality

Please keep everything as it was in the previous stage but remove just one thing: the text. No longer flashing statutes, codes, norms reminders. Let’s get rid of that constant stress of updating the signs whenever law changes. Let’s imagine a world whose legal texts are no longer the signifiers of law.

<sup>24</sup> Souriau [40]. *The Aesthetics of Movement*. Translated and edited by Manon Souriau. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, p 6.

<sup>25</sup> See Pashukanis [34]. Mapping the Lawscape: spatial law and the body. In Z.

Bankowski, M. Del Mar and P. Maharg (eds), *Beyond Text in Legal Education*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

<sup>26</sup> See my work on what I have called the foundational paradox of law in 2005. *Dealing (with) Paradoxes: On Law, Justice and Cheating* in M. King and C. Thornhill (eds), *Luhmann on Law and Politics: Critical Appraisals and Applications*, Oxford: Hart.



This does not mean, however, that you can go wherever you wish. We need laws, don't we. So in this visualisation, fill the material bodies around you, human and nonhuman, walls, pavements, seats, doors, windows, friends, family, pets, pests, in short, *every* body, with law. Bloat them up, stuff them with rights and obligations, limits and permissions. Law is now guiding you in *everything* you do. So, not just where you move and where you pause, but also where your head turns, what you see, what you touch, what you smell even. You quickly realise that the law is not just the long constitutional texts, the ubiquitous statutes and the ever-proliferating caselaw. Law is also things that one could call rules, customs, cultural norms. They are all part of a spectrum. Law indicates how to behave, what to avoid, what to try out within the accepted limits of courtesy, civility, upbringing, respect for others. In its volatile spectrum, law includes norms of behaviour, of what is generally allowed and frowned upon, of what is socially accepted and what is discouraged. Behaviours that we know so well that they have become inscribed in our bodies.

Then see what happens when you start walking around: the passages are now even narrower than when the texts were around. The directions are clearer, not because you read about them and understand rationally what to do but because you are not given any choice. Streets and pavements rush in one direction at a time, like escalators. Doors open only when you are allowed in or when your wallet can afford the establishment behind the door. Otherwise, they remain shut. The walls stop you from even walking into places you would ordinarily be able to. High walls prohibit you from looking in, cinema seats collapse at the end of the film, trains spit you out when your ticket expires.

You are still certain about what the law allows you to do, where and when. You do not always know why, you cannot pinpoint the legal source. A slight haze and the occasional questioning are compensated by a permission to walk around unthinkingly, simply following the legal lines already carved between objects. You are a body moving in a unidirectional corridor of comfort. Safety becomes a blanket, comforting yet potentially suffocating.

### 3.2 *The Movement of Law*

What remains of the law when we remove its textual aspect? Where is the law when it is no longer found in books, journals and online texts, or even in signs and written public commands? Does the law depart, taking with it all our conceptual apparatus of rules and norms, leaving a gaping void?

Of course it does not. Law is as material as it is textual – not only in the sense that text (too) is matter, but in that law's legitimation takes place through matter. Specifically, as I argue below, law's legitimation arises from the way matter moves. Materiality, in which one must include human but also nonhuman bodies, objects and other

elements, is always in movement.<sup>27</sup> Movement has a list of parameters: direction, velocity, pacing, temporality (how long from A to B, or from one side to the other), relationality (i.e., in relation to other bodies), mapping (in terms of beginning, end, and stages in between), impetus or inertia (what started that movement in the first place; how it carries on after the initial push).<sup>28</sup> Even pause is an aspect of movement: with pause, matter passes onto a different layer of movement. Think of death as pause, and how matter is transduced to a different movement configuration with putrefaction or burning. As Olivia Barr writes, “The word *movement* sits so still on this page. One of the risks and occasional consequences of noticing movement is that movement stops moving.”<sup>29</sup>

The parameters of movement carry the law. They determine the spatial and temporal distribution of bodies in relation to each other. They define property, privacy, boundaries physical and notional, contractual obligations, illegal activities, wills and testaments. As Danilo Mandic writes, “law’s movement is a dynamic repetition of force that propels and sets an order by marking the spatial coordinates and temporal positions, by delineating the contours of bodies and processes.”<sup>30</sup> As anyone who has witnessed in any capacity a criminal court case knows, the legal argument often boils down to questions of time and space. In other words, movement. Or, to put it differently, the invisible power behind law’s textuality has now settled amidst the folds of material bodies.

