Methodologies of Affective Experimentation

Edited by Britta Timm Knudsen
Mads Krogh · Carsten Stage

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Methodologies of Affective Experimentation

Britta Timm Knudsen, Mads Krogh, and Carsten Stage

The Time to Experiment?

We live in an era of experimentation—both if we take a look at the broader social world of politics, media and art and at the narrower context of academic knowledge production. The claim of this book is that experiments are inherently affective due to their ability to produce sensuous events that enable more or less intense shifts in attention and involve participants in orchestrated yet unpredictable processes that activate the body's ability to relate to, sense and imagine the world in new ways. Experiments are, in other words, affective per default by enacting the body as entangled with and attuned by a particular setting—and maybe even by drawing attention to the body's ability to become affectively entangled with the world in the first place. In this introduction we offer a heuristic aimed at qualifying the analysis of both 'found' examples of affective experimentation and research

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processes or methods that are themselves experimental. The heuristic unfolds three dimensions of what affective experiments fundamentally do: they reveal unrecognized aspects of the social, they engage with unpredictable and transgressive processes and they enact a future in the making. Our claim is that all experiments to be called affective engage with these three dimensions.

In understanding experiments as situations that make the body affectively aware of its entanglement with a setting—and of its potential for being involved in and distributed by entanglements—we are inspired by Lisa Blackman. According to her, practices of experimentation can be described "as inventive strategies for producing particular forms of entanglement. This is in line with work taken up across the sciences and humanities, which approaches experimentation as performative, and where the technical framing of an experimental event provides the setting for dynamic processes of enactment to take form" (Blackman 2012, p. 144). Following this line of thinking, experimentation is a force of sensuous transformation and intensification that simultaneously 'touches' the body as a defined or subjectively felt entity and enacts that very same body as dispersed and distributed in relation to a setting. In that way experimentation also stresses and produces awareness about how "we extend into our environments and yet paradoxically are required to live this extension as interiority" (p. 151). This edited collection offers 14 chapters that develop various strategies for empirically exploring experiments as affective and performative events of sensuous entanglement—both in relation to experiments as 'affective strategies' enacted by non-researchers (e.g., cultural producers, as in the chapter by Julian Henriques, or activists, as in the chapter by Paul Schütze, Kilian Jörg, Imke von Maur and Jan Slaby) and as research methods. That is, experiments strategically devised and methodologically reflected by researchers in order to explore affective aspects of the world (as with the creative-writing workshops developed by Natalie Ann Hendry and Signe Uldbjerg or the virtual reality installation devised by Britta Timm Knudsen in order to explore wind as elementary attraction).

The collection responds to a pressing need to understand the intersection between affect, experimentation and sociocultural change by offering analytical strategies that enable researchers to explore just how and with what consequences experimentation is affective. The chapters of the collection address the field of affect studies in different ways, but they share an analytical interest in how experiments produce, modulate and circulate experiential intensity, shifts in attention and movements between bodily

states (Anderson 2014; Brennan 2004; Massumi 2002)—even if this does not necessarily make experiments transformative per se, as they can also reproduce affective economies and hierarchies (Ahmed 2004; Berlant 2011; Ngai 2005). The chapters in the volume also share an interest in affective experimentation as a practice that is at once inherently unpredictable, vested with the ability to open up new (but not necessarily progressive) futures, but which may also give otherwise hidden or invisible social logics a visceral form. In keeping with these communalities, we aim in this introduction to stake out an understanding of affective experiments as linked to overlapping processes of unpredictability, potentiality and (re)presentation enacted or put into motion through bodily entangling events. Simultaneously, we wish to underline that the affective intensity of experiments are produced by their ability to engender spectacles (on widely varying scales) and experiences of immersion and 'showing-not-telling' that in themselves hold a potential of experiencing world-making and futurity for participants and witnesses. Indeed, we consider this world-making capacity a key aspect of affective experimentation, in keeping with the performativity noted by Blackman.

Let's consider an all-too-present and pressing example to help set the intended direction. Besides its far reaching and catastrophic consequences, the outbreak in 2019/20 of COVID-19 encompassed all sorts of experiments. The virus itself could already be regarded as a non-human force of constant experimentation-through-mutation. However, in its global rupture of routines, the pandemic also triggered a dire need to experiment on multiple levels, for example, as regards vaccine development, cross-national research collaboration, production and dissemination of protective gear, establishment of test centres, upscaling of treatment facilities and so forth. In the highly unpredictable, experimental processes, set off to accommodate these various needs, economic inequalities were quickly exposed, especially in relation to the world's poor for whom lockdown measures (even something as simple as washing one's hands several times a day with soap) were a luxury beyond reach. In the French media, two doctors suggested a very specific experiment: Africa should be used as a testing ground for the efficacy of vaccines. This provoked a furious backlash, notably from leading African and Afro-European football stars. Also in politics, the crisis opened a space for experimentation with dramatic consequences—for example, the return of authoritarian political logics legitimized by a permanent state of emergency, biopolitical remedies to govern and survey bodies, lockdowns, border closings, giant sums of subsidy—all examples

