

Contents

02

Editorial

Dorothee Richter, Eleonora Stassi, Tanja Trampe

07

Collaboration and Migration

A Discussion with Almut Rembges, Philipp Lutz, Katharina Morawek by Makiko Takahashi, Lisa Lee Benjamin, Franziska Stern

13

Twenty-four Hours at the Grandhotel Cosmopolis in Augsburg. Stories of Work, Migration, and Collectivity.

Silvia Converso & Frédéric Bron

22

Beyond Human Rights

Giorgio Agamben

29

Autonome Schule Zürich

Dialogue between Sadou Bah and Ludovica Parenti
in Collaboration with Emilie Bruner

37

On Making Zurich a Home for Art and Artists

An Interview with Esther Eppstein
by Agustina Struengmann

44

Alienation, the Social Individual, and Communism: Marx in the 21st Century

Roberto Nigro

53

"We have to live a quiet life." The Voice of the *Sans Papiers*

Conversations with Fany Flores & Bea Schwager
by Mariana Bonilla Rojas, Cordelia Oppliger, Silvia Savoldi

62

For Whose Own Good?

A Conversation with Melanie Muñoz from
the Association Lysistrada by Diana Padilla

68

ELDORADO – Where Would You Search for It?

Vreni Spieser in Conversation with Silvia Converso

73

The Glorious 7

MigrafonA

78

Immaterial Labor

Maurizio Lazzarato

89

Heterogeneous History, a Never-ending Story

A Conversation with Martin Krenn

by Katrijn Van Damme & Petra Tomljanović

95

Collective Identity Provides No Insights

An Interview with Tim Zulauf by Katya Knoll

101

New Borderlands

Marion von Osten

109

On Memes, Migrants, And Spectrum

Petra Tomljanović

117

Maandish balad

A Formal/Informal Conversation
with Rayelle Niemann
by Paloma Rayón & Silvia Savoldi

124

HEIMAT / watan¹

Rayelle Niemann

127

Questioning the Nation State:

A Possible Future for Urban Citizenship

Mathias Rodatz Interviewed by Hana Cisar

132

Urban Recycling – the City in Migrant Economy

Erol Yildiz

136

"There is no limit, I'm very happy with hybrid bastards."

Anne-Julchen Bernhardt

in Conversation with Hana Cisar

141

Reflexions on Personal Geopolitics

by Students of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating

Conducted by Michelle Geser Lunau & Mona Liem

148

Imprint

Editorial

Dorothee Richter, Eleonora Stassi, Tanja Trampe

“Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics” is being published within the framework of the Parallel Events accompanying Zurich’s Manifesta 11 devoted to the theme “What People Do for Money: Some Joint Ventures”. Unlike the Manifesta concept, the contributions to this journal relate the changes that have come about in working conditions and circumstances since the early 1990s directly to the multifarious migration movements in Europe.

To this day, changes in working processes and migration movements are usually regarded as mutually isolated “problems”. However, we see the connection between them as a geopolitical reality rooted in political and economic power structures, aspirations to hegemony and the battle for resources, a reality that already began to take shape in the harbingers of neoliberalism. Whereas in the eighteenth century the impoverished working class still found itself directly confronted with a wealthy upper class, today these lines of conflict traverse the globe horizontally.

Work as such, its distribution, and the distribution of the profits it yields have shifted radically over the past thirty years. Whereas planning and organization have remained—well networked—in the so-called First World, manual and mechanical types of work have moved to so-called developing countries. A workforce is thus still needed, but geographically the labour is to be carried out in the labourers’ native countries, because otherwise the low-wage system would no longer function. However, people migrate not only on account of wages that no longer suffice to secure a livelihood, but also owing to the complex circumstances brought about by wars that, at least on the surface, appear in the guise of religious or racial conflicts. Beneath the surface, however, the struggles rage over claims to hegemony and the territorial domination of resources. Owing to its (relatively) democratic politics and relative prosperity, the “West” has become the auspicious destination of migratory movements. When the newcomers arrive here, their situation again becomes complicated. Our democracies do not welcome them with the open arms they envisioned. Here, matters of self-empowerment—for example, by means of paid work—play a key role. Only a small number of lucky people on the organization/management level of the “First World” benefit from the globalization of labour conditions—so-called “expats” who are able to move about autonomously and freely in foreign countries. Mobility and networks are important factors here, and ones that also prove advantageous for the work carried out in the various fields of the creative industry.

The idea on which the Manifesta 11 concept is based—the adherence to the division of the working world into traditional sectors and trades—is one we consider obsolete. Current post-Fordist structures assign only marginal status to the male-dominated professions in the trades that form the foundation of the Manifesta concept. Work processes and the demands made on wage labour underwent

radical change long ago. In the sense of a “new spirit of capitalism” as investigated by Ève Chiapello and Luc Boltanski, we should no longer be content to criticize capitalism, but must also point out the crisis of anti-capitalist critique.¹ Directly correlating the post-Fordist conception of labour and the concrete conditions of (im)migration, we hereby refer specifically to the praxis of the city of Zurich, one third of whose population has a migrant background but no say in political matters, not even on the local level. This is a fact that unfortunately receives no attention whatsoever within Manifesta’s definition spectrum. A further decision, likewise rooted in this traditionalist approach, is mirrored in the list of artists, in which women artists, at a ratio of 30 to 70 percent, find themselves far outnumbered by their male colleagues...

From the perspective of the current discourse on curating cultivated by this journal regardless of the respective specific theme, the Manifesta administrative director affirm a conservative trend inasmuch as she and a committee appointed an artist to act as curator. Within the curatorial discourse, there is a strong faction that deliberately takes a stand against the practice of transferring the problematic genius concept from the artist to the curator (as a meta-artist). It is no coincidence that feminist curators (among others) call attention to this problematic issue. Their stance implies a number of alternative–i.e. discursive and institutional-critique-oriented–approaches to curating; after all, they conceive representation as a power constellation. Our attitude–and thus the outlook that finds expression in this edition–is in keeping with a current interest in non-representative curatorial approaches, long-term processes, intensive knowledge acquisition, and alternative formats. “Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics” has accordingly taken advantage of the comfortable time span of eight months to experience and develop deliberately exceptional curatorial approaches. On the basis of a workshop series and using the interview as a tool, the students of the international Postgraduate Programme in Curating at the Zurich University of the Arts examined the multifarious–and, without exception, strongly politically oriented–interrelationships between work, migration, and geopolitical individuality. In numerous intensive discussions, they acquainted themselves with living circumstances in relation to the city of Zurich and reflected on their own positions, but also especially on the status of migrants from less privileged circumstances. One part of the process was to read a selection of texts serving as a framework for the widely varied “personal geopolitics” by offering more general deliberations on migration and labour.

Migration movements call the order of an economic system into question. Giorgio Agamben takes this circumstance as his point of departure when, in his text “Beyond Human Rights”, he describes the transcultural as an oppressed concept. “In the face of state sovereignty, which can affirm itself only by separating in every context naked life from its form, they [intellectuality and thought] are the power that incessantly reunites life to its form or prevents it from being dissociated from its form.”² A vague form of existence not bound to any borders gives migrants a subversive power; their fluctuation raises questions about nationalist definitions. For this reason, migration is often combated, although it is in no way economically or socially sensible to combat it.

Inspired by the concepts of interculturality and transnationality, “Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics” takes a look at the omnipresent post-migratory existence and seeks to arrive at the most concentrated possible descriptions with the aid of the broadest possible field research. The subversion inherent to the migratory per se moreover mobilizes humorist forces that defy the drastic nature of many real political situations. One popular satirical device is the meme, a

type of commentarial image-text collage currently spreading like wildfire on the web. Memes are a sociocultural phenomenon disseminated in the social media and capable of constant reproduction and reinterpretation. The message can be of a humorous, satirical or revelatory nature; the intention can be the artistic pleasure afforded by memes or the advertisement of a product, but also self-representation or propaganda. Usually the author remains anonymous, and copyright aspects are evaded. A meme that plays with popular motifs can burst the bounds of its circulation framework and reap attention outside the Internet as well. The memes we are publishing in this edition are commentaries developed by the students and results of a thematic workshop headed by the Zurich media art duo !Mediengruppe Bitnik.

Individual tableaus from the comic *The Glorious 7* produced by the Viennese collective MigrafonA constitute another illustrative intervention. The variable collective condenses debates on migration policy into comics from the migrants' perspective. *The Glorious 7* of 2011 has lost nothing of its topicality to this day; it addresses processes of transformation in wage labour, borders and national states, casualization, impoverishment, and control and discipline measures affecting large portions of the European population.

The interviews were conducted by the students individually or as a group, wherever possible in person, or via e-mail dialogues or Skype. This multitude of possibilities helped bridge distances and put some students on the road. They approached artists, curators, activists, institutional and non-institutional organizations, social workers, architects, and theorists in the context of Zurich or on the international level. Every submission took on a shape of its own.

Mariana Bonilla Rojas, Cordelia Oppliger, and Silvia Savoldi dedicated their contribution to the Sans-Papiers centre in Zurich (SPAZ). A multiplicity of voices emerges from the discourse: not only that of Bea Schwager, a representative of SPAZ, but also that of Fany, an ex-Sans Papiers.

In the case of Grandhotel Cosmopolis, the interview is not just a conversation but becomes a place. Frédéric Bron and Silvia Converso spent twenty-four hours in Augsburg, and their report and the dialogues with Susa Gunzner and Sibil Sattler together recreate that particular microcosm of the overall context.

Ludovica Parenti and Emilie Bruner worked on an artistic dialogue with the founder of the school Autonome Schule Zürich (ASZ), Sadou Bah, based on a 1961 conversation between Alberto Moravia and Claudia Cardinale for *Esquire Magazine*.

Hana Cisar conducted two important interviews relating the topics of migration and work to the territory of architecture: one with architect Anne-Julchen Bernhardt on urban projects mirroring changes in migrant issues, and the other with political scientist and geographer Mathias Rodatz on the concept of urban citizenship, a political discussion that has recently emerged in the city of Zurich.

Tim Zulauf, Vreni Spieser, and Martin Krenn, interviewed by Katya Knoll, Silvia Converso, and Petra Tomljanović and Katrijn Van Damme respectively, examine their artistic practices in depth. Theatre, migration and post-colonial struggles, production of knowledge and memory, ELDORADO, and the public space are just few of the issues addressed.

Almut Rembges (bblackboxx, Basel), Philipp Lutz (foraus, Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy), and Katharina Morawek (Shedhalle, Zurich) are the protagonists of a roundtable discussion on collaboration and migration moderated by Lisa Lee Benjamin, Franziska Stern-Preisig, and Makiko Takahashi.

Melanie Muñoz and the non-profit organisation Lysistrada discussed sex-work politics in Switzerland with Diana Padilla.

In what they defined “a formal/informal conversation”, Silvia Savoldi and Paloma Rayón talked to Rayelle Niemann about the concept of “identity” in relation to her stateless status and her curating practice. Niemann’s text “Heimat” (Cairo, 2004) is also included in this publication.

Interviewed by Agustina Struengmann, Esther Eppstein and her message salon, as an important contributor to “making Zurich a home for art and artists”, were a must in this issue.

A survey drawn up by Michelle Geser and Debora Mona Liem Adinegoro, highlighting the importance of personal—often also migrant—backgrounds and geopolitics for this OnCurating project, rounded out and provided a framework for the students’ contributions.

Translated from the German by Judith Rosenthal

Notes

1 Luc Boltanski, Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, New York/London,,2006.

2 Giorgio Agamben, “Beyond Human Rights,” in Paolo Virno, Michael Hardt, eds., *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, pp. 159-165 (printed as facsimile in this issue).

Eleonora Stassi is a freelance curator based in Zurich. She defines herself Mediterranean, because of her mixed origins from Italy, Tunisia, Albania, and Slovakia. Her practice and research focus is on identity issues, digital nomadism, and post-migration. Eleonora Stassi is alumna of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK: she developed her MAS project under the title Curating (Post) Migration. She is the initiator of the Migrations-Museum Zürich (www.migrationsmuseumzurich.com) and the children's publishing house Die blaue Ampel. She has two daughters.

Tanja Trampe is a curator, cultural theorist, writer, and artist based in Zurich. First educated as a graphic designer with extensive work experience, she graduated with a degree in cultural theory and holds an MA in curating from the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK. For ten years she was the assistant curator of Museum Bellerive, an affiliate of the Museum of Design Zurich, where she also co-curated her first exhibitions. In 2013, she was selected to co-curate the 2nd POOL exhibition with artworks from the collections of Maja Hoffmann and Michael Ringier at Westbau/Löwenbräukunst Zurich hosted by the LUMA Foundation. Today, she is a freelance curator whose curatorial practice and research focuses on community-based and relational art, the public sphere, and post-colonial issues. As an artist, she is an accomplice of data | Auftrag für parasitäre* Gastarbeit (Mission in favour of a para-site guest-work) and investigates urban, rural, and socio-political issues through artistic field research and socially engaged art interventions. As an art mediator, she is currently working for the Cabaret Voltaire and is a guest lecturer at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.

Dorothee Richter is a Professor in Contemporary Curating at the University of Reading/UK, and head of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating (CAS/MAS Curating) at the Zurich University of the Arts ZHdK, Zurich/CH. Together with Susanne Clausen she is the director of the Research Platform for Curatorial and Cross-disciplinary Cultural Studies/Practice-Based Doctoral Programme at the University of Reading. Richter is further the publisher of the web-based journal OnCurating.org and has worked extensively as a curator: She initiated the Curating Degree Zero Archive, a documentation on contemporary curators known for their experimental and critical positions which travelled to 18 venues in Europe. She was further the curator of Künstlerhaus Bremen, where she organised several symposia on feminist issues in contemporary arts as well as an archive on feminist practices, including Materialien/Materials. Recently she directed in cooperation with Ronald Kolb a film on Fluxus: Flux Us Now - Fluxus Explored with a Camera (2013: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, University of Reading, Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst Zurich; 2014: Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Hochschule für bildende Künste Hamburg, Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst Bremen, Nassauischer Kunstverein Wiesbaden, Kunsthalle São Paolo; 2015: Ostwall Museum Dortmund, Kibbutz College Tel Aviv, Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Museum Tinguely Basel; 2016: Lentos Museum Linz). Together with Ronald Kolb she is currently working on a video archive on curatorial practices, a project in collaboration with the ZHdK and the ZKM Karlsruhe.

Collaboration and Migration

A Discussion with Almut Rembges, Philipp Lutz, Katharina Morawek

by Makiko Takahashi, Lisa Lee Benjamin, Franziska Stern

This roundtable discussion was held on December 15, 2015, at Shedhalle in Zurich, and addressed the current situation around migration in Switzerland as well as different individual viewpoints and experiences. The participants of the discussion included: 1) Almut Rembges, founder of bblackboxx, an “emancipatory art practice” located adjacent to the detention centre in Basel, currently hosting the No Border Café; 2) Philipp Lutz, a political scientist working for foraus, a foreign policy think tank connecting the worlds of science and politics. Migration is now one of their main topics and is explored through their “PoliTisch” project; and 3) Katharina Morawek, director of the Shedhalle, a public institution for artistic and cultural practices related to socio-political topics. Their current project, “The Whole World in Zurich”, is focused on interventions into Swiss migration politics, proposing the concept of “urban citizenship”.

Q: Migration and work is a very large nebula consisting of many institutions, organizations, and individuals. How are you networking within this web of interests, and which areas are you targeting specifically?

Almut Rembges: We have several different levels where we network. In the beginning it was just a few artists who started to make projects. As bblackboxx grew with these artists, I noticed the need for networking in the political field. I discovered political activism thanks to the Autonome Schule, an autonomous education project for people who do not hold papers or permits to stay. Their base principles inspired me and connecting with them was, for me, a major point of orientation for what emancipatory practice means. I also went to visit several no border camps and joined the Network of Critical Migration

Studies, to gain more information and tools to work effectively.

Katharina Morawek: In spring 2016, we started the project “The Whole World in Zurich” with the aim of creating concrete interventions into Swiss migration politics. A transdisciplinary working group developed models of how citizenship could be applied locally, in the city of Zurich. We met with institutional representatives and other individuals from civil society. Instead of meeting them in their offices, we aimed to establish dialogical spaces, where usual habitual frameworks can be shaken up—for example on a ship on the lake of Zurich. The idea is to establish new forms of discussions on eye-level.

Philipp Lutz: We have just established a new forum called “PoliTisch”. The concept is to create an informal dinner, hosted at someone’s home, which is centred on a political discourse. The invited guests range from people from the local city municipality, engaged stakeholders from different backgrounds and local opinion leaders, as well also people who migrated to the area. As Switzerland is so diverse, it is very important that we reach all the regions. Often participants know each other, but they do not know who else is invited to these dinners. It is a quiet and confidential setting where people are not recorded and can have an open discussion and a safe space where nothing leaves the room. This safe space creates the possibility of a very direct exchange. The other approach is through the larger public events foraus produces, which are a bit more traditional but help to share the ideas and spread a new vision to an even broader audience.

Q: What is the overlap of your organizations and the current connectivity between you? You are all in the same field of work but in different ways. Do you develop scenarios to somehow enforce each other?

PL: Katharina and I have met before on a civil society platform. Although there is always a core of people involved with certain issues, people tend to be engaged within a specific focus or within their own organization. Thus there it is difficult to coordinate activities between various organizations. It would be better if we work together and try to use these synergies, as it could have a much larger impact.

KM: There are connections between different organizations, but those connections are loose and there is a lack of strategic alliances. The political system in Switzerland, direct democracy, is structured through referendums which are driven through special interests, while many people are excluded from participation. This contributes to social fragmentations and particularizes political practices. In recent times, the potential for strategic alliances is increasing, for example with the platform “Wir alle sind Zürich”. This is something new, and it is going to mean that many of those who were being ignored by a dominant society for a long time will demand their rights within the framework of something like a new civil society in Switzerland.

Q: Can you talk about the “helping hype” issues and the challenges you are dealing with that you are experiencing now?

AR: This autumn I had twelve different emails from young women—most are only sixteen to eighteen years old—this “helping hype” is actually very gendered. They wanted to find out what they could do for refugees. As a result, I had three meetings a week with these volunteers and talked about post discrimination and my problems with charity. After a while I felt really strange in this role, where I ended up talking about refugees a lot. Also, I did not feel good to be the point of orientation for these volunteers at bblackboxx—I did not want this role of being a mentor for them. So now, I just give them the key and tell them, “Just go there make some tea and see yourself what you want to do”. At bblackboxx, we don’t see ourselves as mediators or the like, because we believe that people can mediate themselves. So bblackboxx just offers a space where everyone can talk to each other, or not talk and just spend time together.

The frame of “charity and community art” which is given to bblackboxx by the proximity of the camp and the prison and the issues we are dealing with is really strong, and I have tried for many years to break this idea or label. I am not sure if it is even possible. Some foundations call us and ask, “Do you need money?” Once I asked back, “Money for what? What is your idea?” The guy said, “Maybe blankets”. We could just go and buy blankets but it feels wrong, as it will just enhance the charity effect. I was so uncomfortable with this hype. They want something real and tangible, like blankets, and I respect that, but I cannot run around for rich people who want to help refugees and buy blankets. They should do it themselves.

KM: I share many points with Almut on this question. But I would like to add something. Empathy, or the interest to share, are ethical resources that we should not underestimate, especially within societies that are characterized by de-solidarization. Migration has been declared the equivalent of a national catastrophe, compared with a flood, a wave, a surge, with all those negative connotations. So the term solidarity has gone through a very difficult history and is saturated with a lot of paternalism, for example, if we look at the history of internationalism or development work.

AR: Katharina, which terms do you prefer instead of “solidarity”?

KM: We could use the term complicity—meaning to partner up with a common interest, like accomplices. But even though I share the criticism concerning the term solidarity, I do think it is worth the effort of trying to reaffirm it. Solidarity is not about helping, it is about sharing a common interest. It is about acknowledging that every one on this planet has a right to the pursuit of happiness. It is essential to acknowledge this right. Our Shedhalle-project “The Whole World in Zurich” is about paving paths for such changes in migration politics, towards “the right to have rights”.

PL: The most central value in the migration debate is the value of freedom. It is our civil right as citizens to have individual freedom, but migration policies often restrict this freedom. By framing migration as an issue of freedom, we can begin to flip the argument, so that those who don’t see an open society as something desirable are now in a defensive position to argue that it is in public interest to restrict individual freedom, and with the duty to prove that

people's freedom is harmful. This change of narrative could be quite powerful.

AR: We should not forget that a person who agrees with border politics also agrees with the fact that people are killed. A pro-border person does not seem to understand that border politics does not work in the way it is intended—it does not stop anyone from migration. I think that should be obvious by now. Maybe we should ask ourselves, to begin with, who we think we are to tell other people where they should stay or go.

PL: In the migration debate they always brought up two cases, to speak up for freer migration, let's say. One is the moral case, and the other is the economic case. Migration is largely driven by economic factors and better personal prospects for themselves and their families. Migrants coming to Europe know that there are jobs for them. People spend all their savings to pay smugglers. There is some project that actually calculated this money spent for people paying to come to Europe, and they calculated the money European taxpayers pay to deter migrants from coming. It was approximately the same amount of money—roughly one billion Euros. So a pure repression strategy is actually a huge economic loss, and in the end it is not very effective, as people are still coming. Violent border regimes are therefore not only inhumane, but also a huge burden on European tax payers.

Paternalism is what our current migration policy regime is based on. All the rules and how it is designed are very paternalistic, especially, when it is the issue of integrating refugees or migrants into the labour market. The general view is that these migrants are only low-skilled people who are determined to do certain tasks in society, and that we know what is good for them, and can place them there or will not there. The rising problem with the asylum system in Switzerland is a result of these paternalistic structures, and they are also reflected in the public discourse.

Q: As we are talking about definitions, and solidarity, how do you insert these or change the public and political discourse? Or reframe the debate? Is it as simple as changing the wording or creating new platforms?

PL: In the recent media debate on the refugee "crisis" it is quite fascinating how the terminology of floods portrays migration as a natural catastrophe or migrants as an anonymous mass with no face. Issues

of individuality and messages may trigger empathy or solidarity. But if you read in the news "100 people drown in the Mediterranean", it is just another statistical figure. However, we saw a significant change in the debate when the picture of a single Syrian boy, Alan Kurdi, on the Turkish shore appeared in the media. Suddenly, there was a face, a familiarity, and hence a direct connection.

AR: Yes, but that shift was over in three days, and people forgot about it.

KM: I think it was a bit longer, but to sustain empathy can be exhausting and overwhelming for some people. For example, it is easy to donate old clothes when you have them. But for people to accept that their own "good life" is connected with the presence of those who don't have a good life, and therefore are seeking it, can hurt. It is necessary to see those global relations. But to express empathy and solidarity in such a situation can be quite exhausting. Many people try to protect themselves and their privileges from this exhaustion by repressing, forgetting, and detaching. The point is: those "privileges" of a good life are actually everyone's right—and if some lose them, it does not mean that others will automatically gain. The point is not to fight against privileges, but for a good life for all.

AR: I would like to say something about the term "giving voices" and the representation of individual destinies in the refugee discourse. Just recently, some students came to bblackboxx as they planned a film project based on interviews with refugees. No problem with that, but then they explained: "We want to show the human being behind the asylum seeker". I know what they meant, but to me, this is a totally absurd sentence. Because it sounds like the filmmakers assume that there is an audience who needs to learn that refugees are human beings, and once they know it they would show more empathy. I am not sure if that is the key to the problem. I feel more and more uncomfortable with this attitude that people need to be fed with images of suffering so that they understand that war, poverty, and borders are not right.

Q: How do the recent migration topics affect the art world or cultural production? What do you see happening in the future?

AR: The attention bblackboxx received from the art world was good, but in many cases it felt wrong. I started to feel like the refugees were a fetish,

from the cultural production point of view. I felt strange and guilty because it was clear that the success of bblackboxx is basically based on the presence of the detention prison in the background. What I actually like about bblackboxx is that we are going somewhere where people are already gathering and have nothing else to do but to sit together and to talk. I also like the fact that many people who use our space don't come because of the art projects, but for coffee and tea and to hang around. I have a problem in general with art spaces. Very often, it seems to me that any form of friction and critique is losing its power inside the art context. Inside the white cube, political art turns into homework. When it comes to bblackboxx, I don't think that art should be "used" for other goals, such as social work or political propaganda. At bblackboxx, we never intended to make projects that address a previously defined audience. All we can do with art is to open referential frames... To take people with us to unknown territory, to make room for vagueness and a way of thinking which does not mean to calculate its goals or manipulate.

Needless to say, that, apart from other art projects, there is also some political activism and helping going on around bblackboxx. But the art projects are art projects—they don't serve other purposes.

KM: Within the art world and its institutions, there is a particular interest in migration as a political issue plus an obscene interest in refugees as artistic "material", but without wanting to look at or touch the social structures that produce inequality or racism. It is unsettling for protagonists of the art field to think about precisely their own institution, actions, or affiliations, and how racism is reproduced there.

AR: I can speak of a recent example: bblackboxx was invited to the Textile Museum in St. Gallen with a project called "Cut the Fence" by the artist duo Copa&Sordes. It is a fundraising discourse project. I realized only there that the curator was not aware of our bblackboxx attitude toward migration, which says clearly "NO DETENTION PRISONS, NO BORDERS". For the opening speech, she had invited an official from St. Gallen who was the head of the Police Department. According to her, this should inspire a conversational debate framed like, "The Police come to talk with bblackboxx artists about deportation and border control". But to me this did not make sense, as the head of the police department has already made a decision. He belongs to those parties who chase the unwanted migrants and put them behind fences. For me, then it is simply too late

to talk. I feel like this is a typical situation. Curators from the art world and cultural institutions find bblackboxx somehow interesting, but ultimately, they underestimate our radicality, they perceive us just as a social engaged project for refugees...and it is a very nice thing and everyone can feel better about the whole migration topic because they were socially engaged. I actually dislike the term "socially engaged", or rather don't feel so comfortable with it as a frame for bblackboxx. I would rather think of bblackboxx in the sense of interference or shuffling. We like to frame bblackboxx x as a counter-performance, against a context, which is dominated by separation and oppression.

KM: I want to stress the issue of self-representation, the importance of narratives by those people who actually have something to say about it. What we will experience in the next few years will be new forms of cultural production that are initiated and defined by the newcomers.

Captions

1 Roundtable discussion at Shedhalle, 15 December 2015. Photograph by: Makiko Takahashi.

2 foraus: A moderated talk on migration during a "PoliTisch" at the Swiss Embassy in Berlin. Photograph: provided by foraus.

3 bblackboxx: Meeting place and art space located in Basel. Photograph: © bblackboxx.

4 Participants of the 3rd Hafenforum at Shedhalle, 6 February 2016. Photograph by: Guido Henseler.



bblackboxx (Basel/ CH): **Almut Rembges**,
Founding member

bblackboxx is a network of artists and activists who collaborate, congregate, and create projects in a former kiosk building close to the detention centre for asylum seekers in Basel. It is a place for public encounters, discourse, and education for the current community of inhabitants of and around the detention centre. She followed her passion, and bblackboxx now collaborates with many groups and actively stands and speaks for a world with no borders, no detention centres, and for people to be treated as people, no matter their origin or situation.

foraus (Zurich/ CH): **Philipp Lutz**, Migration
foraus

foraus (Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy) generates independently high-quality recommendations for Swiss foreign policy decision makers and the public, thereby bridging the gap between academia and politics. Its non-partisan approach aims to promote an open dialogue and informed decision-making on all aspects of Swiss foreign policy. foraus is a grassroots organization whose success as a think tank is based on its members' voluntary commitment. Their current project on migration is based on a new event-format called "PoliTisch".

Shedhalle (Zurich/ CH): **Katharina Morawek**,
Curatorial and Managerial Responsibility

An institution of contemporary and critical art, Shedhalle defines itself as a place where new forms of artistic and cultural practices—particularly those related to socio-political topics—can be produced and presented within the framework of exhibitions and other events. The project "The Whole World in Zurich" demands legal, political, social, and cultural participation and investigates how the concept of urban citizenship for everyone living in Zurich can be realized.

Lisa Lee Benjamin (US) is an artist, curator, author, and avid instigator of many cross-pollinating international initiatives including *Kulturfolger*, *We are Nature*, *Urban Hedgerow*, *Alpine Initiatives*, and *UG LAB*. She generates experiences and solutions for diverse animal and human habitats, which challenge conventions of sustainability and community. She is currently studying at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.

Franziska Stern-Preisig (CH) is founder and curator of *Villa Renata*, an art and project space in Basel. The space offers artists the opportunity to develop and

execute site-specific works. The focus is well balanced between a variety of young and established artists. The mix of disciplines encourages discourses and generational exchanges. Franziska Stern-Preisig has a strong background in coaching and organizational development and is currently working on her Master Thesis on participatory art at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.

Makiko Takahashi (JP) is a curator with academic background in art history, aesthetics, and museum studies. Formerly engaged in art projects, she developed exhibitions for *Spiral* (Wacoal Art Center, Tokyo). She is currently studying at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK. As curatorial project she is currently developing online exhibitions to explore greater possibilities of curating in cyberspace and going beyond the restrictions of conventional physical exhibition projects.

Twenty-four Hours at the Grandhotel Cosmopolis in Augsburg. Stories of Work, Migration, and Collectivity. Silvia Converso and Frédéric Bron

The Grandhotel Cosmopolis is located in the core of Augsburg; however, our taxi driver does not know the place nor how to get there. He was probably searching for a new luxury hotel but definitely not thinking of one of the most innovative social art projects in a former old people's home, an infrastructure hosting migrants as well as a hotel run by volunteers, migrants, and artists. The first significant impression is the red carpet laid out down the stairs to the street. It's a first clear statement: everybody is indiscriminately welcomed with open arms. Entering the lobby, we already get a glimpse of the genuineness and the atmosphere of GHC, of how the place is organized. In a very natural way, we feel immediately at ease. As Sibil and Susa, artists and two of the many managers of the hotel, show us around and introduce us to the people inhabiting the hotel, we further gain other remarkable impressions which allow us to understand the complex nature and the philosophy of the GHC.

"The GHC is a living organism with up to 150 living beings acting weekly in it and with it", as Sibil explains. "Those 150 biographies evince/contain an extreme diversity: from Tchechian baby to Swabian grandmother, from illiterate to scientist, from passport to sans papiers, from traumatized by war to people enjoying an alternative cultural space. Thereby the organism is pumping in a high frequency caused by a great density of events and it needs a preparedness for responsibility and sensibility to keep the organism stable."

One can immediately feel that all the components of GHC are equally part of this polyphonic organism and, as such, actively operate in this

aesthetic process that homogenously models its community through the arts. As Susa adds, "the activity in GHC is shaping an aesthetic by using creativity to develop an attitude into a lifestyle, to find the least common denominator of compassion to form a common base of consciousness. We are not working together for a certain output or product but to establish a field in which this organism can grow into a structure that it is not to collapse in the future."

We find this aspect truly fascinating, as we could, in fact, feel it and see it all over the place from the beginning. So we ask them what does 'work' mean in the context of socially engaged art, for instance, in a structure like GHC?

"(It is) an ongoing process, a state of consciousness" as they put it:

- Being aware of the whole structure and circumstances while acting in the present situation.
- Creating space.
- Facing the individual skills and linking them.
- Detecting symphonies of harmonies.
- Detecting symphonies of conflicts.
- Listening to them.
- Composing the compromise.
- Understanding the structure of an organism and caring for it.
- Recognizing the needed positions in it.
- Filling them. Implementing this organism in bigger organisms.
- (like: the city, economic system, law system).
- Dealing with all-out responsibility.
- Letting the unexpected come.

Considering the unique nature of this hotel and their managers, we ask Susa and Sibil to describe a typical working day at GHC, with respect to what they personally do there.

Susa: Getting up very early, completing emails in silence. Drinking coffee in the lobby, meeting incoming hoteliers, starting to talk. Having meetings—scheduled, unscheduled, urgent ones. One-to-one-meetings, group meetings up to 30 people. Answering phone calls meanwhile. Topics: recording needs, providing support for specific sections, structuring the organism, connecting people, defining the house, communicating this definitions to outside positions (foundations, universities, civil services) playing solitaire on my laptop to have mental holiday, meditating, transforming the constantly changing surface of the organism into a familiar space. Looking for a shared language and common values. Thinking about material and immaterial values. Dreaming of beauty and giving it a form. Also: having lunch with all the others.

Sibil: Entering the house, drinking coffee in the lobby. Meeting other incoming people, marking topics. Looking for the woman from Afghanistan asking her how she feels today and if she wants to cook with us. Changing clothes. Going downstairs in the kitchen. Having an appointment with other cooks or waiting if someone else enters the kitchen to take part in the (cooking) process. Being flexible. Developing the daily menu while checking what we have in the cold store, what requests we have in the team, checking competences. Cooking while balancing the group, balancing the menu. Eating lunch together. Cleaning up the kitchen. Changing clothes. Having meetings with clients, other working groups, helping to coordinate the kitchen. Developing financial schemes for the gastro. Taking part in GHC offers like the listening circle. Leaving the house for picking up a falafel. Eating in the atelier. Writing emails, designing concepts. Talking to people I meet on the floor. Visiting the girl on the 3rd floor for a cup of tea or having a look at what she learned at school. Leaving the house.

The very centre of the life and activities of GHC is the kitchen, especially at lunch. Every day on the menu there is a different type of food, be it German cuisine prepared in the Syrian way or Persian food cooked by the refugee guests at GHC. It constitutes the get-together par excellence of all the activities happening there, the moment of exchange in which the people working and living at the hotel

have the chance to comfortably interact and spend some time all together.

We sadly came too late to experience this moment; however, we could get some of its taste for dinner. The Persian food they cooked was just amazing. Yet the thing that struck us the most was the jovial and warm atmosphere: we all sat together at a big long table and interacted with each other. We were sitting close to Djamal from Morocco, who told us about his life, his travels, how he came to discover GHC and what he does there. We found this exchange with him while having food together really insightful and enriching. All this felt like the magic ingredient that gave the perfect taste to the dinner. Maybe this exactly what GHC is about: an aesthetic process which satiates all the senses and, in this regard, the kitchen properly personifies its core.

Djamal's story and experience at GHC is truly interesting. He's 42 years old and has been living there for fifteen months where he works as concierge.

Q: How long have you been here?

Djamal: I have been staying at the GHC for fifteen months.

Q: Where have you been before?

D: I was travelling, you know, I'm a vagabond. I was in Spain, Italy, Serbia, Hungary, Greece, and many more Balkan countries.

Q: Were you searching for a job, better living conditions, or simply for happiness?

D: No, this is the way of life I chose, I have to move. My mother is a vagabond, too; she was a nomad, and I like to change after a couple of months.

Q: Are you here alone or with your family?

D: No, I'm here alone.

Q: Did you specifically decide to come to Germany?

D: No, I did not decide to come to Germany. I was just on transit through Germany, but then I ran into a police control and they forced me to stay. They put me into jail, took my fingerprints, registered me, and put me in a home for asylum-seeking persons. Now I can't travel anymore because they would bring me back if they control me.

Q: Would you like to move on?

D: I think with the migration problem we have right now, Germany is a strong country and has more abilities to offer help.

Q: So do you feel welcome?

D: Yes, in all ways I feel secure, especially economically.

Q: Do you share your experiences with the other migrants here at GHC?

D: Not so much, but I propose it to some of them.

Q: Are you in touch with your family, with your brothers and sisters?

D: Last time I was in touch with my mother was two years ago. It's difficult because every time I talk to her she cries, and it's hard for me to endure it. She wants me to come home but I can't go home now. My two brothers and my sister are also staying in Europe, but they are legally here.

Q: How do you spend your days here at GHC?

D: I'm kind of a housemaster here, a concierge. So I'm here to help, to get things fixed when there are problems with electricity, the sanitation, or when something needs to be painted, and sometimes I have a job or work to help other people outside of GHC.

Q: Do you think the GHC can help you to find a job and to integrate you better in the society?

D: Yes I get a lot of support from GHC and some propositions for different jobs. But in the first place the GHC offers me a kind of psychological support. It offers me a place where I feel at home, also thanks to the other people here. They help me also to get a work permit, but then again I will need to do a formation.

Q: How would you describe the GHC in your own words, what would be your definition of it and what does it represent to you?

D: For me it's the best example for a functioning integration, it works very well, like a prototype of how integration should be with the phenomenon

that is happening right now. We should try to apply it to the 'real society'.

Q: What is it that makes this programme work? What makes the difference?

D: Outside we need to find a way to avoid xenophobia and make citizens feel safe with us and the other way round.

Q: How does GHC reach that aim to make you feel secure? What is the difference?

D: Well it's the colours, the languages, the differences; it's like a mosaic. This diversity gives me this secure feeling.

Q: Do you think the artistic approach of GHC in the way they are organizing and shaping the workshops, the daily duties, the cooking, the music, and the communication is a key factor for the functioning of GHC? And is this integration of art important for you and does it bring people together?

D: Yes, it is also a part of the integration. You can, for example, play any instruments you would like to play. Art in a way takes the tension out, and it relaxes the people. And encounters with artists are easier, they are more open-minded; they welcome us, and you can connect to them. There are artists at GHC but also other artists come from the outside to visit us here.

Q: Does the contact with artists inspire you and do you come up with your own suggestions?

D: Yes, I also had the opportunity to organize some meetings.

Q: In relation to that valorisation through the participation to the work here and also to the artistic side, how difficult is it to maintain your dignity being here, though in a place of encounter, but in a way not completely part of the society and having the status of a refugee?

D: Well, I'm in contact with artists, but in fact I'm not an artist. I'm just doing the job of a housemaster, but at the same time I participate to art projects or political discussions and that's how I started to integrate at GHC. Art also protects me, it's active, if I have problems I'm surrounded and people help me.

Q: You explained us that you arrived here by chance. You were walking through this area and then you heard some music and you just followed the red carpet that leads to the GHC. Do you think you are now privileged compared to other migrants?

D: You know, within the refugees the sensibilities and wishes vary a lot. I tried to bring refugees from other places to the GHC many times. For example, I invited them to concerts or events. But even they knew they could stay, they didn't. I told them it's a relaxing and safe place. So for me it works and the GHC is the right place, but maybe not for another migrant.

Q: How do you see Germany today? Does it correspond to the place you were expecting?

D: I never thought about Germany, I was on transit so I had no expectations. But today I think that it is the country that procures me with the highest hopes because it's a strong economy and also secure in other ways. So it's the right place for me and for other migrants. It's a stable situation for me, and in a country like this I can envisage a future. Maybe one day I could have a family and through that a sense. In many other European countries, like Greece where I stayed for several years and where I saw the corruption, the situation is not comparable to here and very precarious. Germany is a much more transparent country.

Q: Thus, it's the country that triggers the intention of having a family?

D: No, in the first place it's my age. I'm 42 now and the vagabond life needs to come to an end one day. I need a stable and more settled situation.

Q: And in the future, in five years, where do you see yourself?

D: I think in five years I see myself at home.

Q: Where's home?

D: Morocco. But I don't know what the situation will be. As Arabs we don't really know freedom. After the revolution there might be a civil war and then you have to choose a side. If you don't choose, you have to go. And as I don't want to be forced to choose, I prefer to be away but one day I would like to go home.

Q: Do you think you could feel at home in a country like Germany?

D: Hm, yes, I could imagine that. But we need some more transparency, we need more rights like the right to work and the right for education, then I can imagine that I could be one of them and develop a feeling of being at home. With the actual migration situation and so many new migrants, I think Germany and other European countries have to change the education system. It's an evolutionary process and it has always been like this. It's necessary to adapt the system a little bit. To go with the evolution is to acknowledge these emerging changes of this generation. It's about the integration of the children of migrants; it's not about changing German culture but to adapt the educational system a little bit. Then the next steps will happen naturally.

One of the many workshops offered at GHC is called "Emotion Room". We are invited to participate with migrants and staff members to this community procedure, which is a regular part of the collaborative alignment or the daily flow. The participants sit together on the floor in a darkened room, only illuminated by some candles. The woman leading the session explains the rules. It's possible to pipe up by taking a little bag with stones that lies in the middle to express oneself or just deposit one's emotions and thoughts of the day. But it's also possible to take the bag and simply remain quiet and through that ritual get silent awareness from the others. I felt at first hesitant to participate, as I feared getting involved in some kind of esoteric circle I might not be comfortable with. But then after a moment of silence, during which everyone was staring into the candlelight, a Syrian girl starts to talk about her impressions of her first Christmas in another town away from her family and about her concerns of wanting to ask things all the time. I suddenly feel that I'm entirely within this circle and these shimmering faces that were foreign to me just moments ago start to look familiar. Another girl starts to talk about language issues and misunderstandings and one participant after another takes the bag and explains in a very confident and disarming openness his emotions of the day. Overwhelmed by these insights into the lives of people facing harsh situations, I feel a strange desire to at least share a similar experience and not an emotion that seems ridiculous compared to their situation. But then I dig a bit deeper and grasp the bag as the last one to share a thought about expected changes and new engagements I'm aspiring to. At the end, the leader of the

group thanks everyone and reminds us that confidentiality is part of the “emotion room”. The light is switched on, and the faces disappear. Some of them were seen again during dinner, like Andre, for instance.

Andre is a shy calm guy with a warm and sweet smile. He’s from São Paulo, Brazil, 32 years old, as he tells us. His grandparents migrated from Japan to Brazil. He’s been living in Augsburg since March 2015. He has a really interesting story and we asked him to tell us more about himself.

Q: Why did you come to Germany and did you come by yourself?

Andre: When I was 15 years old, I went to the U.S. to get my high school education. From that moment on I realized that I wanted to travel more and learn about other cultures, as this experience really opened up my mind and my way of thinking about the world and people. I lived for several years in the U.S., but after a while I decided it was time to move on and get to know other places. An opportunity arose to work in Argentina, where I met my wife who is German. At first we were travelling through South America doing volunteer work. After that, we decided to live in Cordoba, Argentina, where we ended up staying for almost five years. For different reasons we decided to move out to Germany, and since March of this year we have been living in Augsburg. At the moment I’m learning the language in an integration course dedicated to migrants and refugees. My wife comes from Augsburg originally, and all her friends knew about the GHC. As I heard about the concept, I decided to pass by and to see if I could do something there. My intention was to work in the office, as it is what I usually do. I worked developing intercultural programmes like volunteer programmes, internships, exchange and study programmes. The GHC was interested in giving me an opportunity but they said that I first had to work at the bar to get an impression of how it works and to get to know the people that are living and working here. Then you start going to meetings and you learn step by step who is doing what, as there are so many people involved at the GHC.

Q: What is your impression so far of GHC? How would you describe it in your own words?

A: Hmm, I think it’s difficult to describe it in words. What I can say is that I feel really good here. I feel that the people who work here have the same vibe. And it’s a very strong experience to see people

arriving here with their heavy experience and what it means to help. I would like to do more and get more involved but it’s a process.

Q: Do you think the GHC is some kind of utopia that just works here due to the specific makers of GHC who realize this project with so much passion and engagement?

A: I think it could be adapted to other places, but it depends on the people who are involved. I’m sure there are many wonderful people like the ones here that would put the same effort into a project. Until now I did not learn how they manage everything, but I will talk now with Susa. As everyone does a lot of things, I don’t really know how planned it is but it works. It’s a kind of flow.

Q: Do you think it works because it is related to an artistic process, that art is part of the daily life? Is the fact that artists are the makers of the GHC a key factor?

A: I’m not sure what kind of art it is exactly but everyone that works here has art inside them, in the way they do things. It could also be a non-artist but somehow things happen in an artistic way. And this experience is also what happens now for me. Not everyone can do something amazing with art, but it’s a part of the way to proceed and to interact. It’s a lot about the people working here. From the ones who live here, some are involved with arts but most of them are not. A lot of people living here also have psychological support, everyone takes care of each other. I worked once as a volunteer in Peru in a village that was destroyed after heavy rainfall and floods and the families were on the street living in tents. These people needed psychological support to deal with the situation. If I talk to some of the people here, I realize that the experiences are so completely different from what we can imagine. I don’t get too deep during these conversations because it’s so sensitive. So I’m here to participate and collaborate without being too aggressive or too direct.