Law *as* movement.<sup>31</sup> Mandic again: “law as an instance of...a moving reality. It incorporates all the qualities of movement whilst both resulting from and engendering movement.”<sup>32</sup> And further: the law of movement. Already pulsating in the core of every body, propelling it to carry on becoming one with the world. Erin Manning memorably writes: “there can be no beginning or end to movement. Movement is one with the world, not body / world, but body-worlding. We move not to populate space, not to extend it or to embody it, but to create it.”<sup>33</sup> And further: we move in the lawscape, not to extend it or to embody it (we already do that), but to generate it. This is not an exercise in control over the lawscape. The more we lawscape, the more we are being lawscaped by the lawscape. There is no emancipation from systems theory here: the lawscape generates us.

In your earlier visualisation, lawscape and body were fused into a one-directional command. Your body was offering itself to being lawscaped by the movement around it. Again, the visualisation is not unlike what we do in real life, when we simply walk around a city or roaming in the countryside: we mostly follow the urban

<sup>27</sup> Bennett [3]. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press; Deleuze, G., 2006. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. trans. T. Conley. Continuum: London.

<sup>28</sup> See Ingold [14]. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge.

<sup>29</sup> See Barr [2]. *A Jurisprudence of Movement: Common Law, Walking, Unsettling Place*. London: Routledge, especially Chapter 2.

<sup>30</sup> Mandic [24]. Movement. In Agnieszka Kilian (ed) *Dreams & Dramas: Law as Literature: The Reader*, nGbk/HIT Gallery, 221.

<sup>31</sup> [2].

<sup>32</sup> Mandic, 221.

<sup>33</sup> Manning [25]. *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*. MIT Press.

striation, we walk on pavements, we cross at green lights, we do not walk into other people's places uninvited. Our limits become extensions of the limits around us, co-produced and co-maintained by all bodies involved. The lines of property and propriety extend from the streets and walls to our veins and bowels. So we may move (because that is what we always do) but things do not necessarily become better or change radically. As Paul Virilio writes, "revolution is movement, but movement is not a revolution."<sup>34</sup>

We need a distance from the all-absorbing materiality of the lawscape. Paradoxically, what enslaved us earlier, may set us apart now. The textuality of law might allow us an observational distance. This does not amount to world-settling consensus or world-altering argumentation. It does not change the fact that control over lawscape is limited and always mediated through our bodies. But textuality allows for a distance (a gap, an interval, a rupture) from which our bodies can observe what happens in the lawscape (but we must never forget that all observation is always self-observation, whether systemically, psychoanalytically, ethnographically or any other manner). We observe, for example how at any particular moment the lawscape makes itself visible (when laws become so pronounced that they take over materiality, such as in the case of prisons or immigration control areas) or invisible (when laws recede in order for a different function to emerge, such as consumerism in shopping malls and aesthetic capitalism in art galleries). Sometimes, the lawscape is as vibrant and omnipresent as if the law were written in fluorescent neon letters everywhere. Other times, the material world bends around you to let you through or to push you away from where you are not supposed to tread. There are also those times, perhaps the hardest ones to detect as I show in Part 3, when your own body, a palimpsest of legal stratification (ravaged by its fears and hopes, its ought and ought-not, its real and false desires), propel you from within like a self-mobilised automaton.

In all these cases, and especially in the way the lawscape shifts from one stage to the next, language might offer some distance and stop the ineluctable fall of the body in the whirl of its own complicity. Observing these shifts and putting these observations into language means that our body already moves in a slightly different direction, assembling other human and nonhuman bodies along the way and perhaps giving rise to a different turn, a different lawscape, a wave-like emergence, a fold, a line of flight, a reorientation. But allow me to reserve the conclusion of this article for this kind of movement.