that either fuelled hopes for political alternatives to capitalism or just confirmed already existing inequalities. Even culturally and in the arts, lockdown and demands of social distance inspired new forms of expression and performance—for example, balcony singing (spreading via social media from Italy in March 2020), drive-in concerts, online theatre performances and museum visits that transformed into take-home-kits allowing audiences to interact with cultural institutions (e.g., the National Gallery of Denmark) from their homes.

These experimental ways of doing science, politics, culture (and of intertwining these spheres) bore the mark of crisis or emergency in the sense that normal procedures seemed indefinitely suspended. New cultural forms and new online formats, as well as a burgeoning hope for the pandemic to be an event capable of mobilizing populations for long-lasting change or for rediscovering more progressive uses of new media, were produced as a response to the lack of efficient everyday routines (see Susanna Paasonen's chapter in this book). However, fear, anxiety and anger also occurred as pronounced, affective reactions to the medical, economic, political, social and cultural crises created by a global pandemic that to a large extent re-affirmed global power-geometries and nationalist agendas. Here, again, it is important to stress that an interest in understanding affective intensities in their collective, relational and unpredictable unfoldings does not prevent us from considering the sociocultural and political implications, stabilisations and hierarchies of affective processes. The latter focus could, for instance (as in the chapters by Christoffer Kølvraa and Schütze et al. in this book), stress the inherent magnetism of the status quo as a structure of feeling or populist political discourse as an efficient evacuation of 'what could be' replaced by a sentimental celebration of 'what is'.

Looking beyond COVID-19, a wider array of developments in media, arts and politics is easily identified, which reinforces the need to understand the social ramifications of affective experimentation. Examples could be media formats, where, for example, reality TV of the 1990s sparked a persistent wave of lifestyle experiments (Dovey 2000; Black 2002; Jerslev 2004), or the cultural industries, where liveness and the possibility of immersing oneself into a staged environment that trigger affects are constantly probed—whether in contexts of museums, tourism, festivals or consumer branding (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Klingmann 2007; Knudsen 2011a, b; Bjerregaard 2015; Daugbjerg et al. 2016). Another example is how experimental approaches from the arts travel to the world of

healthcare to engage with and affect illness experiences (Charon 2006; Sampson 2004) or to contexts of social media, where reading and writing experiments (steered by researchers) may counter issues of assault and solitude (Mortensen 2020). Also in politics, experiments aimed at performing power and decision-making differently draw on affective dynamics in the enactment of alternative and temporary forms of radical democracy—as in the case of place-based social movements such as Los Indignados, Madrid 2011, and Les Nuits Debout, Paris 2016 (Romanos 2016; Guichou 2016). In various scholarly contexts, we also perceive a rising methodological interest in experimental and creative approaches to doing research, where methods are not approached as routinized procedures, but rather as performative tools for producing knowledge and relations between researcher and research participants in new ways (Bergold and Thomas 2012; Hope 2016; Kara 2015; Mannay 2016; Markham and Pereira 2019).

Research on the affective, emotional and intensive aspects of contemporary culture has been flourishing for two decades, but the development of methodological approaches and devices for understanding the importance of affect is still a burgeoning research agenda. Existing contributions to this methodological challenge have tended to aim at either tracking or documenting affective aspects through the retuning of established qualitative methods of social and cultural research (e.g., Kahl 2019; Knudsen and Stage 2015) or unfolding how methods cannot represent but must instead create or produce affective attunements due to the inherited performativity of methods (Vannini 2015; Clough 2009; Law 2004). This edited collection suggests instead to develop a different trajectory—one that tries to transgress the dichotomy of understanding methods as being either representative or performative (see also Lury 2021)—by approaching the academic exploration of affects through the lens of experimentation. Moreover, as indicated, we consider affective experiments to be both actual strategies of social agencies that must be explored to understand crucial aspects of contemporary culture and society (Fleig and Scheve 2021) and as research methods able to not only produce but also give insight into and reveal existing social and affective logics. This difference structures the collection's bipartite organization.