Q: Going back to the relation to art. We had the chance to visit the “Emotion Room” and we were impressed by this session. One could say it’s all about the artistic view, the way you cohabit; the way you deal with each other and talk to each other. It’s a creative way to process. Would you agree to that?

A: I think it’s important to try different formulas because everything is relevant in the process of

helping. I don't know if art is the key point but it definitely helps, not only the people living here but also the ones working here. The importance of being in contact with all the different realities that come together is something I also learned in Peru, where being close to the people that were going through all these difficulties was not only good for them but also for everyone else. That's what I meant with art, not in the typical sense of art that one might think of, but the art of living and helping each other with different ways and considering the contribution from everyone, because everyone has something to share. So it's also a social aspect, with energies coming through all these different perspectives that are somehow used for the processes. Here, I keep meeting awesome and different people all the time, and I'm very thankful for that.

The experienced intimacy that occurred within this group impressed us in an almost unsettling way and offered us a better, more concrete understanding of terms like collaborative or dialogical work for the creation of inter-human relations. We also gained a more clear comprehension of the concept of art as part of social practice or "social sculpture", which is a description with different significations and which is also preoccupying the makers of the GHC. On a more personal level, this experience and being confronted with inequality affected us and made us reflect on responsibility as professionals, but also simply as humans. Maybe this is one of the basic elements that make the relations at the GHC work. The processes have a community effect on people and cause them to relate on a level of equality, no matter the situation in which they find themselves.

To conclude our twenty-four-hour stay at the GHC, we asked Susa and Sibil how they would inscribe this project in a more theoretical discourse about socially engaged art. Grant Kester differentiates between collaborative, dialogical works, and projects based on a scripted "encounter". Curator and art historian Claire Bishop identifies projects with an author to guide participants on the one hand, and de-authored procedures that aim to embrace collective creativity on the other hand. To sum up the activities, she settles on the term social collaboration. What is their position in relation to these propositions?¹

"We don't think that Kester and Bishop represent two different approaches to a collective process but two different stages in the process of the collective Grandhotel. The Grandhotel started with

strong guiding figures that channelled an idea for a collective in which many can participate. Other figures started to implement this idea in a collectively sustainable structure and provided the womb for the collective to grow. Once the structure is provided and defines positions according to the needs, talents, and abilities of the individual members of the collective, the group has found a common script and the internal code. The guiding figures can then re-dive into the collective ocean from where they emerged. The Grandhotel is in the middle of the process of taking "the artist" off the stage. And we assume that other stages will follow.

Maybe the Afghan woman would give you a different answer."

Captions

1 Grandhotel Cosmopolis: The bar and foyer, 2015. Photograph by: Silvia Converso.

2 Grandhotel Cosmopolis: The kitchen, 2015. Photograph by: Silvia Converso.

3 Grandhotel Cosmopolis: Dinner, 2015. Photograph by: Silvia Converso.

4 Grandhotel Cosmopolis: Guests and managers at the dinner table (second from right is Djamal), 2015. Photograph by: Silvia Converso.

Notes

1 Grant Kester, Letter to the Editor, *Artforum*, May 2006.

Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents", *Artforum*, February 2006.





Susa Gunzner (b. 1966) is a sound artist who lives and works in Berlin and at Grandhotel Cosmopolis in Augsburg. She works in the laboratory Grandhotel Cosmopolis at the interface between global nomadism and transporting society into the 21st century. She investigates the relationship between the individual and the collective, and material and immaterial values. In collaboration with Sibil Sattler, she develops strategies to spread the quality of the heart to perforate stiff systems.

Sibil Sattler (b. 1976) is an artist, textile designer, and cook who lives and works in Berlin and at Grandhotel Cosmopolis in Augsburg. She observes and transforms traditions and cultural patterns. She explores the nourishment of a future society regarding the formation of cosmopolitan groups, current collaboration and the worldwide quantity of food. In collaboration with Susa Gunzner, she develops strategies to spread the quality of the heart to perforate stiff systems.

Frédéric Bron (b. 1970) is leading partner of two locations in Zurich, the alternative music club Papiersaal, and the multi-purpose space Folium. He is currently studying at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK. His curatorial emphasis is in art in the public space and in socially engaged art practices. For his current project "SummerLAB", he is researching the engagement of art in the representation of migration in the public discourse. For this project, Bron also considers the experiences and results of the work of Grandhotel Cosmopolis.

Silvia Converso (b. 1985) is a cultural producer with a solid background in literature and a keen interest in architecture and socially engaged art. She completed studies in languages and literature, focusing on the interdisciplinarity of arts. She worked as project coordinator for the major festivals of arts and literature in Europe (international literaturfestival berlin, Hay Festival in Hay-on-Wye/Wales, Festivaletteratura in Mantua). In particular, she was actively involved in the programme of the Festivals in Prison, organizing lectures and cultural activities with inmates. Since 2013, Converso has been living in Zurich. She is currently studying at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK and works as a communication consultant for art and architecture and as an independent curator in the field of socially engaged art practices.

Beyond Human Rights

Giorgio Agamben

Subsequently published as a facsimile. This English translation of the original Italian text (1993) was first published in Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End. Notes on Politics in Theory Out of Bounds*, Vol. 20 (Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

Giorgio Agamben (1942) is one of the leading figures in Italian philosophy and radical political theory, and in recent years, his work has had a deep impact on contemporary scholarship in a number of disciplines in the Anglo-American intellectual world. Born in Rome in 1942, Agamben completed studies in Law and Philosophy with a doctoral thesis on the political thought of Simone Weil, and participated in Martin Heidegger's seminars on Hegel and Heraclitus as a postdoctoral scholar. He has taught at various universities, including the Universities of Macerata and Verona and was Director of Programmes at the Collège Internationale de Paris. He has been a Visiting Professor at various universities in the United States of America, and was a Distinguished Professor at the New School, University in New York. He caused a controversy when he refused to submit to the "biopolitical tattooing" requested by the United States Immigration Department for entry to the USA in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Giorgio Agamben

Beyond Human Rights

In 1943, Hannah Arendt published an article titled 'We Refugees' in a small English-language Jewish publication, the *Menorah journal*. At the end of this brief but significant piece of writing, after having polemically sketched the portrait of Mr. Cohn, the assimilated Jew who, after having been 150 percent German, 150 percent Viennese, 150 percent French, must bitterly realize in the end that 'on ne parvient pas deux fois,' she turns the condition of countryless refugee – a condition she herself was living – upside down in order to present it as the paradigm of a new historical consciousness. The refugees who have lost all rights and who, however, no longer want to be assimilated at all costs in a new national identity, but want instead to contemplate lucidly their condition, receive in exchange for assured unpopularity a priceless advantage: 'History is no longer a closed book to them and politics is no longer the privilege of Gentiles. They know that the outlawing of the Jewish people of Europe has been followed closely by the outlawing of most European nations. Refugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of their peoples.'¹

One ought to reflect on the meaning of this analysis, which after

fifty years has lost none of its relevance. It is not only the case that the problem presents itself inside and outside of Europe with just as much urgency as then. It is also the case that, given the by now unstoppable decline of the nation-state and the general corrosion of traditional political-juridical categories, the refugee is perhaps the only thinkable figure for the people of our time and the only category in which one may see today – at least until the process of dissolution of the nation-state and of its sovereignty has achieved full completion – the forms and limits of a coming political community. It is even possible that, if we want to be equal to the absolutely new tasks ahead, we will have to abandon decidedly, without reservation, the fundamental concepts through which we have so far represented the subjects of the political (Man, the Citizen and its rights, but also the sovereign people, the worker, and so forth) and build our political philosophy anew starting from the one and only figure of the refugee.

The first appearance of refugees as a mass phenomenon took place at the end of World War I, when the fall of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires, along with the new order created by the peace treaties,

1. Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees', *Menorah Journal*, no.1 (1943), 77.

upset profoundly the demographic and territorial constitution of Central Eastern Europe. In a short period, 1.5 million White Russians, seven hundred thousand Armenians, five hundred thousand Bulgarians, a million Greeks, and hundreds of thousands of Germans, Hungarians, and Romanians left their countries. To these moving masses, one needs to add the explosive situation determined by the fact that about 30 percent of the population in the new states created by the peace treaties on the model of the nation-state (Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, for example), was constituted by minorities that had to be safeguarded by a series of international treaties – the so-called Minority Treaties – which very often were not enforced. A few years later, the racial laws in Germany and the civil war in Spain dispersed throughout Europe a new and important contingent of refugees.

We are used to distinguishing between refugees and stateless people, but this distinction was not then as simple as it may seem at first glance, nor is it even today. From the beginning, many refugees, who were not technically stateless, preferred to become such rather than return to their country. (This was the case with the Polish and Romanian Jews who were in France or Germany at the end of the war, and today it is the case with those who are politically persecuted or for whom returning to their countries would mean putting their own survival at risk.) On the other hand, Russian, Armenian, and Hungarian refugees were promptly denationalized by the

new Turkish and Soviet governments. It is important to note how, starting with World War I, many European states began to pass laws allowing the denaturalization and denationalization of their own citizens: France was first, in 1915, with regard to naturalized citizens of ‘enemy origin’; in 1922, Belgium followed this example by revoking the naturalization of those citizens who had committed ‘antinational’ acts during the war; in 1926, the Italian Fascist regime passed an analogous law with regard to citizens who had shown themselves ‘undeserving of Italian citizenship’; in 1933, it was Austria’s turn; and so on, until in 1935 the Nuremberg Laws divided German citizens into citizens with full rights and citizens without political rights. Such laws – and the mass statelessness resulting from them – mark a decisive turn in the life of the modern nation-state as well as its definitive emancipation from naive notions of the citizen and a people.

This is not the place to retrace the history of the various international organizations through which single states, the League of Nations, and later, the United Nations have tried to face the refugee problem, from the Nansen Bureau for the Russian and Armenian refugees (1921) to the High Commission for Refugees from Germany (1936) to the Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees (1938) to the UN’s International Refugee Organization (1946) to the present Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (1951), whose activity, according to its statute, does not have a political character but rather only a ‘social and

humanitarian' one. What is essential is that each and every time refugees no longer represent individual cases but rather a mass phenomenon (as was the case between the two world wars and is now once again), these organizations as well as the single states – all the solemn evocations of the inalienable rights of human beings notwithstanding – have proved to be absolutely incapable not only of solving the problem but also of facing it in an adequate manner. The whole question, therefore, was handed over to humanitarian organizations and to the police.

The reasons for such impotence lie not only in the selfishness and blindness of bureaucratic apparatuses, but also in the very ambiguity of the fundamental notions regulating the inscription of the *native* (that is, of life) in the juridical order of the nation-state. Hannah Arendt titled the chapter of her book *Imperialism* that concerns the refugee problem 'The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man'.² One should try to take seriously this formulation, which indissolubly links the fate of the Rights of Man with the fate of the modern nation-state in such a way that the waning of the latter necessarily implies the obsolescence of the former. Here the paradox is that precisely the figure that should have embodied human rights more than any other – namely, the refugee – marked instead the radical crisis of the concept. The conception of human rights based on the supposed existence of a human

2. Hannah Arendt, *Imperialism*, Part II of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951), 266-298.

being as such, Arendt tells us, proves to be untenable as soon as those who profess it find themselves confronted for the first time with people who have really lost every quality and every specific relation except for the pure fact of being human.³ In the system of the nation-state, so-called sacred and inalienable human rights are revealed to be without any protection precisely when it is no longer possible to conceive of them as rights of the citizens of a state. This is implicit, after all, in the ambiguity of the very title of the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, in which it is unclear whether the two terms are to name two distinct realities or whether they are to form, instead, a hendiadys in which the first term is actually always already contained in the second.

That there is no autonomous space in the political order of the nation-state for something like the pure human in itself is evident at the very least from the fact that, even in the best of cases, the status of refugee has always been considered a temporary condition that ought to lead either to naturalization or to repatriation. A stable statute for the human in itself is inconceivable in the law of the nation-state.

It is time to cease to look at all the declarations of rights from 1789 to the present day as proclamations of eternal metajudicial values aimed at binding the legislator to the respect of such values; it is time, rather, to understand them according to their real function in the modern state. Human rights, in fact, represent first of all the originary

3. *Ibid.*, 290-295.

figure for the inscription of natural naked life in the political-judicial order of the nation-state. Naked life (the human being), which in antiquity belonged to God and in the classical world was clearly distinct (*as zoe*) from political life (*bios*), comes to the forefront in the management of the state and becomes, so to speak, its earthly foundation. Nation-state means a state that makes nativity or birth [*nascita*] (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty. This is the meaning (and it is not even a hidden one) of the first three articles of the 1789 Declaration: it is only because this declaration inscribed (in articles 1 and 2) the native element in the heart of any political organization that it can firmly bind (in article 3) the principle of sovereignty to the nation (in conformity with its etymon, *native* [*natío*] originally meant simply 'birth' [*nascita*]). The fiction that is implicit here is that *birth* [*nascita*] comes into being immediately as *nation*, so that there may not be any difference between the two moments. Rights, in other words, are attributed to the human being only to the degree to which he or she is the immediately vanishing presupposition (and, in fact, the presupposition that must never come to light as such) of the citizen.

If the refugee represents such a disquieting element in the order of the nation-state, this is so primarily because, by breaking the identity between the human and the citizen and that between nativity and nationality, it brings the originary fiction of

sovereignty to crisis. Single exceptions to such a principle, of course, have always existed. What is new in our time is that growing sections of humankind are no longer representable inside the nation-state – and this novelty threatens the very foundations of the latter. Inasmuch as the refugee, an apparently marginal figure, unhinges the old trinity of state-nation-territory, it deserves instead to be regarded as the central figure of our political history. We should not forget that the first camps were built in Europe as spaces for controlling refugees, and that the succession of internment camps-concentration camps-extermination camps represents a perfectly real filiation. One of the few rules the Nazis constantly obeyed throughout the course of the 'final solution' was that Jews and Gypsies could be sent to extermination camps only after having been fully denationalized (that is, after they had been stripped of even that second-class citizenship to which they had been relegated after the Nuremberg Laws). When their rights are no longer the rights of the citizen, that is when human beings are truly *sacred*, in the sense that this term used to have in the Roman law of the archaic period: doomed to death.

The concept of refugee must be resolutely separated from the concept of the 'human rights', and the right of asylum (which in any case is by now in the process of being drastically restricted in the legislation of the European states) must no longer be considered as the conceptual category

in which to inscribe the phenomenon of refugees. (One needs only to look at Agnes Heller's recent *Theses on the Right of Asylum* to realize that this cannot but lead today to awkward confusions.) The refugee should be considered for what it is, namely, nothing less than a limit-concept that at once brings a radical crisis to the principles of the nation-state and clears the way for a renewal of categories that can no longer be delayed.

Meanwhile, in fact, the phenomenon of so-called illegal immigration into the countries of the European Union has reached (and shall increasingly reach in the coming years, given the estimated twenty million immigrants from Central European countries) characteristics and proportions such that this reversal of perspective is fully justified. What industrialized countries face today is a permanently resident mass of noncitizens that do not want to be and cannot be either naturalized or repatriated. These noncitizens often have nationalities of origin, but, inasmuch as they prefer not to benefit from their own states' protection, they find themselves, as refugees, in a condition of de facto statelessness. Tomas Hammar has created the neologism of 'denizens' for these noncitizen residents, a neologism that has the merit of showing how the concept of 'citizen' is no longer adequate for describing the social-political reality of modern states.⁴ On the other hand, the citizens of advanced industrial states (in the United States as well as Europe)

4. Tomas Hammar, *Democracy and the Nation State: Aliens, Denizens, and Citizens in a World of International Migration* (Brookfield, Vt.: Gower, 1990).

demonstrate, through an increasing desertion of the codified instances of political participation, an evident propensity to turn into denizens, into noncitizen permanent residents, so that citizens and denizens – at least in certain social strata – are entering an area of potential indistinction. In a parallel way, xenophobic reactions and defensive mobilizations are on the rise, in conformity with the well-known principle according to which substantial assimilation in the presence of formal differences exacerbates hatred and intolerance.

Before extermination camps are reopened in Europe (something that is already starting to happen), it is necessary that the nation-states find the courage to question the very principle of the inscription of nativity as well as the trinity of state-nation-territory that is founded on that principle. It is not easy to indicate right now the ways in which all this may concretely happen. One of the options taken into consideration for solving the problem of Jerusalem is that it become – simultaneously and without any territorial partition – the capital of two different states. The paradoxical condition of reciprocal extraterritoriality (or, better yet, aterritoriality) that would thus be implied could be generalized as a model of new international relations. Instead of two national states separated by uncertain and threatening boundaries, it might be possible to imagine two political communities existing on the same region and in a condition of exodus from each other – communities

that would articulate each other via a series of reciprocal extraterritorialities in which the guiding concept would no longer be the *ius* (right) of the citizen but rather the *refugium* (refuge) of the singular. In an analogous way, we could conceive of Europe not as an impossible 'Europe of the nations', whose catastrophe one can already foresee in the short run, but rather as an aterritorial or extraterritorial space in which all the (citizen and noncitizen) residents of the European states would be in a position of exodus or refuge; the status of European would then mean the being-in-exodus of the citizen (a condition that obviously could also be one of immobility). European space would thus mark an irreducible difference between birth [*nascita*] and nation in which the old concept of people (which, as is well known, is always a minority) could again find a political meaning, thus decidedly opposing itself to the concept of nation (which has so far unduly usurped it).

This space would coincide neither with any of the homogeneous national territories nor with their *topographical* sum, but would rather act on them by articulating and perforating them *topologically* as in the Klein bottle or in the Möbius strip, where exterior and interior in-determine each other. In this new space, European cities would rediscover their ancient vocation of cities of the world by entering into a relation of reciprocal extraterritoriality.

As I write this essay, 425 Palestinians expelled by the state of Israel find themselves in a sort of no-man's-land. These men certainly constitute, accord-

ing to Hannah Arendt's suggestion, 'the vanguard of their people'. But that is so not necessarily or not merely in the sense that they might form the original nucleus of a future national state, or in the sense that they might solve the Palestinian question in a way just as insufficient as the way in which Israel has solved the Jewish question. Rather, the no-man's-land in which they are refugees has already started from this very moment to act back onto the territory of the state of Israel by perforating it and altering it in such a way that the image of that snowy mountain has become more internal to it than any other region of Eretz Israel. Only in a world in which the spaces of states have been thus perforated and topologically deformed and in which the citizen has been able to recognize the refugee that he or she is – only in such a world is the political survival of humankind today thinkable.

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Autonome Schule Zürich

Dialogue between Sadou Bah and Ludovica Parenti in Collaboration with Emilie Bruner

The dialogue is interpreted after the interview with Claudia Cardinale held by Alberto Moravia in 1961 for Esquire Magazine.

Dear Bah, I am going to interview you. But it will be a somewhat unusual interview. You must permit me to reduce you to an object.

I understand

Object in so far as opposite of subject. That is to say, not any kind of object at all, but specifically that object, which you yourself can be considered to be, indeed, are.

Any object?

That's right, just such an object. You see, I don't want to know your past, present or future. I'm not interested in your opinions on politics or nationality, art, women and men, on Switzerland, religion, administrative work and so forth. Nor does it interest me to learn how you live or with whom you live, what jobs you have worked to date or what your plans are for the coming month or the coming year. None of this apparently inevitable subject matter of interviews interests me.

May I say something concerning this point, that I have a hard time seeing myself as an object? An object for me is a fixed thing. It is not so for myself.

That is an important point. Let's work towards this together.

Good, I am curious.

I have neglected mentioned topics, because these matters are uncertain, changeable; they depend on your point of view, and they're a product of environment. They are impossible to verify exactly. Moreover, they're matters which do not single you out in any way; in fact, according to them you resemble millions of others.

For me every human being is unmistakable.

Surely, but what makes you an object distinct from every other object; in other words, your

appearance makes you distinctive. There are no two things exactly alike in nature: not one leaf of a tree perfectly resembles any other. Man alone can manufacture quantities of identical objects. Therefore, what distinguishes you from millions of others is your appearance as part of the natural world. Your physical features, yes; your clothes, no.

You will think this interview will lead towards a description of a passport or identity card. That might be, although more detailed and precise. But that's just it: wherever you go, your passport is the document by which you can be recognized among the billions of people who inhabit the earth. Perhaps you think that you would be recognizable if your tastes, ideas, opinions, past life and future projects were noted on your passport instead of your physical features? But no, you would find doubles everywhere and vanish into anonymity.

I enjoy this argument. As mentioned, in my opinion every human is unique. But let's take the school's development as an example. It stands in direct relation and not lastly with the exchange through various personalities.

Yes, therefore information is given on your website and many recent articles have been written over the ASZ since the move into the new premises here on Sihlquai 125. Imagine what it would be like to meet someone in New York and have to run through an entire alphabetization class in order to be recognized by the entry authorities.

That wouldn't be possible without the others.

Most likely. Hence, let's focus on clarities such as the small indentation on the bridge of your nose. But I don't want us to get ahead of ourselves. Let us go step by step. First tell me your measurements. How tall are you?

My height? I am 1.72 metres tall and weigh 69 kilograms.

Therefore, relatively average but rather thin for a grown man.

Yes.

Your waist measurements?

My waist? I really cannot tell you. Funny question. (laughs)

Definitely slim but not too slim.

Yes, very slim.

And your chest and hips?

Height and weight are the only known measurements to me. The rest doesn't interest me, hence I never gauged them.

Now these figures aren't all too significant in themselves and sufficient to define the space in which you move as a visible being. One would need to add a few more.

Honestly spoken, it's not that important to me. At most, I would only be able to add my shoe size.

What about the circumference of your head for example, the length of your neck, and of your arms and legs?

Everything in nature is a matter of measurements of the proportions of the parts.

(laughs) I don't know these numbers. They don't interest me.

Never mind; we'll proceed. Can you describe your hair?

Yes, I have black hair.

Black tells too little. I would say it is dense and from uniform brilliance. Moreover, they don't drop inanimately but evoke the impression of vividness and strength. What are the different ways you have worn it in your lifetime?

I wear it short mostly.

How short?

I would say a maximum of 10 cm. I don't like to wear it any longer. I've always worn it that length. No other way. I've never styled it. I cut it and that's all that happens to it.

Apparently you have found comfort in your appearance. What are your ears like?

(laughs) I think I have normal ears. Like all ears. I haven't noticed any peculiar features.

One could describe them as fully formed. As one visualizes a common ear.

Exactly, that's what I thought, unless you'd like to add anything?

Not at all. The ear shape supposedly reveals the most important traits of people. You are laughing now. How come?

I don't know. These are questions that I've never been asked before. For me, my ears were always ears.

Probably a sign of shyness. What can you tell me about your forehead?

(laughs out loud) What can I say about my forehead? I don't know.

Well, it's a large forehead, somewhat tenacious, obstinate and also childish looking. The forehead of a diligent, thoughtful personality.

And now for your eyes. Are they black too?

No, they are grey.

I might add that your gaze is very soft. And now, if you would be kind enough to laugh?

Yes. (laughs) That's the one thing I'm very good at. Often for no reason.

When you laugh, your eyes open up even a bit further. Especially when you laugh they sparkle, there's something placid, polite, patient, something intense to them. What else can you do with your eyes?

With them I can be very aware.

What are the most important moods you can express?

Happiness. I like to raise spirits. Obviously there are times when there's nothing to laugh about, I might add.

So when you are agitated, one can behold that from your eyes?

Yes, I would say that one can easily recognize the condition I find myself in.

Do your eyes weep often?

Not often but it can well happen that they shed tears.

In what situations?



Sometimes for instance, I don't even realize I'm crying. The tears just start running on their own without being triggered by emotions. On other occasions, I can't hold back my feelings and I truly start weeping, without being able to explain this emotional outburst. I remember this happening when I heard about the tsunami in Southeast Asia, or the attacks in Madrid and the United States.

Now for your nose.

I'm not even so sure about it.

Your nose is (straight) but distinctive. I would say it had a classical look, tempered, however, by modern sensuality. The spread nostrils are accentuated by your mouth with its gentle lineaments, ready for the next smile.

We can leave it at that.

Let's talk about your mouth then. How would you characterize its expression?

There's nothing special to note.

Even when a laugh emerges? Is there no movement?

Of course. That is interesting. My mouth expresses a fairly strong countenance, depending on the situation naturally, but it isn't necessary to elaborate on that.

In any case one can recognize a spirited, very open, irresistible laugh, in which your courtesy seems to explode and obtain air. One gets the impression that you laugh to communicate, to overcome your own diffidence. The laugh conducts your entire appearance. What would you say your teeth are like?

Oh. They are rotten. Unfortunately, they really make a bad impression.

And that has an impact on how you show your mouth?

Yes, sometimes it hinders me from laughing because I'm afraid that someone can see my broken teeth. (laughs out loud)

Your smile—or rather your laugh—leads us to the shape of your face which contains and surrounds it. What shape is your face?

Somewhat round.

With smooth transitions. This shape gives it a particular look, the aspect of an archaic, intrinsic, childlike face raised toward the light. All the more since it rests on the summit of a long, sturdy neck. By the way, we have not yet mentioned your colouring. What is your complexion like?

Well, let's say that I have black skin. Nothing special, simply black.

Black seems to be fairly inaccurate. As black we imagine your rain jacket, your jumper or my turtle-neck. Can you describe the colour more specifically?

My skin colour is somewhat dark, with a

bronze tone. I would say a dark bronze, not entirely black.

Now let's look at your hands. Will you be so kind to show them? These hands are comprehensible only if one realizes that your arms are long and slender and your wrists relatively delicate. But how would you describe your hands?

My hands are not the largest. I'm perpetually reminded that I'm not very handy. Sometimes I don't even know where I should put them.

The band-aid on your finger gives that away. Your gestures though are prudent. The palms are lighter than the back of the hand, fairly flat, the lines go very deep. These hands are, as you said, fine yet not outstanding, they remind one of a young man's hands. This brings us back to your body. What are your shoulders like?

I have small shoulders.

What can you tell me about your legs?

Interesting. Just recently I learned that, in comparison to other people, I have long legs.

How do you walk?

I was told that I have a very equalised walk.

After examining the parts, we should now try to define the whole. Tell me, then, how would you characterize your beauty? But, first, do you think you're beautiful?

Yes, I believe myself to be beautiful. It comes from the inside; I can't even imagine something ugly would emerge from there. I think it is fair to say that, without being able to elaborate on that.

What makes your notion on not being able to explain this further?

Because this has always been my understanding of it. I only know it this way.

Well. Understandably so. Generally, one could conclude, that your head is that of a young boy; your body instead, that of an established, clearly balanced man. Your head and your body express two contrasting things: your head, timidity, innocence, wit, curiosity; your body, serenity, tranquillity, maturity, and, above all, I think I see an appetite for life which is pure, spontaneous, and not only preoccupied with intellectual or moral complications. Correct me if I'm wrong.

I have nothing more to add to this.

Dear Bah, I quote Moravia: The first part of the interview served as the attempt to describe you as an object in space. Why as an object? Because I only had the indirect relation to you through the ASZ; so I sat down in front of you as I would in front of any other object, a glass, table or a chair, and you were merely an object of a certain shape, certain colours, contours and scale, a matter which filled the room, encom-

passed by my gaze. In short, I was the subject, you the object and between us the mere circumstance of your guise. Now, regarding your appearance in space has been described, let's devote ourselves to your disappearance. Since we made sense of how you emerge, I would like to examine the occurrence through which you vanish, namely your sleep. For things are visible by day, by night they vanish. The day is thus the time of objectivity, filled, yes, exuberant with, visible things that impose their presence on us; the night instead is the time of subjectivity: black and in absence of things, it is fed with our fantasies, our delusions, our misapprehensions, our dreams. By granting daylight entrance in the morning we create the things; by putting out the lamp in our room at evening time we abolish them. The object is present throughout the day, one can see, touch, measure it; at night it no longer exists, it is eliminated. However, there are various modes to disappearing, dependent on the object's substance. Commonly everything non-human disappears in a passive, yes, almost capitulating manner; only man has the desire to disappear. It is his will to dissolve, to no longer be there. And he does so every night by going to bed. He disappears into the darkness of his room initially and then, as soon as he falls asleep, into the obscurity of his consciousness. I now then would like to capture in what manner you, after you've stepped into appearance by day, withdraw at night.

In other words, I want to ask you how you go to bed.

Well. Ask me, I will try to answer.

Let's proceed one by one. At what time do you go to bed?

I try to do so as consistently as possible- usually I retire at eleven o'clock.

And for how many hours do you sleep?

Six. At least.

How come six?

Because I usually feel recovered then.

Your disappearance in space lasts for 6 hours.

That is less than the disappearance of the sun and the things generally which emerge with it; yet it is longer than the disappearance of someone who suffers from sleeplessness and only gets as little sleep as two or three hours per night.

Yes, of course, that is obviously true.

The obvious is noteworthy, too. The obvious is my sole interest. Maybe because no one else is concerned with it and it becomes mysterious through its neglect. Never mind though. I was talking about the person who suffers from sleeplessness. I think the insomniac's greatest sorrow is his inability to disappear for a sufficient amount of time. Not being able

to sleep means awareness of his existence, to know one is here. But let's return to you. So you go to sleep. What do you do when you go to sleep?

I dream a lot and vividly.

Let's take smaller steps. How do you go to bed?

I take off my clothes and lie down.

Let's just hold on at these two sentences. You take off your clothes and lie down. What does, to take off one's clothes, mean in your opinion?

It doesn't have a larger meaning to me. To me it is the preparation for a good night's sleep.

Maybe it has a further meaning. Have a look for a moment at this image of a Hatterman painting. What can you see?

If I am not mistaken, I can see a dark-skinned man sitting in a restaurant or bar with a beer in front of him.

What do you think? That this man, who lived 86 years ago, looks different to you once you have undressed?

Certainly.

So if this man would have undressed and were to stand beside you, as you too would be naked, do you think one would be able to recognize that this man lived almost a century ago whilst you are alive today?

No I wouldn't say so. We could probably encounter each other in these temporalities.

If you two were to stand beside each other without clothing, you would be insofar distinct as you are two individuals, but one wouldn't be able to allocate your respective time. In other words, you would be situated beyond time and history, thus eternity, that is to say what man calls eternity.

To sum up: when you undress to go to sleep in the evening, respectively to dissolve in space, then you quite naturally begin to dispose of everything that holds you in time, binds you to history, namely your clothes. To disappear in space, we firstly disappear from the world. The clothes are the world.

That makes sense.

Now of course one could easily say that it is more comfortable to sleep without dress. But beneath this supposed simplicity lies a complex matter of fact. Why do you think we get dressed?

Surely for a combination of conviction and concrete reaction to our surroundings. I think that we might want to protect ourselves. On the other hand, we dress on the assumption that we are better off that way.

And why, do you believe, you dress dissimilar to the sir in the Hatterman painting?

I believe we don't dress widely differently. He obviously appears to be very sharply dressed. I don't

always worry about being as elegant, I'd say I can recognize a difference there.

Hence a fashionable component. Is that an important aspect of culture to you?

Not really. I don't feel particularly drawn to fashion. It seems to be predominantly advertisement and plenty of drama to propel consumerism. Essentially fashion doesn't create many new visions but recycles the occurred with the pretence of being present and up to date.

As you undress, you acquit yourself of carrying this drama and presence whether emancipated or integrated—and so you withdraw from history and time. Can we agree?

Yes.

Let us then come to the facts. What do you wear when you enter the bedroom in the evening?

I often wear my underwear, unless it is too cold to do so, in which case I'm just dressed normally.

And what do you perceive during this disrobing?

It could occur that I feel chilly and want to rush under the covers.

So you take note of your surroundings. And in which order do take off your clothes? First your coat and then the underwear or vice versa?

Funny, I never paid it any attention. I don't have a specific procedure. Well, one garment at a time—from outside to the inner layers, naturally—sometimes the trousers before the shirt or vice versa.

Let's have a look at the image of the man in Nola Hatterman's painting once again. Under this hat and the waistcoat there must have been underwear surely?



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Yes, I suppose so.

But Hatterman wouldn't have dreamt of painting the man in his underwear. She painted him, as he presented himself to the world, the eyes of society. We have to make a first distinction accordingly.

Which do you have in mind?

Between the attire you wear to present your-self to society, and the one you wear to not present yourself to society.

To be more precise: between clothes and underwear.

I see.

The clothes affect your life in society, in culture, in history, in public; the underwear means your private life. In order to sleep, hence to disappear, you retire from the public to the private, from history to intimacy, which means you start out by disposing of your wardrobe which represent the public and then, in a second step, the underwear, which embodies personal life. Not the other way around. Let's return to you. When you go to bed, you disrobe and lie down. So far we have only talked of undressing. Now, let's presume you have unclothed already. So you then lie down in bed. What does that mean to you in the first place?

Recovery.

Let's have a look at what happens when you have laid down, when you have seized the most comfortable position to vanish.

I turn off the light. In this case apparently to no longer be present. I'm letting myself in for sleep.

To create darkness means to abolish light, which is the first requirement for existence of things. The day is full, the night is empty.

When you have shut the light, do you by any chance touch your arms, legs, chest to affirm your presence?

Yes, sometimes (laughs out loud).

In any case, you take hold of a specific posture, is that true? In order to fall asleep as quickly as possible.

Yes.

What posture do you take in exactly?

I usually begin lying on the right side, but I can be very erratic. I find it problematic laying calmly on one side. In sleep equally so, by the way.

When the body then manifests itself in space during wake time, so it disappears during sleep, and the positions in which it adjourns to help it to disappear.

I am not entirely clear on the 'disappearance'.

To disappear from consciousness; to disappear entirely. Once you have found the most comfortable

position to fall asleep, you will realize how your body is being enveloped by a kind of mist, empties and dissolves. Your limbs no longer for you exist, which means as much as that you no longer exist. You have fallen asleep.

I feel as if I were living a second life in sleep though. One I can just barely remember in the morning, but is completely vivid. I therefore exist in these dreams, it's absurd!

But the fact that you dream proves less that you exist, but the theoretical possibility of our existence. For dreams are suppositions, wishful thoughts of existing. Do you want to talk about a dream you've had?

Are you interested in that? I can tell you about my dream I had last night. I dreamt somehow that people with rifles were chasing the others. I was amongst the chased ones. At some point I managed to obtain a rifle myself—I do get those kind of nightmares, that is for sure.

Who are these 'others'?

There are plenty of strangers in my dreams.

Are these bodies dressed or naked?

It depends. It may happen that I myself am naked.

What do you feel during these nightmares?

Often I conceive fear, but in very varying manners.

Can you also recall other dreams?

Before that, I dreamt that I could fly for instance, or the notion of weightlessness generally.

When is it that you wake up?

Either when I get scared or I just happen to wake softly.

Do you dream while awake?

No.

What do these dreams have to do with whom you are during waking hours?

Almost nothing.

That is quite possible. For if these dreams stood in correlation with that, in which you are and wanted to be in an alert state, you wouldn't dream of it. But let's carry on. You went to bed at 11pm and fell asleep straight away. Whether you dream or not, what do you do at 12am?

At midnight? I'll be sleeping or might just be still awake.

And at 1am?

At 1 I will surely be sleeping.

At 2?

Also.

At 3?

Could be likely that I have to go to the loo.

At 4?

Sleeping.

At 5?

Sleeping.

At 6?

I wake up many a time.

At 7?

I wake up to begin the day.

Let's hold on here for a moment. You wake up, which means that you emerge again, firstly to yourself, then to the others. That needs to be clear by this point.

Yes, I would say so.

In what manner does this reappearance occur?

Firstly I try to understand where I am, the rest is to follow.

How long does this waking up take?

That happens very quickly. I remain in a doze for a moment after though.

And what do you do once you are awake?

I stand up and turn on the light.

After that you have breakfast?

Hardly ever.

Do you talk in the mornings?

Yes, it happens.

What about?

That can vary a lot. It is situation-dependent and obviously also according to the person I am with.

Who surrounds you at this point?

My wife or friends.

Do you look in the mirror in the morning?

Actually, I hardly ever do. But I have formed a habit of doing so more often now.

How come?

I don't automatically look into the mirror after a shower or such. I do this now to check my face. For instance, whether it is properly creamed and whether I can leave the house in that state.

How does that come about?

Well, it's self-evident, I am at mine with myself; my appearance doesn't matter here.

In which order do you get dressed?

Here too I don't have a strict method. When I think of it, I could say that I always put on my trousers first, then the rest.

How about your shoes?

They always come last!

Let's summarise: When you go to bed and fall asleep, you remove yourself, unwind step by step; when you wake up and rise, you reassemble equally stepwise, rebuild yourself; evenings you employ effort to disappear, mornings to re-emerge. Is that correct?

That is right.

In the evening you doff your clothes which are your connection to time, society, history, culture. Once vanished from time, by falling asleep, you also vanish within space in the morning you reappear in space by waking up and as you dress, in time. The awareness of your own body allows you to relocate yourself in your surroundings. Later, as soon as you are dressed, you find yourself again in the world, in your own manner.

What do you mean? I have no remark at this point.

As the founder of the ASZ, as a personality belonging to a specific society, as a family member and many more. But now I would like to ask you a few last questions if it doesn't tire you yet.

No, I'm still good!

First: what impression do you think your appearance creates? You are a personality existing in the public eye—within your students, colleagues and public.

Hm, very different! A friendly one with acquaintances. It can happen that people don't necessarily like, become frightened at or don't feel like seeing me. To students I probably offer assurance. I don't see myself as a person in the public eye, though. I could imagine that there are people who get vexed or think I am chaotic, but here, too, the situation varies. Obviously I like to be perceived positively, but I cannot guarantee that. Rather than placing value on how I come across to others, knowing and communicating what I want and what I am doing is more important to me.

Do you like your body?

Yes, and no. I am somewhat dissatisfied with my teeth. I'd rather have yours. (laughs out loud)

How nice, since one should note: the body is that what is; there is nothing else besides the body, as the body is a shape that entails everything; there is nothing outside of the body. You exist then, because you have a body and if you wouldn't like your body, you wouldn't be able to like yourself.

Which part of your body depicts what you are best?

Maybe my eyes.

Why is that?

Because, in my opinion, my eyes are the most versatile. With my eyes I can laugh without any further gestures by my mouth for instance.

And when are they dearest to you?

That is a difficult question. Most probably when I am making conversation with other people.

In the meantime, you might fear that I am trying to screen you, rout within your innermost?

No, I am not suspicious.

I said that for this conversation, you are merely an object, an apparition in the room. Because I do not have to examine your core, as there is no such thing as a core, not in you nor in anyone else. I didn't want to practice psychology, but describe in what manner you vanish and reappear. Hence you in fact don't have to be scared I could read your innermost. What is to be read in your innermost, is written on the person per se. Somewhat dim per-haps, but certainly decipherable if you listen and look. Well now, I think the interview comes to its end. Would you like to add anything?

Thank you.

Cordial thanks to you, Bah.

Captions

1 Autonome Schule Zürich (ASZ), office.

Courtesy LP.

2 Nola Hatterman, *Op het terras / On the Terrace*, 1930, oil on canvas. Courtesy Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. The man featured in this painting, Jimmy van der Lak, emigrated from Suriname to Amsterdam, where he found fame as boxer, barman, and cabaret artist. By including the newspaper open to advertisements of cabaret performances, Nola Hatterman indicates the role played by the subject in the city's nightlife. Hatterman painted in a style known as the New Objectivity, in which objects often disclose details of the subject's background. Hatterman was commissioned to paint the portrait by the Amstel Brewery, but the company did not consider the piece suitable for advertising their product. Raised in what was considered a 'colonial milieu', Hatterman said that she felt black on the inside. She settled in Suriname in 1953, where she founded an art school.

Autonome Schule Zürich (Zurich/CH) and the association Bildung für Alle (BfA), are autonomous, self-organized, and participatory education projects, assembled by people with and without permits to stay. The school functions on a horizontal basis, is inclusive, and aims to be communicative with clear and critical positions. Central to the ASZ' mission is the emancipation rather than 'integration' of participants. To facilitate exchange and understanding between all people stands at the heart of the ASZ' pursuit.

After numerous clearances, the ASZ moved into the former premises of the ZHdK at Sihlquai 125 in November 2015. The school accepts financial support to fund its activities as long as the maintenance of its independence is assured. www.bildung-fuer-alle.ch

Sadou Bah applied for Swiss asylum in 2002. Although the plea was denied promptly, he attended German lessons and found voluntary work throughout four years. After the 2008 Asylum Act tightening, he no longer was able to work and has been remitted to emergency relief. Ever since this imposed abeyance, he became involved with Bleiberecht and Solinetz Zürich, and most notably also helped the Autonome Schule Zürich (ASZ) come to life. Meanwhile Bah holds a residence permit and has been married to his Swiss wife since 2013. Furthermore, he is a board member of the City of Zurich's Office for Cross-Cultural Issues (Ausländerbeirat der Stadt Zürich) and Association of Minorities in Switzerland (Verein GMS).

Emilie Bruner (US) is a freelance curator based in Zurich where she is currently working towards her Master Thesis in Curating ZHdK and on a series of exhibitions with artist Ines Lechleitner. In 2003, she developed and built the contemporary art division of her father Marc Bruner's art collection. This collection consists of about 160 artworks, which have been shown in museums and galleries worldwide. In 2005, she founded the London project space 19 Weymouth, which served to show the contemporary art collection as well as an international platform for young artists to exhibit their work. The yearly program consisted of exhibitions, presentations, and performances. Together with the art historian Chantal Blatzheim, Emilie Bruner founded in 2012 a non-profit collectors club called t.a.c.t. (Travel and Collect Together). t.a.c.t. offered private and exclusive trips consisting of museum exhibitions, art fairs, biennials, studio visits, and private collections with VIP access.

With affection, **Ludovica Parenti** (b. 1992) currently resides in Zurich where she is a post-graduate student in Curating ZHdK and is co-running a project space in Zurich-Altstetten.

On Making Zurich a Home for Art and Artists

An Interview with Esther Eppstein

by Agustina Struengmann

The conversation with Esther Eppstein took place on 10 February 2016 in the crowded and cozy Cafe Zähringer and lasted for nearly two hours. There was a lot to talk about. Esther Eppstein has spent the last twenty years managing message salon, an independently artist-run space for experimental art practices and ideas. This makes her a key art figure in Zurich; her contribution was recognized in 2014 with the advancement award by the Canton of Zurich (Förderpreis des Kantons Zürich) for interdisciplinary art mediation. For her, “the Zurich art scene needs artists from abroad, inspiration, rejuvenation, insight, criticism and networking”. Eppstein is a tireless networker, always looking for what the city needs, and her flexible platform allows her to adapt accordingly.

The message salon’s latest format, also the focus in this interview, was the “message salon embassy”, an artist-run artist residency in Zurich that was active from May to September 2015 and welcomed four Israeli artists from Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Agustina Struengmann: What was the main goal of the message salon embassy artist-run residency?

Esther Eppstein: message salon has existed for 20 years, and has been moving from place to place, always as an art space for happenings, artists’ meetings, experimentation, and social events. After Perla-Mode I felt I needed a change, a transformation of the project. Maybe because I felt a little bit tired of running an art space again, and also because I felt that after twenty years the art scene and the meaning of off-spaces in Zurich had changed. In 2014, I took some time off and went to Israel for almost one year to rethink the format and to come up with new ideas. It was then I thought this would be something I would like to spread or share with people from Tel Aviv.