I have called the connection between text and materiality *sliding*.<sup>35</sup> Sliding is a smooth yet unceasing passage between the two ends of the legal fold. This is important: *fold* rather than binary, because text and materiality are coextensive, multiple and circular, where text's materiality rushes in materiality's text. Gilles Deleuze, quoting the Stoic Chrysippus, writes: "If you say something, it passes through your

<sup>34</sup> Virilio [43]. *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*. Trans. Mark Polizzotti. Columbia University, 43.

<sup>35</sup> \*\*\* [34]. Performing Metaphors. *Theory and Event* 23(4), 268.

lips: so, if you say ‘chariot’, a chariot passes through your lips.”<sup>36</sup> There is constant movement between materiality and text, and law is perhaps one of the most obvious examples of such a sliding. Neither just text nor just materiality, law is fully both, fully dwelling on the movement between the two. Law as movement, therefore, is not just the human, nonhuman or even planetary movement. That too. But also an internal movement, a *moto perpetuum* between text and materiality. Erin Manning again: “The movement within becomes a movement without, not internal- external, but folding ... This means you are never stopped.”<sup>37</sup>

### 3.3 The Material Lawscape

The second task in *escaping the lawscape* is an exploration of the material lawscape. Participants look for material objects and bodies that invite them to move in a certain way and stop them from moving in other ways. Then they must find ways to *disobey*.

Interestingly, creativity is often associated with disobedience. During most performances I feel the need to clarify that the first exercise is *not* about disobedience. That comes later on—just wait for it. The groups (in its subsequent iterations, the game is always played in small groups) start playing with basic structures: desk, chairs, walls, doors, corridors. Their bodies become contorted around the materiality of the objects. Am I not supposed to sit on the table? I will. Am I not supposed to jump that fence? I will. All available objects, even other human bodies, are appropriated *à la situationiste*, and their lawscaping function is ruthlessly questioned, employed differently, playfully, anarchically.

During one of the workshops at the Royal College of Art in London, a group of students moved into the discussion space of a makeshift group of tutors (me included) while we were chatting about the exercise. It was a smooth yet persistent move, their group clearly intrusive and persistent while we attempted to carry on our discussion and suppressing our laughter. This was one of the few times that participants made active use of other human bodies and the lawscape they inhabit and generate. Intruding in a discussion is one thing, but a collective intrusion into a hierarchically different (despite our horizontal, democratic, participatory attitude, we remained their tutors and I remained the workshop lead) group discussion is a remarkable move in two ways: first, it denotes an understanding of human bodies and their constructed habitat as one of the lawscape’s textual and material production (we were material bodies engaged in a discursive, textual exchange); and second, it shows how disobedience can be of varying degrees and one of the most marked ones is when one questions hierarchical societal levels. One of the material lawscape’s goals is to show how socially embedded and power-determined law is. This admittedly rather banal fact can be quite an eye-opener when realised

<sup>36</sup> Deleuze [5]. *The Logic of Sense*, trans M. Lester. London: Continuum. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Manning 13.

not purely intellectually but through one's own body. One can then *feel* that law's embodied and spatialised materiality is saturated with power.

However well-accepted this connection between law and power might be to scholars of critical legal theory and critical sociolegal studies, it is not a given. Luhmann's theory for example is notoriously criticised for its inability to take power into account.<sup>38</sup> Yet, there is something to be said about, on the one hand, this combination of systemic closure where the only thing against which one can measure up is oneself; and on the other hand, the way the various systems, against all odds, manage to come together and generate what we abstractly call society.<sup>39</sup> Both aspects of the theory work along notions and practices of immanence, where there is no outside to the interior of each system and society at large. This distinctly materialistic, indeed Nietzschean way of thinking of reality,<sup>40</sup> has found its way into the lawscape: an immanent surface on which the various bodies fold into assemblages, which, following Karen Barad, emerge as agents that affect the way the whole surface moves.<sup>41</sup>

However, flatness does not mean equal distribution. As I have analysed extensively elsewhere,<sup>42</sup> the lawscape's flat ontology, namely a plane of immanence (to follow Deleuze and Guattari<sup>43</sup>) where human and nonhuman bodies share the same horizontality, is *tilted*. Heavier assemblages that yield more power (supranational corporations, oil-producing states, the infamous 1%, polluting substances, the great Pacific garbage patch, but also groups of tutors talking to each other away from students) tilt the lawscape in specific, mostly unequal ways. Their bodies bloat with legal exclusion and controlled access, creating boundaries, visible and invisible, that stop other bodies from moving in.