The edited collection *Affective Methodologies* (Knudsen and Stage 2015), in line with other timely attempts to take up the methodological challenge of studying processuality and affect (see Lury and Wakeford 2012; Coleman and Ringrose 2013; Anderson 2014; Vannini 2015; Kahl 2019; Fleig and Scheve 2021), positioned inventive experiments as one of

three constructive meta-strategies for producing empirical material for affect research. In that volume, the experiment was characterized as double-edged: on the one hand, it unfolds as staged events within which it is possible to produce academic knowledge; on the other hand, the experiment was understood as intentional attempts to produce affective forces offering open-ended opportunities for multiple encounters and responses to take place (Knudsen and Stage 2015). In terms of affect studies, our methodological take in that collection was based on the premise of moving away from focusing primarily on what affect is and its relationship to other concepts like 'discourse' and 'cognition' (e.g., Massumi 2002; Brennan 2004) in favour of focusing more on ways of investigating how affective intensity is (re)produced, circulated and rewired in and by particular experimental settings (Anderson 2014).

In keeping with these earlier efforts and the double interest in affective experimentation as both social phenomenon and research method, this collection aims at offering methodological approaches that allow researchers to address the increasing importance of experimentation for contemporary culture, media and politics but also to develop new creative research methodologies that engage in co-constructing and re-sensibilizing to the sociomaterial world through experimentation. Thus, we understand 'methodology' in the overall sense of comprising the reflective design of a research process in order to be able to answer to a particular knowledge problem. Particular approaches (or methods) range from specific ways of engaging sites and practices of affective experimentation (e.g., via field work, interviews, text analysis), through analytical strategies for exploring such practices and the importance of affective experimentation in contemporary culture, to researcher-initiated arrangements that produce social situations where research can take place (e.g., in the form of events, interventions, workshops, creative communication endeavours). In this way the collection simultaneously develops ways of methodologically exploring existing societal logics of affective experimentation and of potentially changing these logics by means of affective experimentation. The impetus for bringing these different methodological strands together in the same collection is that their combination can help us identify and reflect on the various ways affective experimentation matters for contemporary culture and sociopolitical change.

In the following, we take some preliminary steps towards unfolding the concept of experimentation before presenting the analytical heuristic for

studying affective implications of experiments in their various forms and functions. Finally, we briefly present the collection of articles.

The History and Politics of Experimentation

To advocate a performative understanding of affective experimentation calls for some historical elaboration. As epitomized by the natural sciences, experimentation is traditionally aimed at trying or testing theories. This requires strict procedures—protocols, instruments, standards and so forth—and the seclusion of factors (traditionally in terms of the laboratory) to ensure trust in the conducted trial (Franklin and Perovic 2021; Gooding et al. 1989). A linear idea of efficient causes governs this idea of the experiment both in terms of how observations confirm or dismiss theories and as regards the reproducibility of results, and even if the positivist tenet of such thinking was long ago revised by science and technology studies scholars, among others, trust in experimental research prevails—by way of networks of scientific institutions, publications, norms and interests, media, technologies and so forth. That is, a broad range of (f)actors enrolled to make experiments work as a 'convincing' and 'reliable' mode of knowledge production. Even in the humanities and social sciences, the idea of the laboratory has been adopted as a privileged space for doing experiments to transfer into real-world settings (i.e., field sites for testing interventions), 'real-life experiments' or living labs (implementing scientific knowledge or technology and infrastructural innovation in urban environments), without dispensing with ideals of theory testing, procedural strictness, the seclusion of effective factors and so on (Krohn and Weyer 1994; Bruun Jensen and Morita 2017).

Understanding experiments as performative emphatically counterposes traditional, positivist ideals. But, in fact, we find, in a closer inspection of the history of the scientific experiment, indications that support a performative and affective approach to what experiments do. Indeed, it seems that the scientific experiment was born to be affectively compelling. Staying within a Eurocentric frame of scientific knowledge production, one of the ideological pioneers of experimental science was Francis Bacon and his *Novum Organon* from 1620 (Bagrie 2004). This philosophical work, concerning how knowledge is generated in the natural sciences, refers to Aristotle's *Organon* and presents a new, more inductive and empirically grounded method still based on logics. Bacon's focus on new discoveries was dependent on the travels to and explorations of 'new'

territories as a part of European colonial endeavours in the seventeenth century. In the *Novum Organon*, Bacon was hoping to discover something about the natural world and not only to deduce something from already established principles. Even though the Aristotelian approach was also based on the human sensing of a natural world, Bacon claimed that the general principles of nature according to the Aristotelian method were not based sufficiently on empirical knowledge (Bacon [1620] n.d., p. 3). The new methodological procedures, according to Bacon, had to be inductive. They should be embedded in the human sensing of nature and according to principles that nature acknowledges as its own (p. 4). However, Bacon distinguishes between an immediate sensing of the world that we cannot rely upon and a mediated experience of the world enacted through experiments and their devices capable of correcting sensuous errors along the way (Bagrie 2004, p. 65). In other words, Bacon supported the idea that mediation and, in a wider sense, the staging of an intentional, experimental situation—as a distributed environment of knowledge production—can be a way of moving closer or of immersing oneself into an (affective) experience of the world, creating awareness about otherwise hidden aspects of that world.