I wanted to create a more personal space for exchange, for encounters, for connecting or even for

magic, for that something that happens between people, instead of just providing entertainment. I felt that the whole art scene in Zurich became a bit like entertainment, where galleries look like museums and museums try to look like off-spaces. In my view, art is becoming more and more attached to the market, with young artists thinking that success is when a gallery picks them after their diploma show. I want to step out from this and generate something else. I started to invite artists from Tel Aviv for a residency in Zurich and the good thing was that I had the chance to have a perfect space for the residency. It was important to me refer to it as an “artist-run residency”. In this way it differed from an institution. I see it as part of my artistic practice.

message salon embassy is not about producing artworks, but instead about spending time, meeting people, and gathering ideas. Artists sometimes exhibited their work, but this wasn’t the final goal and spirit of the residency. Instead, it was more about connecting them and generating an artist network. For example, when I showed Israeli artists here in Zurich, people at the beginning were maybe critical about Israel, and now they want to go there. It is really about that, connecting people and connecting artists.

I think immaterial things are becoming more and more important today. In the context of social media and an overheated and overrated art market, friendship and spending time together become more necessary, and also the intimacy, and having real conversations with people.

AS: How was the artist selection process?

EE: It was in similar to how I did it with message salon. Since it is my space, it is connected with friends, and therefore very personal. I started with the people I met when I was in Israel who I felt would be interested in coming to Zurich. I wanted to make a program with variety: one artist was a

painter, one was a sculptor, one doing more musical projects and installations, and one was doing more research and curating. It was also important to create something that stays after they leave, because sometimes it was not possible to do an exhibition. We created a zine with each artist. This was something the artist could keep and take back to Israel.

AS: For how long did each artist stay?

EE: For around one month, sometimes shorter. Each artist came separately, because I was taking care of them and connecting them, thinking what kind of person would this artist want to meet, what shows should we go to, which curators should he/she meet. The program was different for each case.

AS: And somehow connect them to the local scene?

EE: Yes, since I know the city very well. This opportunity to connect artists is what I think is missing in most residency programs. They normally send them, they arrive, nobody takes care of them, they don't go out much, they don't make connections, and they are most of the time isolated. I really wanted to make something happen, because when people meet people, they become friends and something starts to grow. A lot of these other residencies sometimes don't bring any result at all.

AS: What is the future of the embassy: i.e. are you interested in furthering the exchange and sending Swiss artists to Tel Aviv?

EE: I started with Israel because of my background and because I have friends in Israel. The original idea of the message salon embassy was to send Swiss artists to Israel but this was even more difficult in terms of receiving financial support, and also because I don't know the Tel Aviv scene as well as the Zurich scene, where I know the people and how to get the audience.

I thought it was good to first test it in Zurich and then evaluate doing it somewhere else. Now that I am more experienced, I can see how I could spread it and do a bigger project. My aim is to expand this format of residencies. It is important to bring people from abroad to Zurich, but how far can I compromise it? That is always the question (this in terms of money and support). At the moment I am working on a possible collaboration with a hotel in Zurich for an artist residency program in 2017, but this time bringing artists from different nationalities. It will be

different from the message salon embassy because it will have to adjust to the interests and ideas of the hotel.

AS: What is your motivation for organizing these residencies?

EE: The motivation is the same as with the message salon: to bring people together in the context of art. In the case of the message salon embassy it is especially to bring artists together and connect them with friends and people in Zurich, because I also think that we as artists should connect more together so we are not so dependent on institutions or curators. This is maybe a romantic idea, an idea that also looks back to artists' salons of the beginning of 20th century, where artists were gathering and starting new ideas. It is also my motivation to expand the message salon to an international context.

AS: What, for you, was the main benefit of the residency series?

EE: For me, the main benefit was the same as with the message salon, to share experiences and to strengthen the bonds, like starting a history or something together. Maybe it won't last for a long time, but it might also be the start to long-term friendships.

AS: How do you feel with your role as ambassador?

EE: Good, because it is exactly what I do anyway. When I am with artists from abroad, I connect them to other people, I take them to openings and introduce them. This is the result of what I've done for twenty years. You just need the sensitivity of asking, "What does the person need?"; and thinking who could be helpful for him/her to meet. I am always being the host. When I have a space, I am the host for guests and for artists, and the same when I do the residencies.

AS: How do you see the Zurich art scene in terms of its openness to international artistic and cultural exchange?

EE: I think it is not enough, especially in Zurich. That is why I thought to do a residency here. There are some residencies in Zurich that work well, for instance at the Rote Fabrik and at Binz39, but then there is nothing else.

In the 1990s, curators went to openings in

off-spaces. This now has disappeared a little bit. It was during this time when a new art scene came up and the Löwenbräu-Kunstareal opened, and a lot of artist-run spaces and off spaces popped up. It was very dynamic, and now I think is not that much anymore. Everything is now concentrated at the Art Academy ZHdK at Toni-Areal. I think in one way it is good and remarkable for a society that the state invests in education, and even in art and creative professions, but on the other hand the underground scene is not so strong. I also think it is positive that here there are still more possibilities than in other places, because there is money destined for art and culture.

That is also why I started with these residencies. The scene needs more exchange. Here in Switzerland, people sometimes really don't see what is going on elsewhere. We have to take care that this exchange happens, and that we don't become more isolated, like an island in a crazy world. We should also share, since here the possibilities are so vast.

AS: How did the artists in residence feel in Zurich? Did they feel welcome?

EE: Yes, I think they felt welcome because I was hosting them and also because I could connect them immediately to people in Zurich. I also invited artists who were all a bit connected to Zurich. Two of them, for instance, had already been in Zurich before the residency: one had a friend here and another artist had an exhibition in message salon one year ago, so he already had friends here, too. This was important, so they didn't feel totally lost; they had an environment in which they felt comfortable. But I know it is difficult, and it is important to have somebody like me who connects them with people. This personal element was very important.

AS: And with the culture in Zurich in general? Did they have difficulties?

EE: It is difficult to say. I would say mainly no, mainly people are open. For example, Anna Lukashovsky, who is a painter, could really motivate people to go with her and paint outside in the streets. People hadn't seen that here in Zurich for a long time. Maybe it was special that my guests were from Israel. I wasn't criticized openly but I felt it a bit. I did not strictly aim at limiting the residency to Israel, but I was in Tel Aviv and that is why I could connect there. It was an experiment, but people already took this as a kind of political statement.

AS: What was each artists' feedback to you as the host?

EE: I would say it was mainly good, but there were also some difficulties. I am doing the program as my artistic project; I have an idea, a frame, and sometimes the artists maybe felt a little bit instrumentalized. Even if I try to keep it as free as possible, there are certain things I want to complete: they had to give a talk, produce the zine and do one or two art walks with me: go on-tour to openings, visit artists' studios or meet curators or any people of interest. All the rest of the time they were free.

This was the vision that I had, a kind of structure that they had to be open to and collaborate with. Overall it was a very good experience.

AS: Would you do it the same way again, in terms of the program and structure?

EE: If I had nothing else to do and somebody provided me with the funds, I would do it in the same way again. But I now have to find funding. I will have to make compromises because this past residency program had a very free structure.

AS: What is your opinion: Is Zurich a welcoming city for artists in general?

EE: This is a difficult question. I think that Zurich is a good city for artists who have galleries and are well positioned in the market. It is also good for young artists who go to art schools. I think that compared to other societies, it is still a very good place for artists because there are possibilities, there is money. On the other hand, having the money can also be a problem; artists are not so free or inspired. In general, it is a very good city. This is one of the reasons I am doing the residencies here: these things in Switzerland are possible. If you are doing things and you keep it going, there is always some way to make it happen. If it is an inspiring city, that is maybe another question.

AS: Was migration a focus to talk about with the resident artists? Were migrant issues or/and their "personal geopolitics" a topic in the discussions with the resident artists? Was it a topic of the works they developed during their stay?

EE: Yes. We had, for example, a series of talks moderated by an Italian linguist who lives and works in Zurich, Dr. Giorgio Iemmolo. The talks were not about artists presenting their work or an art historian

talking about art, but more in the format of *Salon* discussions, inspired by the French Salons of the 18th century: a forum for informal and meaningful conversations about certain relevant self and society topics that were connected to the artist's work. It was more like sitting together at the kitchen table and chatting in a relaxed atmosphere.

The first talk, "Le Salon dans le Salon Nr. 1", was a discussion between painter Anna Lukashovsky, Giorgio Iemmolo and artist Maria Pomiansky. Under the title "Where did I end up?" they discussed the challenges and funny moments of adapting to different cultures. Lukashovsky was born in Vilnius, and lives and works in Haifa; Pomiansky was born in Moscow, immigrated to Israel, and later moved to Zurich, where she works as a painter. A Soviet artist with a Jewish background immigrating to Israel—this is happening in most of the cases of ex-Soviets that immigrate to Israel—they may never feel Israeli although they learn a totally new language. So this feeling of never belonging somewhere is something that is anyway very present in Israel, home to many refugees and immigrants. Identity is anyway a big topic in Israel.

AS: Did you feel identified?

EE: Yes sure, in a way yes. It is something that connects somehow, even if every story is different.

AS: Beyond the art world, how would you characterize the integration of second-generation migrants to Switzerland in terms of their inclusion or exclusion from the national collective?

EE: In the beginning of 1900s, my grandfather left his family and the poor Shtetl in Poland/Russia. He first immigrated to Argentina, then returned to Europe and somehow ended up in Zurich, where he settled down and started a family. My father was born in 1917 in Zurich-Aussersihl, which was called at that time "Shtetl an der Sihl". He lost his Polish citizenship during World War II, and after the war, he lived almost another ten more years without papers, as a stateless person, with no citizen rights at all. Although he was born in Switzerland, and had members of the family killed in the Holocaust, it was still quite an effort to finally get a Swiss passport. It was a very unhappy experience, as he experienced latent anti-Semitism and discrimination. To finally get a Swiss passport, in the 1950s, meant something existential to him.

So given my father's experience, for us, his daughters, it was always clear that we have to vote,

we have to participate, we are citizens of this country. I am critical, I have a background that makes me immune in a way. So this is my story.

For more information visit:
<http://www.messagesalon.ch/>

Captions

1 Benjamin Sommerhalder, message salon embassy, logo, 2015.

2 Esther Eppstein, 2013. Photograph: © Caroline Minjolle.

3 The opening of message salon embassy, live via Skype: Señor Sandwich and Ella Spector from Tel Aviv, September 2015. Photograph: © Vadim Levin.

4 message salon camping site and snackbar, Pfingstweidstrasse, Summer 1999. Photograph: © Esther Eppstein.

5 message salon Perla-Mode: Mark Divo, 7. Dada Festwochen, June 2012. Photograph: © Esther Eppstein.

6 message salon caravan, 2001: Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Collection on Display, 2014. Photograph: © Esther Eppstein.





Esther Eppstein (b. 1967 Zurich/CH) currently lives and works in Zurich. In 1996, the artist and curator founded message salon, Zurich's longest existing independently run art space, which has matured since then into a central meeting point for the local art scene. It became a gathering place where artists could connect and exhibit their work, serving as the first exhibition venue for many young artists. It started at Ankerstrasse (1996–98), then moved to a mobile artist-run space in the form of a caravan (1998–2000 and now part of the Collection of Migros Museum), then to Rigiplatz (2001–06), followed by Perla-Mode at Langstrasse (2006–13), and since 2014 it is the message salon en route. The "message salon embassy", Eppstein's first artist-run artist residency in Zurich, was active from May to September 2015 and welcomed four Israeli artists from Tel Aviv and Haifa.

Agustina Struengmann (b. 1983 Buenos Aires/AR) lives and works in Zurich and holds an MA in Curating ZHdK. Among her curatorial projects are the exhibition A Performative Piece by Nicole Bachmann at Museum Bären-gasse, Zurich, (2015) and Reflections on artistic services, performance and the institution, a film in which interviewed artists reflect on the artist's role in the context of institutional commissions (2015). She is currently working in a project for Manifesta11/Parallel Events: HnC/agency for the new contemporary. Produced in collaboration with artist Martin Schick and producer Marisa König Beatty, this agency will provide performance art for private spaces. Struengmann is further in the process of creating a foundation to support artists from Argentina through collaborations with residency spaces in Europe. She has contributed to magazine Barzón, the Journal of Curatorial Studies, Art Nexus magazine and OnCurating.

Alienation, the Social Individual, and Communism: Marx in the 21st Century

Roberto Nigro

In some well-known pages of the *Grundrisse*, Marx writes: “The theft of alien labour time, on which the present wealth is based, appears a miserable foundation in face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself.”¹ In the context of the actual crisis, it could be interesting to reflect on the use of this word: “theft” (*Diebstahl*), that is at the backdrop of the analysis of Marx, not only in the *Grundrisse*, but in his whole work.

To put the question in terms of theft (of alien labour time) has the advantage of revealing that capitalistic relations of production rest intrinsically upon forms of exploitation. This approach can shed a different light on the (financial) crisis we have been experiencing for several years now. In reality, we should acknowledge that the crisis is permanent. It is the horizon of our existence. Crises take different names; their phenomenology varies and, accordingly, the forms of our fear also change. But we were never in a situation relieved by crises. No single moment of our existence was exempt from one or another crisis. And we will never overcome crises or be drawn from them.

This peremptory statement is not the result of pessimism; it is rather the acknowledgment that the crisis is the mode of government of contemporary capitalism.² The crisis is the form that *civil war* takes today. And we must acknowledge that we are in a social war. This social war is not the generic war of all against all, as we could understand it with reference to Thomas Hobbes’ *Bellum Omnium contra omnes*. On the contrary, it is the war of the rich people against the poor ones, the war of the owners against those who do not possess anything, the war of the rulers or masters against the proletarians.³ Civil war or social war is one of the forms of the class struggle. In neoliberal capitalism, this class struggle has become asymmetrical: on the one hand, there is one class that leads the struggle: this is the class recomposed around finance, the class that has reconstituted itself around the power of money or credit;⁴ on the other hand, we have a class that is no longer one, we have a multitude that is fragmented and hardly able to resist the process that is going on.⁵ Finance, i.e. the class of the rulers and of the masters, leads the class struggle today.

Capital does not seek a general balance, as many economists tell us. Capital does not look for peace or for the end of conflict, as we could wrongly imagine; capital works through a continuous overturning of the mode of production and reproduction. No branch of production, no area of society is spared. The perpetual imbalance, the permanent asymmetry, the inequality as basis for development is the law explaining the functioning of capital. That’s the reason why we have to understand the crisis not as an exception, but as the rule of capital: crisis is the normal mode of functioning of capital. Its development is filled with crises, since

capitalism is a mode of production that cannot but function through recursive structural crises. Crisis is the form through which the irreversible antagonism between the production of wealth and its unequal appropriation explodes.⁶

What does the unequal appropriation of wealth mean? Let us turn towards the Marxian *Grundrisse*.

The *Grundrisse* is a lengthy, unfinished manuscript, composed by Marx in 1857–1858. This work was composed during the period following the defeat of the European revolutions of 1848–1850. Marx reflected a great deal upon the reasons of the defeat. In 1849, after being successively expelled with Engels by the governments of Prussia, France, and Belgium, since they were the major exponents of the League of the Communists, Marx fled to London, where he lived in exile until his death in 1883. In London, he lived with his family in a condition of extreme poverty. There are some very beautiful letters Marx wrote to his correspondents during this period, in which he describes the daily difficulties he was experiencing in London. If, on one side, Marx was reflecting on the defeat of the European revolutions, on the other side there was an event at the horizon attracting his attention. Marx was very excited about the possibility of a global economic crisis that was about to explode. The reason for his excitement came from the fact that he associated the crisis with the possibility of revolution. In a situation of crisis, the possibility that the development takes unforeseen trajectories cannot but increase.

Marx wrote to Engels on 13 November 1857: “The American crisis, which we foresaw, in the November 1850 issue of the review, would break out in New York is fantastic. [...] Even though my financial situation is disastrous; I have never felt so ‘cosy’ since 1849 than with this outbreak.” “I am working like a madman for whole nights in order to coordinate my work on economics, and to get together the *Grundrisse* before the deluge.” (To Engels, December 12, 1857.) “I am working like a condemned man. Sometimes until 4 o’clock in the morning. It is a double work: 1) the elaboration of some fundamental aspects of the economy [. . .] 2) the current crisis.”⁷

Marx was working like a madman in order to coordinate his economic studies. He was coordinating his economic analyses on capitalism. In order to do that, he regularly visited the library of the British Museum. There he could grasp the classical economy from Adam Smith to David Ricardo and coordinate his studies as quickly as possible, in order to make them available for the working class. There was an extreme urgency that led to the birth of this first great political synthesis, that is the writing of the *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*.

As already mentioned, Marx characterizes the whole capitalist system as a system based on theft. But what peculiar form does the “theft” take? We have to understand that it is a *structural* dimension of the capitalist mode of production and not a *moral* dimension depending on the specificity of human relations.

In order to disentangle these aspects, let us start from the opposite point of view, that is to say let us start with a first objection against the idea of capitalism as a system of theft. Instead of immediately accepting Marx’s thesis, let us raise a doubt against it.

At first glance, the wage system seems to be based on an equal exchange. The wage system can be defined as an exchange system: a worker brings to the job market his or her work or, put in a more appropriate way, his or her *capacity to work*. (At this stage of the analysis I do not need to make a distinction between material or immaterial work, material or immaterial production.) He or she brings to the job market himself or herself, that is to say his/her body. It is this work capacity, this capacity to work, that will be *alienated*. The worker offers his/her

capacity to work and, by the same token, the product of his/her work. His/her capacity to work means literally a capacity to produce something. (S)he will offer the product of her/his work to somebody else. In that sense (s)he will separate the product of his/her labour from him/herself. In this sense, (s)he *alienates* her/himself.⁸

But one could also ask: why employ such a strong word as “alienate”? Why can’t we simply say that we are exchanging on the job market our capacity to work *on an equal basis*? The exchange we are referring to is the exchange between labour and salary. We offer our capacity to work, and we earn a salary in exchange. The worker earns a salary for the work he/she is providing. Therefore, we are confronted with a simple exchange occurring on an equal basis. What is the function of salary? Salary pays for what the worker sells on the market. Put differently, salary pays for the fact that the worker is hired for a certain time. He/she accepts to be *used* for a while. Of course, we can also say (and this is not a tiny difference, as we will see later) that he/she is “obliged” to sell him/herself on the job market, or put differently, (s)he is obliged to sell her/his capacity to work.

But in order to simplify the analysis here, let us put aside the issue concerning the obligation, that is to say the fact that the worker is “obliged” to sell her/himself on the job market, and only admit that (s)he accepts to sell her/his capacity to work.

In the same way one can rent a car in order to use it, one could say that one can hire someone’s capacity to work. Salary should pay this upkeep. When you rent a car, you also pay for the upkeep of the car. It is the same when someone hires a worker: (s)he is paying for the upkeep, for the maintenance of the worker. The salary must allow the regeneration of the labour force. And not only that: it must also allow the survival both of the worker and of his/her family, his/her children.

If the capacity to work was paid correctly, that is to say according to the laws of supply and demand in a specific conjuncture, then we would be faced with a normal exchange, one that cannot be formally called into question. Then, why would the bearded philosopher of Trier insist on speaking of theft?

It is because we cannot stop at this simple description. First of all, we should remark that if the exchange must take place, or if the exchange takes place, one needs that some interests come into play. Between the contracting parts there should be interests. The interest of the seller is of course very clear. The worker, i.e. the seller, sells his/her work in order to earn a salary. The worker alienates the use of his/her labour force in exchange for a salary. (S)he needs a salary which will permit him/her (and his/her family) to survive. But concerning the buyer, the purchaser who wishes to use the labour force he/she is buying, things are different. The capitalist purchases something that he/she pays according to its value, and by the same token claims to exploit it. But he/she pretends to exploit it in order to earn from it a *surplus* of value, that is to say a profit, something that can improve the production or his/her wealth. Then, there is an anomaly in the form this exchange takes. If, actually, the worker does not lose anything in this exchange, on the other hand, one cannot say that he or she wins something either. The salary he/she earns should be used in order to reproduce his/her own existence. And if it happens that the salary of the worker is higher than the real needs of his reproduction, the rectification will be effectuated automatically, and the salary will decrease. (Of course, the capitalist does not need to directly decrease the salary; (s)he can

intervene on several other connected elements that assure the reproduction of life and can decrease the purchasing power of salaries.)

But in the dynamic of this exchange, it happens that the buyer not only pretends to get back his/her investment, that is to say that he/she doesn't want to lose anything, but he/she also pretends to increase his/her profit or wealth. But if he/she pretends to increase his/her possessions, his/her wealth, this means that the apparent exchange on an equal basis hides something; it conceals a process that changes the equality to an inequality without violating the apparent legitimacy of the exchange law. What happens then?

We are faced here with a process resting upon three elements or moments: to give, to receive, and to return. If, on the one hand, we say that the donor, that is to say the worker, brings to the job market his/her labour force, his/her body, his/her brain and sells them in order to earn a salary in exchange (a salary that should satisfy his/her needs), on the other hand, what the capitalist returns in the form of salary cannot be compared with what (s)he received from the worker. This is the reason why the exchange on a formal equal basis leads to a form of inequality. Put differently, what the capitalist seizes by paying a salary is not precisely the same thing that is sold by the worker in exchange of a salary. The capitalist purchases something that he/she will exploit at his or her mercy. Here a difference or a division emerges that is very important. A dissociation, i.e. a division, occurs within the concept of the labour force; the labour force entails two aspects: one of them can be referred to what the seller gives in the process of exchange; it concerns the worker and what he/she offers; on the other side, there is the aspect that concerns what is received by the buyer, by the capitalist. It is because of this dissociation that an apparently equal exchange comes to rest upon the form of inequality. It is on that basis that an apparently equal exchange generates profit only on one side.⁹

But this is possible if and only if we add to this description a further element. This exchange takes place within the framework of a power relation, where the seller, i.e. the worker, occupies the position of the dominated individual and the purchaser the dominant position, which enables him/her to let his/her interests prevail. The wage regime can produce its effects only if the worker is placed in the position of a split subject; that is to say that (s)he is master of his/her labour capacity, on the one hand; but, on the other hand, and simultaneously, (s)he can alienate its utilization. This presupposes that this labour force can be separated from its utilization.

Therefore Marx initiates an incredible break when he introduces in the analysis of the wage system the concept of labour force instead of only speaking of labour. If the seller, i.e. the worker, or employed person alienated his/her work and, by the same token, his/her work was paid according to its value, as the classical economy until David Ricardo sketched out, the capitalist, i.e. the purchaser, would earn nothing. But we should also remark that under those conditions, the exchange would also not take place for the simple reason that it would not imply any interest for the capitalist. But if we presuppose that what the sellers, i.e. the workers, bring, that is to say give or offer, is their *labour force* or the possibility to employ it for a certain time, it happens that what is transmitted or received at the end of the exchange is not exactly the same thing that was brought at the beginning of the exchange. What is received is the possibility to employ the labour force *beyond* its real or actual value. One could also say that the capitalist buys a *promise* of work (that is to say a promise of valorisation). (S)he buys the possibility of getting

back a profit by using it. This profit is reserved only for the one (i.e. the capitalist) who bought this right to employment at its value, that is to say at the value of the worker and for the needs of his/her reproduction. But it is not bought at the value *that it can produce*. When the worker accepts to be hired, (s)he undergoes a mysterious transformation: (s)he stops being her/his singular body and becomes a productive subject, a subject bearing a labour force, whose performance, since it refers to social work, is submitted to a communal evaluation. This subject (i.e. the worker transformed into labour force) is, in the genuine meaning of the term, a “subjected” subject.

The labour force we are referring here to is not something already encapsulated in the worker, as if it were inscribed into his or her nature. In the capitalist system, this capacity to work is constantly produced. That is the reason why we can connect Marx’ analyses here to Foucault’s historical analyses on technologies of power. If the economic take-off of the West began with the techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital, it might perhaps be said that the methods for administering the accumulation of men made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon fell into disuse and were superseded by a subtle, calculated technology of subjection. In fact, the two processes—the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital—cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them; conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital. At a less general level, the technological mutations of the apparatus of production, the division of labour, and the elaboration of the disciplinary techniques sustained an ensemble of very close relations. Each makes the other possible and necessary; each provides a model for the other.¹⁰

The role played by disciplines is at the core of the functioning of a capitalist society. But how shall we understand the function of discipline and also the fact that the worker accepts the condition of such an unequal contract?

Why does the worker give way freely to the conditions of such a strange contract, that seems to be equal, but is only so formally, since only one part wins? What brings him or her to accept it, if the reciprocity is only apparent? The worker is obliged to accept the inequality of the relationship. At the beginning of the exchange, there is the labour force of the worker, that is to say there is his/her labour force, his/her personal labour force. But once the exchange has been accomplished, one can remark that the personal labour force does not exist anymore in this form. It has become a generic labour force that can be exploited under conditions that are no longer those of an activity pertaining to the individual work, or referring to the capacity of the person effectuating the work. This labour force has become a general productive activity subjected to common norms. The worker ceases to be the person who is and becomes an operator involved in an operation going beyond the limits of his/her own existence. The worker enters the form of social work, or of the work that takes place in the form of social cooperation. In social cooperation, the work of the individual is no longer his/her own work, but “some” generic work that has to be effectuated under conditions that do not depend any more on the individual.

What characterizes the capitalist mode of production is that the labour force is treated as if it were a two-sided reality. It is not the same for the worker or for the capitalist. The secret of the exploitation consists in the fact that the worker

remains master of his/her force while he/she steps aside from its utilization, as if its utilization were no longer part of this force and as if this force were independent from him/herself. Here resides also the force of the concept of alienation, which should not be referred to human nature, as if it were human nature that is alienated or lost during the process of production.

So, we can also say that the labour force is invented. It is the result of an associated technical creation. Marx explains that the worker alienates his/her capacity for labour, his/her creative force, which is subsumed by capital under the appearance of an equal exchange relation: in the process of production, capital puts this creative force to use for itself and pays a price for it independent of the result of the activity of labour. At best, to the conceded price (wage), the worker succeeds in restoring his/her own use value: (s)he responds to the necessity of his/her own reproduction—but even this price must be ceaselessly taken under control. All the rest of the worker's activity is now in the hands of the boss.

But let's go a step further and analyze what is at issue in this question of the productive subject or of labour force. And let us do it from another, yet still connected, standpoint. This concerns the question of exploitation, that is to say the question involved in the use of the word "theft." Marx gives the question of exploitation a very particular form. This involves a radical call into question of the topic of the theory of value.

In the Marxist tradition, the theory of value takes two forms. On the one hand, it is known as the theory of abstract labour. This means that work is the unit present in all commodities, since work is the common substance required in order to produce something. Each form of work is referred to abstract labour. The importance of this approach resides in the fact that it allows one to show that behind each particular form of work there is a global social labour force that can indifferently produce this or that. The Marxist tradition deduces from this approach a second aspect, which is the question of the theory of value orbiting the question of the measure of the value of labour. One can define a unit of simple labour as a basis for measuring each form of labour production. The theory of value becomes in this connection a law of general balance, allowing for a measure of value by going from the simplest units to the more complex ones. The law of value gives the system a certain degree of rationality.¹¹

However, in Marx the question of the law of value has a different form. One never stops to say that Marx took the theory of value from the classical political economy, from authors like Steuart, Smith, and in particular Ricardo. One thinks that the classical political economy elaborated a theory according to which the value of commodities depends on the socially necessary labour time in order to produce them. One thinks that Marx simply took this theory from the classics without transforming it. But this genealogy is false, because it misunderstands the different use that Marx makes of such a theory.¹² Marx uses the theory of value not in order to clarify how values are transformed into prices or how profit is produced. Marx intends not only to explain how the bourgeois economy functions, but he also wants in particular to show how structural the process of exploitation is in capitalism. Therefore, he introduces into this theory an important discontinuity. In Marx' view, labour, that is the ground of the value in the capitalist system, is labour become abstract; what is exchanged between the capitalist and the worker is not – as the classical economists thought –labour, but labour-force. Once the notion of labour is understood in its abstract form, one can also understand how daily work can be divided into two parts: on the one hand, there is the part (that is the

salary), which is paid to the worker; on the other hand, there is a part of which the capitalist takes possession. In this connection, the exploitation becomes structural. Exploitation is the appropriation of other people's work; capitalist accumulation proceeds on that basis. The second implication of this relationship is that the relationship between capitalists and workers, on which surplus-value is created, is genuinely political. How much work will not be paid is not a question pertaining to the functioning of economy, but it is a *political* question: the power relations between classes decide on these proportions and not the market.

The theory of value takes the form of an antagonism in Marx's account. It is the motor of a constitutional imbalance. In fact, so-called necessary labour is not a fixed quantity, but it depends on the class struggle led by the working class. It is the result of struggles against wage labour. It is the result of the continuous attempt to transform the form of labour in order to remove it from its misery. The law of value must be thought within the more general theory of surplus value. Within the whole capitalist development, this law constantly produces crises: crises are provoked by struggles, by the impossibility to limit the growth of demand (that is to say of the material and immaterial needs of subjects, of their desires, aspirations, affects...).

The first form of the law of value to which I referred, by saying it worked in the Marxist tradition, extinguishes itself for several reasons. The first one is that it presents internal contradictions. The first contradiction is the opposition between simple work and qualified or complex work. The fact is that the second cannot be reduced to a multiplication of simple work, as if simple work were the basis, the unit of measure, starting from which the complex forms of work could also be calculated. The second contradiction comes from the opposition between productive and unproductive work. Productive work is the one producing capital. But this definition cannot be applied anymore, since productive labour is inscribed in the form of social cooperation. The productive character of labour depends on cooperation. The third contradiction resides in the fact that the productive labour of the intellectual labour force cannot be reduced to the simple sum of simple labour; by the same token it cannot be reduced to social cooperation either, for the simple reason that intellectual and scientific labour includes creativity. We can sum up all of this by saying that if the distinction between productive and unproductive labour applies to manufacturing (to some extent to pre-capitalist forms of production) and becomes aporetic already in the phase of development of capitalism linked to great industry, then this distinction will become absolutely inadequate in post-industrial society. In post-industrial society, intellectual and scientific labour becomes hegemonic. The global labour force, that Marx names the social individual in the *Grundrisse*,¹³ compels capital to a constant reorganization of the exploitation; it compels it to extend its domination in a more global way. However, on the other hand, it is precisely in this process that communism takes shape. Communism springs forth from the intensity of the contradictions that are contained in the concept of world market: at once a moment of maximum capitalist integration and a moment of maximum antagonism. Marx refers to two concepts in order to describe these transformations: he mentions the formal subsumption and the real subsumption of society to capital.¹⁴ But this process should not be interpreted as a linear process towards the greatest level of integration. If the concept of value is conceived as a temporal measure of productivity, the question that can be raised is how the productivity of social labour can be measured. If social labour coincides with the whole time of existence and includes all sectors of society, how could time measure the totality in which it is involved? When the time of existence is entirely the time of production, who measures whom? When exploitation reaches these forms, the production of value can no longer be measured. The law of value can no

longer measure the extension of the exploitation; it does not mean that exploitation disappears; on the contrary, the law of value continues functioning as political law, as order, as command. Capital exercises its command on society through political forms (through bureaucracy, administration, finance, monetary politics). Capital exercises its command on society by controlling communication, desires, affects, and so on. Here, Marx's analyses touch a maximum of intensity and shed light on historical developments in which our *own* and *actual* history is trapped. The return to Marx sheds a different light on our present.

Notes

1 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse. Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, Penguin Books, London, 1993: Notebook VII, p. 708.

2 Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man. Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2012.

3 Michel Foucault, *La société punitive*, Cours au Collège de France 1972-1973, édition établie par Bernard E. Harcourt, EHESS/Gallimard/Seuil, Paris 2013, p. 14-15, 30, 33.

4 Christian Marazzi, *The Violence of Financial Capitalism*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2011.

5 On these issues, see A. Negri/M. Hardt, *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin Putnam, 2004. Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of Multitude*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2008.

6 Luciano Gallino, *Il colpo di stato di banche e governi. L'attacco alla democrazia in Europa*, Torino, Einaudi, 2013.

7 Letters also quoted in Antonio Negri, *Marx beyond Marx. Lessons on the Grundrisse*, Autonomedia Pluto, New York, 1991, p. 2. See this work for an in-depth analysis of the whole *Grundrisse* by Marx.

8 It is probably useful to point out that in English and German we can make the distinction between work (*Werk*) and labour (*Arbeit*). The first term would refer to the result or the product of the labour activity, that is to say the work once it has been accomplished. The second term indicates the process or the operation that brings the accomplished work. The issues involved in the following pages are deeply indebted to the unique analyses developed by Pierre Macherey in his book, *Le Sujet des normes*, Éd. Amsterdam, Paris, 2014, in particular ch.: *Le sujet productif: De Foucault à Marx*, p. 149–212.

9 See Paolo Virno, "Forza Lavoro", in *Lessico Marxiano*, manifestolibri, Roma, 2008 p 105–116.

10 See Karl Marx, *Capital. Critique of Political Economy, vol. I*, Penguin, London, 1990, chapter XIII. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, Penguin, London, 1991, section, 3, ch. 3. Also Sandra Mezzadra, "The Topicality of Pre-history. A New Reading of Marx's Analysis of 'So-called Primitive Accumulation'", in *Rethinking Marxism*, 23.3, 2011. See also Sandro Chignola, *Foucault oltre Foucault. Una politica della filosofia*, DeriveApprodi, Roma, 2014, p. 65–70.

11 A. Negri, *Marx beyond Marx*, op. cit., p 151–170.

12 A. Negri, "Crisi della legge del valore-lavoro", in *Lessico marxiano*, op. cit. p. 87–94.

13 *Grundrisse*, Notebook VII, op. cit.

14 See Karl Marx, *Results of the Direct Production Process*, Ch. 6 in MECW 34, 1863.

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“We have to live a quiet life.”

The Voice of the *Sans Papiers*

Conversations with Fany Flores & Bea Schwager by Mariana Bonilla Rojas, Cordelia Oppliger, Silvia Savoldi

The first interview was conducted in Spanish on 1 December 2015 with Fany Flores; the second one was held in German on 9 December 2015 with Bea Schwager, prior to the Swiss poll regarding the law enforcement initiative (Durchsetzungsinitiative) on 28 February 2016 (which was rejected).

We arrive on time for our meeting at the *Sans Papiers* office in Zurich (SPAZ) at the Kalkbreite complex. It is 2pm sharp. We are on a quest to interview Bea Schwager, the head of the organization, as well as a woman, a so-called “*sans papiers*”, named as such because of the lack of a resident permit in the country. We are well aware it is an assignment, but for us it has always been much more than that. It is a personal journey of understanding and the opportunity to work on human connections.

A woman with a very strong presence and a soft and caring, yet decisive voice comes towards us. She is around sixty years old, small in stature, short grey hair, open and honest smile, and thick hands that express with delicate movements. She apologises on behalf of Bea, who is sick and therefore unable to attend. At the beginning we are unsure of who she is. Does she work at SPAZ? Nevertheless, she is well informed, so we are tempted to follow her lead. However, we wonder, could she be the woman we came to talk to with so much interest but also with so much fright?

Yes, she is the right one. So we follow her to the coffee shop as she suggests, “because the office is going to get very crowded”. We choose a comfy corner right beside the entrance, and just like that, we are ready to start.

Interview with Fany Flores:

Q: Can you tell us your story? Where are you from? What made you decide to move to another country?

FF: I was born in La Paz, Bolivia. I come from a family of eight siblings, a hard-working family; that is why I have never been afraid of working. I have four children. When I decided to come to Switzerland, in 2002, they were twenty, fifteen, eleven, and nine years old respectively. I was also married. My ex-husband was abusive, and he is still, sadly, an alcoholic. I endured until I could not take it any longer, and then I knew I had to make a choice. I did not want my children to keep on witnessing the mistreatment I was bearing, and I realized I needed to save my own life. Suddenly, I found myself in a situation where I had to provide for my kids. That is why I chose to leave. I was committed to give them a better future no matter what it took.

Q: Why Switzerland? How did you manage to come to Zurich in the first place?

FF: I had no clue where Switzerland was. Sweden yes, Germany also, but about Switzerland I knew nothing, because in Bolivia very little or nothing is heard concerning this country. It was a twist of faith. In La Paz, I used to have a bakery shop. That is how I got to know a woman, one of my customers, who turned out to be Swiss. I heard her speak to her kids in a foreign language and I got curious, so I asked where she was from. I started asking about the possibility of coming to Switzerland. From the very beginning, she told me it was really hard to find a way to stay there; she was unable to provide any guarantee, so I was unaware if I was going to be able to stay

once I got in the country. Nevertheless, I sold everything in my possession, all the equipment from the bakery shop. Of course, I did not get their real worth, money-wise, but I did not mind.

Immediately after I got the tourist visa, I followed the Swiss woman and her family to Zurich, and I left my kids in the care of my mother. I stayed at a hotel and I worked for the family, doing all the house chores from my arrival until my tourist visa expired. We are talking about twenty days in total. Once I became a *Sans Papiers*, unfortunately, I was unable to keep on working with them. They were afraid of the risks of providing a job for someone like me, so all of a sudden I was on my own. Nevertheless I was grateful, they gave me an opportunity.

Q: What happened then?

FF: I want you to understand that anyone in a condition of illegality in this country lives a very difficult life. As a *Sans Papiers*, you have a very hard time trying to figure out where to work, where to eat, where to sleep. I mean, everyone will desert you. So for the first year I did everything I could to survive. I slept under bridges, on staircases, at people's places as a guest. I earn as little as two hundred Swiss francs per month, so I was in a very difficult situation myself, and I was unable to send any money for my kids.

I realized very quickly this was a situation I was not experiencing alone. I met others living under the same conditions because of the lack of "the paper". I got to know them at the *Misión Católica de Lengua Española* through the priest Ángel Sanz. He built up a collective of people in Zurich advocating for those of us without papers. I can tell you that, for me, to suddenly learn that there were others in my position and that there was a will to help came as a great relief.

Furthermore, a tiny light of hope grew on me when I heard through some people from the *Misión* that after living as a *Sans Papiers* for four years in the country, it was possible to present yourself to the Migration office explaining your situation in order to become a legal citizen. Sadly, it turned out to be a scam. I learned about families that were here in Zurich in an irregular situation for fifteen or even twenty years, who have never been legitimized. I even knew from cases of such families and single people who approached the Migration Office, looking forward to applying for the residency with all the legal procedures, and were instead deported right after their voluntary approach. The authorities came at six in the morning, took them away from their

houses, and sent them back to their country of origin—families with kids that were born here, in Zurich.

Q: How long have you been in Switzerland? Were you aware of the challenges to overcome as result of not having "the paper" before making the decision to come here?

FF: I travelled to Zurich in December 2002; I have been here for almost twelve, no thirteen years. Yes, it will be thirteen years this December. Now I have acquired the right to live here legally. Two years ago I fell in love and I got married, that is how I got the document. You know, I would have liked to earn it by my own accord. I would have loved that they had told me: You deserved it because of all the hard work you have done since you arrived, for all the love you have given to the families you have met and have worked with. Fany, here is your permit!

You know, this is what gives me the liberty to speak; I wouldn't have dared to speak so freely about my situation before. You develop a lot of traumas as a *Sans Papiers* because you experience a lot of distressing situations due to the limitations you are submitted to. I can tell you that in my case, I still feel in my body fear and anguish when I encounter myself in situation of control by the authorities. It is now unfounded and I know it; but living like this, with so many limitations, restrictions and difficulties, leaves a mark on you.

Q: How did you feel once you had the document in your hand?

FF: That day I cried a lot, and I could not believe it, I was sitting in front of my door looking at the tag. I could not stop looking, I could not believe when I saw my name beside my doorstep, right there in the entrance. It was always the name of someone else; never before my name had been exposed on the door of the places I lived. But this time it was my name on the tag. I felt much more that moment than the moment when I got the document. Now I can sleep in peace, I have a roof over my head, I can breathe, I can go out, I can laugh, and I can hear music as loud as I want.

Beforehand I could not do it, even less if I was living in a family home. You may expose yourself and put the family at risk. In this condition, you have your corner and you should be unnoticed. But to have your name on your front door means to regain your identity, and it is just like winning the lottery. It was for me something beautiful, really beautiful. So I sat and cried. I did not know if I should scream

or run. Then I saw my husband, he was looking at me and he came towards me. He hugged me and said: "There you are!" He is a man with a great heart.

Q: What do you think about the fact that Switzerland does not give *Sans Papiers* the possibility to legalize their situation?

FF: People call us "Illegals" or "*Sans Papiers*", but that is not the truth. We own a passport, we have a nationality: I am Bolivian. But people get confused about it and are mistaken about our condition. We do not have the resident permit to be able to legally stay in this country, that is why we have no chances. The person who is in a situation of illegality here in Switzerland is in a very vulnerable state, completely unprotected.

Some people think we are taking advantage because we do not pay taxes, but we would pay them gladly if we were given the chance. We are very hard-working people, and we live very respectful and honest lives. It is exactly because of the lack of the document that give us the right to reside, that we do not have the possibility to do it. Without this paper you are not even allowed to open a bank account, you are not able to rent a place in your own name, you are submitted to the mercy of those around you.

Q: You have overcome many difficulties. Was your previous status as a *Sans Papiers* a risk for those who surrounded you?

FF: The risks for the families that help us are real: they can be fined. That's why you have to be very careful, you have to be almost invisible, it's as if you weren't there. You are even told to answer that you are visiting the family if by chance you are asked. But I always worked hard and got new jobs through the word of mouth. Families, which were happy with my work, suggested my name to new families. They had to be outspoken about my illegal position, but they also underlined how loyal and dedicated I was. Then it was never a problem. When you do something good in your life, you get something back, at least.

Q: Do you feel it is possible to be outspoken about the fact of not having "the paper"?

FF: It is impossible to be outspoken, it represents a huge risk to tell anyone about your condition. You have to be very careful all the time, very aware of your surroundings. Needless to say you are not entitled to do much, from work to house, from house

to work. God forbid you want to lie in the grass and enjoy the sun on a summer day by the lake. There is always the dreadful possibility of a control. We have to live a quiet life.

Q: How did you keep in contact with your kids? How did they feel about your decision?

FF: I used to buy calling cards. Ten Francs allowed me to speak with them for sixty minutes. I used to call them ten minutes everyday to ask them if they had eaten. So many times I wished I was there to take care of them, when they were sick or had a birthday party. I missed so many things: my daughter's fifteenth birthday party, my sons' graduations. But they get it now. When I left, the oldest two were already adults, they understood and supported my decision; but for the youngest it was hard. They did not realize that I was doing it for them. Then in 2008 I had the chance to show them what I was enduring. They came to visit me in the winter, and this season is very different in the country where we come from. I decided to make them go through my routine and my "*compañeras*" one.

My normal workday was from six until nine and it implied two to three jobs per day. This meant approximately ten jobs per week. I spent a lot of time moving from one place to the other because I could not say no to a job offer. So, if it implied a three-hour train ride, I would do it. I became very organized, very Swiss in this respect. So, we woke up at five and went out in the cold with our jackets to reach the first working place of the day. At some point, my daughter couldn't bear the cold any more and fell sick. They experienced how hard it had been for me. I also brought them to the meetings of the "*Coletivo sin papeles*" for them to hear the stories of other people in my condition. They cried after each report. It was hard, but they needed to know that I hadn't fled from them; I was just trying to build a future for them.

You know, when I first came here I had an idea of what I would encounter job-wise, because I worked for a while as a housekeeper in Argentina when I was younger. But the truth is I would have gone wherever. I would have gone to China, I would have gone to Sweden, I would have gone wherever just to be able to provide for my kids.

Q: What has been the biggest challenge you have had to overcome as a *Sans Papiers* since you arrived in this country?

FF: Everything is a challenge. The language, the culture is very different, even the food takes time to

get used to. Nevertheless, Switzerland is very beautiful. The hardest part was when people tried to take advantage of me, in a dishonest way, because they were aware of my condition. At the beginning, when I arrived in Zurich, I was homeless; but after a while I was offered a room for 600 CHF per month. The moment I arrived at the place I saw that beside my bed there were many mattresses on the floor. Suddenly a man came in, I asked him what he was doing in my room, to which he replied: "I live here!" I discovered that the same room was rented to a lot of different people at random prices. One paid 200 CHF, the other 400 CHF, and we all shared the same space.