Lawscape's ability to visibilise and invisibilise itself can, paradoxically, be put in the service of collective political resistance. Let me share the example of four design graduate participants in the material lawscape exercise that decided to disobey the legal materiality of a common bench. The short video they took begins with them sitting on the bench quite regularly with straight backs, nonchalantly looking on their phones. Even before the viewer is given the opportunity to notice that something isn't quite right, the camera turns and we realise that they were not sitting but actually lying with their backs on the seat of the bench, their legs draped over the back of the bench and their feet dangling towards the sky. The illusion was made possible only because they kept their

<sup>38</sup> Pottage [35]. Power as an art of contingency: Luhmann, Deleuze, Foucault. *Economy and Society* 27(1),

<sup>39</sup> In systemic terms, systems structurally couple with each other and share historicity. Luhmann [21]. Closure and Structural Coupling, *Cardozo Law Review* 13(5), 1419–1442.

<sup>40</sup> "There is no outside" in Nietzsche [28]. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. G. Parkes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, at 175.

<sup>41</sup> Barad [1]. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>42</sup> Pashukanis [32].

<sup>43</sup> Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F., 1988. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi. London: Athlone Press.

backs and necks upright, so that gravity would not reveal the trick. This simple materialisation of the camera angle exemplifies the distance between materiality and representation (one form of which is also legal textuality), without, however, dwelling on a simple phenomenological inversion. The bench *was* used materially differently. The fact that we were presented this in a playful, illusionistic way, is the way distance works. It solidifies the sliding between visibility and invisibility of the lawscape. Sitting regularly on the bench is part of invisibilisation: the lawscape conceals its disciplinary materiality that excludes the non-able-bodied, the black during South Africa's apartheid, the homeless in the City of London's lunch hour, the urban fox, and so on. When the participants sat the other way, they visibilised the lawscape and its inherent subtle controls.

## 4 Third Movement: on the Spectacle

### 4.1 Visualising Affect

And now, allow all objects and bodies to return to their regular size: slimline, lawless presences of pure materiality. Observe how streets are back to being flat and wide, windows open, walls straight, layered, potentially climbable, shops inviting you regardless of your financial capacity. For the last stage of the visualisation, I ask you only one thing: allow your body to swell up with law. Pump it up with a juridical solidity, dress it in jurisdictional certainty, wrap it in rhetorical flourishes, inject subcutaneously in it the stock of legal knowledge, feel your bloodstream getting warmer with law, speak fluent legalese. Slowly but surely allow yourself to become the law. You feel law, eat law, sweat law, defecate law. Your body is the law, and the law is your body. Your radiance is infinite, your certainty blinding, your step as cosmic as the globe, as vast as history.

Your movements are now determined solely by you. You are *the* law. The world becomes your playground. It moves alongside you, attuned to your every thought and gesture. Everything is up for grabs. Everything is available to you. You finally truly belong. The atmosphere is luminous, rarefied, welcoming yet bracing, your breath one with the world's. Your inside extends infinitely towards your outside. This is an eternal present, comfortable yet full of truth. How wonderful it must be to feel that total freedom, the absolute roaming of the monarch, the colonising spread of the powerful. The territory belongs to you and you belong to the territory.

You catch a glimpse of your strapping body on a mirror. Proud, erect, stalwart. You pause briefly to fix a lock on your hair. After all, the law must also look good. You try your most radiant smile. But something is bothering you. You are having a moment of dissociation. Is that you in the mirror? Is this someone else? Who is the real you here?

## 4.2 The Lawscape as Atmosphere

Forgive me but this is where I burst the bubble.