Similar indications of affective implications in the trajectory of the scientific experiment can be found by looking to another champion of experimental research, co-founder of the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, Robert Boyle. In Steven Shapin's reading (1984), experiments' reliability as valid sources of knowledge came with the work of Boyle to depend on three technologies: a material technology of demonstration (such as the air-pump in Boyle's experiments with pneumatics), tempered by collective labour and disciplined by artificial devices (additional tools or machinery); a literary technology by means of which the phenomena could spread to larger audiences than the ones directly witnessing demonstrations; and a social technology (Shapin 1984, p. 484) pointing to how the social solidarity of the experimental community was created. Apart from the fact that the experiment was born as a spectacle with eye-witnesses present to attest to the matter-of-factness of discoveries, the striking feature of the scientific experiment from the seventeenth century, according to Shapin, is that its aim was to enlarge the witnessing public beyond the immediacy of the actual experimental event. Literary technologies should facilitate replications, which depended on extensive use of visual representations but also on thorough considerations of how to write scientific prose to affect audiences (see, e.g., Vannini and Vannini,

Chap. 13 in this volume). Elaborate sentences with circumstantial details were understood as being able to mimic the immediacy of pictorial representations (Shapin 1984, p. 493) and detailed accounts of failed experiments and modesty in relation to the position of the researcher—including the claims made—heightened the credibility of the researcher and increased the interest of wider publics. Adding to the mediated sensory engagement, which Bacon emphasized as a means to 'revelation', with Boyle, in other words, we find produced attention and immediacy in the spectacular liveness of the experiment, capturing witnesses, and in the technological—pictorial and literary—ways of rendering this liveness in order to engage and excite wider publics.

Recognizing these affective implications in the historical meaning of experimentation is important, not least considering the spreading of scientific ideas to other fields such as experiments in the sociopolitical realm. As a tragic example, consider the initiative in 1951 of sending 22 Greenlandish children to Denmark as part of a 'civilizing mission'. The goal of this mission was to create a bilingual Greenlandish elite and the forced removal was at that time understood and framed explicitly as a social experiment. The delimited group of specially chosen children and variables in terms of ethno-national and socioeconomic circumstances for their upbringing constituted a sense of a laboratory condition aimed to test the significance of such variables for advancing a process of Greenlandish modernization. Certainly, notions of linearity governed the experiment, as regards the 'good' to follow from relocating children, just as specifying criteria of selection and circumstantial variables could afford replication.

More than half a century later, the Danish state is still experimenting, now with initiatives—since 2010—in the officially labelled 'ghettos', which are problem-ridden (according to official statistical criteria) but also affordable housing areas in the suburbs of bigger cities in Denmark. With the aim of countering "parallel societies" or "failed integration" (Simonsen 2016), these areas are either partly demolished or encumbered with so many restrictive rules regarding income levels, levels of education, unemployment levels, criminal rates and percentage of non-Western immigrants and descendants that large groups of minority-religious or minority-cultural groups are forced to move away from their network and from earlier social initiatives that have been beneficial to the areas. The decision to reduce the affordable housing stock in 'areas of parallel societies' will cost around 11,000 citizens their homes before 2030. Critics have called this and related initiatives one of the most significant social welfare

experiments—based on racialized housing politics—in recent history (Bach 2019; Soei 2021). Moreover, initiatives are also in this case conducted in a limited space designated by demographic, socioeconomic and ethnic variables with explicit effects to be tested, that is, according to a real-life notion of the laboratory echoing scientific experimental ideals.

The affective implications of these cases from recent Danish history merge scientific logics with political gesture. Indeed, this has, arguably, added to their destructive character. The spectacular character of the experiment may be amplified through forcefulness or the 'radical' nature of measures—as with removing children by force and demolishing homes—in order to engage and arouse publics far beyond the scientific community. The mediated distribution of the experiment may, and perhaps inevitably will, translate into politicized representation. Indeed, in this respect, our examples fall in tragic line with the way "experimental subjects" in politics have often been "vile bodies" (Guerrini 2016), such as prisoners, prostitutes, orphans, people with disabilities, the mentally ill, hospital patients, slaves and the colonized. In the mentioned cases we see colonized citizens and Muslim minorities in the role of 'vile bodies'. Also, representations of social experiments may play to moral panics enticed by and, reciprocally, enticing radial measures. Public flows of fear, anxiety and perhaps dreams of another state—a 'better' future for Greenland or less 'parallel societies'—converge, in this respect, with the sense of efficient linearity vested in the experiment. Indeed, the affective experimental strategies employed by Danish officials could be said to reinforce dominant forms of governance—protend established power relations—via feelings of fear, repulsion and anxiety for the majority population.