On the other hand, I am aware there are people who offer you to marry you, for you to get Swiss citizenship in exchange for a fee. I know of a man who married a Swiss woman that asked for 15,000 CHF. They don't even live together, she has her own partner, but you have to stay married for five years to get citizenship. Now it's the second year of marriage and she's already asking for 30,000 CHF. He is working hard, he is taking three jobs at the same time to save money, but the fact that the amount doubled makes the situation much harder. I am afraid for him, I fear that the next year she will ask for 45,000 CHF. How is he going to manage that? The worst thing is he can't report this extortion to the police.

In the end we would do anything to stay here. We are forced to never look back, even if it is hard. I regret not being able to go to my mother's funeral when she died. I just couldn't go back. This is still a source of great anguish and sadness for me.

Q: While you were a *Sans Papiers*, were you ever approached by any legal authority and asked for "the paper"?

FF: I was once deported, it happened in 2007. I was on a train, I was going from one work to the other, when someone came and asked for the ticket. I did have a halbtax (half fare) card, but it was not mine—a friend loaned it to me. So I tried to show it very quickly; I was nervous and therefore clumsy and it was noticed, so the card was taken from my hands for further inspection. It was obvious that the picture in the card was not of me. Then I was asked to sign as in the document, and I could not do it. At that moment I was completely certain of the implications of what just had happened.

Since I did not have any documents I was put into custody and handed in to a policeman and a policewoman. The man was gentle, but the woman was very rough. She kept my head low so I couldn't

see where they were bringing me, I just knew we were in Winterthur, somewhere. It was a terrible and frightening experience. I cannot tell, not even now, where they took me. When we got to the police station, they started questioning me. I kept answering that I didn't remember where I lived and where my documents were; I could not give a straight answer because at that time a compañera and I were living together and I could not hand her over. I was allowed to make a phone call and I rang the priest of the "Mision Catolica", to whom I explained my situation. He brought my passport. From then on my deportation was quick. If I didn't hand in the passport, they wouldn't have known where to send me and it would have been a very exhausting and long process for me. It would have taken months or even never happened.

When I arrived in La Paz, I saw that the situation hadn't changed, not even a bit, since I left in 2002. I realized I couldn't stay there; I had to come back to Switzerland. Fortunately, there were good people willing to help me. I can't tell you exactly how without compromising the lives of those angels, but there is a way to get here through the mountains. I came back through Italy.

Interview with Bea Schwager

We are profoundly shaken by this experience, and perhaps it turned out well that we couldn't interview Bea Schwager on the same day. We have some time to elaborate Fany's story and to ask Bea more accurate questions. The next time we arrive at the contact point of SPAZ just before its president does. The office lies within the very new and self-governed housing complex "Kalkbreite" whose credo is to establish inhabitants of different backgrounds as well as a certain number of non-profit organisations. She comes by bike even though she is still sick. We try to conduct the interview in the common room of the office, but it is where *Sans Papiers* kids can play, so we move to the cafeteria again. Bea is very calm and her voice is dry and professional, but gets lower when asked about her feelings towards the people who come to the organisation for help.

Q: How long have you worked with SPAZ?

BS: Since it came into existence, for 10 years now. *Sans Papiers AZ* was founded mainly by the unions, the Vereinigung unabhängiger Ärztinnen und Ärzte und Medizinstudierender, the democratic lawyers, and the Colectivo Sin papeles, a self-help organisation of women from Latin America. They

were looking for a manager, and I applied for the job. I was really into this *Sans Papiers* topic for a long time. I used to work as a volunteer for the legal advice for asylum seekers, where I taught myself all the questions in the asylum field as well as the Foreign Nationals Act¹. I disliked the fact that there are people in our society who are excluded and discriminated against: I found it important to engage for them. I also worked in the development cooperation and fought for their rights on a political level. Therefore, I felt that the position of manager of the contact point of *Sans Papiers*² was exactly my job—and I got it. It started as a part-time job of 30% to build up the contact point, located at the Volkshaus in Zurich, together with the UNIA. Today we have 150% working time per position³, also one lawyer as a consultant on a voluntary basis and two legal experts liable for compulsory community service.

Q: What has changed in these ten years regarding the situation of *Sans Papiers* in Switzerland? What were the main goals of SPAZ?

BS: Not much. The law has been tightened. For example, in 2008 the Foreign Nationals Act went into effect. Subsequently, the situation for the *Sans Papiers* became even more difficult; for example, the conditions for family reunification has been narrowed, which has led to more *Sans Papiers*. Then in 2014, the initiative against mass immigration was accepted⁴. We fear that consequently the number of the *Sans Papiers* will increase. Migration takes place, but we only have a shift from a legal status to an illegal status, with devastating consequences for the people concerned.

But there were also some small improvements: in 2013 we gained access for young *Sans Papiers* to apprenticeship⁵. Unfortunately, because of strong limitations, we only have three apprenticed *Sans Papiers* in the Canton of Zurich. Still, from a political perspective, it is a step in the right direction. And we managed to obtain a constant discussion with the State Secretariat for Migration⁶ in order to loosen these conditions a bit and also to apply the regulations of hardship cases⁷, actually most often the only “door” for *Sans Papiers*.

Q: What are the main questions or major concerns of the *Sans Papiers* when they come to SPAZ?

BS: “Is there a possibility of getting a legal status?” In most cases, there is none. Apart from that, they ask very specific questions regarding school enrolment, or school in general, about the health

system, how to get insurance and advantages in payment, on acknowledgement of paternity and about marriage⁸—as a *Sans Papiers* you are not allowed to marry because you need a regulated stay through a resident permit. Repression, psychological problems, habitation problems, work-related problems are questions of everyday life for a *Sans Papiers*. And as a *Sans Papiers*, everything is complicated.

Q: How exactly does SPAZ help, e.g. if a *Sans Papiers* needs a room to stay?

BS: We cannot provide *Sans Papiers* with a bedroom—that would be illegal. What we do is to mediate with the landlords if some problems occur. Having a room is one of the biggest problems in Zurich, because they are not allowed to rent a flat and as a flat owner you’re not allowed to let anything to *Sans Papiers*. So they depend on people who just offer their rooms at some risk. It happens sometimes during the winter that women with children and their suitcases come to our office and ask us for a room where they can sleep. They don’t know where else to go. We haven’t found a solution to that yet. There used to be a religious institution offering rooms for single women, but then a denunciation occurred. The emergency overnight accommodation is no option either, as they are so crowded and mostly available for one night only. The holding company of the cooperatives in the Canton of Zurich⁹ initiated a program to sensitise members to offering vacant rooms to *Sans Papiers*, e.g. during holidays. We, the board of SPAZ, created a task force that cares for questions on habitation. But it remains difficult because at the end of the day whoever offers a room to a *Sans Papiers* makes him- or herself chargeable.

Q: How do you deal with the fact that you act in a field where you might be punished for helping?

BS: Somehow I got used to it (she laughs). What does it mean, chargeable? In the end, we risk a derisory accusation in relation to the situation of the *Sans Papiers*. We are mainly talking about a conditional fine. I consider the fear far too big. I would rather vote for the courage to stand up for one’s beliefs. The risks for people in an illegal situation are much bigger than for the Swiss people helping them. Don’t look at the risk, be brave and cross the border. For example, we once had a person who nursed her dying *Sans Papiers* mother, and she was worried about what could happen to her if her mother died. We told her to care about her mother now and not

worry about her status. I think most people are just unable to cope with this situation: that is why they worry about a possible fine. But we should be courageous—and help.

Q: As a legal Swiss person you help illegal people: how does that affect you? How do you deal with all these serious problems and sad stories?

BS: I don't consider them "illegal". They are human beings who need help. But through this work I realise how privileged we are. And the luck we have to be born here. It is a huge injustice; it's exasperating. I feel more angry than desperate, and that produces the energy I need to help these people, but it's not easy to cope with the sad stories. The worst thing is if you can't achieve anything, when there is no solution. We learn a professional conduct to keep a certain distance, but still, you take some stories home with you.

Q: What are the reasons against a collective regulation of *Sans Papiers*?

BS: They fear a pull—that many foreigners would come to Switzerland. But in countries that already have this collective regulation, there is a study¹⁰ that shows that this is not going to happen. We hope to reduce the prejudice. Another argument is that "illegality" shouldn't be rewarded. And also, that the law doesn't allow it.

They—and we are talking about the majority of Switzerland—simply refuse the reality. Their idea is to minimise migration and therefore to close the borders. So the law is getting more and more restricted. But it's totally irrational and people keep on coming. The only thing we gain is a shift from a regular status to an irregular status.

Q: Can you tell us something about strategies for *Sans Papiers* to achieve work?

BS: Most have friends or relatives who act as a door opener to work. This is important, because already asking someone for a job might be a risk! Therefore, only a few are actively looking for a job, e.g. by checking the job ads with at the largest food wholesaler Migros or Coop.

Because *Sans Papiers* have no access to social welfare, they are forced to work and so they are where the work is. In other words: the number of jobs defines the number of the *Sans Papiers*. Without work, they wouldn't be here.

Mostly, they work in private households, on farms, on construction sites (although these are

increasingly controlled), in cleaning companies, or as freelancers who offer any kind of services. But they work in superior sectors as well, e.g. I know of a large company that hires qualified *Sans Papiers* on a temporary basis because they need workers for a short time and very fast. With the lack of time they don't care about permits, they just take the risk. It's interesting that nobody talks about those people, the debate runs only about the low-income level.

Q: Do you offer psychological treatment?

BS: If psychological treatment is needed, we refer them to Meditrina¹¹, a low-threshold medical contact point for *Sans Papiers* run by the Swiss Red Cross¹². Further, a psychiatrist nearby offers a monthly pro bono treatment especially for children. But schoolchildren might be counselled by the School Psychological Service.

Q: How do they get to Switzerland?

BS: Most people come to Switzerland as tourists with or without a visa and stay longer than they are allowed to. They belong to the so-called primary *Sans Papiers* category: they never had a permit to stay. To the "secondary *Sans Papiers* category" belong those people whose permit has expired. To this category belong also asylum seekers who were rejected but don't return to their home country because of war or economic reasons. Although the group of the asylum seekers is relatively small in relation to other *Sans Papiers*, it is the one that is the most discussed.

Q: What are the reasons to live as a *Sans Papiers* in Switzerland?

BS: There are various. They might be children whose parents have a legal permit but without permission of family reunification. They might be children, born in Switzerland, of a *Sans Papiers* mother and a legal father who doesn't acknowledge paternity. Therefore, the child would be Swiss but is without a legal status. Actually, due to the implementation of the initiative against mass immigration, it is in discussions to limit the permits for family reunification even for EU citizens. Subsequently, the numbers of *Sans Papiers* would increase. This puts us back to the situation we had with the status of seasonal workers, where a lot of their children had no permission to stay. I thought we had overcome this situation.

Q: How long do *Sans Papiers* stay in general?

BS: We had a woman who lived in Switzerland for forty years until she got a permit to stay¹³. But that is very long. It can be also only a couple of weeks...or anything in between. Many come here just for a couple of months to earn some money and intend to go back. But mostly this dream does not come true, so they stay for years. They also remain because of the Schengen Area: it is getting more and more difficult to leave Switzerland and come back. If they are caught, they risk a ban on entry to the whole zone. So they stay here. In other words, the Schengen Area was supposed to keep *Sans Papiers* away—among other reasons—but instead it makes them stay.

Q: What about permit controls at the office of SPAZ?

BS: Before we opened the office in 2005 we got in contact with the city police and asked them for a special agreement on not controlling the area for residence permits. We obtained an informal confirmation. So far, this has worked pretty well. Still, a lot of *Sans Papiers* at first send their relatives or friends with a legal status to make sure they will be safe. It's a real concern.

Q: What is SPAZ currently working on?

BS: I am involved in the project “Urban Citizenship”¹⁴. We are in discussion with Richard Wolff, the head of the police department, to achieve that the police will no longer impose controls on people due to their residency status¹⁵. We discussed also the launch of a city card on the model of the already existing one in New York City that identifies all the people living in town as citizens. A national residence permit status would no longer be in effect, and that would offer anybody the access of all services of a city. The City of Zurich is quite open to discussing this question but, of course, implementation is another story. Since the whole discussion about the situation of *Sans Papiers* is blocked on a national and cantonal level, this city card would be a possible pragmatic next step to improve the situation of the *Sans Papiers* living in Zurich.

Q: What would be a great next step, or what is the main claim of SPAZ?

BS: We demand a collective regulation. Switzerland shall—like other European countries¹⁶ already do—not only apply the hardship case article on an individual level (an exit from *Sans Papiers*

status) but to provide for all who work and live here (collective) permission. That is, of course, a rather utopian request—but also the only one that would solve the problems of the *Sans Papiers*. A regular status would also have advantages for the city—e.g. the *Sans Papiers* would pay taxes.

The European countries that implemented it did it not for humanitarian but for economic reasons. Accompanying aspects like the ability to control working conditions, legal means against repression or exploitation, access to social security and the health system are achievements on the humanitarian level.

Captions

1–2 Fany while sharing her story, Zurich, 1 December 2015. Photograph by: Cordelia Oppliger.

3 *Sans Papiers* are among us, yet often invisible. Photograph by: Cordelia Oppliger.

4 Doorbell of the *Sans Papier* Anlaufstelle Zürich. Photograph by: Cordelia Oppliger.

5 Entrance to the office of the *Sans Papier* Anlaufstelle Zürich. Photograph by: Cordelia Oppliger.

Notes

1 Federal Act on Foreign Nationals. <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20020232/index.html/>. Accessed 05.03.2016.

2 *Sans-Papiers* Anlaufstelle Zürich SPAZ. <http://www.sans-papiers.ch/index.php?id=184/> Accessed 05.03.2016.

3 In Switzerland, more than one person can work at the same position.

4 Eidgenössische Volksinitiative ‘Gegen Masseneinwanderung’. Switzerland’s direct democracy allows the people to launch an initiative. 100,000 signatures by Swiss citizens are needed. See <https://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis413.html/> Accessed 05.03.2016.

5 Under certain conditions, *Sans Papiers* can do an apprenticeship. In the Canton of Zurich there are four apprenticeships.

6 State Secretariat for Migration SEM. <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home.html/> Accessed 05.03.2016.

7 With serious personal hardship cases, an exception from automatic deportation can be made (Härtefallklausel). See <https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/publiservice/statistik/auslaenderstatistik/haertefaelle.html/> Accessed 05.03.2016.

8 "Marriage between *Sans Papiers* is not possible. A *Sans Papiers* can only marry a Swiss person, or a person with C permit and when they are not living on social assistance. Or with a B permit, but then the person must provide an income of at least 5,000 CHF and an adequate flat. De facto, we have a prohibition of marriage." Bea Schwager, Interview of 09.12.2015.

9 Plattform Genossenschaften. <http://plattform-genossenschaften.ch/ueber-uns/> Accessed 05.03.2016.

10 Albert Kraler, "Regularisation: A misguided option or part and parcel of a comprehensive policy response to irregular migration?" IMISCOE Working Paper Nr. 24 (2009). Accessed 05.03.2016. <http://www.imiscoe.org/publications/workingpapers/documents/WP24-regularisation.pdf>

11 See <https://www.srk-zuerich.ch/srk/Was-wir-tun/Migration-Asyl/Meditrina/> Accessed 05.03.2016.

12 See <http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/where-we-work/europe/swiss-red-cross/> Accessed 05.03.2016.

13 This is because of the hardship case article.

14 See Shedhalle feat. Stadtforum. WIR ALLE SIND ZÜRICH. ALLE DIE HIER SIND UND NOCH KOMMEN WERDEN. http://www.shedhalle.ch/2016/de/363/Wir_alle_sind_Zürich/ Accessed 4.3.2016.

15 Matthias Rodatz, Lecture on urban citizenship, 6 February 2016, Shedhalle, Zurich during "Wir alle sind Zürich".

16 Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, France.

The association *Sans Papiers Anlaufstelle Zürich* (Zurich/CH) was initiated in April 2005 by unions, migrant organisations, and individual persons. The executive committee consists of representatives of unions and relief organisations, the *Colectivo sin Papeles*, the Democratic Lawyers, the Association of Independent Doctors, and private persons. The goal of SPAZ is that all human beings, independently of their residence permit status, should be allowed to get their elementary basic rights, such as education, health, legal hearing, protection from exploitation, and social security, as well as the right of leading a human life. In order to achieve this goal, SPAZ runs a drop-in centre in Zurich that offers consulting to any interested person, either *Sans Papiers* or not, free of charge.

Fany Flores (La Paz/BO) lives and works in Zurich.

Bea Schwager (b. 1961), is an interpreter and bookseller and previously volunteered at a legal advice service for asylum seekers. Since August 2005, she has been head of the association *Sans Papier Anlaufstelle Zürich* (SPAZ). Her tasks are: coordination, campaigning, public relations, lobbying, and fundraising. She speaks German, English, Italian, French, and Spanish. She also operated as co-president of an association for rights of children in illegal situations.

Mariana Bonilla Rojas (b. 1984, Bogotá/CO) has a background in architecture and further education in arts. As a student of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK, she immersed herself in the world of curating films, developing a growing interest in the Latin American scene, with a particular focus in Colombia. She is currently living in Zurich and developing curatorial projects, both in Colombia and Switzerland.

Cordelia Oppliger (b. 1968) has an apprenticeship as commercial employee and further education in public relations, fundraising, and creative writing. As a student of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK, she is researching aspects of perception and is interested in combining communication and curating. She works as head of marketing, public relations, and fundraising at a museum and lives in Zurich.

Silvia Savoldi (b. 1987, Brescia/IT) studied architecture in Ferrara and Porto. During her academic years, she developed an interest in contemporary art and photography that led her to take part in the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK. Her curatorial research focuses mainly on digitality, sexuality, and semiotics. Currently based in Zurich, she is curating an exhibition about Davide Trabucco's work at the gallery da Mihi in Bern.



For Whose Own Good?

A Conversation with Melanie Muñoz from the Association Lysistrada by Diana Padilla

While walking to my meeting with Melanie on a Monday evening I can tell right away that the streets are pulsating with life. I am meeting her in the iconic Rothaus Hotel, right in the heart of “Kreis 4”, one of Zurich’s busiest areas, filled with bars, cabarets, erotic cinemas, and windows illuminated by red lights. The sex work legality of the city is evident, but here there’s more than meets the eye.

Diana Padilla: Please tell me a bit about your line of work: Why did you choose social work and how did you end up in a place like Lysistrada?

Melanie Muñoz: My first formation was journalism—I chose my main topic to be prostitution in Switzerland because it was a very interesting and complex subject, and of specific interest for journalism with regard to the one-sided way the topic was portrayed in the media. I met somebody working in Zurich for an institution that does counselling for sex workers. She asked me if I would agree to start teaching a German class for sex workers in “Kreis 4” of Zurich, where a big part of sex work took place at that time. I taught that class for about three years, in “Business German” so they could learn how to negotiate and everything else of necessity. Following this, I was offered a job as social worker in Winterthur and I accepted under the condition of me being able to study social work properly. I was convinced to address to the issue of adult migrants because of its importance in Switzerland.

DP: Migration in Switzerland is at a very high rate—around a third of the inhabitants are migrants. Are you informed about the percentage of sex workers among them?

MM: We don’t have exact numbers because, of course, we don’t reach every single sex worker. The well-settled, professional sex workers with permission are not reached by us because they work

privately in their apartments. But the people we meet, mainly in the streets, are practically all migrants.

DP: As far as I understand in the Canton of Zurich, sex work laws are stricter than in others. In the Canton of Solothurn, these strict laws haven’t reached them yet. Is this the reason why Lysistrada is located in Solothurn?

MM: We are about fifty people involved throughout all of Switzerland, providing a lot of volunteering work. As you mention, there are a lot of strict laws and Solothurn will get one next year. But regulations can be important at some point. The association is formed by a committee of five women, and they are working as volunteers. Me and my colleague are the only ones earning a regular salary, because we do the basic work, and I am the Project Manager. The volunteers do the strategic work for our association, and that’s important because since they are volunteers, the government is not allowed to dictate to them what to say or not to say. I guess there’s the same problem everywhere; we have a saying in German for that: “You never bite the hand that feeds you”. So the government cannot tell us to keep our opinions silent, because the committee is working independently. We’re a bunch of women working together, and we’re having a great time.

DP: Can you give an example of the laws that are restricting sex work? What is the main obstacle?

MM: The biggest problem is that the Swiss government confuses prostitution with human trafficking, but the one doesn’t have anything to do with the other. Furthermore, politicians always claim to provide those laws to protect women, but in the end it doesn’t have anything to do with protection because those are migrant laws. Actually, it is a legal way to restrict the number of women allowed to

work here. Because women from poorer countries outside the European Union don't even get here legally, unless they get married. I'm talking about the percentage of rather poor women who have to work to support a family, etc., and the officials say: "Because they are from a poor country they are dependent. That's why they have to have a regular working contract – and a boss". This is kind of ridiculous.

DP: But pimping is prohibited, isn't it? Or is it tolerated in a grey area?

MM: Pimping is not forbidden anymore; what is forbidden is to push somebody into prostitution, but one can be a manager of a prostitute if she chooses to have one. The difficulty among the whole issue is the administration: the affected are mostly women who don't speak the language (German, or Swiss German in this case). In the Canton of Solothurn they can work independently in street prostitution, otherwise they would need a work contract, and that's the point: under federal law a contract between a sex worker and a client is immoral, but a lot of regional governments ask for contracts between a sex worker and a business owner. In every Canton, such contracts are running but we know it's a farce because there is no job description. Every woman has to be working of her own free will, and decide for herself what she's willing to do or not. That's one of the main problems, that most women cannot manage these complicated administration issues, so they have to pay somebody who usually asks for a lot of money to do it. And it's also the same with the tax forms. Here is when the pimps come into action: men with a lot of imagination in making a business out of it.

DP: I would like to focus now on Lysistrada: What kind of support do you provide by taking into consideration the mentioned problems?

MM: Lysistrada is a street work organisation, which means that we can only visit places where women are at work: clubs, bars, wellness centres, private apartments, the streets. They cannot show up at our office even if it would be more helpful for them to come to us with all their paperwork; but right now we are only doing street work. We call this "door opener". We talk to these women about health and prevention, that's easy to understand. We deliver condoms and working material in many languages. But we also tell them little tricks that we have learned from other women and make sure they know that we

don't have a moral problem with sex work as many other people working in the field have. Religious groups are telling them that god doesn't approve of what they are doing, that it is wrong, etc... We always have to convince them first that we are not religious, nor from the government or the police, and that we do not hold any control function. Then when we have their trust, they open their doors to us. At the working place itself—surrounded by their bosses and other girls—they cannot speak to us directly, so they reach us later by a call or an e-mail. On site, we work with so-called mediators. We didn't invent this wording but adopted it from the National AIDS Federation, a Swiss association. The mediator women are like cultural mediators and speak the language of the sex workers. All in all our work is very much based on personal relationships.

DP: Do you help them in any way with providing health and/or legal counselling? What can a sex worker do in the event she needs assistance?

MM: For example, health is a very easy subject. In Zurich, there is a wonderful institution where they can have medical studies done or abortions for very little money. What we can offer them is a pretty good contact list with doctors all over the Canton of Solothurn. We explain to the doctors what the sex workers do and need so they're ready to welcome them with any further administration problems. They can go there anonymously if they want to and also, if they don't have a permit or insurance, so if somebody is there illegally or doesn't have insurance she can go there, no problem and no questions asked. Another possibility we offer is *triage*, which means that if we cannot help immediately because we are doing street work, we try to send the person to the place/organisation where they can help. All the organisations in Switzerland that have to do with sex work are all working together; we have unions all over the country, we know each other, we know the institutions, we know who speaks which language, where can we send somebody regarding which problem, etc.

This top organisation is called Prokore—it is a Swiss association and a network, so all organisations in Switzerland that deal with sex work are members. I have been part of the committee for many years—there I do my volunteer work, and we organize a lot of work in groups with different subjects, we do political stuff, we get in touch with the Swiss counselors if there's something that they're trying to do. We are militant.

DP: Switzerland is a privileged country. It is one of the very few countries legalizing prostitution. Have you ever worked with countries where sex work is illegal?

MM: Yes, I had a close exchange with Sweden because it was said that Sweden had some good solutions concerning prostitution, and by experience I can say that this is not true at all! In Sweden, prostitution is immoral and the women in prostitution are treated as victims and not as an active subject that can decide. Since every sex worker in Sweden is called a victim, and since they do not want to punish victims they would not forbid prostitution, but they punish the clients, which is ridiculous. Switzerland recently did consider following the Sweden model, but fortunately we did a great job so it didn't have to come to that, and we reached the goal. Now it has been decided that Switzerland will not go for this Sweden model, but they are reinforcing regulations, which wouldn't be a bad thing actually if there wasn't such a strict regulation for migrants. This issue is not about prostitution but about migration, because they don't want to encourage people to come to Switzerland.

On the one hand, there are the women from Latin America, Russia, Asia, and Africa who are allowed to work legally in cabarets as dancers. There, the women possess a contract to dance, but they have to do it naked. They also have to drink a lot with the guests to make more money. That drives us to another absurd fact: because animating somebody to drink alcohol is illegal, but everybody knows that cabaret dancers also make additional money by animating clients to consume champagne. To understand my point: the work in the cabaret was the only sex work that was regulated with contracts and specific laws. But as the government knew that there is animation to alcohol and there is prostitution in cabarets, even WITH laws they decided they could not protect those dancers regardless of the regulations. They decided that migrant women from outside Europe are not allowed anymore as cabaret dancers in this country. But at the same time, they are doing a lot of regulation in sex work, which is a big contradiction, right? We had a regulated part, and it didn't work. Now we are trying to tell them again and again to not regulate so much because it's going to provoke the opposite of what they want.

On the other hand, there are sex workers from the European Union allowed to work independently. In Solothurn, the streets are the only place where the police do not ask for a working contract, but just with the flexible movement of residents of the Euro-

pean Union that allows them to work only ninety days a year. This regulation is part of the bilateral contracts between Switzerland and the EU, with the effect that most of those women who work here for ninety days don't live here permanently. They have their families in their countries like Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Germany. They move back and forth and leave their children behind and come here only to make money.

DP: Is there an utopian idea of how sex work could become an accepted profession within this society? What would be the "perfect world" for an either migrant or Swiss sex worker?

MM: I guess the perfect world would be one without prostitution. But then the world itself is far from perfect. At this point, I usually like to ask people to define prostitution. Where does it begin? Where does it end? We do have this pictures in our minds that the prostitution act is the sexual act and that the person gets money for that, but I think there are probably marriages where women do a lot to keep the peace at home. I think it would be worth rethinking who is a prostitute and why.

DP: The name *Lysistrada* comes from a comedy by Aristophanes and talks about how women were in control of men by restricting or allowing, being completely in control of sex, and this way they would negotiate things to keep the peace while being empowered. Is that the organisation's motto?

MM: Exactly. The utopia would be that every person who decided, under any circumstances, to become a sex worker in Switzerland for whatever reason—and most of the reasons are economic—has the possibility to work in safe, good, and independent conditions. That society respects and recognizes that decision. Most of them have children, family, hopes, and dreams, and the utopia would be that anyone who decides to do sex work should have good conditions without any pressure. This way each one could decide on the service she's offering, reject clients, and negotiate the price of the service. For our organisation, these are the three essential things for free and independent working of the "free will" nature. Sex work is a social reality and actually fits perfectly into capitalism; it has always existed and it will keep on existing. I just wish they could work in conditions where they can stay healthy, physically and psychologically, and to achieve this, they need social recognition.

DP: Right, they should always be protected...

MM: Right, but the acceptance of society is the most important. As long as the society doesn't accept sex work for moral reasons, a sex worker will never be able to have the same access to the world as other members of our society have.

DP: Do you think Switzerland is far from this utopia or do you see it in the near future?

MM: Switzerland was closer to that some years ago, but then it became more of a migration politic instead of sex work politic. Sadly, Switzerland is drifting away from that utopian concept. Although sex work is legal and will stay legal, probably relevant organisations will receive less funding money, unfortunately, even if we are the ones who have access to those women. This trend does not only apply only to Switzerland, it's all over Europe that we—society—are getting very “moral” again.

DP: In the face of the recent Swiss Council elections, the right wing occupies the majority of the seats in the parliament. Why this turning point?

MM: This trend has been going on for years—the right-wing parties take advantage of the people's fears. Since Switzerland is a rich country, it seems that its citizens have something to lose. Especially in this recent election, we could see that the right-wing politicians didn't have to struggle too much because the war in Syria and the arrival of the refugees helped them to ensure that people were even more scared, so it was easy this time for those parties to win. That's my opinion.

DP: What are your future plans or projects?

MM: What I see after all these years is that it is very important to make-our association work. What I learned is that if you want to do a good job for sex workers, you need to deal with politics. At the beginning I didn't know this, and all I wanted was to do social work and help empowering those women. But this is not enough: you need to battle in politics, because what we want to change is not the sex work but to make society accept it. That is political work and engagement—and it has to be done for free in order to not be politically punished. To provide good work in issues like migration or sex work, you have to act politically and show volunteering engagement.

DP: Would you like to become a politician?

MM: No, I would never become a politician because I like to be on the other side—on the side of the human beings who have to deal with the consequences of others' political decisions. There, I think, I can do something that can change this world a little bit. Beside this, I don't like to do an office job; I feel more comfortable sharing my working time with sex workers than with decision makers.

DP: Probably with the new media generation, which is growing with fast, unlimited, and individual access to information, such issues may change for the better. The digital era may help enable more tolerance around homosexuality, sex work, and women's rights, or against racism.

MM: We have to believe in the fact that such a future is reachable. I'm scared that it's going the other way globally because the world is changing right now; we are living in a very impetuous moment. It is a good thing that all those people are coming because they decided to no longer accept the suffering in their countries; it's a good thing that they are moving. But on the other hand, there is a settled society and that may clash. So usually these migration waves provoke a strict politic on migration in the well-settled countries as a consequence, because they want to conserve what they are used to having and they don't see that we are all part of the same planet. If we are living in a very rich country, it has a lot to do with the things happening out there, in other countries. I'm not too optimistic, but that doesn't matter, we keep on going and working hard!

DP: And that makes this mission even more admirable.

Captions

1 “Women's fight now!” Graffiti in the neighbourhood of Zurich's Langstrasse, April 2016. Photograph by: Diana Padilla.

2 “We must fight stigmatization and criminalization of sex workers”. Graffiti at a construction site on Zurich's Langstrasse, April 2016. Photograph by: Diana Padilla.

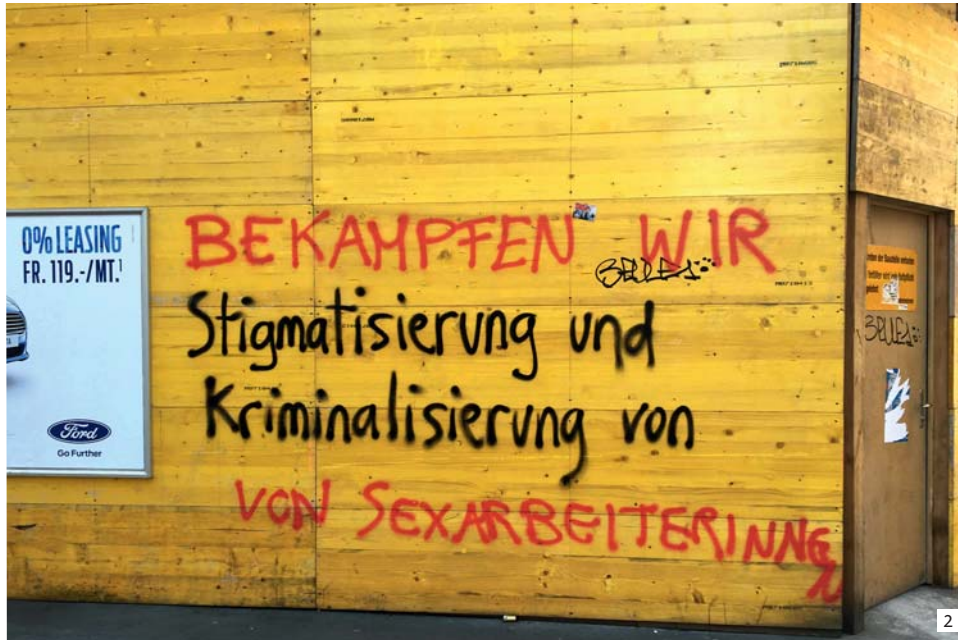
3 Nightclub on Zurich's Sihlhallenstrasse, in the neighbourhood of the Langstrasse, April 2016. Photograph by: Diana Padilla.

Lysistrada (Solothurn/CH) is a non-profit organisation whose professional approach is the empowerment of sex workers. The staff regularly visits sex workers all over the Canton of Solothurn to talk about health, prevention, and legal counselling. They offer access to anonymous medical counselling and prevention materials, and triage them to other organisations in case the problem can't be solved immediately. The committee works voluntarily, and the motivation for this work and the organisation's self-conception is that sex work is a social reality. Lysistrada seeks to ensure that the professional conditions of sex workers are as humane and equitable as those of all working people.

Melanie Muñoz (b. 1975) is a social worker who has been living in Zurich for twenty years, and for the same period of time she has been highly interested in the very complex subject of female sex work that connects sociology, politics, economy, society, gender, and sexuality.

Diana Padilla (b. 1990 Mexico City/MX) holds a Bachelor in Fine Arts from the Santa Fe University of Art and Design. She was part of the organisation One Billion Rising New Mexico, which focuses on the abolition of violence towards women and children. Her practice revolves around art education and socio-political art. She currently lives in Zurich and studies at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.





ELDORADO – Where Would You Search for It?

Vreni Spieser in Conversation with Silvia Converso

Vreni Spieser is an artist who works with installation and performance, often in relation to architecture, often in ways that are temporary or impermanent. Her works generate a break with the centuries-old Eurocentric view of the world to adopt a postcolonial perspective. A central theme in this task is her interest in ornament, itself a product of migration, adaptation, and transformation. She creates alternative spaces that can be read as a counter-position within our culture, where critical reflection on what already exists is possible and the imaginary of an alternative possible life can be realized.

Silvia Converso: Your artistic practice can be altogether inscribed within your project called ELDORADO. Could you please tell about this project? How does it reflect your travels together with your various artistic projects that you develop in the countries you visit?

Vreni Spieser: It's a bit difficult to give a short answer. I decided to give my working practice this big title ELDORADO when I stayed in Argentina for half a year in 2009. Before travelling there, I participated in an artist residency in France, in Rouen, in the so-called "banlieue", where mostly people from Maghreb and Western Africa live. I tried to involve them into my work and it was kind of successful, especially with of a group of women from Senegal and Mauritania. I did some sort of dancing project and for the closing night of my residency, I organised a performance in the public space where I invited everybody to dance with me and with their own headsets with music. So I spontaneously gave this performance the title ELDORADO. In that moment it was a naive approach, since I did not think too much about the meaning of ELDORADO. It was rather more in the sense of a place for adventure, a place where you can do whatever you like. For me it felt more like dancing during the night-time with a lot of people I met during those two months. It was

like transforming this place for half an hour with a very simple action. So that was the first time I used this expression. Then, shortly after France, I travelled to Argentina, to Buenos Aires, and I still had all those memories and the experience with mainly African women.

I spent a lot of time there, and I was thinking a lot about my work in the past ten years, this journey in France, the current time in Buenos Aires and then back in the 1980s, beginning of the 1990s when I travelled to Western Africa, as I was married twice to a man from that region. Considering all these experiences in my life, I gathered a lot of knowledge about many things, and I was very much involved in the migration issue because of my African husband. Hence all these aspects, alongside my interest in patterns, which is connected with the production of textiles, which is connected with sea ferries, which is connected with Europeans travelling all over, with the story of slavery, and then and then and then, so I thought, if I give all this the title ELDORADO, it's like a big bracket, a big picture, and it gives me the freedom to work. It's as if this term allows me just to continue to research and explore, plus it visually also includes my own biography. I still don't exactly know how to research it, but it's a never-ending research process.

SC: How would you now relate your project ELDORADO with the question of borders and migration that has lately become a more and more burning issue according to many points of view?

VS: Since the late 1980s, I have always been reading about the migration theme, especially about Western Africa, as I experienced this region myself and I also met people there so I am able to understand the context in a way. Sometimes for me it's a bit annoying because of the media—it looks as if it's a new phenomenon, but it's not new at all. I am very much interested in migration but I don't want to work only on migration in a narrow sense. I don't

know, for example, anything about Syria but now I do because of the newspapers, and I have therefore more access to it automatically. So I just continue the way I have always been working.

SC: In the past months you had the chance to closely work and do workshops with migrants and intervene in the public space where they stayed in Belgrade and do activities with them at a camp in Athens. Can you tell us about this experience? Was it the first time for you working with migrants?

VS: I participated in this very short-term, three-week artist residency called “Sound Development City”, a travelling residency that always takes place in two European cities and connects them through one week of travel. In 2015, it happened in Belgrade and Athens. I basically applied because of the two cities. I had never been to Athens but I had been once to Belgrade in 1988 for one day. I had always wanted to return there for a very special story that I have with Belgrade, as I stayed there on the way to Ghana where I got married. It was a marriage trip to Ghana, since it was the easiest way to marry somebody from Western Africa and allow them to enter Europe. My intention to take part in the residency was therefore very much connected to my personal geopolitics, rather than working with refugees. But on the other hand, I was very aware that the route between Athens and Belgrade was exactly the way refugees have been choosing to enter. Since March 2015, I have been following the news about it in the media. So I had two main reasons to apply: one personal, the other a more political one. This is quite important for my Eldorado project—this mix of biographical material with global history or geopolitics.

It was just about the two cities—the idea of being in an unknown place. The residency participants and I stayed all in the same hotel in Belgrade, and it was next to the park where the refugees camped, on the hotspot where they arrived by buses and taxis and continued their trip again. I could see them in the park from my hotel room. It was like being the middle of the whole story. So I prepared myself to do a little project with two posters. It was basically a very simple gesture or action consisting of these two posters, one in English *ELDORADO, where would you search for it*, the other one with the Serbian translation, and I started gluing them in the streets of Belgrade. My focus was not on refugees. Only the *ELDORADO* thing is worthwhile to everybody. It was just about thinking about it, if anybody would perhaps react to it and give me the chance to discover the city.

SC: How about the chance to get in contact with refugees and share experiences?

VS: At the beginning I felt surprised as well as overwhelmed. It was raining like hell. I had a little trolley, I had my posters, and I was wearing white overalls, like a painter. So I started doing this and I felt really shy. It is not something I do really often, plus I did not know the place. I did not speak the language; they told me it is impossible to get permission in Belgrade to do it officially so I felt scared that the police were going to come and that I was putting myself into danger. So I started slowly, kind of shy while I was getting used to it, and I did not go to the other places. The Belgrade people did not react at all. Instead, it was the refugees that showed more interest. Three Syrian men approached me offering me a cigarette, so I had a chat with them. They spoke very little English, mostly the boy could, as he learnt it at school, so he was translating for his father and his uncle. They were on their way to Sweden, and they told me they had been travelling not by train or by bus, only by taxi. The other day some people asked me what I was doing; it was a group of two men and a woman from Somalia. The woman was standing there and watching me glue the posters. The man's English was much better so he was asking me what I was doing, what *ELDORADO* was. In Belgrade, it felt like being more in the middle of the refugees issue; I could not do anything else without thinking about it as it was so present, so strong the whole thing. Then I took the train from Skopje and from there to Thessaloniki by bus. The train from Belgrade to Skopje is exactly they travel and the way they have been walking, just the other way round. It was stopping on the border, then waiting two or three hours, and then we heard them walking. I felt like I was in those movies from the 1930s or '40s where you see these refugees walking and crossing borders. Strange, but I was sitting there feeling guilty. But then I asked myself why should I feel guilty, it's just like this. Yet, I could not help feeling this way. I guess it is the Western problem, this sense of guilt and responsibility, which isn't completely wrong, probably...

In Athens we had local staff helping us. They asked me to do a workshop there with patterns based on the word *ELDORADO*. But before we started to think and talk about it, they asked me who could participate in the workshop. Ideally, everybody interested in pattern-making, in architecture and design, whatever, I said. But then I thought that people with migration background very often also have access to pattern-making as they come from places where they are used to wearing and living with patterns. So

I simply suggested that people with a migration background should also participate.

SC: What difficulties did you encounter, or rather, what surprised you the most about their participation? How did you manage to connect with them despite not speaking their language?

VS: We had the chance to have a translator from Greek to Farsi working at the camp where the workshop was held. We also had flyers, and we walked around the centre for about half an hour, trying to search for people, present ourselves, and explain the whole thing. There were refugees who were very friendly, kind of interested. The plan was to present myself and let them get the whole idea. So I figured out how big the centre was, I planned on doing an introduction of myself, of ELDORADO project, then a little introduction how patterns can be done and applied considering the limited time we had. That was the main goal of the workshop: working in groups. People were really friendly.

It was not a project only about refugees; we had some architects coming from the outside, some friends of friends, and our group. It was a bit of a mixture. As for the communication, we had a man from Afghanistan who has been living in Athens for a while, so he was translating my English into Farsi and the other way round. We had roughly twenty or thirty participants. They worked in a very concentrated manner: men and some children but no women. We talked about ELDORADO and some knew the word; they asked me if it's a town, or if they ever discovered it, and so on. Then I started showing them how to make patterns through photocopies. They tried it out themselves, and everybody started to work. That was surprising for me and very beautiful to see, very touching. I did workshops with professionals before. Yet with such a limited time frame and with people of different origins everything was very fast, immediate, and very beautiful. Unfortunately, I could not really verbally communicate with them but somehow, with all these traditions with cardboards and patterns that people have in Afghanistan, we managed to connect on a different level, even if they were not familiar with the alphabet nor ELDORADO. It was a big group and everybody was working with the same elements without complications, because it's a very easy and practical technique. You don't need to speak a lot. You just communicate by working together and in the end you build up something, like a house, one piece after the other.

SC: How did these experiences change the way you envision your project and your ideas of borders? Which impact did they personally have on you?

VS: I heard stories from refugees. I have been working a lot with them, but not really talking to them. Already in Belgrade I thought I had to become more radical and just finish what I was doing—otherwise one risks being overwhelmed. I became sometimes really angry about the whole system, making a profit from the refugees and the situation because in Belgrade a lot of the refugees kept on asking me where they could find a Western Union store. This inspired me to create a side story in Belgrade, as you cannot find information about Western Union in the Internet. I could only find one article about the fact that they make huge profits along the migratory movements.¹

As for the workshop at the refugee centre, for me now the goal is not to keep on doing workshops with refugees in different centres. It was rather that moment and that experience. It was in a much wider frame, in a bigger picture and sense—meeting people it's per se a simple way. But you can really also do things together in such an inspiring way. Nobody asks you why you are doing it or for money. It's the moment per se that becomes really powerful, and that's the thing I am always fighting for wherever and whenever I do workshops of this type. I know it's a naive approach, but it's a moment that I try to keep with these people. In Athens, I was glad they participated because without their participation this would have not happened. I don't like forcing people to do things but then if this happens, then it's very strong. I am more concerned about creating a situation and a setting, in which people can fit in very easily and naturally. I think in this way you could do a lot of things. Back in the 1980s, I was pretty involved in Switzerland with this issue concerning the refugees, whereas now I deal with it in a different way and I transfer this discourse into my work. I used to like it, though. I just do not like the tendency that this discourse has taken lately in Switzerland. They put them in some villages or they tend to segregate them in areas that are not really visible. As I said, my ELDORADO project is actually bigger than this, and I still have my interest in patterns and it's also about people with their dreams and needs. I did not change my focus. It's not about Syria, it's not about Afghanistan, it's not about Somalia—it's about something way bigger than this. Something global and totally human. I haven't believed in borders for a long time. I know it's a utopian stupid thing to say, but I think that borders should disappear immediately. It's an

artificial construction of power. But I know it will not happen. I am really realistic as a person, but I like to see it in this much bigger picture. As soon as I have the chance I will do these workshops again, but I do not push them to happen. I don't want to travel and become a specialist on this topic. Plus I do not feel myself as a helping person. It's more about the exchange and the opportunity to relate to each other.