It is true that we found ways of escaping the inexorable suffusing of materiality. Textuality has offered us distance, and so did playfulness, inventiveness, irony. These are all solidly humanistic, learned and enlightened ways. But these ways also bring us back full circle to an enclosure.

Let me start by the act of visualisation. The whole process works along metaphorical lines: you do not *actually* see things. You inhabit a metaphorical space where visualisation stands for an all-inclusive enclosure of visual inventiveness. You populate that space with further metaphors: streets that close in, bodies full of law, Leviathan-like straddling over the territory. Even the whole concept of lawscape is metaphorical.

Ever since the influential *Metaphors We Live By* by linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson, we have woken up to the fact that metaphors are not mere figures of speech but determine how *thought* is structured and evolving.<sup>44</sup> What is most extraordinary though is the way metaphors operate under our skin as it were, bypassing the conscious and targeting our unconscious. Legal metaphors such as *breaking the law*, *blind justice*, *nowhere to hide* from the law and so on, are ways to understand law beyond linguistic communication. They are emplaced and embodied metaphors, “learned automatically through our bodily interactions with aspects of our environment.”<sup>45</sup>

Metaphors are a strong lawscaping force, allowing and disallowing movements while bypassing the rational questioning of such predispositions. Because of their ubiquity, metaphors trigger specific, normatively fixed affective responses. Metaphors we live by is simply another way of saying *laws* we live by. Just like law, metaphors are never just textual. They are a prime example of sliding between text and materiality, helming that fold. As Donna Haraway says in an interview, “I find words and language more closely related to flesh than to ideas...Since I experience language as an intensely physical process, I cannot *not* think through metaphor.”<sup>46</sup> This is the *matterphorical* aspect of metaphors, as Daniela Gandorfer and Zulaikha Ayub have memorably put it,<sup>47</sup> meaning that their textuality is fully embedded in our material (corporeal and spatial) world. This straddling, indeed this metaphorical akimbo, contributes to the movement of the lawscape towards what in my work

<sup>44</sup> See also Lakoff, G., 1993. The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor. In *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony, 202.

<sup>45</sup> Mark [15]. Mind, Metaphor, Law. *Mercer Law Rev.* 58, 845p. at 856; See also G. Lakoff and M. Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy In The Flesh: The Embodied Mind And Its Challenge To Western Thought*. 3–5. See also Ricca, M., 2021. The ‘Spaghettification’ of Performativity Across Cultural Boundaries: The Trans-cultural/Trans-Spatiality of Digital Communication As an Event Horizon for Speech Acts, *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law—Revue internationale de Sémiotique juridique*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11196-021-09880-4> for the connection between denotation and performativity and the spatiality of the textual.

<sup>46</sup> Donna [13]. *How Like A Leaf: An Interview with Thyrza Nichols Goodeve*. 85–6, original emphasis.

<sup>47</sup> Daniela Gandorfer and Zulaikha Ayub. 2021. Matterphorical. *Theory & Event* 24(1), 2–13.

I have called an *atmosphere*.<sup>48</sup> To put it briefly, a lawscape becomes atmospheric when its usual mechanism of legal restrictions (visibility of lawscape) or capitalist enjoyment (invisibility of lawscape) takes over and eclipses the other possibility. One of the clearest examples is the passage from passport control to duty-free shopping in an airport: after an intense lawscaping space where one's body, property and identity are submitted to in-depth fragmentation and scrutiny, one finally walks into the miraculous world of clouds of perfume and triangular chocolate bars, where everything is up for grabs (provided you have enough plastic – alienation as an example of the lawscape's invisibilisation).