By exploring these kinds of experiments, consisting in governmental interpellation to particular ethnic groups, an ethics of affective experimentation becomes clear. It should be possible not to participate in—and to exit (Kelty et al. 2014)—the experiment in order to counterbalance the affectively compelling nature of the experiment. The collaborative and participatory modes of doing fieldwork that are explored by Carsten Stage, Sophie Hope, Signe Uldbjerg and Natalie Ann Hendry in this volume are one way of proceeding to further empower participants in experiments; a point also thematized in the tradition of experimental ethnography (Estalella and Criado 2018; Torfing and Ansell 2021). Another is to grant all actors involved—also the non-human—the ethical agency to refuse involvement as Dorthe Staunæs and Sverre Raffnsøe propose in their chapter on equine-assisted leadership courses.

Of course, science and politics are not the only fields to have significantly influenced the trajectories and, thus, current uses of experimentation. As noted, developments in culture, media and the arts also involve experiments as has been the case historically. Perhaps the open-endedness or unpredictability we argue are central to affective experiments have been most directly cultivated by the arts—for example, through the strong connections between experimental approaches and avant-garde movements in the aesthetic field throughout the twentieth century (Bürger 1984; Ferrari 2020). After the First World War, dadaism invented the experimental subject as a reaction to the progressive mechanization of life and the inhuman horrors of the war. Within an organized apparatus of experimentation, techniques such as automatic writing and drawing, ready-mades and collages reframe agency (Hookway 2020). In the 1960s, merging of social movements and arts—'happenings' and 'performances'—often violated commonly accepted social rules to explore how people react—to expose self-evident social rules and to anticipate new and utopian social orders (Klimke and Scharloth 2009). This aesthetic trajectory enables ludic or unplanned happenings, without much care for standards and protocols, in the pursuit of non-linear development or affective lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari 1994) where interventions are 'tried out', iterated and creatively tweaked without always knowing exactly what the outcome will be (Markham and Pereira 2019; Probyn 2004). And this is even if, as in the arts, minute planning, elaborate staging and the assistance of an entire artworld may be required to translate chance into artistic expression. The relationship between postmodernism—in the 1980s—and avant-gardism is stressed by Jean-François Lyotard, who considers postmodernism to be the avant-garde impulse within modernism (Lyotard 1979), but also by Brian McHale, who explores the world-modelling processes of artistic experiments in a way similar to what happened in the 1960s (McHale 2012). The difference between the attacks on the social order in the 1960s and the ones in 1980s postmodernism relates to the difference between having multiple perspectives on one reality and a turn to ontology that posits the existence of multiple worlds, a pluriversality (Escobar 2016; Mignolo 2018).

After outlining and discussing some of the many historical trajectories of experimentation in various fields, like science, politics and aesthetics, we will now proceed by describing how the concept of affective experimentation is put to analytical use in this edited collection.

Analysing Affective Experimentation

To analyse affective experimentation is to enquire into the dynamic shifts and sensory entanglement of both found and researcher-initiated experiments. If experiments create shifts in attention, then how does this happen exactly? When attention shifts, what is brought to the fore? What kind of event or spectacle is enacted? And simultaneously, how are subjects immersed; in other words, which sensory or other entanglements afford affective dynamics to be felt and to, potentially, produce experience or action?

Thinking about scientific and artistic lineages, we understand the experiment as played out in the tension between being planned and unpredictable. Also, this in-between can be analytically explored. Guided by a performative interest in what the experiment does, affective dynamics can be considered strategically produced, that is, planned and executed with some degree of linearity or, indeed, co-producing some sense that desired forces may be preconceived, arranged and brought into effect. Simultaneously, affective experiments may also probe the indeterminacy of encounters, unexpected forces or, in other words, a sense of multiplicity and non-linearity arising from the experimental apparatus. In both cases, by way of its procedures (or deliberate lack thereof), the experiment (re)presents particular affective dynamics—arrested, exposed and prospected on the performative terms of the experimental setting, however distributed. Moreover, from the perspective of Spinozist-Deleuzian affect theory, the in-between—of strategically planned effects and unexpected happenings, conceived linearity and aleatory indeterminacy—may be regarded as an intensive state, only preliminarily configured in and by the experiment. Indeed, to stage and analytically navigate this in-between in terms of actual experiments is, simultaneously, to draw attention to a virtual reservoir of intensive flows as a potential for further experimentation.

