

# Dividuations

“A bold and wide-ranging investigation of the hinterland between the ‘I’ and the ‘we’; one that explores the conditions for radically redefining forms of subjectivity and collectivity in ways that can positively embrace the dividuations that make us so much more than the individuals we sometimes think we are.”

—Iain MacKenzie, *Director of the Centre for Critical Thought,  
University of Kent, UK*

“Ott takes on a particularly weighty task, to redefine our ‘becoming-world’ in the face of demands imposed by modern revelations of the most manifold ‘interpenetration relationships’ and novel modes of subjectivation. She offers her readers the new term ‘dividuation’ for this. Ott’s promotion of dividuation is coupled with an impetus to diagnose our era. Today, she argues, subjectivation is no longer to be understood as individuation, but as dividuation.”

—Bernd Bösel, *Professor in Media Theory and Media Studies, University of  
Potsdam, Germany*

“Ott introduces the term ‘dividuation’ into the debate on new subjectivations. This diverse overview of various different social areas in bio(techno)logical, socio(tech)nological, and aesthetic/artistic analyses undoubtedly emphasises the relevance of the arguments presented by Michaela Ott. Herein lies the innovative character of her work.”

—e-Journal für wissenschaftliche Rezensionen Institut für Theater-, Film-  
und Medienwissenschaft an der Universität Wien.  
[https://rezenstfm.univie.ac.at/?action=rezension&rez\\_id=364](https://rezenstfm.univie.ac.at/?action=rezension&rez_id=364)

Michaela Ott

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Theories of Participation

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# Foreword

This philosophical study was primarily written for those who are curious about other forms of self-definition in turbulently changing times. It is for those experiencing a creeping doubt regarding their undividedness—their individuality—because they have discovered that their fortunes in life depend upon a large number of factors, which include other persons both close to home and far away, various milieus, aesthetic/technological circumstances and time-bestowing events. They see themselves less as masters of their fate than as servants of their life constellation. Insights of this kind suggest that we understand ourselves in terms of participation, in many directions and on various levels. The concept of the individual, introduced as a Latin translation of the Greek atomist world view in the first century BCE and later made general for political and economic reasons, is increasingly recognised as misleading and ecologically and ethically disastrous.

Non-Western identities appear to be more familiar with participation necessities, be they cultural or economic/imperialist in character, and thus develop philosophies of a spatiotemporal interwovenness, which, today, we are compelled to recognise as the fate of a migrating and self-globalising humanity.

That we are embedded in dividuation processes is attested to by this English version of an originally German book, which was undertaken so that a greater number of persons could consider the concept proposed in

it and engage in an ongoing debate with it. So that non-German speakers could also test the usefulness of this new terminology for contemporary understandings of the self, of biological and socio(techno)logical ensembles, of cultures and artworks, the book was translated into the contemporary lingua franca in a highly reliable and elegant manner by Alison Kirkland, for which a great deal of thanks is due. I would also like to thank all those who have contributed to the success of this book and thought initiative through related concepts and attitudes. The hope is that unforeseen condividuations will be set in train that, through sharp-eyed moderation of their ties with others, make it plain that we can only speak to one another if we affirm our dividuations.

Berlin, Germany  
2018

Michaela Ott

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