SC: If you could pick 10 words that define similar patterns to your vision of ELDORADO, especially in relation to yourself, which ones would you chose?

VS: I don't really search for ELDORADO, I am more observing everything around it. But ideally it would be:

very big cities, escapes, friends, movement, giving dreams a big value, free basic income for everybody, replacement of religion through ethics, daily dancing, putting a sense of humour into almost everything, living in foreign places, the disappearance of the SVP, cats.

Captions

1 Vreni Spieser, *Terra Incognita*, 2015: Poster-gluing in the streets of Belgrade. Photograph: Svetlana Marchenko © Vreni Spieser.

2 Vreni Spieser, *Terra Incognita*, 2015: Final performance in Athens. Punkistan or let us cultivate our toenails. Photograph: Dimitris Polymenopoulos © Vreni Spieser.

3 Vreni Spieser, *Terra Incognita*, 2015: Workshop (Patterns against the stream or how to occupy the public space in a different way), Elaionas, Center for Refugees, Athens. Photograph: Maria Petinaki © Vreni Spieser.

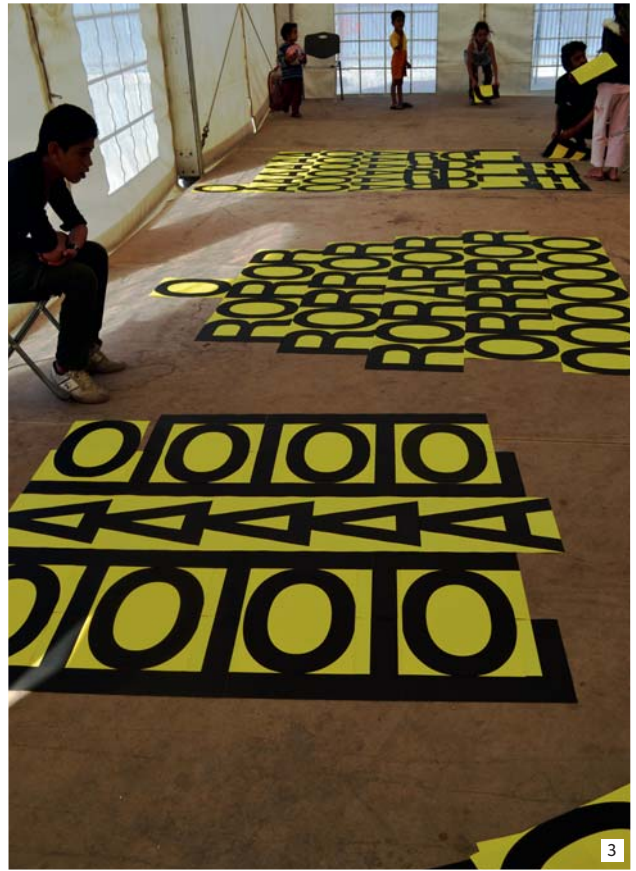
4 Vreni Spieser, *Terra Incognita*, 2015: People and places in Skopje, Adran (Hitchhiking to Eldorado). Photograph: Adran © Vreni Spieser.

Notes

1 Western Union charges a fee of 15% on the amount being transferred. That is to say that for €200 the commission costs are around €30. However, Western Union can be considered one of the most reliable companies allowing safe money transfer.

Vreni Spieser (b. 1963) is a Zurich-based artist who works with installations and performances, both on a local and global level. Her artistic practice can be inscribed with the term ELDORADO: it reflects her ongoing research process that takes her to explore themes such as migration, post-colonialism, travels, adaptation, dance, and ornament through which she creates alternative spaces for counter-culture. Some of her most significant projects are "Vitrine/Eldorado-Wunderkammer" at the senior residency Frauensteinmatt, Zug (2011–12), "Going Public", Zug (2014), "El Zumbido Alrededor", Buenos Aires (2011) and "Les fêtes", Rouen (2008).

Silvia Converso (b. 1985) is a cultural producer with a solid background in literature and a keen interest in architecture and socially engaged art. She completed studies in languages and literature, focusing on the interdisciplinarity of arts. She worked as project coordinator for the major festivals of arts and literature in Europe (international literaturfestival berlin, Hay Festival in Hay-on-Wye/Wales, Festaletteratura in Mantua). In particular, she was actively involved in the programme of the Festivals in Prison, organizing lectures and cultural activities with inmates. Since 2013, Converso has been living in Zurich. She is currently studying at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK and works as a communication consultant for art and architecture and as an independent curator in the field of socially engaged art practices.



The Glorious 7

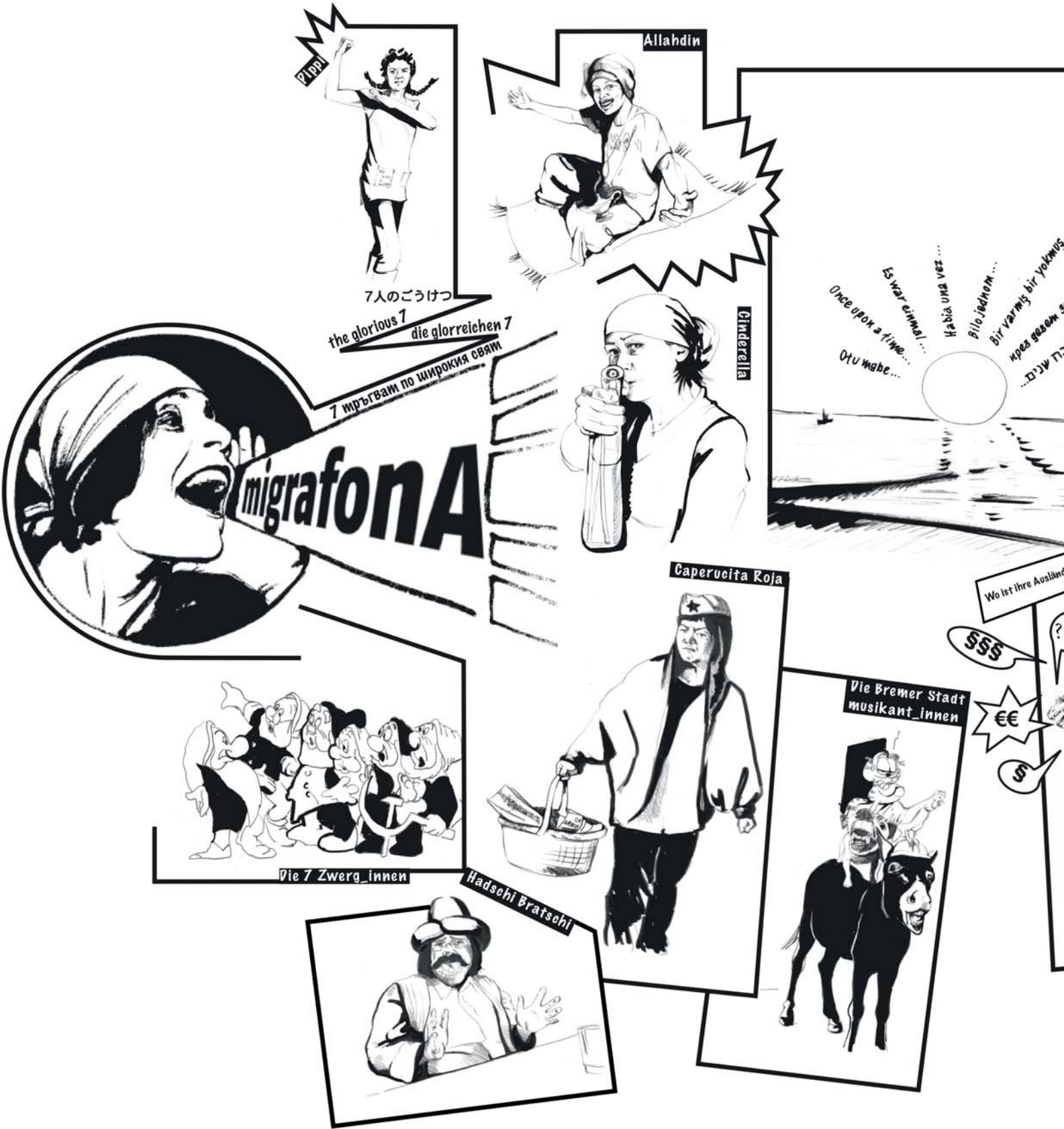
MigrafonA

Making use of the condensed form offered by the comic, *The Glorious 7* criticizes the racist Austrian consensus that has come very much to the fore again in 2016, manifesting itself in the so-called foreigner laws, hegemonic values and knowledge production, historiography, etc. The individual tableaus make reference to current processes of transformation of wage labour, borders and nation states, casualization and pauperization as well as control and discipline measures that affect large proportions of the population—not only the Austrian segment.

MigrafonA (Belinda Kazeem, Petja Dimitrova, Radostina Patulova, Vlatka Frketić, Vina Yun), *The Glorious 7*, 2011 (selection), Comic strip, b/w, A5, 2011.

MigrafonA (Vienna/AT), is a collective founded in 2007 with variable members including artists, culture producers, and activists. The collective uses the comic format to report on the realities of migration politics, national identity construction, and migrants' self-empowerment strategies, and to experiment from the migrants' perspective with the visualization and historicization of current political debates and the transformation of critical theory onto a visual level.

www.petjadimitrova.net/works/MigrafonA.html



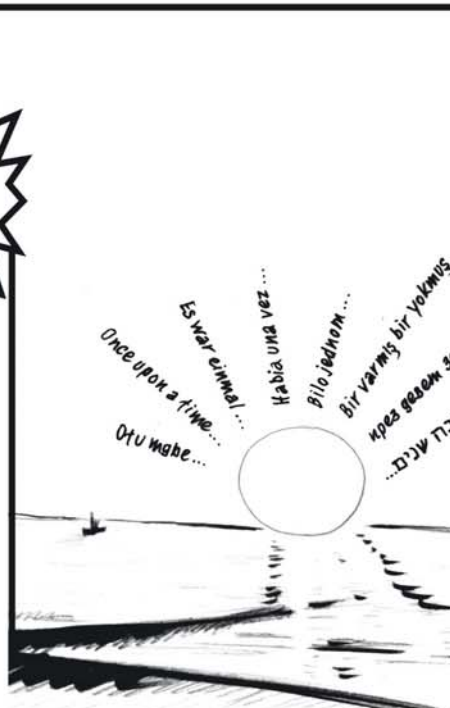
7人のごうけつ
 the glorious 7
 die glorreichen 7
 7 мъръвам по широкя свям



Allahdin



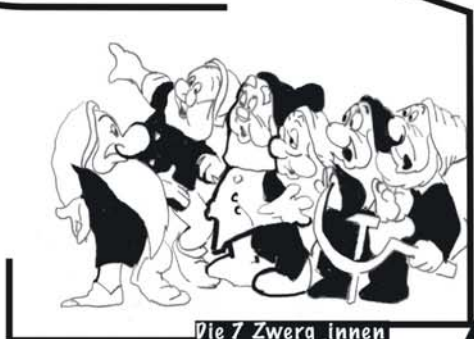
Cinderella



Once upon a time...
 Otu wabe...
 Es war einmal...
 Habia una vez...
 Biljednom...
 Bir var mis bir yokmus
 Kpez gosom s...
 ...D'ya T...



migrafona



Die 7 Zwerg_innen



Caperucita Roja



Hadschi Bratschi



Die Bremer Stadt muskant_innen

Wo ist ihre Auslän...
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Immaterial Labor

Maurizio Lazzarato

A significant amount of empirical research has been conducted concerning the new forms of the organization of work. This, combined with a corresponding wealth of theoretical reflection, has made possible the identification of a new conception of what work is nowadays and what new power relations it implies.

An initial synthesis of these results—framed in terms of an attempt to define the technical and subjective-political composition of the working class—can be expressed in the concept of *immaterial labor*, which is defined as the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity. The concept of immaterial labor refers to *two different aspects* of labor. On the one hand, as regards the “informational content” of the commodity, it refers directly to the changes taking place in workers’ labor processes in big companies in the industrial and tertiary sectors, where the skills involved in direct labor are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical communication). On the other hand, as regards the activity that produces the “cultural content” of the commodity, immaterial labor involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as “work” in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion. Once the privileged domain of the bourgeoisie and its children, these activities have since the end of the 1970s become the domain of what we have come to define as “mass intellectuality.” The profound changes in these strategic sectors have radically modified not only the composition, management, and regulation of the workforce—the organization of production—but also, and more deeply, the role and function of intellectuals and their activities within society.

The “great transformation” that began at the start of the 1970s has changed the very terms in which the question is posed. Manual labor is increasingly coming to involve procedures that could be defined as “intellectual,” and the new communications technologies increasingly require subjectivities that are rich in knowledge. It is not simply that intellectual labor has become subjected to the norms of capitalist production. What has happened is that a new “mass intellectuality” has come into being, created out of a combination of the demands of capitalist production and the forms of “self-valorization” that the struggle against work has produced. The old dichotomy between “mental and manual labor,” or between “material labor and immaterial labor,” risks failing to grasp the new nature of productive activity, which takes this separation on board and transforms it. The split between conception and execution, between labor and creativity, between author and audience, is simultaneously transcended within the “labor process” and reimposed as political command within the “process of valorization.”

The Restructured Worker

Twenty years of restructuring of the big factories has led to a curious paradox. The various different post-Fordist models have been constructed both on the defeat of the Fordist worker and on the recognition of the centrality of (an ever increasingly intellectualized) living labor within production. In today’s large restructured company, a worker’s work increasingly involves, at various levels, an

ability to choose among different alternatives and thus a degree of responsibility regarding decision making. The concept of “interface” used by communications sociologists provides a fair definition of the activities of this kind of worker—as an interface between different functions, between different work teams, between different levels of the hierarchy, and so forth. What modern management techniques are looking for is for “the worker’s soul to become part of the factory.” The worker’s personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organization and command. It is around immateriality that the quality and quantity of labor are organized. This transformation of working-class labor into a labor of control, of handling information, into a decision-making capacity that involves the investment of subjectivity, affects workers in varying ways according to their positions within the factory hierarchy, but it is never the less present as an irreversible process. Work can thus be defined as the capacity to activate and manage productive cooperation. In this phase, workers are expected to become “active subjects” in the coordination of the various functions of production, instead of being subjected to it as simple command. We arrive at a point where a collective learning process becomes the heart of productivity, because it is no longer a matter of finding different ways of composing or organizing already existing job functions, but of looking for new ones.

The problem, however, of subjectivity and its collective form, its constitution and its development, has immediately expressed itself as a clash between social classes within the organization of work. I should point out that what I am describing is not some utopian vision of recomposition, but the very real terrain and conditions of the conflict between social classes.

The capitalist needs to find an unmediated way of establishing command over subjectivity itself; the prescription and definition of tasks transforms into a prescription of subjectivities. The new slogan of Western societies is that we should all “become subjects.” Participative management is a technology of power, a technology for creating and controlling the “subjective processes.” As it is no longer possible to confine subjectivity merely to tasks of execution, it becomes necessary for the subject’s competence in the areas of management, communication, and creativity to be made compatible with the conditions of “production for production’s sake.” Thus the slogan “become subjects,” far from eliminating the antagonism between hierarchy and cooperation, between autonomy and command, actually re-poses the antagonism at a higher level, because it both mobilizes and clashes with the very personality of the individual worker. First and foremost, we have here a discourse that is authoritarian: one *has to* express oneself, one *has to* speak, communicate, cooperate, and so forth. The “tone” is that of the people who were in executive command under Taylorization; all that has changed is the content. Second, if it is no longer possible to lay down and specify jobs and responsibilities rigidly (in the way that was once done with “scientific” studies of work), but if, on the contrary, jobs now require cooperation and collective coordination, then the subjects of that production must be capable of communication—they must be active participants within a work team. The communicational relationship (both vertically and horizontally) is thus completely predetermined in both form and content; it is subordinated to the “circulation of information” and is not expected to be anything other. The subject becomes a simple relayer of codification and decodification, whose transmitted messages must be “clear and free of ambiguity,” within a communications context that has been completely normalized by management. The necessity of imposing command and the violence that goes along with it here take on a normative communicative form.

The management mandate to “become subjects of communication” threatens to be even more totalitarian than the earlier rigid division between mental and

manual labor (ideas and execution), because capitalism seeks to involve even the worker's personality and subjectivity within the production of value. Capital wants a situation where command resides within the subject him- or herself, and within the communicative process. The worker is to be responsible for his or her own control and motivation within the work group without a foreman needing to intervene, and the foreman's role is redefined into that of a facilitator. In fact, employers are extremely worried by the double problem this creates: on one hand, they are forced to recognize the autonomy and freedom of labor as the only possible form of cooperation in production, but on the other hand, at the same time, they are obliged (a life-and-death necessity for the capitalist) not to "redistribute" the power that the new quality of labor and its organization imply. Today's management thinking takes workers' subjectivity into consideration only in order to codify it in line with the requirements of production. And once again this phase of transformation succeeds in concealing the fact that the individual and collective interests of workers and those of the company are not identical.

I have defined working-class labor as an abstract activity that nowadays involves the application of subjectivity. In order to avoid misunderstandings, however, I should add that this form of productive activity is not limited only to highly skilled workers; it refers to a use value of labor power today, and, more generally, to the form of activity of every productive subject within postindustrial society. One could say that in the highly skilled, qualified worker, the "communicational model" is already given, already constituted, and that its potentialities are already defined. In the young worker, however, the "precarious" worker, and the unemployed youth, we are dealing with a pure virtuality, a capacity that is as yet undetermined but that already shares all the characteristics of postindustrial productive subjectivity. The virtuality of this capacity is neither empty nor a historic; it is, rather, an opening and a potentiality that have as their historical origins and antecedents the "struggle against work" of the Fordist worker and, in more recent times, the processes of socialization, educational formation, and cultural self-valorization.

This transformation of the world of work appears even more evident when one studies the social cycle of production: the "diffuse factory" and decentralization of production on the one hand and the various forms of tertiarization on the other. Here one can measure the extent to which the cycle of immaterial labor has come to assume a strategic role within the global organization of production. The various activities of research, conceptualization, management of human resources, and so forth, together with all the various tertiary activities, are organized within computerized and multimedia networks. These are the terms in which we have to understand the cycle of production and the organization of labor. The integration of scientific labor into industrial and tertiary labor has become one of the principal sources of productivity, and it is becoming a growing factor in the cycles of production that organize it.

"Immaterial Labor" in the Classic Definition

All the characteristics of the postindustrial economy (both in industry and society as a whole) are highly present within the classic forms of "immaterial" production: audiovisual production, advertising, fashion, the production of software, photography, cultural activities, and so forth. The activities of this kind of immaterial labor force us to question the classic definitions of *work* and *workforce*, because they combine the results of various different types of work skill: intellectual skills, as regards the cultural-informational content; manual skills for the ability to combine creativity, imagination, and technical and manual labor; and entrepreneurial skills in

the management of social relations and the structuring of that social cooperation of which they are a part. This immaterial labor constitutes itself in forms that are immediately collective, and we might say that it exists only in the form of networks and flows. The organization of the cycle of production of immaterial labor (because this is exactly what it is, once we abandon our factoryist prejudices—a cycle of production) is not obviously apparent to the eye, because it is not defined by the four walls of a factory. The location in which it operates is outside in the society at large, at a territorial level that we could call “the basin of immaterial labor.” Small and sometimes very small “productive units” (often consisting of only one individual) are organized for specific ad hoc projects, and may exist only for the duration of those particular jobs. The cycle of production comes into operation only when it is required by the capitalist; once the job has been done, the cycle dissolves back into the networks and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities. Precariousness, hyperexploitation, mobility, and hierarchy are the most obvious characteristics of metropolitan immaterial labor. Behind the label of the independent “self-employed” worker, what we actually find is an intellectual proletarian, but who is recognized as such only by the employers who exploit him or her. It is worth noting that in this kind of working existence it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish leisure time from work time. In a sense, life becomes inseparable from work.

This labor form is also characterized by real managerial functions that consist in (1) a certain ability to manage its social relations and (2) the eliciting of social cooperation within the structures of the basin of immaterial labor. The quality of this kind of labor power is thus defined not only by its professional capacities (which make possible the construction of the cultural-informational content of the commodity), but also by its ability to “manage” its own activity and act as the coordinator of the immaterial labor of others (production and management of the cycle). This immaterial labor appears as a real mutation of “living labor.” Here we are quite far from the Taylorist model of organization.

Immaterial labor finds itself at the crossroads (or rather, it is the interface) of a new relationship between production and consumption. The activation of both productive cooperation and the social relationship with the consumer is materialized within and by the process of communication. The role of immaterial labor is to promote continual innovation in the forms and conditions of communication (and thus in work and consumption). It gives form to and materializes needs, the imaginary, consumer tastes, and so forth, and these products in turn become powerful producers of needs, images, and tastes. The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor (its essential use value being given by its value as informational and cultural content) consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms, and creates the “ideological” and cultural environment of the consumer. This commodity does not produce the physical capacity of labor power; instead, it transforms the person who uses it. Immaterial labor produces first and foremost a “social relationship” (a relationship of innovation, production, and consumption). Only if it succeeds in this production does its activity have an economic value. This activity makes immediately apparent some thing that material production had “hidden,” namely, that labor produces not only commodities, but first and foremost it produces the capital relation.

The Autonomy of the Productive Synergies of Immaterial Labor

My working hypothesis, then, is that the cycle of immaterial labor takes as its starting point a social labor power that is independent and able to organize both its

own work and its relations with business entities. Industry does not form or create this new labor power, but simply takes it on board and adapts it. Industry's control over this new labor power presupposes the independent organization and "free entrepreneurial activity" of the labor power. Advancing further on this terrain brings us into the debate on the nature of work in the post-Fordist phase of the organization of labor. Among economists, the predominant view of this problematic can be expressed in a single statement: immaterial labor operates within the forms of organization that the centralization of industry allows. Moving from this common basis, there are two differing schools of thought: one is the extension of neoclassical analysis; the other is that of systems theory.

In the former, the attempt to solve the problem comes through a redefinition of the problematic of the market. It is suggested that in order to explain the phenomena of communication and the new dimensions of organization one should introduce not only cooperation and intensity of labor, but also other analytic variables (anthropological variables? immaterial variables?) and that on this basis one might introduce other objectives of optimization and so forth. In fact, the neoclassical model has considerable difficulty in freeing itself from the coherence constraints imposed by the theory of general equilibrium. The new phenomenologies of labor, the new dimensions of organization, communication, the potentiality of spontaneous synergies, the autonomy of the subjects involved, and the independence of the networks were neither foreseen nor foreseeable by a general theory that believed that material labor and an industrial economy were indispensable. Today, with the new data available, we find the microeconomy in revolt against the macroeconomy, and the classical model is corroded by a new and irreducible anthropological reality.

Systems theory, by eliminating the constraint of the market and giving pride of place to organization, is more open to the new phenomenology of labor and in particular to the emergence of immaterial labor. In more developed systemic theories, organization is conceived as an ensemble of factors, both material and immaterial, both individual and collective, that can permit a given group to reach objectives. The success of this organizational process requires instruments of regulation, either voluntary or automatic. It becomes possible to look at things from the point of view of social synergies, and immaterial labor can be taken on board by virtue of its global efficacy. These viewpoints, however, are still tied to an image of the organization of work and its social territory within which effective activity from an economic viewpoint (in other words, the activity conforming to the objective) must inevitably be considered as a surplus in relation to collective cognitive mechanisms. Sociology and labor economics, being systemic disciplines, are both incapable of detaching themselves from this position.

I believe that an analysis of immaterial labor and a description of its organization can lead us beyond the presuppositions of business theory—whether in its neoclassical school or its systems theory school. It can lead us to define, at a territorial level, a space for a radical autonomy of the productive synergies of immaterial labor. We can thus move against the old schools of thought to establish, decisively, the viewpoint of an "anthropo-sociology" that is constitutive.

Once this viewpoint comes to dominate within social production, we find that we have an interruption in the continuity of models of production. By this I mean that, unlike the position held by many theoreticians of post-Fordism, I do not believe that this new labor power is merely functional to a new historical phase of capitalism and its processes of accumulation and reproduction. This labor power

is the product of a “silent revolution” taking place within the anthropological realities of work and within the reconfiguration of its meanings. Waged labor and direct subjugation (to organization) no longer constitute the principal form of the contractual relationship between capitalist and worker. A polymorphous self-employed autonomous work has emerged as the dominant form, a kind of “intellectual worker” who is him- or herself an entrepreneur, inserted within a market that is constantly shifting and within networks that are changeable in time and space.

The Cycle of Immaterial Production

Up to this point I have been analyzing and constructing the concept of immaterial labor from a point of view that could be defined, so to speak, as “microeconomic.” If now we consider immaterial labor within the globality of the production cycle, of which it is the strategic stage, we will be able to see a series of characteristics of post-Taylorist production that have not yet been taken into consideration.

I want to demonstrate in particular how the process of valorization tends to be identified with the process of the production of social communication and how the two stages (valorization and communication) immediately have a social and territorial dimension. The concept of immaterial labor presupposes and results in an enlargement of productive cooperation that even includes the production and reproduction of communication and hence of its most important contents: subjectivity. If Fordism integrated consumption into the cycle of the reproduction of capital, post-Fordism integrates communication into it. From a strictly economic point of view, the cycle of reproduction of immaterial labor dislocates the production-consumption relationship as it is defined as much by the “virtuous Keynesian circle” as by the Marxist reproduction schemes of the second volume of *Capital*. Now, rather than speaking of the toppling of “supply and demand,” we should speak about a redefinition of the production-consumption relationship. As we saw earlier, the consumer is inscribed in the manufacturing of the product from its conception. The consumer is no longer limited to consuming commodities (destroying them in the act of consumption). On the contrary, his or her consumption should be productive in accordance to the necessary conditions and the new products. Consumption is then first of all a consumption of information. Consumption is no longer only the “realization” of a product, but a real and proper social process that for the moment is defined with the term *communication*.

Large-Scale Industry and Services

To recognize the new characteristics of the production cycle of immaterial labor, we should compare it with the production of large-scale industry and services. If the cycle of immaterial production immediately demonstrates to us the secret of post-Taylorist production (that is to say, that social communication and the social relationship that constitutes it become productive), then it would be interesting to examine how these new social relationships innervate even industry and services, and how they oblige us to reformulate and reorganize even the classical forms of “production.”

Large-Scale Industry

The postindustrial enterprise and economy are founded on the manipulation of information. Rather than ensuring (as nineteenth-century enterprises did) the surveillance of the inner workings of the production process and the supervision of the markets of raw materials (labor included), business is focused on the terrain outside of the production process: sales and the relationship with the consumer. It

always leans more toward commercialization and financing than toward production. Prior to being manufactured, a product must be sold, even in “heavy” industries such as automobile manufacturing; a car is put into production only after the sales network orders it. This strategy is based on the production and consumption of information. It mobilizes important communication and marketing strategies in order to gather information (recognizing the tendencies of the market) and circulate it (constructing a market). In the Taylorist and Fordist systems of production, by introducing the mass consumption of standardized commodities, Ford could still say that the consumer has the choice between one black model TS and another black model TS. “Today the standard commodity is no longer the recipe to success, and the automobile industry itself, which used to be the champion of the great ‘low price’ series, would want to boast about having become a neoindustry of singularization” – and quality.¹ For the majority of businesses, survival involves the permanent search for new commercial openings that lead to the identification of always more ample or differentiated product lines. Innovation is no longer subordinated only to the rationalization of labor, but also to commercial imperatives. It seems, then, that the postindustrial commodity is the result of a creative process that involves both the producer and the consumer.

Services

If from industry proper we move on to the “services” sector (large banking services, insurance, and so forth), the characteristics of the process I have described appear even more clearly. We are witnessing today not really a growth of services, but rather a development of the “relations of service.” The move beyond the Taylorist organization of services is characterized by the integration of the relationship between production and consumption, where in fact the consumer intervenes in an active way in the composition of the product. The product “service” becomes a social construction and a social process of “conception” and innovation. In service industries, the “back-office” tasks (the classic work of services) have diminished and the tasks of the “front office” (the relationship with clients) have grown. There has been thus a shift of human resources toward the outer part of business. As recent sociological analyses tell us, the more a product handled by the service sector is characterized as an immaterial product, the more it distances itself from the model of industrial organization of the relationship between production and consumption. The change in this relationship between production and consumption has direct consequences for the organization of the Taylorist labor of production of services, because it draws into question both the contents of labor and the division of labor (and thus the relationship between conception and execution loses its unilateral character). If the product is defined through the intervention of the consumer, and is therefore in permanent evolution, it becomes always more difficult to define the norms of the production of services and establish an “objective” measure of productivity.

Immaterial Labor

All of these characteristics of postindustrial economics (present both in large-scale industry and the tertiary sector) are accentuated in the form of properly “immaterial” production. Audiovisual production, advertising, fashion, software, the management of territory, and so forth are all defined by means of the particular relationship between production and its market or consumers. Here we are at the furthest point from the Taylorist model. Immaterial labor continually creates and modifies the forms and conditions of communication, which in turn acts as the interface that negotiates the relationship between production and consumption. As I noted earlier, immaterial labor produces first and foremost a social relation—it produces not only commodities, but also the capital relation.

If production today is directly the production of a social relation, then the "raw material" of immaterial labor is subjectivity and the "ideological" environment in which this subjectivity lives and reproduces. The production of subjectivity ceases to be only an instrument of social control (for the reproduction of mercantile relationships) and becomes directly productive, because the goal of our postindustrial society is to construct the consumer/communicator—and to construct it as "active." Immaterial workers (those who work in advertising, fashion, marketing, television, cybernetics, and so forth) satisfy a demand by the consumer and at the same time establish that demand. The fact that immaterial labor produces subjectivity and economic value at the same time demonstrates how capitalist production has invaded our lives and has broken down all the oppositions among economy, power, and knowledge. The process of social communication (and its principal content, the production of subjectivity) becomes here directly productive because in a certain way it "produces" production. The process by which the "social" (and what is even more social, that is, language, communication, and so forth) becomes "economic" has not yet been sufficiently studied. In effect, on the one hand, we are familiar with an analysis of the production of subjectivity defined as the constitutive "process" specific to a "relation to the self" with respect to the forms of production particular to knowledge and power (as in a certain vein of poststructuralist French philosophy), but this analysis never intersects sufficiently with the forms of capitalist valorization. On the other hand, in the 1980s a network of economists and sociologists (and before them the Italian postworkerist tradition) developed an extensive analysis of the "social form of production," but that analysis does not integrate sufficiently the production of subjectivity as the content of valorization. Now, the post-Taylorist mode of production is defined precisely by putting subjectivity to work both in the activation of productive cooperation and in the production of the "cultural" contents of commodities.

The Aesthetic Model

But how is the production process of social communication formed? How does the production of subjectivity take place within this process? How does the production of subjectivity become the production of the consumer/communicator and its capacities to consume and communicate? What role does immaterial labor have in this process? As I have already said, my hypothesis is this: *the process of the production of communication tends to become immediately the process of valorization*. If in the past communication was organized fundamentally by means of language and the institutions of ideological and literary/artistic production, today, because it is invested with industrial production, communication is reproduced by means of specific technological schemes (knowledge, thought, image, sound, and language reproduction technologies) and by means of forms of organization and "management" that are bearers of a new mode of production.

It is more useful, in attempting to grasp the process of the formation of social communication and its subsumption within the "economic," to use, rather than the "material" model of production, the "aesthetic" model that involves author, reproduction, and reception. This model reveals aspects that traditional economic categories tend to obscure and that, as I will show, constitute the "specific differences" of the post-Taylorist means of production.² The "aesthetic/ideological" model of production will be transformed into a small-scale sociological model with all the limits and difficulties that such a sociological transformation brings. The model of author, reproduction, and reception requires a double transformation: in the first place, the three stages of this creation process must be immediately

characterized by their social form; in the second place, the three stages must be understood as the articulations of an actual productive cycle.³

The “author” must lose its individual dimension and be transformed into an industrially organized production process (with a division of labor, investments, orders, and so forth), “reproduction” becomes a mass reproduction organized according to the imperatives of profitability, and the audience (“reception”) tends to become the consumer/communicator. In this process of socialization and subsumption within the economy of intellectual activity the “ideological” product tends to assume the form of a commodity. I should emphasize, however, that the subsumption of this process under capitalist logic and the transformation of its products into commodities does not abolish the specificity of aesthetic production, that is to say, the creative relationship between author and audience.

The Specific Differences of the Immaterial Labor Cycle

Allow me to underline briefly the *specific differences* of the “stages” that make up the production cycle of immaterial labor (immaterial labor itself, its “ideological/commodity products,” and the “public/consumer”) in relation to the classical forms of the reproduction of “capital.”

As far as immaterial labor being an “author” is concerned, it is necessary to emphasize *the radical autonomy of its productive synergies*. As we have seen, immaterial labor forces us to question the classical definitions of *work* and *workforce*, because it results from a synthesis of different types of know-how: intellectual skills, manual skills, and entrepreneurial skills. Immaterial labor constitutes itself in immediately collective forms that exist as networks and flows. The subjugation of this form of cooperation and the “use value” of these skills to capitalist logic does not take away the autonomy of the constitution and meaning of immaterial labor. On the contrary, it opens up antagonisms and contradictions that, to use once again a Marxist formula, demand at least a “new form of exposition.”

The “ideological product” becomes in every respect a commodity. The term *ideological* does not characterize the product as a “reflection” of reality, as false or true consciousness of reality. Ideological products produce, on the contrary, new stratifications of reality; they are the intersection where human power, knowledge, and action meet. New modes of seeing and knowing demand new technologies, and new technologies demand new forms of seeing and knowing. These ideological products are completely internal to the processes of the formation of social communication; that is, they are at once the results and the prerequisites of these processes. The ensemble of ideological products constitutes the human ideological environment. Ideological products are transformed into commodities without ever losing their specificity; that is, *they are always addressed to someone, they are “ideally signifying,”* and thus they pose the problem of “meaning.”

The general public tends to become the model for the consumer (audience/client). The public (in the sense of the user—the reader, the music listener, the television audience) whom the author addresses has as such a double productive function. In the first place, as the addressee of the ideological product, the public is a constitutive element of the production process. In the second place, the public is productive by means of the reception that gives the product “a place in life” (in other words, integrates it into social communication) and allows it to live and evolve. *Reception is thus, from this point of view, a creative act* and an integrative part of the product. The transformation of the product into a commodity cannot abolish

this double process of "creativity"; it must rather assume it as it is, and attempt to control it and subordinate it to its own values.

What the transformation of the product into a commodity cannot remove, then, is the *character of event*, the open process of creation that is established between immaterial labor and the public and organized by communication. If the innovation in immaterial production is introduced by this open process of creation, the entrepreneur, in order to further consumption and its perpetual renewal, will be constrained to draw from the "values" that the public/consumer produces. These values presuppose the modes of being, modes of existing, and forms of life that support them. From these considerations there emerge two principal consequences. First, values are "put to work." The transformation of the ideological product into a commodity distorts or deflects the social imaginary that is produced in the forms of life, but at the same time, commodity production must recognize itself as powerless as far as its own production is concerned. The second consequence is that the forms of life (in their collective and cooperative forms) are now the source of innovation.

The analysis of the different "stages" of the cycle of immaterial labor permits me to advance the hypothesis that what is "productive" is the whole of the social relation (here represented by the author-work-audience relationship) according to modalities that directly bring in to play the "meaning." The specificity of this type of production not only leaves its imprint on the "form" of the process of production by establishing a new relationship between production and consumption, but it also poses a problem of legitimacy for the capitalist appropriation of this process. This cooperation can in no case be predetermined by economics, because it deals with the very life of society. "Economics" can only appropriate the forms and products of this cooperation, normalizing and standardizing them. The creative and innovative elements are tightly linked to the values that only the forms of life produce. Creativity and productivity in postindustrial societies reside, on the one hand, in the dialectic between the forms of life and values they produce and, on the other, in the activities of subjects that constitute them. The legitimation that the (Schumpeterian) entrepreneur found in his or her capacity for innovation has lost its foundation. Because the capitalist entrepreneur does not produce the forms and contents of immaterial labor, he or she does not even produce innovation. For economics there remains only the possibility of managing and regulating the activity of immaterial labor and creating some devices for the control and creation of the public/consumer by means of the control of communication and information technologies and their organizational processes.

Creation and Intellectual Labor

These brief considerations permit us to begin questioning the model of creation and diffusion specific to intellectual labor and to get beyond the concept of creativity as an expression of "individuality" or as the patrimony of the "superior" classes. The works of Simmel and Bakhtin, conceived in a time when immaterial production had just begun to become "productive," present us with two completely different ways of posing the relationship between immaterial labor and society. The first, Simmel's, remain completely invested in the division between manual labor and intellectual labor and give us a theory of the creativity of intellectual labor. The second, Bakhtin's, in refusing to accept the capitalist division of labor as a given, elaborate a theory of social creativity. Simmel, in effect, explains the function of "fashion" by means of the phenomenon of imitation or distinction as regulated and commanded by class relationships. Thus the superior levels of the middle classes are the ones that create fashion, and the lower classes attempt to imitate them. Fashion here functions like a barrier that incessantly comes up because it is incessantly

battered down. What is interesting for this discussion is that, according to this conception, the immaterial labor of creation is limited to a specific social group and is not diffused except through imitation. At a deeper level, this model accepts the division of labor founded on the opposition between manual and intellectual labor that has as its end the regulation and “mystification” of the social process of creation and innovation. If this model had some probability of corresponding to the dynamics of the market of immaterial labor at the moment of the birth of mass consumption (whose effects Simmel very intelligently anticipates), it could not be utilized to account for the relationship between immaterial labor and consumer-public in postindustrial society. Bakhtin, on the contrary, defines immaterial labor as the superseding of the division between “material labor and intellectual labor” and demonstrates how creativity is a social process. In fact, the work on “aesthetic production” of Bakhtin and the rest of the Leningrad circle has this same social focus. This is the line of investigation that seems most promising for developing a theory of the social cycle of immaterial production.

Translated from the Italian by Paul Colilli and Ed Emory

Notes

1 Yves Clot, “Renouveau de l’industrialisme et activite philosophique,” *Futur antérieur* no. 10 (1992): 22.

2 Both the creative and the social elements of this production encourage me to venture the use of the “aesthetic model.” It is interesting to see how one could arrive at this new concept of labor by starting either from artistic activity (following the situationists) or from the traditional activity of the factory (following Italian workerist theories), both relying on the very Marxist concept of “living labor.”

3 Walter Benjamin has already analyzed how since the end of the nineteenth century both artistic production and reproduction, along with its perception, have assumed collective forms. I cannot pause here to consider his works, but they are certainly fundamental for any genealogy of immaterial labor and its forms of reproduction.

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Heterogeneous History, a Never-ending Story

A Conversation with Martin Krenn by Katrijn Van Damme ✉ Petra Tomljanović

Q: In your artistic practice, you often draw attention to questions concerning who has control over the conditions for the production of knowledge, values, and skills, and you demonstrate how knowledge, identities, and authority are constructed within particular sets of social relations. That is especially poignant in the collaborative curating project, “On the Tectonics of History”, where you write on “How and where can the influence of history be made tangible? Which intentions or political aims underlie the images that establish our interpretation of the past?” Who, in your opinion, actually, has control over the production of knowledge?

Martin Krenn: “On the Tectonics of History” was a travelling exhibition that I curated together with Andrea Domesle and other local curators, for instance: Michal Koleček, Aneta Szylak, Frank Eckhardt.

I consider myself an artist-curator. The difference is that the job of most curators is to give an overview of several artistic positions, which are relevant for a specific topic, whereas I’m mainly interested in the communication with other artists and in digging deeper into problems that appear in my own artistic work. My social art projects are collaborative, some way they are similar to curating a show. To go back to your question: who has control over the production of knowledge? This is very important if we think about history politics. Who actually writes history? Who defines the historical conception of a country or a state? This is a question one cannot answer so easily, of course. The first thing that maybe comes to mind is that people who are/have been in power define the official historical narrative. However, there is also an ongoing engagement in history politics from below, and this engagement changes the official images of history. The history of a country is always contested. There can never be one

final historical truth; it’s rather an ongoing process of searching for it. This is something we experienced very clearly in Austria after WWII.

Austria’s history politics was based on the myth of being the first victim of Hitler’s Germany. There was also an unofficial and hidden agreement to avoid a discussion about the role of Austrian Nazis. From 1933/34 to 1938, before the Anschluss, there was an Austro-fascist government in power, which was conservative and dictatorial. This government was against Hitler and his plan that Austria should become part of the Third Reich. However, in 1938 the Austrian Federal Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg didn’t give the order to defend Austria from the invading German troops. He did not want to “shed any German blood”, as he said.

Although there was some opposition against Hitler in Austria, a large amount of people also greeted him and his troops. After the liberation in 1945, there was a consensus between the social democrats (SPÖ) and conservatives (ÖVP) to work together in order to establish a new Austrian self-consciousness.

The myth that Austria would be the first victim of Nazi Germany was born. In the 1970s, I still learned in school that the Germans invaded Austria against the will of the people. However, that had to change in 1986, when the newly elected Austrian president Kurt Waldheim was accused of having been involved in war crimes of the Wehrmacht. He was put on the watch list in the United States. When asked about his involvement in the Wehrmacht, he answered: “I can’t remember, I did only do my duty”. That statement became famous, because it was a typical example of the way in which Austria dealt with its past. But after a while, the Waldheim debate finally triggered a new understanding of the NS time and the role of the Wehrmacht in Austria. The education changed and schoolbooks were slowly but

surely rewritten. Austria had to face its own past anew. Witnesses of the Nazi era and holocaust survivors became much more recognized.

In my artistic practice, I'm interested in such rewriting processes of history and also in the question how to intervene artistically into blind spots of history.

Q: This brings us to the next question, regarding your intervention "Luegerplatz". Pierre Bourdieu mentioned that instead of just being a tool of making a difference, art should also test and provoke the tolerance level in the society. Making a reflection on the actions such as long-lasting project of Luegerplatz, where you were involved in questioning historical narratives and invited artists to participate with their responses on the figure of 19th-century Viennese mayor Karl Lueger, the project lasted almost four years. What is the current situation with it?

MK: In this project, students of my seminar and I were questioning the role of Karl Lueger as a "father figure of Vienna" by pointing to his populist method of utilizing anti-Semitism. Lueger was the mayor of Vienna from 1897 until 1910. Historians consider him the first successful European politician who actually won elections with populist anti-Semitic propaganda. His rhetoric was also interesting for us because—unfortunately—Austrian politicians use similar slogans in their election campaigns nowadays. Lueger is called the "founder of modern Vienna", and he also founded the Christian Socialist Party in 1893. This was the forerunner of the ÖVP, which is part of the Austrian government today. His anti-Semitism is historically proven, but the argument to defend him is that everyone was anti-Semitic at this time...

So, in 2008 we developed an intervention in the public space, and our target was the large monument of him at Stubenring in Vienna. We made an international open call to redesign the Karl Lueger monument into a monument against anti-Semitism and racism in Austria. The rector of the University of Applied Arts and historians as well as artists joined us. In the end we received 220 proposals by international artists, architects, and students. Finally, the proposal by Klemens Wihlidal was chosen by an international jury. The idea of this winning proposal was that the statue and the part of the base are to be tilted 3.5 degrees to the right. This submission was chosen because it reflected the City of Vienna's irresoluteness in dealing with Lueger as well as Vienna's

anti-Semitic past. By disrupting the vertical character of the monument, this intervention seeks to challenge the myth of Lueger.