Noortje Marres, in her discussion of the 'living experiment', strikes a related perspective. She stresses the material and affective aspect of experiments as crucial for testing the future sustainability of provisional milieus. Here experiments are understood as "a format or 'protocol' for exploring and testing forms of life" (Marres 2012, p. 76). Through the construction of particular arrangements, these are, however, aimed at giving the non- or not-yet-existent an interim existence, which can be felt, tried out and engaged with. In that sense, experiments also offer their participants the

opportunity to sense, understand and connect with potential, future or virtual versions of the world (Knudsen et al. 2019) and thus maybe to modify their habits or ways of understanding. Experiments are in that way vested in a particular relationship with temporality and the future. By staging subjunctive zones where distinctions between the non-existing and the existing, the felt and the imagined are complicated, they also expose the relationship between actual affective dynamics and virtual potentials for these to change—again, as a subject for analysis.

To accommodate these perspectives, we propose that an analysis of affective experimentation should focus its attention on how affects are produced and circulated in specific experimental practices that (1) intentionally craft milieus aimed at (re)presenting hitherto hidden or unnoticed aspects of the social world; (2) engage with unpredictability in non-linear (e.g., playful) ways; or (3) imagine, test or in other ways give the future a provisional form. In other words, an analysis of affective experimentation would want to take into account how affects come into being through found or researcher-initiated processes of converging (re)presentation, unpredictability and potentiality. Relatedly, we offer the following overall understanding of experimentation as a social, and sometimes researcher-controlled, practice involved in overlapping processes of revealing, playing with and testing the futural potential of life forms, entanglements and social worlds (Blackman 2012; Knudsen et al. 2019; Marres 2012). We propose to consider (re)presentation, unpredictability and potentiality as the three key points of orientation within an analytical framework—a heuristic that can be used to create awareness of different knowledge-producing dimensions of an experimental setting and to focus on the affective implications of the entanglements produced. The heuristic is aimed at both qualifying the analysis of found examples of affective experimentation and understanding the aims and results of research initiatives that are themselves experimental. In the following we unfold the three dimensions relating briefly to some examples from the book:

Experimentation Aims at (Re)presenting Unrecognized Aspects of the Social

Whether testing theoretical hypotheses or aiming at creating novel artistic expressions or forms of social encounter, experiments may be primarily oriented towards revealing or (re)presenting otherwise unnoticed aspects of the world—for example, in Mads Krogh's chapter on how streaming

services and users navigate a sense of simultaneous openness and closure in musical mood management. Maybe the revealed reality shows itself due to the researcher's discursive and affect theoretical focus—as in Christina Jerne's piece on social and political limits as both sad and joyful creative obstructions for research. Maybe the reality is not immediately accessible because it evades direct perception, lack of awareness or falls outside norms, hegemonic or established categories—as in Britta Timm Knudsen's chapter on an artistic VR experiment situated in the dunes of the Danish West Coast that made the elemental movements of the wind visible and 'sense-able' for the users. By understanding experimentation as (re)presentation we become aware of how experiments are vehicles for an expanded mediation of and knowledge about the social world in its affective dimensions.

Representation itself could also be considered an aspect of social dynamics—as in decolonial efforts of bringing 'other' voices, other epistemologies of knowledge to the fore by experimenting with academic forms and their methodological underpinnings, which may be de-territorialized or 'otherwise' performed. Several of the chapters in the book—for example, those by Julian Henriques, Rebecca Coleman, Signe Uldbjerg and Natalie Ann Hendry, and Carsten Stage—experiment exactly with how to give voice and lend ears and bodies to otherwise silenced (e.g., material) perspectives through processes of experimentation. As mentioned, this political ambition does not make affective experimentation progressive in and of itself. Indeed, creating awareness in certain respects, for example, about political resentment or anger among marginalized groups, may bolster established social relations, for instance, by affording anger dynamics to be used to enforce political othering and marginalization. Still, this calls for analysis.

Experimentation Engages with the Non-linear and Unpredictable

Affective experiments are often designed to transgress common ways of doing research or of achieving other goals (e.g., of communication, politics or education). To this aim, open, playful, transgressive ways of acting may be set against established or proven ways. Thus, experimentation translates methodologically into creative, ludic or spontaneous manners of trying something out or into (e.g., everyday) practices of trial-and-error in which the process itself is prioritized over the formulation of predefined results. Moreover, the contingent, illimitable excess, which is also often

regarded as a key aspect of relational dynamics, links affective experimentation to play, pleasurable inventions, disruptions and ambivalences as in Susanna Paasonen's piece investigating the ambivalent dynamics of boredom and interest and as in Christoffer Kølvraa's chapter on populist parapolitics that at one and the same time is to be considered transgressive and reactionary. The creativity of less controlled and non-linear processes seems key to this understanding of the experiment, even if creativity by design and deliberate loss of control may in fact take minute planning. In this respect, affective experimentation is also a matter of navigating the ambivalence of non-/linearity. This navigation is clearly present in Sophie Hope's chapter that—besides making relations and past experiences present as an explicit topic of convivial interaction among the participants in her experiments—plays with formalized processes like card games and dinner conversation to 'see what happens' in the specific assemblage of each experimental situation and with no strong aim in terms of what the outcome of these processes should be.

