

## Introduction

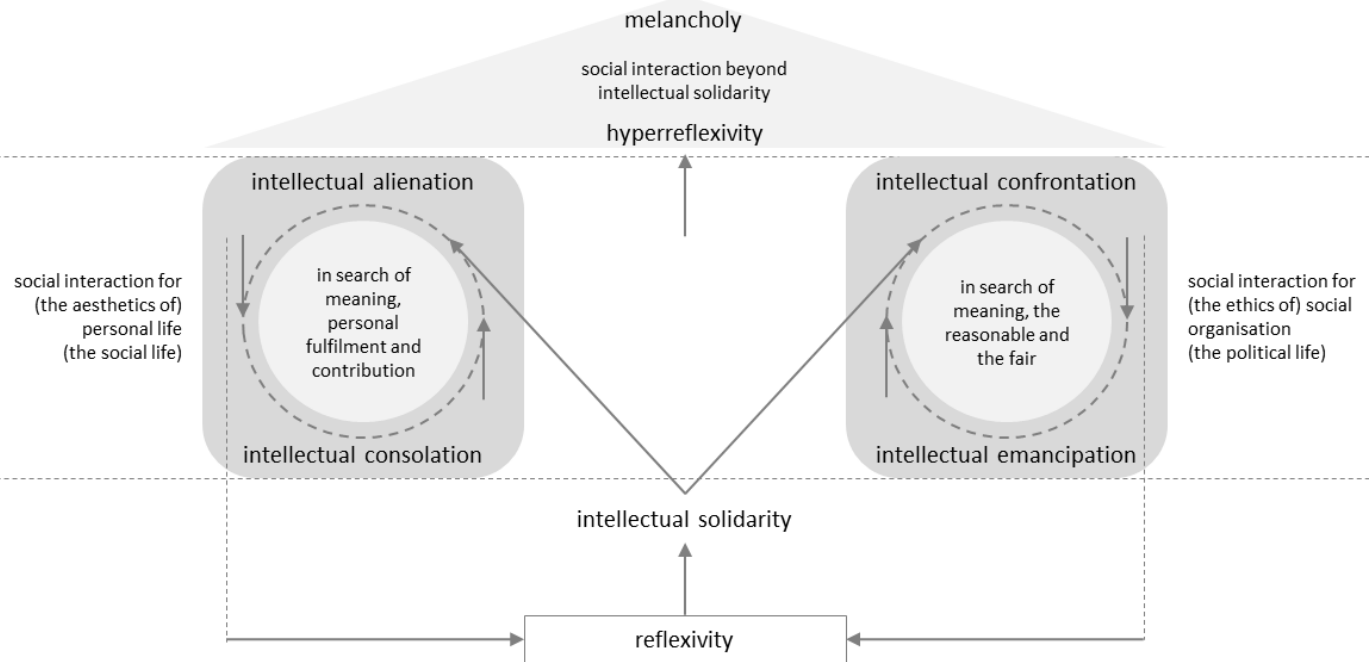
The research programme of the Institute of Idle Curiosity for Elements of Seduction is concerned with the way human beings deal with the uncertain, the complex and the unknown in social and political interaction. The basis of the research is a critical theory that targets strategies of positivism, populism and conformism in social, cultural, scientific, economic or political contexts, but the programme essentially wants to go beyond critical analysis as such. The aim is to research alternative 'ideological' human interaction modes that go beyond the traditional confirmative patterns and systems of social and cultural cohesion, scientific production of evidence and economic and political positioning and competition. These patterns and systems shape our society today, and the dominant perception, motivated from out of different and often conflicting value frameworks, is that they are essential, as they provide the means for the construction of identity, truth, autonomy and authority as proclaimed conditions for societal and thus also individual well-being.

However, the Institute argues that these various patterns and systems, in their form inherited from late modernity, today rather hinder than facilitate a proper dealing with the uncertain, the complex and the unknown. While, in theory, they may not be the cause themselves of the human individual angst or of the social, environmental and economic malaises of today, they apparently neither provide the means to relieve them in practice. The reason is that their constructions, each of them being built on a specific internal logic, nowadays serve various social, cultural, scientific, economic and political self-serving and often conflicting comfort zones, and at the same time relieve individuals from the challenge to nurture an idle curiosity 'at the peripheries of social cohesion' in both private-social interactions and public-political interactions (the last also encompassing those from the scientific and economic sphere)\*.