Atmospheres emerge within boundaries that make participating bodies blithely ignorant of whatever there might be outside, whether spatially (fortress Europe, gated communities, communities of intense inclusion based on racial or religious characteristics) or temporally (the present is the only time in which atmospheres operate yet manage to project it as eternal future). Atmospheres are enclosures, closed systems, bubbles. And metaphors are often put in the service of atmospheric perpetuation. Take the courtroom trial, our dominant legal metaphor that Spaulding classifies as *dead* metaphor, namely an ossified, fixed metaphor that perpetuates law's *closure*, echoing the courtroom *enclosure*: "Enclosure not only symbolized the independence of law from political, commercial, and social space; it served to restrict access, limit vandalism, minimize the disruption of trial, and, perhaps above all, encourage deference to the administration of justice in a democratic society perpetually anxious about the authority of law and lawyers."<sup>49</sup> In other words, enclosure is the metaphor that defends law's self-legitimation by excluding the rest of the world.

Atmospheres reduce bodies to mere complicity while offering them the illusion of power. For there can be no atmosphere unless the bodies participating in it actually desire the very atmosphere and the power that emanates from the sense of belonging. There is complicity in both emergence and in perpetuation. Foucaultian power leaking everywhere means that law can no longer be conceptualised merely as top-down state law. Rather, law is an institutional affect in and between bodies. From Foucault's disciplinary society to Deleuze's society of control: bodies control other bodies in the way they control themselves and their own affects, even in the absence of state legal hierarchies. Self-policing is driven to hysterics by the collective behavioural pressure to fit in. Our desire to belong becomes exploited by atmospherics.

This can be patently observed in the way law has been increasingly organising itself atmospherically, namely by becoming itself an enclosure that allows itself to be *hypervisibilised*. Indeed, legal theoretical preoccupations have moved from definitional matters (what is law, what is its function, what is its connection to justice, what lies outside law) to declaratory mannerisms: from law's definition to law's

<sup>48</sup> Pashukanis [32]. *Spatial Justice: Body Lawscape Atmosphere*, London: Routledge.

<sup>49</sup> N. W. [41]. The Enclosure of Justice: Courthouse Architecture, Due Process, and the Dead Metaphor of Trial. *Yale J. of Law & Humanities* 24, 311, at 316. See also J. [8]. Law, Power And Language: Beware Of Metaphors. *Scandinavian Studies In Law* 53, 259.



selfie.<sup>50</sup> This is law as commodity value.<sup>51</sup> But this is not where it stops. Gernot Böhme writes, “to increase their exchange value, commodities are now presented in a special way, they are given a look, they are aestheticized and are put on show in the exchange sphere... to the extent that use is now made of their attractiveness, their glow, their atmosphere: they themselves contribute to the staging, the dressing up and enhancement of life.”<sup>52</sup>

As a commodity, law packages itself with the aim to become attractive, desirable and ultimately, the *real* law. It’s that look in the mirror you give yourself, that moment of validation. Cassandra Sharp puts it well: “social media narratives can.

render visible the ways in which legality is actively at work in our culture and consciousness”<sup>53</sup> Not only that but “it is through everyday stories that perceptions of law and justice are formed and maintained.”<sup>54</sup> In a more critical vein, this is what Böhme calls “staging value”<sup>55</sup> which supersedes the initial commodity exchange value. Law’s staging value comes from media, both traditional and social. Staging means becoming spectacular: twitter-based, hypersensitive to social pressures, confusing the myth of universality with that of popular acceptance. Law’s staging is aided by technology: it becomes a service product given to entrepreneurship and innovation, computerised and binarised, standardised rather than contingent. Law’s staging is also pedagogical: it can often be simply a mechanical degree with luminous career prospects, at the expense of open thought, interdisciplinarity, critique.

On face value, the need for law to prove its legitimacy means that it resorts explicitly and spectacularly to the values of legality, fairness, universality and justice. While these values are integral to law, they now become a shadow of its former self. They are submitted to a process of spectacularisation. The law constructs this atmosphere of values, and entraps angry, polarised and disenfranchised bodies (individual and collective) in a bubble of belonging, political intensity and apparent paucity of justice.

Who is law now? The one on the mirror or the one you thought you knew?

<sup>50</sup> See Pashukanis [33]. Law and the Aesthetic Turn: Law is a stage—from aesthetics to affective aestheses. In *Research Handbook on Critical Legal Theory*, Emiliios Christodoulidis, Ruth Duker and Marco Goldoni (eds). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

<sup>51</sup> Evgeny [29]. *The General Theory of law and Marxism*. London: Pluto Press; see also Dragan [27]. The Commodity-Exchange Theory of Law: In Search of a Perspective. *Crime and Social Justice* 16, 41–9.