Experimentation Produces Scenes of Provisional Future-Making

In the tradition of the sciences, experiments forecast the future by testing general claims. In the understanding adopted here, this forecasting is performed on par with other aspects of the production of scientific facts. Still, the potential of engendering a sense of linearity, of assurance or trust in what the future brings remains an important aspect of the conceptual heritance of the experiment. It resonates in methodological considerations verging on the trope of generality, for example, in terms of repeatable measures—'the same' experiment reproduced in different sites or with different participants, via protocols or some idea of laboratory conditions—to allow comparison of observations. As performed, the sense of linearity achieved by experimentation will always be preliminary or provisional, even if it may sediment as fact continually reproduced by, for example, technological and institutional arrangements.

However, the point of experiments may also be less about forecasting and more about trying out possible visions or even producing merely a prospective sense of openness—as a forward projection of the aforementioned sense of non-linearity. As a political tool, experiments can, for example, be investigated as specific strategies and outlines of utopia launched to evoke affective investment, repulsion, resonance and circuit. Experiments may, in other words, function as catalysts or media of change

and/or as vehicles to sense and feel the world's capacity to move and be moved. A future-oriented politics of change saturates many experiments in their capacity to offer participants the opportunity to sense, understand and connect to potential, future or virtual versions of the world. When experiments are enacted by individual researchers or artists, in response to, for example, major global challenges such as climate change, sexual, racial and ethnic/religious inequalities or economic imbalances, they often seem invested with the capacity to give future worlds such a provisional existence. The notion of building a different future is, for instance, present in Phillip and April Vannini's chapter in this book. Here they produce an ethnographic allegory that unfolds the lives of glaciers in Los Glaciares National Park, Argentina, aiming to foster new affective bonds through narratively enhanced reader experiences of empathy for other species. The experiment thus—more or less explicitly—points to the potential of a future characterized by multispecies kinship and flat ontologies, quite similar to the piece by Dorthe Staunæs and Sverre Raffnsøe that introduces the reader to leadership programmes with horses and their affective impact.

To sum up, we suggest approaching affective experimentation analytically as processes that (re)present existing dynamics/investments and engage with issues of non-linearity with the potential of opening up the present through the enactment of provisional futures. These aspects of the experimental may be variously probed in analyses, for example, by focusing more directly on exposing existing dynamics than on futural imagination. The processual interplay and variations in analytic emphasis is amply demonstrated by the contributions to this collected volume.

Structure of the Book

As mentioned, the collection consists of two sections. Part I, 'Understanding Affective Experimentation as a Method of the Social', offers chapters analysing found examples of affective experimentations, while the chapters in Part II, 'Understanding Affective Experimentation as a Research Method', share more researcher-initiated and often participatory affective experiments (Mannay 2016). In the following we will describe the contributions of each chapter in both sections.

Chapter 2 in Part I, titled 'Affect as Disruption: Affective Experimentation, Automobility, and the Ecological Crisis' by Paul Schütze, Kilian Jörg, Imke von Maur and Jan Slaby, looks at affective experimentation as a method of disruption to counter the conservative

power and affective grounding of existing social formations. The case in point is the supremacy of the automobile arrangement and affective milieu—saturated by associations of progress, freedom and privacy—at the heart of the Western capitalist social order. It is argued that political activism towards automobiles—such as the flattening of SUV tyres—is capable of challenging the established affective fabric around cars exactly because the ideology and culture upholding it becomes strikingly evident in these micro-political actions.

Populism understood as a playful form of 'as if' politics is argued to perform itself along the lines of affective experimentation in Christoffer Kølvraa's chapter (Chap. 3), 'Populism as Para-politics: Play, Affect, Simulation'. Here the specificity of the populist para-political gesture lies in its ability to create situations in which opponents cannot 'not respond'. The images of the future that reveal themselves in populist experimentation are never fully invested in by the followers, but are, according to Kølvraa, to be understood as fantasies of the non-followers' dystopia. Reduced to play the role of the affective host to a populist parasite, the critics of populism are constantly compelled to react to the outrageous nature of the populist sketches of world-making as 'fake open-ended' versions of futures.

Chapter 4, 'Interspecies Pedagogies: More-than-Human Experiments with Leadership in/of the Anthropocene', by Dorthe Staunæs and Sverre Raffnsøe performs an autoethnographic study of equine-assisted leadership programmes that hope to help future leaders respond adequately to global grand challenges and pressing issues. These programmes cultivate non-human-centric sensibilities that try to reconfigure the interspecies relations anew by letting the animal be the educator. Staunæs and Raffnsøe argue that the affective output of these horse-laboratories is a strong sense of attunement to the mutual encounter between human and non-human actors, an acute awareness of oneself being affected as well as an interspecies ethics of care that also gives all parties in the encounter the freedom to not respond to the invitation to enter into a relationship.