\* In its critical theory and in the consequent research about the alternative ideological interaction modes, the Institute makes a crucial distinction between interactions in 'the social sphere' and interactions in 'the political sphere'. The social sphere denotes human acts and interactions that have no direct meaning or function in and for social organisation (friendship, recreation, play, love, sex, but also individual or joint poetic reverie, reflection, expression and exploration) whereas the political sphere denotes human acts and interactions that have a direct meaning or function in and for social organisation (acts and interactions in the sphere of applied scientific research and development, economics (production, development, services), labour, finance, management, legal affairs, administration but also political negotiation, formal education, public discourse and critique). The idea thereby is that economics, applied science, management, law and administration are means for social organisation and not ends in themselves and that education, research and political deliberation serve to connect both the social and political spheres. Obviously, social, cultural, scientific, economic or political actors can have an influence on these actions and interactions in both the social and the political sphere. For reasons sketched in the second part of this text, the Institute considers human interactions in contemporary art and philosophy as transcending the dichotomy between the social and the political sphere, and this on the basis of new understandings of contemporary art and philosophy, as proposed by the Institute.

## A blueprint for a new humanism

In the research programme of the Institute of Idle Curiosity for Elements of Seduction, the critical theory gradually materialises in the form of a discussion text ('Welcome to the Age of Reflexivity – humanism beyond the comfort of polarisation'; see <http://www.lifeworldtheories.com>). From that basic critical theory, one may understand that the way we can (not) and should (not) use 'referential knowledge' (in the form of facts, opinions and stories) to inspire, inform and instruct our social and political interactions is a central subject in the research programme of the Institute. From this perspective, the Institute proposes the concept of intellectual solidarity as the basic human moral for our world today, and suggest that it would inspire and inform two ideological interaction modes in the social and the political sphere. The basic scheme of the research programme, put forward as a blueprint for a new humanism 'beyond the comforts of self-confirmation and polarisation', is presented in the simplified scheme below.



The idea is that reflexivity, as a human intellectual skill and as a moral stance, would enable human beings to 'better deal' with the uncertain, the complex and the unknown in the social and political sphere. In other words, reflexivity, as a human intellectual skill and as a moral stance, would make intellectual solidarity in the two modes 'possible'. It would initially enable and enforce the human being to acknowledge the need for an essential distinction between social and political interaction modes in the interest of a meaningful reasoning about freedoms and responsibilities in our thinking and acting. The argument is that, while we obviously cannot escape the mode of social interaction, it is in principle possible to 'switch' to a political interaction mode. Only from this understanding, one can start to reason about when and why a human being would have the responsibility to switch to that political interaction mode and about when and why that same human being would be relieved from the pressure of doing it.

Upon recognition of that split, the Institute claims that the human being would in principal be able to nurture an 'idle curiosity' 'at the peripheries of social cohesion' in both private-social interactions and public-political interactions, and live alternative interaction modes for what it distincts as the interactions of social affect (the personal, between the natural and the social) and the interactions of social organisation (the personal, between the social and the political). These new conditions humane, described in the blueprint by a social-aesthetical and political-ethical 'social contract' respectively, could open up lifeworlds characterised by a new romanticism of dealing with ambiguity in social-affectional interactions ('between intellectual consolation and intellectual alienation') and by a new pragmatism of dealing with the uncertain, the complex and the unknown through reflexive and transparent use of knowledge in social-organisational interactions ('between intellectual confrontation and (participation in) intellectual capacity building'). These social-peripheral and social-transversal 'conditions humane' would, the institute suggests, add up to signify 'the Society of Idle Curiosity for Elements of Seduction'

The Institute explores the philosophical groundings and the practical meanings of this conceptual blueprint through art and philosophical activism and claims thereby that contemporary art is the only form of human interaction that should not be bothered with intellectual solidarity itself, and this for the simple reason that it cannot fulfill the normative conditions of intellectual solidarity, neither in its form of confrontation, neither in that of consolation.