<sup>52</sup> Gernot [4]. *Critique of Aesthetic Capitalism*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Rome: Mimesis International, 20.

<sup>53</sup> Cassandra Sharp, 2022. *Hashtag Jurisprudence*, London: Elgar, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Cassandra Sharp, 2022. *Hashtag Jurisprudence*, London: Elgar, p. 13. See also Richard K Sherwin, Neal Feingenson and Christina Spiesel, ‘Law in the Digital Age: How Visual Communication Technologies are Transforming the Practice, Theory, and Teaching of Law’ (2006) 12(2) *Boston University Journal of Science &*

*Technology Law* 227, 259; Christian Delage, Peter Goodrich and Marco Wan (eds), 2019. *Law and New Media West of Everything*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Jeffrey Layne Blevin et al., ‘Tweeting for Social Justice in #Ferguson: Affective Discourse in Twitter Hashtags’ (2019) 21 *New Media & Society* 1636.

<sup>55</sup> Gernot [4]. *Critique of Aesthetic Capitalism*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Rome: Mimesis International, 68.

Law invests in “an *appearance* or *look*, endowing [it] with a *radiance* or *glow*, an atmosphere.”<sup>56</sup> A legal atmosphere is the perfect set for law’s staging itself: once set up, the atmosphere perpetuates itself. It does so by converting into ‘needs’ the desires of the participating bodies. These desires are fundamentally individualistic and neoliberal, nourishing illusionary notions of achieving personal freedom through mortgages, promotions, new gadgets, sports shoes, trendier handbags and so on. This is not about survival or covering of actual needs. This is pure surplus consumption which ‘is seldom referred to today as *luxury* or *extravagance*, because it is no longer bound up with certain privileges or limited to certain classes, but is now taken for granted as a universal standard of living’<sup>57</sup> – or at least the universally aspired to standard of living, even when basic needs are not covered. In generating and acting through an atmosphere, law matches the expectations of a consumerist society, while continuing to nurture these expectations so that more of the same is needed. An atmosphere generates a cycle of addiction where, once the supposed desires are converted into ‘real needs’, more of the same is offered continuously and in excess.<sup>58</sup>

### 4.3 The Affective Lawscape

The third task in *escaping the lawscape* encourages participants to open up even more and unleash their creativity. It is essentially a *carte-blanc* to create and inhabit a space of absolute freedom. In that space, we are told, there is no law. Everything is liquid ludic desire. The participants are asked to occupy a space in a way that will make them feel totally free: they can do whatever they want, regardless of restrictions and my instructions. This is precisely the moment of illusion of free will, the delusion of escaping the lawscape, and finally the packaging of one’s validity of actions in the spectacle of legitimation (and the legitimacy of the spectacle).

The Venice Biennale is a tightly regulated space at all times and especially during the opening, where the international art world converges to the city for a few days of frantic networking. In the main space of the Biennale, the Giardini (‘the gardens’), the multitude of spaces of freedom is deceptive. The art world is supposed to be free, and encourage dramatics, irreverence, iconoclastic creativity. So, the *escaping the lawscape* participants started challenging the given order:

<sup>56</sup> Gernot [4]. *Critique of Aesthetic Capitalism*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Rome: Mimesis International, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Gernot [4]. *Critique of Aesthetic Capitalism*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Rome: Mimesis International, 10. This is the point of Peter [38] analysis in the *World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 170, as ‘a climatized luxury shell in which there would be an eternal spring of consensus’. The affectivity of luxury finds its most prominent form in the Grand Installation of the glasshouse of capitalism, that ‘interior-creating violence of contemporary traffic and communication media’ (at 198).