The pressure group that consisted of us, the Jury, and professors as well as students of the University of Applied Arts pushed for implementation. It is important to note that this was not an official open call by the city government, it was based on the idea of my students from the seminar, and it was launched with a lot of outside support. When the winning proposal was presented to the city government, it was also simultaneously presented to the public. But the current mayor of Vienna declared that the most he could imagine was to put up a small plaque at the monument to contextualize its history. However, to date there is no such sign at the monument. During the election campaign in 2010, the Green Party had spoken out for the redesign of the monument. But the new cabinet—a coalition between the Green Party and the Social Democrats—did nothing. Nevertheless, we published a handbook to redesign the monument in 2011, along with guest comments that put the project in a theoretical and artistic context and also presented all of the 220 proposals.

What happened next was a real political manifestation, namely the re-naming of the Lueger ring, not far from this monument, one of the most important streets in Vienna. Given that there was so much protest around our project and because the University no longer wanted an address containing the name Lueger, the Viennese government finally decided to rename this street the Universität Ring.

Q: Could we measure the success of a certain artistic practice in the public context? Is it achievable to overcome the rhetoric as a possible outcome of socially engaged art? What is the actual value of such practices, both immediately and in the long-term?

MK: We can say that, although the redesign of the monument hasn't been realized, we have managed to actively shape history politics by means of art and have expanded the current debate on memory politics. Also, one result of this debate among other debates and initiatives is that there is a growing consciousness about the problematic anti-Semitic past of Vienna that can be located prior to the Nazi period. Five years after we launched our open call, the name Karl Lueger is seen much more critically—even in mainstream discourse. This project operated at the interface of art education, history and activism, and artistic practice. If you follow the project and how it

progressed, it reveals how art in the public sphere can prevail through commitment and activism, but it also indicates where its limitations are. So, it can be considered a success, but it is generally difficult to measure the political impact on society.

For me, it is important to make a distinction between socially engaged art that wants to change something concretely and socially engaged art that has a political and utopian aim. Some projects want to intervene in the social context by pursuing concrete change within a given timeframe. In Zurich, for instance, in 1994, WochenKlausur was invited by the Shedhalle to realize a project about drug issues. They made it possible to arrange a shelter for drug-addicted women and sex workers, which was open during the day. This was a concrete social intervention realized in the timeframe of eight weeks, and it was successful. Yet, other social art projects have no concrete outcome; some of them “succeed” in only posing interesting questions. The Lueger project also had some concrete results such as the renaming of the Lueger Ring, but at the same time it posed questions, which are equally important for me as an artist: What can you do as an artist when you want to intervene into the public realm, what forms of collaboration and participation are necessary and what are your limits? Should we differentiate between symbolic political actions and long-term proceedings with several actors in an artistic dialogical setting? How can such strategies and artistic methods be combined?

As an artist you can take part in the discourse, and your actions may become political to a greater or lesser extent. You have the possibility to create artistic interventions by doing something that normally no one else does. Having said that, socially engaged art differs significantly from social work, but also from activist campaigning, because it creates its own criteria and approaches the social space aesthetically.

Q: In your work “Memory in (Post-)Totalitarianism” (2010–2012), you differentiate between several forms of memory. Why is this important for you? What is considered a heterogeneous social space?

MK: I’ll try to give a short explanation about the differentiation between cultural and collective memory as described by Aleida Assmann¹. Social, national, and cultural memory depends on the duration, emotional intensity, and the degree of institutionalization. To keep a complex theory short: the idea of social memory is that no one is alone with his or her memories. Each human being is influenced by

events in the distant past (the story of your grandmother or grandfather, the history lessons that you had at school). What is stored in the social memory is thus most easily forgotten, as it is passed on mainly orally. As long as a group continues to communicate about the experience, those social memories are upheld. However, Assmann explains that this memory dies along with its living carriers.

The national memory, also called the collective memory, lasts longer than the social memory. This is exactly taught at schools and celebrated (national holidays), and it is often based on myths.

The third type of memory is the cultural memory that is archived on paper, in books, music, DVDs, and films and basically in our libraries, museums, and archives. So this is the cultural approach to history. Each generation redefines its approach and, as I said before, sometimes a shift in perspectives happens. In 1986, when the scandal around President Waldheim took place there was a demonstration with a Trojan horse that was constructed by Alfred Hrdlicka, a quite famous Austrian artist. It symbolized how Austria dealt with its past at this time, and his intervention is now part of our cultural memory. History and the past understood as a fluent process are based on social memory, cultural memory, as well as the national memory.

In the work “Memory in (Post-)Totalitarianism”, I undertook a photographic journey to different sites of history. Through monuments, archives, museums, and memorials I followed the traces of evolution and change of historical images in totalitarian and post-totalitarian societies. Thereby, I examined the role of memorials, movies, and historical novels and how they construct collective and cultural memory. I visited official and unofficial memorials and focused on their different strategies of design and transmission. Central sites among others that I have investigated in Romania were the Sighet Memorial, the Central Archive of the Securitate, a base for a bust of Antonescu and the Holocaust Memorial in Bucharest, and in Germany the Buchenwald memorial, the Buchenwald monument/the group of figures by Fritz Cremer, and the former Gauforum at Weimar. The resulting exhibition consisted of a photo series and a three-band audio and slide installation.

Q: Now we can say that we are again writing history with these massive numbers of immigrants

entering Europe. Can we still use those terms in the current situation?

MK: Europe is indeed writing history, and it is important that the previous history of refugees and immigrants in Europe will be written anew.

Part of Austria's and Germany's history is a more or less hidden history of the "Gastarbeiter". This is the German term for a guest worker. In the 1950s and 1960s, people were invited to come and work in Germany and Austria. They were told, "You can work here, you can send the money home, but after a certain time we want you to leave". That was the opposite of integration. On the other hand, if we compare this with the situation of undocumented workers, then these people at least got their documents and had civil rights. It is important when we discuss the current situation to think back and ask: what was the image of immigrants in the past? How were immigrants treated? What were the mistakes and what were the missed opportunities? Eventually a lot of these guest workers stayed in Austria and Germany, and many of them finally got citizenship. Although there was structural discrimination involved, the story of the "Gastarbeiter" is also a "success story" in/for Germany and Austria. How would our society look like without them? This idea of differentiating between human beings because of their origin and the sharp distinction between political and economic immigrants must be radically questioned. I think one should learn from history, and consequently there should be a positive approach to the refugees of Syria and other people entering Europe, especially if they want to stay here. I think that it is a great chance for Europe, and it is not something that one should fear. If the right steps were taken and European immigration politics was based on principles such as diversity, equality, freedom to stay, and solidarity, then this would be a great opportunity for Europe.

Q: In 2005, Marion von Osten² used the term "shuttle migrants" for this group of workers you mentioned. We now use "migrant" for newcomers and on the other hand the middle- and upper-class are mostly called "expats". Thus, those definitions awaken certain images and prejudices. How can we think in and of redefined terms or narratives, loosened from any association or connotation, which would allow an empowering vision of personal geopolitics?

MK: Although I think that language is an important political tool, I honestly don't believe so

much in the importance of certain terms anymore. Nevertheless, sometimes it is necessary and really important to fight for change in language, for example the term "guest worker" exactly describes how these people were treated. They were aware of their status, and they knew what it meant to be a guest worker. Especially when you were born in Austria and your parents were "guest workers". You were always excluded from the majoritarian society to a certain extent. It also depends how you use a term. Unfortunately, it is often not enough to exchange one term with another.

However, to give a positive example, there was this group in Germany called "Kanak Attak"³ that was actually a kind of label that fundamentally challenged the status of immigrants and guest workers. They questioned from a post-migrant perspective concepts such as "integration", "assimilation", "being German" by claiming "We are all Kanaken". They took the negative notion of "Kanake" and turned it to the opposite. They were very critical about multiculturalism and the idea of a national identity. I think their texts as well as interventions are still quite pertinent nowadays because they show a way to overcome the constructed division between people due to their "origin" or "culture". There is a belief in different cultural backgrounds, but do they really exist as such or are they just a form of stigmatization?

Although I have an Austrian cultural background and the schools that I visited clearly had an influence on me, I also don't want to be defined as a typical "Austrian". There are a lot of clichés and ideas about Austrian society with which I don't want to be associated. The same can apply, for example, to Turkish or Kurdish immigrants. Some of them, especially from the second generation, don't want to be stigmatized as being "Turkish" or "Kurdish", even though they may have positive feelings about their own cultural background.

In the avant-garde there was this approach "not to be an artist". The idea was to get rid of the rules of bourgeois art. I still believe that an artistic practice should avoid being artistic in that sense. The "non-identification" or "non-identity" is an important concept in modern art. Therefore, I am arguing for a non-identitarian approach to politics in art. This idea becomes also relevant in the concept of solidarity. Oliver Marchart⁴ talks about the idea of post-identitarian solidarity where you can show your solidarity with groups without being part of them.

Consequently, you can also question your own identity. Additionally, I can be in solidarity with someone with an Islamic background although I personally may be agnostic or atheistic. In my dissertation, the concept of non-identitarian solidarity is one of the key criteria to define “the political” in social art practices.

Oliver Marchart gives the example of acting in solidarity with people who fight apartheid: it would have been rather thoughtless to tell the African National Congress (ANC) that they should not engage in any form of identity politics. Non-identitarian solidarity means the opposite; the idea is to show solidarity and to question one’s own identity but not to tell others that it would be false to fight for/with their identity. On the contrary, self-empowerment as well as identity politics is essential in political struggles and, depending on the situation, it is important to support it.

As an artist, I believe in aesthetic autonomy, which demands from the artist to get rid of stigmatization and paternalism in all of these facets. One of the key elements in art is the search for the essence of a human being. It can only be pursued seriously if we try to disconnect and become estranged from our own identity. Thus, freedom of art means to oppose any form of (literal and metaphorical) imprisonment of people on the basis of their origin.

Captions

1 Wiener Festwochen 2015: Students of the Culinary School Judenplatz, Vienna (GAFA) joined forces with visual artist Martin Krenn to develop a memory project around the former Hotel Metropole. Photograph: © Martin Krenn, 2015.

2 Hall of the nation, Gauforum (today: Weimarer Atrium), Weimar, 2010: Inmates of the concentration camp Buchenwald were forced/obliged to work on the construction site. Photography (102x136 cm) from the photo-project “Memory in (Post-)Totalitarianism”. © Martin Krenn, 2010.

Notes

1 German professor of English, Egyptology, Literary, and Cultural Studies.

2 Movements That Matter: The Projekt Migration (2003-06).

3 “Kanake” is an insulting term in German for a migrant coming from the south. This group of women and men from the second generation of immigrants was a post-migrant initiative. For the

home page with their manifesto (1998) in German, English, Turkish, and French, see: <http://www.kanak-attak.de/ka/about.html>.

4 Austrian sociologist and political philosopher, currently at the Vienna Art Academy. One of his main research topics is post-structuralism.

Martin Krenn (b. 1970/AT) is an artist, curator, and lecturer at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. He graduated with a degree in Electronic Music at the Viennese University of Music and Performing Arts in 1996 and holds an M.A. from the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, obtained in 1997. From 2006 to 2009, he served as chairperson of the Austrian Artists Association (Fine Arts). Since 2011, he has been a PhD researcher at the University of Ulster, Faculty of Art, Design, and the Built Environment in Belfast. Martin Krenn has had numerous international exhibitions; his work is represented by Galerie Zimmermann Kratochwill, Graz.

Petra Tomljanović (b. 1985/HR) is a curator, journalist, and educator in the area of art, design, architecture, and expressive therapy. She graduated with a degree in art history and literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and Expressive Arts Therapy from the European Graduate School in Saas Fee (CH). She currently lives in Zurich and studies at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.

Katrijn Van Damme (b. 1989/LU) is a Master of Fine Arts graduate with emphasis on jewellery, objects, and design and is currently enrolled in the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK. She lives and works in Luxembourg.



Collective Identity Provides No Insights

An Interview with Tim Zulauf by Katya Knoll

Katya Knoll: You are currently involved in staging the play “Die Schutzbefohlenen” (The Suppliants) by Elfriede Jelinek together with Gessnerallee, Fabriktheater Rote Fabrik Zürich, Theater Neumarkt, Schauspielhaus Zürich, and others. What attracted you to this project, and why have you decided to be part of it?

Tim Zulauf: The choice of the play as a general topic was made by the Schauspielhaus—even before what might be called the Syrian Refugee Crisis. This text has a long history of being staged in various ways. I was invited to join this re-interpretation for Gessnerallee, as migration has been an underlying issue in many of my projects. There is however always a weird mix of aesthetic reasons and content reasons or certain moral considerations behind the representation of a text like *Die Schutzbefohlenen*. For staging this text in Hamburg, for example, Nicolas Stemmann worked with “authentic” migrants, which in turn produced the question: “How can they transmit this very elaborate and delicate text?” Artistically it is quite challenging to perform. But within Jelinek’s play there is this idea of a collective voice of the migrants themselves who speak. So this has turned out to be the question of my project: “Who can understand and relate to this text? Which audience does it address? What kind of accessibility does it have?” That’s why I proposed an Open Call for all Zurich-based artists to collectively choose the most striking of all propositions. During the day of this collective jury a lot of discussions took place, and of course there were also suggestions to realize all the projects together without selecting the so-called most interesting one. During this process the group Kursk was chosen, with their idea to rework and correct Elfriede Jelinek’s text together with students of the Autonome Schule Zürich (ASZ). The text has now been reworked by and with migrants, and will be staged on this very “Schutzbefohlenen”-day, together with my video-documentation of the open-call procedure.

KK: Can you talk about your experience involving migrants in your artistic productions? On the one hand, art is not their area or may not be relevant for them, but on the other hand, this issue is raising so much interest in the art community. So maybe they should be part of artistic interpretations? Do you think it is something they can appreciate also as an occupation?

TZ: I participated previously in a play produced with the ASZ. Those were workshops together with migrants, where we were exploring what it is like to act and perform a text related to your own existential questions. From the very beginning, it was clear that this work would be shown in Gessnerallee. I was quite lucky, because in the ASZ I joined an already existing theatre group of migrants—recognized or not—who were interested in acting or expressing themselves on stage.

Working together produced a lot of serious questions: “Where lies the artistic value? Or is it just the topic of migration and illegality that people sympathize with? And do the scenes figured out collectively remain on a purely private level?” I find it very important that in such projects the so-called migrants are not used for identity politics, meaning that they “as migrants” are supposed to represent “the migrant”. But how it is possible? People come with various backgrounds—refugees, people fleeing because of climate change, war situations, lifestyle choices, so-called “expats”—positions within migration are diversified. Even I myself migrated with my family from Germany to Switzerland in the 1980s. All in all for me these collective identities do not provide any insights. These days I find it unnecessary to work with these labels. Instead of essentializing the backgrounds or routes of people, I would rather engage with various wishes, energies, and social engagements each of us comes along with individually.

KK: How do you see the situation for migrants in Switzerland?

TZ: If you look back, you see how fast the perception of foreigners can change. An interesting example is the attitude towards the Italian community. It changed quite a bit from the 1960s, when there was even a big anti-Italian movement culminating in the so-called *Schwarzenbach-Initiative*, in 1970. Sometimes these negative perceptions seem like politically constructed misunderstandings that are not really linked to what people are, what they bring with them, or how they help creating our societies. I would even call this a produced hysteria affecting every discourse. It helps right-wing politicians unify discourses and mobilize money and people to vote. Another example would be the struggle of Turkish migrants in Germany. But the degree to which they help develop the country is enormous.

If you look at the discourses about the care for elderly people, you realize even nowadays: if we don't have migrating people helping to address these problems, we may just simply not find solutions for them anymore. Unless we completely change our ideas about living together and caring for each other. But I don't see that happening very soon... Still, within the care sector, we witness how certain recognition for a foreign workforce is growing—strangely enough often again connected with stereotypes like “really feminine caring women from Eastern Europe” and so on. Or it gets completely absurd and globalized, as for example with the idea of establishing German education centres in China for care workers who could then do an “internship” in Germany for a couple of years, help the elderly German society in between, and then are promised to go back to China with this precious German knowledge on how to care. A quite cynical idea of how to use a foreign workforce without any physical long-term presence at all...

KK: Why do you think even the most reasonable people are getting emotional about the issue of migration and its influence on our societies?

TZ: We are living here in wealthy societies that naturally get scared of potentially losing what we have. I see our contexts here as a combination of gated communities with a very pragmatic coating of myths like *Swissness* supposed to produce a collective identity that is not only one of collective egoism. The identity produced there is, of course, not a very rational one, it's more a tool of distraction. Why should the founding myths of Switzerland be of any

relevance for today's society with all its diversity in terms of languages and ways of living? These antiquated narratives are used as defence mechanisms against people who want to participate and therefore might pose a threat to the status quo. Strangely enough, it seems to be much more difficult to see what you actually win through the movements or in- and out-fluxes of people. And probably it is this personal, capitalistically individualized fear of losing wealth that leads many people to irrational anti-migration positions.

KK: Would you say that Zurich is more open with the huge proportion of foreigners living and working in this city?

TZ: I think Zurich has a very specific welcoming culture towards certain “wanted” foreigners. People here realize that they need international resources, capacities, and brainpower to build businesses further. If you want to have these qualified people here and “integrate” them (which is not an easy term—what does integration really mean?), you have to offer infrastructure and accessibility. But at the same time, there were so many discussions about the growing population of Germans in Zurich... I as a German get curious about how Germans feel when they get to experience this “discriminating” attitude against themselves. But as soon as it comes to asylum seekers or illegal migration, where the surplus-value of the human workforce is not clear, Zurich is for me a very repressive place. Therefore, I would say that there is an official face smiling at people who promise to develop the city professionally, but in daily life the acceptance of foreigners is not very high. In other Swiss cities like Fribourg or Geneva, you have quite significant migrant communities and you feel that there is a higher acceptance of various skin colours and cultural behaviours.

KK: Was this also the topic you explored at the Tunis Biennial—how did you come to work there?

TZ: To me the “Dream City” Biennial is a very interesting platform, founded in 2007, where under the Ben Ali regime they tried to open public spaces through cultural interventions. At the time, gathering in groups larger than four people was not allowed. With cultural projects you have a chance to bypass such laws. I started to do research and then went to Tunisia, never having visited Northern Africa before. First I thought it would be interesting to work with the historical spaces of the revolution, where certain events took place, and what the narratives around

these places could be nowadays. But through talking to people, I found out that looking back at these supposedly heroic times is not of really big interest right now. People think that the Tunisian “Jasmine Revolution” opening up the Arab Spring is overused as a way of legitimizing governments perpetuating often the same patronizing structures or enforcing religious manners.

I therefore shifted my focus to the relations between Switzerland and Tunisia. I knew that Switzerland had just a few so-called “migration partnerships” with other countries. I was interested in how they were established and why. The image around migrants from the countries of these partnerships was very negative. So through these agreements Switzerland had the possibility of repatriating people of these countries without having to deal with all the bureaucracy around the authentication of origins—but what did these countries get from Switzerland in return? In this context I also found interesting that Switzerland established internships to share its dual educational system, when people learn practical aspects rather than purely academic knowledge. In Tunisia, they still have traditionally more academic studying, but the problem is that many trained academics remain unemployed, as there is no market for their skills.

I then stumbled over a publication that the Bundesamt für Migration produced, entitled “The Moroccan, the Tunisian and the Algerian population in Switzerland” (“Die marokkanische, die tunesische und die algerische Bevölkerung in der Schweiz”). It includes statistics on the criminal activities of these populations and addresses cultural issues, education, professional training, and employment of these nationalities. So I thought: what if we change the perspective and read this Swiss booklet about “the Maghrebians” together with Tunisians? This is why one scene in the theatrical project I did in the framework of the Tunis Biennial was a group reading or “flipping through” this booklet. I also used two segments of Swiss TV news showing Justice Minister Simonetta Sommaruga in the process of establishing this migration partnership between Switzerland and Tunis—I wanted to see what happens if you upend the perspective onto news or knowledge that was originally produced for Swiss people.

With this work, “La porte portable”, I was also interested, in a more tangible way, in spaces like the specific small library Sidi Bou Medien as a place of education and academic knowledge that also has a room for children’s books. There I tried to explore a more “naïve” approach to these spaces and questions of public and private places: I imagined some

slightly absurd perspectives from the future onto questions “right now”, like: “What is the educational proposition of Switzerland for Tunisia?” and “What is the knowledge you store and the knowledge that public spaces like this library share?” We found, for example, children’s books in this library that are purely propagandist, from Ben Ali’s times, but they are still there and nobody really cares. So, for local people my narrative should offer the possibility to draw future perspectives, which is difficult for them to do now, but not without falling back onto what the real political power-games are—in this case between Switzerland and Tunisia. I was looking for possibilities for people to explore this state of in-between spaces, different times of being active and reflective.

KK: You choose to work in various artistic formats. How do you select which one goes best with a topic or issue you want to explore?

TZ: In this particular case with the library narrative, I thought it is curious to see actors in an everyday situation that is somehow slightly translated into a fictitious situation. We had loudspeakers installed, and you could hear the microphoned actors in various parts of the small building. This is a means of accessibility, but it also somehow splits the voices from the bodies and creates a feeling that the performance is there and live, but it feels like there is a time in-between, like it is not really present. It is mediated, somehow dissociated. But as an audience or as a user of the library you often suddenly stand next to the actors and their acting. And at the same time there were still real visitors going into the library and learning there with their earplugs on. So I tried to avoid any threshold: people could do what they usually do in the library, but suddenly they were also involved in a narrative, in another experience of time. This is why I tend to work more with actors rather than producing a film. Performance inscribes itself differently in the space. It is not a monitor or projection in a space, but it is people using the space in ways that are somehow not usual. You cannot even say what separates your personal space and the acting space any longer. This format seemed adequate to a political situation like the one in Tunis, where you lose track of what has already been achieved, what is repeated, what is reactionary or even fictitious, and so on.

KK: In your project “Caregiving Caretakers”, you explore today’s status of care work. Now that people in post-industrial societies are aging, how do

you see the status of care work and the role of women and “emerging countries” in it?

TZ: I have always been interested in looking at what is often seen in our society as “immaterial” and therefore seemingly not productive work, because you do not immediately see the outcome of this work in the form of a product—like with cleaning and education, sex work, or care work. This topic is very much linked to ideas of value and status of women in society and what our paradigms and cultural constructions are to look at this work as “feminine”, and often something that is not paid because it was in patriarchal traditions always done for free. Then I also have a colleague, Sarah Schilliger, who did extensive research and emancipatory efforts with Polish migrants working in the Swiss care-giving system and how these people are sometimes even misused in this job. Besides, on a personal level, I was thinking about how my parents are growing older and what is going on with them. I tried to link the issue of unpaid labour, that is simply done by someone traditionally, and the fact of the real need for these workforces. Basically it is all about a paradox: Swiss society needs an estimated 30,000 care workers for the elderly by 2020, but the recognition for this job is close to zero. The only measure to change the image of this work is through a certain academicization of the job profile itself. That shows quite well how helpless our societies are in establishing new forms of appreciation...

More generally, I have an ongoing interest in how you stage something that is in itself very abstract. This is something I was also exploring in Tunis as well. How do you treat something like international relations, and how they are formed? In the case of care work, it’s all about a certain neoliberal rhetoric of quantifying and qualifying every single working step, or even singling out discrete units of that work—which is completely absurd and does not reduce costs as wished but produces new kinds of neoliberal bureaucracies. I tried to focus on how I could link these abstract questions with how it looks physically and what you can tell and show about this work. Therefore, it was good to see how the caregivers who came to the performance actually reacted to it. They would start laughing at some phrases or situations where other spectators would not, but look at *them* instead not understanding what could be funny. So this interaction within the audience created a new level of what the play is about: audience is part of this, and suddenly you reach another level of comprehension.

KK: What is your main focus and idea behind your work? What do you expect from the audience who comes to see your performances? Is it a reflection on current issues in society?

TZ: There is a strong interest in proposing another type of knowledge, which is not just facts and figures. But some mental-physical connection that you can use as a kind of knowledge, and that has a strangeness through this linking of different segments or domains of society. So it’s about how to create a new way of gathering people around something artistically produced that is not already known or already part of these spectators’ lives, not owned. And because it is a strange or queer, transversal way of looking at things, I hope it’s offering new relations between people and fields of knowledge. If there could be an ideal, it would lie in establishing new relations in the way people feel, in the discourses, where you feel that we relate, but that is not pure information or explanation of things. It’s also about what aspects of reality you can uncover with what way of using your words and your physicality and your feelings, so that the language is crisscrossing usually separated fields within society. And this crisscrossing is something that I am interested in.

KK: What are you looking for in your future projects, what are the issues you would like to explore further?

TZ: We have all these institutionalized art and culture spaces that produce many possibilities in a very refined way of looking at things and discussing things. But often the very basic problem is the accessibility of these spaces to broader audiences. Much of our cultural work tends to stay very esoteric, and sometimes even deliberately demands you to decode it in one specific way. And I think there should be some steps taken to create more accessible spaces, where you can talk without losing the artistic edge of what you are doing. For me this is something quite difficult to grasp, because it is being looked at as a contradiction: the artistically crisscrossing thinking on one hand, and the gesture of openness or accessibility on the other. If we don’t bridge these oppositions, even topics like *migration* become “à la mode” cultural innovation, which has to be treated only in this or that way. We need to establish some other real formats; otherwise it is just an overly self-centred self-reflection. Practically, I hope to go on with the research work that I started in South Africa, which relates to the question of historical guilt that Switzerland, like other countries and companies, has

through supporting the apartheid regime for way too long. The lawsuits that groups like the South African Khulumani Support Group are conducting seem very exemplary and crucial for many post-colonial struggles: they ask in how far there are reparations and compensations to be made and paid without which a new era of overcoming global inequality and even racism will not be possible.

Captions

1 KMUProduktionen, *Pflege und Verpflegung – À bout de soins – Caregiving Caretakers*. Performance: Vivien Bullert, Christoph Rath, Meret Hottinger, Elisabeth Rolli; Festival Belluard Bollwerk International, Gessnerallee Zürich, Kaserne Basel, Tojo Theater Bern, 2014–16. Photograph by: Andrea Thal.

2 KMUProduktionen, *La porte portable*. Performance: Najoua Zouhair, Abdelmonaam Chouayet; Biennale “Dream City. Art et lien social”, Tunis, 2015. Photograph by: Tim Zulauf.

3 KMUProduktionen, *Striche durch Rechnungen. Zur stadträumlichen Verlagerung von Sexarbeit in Zürich*. Performance: Andreas Storm; Les Complices*, Biennale Bern, Shedhalle Zürich, 2013–15. Photograph by: Andrea Thal.



Tim Zulauf (b. 1973) is an author and the director of KMUProduktionen. At the Venice Art Biennale, the dramatisation “*Deviare. Vier Agenten. Part of a Movie*” was part of the official Swiss contribution. Currently the stage production “*Pflege und Verpflegung. À bout de soins. Caregiving Caretakers*”, an exploration of today’s status of caregiving work, is on. Ongoing research on legislation and counter-narration in the distribution of space takes place within “*Shifting Territories*”, investigating social housing strategies in the post-apartheid era. His most recent production “*La Porte portable*” explored the political and mental relations between Switzerland and post-revolutionary Tunisia.

Katya Knoll (b. 1983) has been living in Zurich since 2015. Before moving to Switzerland she had a long-standing career with a consulting company in Russia, during which she was responsible for marketing activities. She has always been interested in finding a link between art and business worlds and is currently exploring this topic within the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.



New Borderlands

Marion von Osten

As an artist and curator, I am not a specialist in the field of border and migration studies. But several events or artistic research projects relating to this subject in the art field of the last ten years could lead one to state that the involvement of visual arts, cultural production, visual culture studies, and its critique also reflects a growing awareness and demand for the reflexivity in the migration-related professional field itself, and this is: how to re-present its “object” of study. The question of representation in my opinion includes how artists and researchers deal with existing images, terms, narratives, and preconceptions of migration, borders, and citizenship today. As in the contemporary scientific, political, and artistic work dealing with migration, borders and citizenship, different problems of description and representations emerged. Terms, like *migration* or the new German expression “with migration background”, for example, tried to avoid former expressions like immigration and emigration, and also tried to acknowledge the realities of new forms of citizenship within Europe. Still, these terms manifest concepts of citizenship and belongings related to the nation-state. Moreover, they still prescribe identities as different and other towards national citizenship that would have a non-migratory history, even though this is hardly a reality for any citizen today. The question of descriptive terms and methodological preconceptions needs critical examination.

Behind this specific reflexivity lies the main question: How is it possible to translate transnational and translocal existences into new terms and imaginaries, which do not re-establish the concepts of border and nation from the backdoor? What does it mean for border and migration studies and its forms of representation, be they textual or visual—both to be considered as mediums of curatorial approaches as well—if the radical potential inherent in migration, which challenges the given national political pre-conceptions, is taken further and beyond its limitations?

So what can be learned from the field of visual arts? I would like to remind us that, within the modernist movement at the beginning of the 20th century, it was representation in its factual sense—as a signifier of a reality—that got into a deep crisis. To document, depict, and show the existing, visual artists, poets, and writers radically questioned the material world. The idea that a painting or sculpture would be able to represent a factual reality was denied. Instead, the modernist artists started undermining the logics of visual narratives by cutting, collaging, and mixing materials and forms, deconstructing meaning, experimenting with non-figurative expressions and poetic imaginaries beyond the traditional mode of depicting. The materiality, tactility, as well as the imaginary of the visual or sculptural came into the foreground. Another path to criticize the ideological use of realism—like constructed in Historicisms, for example—was taken by Berthold Brecht’s use of “Entfremdungs-” (alienation) techniques to point back to the problem of representation itself, to one’s own involvement in power relations and existing societal and material structures. Deconstructing forms and narratives, going beyond figurative representation and ideological realism, searching for a new aesthetic language, was one of the major forces and excitements for modernist artists worldwide. I am saying this since not only male Western artists were forming this movement, as art history wanted us make to believe, as artists in the post-colonies were similarly

engaged in deconstructing existing traditions of figuration that were entangled with colonial historicism and Orientalism.

With this modernist precondition of the visual arts in mind, it is astonishing that in the 1980s a “Return of the Real”, or from the 1990s onward “The Artist as Ethnographer”, became a matter of fact in contemporary art discourses and practices as the art historian Hal Foster has discussed in publications with the same title. With this article I will not go into the detail of Foster’s arguments, but would like to quote Brandon Hopkin’s annotations to his studies:

The focal points of Foster’s investigation are the politics of alterity in the institutions of art. He posits that the site of political transformation is always perceived as being elsewhere, in the repressed other—for the modern artist in the proletariat, for the post-modern artist in the post-colonial, the subaltern, the subcultural—and that perception of this elsewhere is distorted by a realist assumption (that the other has an authenticity lacking in the self) and a primitivist assumption (wherein there is a mapping over of the other, such that the here-and-now self is superior to the there-and-then other). This is why the artist must resist the tendency to project political truth onto this constructed other. Foster claims as well that anthropology, as the science of alterity, has become the lingua franca of artistic practice and critical discourse. Though this was also intended to undermine the authority of the anthropologist, it may actually reinforce it by positioning the anthropologist as the expert reader. (...) The anthropological model is still what operates successful both in art’s critique of its own institutions (the biennale, the museum, the gallery) and in its ethnographic investigations of the cultural other.¹

Thus, it is not only visual arts production and its history of constructing alterity and its search for the repressed that needs critical examinations, as Foster has rightly suggested, researchers’ and theorists’ relations to descriptive terms and visual cultures also need reflection when they are grounded in the fact that political transformations “are perceived as being elsewhere”, outside of one’s own field of practice and power relations. This is also true for assumptions of migration being depicted in a binary construction of victims or traitors, or being answered with so called “Welcome cultures”, while migration policies are harshened. Thus, these concepts have to be critically reflected, countered, challenged, and put into question radically when producing culture, images, films, and exhibitions. This obligation is on our shoulders. We need to think before we act or speak in the name of others.

What to be learned from the visual arts’ complex relation to questions of representation is the scepticism about and the impossibility of the representation of “reality”, thus the acceptance of the very fact that every representation is an abstraction and a creation, one that leads viewers and readers to see and understand the world in a specific way. A starting point for a discussion is how to actually re-present a movement, a person in transit, a study, an insight, or a hypothesis?

Moreover, if we add Stuart Hall’s groundbreaking insights that meaning is not simply fixed or determined by the sender nor is the message transparent nor the audience a passive recipient of meaning, then representation is a manifold and complex set of material and immaterial, human and non-human actors. A book or film aiming to provide a new account of transit migration today never does guarantee the way how an audience will read or view it, or what political impact it

might produce. Thus, the social, cultural, and political context in which new representations of migration emerge is of similar importance and needs much more transdisciplinary analysis and careful handling.

An example of how we tried to answer representational problematics in the TRANSIT MIGRATION project was the MigMap project²: “Mapping the Mappers” – The Maps took into account that the modern state is under constant pressure to re-adapt its functions and technologies as a response to the transnational movements of people. And that individual European nation-states are incorporated into a larger system of supra-states, trading blocs, which also have the function of “managing” migration and thus questioning the sovereignty of the nation-state as the only actor. Travellers without passport or permits, caught up in the transnational dynamics of this current migration and border regime, might seek a better life across several different homelands with periodic diasporan relocation, and can only do so if they disregard or subvert the increasingly discriminating techniques, tactics, and strategies for controlling borders, even if this may become life-threatening.

Another example of an experimental way to force a different understanding of transnational existence can be found in the work of the sociologist Dana Diminescu in Paris, who is trying to break through traditional representations of migrant lives by studying the usage of new communication technologies, mobile phones, net platforms, money transfers, as well as family Skype sessions. With the help of net-specialists, artists’ and designers’ web platforms were created that show the translocality and connectedness of relatives and friends, that day by day cross the existing border regimes via digital communication tools. Diminescu’s “Connected Migrant”³ points to new realities, living and interacting in several places the same time.

Looking beyond the visual arts context into media and filmmaking, it can be argued that the Camcorder Revolution of the last twenty years has also fuelled the “anthropological turn” mentioned by Hal Foster. With the help of small, pay- and moveable cameras, people who are themselves on the move have been depicted in their everyday experience of border crossings. Thus, with the new waves of migration since 1989 it has been possible to constitute a new way of “watching and gazing at” migration.

The images of travel and border crossings have largely arrived in the official as well as in the independent media and thus became an autonomous genre. This travel image of migration is a thoroughly negative one, as the countless sensational documentaries of border crossings at the external boundaries of the European Union make clear. In these new images, it is mainly men from the Global South, on their own, who have been the main subjects, presented as victims or perpetrators of the border. These current representations of migration have determined contemporary discourse on the subject and how migration is popularly perceived.

These images also frequently contain colonial narratives in which migrants are presented as members of an underdeveloped territory. Moreover, the new male figures of migration also conceal the clandestine, transnational movements by women worldwide. The male migrant stranded at the borders of the European Union produces a new image of Europe itself, which no longer is structured internally by migration, but is “threatened” by it on the periphery.

The *EU external border* has become in the post-Fordist migration regime a hotspot for the “image of migration”, which seems magically to attract both the

documenting and controlling eye of cameras. In this newly evolving way of gazing at border crossings that has been established in the countless Arte and festival films, the fact that crossers as protagonists develop their own strategies, with which they actively respond to the conditions at the borders, is often erased, as well as the fact that “borders” are not at all located at the fringes of the EU, but that the border is internalized. The fact that most of these journeys cannot take place without connections, without social networks, friends, and relations, who have pre-structured the path and are already living abroad, remains cut out of the current “migration image”. Instead of accepting the national container as an ontological fact, the concept of the autonomy of migration has been established to counter or prior assumptions on what migration actually does, as Serhat Karakayali and Manuela Bojadžijev express:

The original focus of the debate that started roughly fifteen years ago surrounding the concept of the autonomy of migration was a critique of the metaphor of ‘Fortress Europe’. An important aspect of this critique was its questioning of the presumption that migration policies were exclusively determined by states and the institutions of border control. The metaphor of the ‘Fortress’ also had consequences for the understanding of the political, and this served to illuminate the debate over the last ten years. In other words, how does critical knowledge about migration ‘ally’ itself with political stratagems? While revealing the deadly realities of the border regime was intended to mobilize a humanistic public against such a ‘Fortress’, this strategy did not address the tricks and ruses used by migrants to slip over borders unnoticed. These issues mostly became the preserve of right-wing opponents of immigration, engaged in the baiting of ‘asylum cheats’ and ‘illegals’. In the tragic tale told by supporters of ‘Fortress Europe’, the “migrant’s perspective” ultimately resembles an obituary—that is, it is assumed that they will absolutely fail. Hence the Mediterranean is often described as a mass grave, and rightly so. In light of a skewed discussion in which the ‘migrant’s perspective’ is only ever included as a supplement to the discourse of walling-off, we ask ourselves wherein a possible alternative conception could arise and, therefore, what political project could be articulated through migration? In the first instance, it is an appeal to investigate ‘Fortress Europe’ from the perspective of the practices of migration.⁴

Nevertheless this figure of an *illegal immigrant* implies in its practice knowledge of migration via third nation arrangements, identifying the holes in the fence of the border controls, the means to become invisible or to become *someone else* against or for the categories of identity maintained by State control, while in everyday life, the illegalized traveller must face the necessity of continually having to represent someone else, depending on the context, without being able to articulate it. The practices of the border regime, the controls, and the new security provisions are ambivalently intertwined with the practices and strategies of clandestine movements.

In this context it is worth reflecting on Željimir Žilnik’s Kenedi Hasani Trilogy⁵ as a counter strategy to the Euro-American media coverage that we hear and watch day by day: after his participation in filming of “Kenedi Returns Home” (2004), the main actor of Žilnik’s trilogy, Kenedi Hasani, decided to undertake a series of clandestine travels to EU countries where his father, mother, brothers, and sisters live. During one of his crossings of the Hungarian-Austrian border in 2003, he is captured by the border police and spends a couple of months in a refugee camp. He

manages to escape to Austria and then to Germany and Holland. The film crew meets him in Vienna in January 2005 at a screening of “Kenedi Returns Home” at the University, thus the context of representation, abstraction, and his transnational existence gets into the dialogue. The second film recounts Kenedi’s experience of his two-year refugee status and his return to Serbia, where Kenedi decides to build a house in Novi Sad, because the other members of the family are in the “process of readmission” and are arriving soon. In the third film, Kenedi is in huge debt after having built the house for his family. He finds himself searching for any kind of work to support himself, for as little as 10 EUR per day, a scarce amount to help him relieve his debt. Ultimately, Kenedi decides to look for money in the sex business. Initially offering his services to older ladies and widows, he expands his “business” to offer sex to wealthy men. When he finds out about new liberal European laws on gay marriages, Kenedi sees prospects in looking for “marriage material” to renew his search for a legal status in the EU. The opportunity arises during the EXIT Music Festival, when he meets Max, a guy from Munich. “But will their promising relationship bring the solution to Kenedi’s problems?”, asks the promo text in the end.

In Žilnik’s so-called docu-dramas, the filmmaker tries out different settings for a reversal of existing ethnological roles in a way that protagonists of a societal field are creating the film plot in dialogue with the filmmaker, thus are directing the camera eye and are also acting in front of it. The audience of Žilnik’s films are therefore repeatedly confronted with the question: is it a documentary or is it a fiction? As the object of study, the classical documentary genre, is put into the role of the subject/artist, the storyteller and plot maker turns, like Kenedi, partially into a film star. Not only are the screen and its visual vocabulary used to show an alternate narrative but the cinema apparatus is always misused to put existing power relations into question. The desire for self-invention and role-playing is put into play. Thus, in some parts of Žilnik’s EU border films, the *actor* is taking the role of the documentary interviewer, or is creating *reality effects* due to his playing in a specific environment like a police station; thus the films are creating a situation rather than re-enacting one or following scenes from the outside.

What the three Kenedi films have in common is that they show *actors* in a double sense: a director/actor in a film as well as multiple actors in and of the EU border regime. It also shows that the refusal of refugee status, the harsh border police, and police in general will not hinder Kenedi from trying again and again choosing each time very different strategies and identities to subvert or affirm existing laws as well as creating niches of survival and self-creation. The “actors” in Žilnik’s films are subjects, with prospects, wishes, and failures, they are involved in deviant practices and are not fitting into national *integration* norms even though they are trying to fulfil their dream of a decent life with Western standards. The question if the intellectual milieu that is depicted in the last film has any solutions for Kenedi’s problem stays as an open question to us, too.

What we can witness in Žilnik’s film is that, through the self-organization of migration, civil rights are also differentiated and regulated into different, stratified spaces. These contemporary transnational existences of people who live and communicate in and beyond different global locations are still highly under-represented in contemporary knowledge and art production. Even though those transnational existences produce a horizontal movement alongside migration, encompass wide areas, and radically question the idea of a citizen’s right to be bound to a nation, the transnational traveller—as Želimir Žilnik has put him on screen—is not yet a popular image.

Instead of thinking from within the national container, migration has the potential to function as a model for an understanding of different patterns of movement and residency that points to a post-national future in which neither place of birth nor so-called origin can be decisive in the constitution of the civil rights of the citizen. This would be a task to be investigated and represented, as well as struggled for, or as Serhat Karakayali and Manuela Bojadžijev have argued:

...[C]ritical efforts must be directed towards developing the institutions and practices of citizenship that are not tied to the nation-state, while simultaneously minimizing hierarchies arising through the new differentiation of jurisdictions. In this respect, an opportunity emerges: the demand for rights and justice must move beyond the guarantee of citizenship. Accordingly, classifications of citizenship and statelessness need to be overcome. Aspects of citizenship that are connected to the permeability of borders, and already underlie their deterritorialization, should be considered in terms of the limits within the concept of citizenship itself. In other words, migrants without papers should not only be thought of as objects of exclusion; rather, their appropriation of citizenship (for example, the ability to organize education and accommodation, medical care and work, despite their lack of recognized status) should be understood as challenges and redefinitions of the very limits of our understanding of citizenship.⁶

A social and political organization beyond borders also implies an unrelenting effort to understand and translate different languages, and concepts expressed in the struggle for rights. To engage in these processes would be to open the possibility of articulating subjectivity differently in the future—beyond the nation-state.

Captions

1 Želimir Žilnik, *Kenedi goes back home*, Serbia and Montenegro, 2003, film still. Courtesy of the artist.

2 Želimir Žilnik, *Kenedi lost and found*, Serbia and Montenegro, 2005, film still. Courtesy of the artist.

3 Želimir Žilnik, *Kenedi is getting married*; Serbia, 2007, filmstill. Courtesy of the artist.

Notes

1 Brandon Hopkins, *Theories of Media*, University of Chicago, Winter 2003; annotation on Hal Foster, *The Artist as Ethnographer*, in "The Return of the Real", The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996.

2 cf. Labor k3000: MigMap. A Virtual Cartography of European Migration Policies. Accessed 19.04.2016. <http://www.transitmigration.org/migmap/>.

3 cf. Dana Diminescu (2016). The connected migrant: an epistemological manifesto. Accessed 19.04.2016. <http://diasporaslab.hypotheses.org/115>.

4 Manuela Bojadžijev and Serhat Karakayali, *Recuperating the Sideshows of Capitalism. The Autonomy of Migration Today*. Accessed 18.4.2016. <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/recuperating-the-sideshows-of-capitalism-the-autonomy-of-migration-today/>.

5 Želimir Žilnik's Trilogy contains "Kenedi se vraća kući", 2003 (Kenedi Goes Back Home), "Gde je bio Kenedi 2 godine", 2005 (Kenedi, Lost and Found), "Kenedi se ženi", 2007 (Kenedi is Getting Married).