Julian Henriques, in Chap. 5 'Engines of Affect: Experimenting with Auditory Intensities in the Jamaican Sound System Session' on the street music scene in Jamaica, outlines three ways of working with affective experimentation by looking at how the sound engineers in the streets of Kingston and their ways of knowing are building the 'vibe'; how the sound assemblage on the streets attunes the crowd and how a theoretical thinking-through-vibrations might be a way of approaching affect.

Henriques demonstrates that the sound engineers possess a non-epistemic way of knowing that is experienced through immersion into sonic dominance and through atmospheres of vibrational intensities that merge the listener and the listened-to.

Music streaming and its capacity for mood management in the context of everyday listening is the phenomenon examined in Mads Krogh's chapter (Chap. 6) 'Experimentation in and with the Stream: Music, Mood Management and Affect'. A multivalent notion of affect combined with a simultaneous sense of experimental openness and (teleological) closure are traced across platform procedures and user practices. Moreover, a methodological experiment is evoked to probe this ambivalence—a series of workshops with students at Aarhus University exploring the affective charge of data-based listener profiles—who am I?—and music categories—what am I listening to? Being a user of streaming services predicts and captures affects as well as it provides an experience of eventual openness.

The global COVID-19 pandemic as a 'natural experiment' causing primarily the flat affect of boredom is what Susanna Paasonen examines in Chap. 7 'Experimentations in Pandemic Boredom'. There it is argued that boredom's inherent ties to the historical experience of modernity and in particular to networked media and social media as machines of boredom are questionable. Instead, she shows that networked media during the pandemic shifted discursively to act as cures against boredom. Seeing social media users as boredom managers, she advocates for an ambiguous understanding of boredom tied to fascination and excitement, and she puts forward the attempt to hold on to irreconcilable tensions as an ideal for critical thought.

Part II on researcher-initiated affective experiments is commenced by Rebecca Coleman's chapter (Chap. 8), 'Worlding with Glitter: Vibrancy, Enchantment and Wonder', that examines how glitter—considered through a new materialism lens and Jane Bennett's concept of thing-power in particular—can open up future worlds. On the basis of two collage workshops with 13–14-year-old teenage girls from racially and ethnically diverse groups, it is argued that methods make worlds and thereby futures capable of composing and curating 'the wonderful' through specific materials and affects. We, as readers, are also directly addressed in Coleman's text (through inserted questions) and thus prompted to consider how our own research practices can make enchantment and wonder happen through affective experimentation.

Signe Uldbjerg and Natalie Ann Hendry present a comparative study of online creative workshop experiments with graduate research students from Australia and Denmark during the global COVID-19 lockdowns in Chap. 9 'Affective Writing Experiments'. The 'therapy-like' workshop assemblages enabled through the Zoom interface—that at one and the same time accommodates and alleviates depression—produced an affective solidarity of being stuck together during lockdowns. The creative-writing processes were in that way capable of producing affectively accurate depictions of participants' feelings. The authors furthermore argue that affective experimentation first and foremost has to facilitate participants' experiences of themselves as being productive and capable.

Carsten Stage has set up a partnership-based research experiment—in the form of a theme week—with persons with chronic conditions to investigate their shared stories of shame on social media. In Chap. 10 'Problematising Shame: Affective Experimentation on Social Media', the understanding of experiment is double: on the one hand, the experiment reveals that shame is a fundamental affect in the real or imaginary encounter with derogatory gazes from significant others and loved ones, and, on the other hand, the experiment is capable of repositioning shame amongst chronically ill persons as a collective and structural affect. Furthermore, Stage argues that the research experiment also gives voice to those who reject shame as a relevant framework for understanding life with chronic illnesses.

Sophie Hope's chapter (Chap. 11), 'Affective Experiments: Card Games, Blind Dates and Dinner Parties', presents a range of methods to produce socially engaged art and critical enquiry through different experimental formats. They include staged encounters between strangers on a reflection on memories of a year in history, 1984 Dinners, or they set up Blind Dates between project-partners who have never met, or they invite colleagues who are familiar with each other to critically join Cards on the Table to reflect on ideals and agendas in common projects. Hope argues that assumed knowledge and stereotypes are less used in these experiments and that they are instead characterized by analytical conviviality, at one and the same time peaceful and conflictual interaction. Furthermore, they create awareness of interpersonal dependency and offer possibilities of empathizing with the perspectives of others.

Chapter 12, 'Wind as Elementary Attraction: An Avant-Garde Experiment on the West Coast of Jutland, Denmark', presents an artistic experiment of wind at a coastal tourism destination of Denmark. The