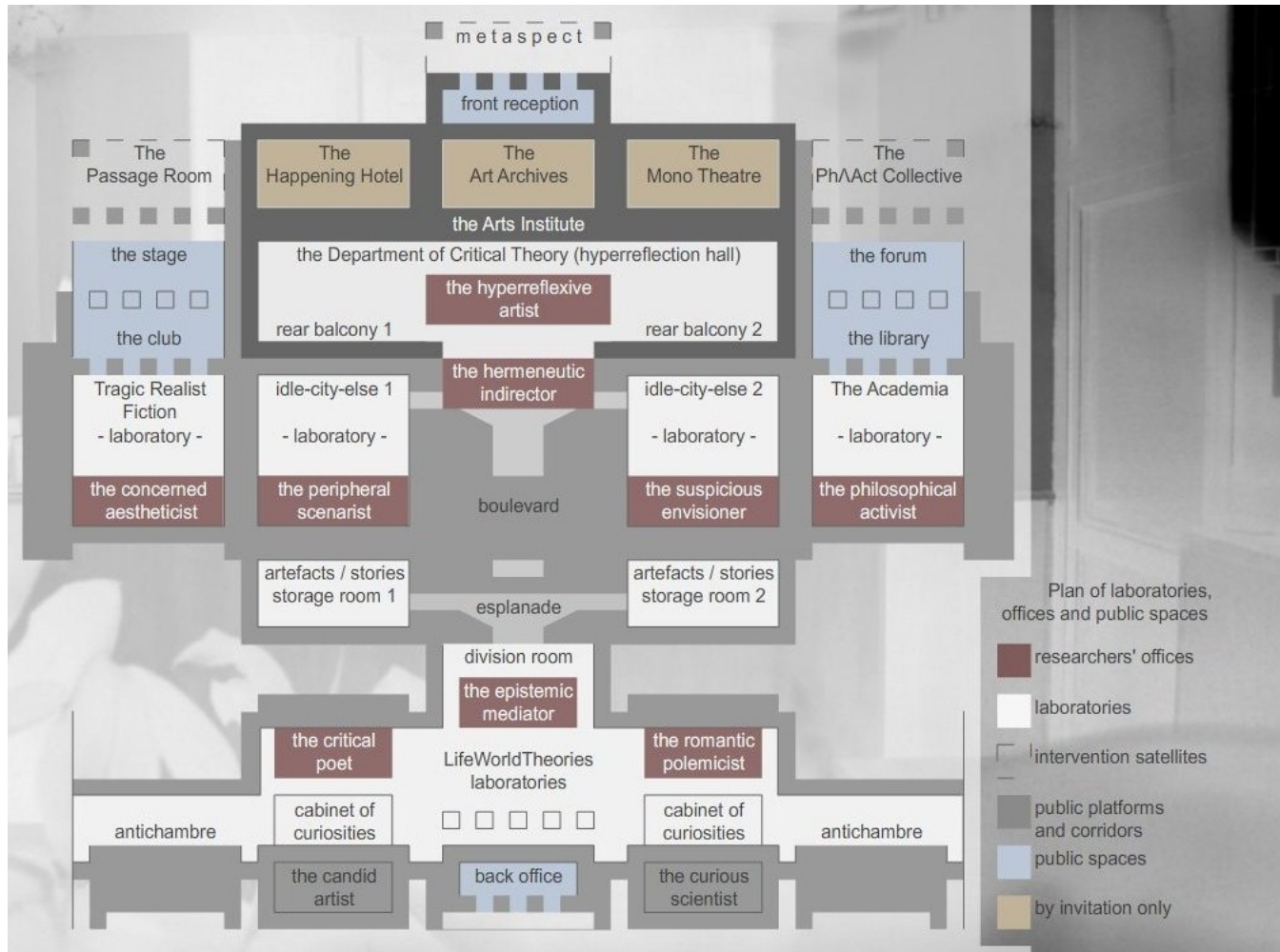
The second and third scheme on the next pages visualise the organisational structure of the Institute.

[...]