6 Manuela Bojadžijev and Serhat Karakayali, *Recuperating the Sideshows of Capitalism. The Autonomy of Migration Today*.



Marion von Osten is an artist, researcher and exhibition maker. She is a founding member of the Center for Post-colonial Knowledge and Culture (CPKC) and kleines postfordistisches Drama (kpD) in Berlin as well as of the media collective Labor k3000 in Zurich. Beyond her artistic and writing practice, von Osten initiates long-term research and collaborative project exhibitions, such as "Vietnam Diskurs Stockholm", Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm, 2016; Aesthetics of Decolonization, Institut für Theorie (ith), Zurich and CPKC, Berlin, 2014–16 (with Serhat Karakayali); "Model House–Mapping Transcultural Modernisms", Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, 2010–13; "Action! painting/publishing", Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Paris, 2011–12; "In the Desert of Modernity–Colonial Planning and After", Berlin, 2008 and Casablanca, 2009 (with Tom Avermaete and Serhat Karakayali); "Projekt Migration", Cologne, 2002–06 (with Aytac Erylmaz, Martin Rapp, Regina Röhmhild, and Kathrin Rhomberg); "Transit Migration", Zurich/Frankfurt, 2003–05.

On Memes, Migrants, and Spectrum

Petra Tomljanović

There is something very interesting, almost pleasing about the Internet. It does not exhort, it does not take stances, but it demonstrates the co-existence of all the possible attitudes around. Google, social media, crypto currencies, avatars, memes...they are all showing us the possibilities of a generic world. Maybe they can provide us with the right amount of inputs and responses to the compelling times in which we abide. Maybe they can respond to the harsh topic of migration; to the unspeakable trauma caused to war refugees; to the atrocious condition where the work is performed?

Let's focus on one of them and try to develop the idea of a meme as an emancipatory media. And maybe the memes, Internet viral phenomena can open new worldings to discuss our responsibilities. Responsibility, as Karen Barad mentions, is the ability to respond to the other and cannot be restricted to human-human encounters when the very boundaries and constitution of the "human" are continually being reconfigured and "our" role in these and other reconfigurings is precisely what "we" have to face. A humanist ethics, she continues, won't suffice when the "face" of the other that is "looking" back at me is all eyes, or has no eyes, or is otherwise unrecognizable in human terms. What is needed is a posthumanist ethics, an ethics of worlding.¹

Step One. POSTHUMANIST ETHICS

In order to enter her "posthumanist ethics" in discussing the topic of memes, migrants, work, and personal geopolitics, my worlding started with Internet openings of different notions of a meme. At the very start it was necessary to show different approaches in the meme culture, derived from different fields biology, Internet, and etymology.

meme (n.)

1976, introduced by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in "The Selfish Gene," coined by him from Greek sources, such as *mimēsthai* "to imitate" (see *mime*), and intended to echo *gene*.

We need a name for the new replicator, a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*. 'Mimeme' comes from a suitable Greek root, but I want a monosyllable that sounds a bit like 'gene'. I hope my classicist friends will forgive me if I abbreviate mimeme to *meme*. If it is any consolation, it could alternatively be thought of as being related to 'memory', or to the French word *même*. It should be pronounced to rhyme with 'cream'. [Richard Dawkins, "The Selfish Gene," 1976]

Internet meme

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
(Redirected from [Internet Meme](#))

An **Internet meme** (/ˈmiːmɪ/ ***MEEM***) is an activity, concept, catchphrase or piece of media which spreads, often as mimicry, from person to person via the Internet.^[1] Some notable examples include posting a photo of people lying down in public places (called "[planking](#)") and uploading a short video of people dancing to the [Harlem Shake](#).

A **meme** is "an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture".^[2] An Internet meme may take the form of an [image](#), [hyperlink](#), [video](#), [website](#), or [hashtag](#). It may be just a word or phrase, including an intentional [misspelling](#). These small movements tend to spread from person to person via [social networks](#), [blogs](#), direct [email](#), or news sources. They may relate to various existing [Internet cultures](#) or [subcultures](#), often created or spread on various websites, or by [Usenet](#) boards and other such early-internet communications facilities. Fads and sensations tend to grow rapidly on the Internet, because the instant communication facilitates [word-of-mouth](#) transmission.

Step Two. POTENTIALS OF A MEME

I propose plunging into the Internet abyss of the terms immigration and foreigners. Suddenly, this opens up a multiplicity of different synonyms such as alien, different, strange, unfamiliar... Could they be seen as a potential for empowerment and open a wider discussion on these very bleak topics?

Synonyms for immigrant Common Informal ☰

noun person from a foreign land

alien	newcomer	outsider	documented alien	naturalized citizen
foreigner	settler	pioneer		
migrant	colonist	adoptive citizen	incomer	

Synonyms for foreign Common Informal ☰

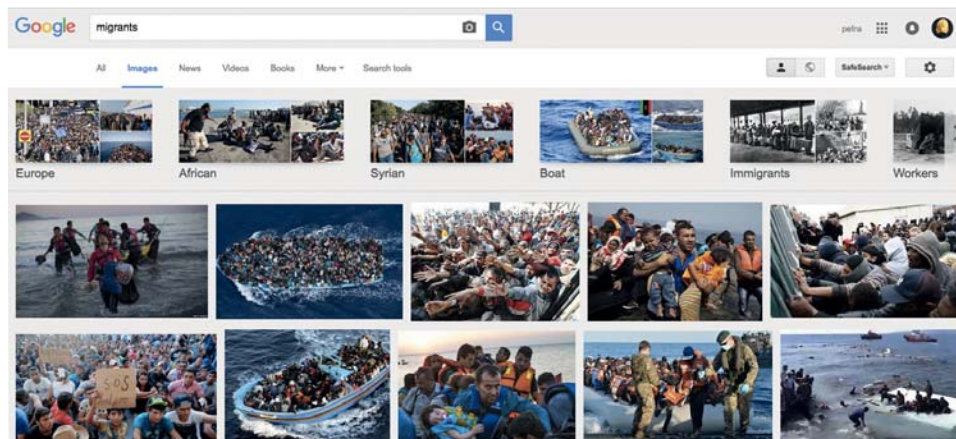
adj from another country, experience

alien	antipodal	expatriate	immigrant	remote
different	barbarian	extralocal	imported	transoceanic
external	barbaric	extraneous	inaccessible	unaccustomed
offshore	borrowed	extrinsic	nonnative	unexplored
overseas	derived	far	nonresident	unknown
unfamiliar	distant	far-fetched	not domestic	
strange	estranged	far-off	not native	
adopted	exiled	faraway	outlandish	
alienated	exotic	from abroad	outside	

Let's see what would Google image search say about the topic of migrants; let's observe the topic of immigrants in terms of the Internet, and how the Internet, as a generic platform, creates an diversifying image of what an immigrant might be.

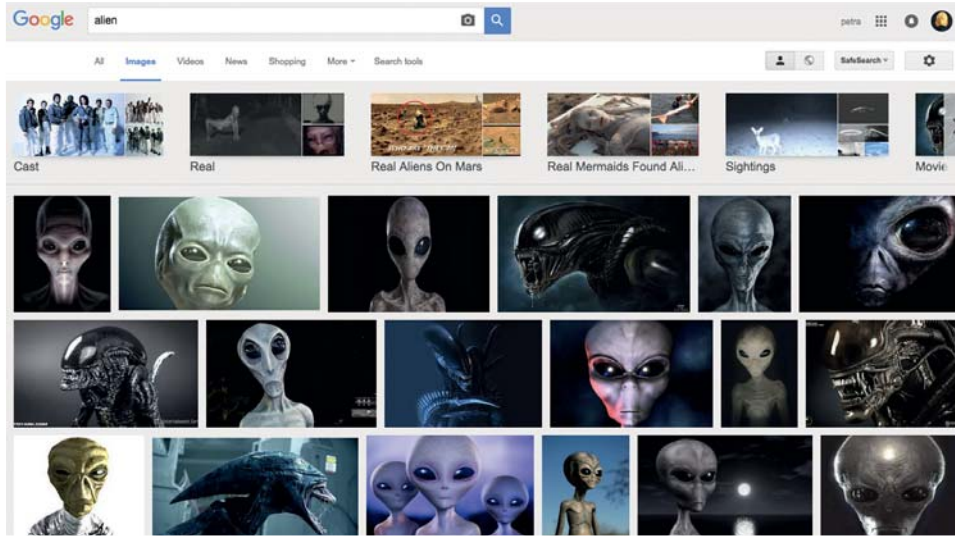
A foreigner alien perhaps? If we take its notion literally, we can use the words such as alien as an immediate synonym of a foreigner. Here the "Xenofeminist Manifesto" by the collective Laboria Cuboniks comes to mind:

We are all alienated – but have we ever been otherwise? It is through, and not despite, our alienated condition that we can free ourselves from the muck of immediacy. Freedom is not a given—and it's certainly not given by anything 'natural'. The construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; alienation is the labor of freedom's construction. Nothing should be accepted as fixed, permanent, or 'given'—neither material conditions nor social forms.²

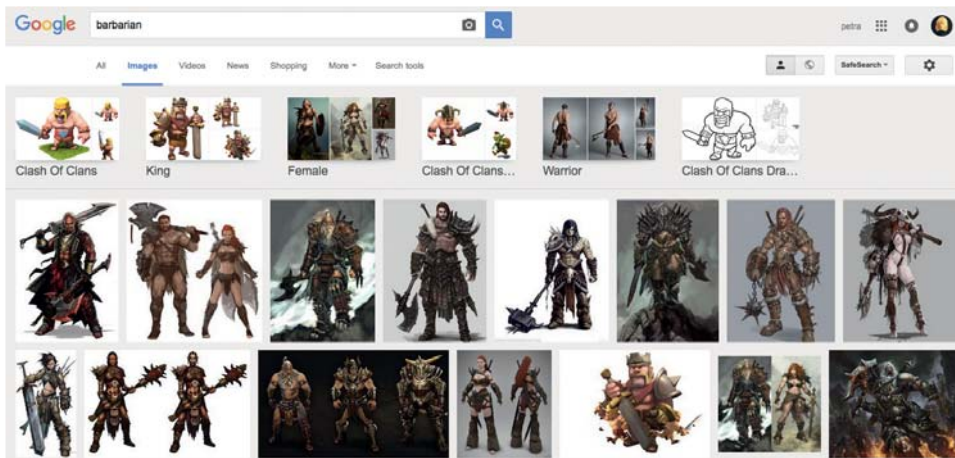


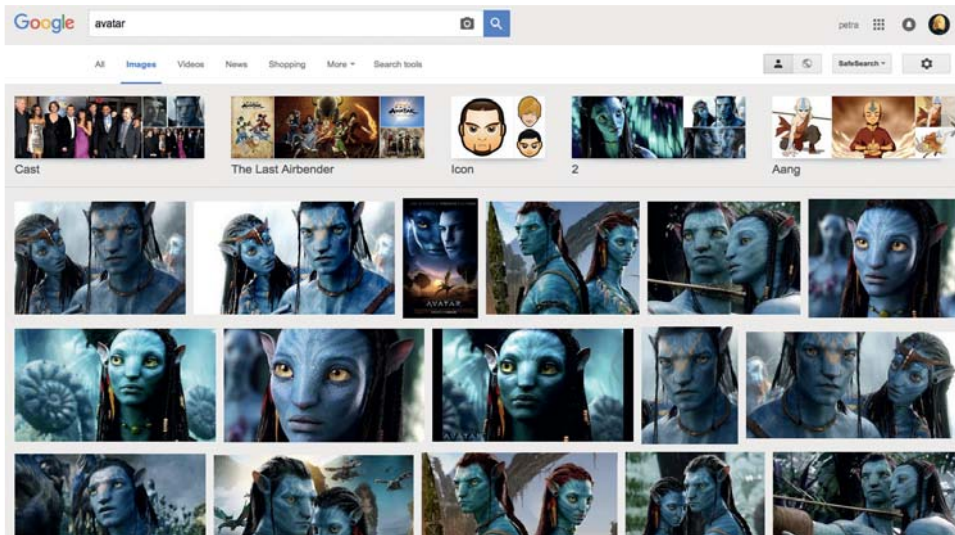
In the same vein, we should admit to ourselves the simplest truth about man being a very strange being, almost a stranger on the earth—an alien, a barbarian, a foreigner. Similar to the way G. K. Chesterton describes the “Everlasting Man”:

He is wrapped in artificial bandages called clothes; he is propped on artificial crutches called furniture. His mind has the same doubtful liberties and the same wild limitations. Alone among the animals, he is shaken with the beautiful madness called laughter; as if he had caught sight of some secret in the very shape of the universe hidden from the universe itself.³



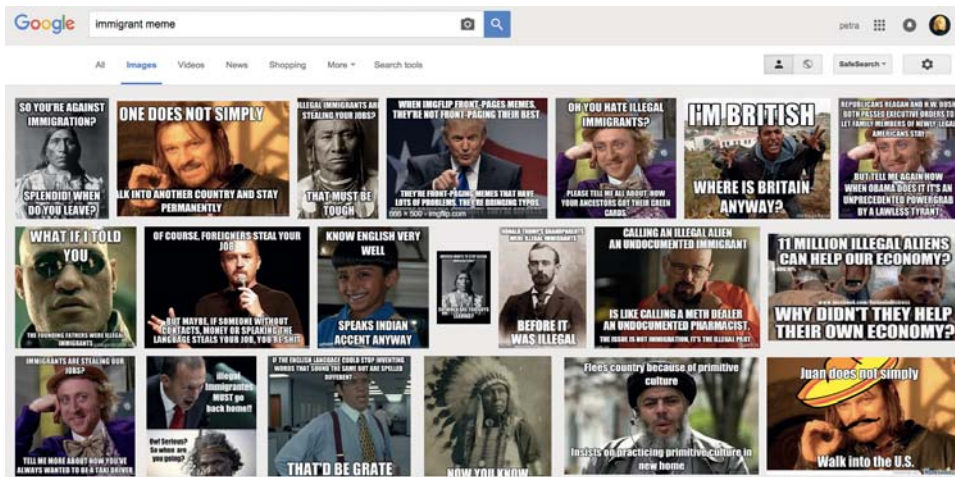
Let's again imagine a very literal translation of a word into an image—let's welcome a barbarian! Or maybe, let's give the opportunity for an avatar to be recognized among “us”.



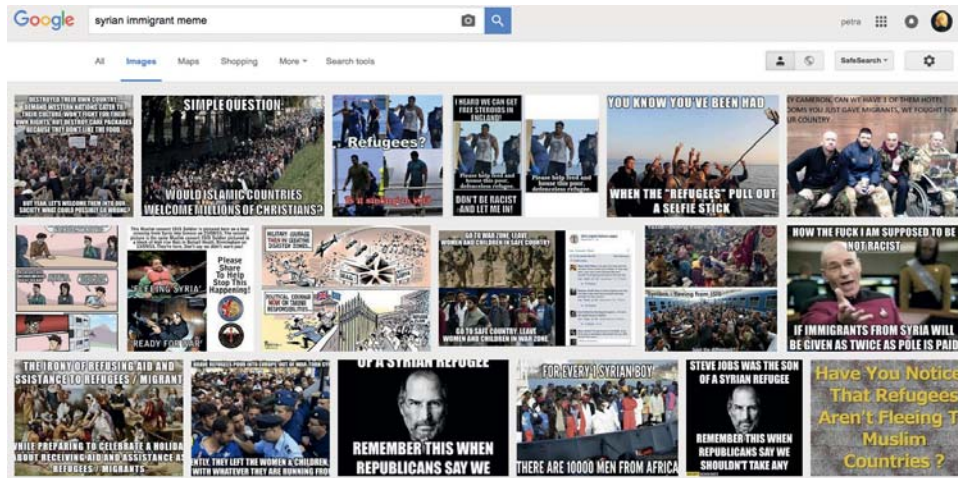


Step Three. METAHAVEN’S POLITICALITY

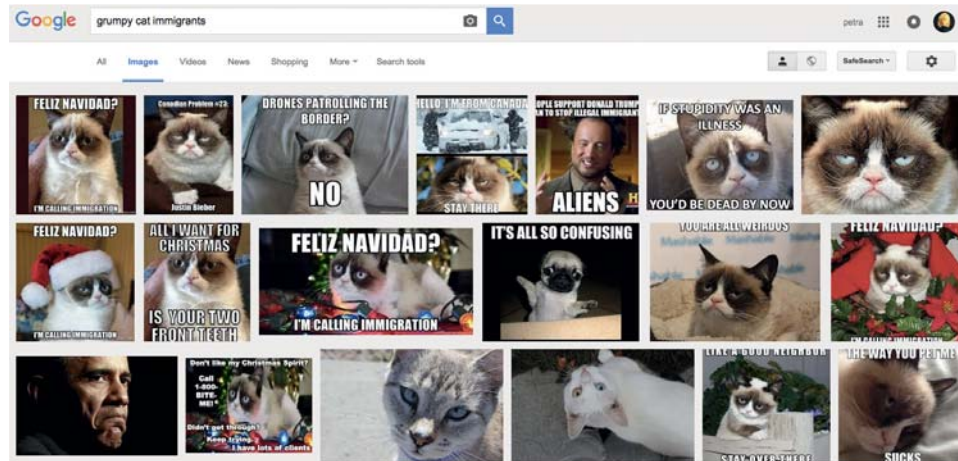
When thinking about memes, we should relate to influential designer collective Metahaven. For them, memes play a distinct role in protest; they seem to be to the resistance of today what “political posters” were to yesterday—the embodiment of shared ideas in a community.⁴ This claim is agreeable to a certain point, but it should be also widened. The meme is actually responding to a sensical question with a meaningless answer, and it is an effective tool to negate the politics of the frame in which the question was posed.



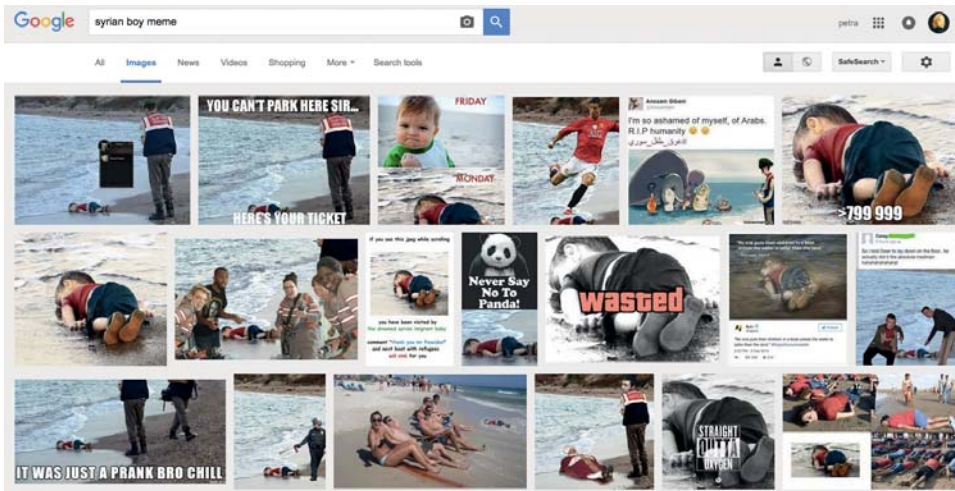
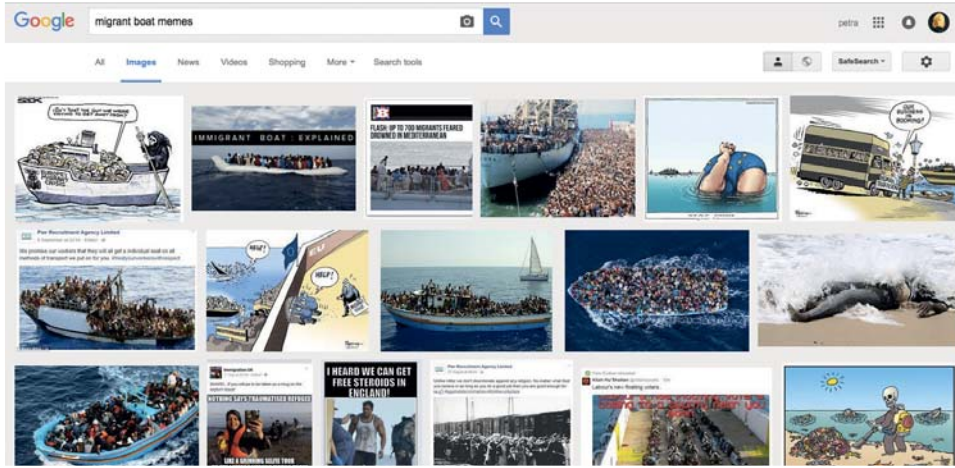
But how to make a personal position towards a meme or what does a meme represent to my practice? Instead of endlessly browsing or curating the Internet in search of what could be that one meme that could describe a certain position, I propose viewing in spectrums. The selection process could be seen as slightly problematic, because curating it would result in an efficient, but a reductionist setup, that flattens diversity and produces a very friendly, empathic, and politically correct environment.



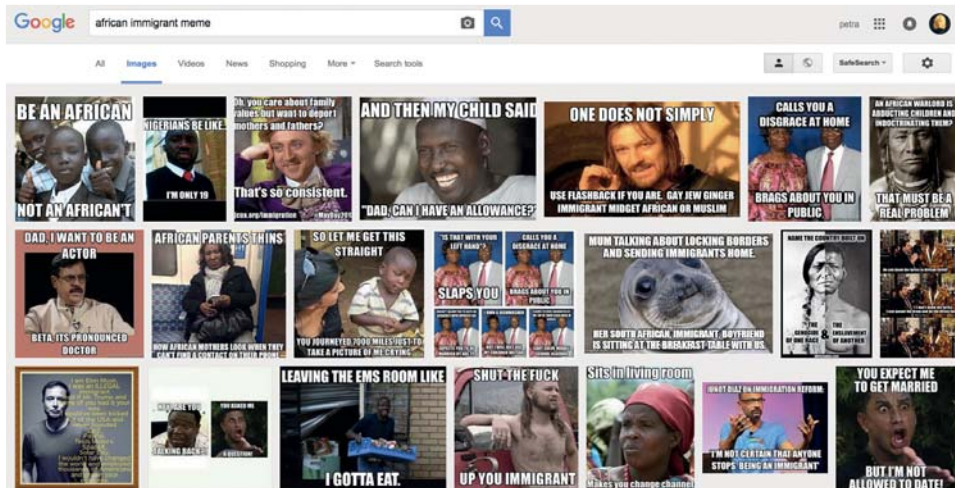
As Žižek mentions, this approach follows a humanitarian idealization of refugees and immigrants that dismisses every attempt to openly confront the difficult issues, which arise when those who follow different ways of life cohabit as a concession to the neo-Fascist right.⁵ And, finally, “curating the net” diminishes the sole role of the Internet: the spectral quality of multiplicity. Therefore I decided to give a spectrum of what could be an immigrant in the framework of a meme, by doing simple print screens of memes I would Google. Finally, making Google inputs is also a kind of curating, but it is possible to get an overview of what could be immigrant...



With this approach we are re-creating narratives of possible immigrant memes, such as Germans, or less likely, a Swiss immigrant meme? I continue Googling some related subjects like boats, some topics that could be observed as funny, or as extremely disturbing and painful.



When discussing the topic, it is necessary to distinguish deeply held 'beliefs' as to what is the 'right' and what is the 'wrong' way of going about addressing what is called the refugee crisis and migrant politics. Even just lumping them together in one sentence like this is viewed, again on all sides of the spectrum, as a declaration of some quasi-faith: either you 'believe' in humanism of the other, or you don't. It is necessary to omit this type of thinking. It's not rational and it's not groundbreaking. It's deeply old-fashioned, and it's misleading.



4 Metahaven, *Can Jokes Bring Down Governments?*, Moscow, Strelka Press, 2012, p. 34. Metahaven is an Amsterdam-based design collective specialising in politics and aesthetics. Founded by Daniel van der Velden and Vinca Kruk, Metahaven's work reflects political and social issues through research-driven design, and design-driven research.

5 Slavoj Žižek, "What our fear of refugees says about Europe," *The New Statesman*, 29 February 2016. <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/02/slavoj-zizek-what-our-fear-refugees-says-about-europe>

6 Ludger Hovestadt, Vera Bühlmann et al, *A Quantum City. Mastering the Generic*, Applied Virtuality Book Series Vol. 10, Basel, Birkhäuser, 2015.

7 Slavoj Žižek, op. cit.

Petra Tomljanović (b. 1985/HR) is a curator, journalist, and educator in the area of art, design, architecture, and expressive therapy. She graduated with a degree in art history and literature from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and Expressive Arts Therapy from the European Graduate School in Saas Fee (CH). She currently lives in Zurich and studies at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.



A selection of memes created by students during the workshop "For the Lulz. RRRRRadical Realtime, Memes and Personal Geopolitics", conducted by !Mediengruppe Bitnik.

Maandish balad¹

A Formal/Informal Conversation with Rayelle Niemann

by Paloma Rayón & Silvia Savoldi

In 2003, curator Rayelle Niemann, now based in Zurich, moved to Cairo. Her projects took her to Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine. In 2007, she initiated the exhibition Mafish Agaza fi Gaza – No Holidays in Gaza in Cairo and Alexandria, Egypt. In May 2007, she hosted a project in Amman, Jordan, with artists from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Switzerland focusing on Art in Public Space with the working title “No Condition is Permanent”. In July 2008, the project “Here I stand” was performed in Damascus, Syria, with artists from Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. Her last project in 2015 was “Between History and Future. New documentaries from Egypt, Palestine and Syria” at Rote Fabrik, Zurich.

Due to the interest and relation of her curatorial work and personal experience with migration, we proposed an interview with her on some related concepts, such as “nationality”, “trans-nationality”, and “trans-locality”, and in relation to her own experience in Germany, Switzerland, and Egypt.

Even though the conversation started as a formal interview, it slowly evolved and become a debate on those subjects.

Silvia Savoldi: States are artificial constructions: their borders can change or disappear. Nonetheless they still define and limit the lives of individuals at all levels, especially when a border is crossed. After your work and personal experience, how do you consider “nationality”?

Rayelle Niemann: Nations...what does it take to identify a nation? You need a museum, a flag, a currency, and maybe stamps. And you’ll define a constitution and a government. It is made of significant objects. For example, museums symbolize the canon. This is why a lot of things that are part of a society don’t get into a museum: because they are not considered as part of the canon. People who run nations (and museums) decide what is part of the country and what is not, what is allowed to have a

visibility and what is not. Of course, nationality has also to do with a passport, which gives legal possibilities, and if you have the right passport, it gives you very interesting possibilities to cross borders. After my experience though, I think the world would be a better place if there were no nations and no nationalities.

SS: Let’s talk about your experience: why did you move to Cairo?

RN: Before moving there in 2003, I was involved with other four people in a project which consisted of the analysis of agriculture in society, “SwissMiniNature/Route Agriculture”². In their deepest thoughts, Swiss people still identify themselves strongly with their agriculture: the land, the farms, and the mountains. Our team had a different approach and located the topic within a global understanding. But we also collaborated with farmer unions. It took us a long time to find a common language with which to communicate with them. We worked for this project for two years; it was like deep diving into the “Heart of Darkness” of Switzerland.

It was contemporary to the boom of post-colonial studies: alongside the academic studies, if artists from post-colonial countries exhibited here, everyone wanted artists to talk about the poorness and backwardness of their country rather than talking about their artworks I was very unsatisfied. A friend of mine had a project in Egypt, and she invited me to work there. When I accepted, I felt comfortable there that I thought, “Yes, I’ll move to Egypt.”

Paloma Rayón: What were your expectations as a highly educated migrant? Did you feel at home, or did you encounter difficulties in integrating into Egyptian society?

RN: I arrived in Cairo with a backpack and found an apartment within a week. I didn't look for a job immediately, because I had some savings and living costs were much lower there. So I was able to start my life slowly.

Nonetheless I didn't feel at home at first. The first Arabic country I visited was Morocco and it was in the 1970s. For me, the different culture and history was "normal". It was a strange feeling, but somehow I felt "at home". I like many things there, e.g. the landscape, the vernacular culture. I had already been in Egypt in the 1980s when I studied nutrition in order to meet British doctors who used to work in the south of Egypt. At some point, as I was more and more involved in theory and discussions about diverse aspects of societies, I changed from food for the body to food for thoughts: I then studied art history and video art. So, I already had a first impression of Egypt, but it changed very much from the 1980s to the 2000s.

For me, Egypt was very interesting because a lot was going on during this time. Egyptians analysed their country with very different means than before, when the main approach was very nationalistic. The art scene was very vivid, the worker unions were very active, urban planners contrasted financial interest companies, a lot of refugees from Sudan, Somalia and Iraq came to Egypt... Also, I immediately got to know people from abroad. But I avoided Europeans and Americans. I met people from Palestine, Iraq, Sudan. I actually knew more foreigners than Egyptians, in the very first phase. I found this very interesting, because we were all foreigners in this country, so in a way we had our little group. Again, it is about this imagined community... All of a sudden you become a part of something which is also "the other", but you share something. The Egyptian side of Egypt became more and more interesting, their approach to history, their society and culture, embedded in the "Arab identity" complex. In the early years of 2000, a lot of discussions and activities happened in Egypt, which was eager to find different answers to the very strong nationalistic image and understanding of its society.

PR: How does, in your opinion, migration affect a person, the way he or she defines him or herself?

RN: I left Germany when I was seventeen, then lived in the UK and Berlin, then came to Zurich in the 1980s, and finally moved to Egypt for ten years. I

experienced more host migration. When we talk about migration now, and finding jobs, we are dealing with neoliberalism. For example, some banks have jobs that require moving from one country to the other.

People have always migrated: as I grew up in Germany, we had *Gastarbeiter* from Turkey, Italy, Portugal, and the former Yugoslavia. But the term itself means "guest workers", it gives no responsibility to the hosting country; it lets itself exploit them nicely. We are exposed to a phenomenon that is not new, but happens under new circumstances.

Migration is also caused by companies: they look for cheaper labour in foreign countries and leave theirs with unemployment. It has to do with the increased flexibility in movement: flights are cheaper; people travel... We used to hitchhike: things have changed a lot.

SS: The fact that people have always moved, as you have just said, usually gets underestimated. We avoid thinking about it. I think it has to do with identity, and especially with collective identity: we see the other as alien. Taiye Selasi³ said: "All experience is local; all identity is experience". How is an individual's identity defined in your opinion? And collective identity? Is it reinforced by the otherness, in your opinion?

RN: That is just the way it is. The word "identity" comes from the Greek term for similar, same. When you create identity, you automatically create the other. Identity is a rather narrow term despite its importance. It also varies with age. When I was young, it was important to be radical with your identity! In contrast to education, to your parents, to the neighbours... Youth culture creates identity through clothing, music, symbols. There's no youth state. But we're switching levels now.

If you talk about nations, you have to define which nation you are talking about. There are countries that love to define themselves as multicultural; for example, the Germany where I grew up was all about having people from different nations, and loving their food... This kind of thing. And then there are countries where the others have no place at all.

I want to give you an example of an artistic approach to Palestinian identity. When I was in Palestine in 2005, coinciding with the last rear ups of the Second Intifada and the aftermath of the "Oslo Agreement"⁴, they had this daily newspaper called

Al Ayyam, and in this newspaper the artists created a supplement. On the front page just the word “Gabash” was written on it, which means “blur”. In the inside, the artists showed portraits of people, and they put the scale of Photoshop and also the bar code for commodity. The purpose was to question the concept of identity as a commodity, ready to change according to whatever. It was a critique within Palestinian society, asking people: “Who are you? Are you what the journalists want to know from you or are you something else?”

When we talk about identity we also have to speak about narration. I realised for myself that I can speak differently about my own history depending on the circumstances, on who asks me, on my mood. I move away from accuracy; it is nothing strict.

But for some, their social, ethnic, and religious background is very crucial and for sure far more complex.

SS: How do you relate to the concept of “transnationality”? Have you worked with it in your curatorial practice? Is it present on your projects *Damascus* (2008) and *Here I Stand* (2008)?

RN: The project in Damascus was about that city and how the participants feel about their place within the city. All the people who participated in Damascus had a different background... So let's start with Ziad Al Halabi, who was born in Jordan but lived in Damascus. Then Mohamed Ali, who is Kurdish. The situation of the Kurdish people in Syria is difficult: most of them have no passport, and they are not allowed to speak their language, they are very marginalised. Then there are Bassel Al Saadi, who is half Lebanese and half Syrian, and the Boukhari sisters, whose grandfather came from Uzbekistan. Pascal Hashem is Lebanese and lives in Beirut; Iman Hasbani is from the Druze town of Suweida, and Diana Jabi is half Hungarian and half Syrian. Both Ala` Diab and Saba Innab are Palestinians born in Kuwait and living in Jordan. Finally, there is Michael Zayat who is from Damascus and Christian.

This shows you the rich diversity of the Middle East. I wanted this for the project, because I always loved Damascus and Syria, especially these diverse identities, these diverse cultures. The term “cultures” is better than identities because, again, identity is something different. An art project the way I wanted to do it in Syria was difficult, so I thought at least I can collect people from different backgrounds in order to at least highlight the rich diversity on a common ground.

We avoided using the word “identity” in the title. Everybody hated this word, and they wanted to work instead on something that concerned them than on “identity”.

For *Here I Stand*, I wanted something that stays: that's why I wanted a catalogue⁵.

For the printed version we were limited, since for every publication you do in Syria you have get the permission of the Ministry of Information and Culture. The maquette has to be presented to these two institutions, then they approve or don't approve. The first type of censorship was inside the heads of the artists. So we had a discussion, and I came up with an idea. We left four pages empty: these would be the uncensored pages. Anyone who gets the catalogue can write something uncensored on them. It also makes the catalogue personal. The people in the ministries probably thought that the four empty pages were a mistake: so we got the permission and we printed the catalogue. The Syrians who looked at the catalogue understood the message of the empty pages immediately. It did not need further explanation.

SS: How was dealing with that much self-censorship? Do you think that the fear about it is reasonable or is it too great?

RN: The Lebanese artist's work was the most discussed. He sent photographs of himself completely wrapped, and he would free himself from it during a performative act. It was clear what he was wrapped in was an “Abaya, a loosely fitting garment to cover the shape of women's bodies. This caused a lot of controversy in the project; other people participating were very afraid. At the time, the tension between Syria and Lebanon was elevated, and Pascal couldn't come to Damascus for the exhibition. Nonetheless he is in the catalogue.

This was the hardest project I worked on in the Middle East. I found people to be friendly and excited about the project, but there were a lot of unspoken tensions. Suddenly they wanted to speak about identities, and it was really overwhelming. Fear runs deep. There are secret services everywhere: Syria has a long history of political prisoners and torture, they randomly arrested people. People would not speak out loud about it.

PR: You have also worked on the concept of Heimat⁶. Can you tell us what you mean with that?

And you have also written that your Heimat is “not to be linked with a certain place” and “is multidimensional and metaphysic”. Does “trans-locality” apply to your thought?

RN: Something about this discussion is really strange for me. Leila Aboulela, a writer from Karthoum, Sudan, wrote about it; we had the same discussions in the eighties, and in the nineties, in the 2000s... It’s unbelievable. I think that maybe each generation has to go through this, because the world changes. The “Identity” in the “Nation” concept is due to changes: now we are in such chaos globally, of course it is again a topic.

The concept of “Nation” is limited. The term “World Citizen” comes from the twenties, but was used more by bohemian people, like artists, writers, and dancers travelling to different countries, and for me this word does not play such an important role any more.

Now, “Global Citizen” is more used, but what do we actually mean when we say globalisation? When we speak about globalisation, we do actually mean that you can find a McDonald’s, a Starbucks, an H&M in every country, and they all look alike, even architecture-wise. This is globalisation, but I hardly associate it with people—more with commodities, architecture, or food. I have travelled quite a lot and like to feel that I come to a place different from another, but now it’s getting less and less diverse; you can find anything everywhere. It has to do with neo-liberalism: the free borders are for goods more than for people, which is in the idea of the European Union. It is a concept of economy.

SS: “Urban Citizenship” is a proposal by the cities of Zurich and Geneva on the model of New York City: everyone who is registered in the city is provided with a city card and rights. I think it relates to what you said beforehand, that you imagine a world with no nations. So, hypothetically, how do you think this could work? How can all the cities be independent without a central government which defines education standards, transportation networks, a tax system?

RN: If you take Switzerland as an example, the education and the tax system are already defined by each canton. It is already real, even if not at that extreme hypothetical extent. Living together is always a matter of negotiation and communication. The present is in flux; the situation keeps changing and creates new needs that you have to discuss. It’s a process, and I think processes are very exciting. But I

like this idea because it takes the issue back to the “local” and it instils responsibility.

SS: Talking about political responsibility, how do you involve people who are not interested either in this kind of topic or in art? How do you reach people who don’t want to hear?

RN: I can give you an example: in my project *Societies in Transition* (2015) it was very important for me that Muslims were talking for themselves. I didn’t invite “experts” on Islam who aren’t Muslims to talk about “them”, the “other”. I tried to reach people from very different backgrounds in Zurich and around to get them interested in this series of events. I made a big effort for this project. I conducted this research to get to know how Muslims live in Switzerland, getting in touch with many Muslim communities here, some more open than others. So I tried to get people who live in areas with problems of integration to come to the events. I succeeded somehow because there were people coming to the Rote Fabric for these events who would never go to a Muslim event, and Muslims came to the Rote Fabrik, who otherwise would not mix. It had to do with personal engagement and energy. It would have been even more complicated in a rural area, but I would like to try this. The countryside would be the best place to do this project. Or the suburbs, where there is a need for a sense of community.

SS: What do you think of people who never moved from the place where they were born? For example, I have spoken to a girl who is from the same Italian village as me and around twenty-five years old, and she told me she doesn’t want to move from it, not even to live in a city. This shocked me, as it is as far as possible from what I feel, from what I want. How do you think this kind of people can perceive “trans-locality”?

PR: This has also happened within my family. Two daughters moved and two brothers stayed at home. It’s just the way you are, either you want to move or you don’t want to.

RN: Either this, you don’t want to move, or you don’t have the possibilities to move. I’m thinking again about Egypt. In the South of Egypt (but not only there) there are a lot of people who can’t move, because of lack of money or documents. But there used to be considerable tourism in that area, so that’s how they receive trans-locality. They become very wise in a way and gather a notion on how people live

in faraway countries. In some countries you cannot freely move by law, e.g. Cuba, China, North Korea. This was why we started the website *citysharing* in 2008: it is accessible 24/7 to people anywhere in the world without needing to travel to an actual exhibition location.
<http://www.citysharing.ch/>

SS: But in the countries you mentioned there's a big web censorship—how exactly do you reach those people?

RN: There are always possibilities to get around restrictions, e.g. changing your IP address...

SS: *You mentioned the refugees: what is your last project, Between History and Future. New Documentaries from Egypt, Palestine and Syria (2015), about? As many of your other projects, it took place at the Rote Fabrik in Zurich: what is your relationship with this cultural centre?*

RN: The Rote Fabrik is the only place where spontaneous projects are accepted. Other institutions have long-term planning, and it did not go along with the immediacy and “urgency” of the topics. They are much more flexible. My last project is a series of documentaries and discussions about some parts of the Middle East. The flyers to advertise it are all different. I wanted to find questions which people here can also identify with (e.g. “Should I lie to my family?”, “Should I trust them?”). The element of surprise lies in turning them and finding the film programme about Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. I know these countries quite well, and they are exposed to violence on different levels. The talks with the directors at the end of the screening provide with a deeper insight on the topic, and with a wider glimpse of the context: it's an important curatorial choice for me.

Captions

1 Rayelle Niemann, No Holidays in Gaza, 2007, invitation card. Courtesy of the artist. “... the title sounds more beautiful in Arabic: ‘mifish agaza fi Gaza’. The circumstances for this picture are special: we were in a car and drove by the beach (in Gaza). I saw three men playing backgammon on the shore and I asked the driver to stop; it was such a beautiful scene, the men gave me the permission to take a picture. They're all dressed very differently: one is more secular, one is more like a Sheikh, and the other is maybe a Bedouin. In that time, this kind of image showing the unity of differences meant a lot.” (R.N.).

2 Raouf Haj Yehia, Gabash; published as a supplement in *Al Ayyam*, May 2005, Palestine. Courtesy of the artist.

3 Ala' Diab, 2008. Courtesy of the artist. This “bug” of Damascus was originally printed without the words in the catalogue of the project “Here I stand” due to self censorship. Later, when the catalogue was put online, <http://www.citysharing.ch/invited-projects~92.html>, the original version was added.

Notes

1 Rayelle Niemann, *Heimat*, Cairo, 2004: “When I am asked where I am from a lot of times I answer: maandish balad (I have no country)”.

2 Swiss National Exhibition Expo.02, Murten, Switzerland, 15.5.–20.10.2002, <http://www.k3000.ch/psp/archive/doc075.htm>

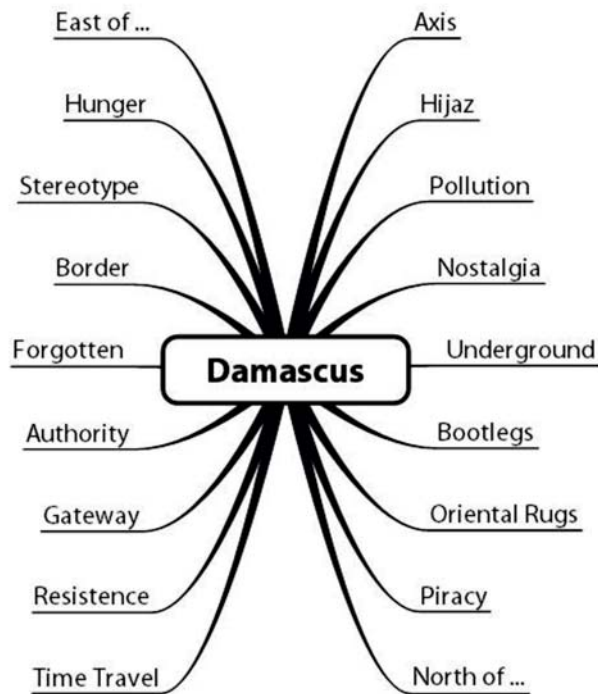
3 Taiye Selasie, *Don't ask me where I'm from, ask me where I'm local*, TED talk, 14 October 2014.

4 The Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada, was the second Palestinian uprising against Israel—a period of intensified Israeli-Palestinian violence. It started in September 2000, when Ariel Sharon made a visit to the Temple Mount, seen by Palestinians as highly provocative.

5 <http://www.citysharing.ch/invited-projects~92.html>

6 Rayelle Niemann, *Heimat*, Cairo, 2004.





3

Rayelle Niemann is a curator, writer, and artist. Her projects revolve around the research on social phenomena, spaces, and places, created by and provided for the human being and the arising reciprocal influences and effects. She has curated among others, the following projects: SwissMiniNature/Analyses of Agriculture and Society, a group project during Expo.02 CH; Performance Festival Physical Vehicle, London 2000; exhibitions Salon 9, Aarau 1999; Art and Virulent Practices, Zurich 1997; From the Disappearance of the Body, Aarau 1996.

Silvia Savoldi (b. 1987, Brescia/IT) studied architecture in Ferrara and Porto. During her academic years, she developed an interest in contemporary art and photography that led her to take part in the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK. Her curatorial research focuses mainly on digitality, sexuality, and semiotics. Currently based in Zurich, she is curating an exhibition about Davide Trabucco's work at the gallery da Mihi in Berne.

Paloma Rayón (b. 1977, Madrid/ES) studied art history in Madrid. Since 2010, she has been Coordinator of Public Programmes at Museo Picasso Málaga, where she is responsible for the coordination of the programme of activities, such as screenings, workshops, and lectures. As a writer she contributes at the blog Con Arte y sonante, El País. She takes part in the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK.

HEIMAT / watan¹

Rayelle Niemann

“... Home is where my heart is, home is so remote, home is out of question, sitting in my throat – let’s go to your place...” Lena Lovitch, one of her popular songs back in the eighties. I close the door behind me and I am chez moi. Ich bin zu Hause. I am at home. I leave the world outside. I am in front of my computer. I go online ... anywhere. Heimat?