<sup>58</sup> [4] at 11 points out that ‘desires cannot be permanently satisfied, but only temporarily appeased, since they are actually intensified by being fulfilled’. While this is true for the kind of desires that we could identify as false desires, and that form part of an economy of desire that is indeed inexhaustible, they have to be contrasted with the kind of desire that emerges from a body’s movement and pause, namely the conative desire of a body that is ethically situated in relation to other bodies.

some of them climbing fences; some having a little nap on the grass outside the Danish pavilion; some having an imaginary tennis match in the middle of the Russian pavilion; and some having a yoga session on the main Giardini avenue risking being trampled over by the masses of the art crowd who looked but did not react. In one iteration of the game, some of us joined hands and moved like a wave through the meandering queues in front of the French and British pavilions, causing a frisson of discomfort to the conscientiously socialising and hard-working Biennale guests.

Things did not always go smoothly. The civil guards of the Biennale were distinctly worried and started questioning participants – especially the ones climbing the external fences of the biennale enclosure. The issue of course was that while it is illegal to cross the fence from outside in, one could not say the same about the opposite direction. They were all legitimate Biennale guests, officially invited and participating in a sanctioned art performance. Yet they were challenging the order. They were not hypercomplying, nor disobeying at that moment. They were pushing the space from within, creating lines of flight that stretched the edges of the atmospheric construction in which we were all participating.

For a moment it would seem that the atmospheric bubble could be defeated. This is the inebriating space of becoming law: neither obeying, nor disobeying but pushing the limits from within in order to create more freedom. Claim the space of law from within the law. Allow the embodiment of law to be full. Only then will you have truly escaped the lawscape.

Naturally, all this is nonsense. The atmospheric bubble is never defeated – we only dive into another instance of atmospheric construction. Creativity isn't salvation, *carte-blanche* isn't free will. Nor can the lawscape ever be truly escaped despite the playful linguistic promise of the term. There is no escape from or *in* the lawscape. There are many reasons for this but let me here offer just two: first, the spaces of freedom, however hard-won and creatively constructed, could only emerge because someone like me had given them prior permission. Indeed, when trouble with the guards arose, the participants pointed them to me, the true responsible for the chaos. I (in my self-legitimising, assumed authority which was further sanctioned by the curators who invited me) was the atmosphere generator: the Director behind The Truman Show. This is said with no megalomaniac pretence. Quite the opposite: the impossibility of escaping the lawscape fills me with a slow melancholy.

The second reason for which escaping the lawscape is impossible is because everything the participants do in these iterations is broadcasted. All groups are asked to post their activities online in dedicated open access groups or with public hashtags. The more they post, the better. This is the moment in which they truly become the law, the *real* law, confirming and asserting their legal agency to create spaces of freedom within the law.

We packaged the law and any attempt at escaping it in social-media accepted ways, in fun and creative actions set in open ludic environments, in seemingly free and alter-becoming ways of expressing oneself. We flirted with the unlawful like drunk teenagers and we broadcasted that to the guards and our followers. We used law as a cute commodity to be played with. Nothing wrong with any of that. But we simply ended up playing the game according to the laws of the law.

## 5 Conclusion (or, Final Movement)

Permit me a last piece of visualisation: imagine that you are walking in a city at dusk. Everything is steeped in a warm orange colour. It is the moment that law departs. There are people waving on the seafront in the direction of the law that slowly sets behind the mountains, ready to illuminate a different spot on the planet. The chill of a lawless night is gripping you. You are struck by panic, especially when seeing all these other bodies moving silently away from the waterfront, lost and somewhat menacing. But you persevere. You join a group of people and start looking. Your group hardly talks. It just listens to others. The city is turning into a whispering gallery of desires. The voices come from every body, animate and inanimate. Little by little, your group swells up. All the fear, lack, hope and desire around you are now absorbed within the group. It becomes part of a wave. Are you riding the wave or are you the wave? It is not important. The wave is undefined, sprawling, frothy and embracing. This is law, you hear people say. This is law. A new law but also a very old law. A law with direction but without origin. A law that needs no mirror, just horizon. A law of surface signalling depth. You are part of a collective, an assemblage, a line of flight. You are no longer just you. You are not just you. You, all of you, are the law. And that might be the law you really need.

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