The art and philosophical activism related to the 'blueprint for a new humanism' and the particular organisation of the research programme make the Institute of Idle Curiosity for Elements of Seduction the ultimate meeting place and reflection space for anybody concerned with the aesthetics and ethics of being human in our world today. You are invited to come to the Institute, either to dwell in solitary reflection through the different departments, esplanades and corridors or to participate in the happenings that are organised on regular occasions.

The Institute of Idle Curiosity  
for Elements of Seducton

Scheme



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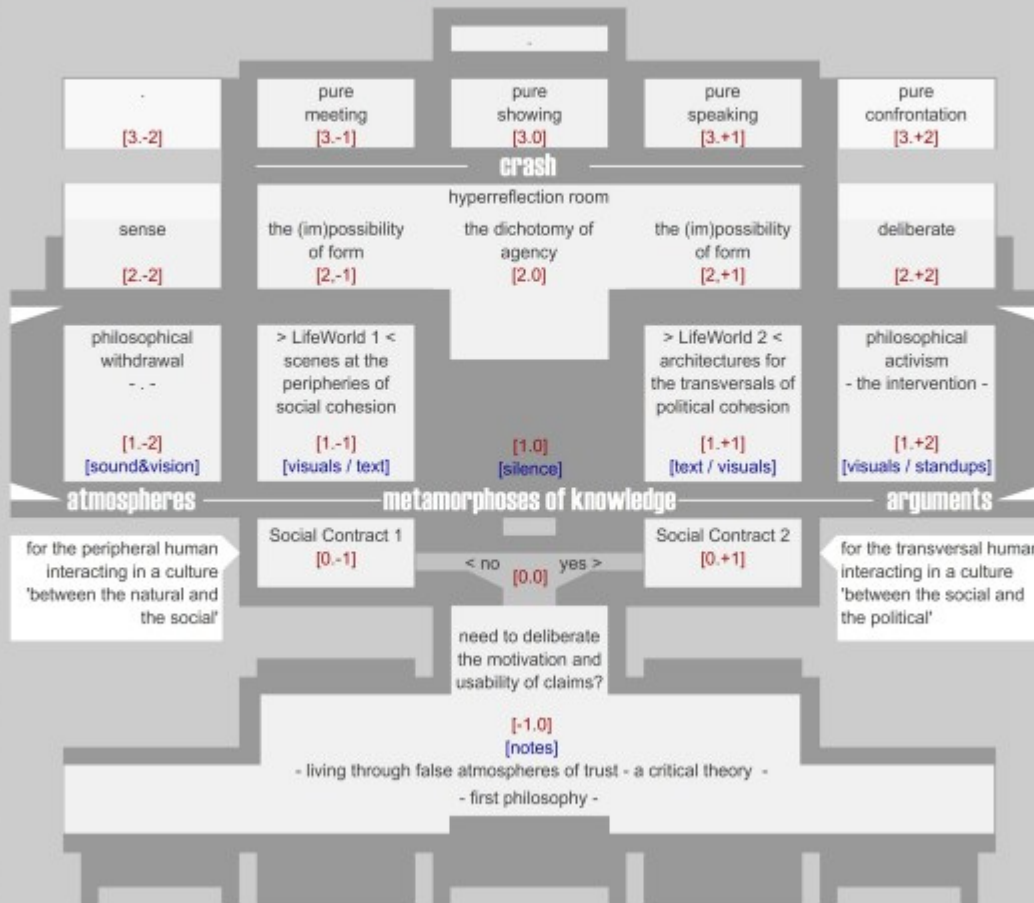
FOR THE INSTITUTE OF IDLE CURIOSITY FOR ELEMENTS OF SEDUCTION

[www.idle-city-else.org](http://www.idle-city-else.org)

# the institute of idle curiosity for elements of seduction

between atmospheres and arguments: an overview of the research programme of the institute

[x,x] = works matrix elements



a social contract that implies a joint agreement to accept ambiguity in natural-social interactions, and this on the basis of a mutual reluctance to ask clarity related to intentional meaning.

a social contract that implies a joint agreement to stimulate and enable reflexivity and to create transparency in socio-political interactions, and this on the basis of a mutual right to ask clarity related to intentional meaning.