When I am asked where I am from, a lot of the times I answer: “maandish balad” (I have no country). Not because this question gets on my nerves, well, it does sometimes, but mainly because I really don’t know what to say. This question pushes a door open, behind which a complex realm manifests itself. Actually, it is a simple question set for a simple answer. But it implies a lot of traps. Any answer might accumulate clichés and confusion, not precision. Maybe because living outside the country where I was born for a long time makes me sensitive to nuances, which would be obscured otherwise. There is a demand for reconsideration all the time. Being confronted with other people’s Heimat challenges more sophisticated reflections from my side. Maybe because apparently the word Heimat is an invention of the German language which is closely linked to much more than home or homeland will ever imply, laying out a huge tray full of fragments provoking tempered discussions. Usually I do not apply the word Heimat. In recent years, there have been approaches to redefine Heimat in Switzerland and Germany, to give it a more current aspect and free the word from encrusted historical and traditional point of views, in order to adjust it to the multicultural present—as some societies tend to carry this attribute nowadays. I remain sceptical.

Maandish balad.

The last sixteen years, I had my base in the German part of Switzerland; now I have been living in Cairo for one year. I was and still am fortunate to be able to live in different countries and cultures, to undertake intensive commissioned travels that allow me to dive into varied models of life. If Heimat is understood as a matter of having rights, enough to eat, being respected, then it would be a cause of basic simplicity. But this very common interest in Heimat, I discovered, is ignored and dashed away by higher, prevailing interests. Taking advantage of relatively modest fundamental needs seems to be no moral conflict. Being born German, the question of and the desire for Heimat, linked to a national identity, was always an important and present discourse. Especially for my parents who belong to the German generation that lost their Heimat several times, that had to move several times, but yet had to defend the Heimat; it was a big issue as well as a chance after the Second World War. There was the illusion to be able to start at point zero. All losses, all disappointments, all intrusions of privacy, and all regrets were transformed and canalised into a huge projection, a dream: to build a morally healthy society, with enough space for the Heimat to expand once again.

Heimat linked with a national identity, I found difficult to refer to. My cultural background is German, not Middle European. It is German. I never felt comfortable with it, as it did not open up a space, but it was rather full of restrictions. I do remember having intense arguments with my parents during my teenage years

because I would declare that I was a world citizen. Through their eyes, I was basically betraying and offending the foundation they were trying to establish after the war, providing a so-called secure and happy place for their children to be proud of.

The word Heimat and its connotations made me feel uneasy. Always there was something to it, a certain demand to which I could not adapt. The offered Heimat was too narrow, too static. It demanded an overall appreciation and identification I could not live up to. I reached out for a broader world. A world with space to breathe, without having to fulfil specific behaviours, customs, regulations, expectations. A world where I just could be myself, whoever this would be, without having to face the pressure to belong to something, to be the same as, to be part of something which did not feel like mine. Of course, this causes loss and alienation and fear. The human desire to belong to something is sown. But realising intuitively and consciously that the “new world” was being built on disguises, without providing space for different needs—mental and physical space mostly being identified as a certain mean for interests serving hierarchies and power—I tried to find family some place else. I did not call it Heimat, maybe “geistige Heimat”, but most of the time I would call it family. Extended families were very much in fashion and in need in the seventies and eighties, providing cosy nests for radical thoughts and activism. It was a very important time to sharpen and shape consciousness and awareness. To rewrite her/his story, to widen the canon despite to ruling limitations. But somehow, it became obvious quite quickly that this implemented new regulations, new limitations, new expectations striving after fulfilment—new hierarchies even if the language was different. I felt uncomfortable. Once again I had to free myself from sweet and well-meant chains, which claimed to offer security and home. I understood that Heimat, family, was not be linked with a certain place, nor was it linked to certain structures and ideologies. Heimat is multidimensional and metaphysical. I find Heimat in books. I find Heimat in music and songs. I find Heimat in different cultures. I find Heimat in some landscapes. I find Heimat in talks. I find Heimat in some moments. I have Heimat as memories. Heimat became more flexible, more challenging, and livelier. Heimat became a matter of immediacy. I started to feel at home in different languages; discovering that there are expressions one cannot translate in order to express certain emotions, certain atmospheres. One can paraphrase, but then allowing that the true meaning vanishes.

My Heimat is scattered throughout the world. My Heimat is in good hands with some people. People I met. People I will meet. Heimat is something very individual. It is something quite intimate. And unique. My Heimat is not tied to a house, a tree, a street, a field, to belongings or a nation. My Heimat is within me. I carry it around with me all the time. Sometimes I can share it with others. Sometimes I cannot. Sometimes it makes me feel privileged. My passport supports this privilege. I am aware of it. Although sometimes I have the feeling that I am missing something. However, it was a long and sometimes painful struggle to reach this point. Times of restlessness, resentment, defeat, and parting had to be passed. Experiences had to be processed, reassessed. Heimat became a continual ongoing process, a lifetime project I am not concentrating on otherness. I am concentrating on what is there to be shared. And there is a lot to share. Not everywhere, not everything and not with everybody. But in the wide world, in the small world one meets people with whom it is possible to share and shape a mental and emotional topography, regardless of background, education, class, ethnic and cultural heritage, gender. Heimat should be a state of mind, not defined by exclusion, but defined by the application of common sense, acknowledging that diversity enriches

life and the capability of experiences. Something broader, almost something universal, wider than immediate kinship, blood, and ground. Heimat as a construct in a conventional sense limits a lot of possibilities. Heimat as a construct on a metaphorical level might leave some chances open. Especially needed in times when neo-geopolitical approaches are launched as ultimate solutions serving economic interests, while exploiting resources and human labour, re-establishing narrow-minded national and racial ideologies.

Cairo/EG, May 2004. An Arabic translation was published in Akbar Al Adab, a weekly literary Arab magazine, Cairo, June 2004.

Notes

1 Arabic for Heimat (homeland).

Rayelle Niemann is a curator, writer, and artist. Her projects revolve around the research on social phenomena, spaces, and places, created by and provided for the human being and the arising reciprocal influences and effects. She has curated among others, the following projects: SwissMiniNature/Analyses of Agriculture and Society, a group project during Expo.02 CH; Performance Festival Physical Vehicle, London 2000; exhibitions Salon 9, Aarau 1999; Art and Virulent Practices, Zurich 1997; From the Disappearance of the Body, Aarau 1996.

Questioning the Nation State: A Possible Future for Urban Citizenship

Mathias Rodatz Interviewed by Hana Cisar

Hana Cisar: For about ten years, you have been researching the influence of migration on the spatial and political reassignment by governmental policies in cities. What was your initial motivation to start this research?

Mathias Rodatz: Back then I was living in Leipzig. I had been working mostly on questions of neo-Nazism and the ways in that neither society nor the state found adequate ways to respond to this threat to an open and democratic society. Sometime in 2006 I stumbled upon a headline of the local newspaper: “City hall is planning Chinatown”. This headline and the story about it raised so many questions that I decided to start to work on these issues. So what was going on? The city’s planning department had developed a small project in a district in the east of Leipzig, close to the train station. Their idea was to turn a small block of empty houses into an “international district” with space for small shops to be operated by migrants that are specialized in international (what the planners called “ethnic”) goods. With this idea, they were actually just doing what is very common in planning today: they were looking at this former shopping street in a district that—in their eyes—was poorly developed and needed attention due to the concentration of poverty and social problems. And they were asking: What is unique here, what can we put on display to put life back into this former centre for local commerce and urban life? What they saw was what we know from all our cities: in areas that are not perceived as profitable, it is often (former) migrants who are securing the local supply in the neighbourhood. And such commercial services often function as a precondition of life on the streets and sociability in public spaces. So the project that was planned was not doing any-

thing new, really. They wanted to provide some more space for small commerce and use the framing of the “international district” as a selling point for an economic and social revitalization of the street in a city that for the most part lacks cultural diversity.

HC: And what happened to the project?

MR: The public and political reactions to these plans were devastating. Under the above-mentioned headline in the local newspaper, it read that the city was seeking to develop Leipzig’s East into a “district for foreigners, something like a ‘China-Town’ or a ‘small Arabia’”. And this was perceived as a threat to public order and safety. Politicians and commentaries from almost the complete political spectrum started to issue warnings that this development would equal the construction of a “parallel society”, threatening the integrity of Leipzig’s society. You have to understand that the city of Leipzig—as all cities in Eastern Germany—is not very diverse. At the time, only 7% of the city’s population had what German statistics call a “migration background” (meaning that they themselves or one or two of their parents had migrated into Germany). The district in question had an elevated share in diverse population (15%). This elevation was seen as a warning sign of a bad future that would be fostered by the idea of the planning department. As a result of this debate, the project was cancelled.

HC: How would you explain to a child that a couple of houses providing space for commerce to migrant citizens of Leipzig are perceived as a threat to the social integrity of the city?

MR: That depends very much on the child you are talking to. If you talk to one belonging to the 15% that are object of the public fear, she will not need an explanation. She will tell you that she is not surprised, because she hears again and again how she doesn't belong—in her classroom, in the tram, in the big commercial supermarket at the end of the street (where mostly white, “ethnic” German people work). Being an object of that fear is just one instance of the institutional and everyday racisms that are common to our cities. And it is this experience that you would have to try to explain to a child who does not share it. You would have to explain how migrants of colour or from certain supposed “cultural backgrounds” are considered fundamentally different to the “ethnic” Germans in newspapers, on TV, in public discussions; how this order of things has been repeated for decades in both the former East and West of Germany; and how theories from biology, sociology, and other social sciences have been used to provide proof for the idea that this difference turns into a threat as soon as too many of “those” migrants live in one area of a city. And you would have to explain to her as well, how this has been so obviously wrong for so many decades: how many (former) migrants in the east of Leipzig just as much as in the commonly known, so-called “breeding grounds” of “parallel societies” in Germany—in Berlin-Neukölln or Duisburg-Marxloh—how these people are struggling to make a living, to build communities and neighbourhoods, just to be called out as extremists, thugs, or criminals again and again. In short: you would have to explain to her the functioning of a racist society and its spatiality. You would have to explain to her the reality that people without white privilege are experiencing every day in our cities.

HC: Could you say something about the definition of terms such as migration, post-migration, integration, assimilation as you are using them in your research and in which concept of culture they are imbedded?

MR: In general, I argue from a poststructuralist perspective. So I do not use terms such as “migration”, “integration”, “assimilation”, or “culture” as theoretically defined concepts that I can draw upon to interpret certain developments in the city. I am interested in the way such terms and concepts are part of the way we are governed. I want to understand the role they play “out there”, what meanings they entail and which orders they enforce upon the world if they materialize as practices of governing and everyday routines. If we look at the history of the

migration regime in Germany, we can see how dominant categories have changed. There is a big part of the population that has been addressed in episodes as “guests”, “foreigners”, “migrants”, or “Muslims” over the last fifty years, but never as plain citizens belonging to Germany as a society of migration. And these categories are related to changing concepts such as the German self-understanding as a non-immigration country (that lasted over almost four decades of migration history) or the newer idea of a German “Leitkultur”,¹ but also sociological concepts such as “assimilation”, “integration”, “multiculturalism” or “diversity” that form and rationalize the way migration and society are related and acted upon by the state. I am interested in the orders produced by such concepts, as well as their contradictions, and how (migrant) social and political struggles act upon them and how they are re-negotiated over the long run and in everyday politics, the economy, or the workings of public administrations. As you can imagine from the example above, this perspective allows one to connect developments in urban governance and public administration or planning to questions of spatial configurations, citizenship, and the right to the city.

HC: Your current research is focusing on Frankfurt, one of the most diverse cities in Germany. Looking at Frankfurt, how would you say that the governance of migration and integration has changed in the last decade?

MR: Our project is discussing Frankfurt as a case study for what has been called a paradigm shift of local integration policies in Germany. Up until the 1990s, no German cities had developed permanent institutional structures or explicit strategies in the field of migration and integration. This has changed dramatically since then, and especially in the last ten years. Today, more than 90% of the major German cities have developed formal strategies that define integration policy as a core task to be mainstreamed in all fields of urban governance. These cities have established offices or departments that monitor, control, and regulate the implementation in the day-to-day business of public administration and to align projects and services carried out by private organizations with their goals. So it is clear that there is a quantitative leap in activity in this area of urban governance. But in this process, there is also a qualitative shift to be witnessed that leads back to my answer to your last question. We can see how conceptions that inform migration and integration policy have changed vastly in this process. In the past,

cities understood migration and integration first and foremost as a synonym for problems that needed to be solved. Migrant populations were addressed as (potential) troublemakers, as a threat to the order of the city. As integration was often understood in the simple terms of cultural and social assimilation, all visible forms of (social, cultural, religious, political) difference that could be associated with migration were taken as signs for the potential “failure” of integration, be it—as in the example above—a couple of shops serving the consumption needs of migrant communities, or the construction of mosques visible in the urban landscape. Such problematizations were often associated with demands on the federal government to increase efforts to reduce the migrant population, but they also resulted in interventions on the city level. Their most vivid expressions were regulations that banned foreigners from moving into certain districts defined as overpopulated by migrants, or quotas for migrant residents in public housing.

The underlying images remain central to public discourse until today, oftentimes driven by the rise of anti-Muslim racism from the 2000s onward. However, many of the newly developed explicit city strategies are based on much more complex understandings of the role of migration and processes of integration in cities. Frankfurt may be the best example for this: the strategy on “integration and diversity” that was formally adopted in 2010 represents migration as a driving force of economic, social, and cultural city development in the “global city” of Frankfurt, drawing on scientific concepts such as transnationalism or “super diversity”. In a nutshell, the strategy states that in a city where almost 30% of the population does not hold a German passport and where almost 70% of children under six years of age have a migration history in their own family, migration and cultural diversity cannot be represented first and foremost as a source of problems, but are simple facts and conditions of urbanity in a globalizing world. In consequence, the concept calls for an adaptation of the city’s self-perception, along with its institutions and structures, to this fact. According to the concept, this not only implies efforts in anti-discrimination throughout the administration’s departments as well as structures in the city such as the labour or housing market, but also questions of representation, such as the aim to increase the diversity of city staff to match the actual composition of the city’s population. In summary, this shift could be described as a re-conceptualization of urban citizenship. The old discourses framed migration as a threat

to the citizens of the city, understood as a community of German descent and culture. In the new concepts, urban citizenship is disentangled from questions of national belonging and national citizenship, and instead derived from a description of the city as a place of globalization, where the history, presence, and future of migration are simple facts. Such concepts speak for the people that are actually living in the city.

But, of course, the existence of such concepts cannot be confused with their implementation. This becomes particularly clear in our case study in Frankfurt. Even though the city was the first in Germany to institutionalize integration policies on the city level with the introduction of the Department of Multicultural Affairs in 1989, and even though the strategic reorientation with the concept in 2010 was very far-reaching, the efforts of implementation have since been marginal. While the department itself has introduced the strategy and is strongly identified with its goals, every step of implementation that reaches into other departments’ routines has been accompanied by strong opposition. As a result, the claim of new forms of urban citizenship remains in large parts an unkept promise—one that may only come to reality through external pressure. And we can see in Frankfurt how migrant communities and social movements are using this tension in their struggles for equity, as the right to the city movement is beginning to join forces with migrant and refugee organizations.

HC: Do you think the current Frankfurt Urban Citizenship model can and should be implemented in Zurich? Relying on your past experience of the project of the Shedhalle, which fostered this discussion in Switzerland, would you say that the cities of Frankfurt and Zurich are comparable? If so, could you explain how?

MR: Both cities are considered small global cities whose economies and urban societies are heavily transnationalized. And I believe for both cities it is true that while the important role of transnational corporations, for example, within the finance industries and the free global flow of the management class and high-skilled labour forces of these economies have been recognized as decisive factors for the futures of the cities, the role of migration and diversity in a wider sense is too often taken for granted. Both cities have to learn that their urban realities are in contradiction with ideas of national homogeneity and the integration “into” some abstract notion of

national culture that still substantiate their nation's migration and integration regimes. It is these cities, and within them the districts that are most commonly described as problematic due to their high diversity (i.e. "parallel societies"), where local communities have long learned to live the future of a majority-minority society (where racial and ethnic minorities make up the majority of the population). Cities such as Frankfurt and Zurich have to understand that it is of vital interest for them to speak and act in the name of this urban reality. The fact that so many members of urban society are formally or informally lacking political, economic, and social rights and subject to discrimination and racism has been unbearable all along; but in the face of the demographic developments, the democratic duty of the cities to recognize all of their populations as citizens and to further their rights if necessary beyond and against their nation's conceptions has turned into a social, political, and economic necessity. Just to point to the most obvious example: a voting system that excludes 30% (Frankfurt) or 40% (Zurich) of the urban population has long lost its democratic legitimacy—and is nothing more than an exercise in nationalist romanticism.

Frankfurt may be some steps further along than Zurich in recognizing the necessity of adapting to the diversity of urban life and the far-reaching implications of urban citizenship when we look at the city's diversity strategy. But as I described above, the actual practices are far from a state that one could describe as a working "urban citizenship model" as one that is successfully tackling the injustice in our cities. For the moment, we have to look at other places for working models of the future city such as formal or informal implementations of an actual urban citizenship in places like San Francisco or Toronto, who have declared themselves "sanctuary cities". But, of course, even there we see that movements cannot rely on urban politics and municipalities to provide solutions, but that the necessity for migrant and refugee organizations and social movements in general to organize and develop and maintain political pressure is substantial. In this regard, I think the work that is developing in Zurich at the moment, in terms of organizing the city's various stakeholders in these questions ("Wir alle sind *Zürich*") and also of mobilizing far-reaching concepts of urban citizenship from working examples in the North American context, is very promising. I believe that the efforts of translating such conceptions politically and legally for the Swiss context along with the experiences that are gathered in

Zurich at the moment could foster the practical political discussions and efforts in terms of these questions in many European cities, including Frankfurt. But most importantly, the city of Zurich should listen closely and care for what is happening there. Such movements are practicing the future of our cities.

HC: Human Geography draws its particularity and methods from connections with other disciplines. What forms of attitude or action are possible in that field from your perspective as political scientist working in a human geography department to induce a movement to transform, reform, or revolutionize life in cities?

MR: I guess if I would be a political scientist in the sense of the discipline's tradition or canon, I would readily find the idea to "induce a movement to transform, reform, or revolutionize life" appealing—because it is based on the assumption of sovereignty central to that discipline. Only in the political sciences can you still so easily get away with the idea that social sciences can take a bird's-eye view and just see how the world should be changed to be ordered well. As Warren Magnusson once put it in an insightful critique of the political scientists' gaze: "Sovereignty in general and the state in particular is the condition that we assume [...]: we are not megalomaniacs, but only advisors to those who could implement our dreams." But as Magnusson goes on, nobody ever does successfully implement such dreams. Because our worlds (including our cities) cannot be ordered neatly as can be done with thoughts on a piece of paper. Our worlds are always already filled with complex interactions, structured by power relations and subject to contestation and struggle. This is what I believe political science should be about—and fortunately I was trained in a context of an interdisciplinary political theory that very much attended to such questions. But even more so I find my discipline of human geography to be perfectly equipped for the task at hand—not only because of its interdisciplinary interferences, but because of its focus on spatial configurations, on place and locality, and its foundation in field work.

So to come back to your question from this perspective: if we do want to transform, reform, or revolutionize life in cities, we should not see our role as those that "induce", that lead the way. Instead, we should engage with the political and social movements in our cities that we find struggling with the state of things. Human Geography, and especially the

Frankfurt department, is great for this kind of work. There are many inspiring colleagues in the discipline here and abroad who are practicing such an understanding of engaged social sciences. What reduces the possibilities for this dimension of scholarly work is thus less the disciplinary restrictions, but the state of the German university as a working environment, that is, reducing academic work at the doctoral and post-doctoral level to a competition for the very few positions with permanent contracts. As only publications in peer-reviewed articles in high-ranking journals seem to count in this competition, other equally important aspects of academic work become side-tracked—most often the ones that produce the social and political relevance of academia as an educational system as well as within society as a whole.

Notes

1 “The term was coined by the political scientist Basam Tibi in 1998, as a description of the dominance of traditional concepts of German culture in a multicultural context. It soon developed into a central term of a populist political discourse constructing migrants from non-Western and especially Muslim cultures as problems of integration that should be answered with the political enforcement of a German *Leitkultur*.” (M.R.)

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Urban Recycling – the City in Migrant Economy

Erol Yildiz

Over the centuries, Europe's cities have been shaped by various different movements of migration. Urbanization without migration is downright inconceivable. To that extent, the labour migration after WW II was only a new phase in which numerous towns and cities were lastingly transformed. Today as well, migration is part of urban everyday existence and increasingly is leaving its indelible stamp on urban reality, even if this development scarcely surfaces in public memory. Instead of acknowledging the living realities of migrants on the ground, they are virtually scandalized and stylized as disintegrative elements. The result is that the constituting nexus between migration and urban development is lost sight of, and the contribution by migrants to urbanity was scarcely acknowledged. Consequently, it is not surprising that another perspective more aware of diversity is being called for in critical migration research in recent years, a vantage point that opens up the horizon of observation for urban transformation processes determined by migration (Yildiz 2013).

Sometimes all that is necessary is an initial visit to some locality or a conversation in order to change one's point of view. It becomes evident that just due to structural reasons alone, the so-called parallel societies are hardly conceivable. That is because urban structures motivate, indeed compel individuals in varying ways and differing contexts to engage in urban communication. Economic activities, social networks, and other initiatives serve to connect the cities and their neighbourhoods with the regional, national, and global world. We see that only few residents were actually born and grew up in a given city neighbourhood, and that not all those who migrate into the city remain forever in one place.

Today the Mom-and-Pop Small Corner Store is Uncle Ali's

Instead of passing judgment from the top down and deprecating residential neighbourhoods marked by migration, the discussion here is on their relevance for urban development and the urban economy. Seen from this vantage point, it becomes evident that often the stories of immigrants are about success, even if realized under precarious conditions. Many such neighbourhoods, which city planners and agencies gave up on and decided to leave to their fate, as a result of de-industrialization and the exodus of population groups previously long-term residents there, did not start moving again until immigrants began to locate there. Those new arrivals, despite an array of diverse legal and political barriers, chose to move into dilapidated or empty houses and apartments; they opened *Uncle Ali* shops¹ and established informal networks. Moreover, the strategies involved here were ones where people are forced to organise their existence and social advancement outside of the official labour markets, and whose accomplishments for that reason are scarcely included in the rosters of *national accounting*. Yet it is precisely those urban districts that are marked by a huge density of provision of services, shops, and gastronomic pleasures on offer. We see how the residents in these neighbourhoods have organised their lives under difficult conditions, how

neglected urban spaces can be revitalized, and thus in a sense “recycled”, through specific economic activities (Yildiz / Mattausch 2009).

Migrant economies today in all European metropolises have become impossible to overlook, and they leave their contouring imprint on the image of the ‘European city’. In many cities, immigrants organise a substantial portion of the business infrastructure, and through their social and economic activity make a significant contribution to urban living quality. We can observe here a kind of self-organised integration. Although politically deemed “undesirable”, many *Gastarbeiter* gradually came to settle permanently in European metropolitan centres and tried under legally compounded and aggravated conditions to appropriate urban localities as their own, and to create and shape new places. In the 1970s, immigrants who were traders set up rows of shops in urban neighbourhoods that, due to global processes of economic restructuring, were losing their local tradespeople. In so doing, they injected new life and vitality into the streets and unto sidewalks, contributing in the process substantially to the renovation and modernization of urban spaces that had deteriorated. Kiosks, small local restaurants, and grocery shops became their principal source of livelihood, gradually leaving their mark on numerous neighbourhoods and streets, so that in many places in the meantime the streets took on a ‘Mediterranean-Oriental flair’. By their presence and through their independent activity, immigrants have left their imprint on the changing face of many cities, giving them stimuli and fresh impetus, and providing many urban districts with a newfound stability once again. They made a virtue of necessity, transforming unemployment into a life in the labour force to meet their subsistence needs.

Prime textbook examples are the urban neighbourhoods near railway stations. As old films show, it was the train stations in particular that served in the years when guest workers were being recruited as the main meeting spot for such workers, and became the imaginary link to their places or origin. E.g. in Germany most of them were living in barracks and huts on the grounds of companies or in collective accommodations. They knew little German and had but scant contact with the local population. Given the state of telecommunications at the time, their connections with their family back home were also initially largely interrupted. Under these conditions, a walk down to the central train station, their first point of arrival in town, was linked with the hope of meeting some acquaintances from their region of origin. Consequently, railroad stations were always a locus of encounter, a place to meet and communicate. It is thus not surprising that precisely in these areas of the cityscape, the first tea houses, small restaurants, and cultural meeting places and hangouts were established by immigrants. The train stations were at the same time points of arrival and loci of departure for urban developments, regeneration, and renewal.

Economies stamped by immigrants in many large cities show how labour migrants and their descendants, living under discriminatory conditions, developed a culture of independence in the truest sense of the term, which would have been unimaginable without the use of informal resources. In most instances, these were family businesses, and oftentimes entire families were actually involved in some capacity in the respective shop or business. In addition, it is evident that it was specifically these family *mom-and-pop enterprises* that in difficult times and in desolate locations were prepared to take risks and open businesses, thus contributing to a fundamental improvement in the supply situation in the urban neighbourhoods.

Economic activities and social networks are closely intertwined. Since migrants find themselves marginalized in the formal labour market, they are forced to develop

other strategies and social skills than in the case of the local population. The development of migrant economy shows that the businesspeople can rely on networks and resources necessary to them for survival. By mobilizing networks and resources, they are also automatically strengthened, “they accumulate social capital” (Saskia Sassen 2000: 103).

Neighbourhoods or streets marked by the presence and activity of migrants should not be seen as a reflection of their *society of origin*, but rather should be viewed as a local and specific arrangement that reflects the living situation of people in the cities. In this way, local expectations are mirrored and expressed, traditions are cited, and new global impositions are reacted to. Retail traders orient themselves, for example, to the tastes of their local clients. Their shops and restaurants, their products and range of services on offer are often a concession to the European conceptions of the imagined “Orient” or “Mediterranean culture”. They are stagings in which the most diverse elements blend and coalesce into a new image, a ‘new tradition’. Here we see the staging of a German Orientalism that Edward Said famously termed *imaginative geography*. (Said 1979: 49ff.)

Robert Pütz also shows in 2004 in a qualitative study on entrepreneurial activities of Turkish migrants in Berlin how “being Turkish” is invented in the local context, staged as a business strategy, and how it is successfully employed. In his view, that is not ethnic behaviour but a transcultural practice, an economic strategy for action. In addition, the businesspeople often find themselves forced to react to ascriptions from the outside, labelling processes to which they are exposed on a daily basis, i.e. they are forced to deal flexibly, playfully, or even with a touch of irony, with clichés of an ethnic or cultural kind. Such strategies or tactical moves, that for outsiders sometimes are confusing or irritating, basically contribute substantially to the economic success of businesses established and run by immigrants. Ethnic clichés are reinterpreted and marketed, becoming a positive self-definition. In this way, migrants create through their economic activities hybrid *multi-home spaces* beyond national and ethnic myths, and beyond the either-or binary of *culture of origin and majority culture*. These places differ from social spaces in which non-ambiguity and monocultural habitus is the norm. These are in a certain sense a kind of *transtopia*², in which economic strategies and new ways of dealing with ascribed clichés are developed in order, at one’s own expense so to speak, to configure and enable one’s social advancement up the ladder (see Péraldi 2009).

These developments specific to a neighbourhood long since reflect an urban daily reality that is distinctively marked by both locality and globality (Yildiz 2004). In the cities, reflected in innumerable examples, we can observe what I have termed *multi-home (mehrheimisch)* everyday praxis, namely social and cultural experiences that are multiply superimposed, intersecting, and overlapping, a multiplex of hybridity. They point to and prove how the residents of urban neighbourhoods utilize for themselves economic, social, and cultural elements and networks that transcend boundaries, defining these anew, combining and fusing them into new structures and life plans, in this way creating urban transtopias. Along with the Oriental and Mediterranean stagings described above in retail trade and gastronomy, this mixture is very evident, specifically manifest in the youth scene culture and its trends, whether hip-hop, Orient Lounge or the ‘Kanak Sprak’³.

It is high time to acknowledge the development of neighbourhoods marked by migration and their economic structures as genuine success stories of immigrants and to bring the cultural and economic stimuli generated by migration to centre

stage in urban policy. Such neighbourhoods have become pacesetters and innovators for the globalized world. It is precisely the informal networks which immigrants in their economic activities can fall back on that constitute in times of economic crisis an important resource and strategy for survival.

Translated from the German by Bill Templer

Notes

1 This is a contemporary play on the traditional German expression *Tante-Emma-Laden*, the equivalent of a *mom-and-pop store* in American parlance.

2 *Transtopia* refers to spaces in which differing, contradictory, plurivalent, ambiguous, local and transborder elements are fused with one another and coalesce into urban structures and forms of communication. *Transtopia* can be places of transition, where marginalized actors and kinds of knowledge move into the center centre of observation, are rendered privileged, and in part also cultivated; loci where dominant norms are interrogated and another and different urban matter-of-course naturalness is generated.

3 *Kanak Sprak* is a German sociolect created by Turkish youth in Germany in late 1980s.

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"There is no limit, I'm very happy with hybrid bastards."¹

Anne-Julchen Bernhardt in Conversation with Hana Cisar

Hana Cisar: Today's migration seems to burst all political and economical limits. Does your typological and phenomenological survey of migrants as builders in Germany, TRANSFER, as published in ARCH+ in 2013², relate to this situation, when thousands of refugees are attempting to reach Europe in search of safety and a better life?

Anne-Julchen Bernhardt: The TRANSFER project uses tools of the Enlightenment. It looks at migrant buildings objectively. TRANSFER changes the passive attitude of welfare to active participation in society. It demonstrates the building activities of people from abroad in Germany. Migrants produce space to last; they contribute significantly to the material culture of Germany. Also, migrants generate architecture that wasn't here before. The architecture differs in program, use, actors, form, detail, economy, location, construction, building process, and production conditions. By studying these new hybrids accurately, the transformation of migratory elements under the local conditions in Germany can be observed. These transformed typologies nurture design processes in architectural design with the elements involved. A qualitative type of research does not intend to propose fast solutions for the actual situation. It is a contribution to the discourse of intercultural experiences and practices in Europe.

HC: You write about the "travel of the architect" and about bodily experience as the most important source of the building idea. After Le Corbusier's famous "Travel to the Orient", many theories and speculations were formulated, about how he translated his visual impressions into new models for architecture in France and in Switzerland. How different is the translation in the TRANSFER project?

AJB: The journeys are not that different from the famous journey of Le Corbusier. But the important difference is that the journey is not initiated by a

white, male, dictatorial, heterosexual, European architect looking at a so-called primitive culture. It's organized by ordinary people trying to find the essence in their culture and by less famous architects invited by migrants to look at their culture. The transformation is more pure and often with less awareness. The process of transformation is often determined by simplification and misunderstanding. But especially the simplification gives an indication whether an architectural element is important or not. For instance, the garage for the temple carriage for the Sri Kamadchi Ampal Tempel in Hamm-Uentrop is a simple corrugated steel structure—similar to industrial constructions—that was built by a local company. The design and the material of the garage adapt to the surrounding context, while the carriage has still its distinct shapes and materials. The garage seems less important than the temple carriage. The garage is totally secular, while the carriage is sacred. The garage is a typological adaptation to the German climate (rain) and a constructive adaptation to the German construction methods—a hybrid prototype is created. Various 'mistranslations' show the effect of the local context, rather than of the original one.

HC: You describe how the traditional Oriental typologies of public and semi-public buildings transform themselves and the (German) cityscapes. Does something like integration through architecture exist in the Turkish area or in a shisha-bar in Cologne? Who is building and who is coming there?

AJB: Urban space in German cities changed tremendously in use and appearance with migration. *Keupstraße* in Cologne, for instance, has been in the process of transformation from a typical 19th-century working-class street into an Oriental Bazaar for the last thirty years. It is now intensively filled with Turkish craftsmen shops and restaurants, at the moment still without a roof, but the shop owners are already thinking about it. It is a contemporary tourist

attraction. Now, there is a smell of strawberry in the city streets, Shisha bars pop up on every corner. It is a new nightlife location, visited by young men and women; different from the Shisha bars in the Arab world, which are visited only by men and different from all the existing German nightlife locations like breweries, bars, bistros, cafés, and restaurants. The Shisha bars share a specific layout of seating (on the perimeter of the room) which enables the visitors to communicate with the entire venue, although you share a table with a smaller group of people.

HC: Your research starts with the assumption that architecture emerges out of migration. In other words: architecture develops where the original parameters—climate, place, material—change. A particular case is the reconstruction of existing buildings. What influence does this have, beside other parameters, on such a strong typology as that of a Hamam?

AJB: One can often find transformations in migrant architecture. Due to economic constraints, used buildings are preferred over new ones. Generic boxes located in the urban sprawl are particularly attractive to low-budget investments. Religious programs move into former industrial buildings along with their architectural elements. The boxes are transformed, and in the process of adaption you find the most important elements that have to be transformed. The more complicated the process of adaption, the more significant the selection of the elements to be transformed. And the result shows the initial position of the existing building and the initial position of the typology. In the example of a Hamam in the city centre of Düsseldorf, the traditional mirror symmetry is not structurally transformed but done programmatically. Women can use the Hamam on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, men on Wednesdays and Saturdays. So this element of the typology seems to be not obligatorily connected to form. Other elements, like rooms with good proportions and an elaborated connection between the rooms, seem to be fundamental. In the transformation of an existing 19th-century building you can find each traditional room placed and arranged meticulously in the existing structure, quite similar in size and proportion to the original, connected by new stairs and openings.

HC: You say that the buildings of the migrants in Germany change especially the agglomeration. How does this happen?

AJB: The conditions of production of migrant buildings are different from the ones of buildings by people without a migration background. Their social position differs from the German majority. Their needs are not fully satisfied by the existing German social system and building program. Thus they constitute groups, find spaces to meet, and perform their social activities. Less solvent, their financial resources are limited. They rent or buy used buildings or cheap plots that are not located in the city centre. In the sprawl you can find intensively used programs like mosques, temples, community centres, wedding halls, schools, sports clubs. Migrants contribute to the urbanization of urban sprawl, they hybridize, compress, and socialize places far from the urban centre. Transit spaces become habitable spaces: at the exit road in front of the wedding hall you can see women in evening dresses chatting, the Goddess Kamakshi is passed in their temple car along warehouses of Westfleisch, the nearby canal serves for the ritual bath of several hundred believers. These spaces are globally connected; the temple celebrations in Hamm welcome Hindus from Denmark, France, and the Benelux countries. Migrants are actively engaged in urban development; they are the protagonists of a new agglomeration that forms not only a logistical and infrastructural system but also a hybrid cultural space. The agglomeration becomes a culturally charged space.

HC: Until now, the migrant building activities acted under the radar of the building authorities. How does the planning department and the building authority react to them?

AJB: German bureaucracy is quite slow in reaction to these changes. It took twenty years to accept the vanishing difference between housing and office. It is still not accepted that a new small hybrid—the kiosk—is changing from a shop for cigarettes and newspaper to something between retail, café, and service point. The regulatory agency has bigger problems by authorizing the hybrid program. Both are examples of programs that do not fit into the traditional classification of approved uses. The new architectural programs accompanying people from abroad are looked at with suspicion. Often they do not match the existing categories and laws. They are perceived as a problem, their indeterminacy is a threat.

HC: Is there something like a limit: only so far and not more? Or can we expect, in the image of the

future society, a total hybridization of the urban space?

AJB: There is no limit, I'm very happy with hybrid bastards. Architecturally, Germany represents an agreement on proper soberness. The new hybrids are the antipode, they are raw, complex, and of a particular unfinished beauty. The new hybrids challenge the ordinary notion of architecture, their ambiguity fosters a more reflective understanding of typologies and of architectural space.

HC: Last year you did a project seminar at the RWTH in Aachen with students on the theme of a migrant centre. What can architecture students do at this level to make a difference for migrants? What has happened lately that this is considered a new theme? Is this change relevant for your research?

AJB: We started the studio with a collection of spatial elements from all over the world. A spatial program names and assigns rooms by seemingly universal terms. But a building program is not universal; the name of a room implicates a defined use. We wanted to broaden the cultural understanding and use of spaces, to find more specific or more universal spatial manifestations. The collection helped us to be aware of differences between different cultures, and to praise them somehow. The projects for the migrant centre reflected the two opposite possibilities—to be heterogeneous and special, or to be universal and simple. We looked for ambiguous architecture, which could be understood by many. The studio Kosmopolis took place in spring 2015, before 800,000 refugees came to Germany. Kosmopolis dealt with migrants in a German city, not with refugees. Refugees need help and shelter, which is a different task. Refugees have to become migrants as soon as possible and dissolve into the body of the city. Architecture of welfare is not my field of interest; I am more interested in architecture that activates urban citizens.

HC: How can urban citizens be activated by architecture, and in which parts of the city can it best happen?

AJB: As I said before, there are two opposite possibilities and probably many in between. One is described by the famous quotation by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe to Hugo Häring, that he has only to make the shack big enough to let different things happen. The strategy of a spatial generosity combined with beauty is not only true for mixed-use but

also for cultural hybridity. The other possibility is an architecture that synthesizes different specific spatial elements in an eclectic, precisely ambiguous whole. In eclecticism you have to choose: it is not almost everything but a precise selection of many elements. Its multi-attributive elements can act as an evidence for appropriation. The city is a multidimensional, non-hierarchical, pulsatile structure. So the architecture should be everywhere, in your neighbourhood, in the city centre, in the periphery, in the agglomeration.

Captions

1 Garage for the temple carriage, Hamm-Uentrop: The garage is a typological adaptation to the German climate and an adaptation to German construction methods. Photograph: © Anne-Julchen Bernhardt, Cologne.

2 Shisha shop, Cologne: The ubiquitous youth culture of shisha-smoking is celebrated with products and shop design. Photograph by: Anne-Julchen Bernhardt, Cologne.

3 Wedding hall, Cologne: The wedding hall in the industrial zone changes the interpretation of zoning laws in Germany. Photograph by: Anne-Julchen Bernhardt, Cologne.

4 Keupstraße, Cologne: The shop owner's association of Keupstraße is thinking about placing a canopy over the street and turning it into a real bazaar. Photograph by: Anne-Julchen Bernhardt, Cologne.

Notes

1 Anne-Julchen Bernhardt on the influence of building activities by migrants in urban spaces in Germany.

2 Anne-Julchen Bernhardt, Anna Weber, "Transfer. Migration erzeugt Architektur", *ARCH+* 213/2013, p. 72–73.



Anne-Julchen Bernhardt (b. 1971/DE) studied architecture at the RWTH Aachen and the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, worked as an architect in Berlin and Cologne, and as an assistant professor at the RWTH Aachen. Since 2008, she is a tenured professor at the RWTH University for building typologies. In the year 2000, she established BeL Sozietät für Architektur together with Jörg Leiser. BeL has received numerous awards, among them the Kunstpreis Baukunst of the Berlin Academy of the Arts. The office has worked on 122 projects; 20 have been completed.

Hana Cisar studied architecture at the ETH Zurich and the EPF Lausanne. She has worked as an architect in Zurich, Lugano, and Paris. She has taught architecture at the EPFL, the University of Liechtenstein, and the University of Applied Sciences in Chur. At Eindhoven University of Technology she was Chair of Architectural Design and Urban Cultures. She works independently as a designer and author, and is currently a student of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK, as preparation for establishing a platform on curatorial practice (curating architecture).

Reflexions on Personal Geopolitics by Students of the Postgraduate Programme in Curating Conducted by Michelle Geser Lunau & Mona Liem

The students of the Postgraduate Program in Curating at ZHdK collaborated on the OnCurating Journal: "Work, Migration, Memes, Personal Geopolitics" by leading interviews with different people acting in the field of work and migration. However, most of us are or have once been ourselves in a specific migration situation or witnessed this situation through colleagues of the program. As master students from foreign countries, many of us are privileged and highly qualified migrants but at the same time in a quite insecure working and living situation. We would like to add these experiences of the students involved in the project and developed a survey as a frame to the issue.

We asked the students the following questions:

1. What was the most memorable moment when you were interviewing your interview partner(s) in this project?
2. How did your personal migration experience or perception of migration influence the interview you led?
3. How much of an impact did this project have on your personal life? What is your perception or opinion of migration and migrant people today? Did you encounter specific problems in the project you didn't know/consider before, etc.?

Through the surveys, we got back interesting answers from our colleagues pointing out their personal situation in the migration context and their personal opinions about the topic. Many of them are encountering precarious work and insecure visa

situations. This created in all of us an awareness of possible problems and critical situations other migrants could probably experience. It made us all think about ourselves and our positions in relation to the migration topic and review our preconceptions in a critical way. Through this, we did not only act in a more sensible way in interviewing people from different contexts, it also made us think about our standpoints in the migration discourse and helped us to adopt more conscious and pointed stances. In the end, it made us aware of the many different points of view and gave us a small overview of a very current and extremely complex topic that is striking us all in one or another moment of our daily lives.

Michelle Geser Lunau (1983) studied literature, art history, media and comparative cultural studies at the universities of Konstanz, Regensburg and Madrid and graduated as M.A. She has been working for the KKL Lucerne and the Tonhalle Orchestra Zurich. Since 2011 she is the cultural appointee of the city of Rheinfelden and thereby responsible for fine art exhibitions and classical music. In 2015 she started her studies at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK to gain further knowledge in the field of contemporary art.

Mona Liem has educations and working experience in visual communication, design and management. Her passion for art became one of the reasons to visit courses in art at ZHdK, Oxford University and Node Centre. Currently she is studying at the Postgraduate Programme in Curating ZHdK and is doing research with Z-lab (Smart Curation ZHdK). She is fascinated with new media art as

art can be explored transdisciplinary and through diverse media. Her MAS final exhibition "PRISMA" (2016) is about identity and new media art connecting two spaces through technology.

Lisa Lee Benjamin

1 Memorable moment ... I would have to say it was during the course of our roundtable interview and was an overall feeling that everyone is working on this together. We somehow are all searching for truth, clarifying personal beliefs, trying to understand and work out what it means to be alive in exactly the situation we are in today. We are all in this together, no matter our standing or our current place. The world is changing as it always does, and this issue is one that is ever-present and has been ever-present in history—it is not a problem but a quest for personal freedom or perhaps an evolution of our human spirit. It is a question of how art can reclaim its role for society by actually commenting and actively suggesting change and new ideas and helping us find our way.

2 It created a moment of listening for what the possibilities are and how connectivity is changing approaches to migration politics and a deep interest in how art can actively participate.

3 I have been striving for several years to obtain my somewhat shaky existence here in Zurich. Switzerland is my soul, is home, it is where I have found the path to myself somehow. Trying to establish here is in some ways unattainable, and the most the steep and difficult route to take. It could be easier to make my way with my family nearby, in my native country, with full support and within the boundaries of what I know.

What does one do with this feeling of longing of desire to be spiritually home? I think it is this, of course, which has inspired solidarity and a sense of empathy. We all should be free as human beings to find our spiritual home and to find our way back to ourselves. I also have felt many emotions and am questioning not just the symptoms of what we see presently, but also the root. There are some like me in search of themselves, yet many people are fleeing because this freedom and their basic rights are limited or in danger, and many of them have to leave their spiritual home, the place they know and not by choice leave much of what they love behind.

We are being asked to evolve and create the space that we can all return home, whatever that means for each of us as individuals. It is ever more

complicated with new mobility, perceived threats of lack, fear of the unknown, fear of change, fear of loss, and the dynamics of these ever-changing diasporas. Yet this is exactly what is pushing us into the next paradigm and the ability to see what is possible. What is wonderful about our world is each place has its own resonance, culture, values, strengths, weaknesses, and lessons for our species as a whole. How do we grasp and incorporate this knowledge and create people and places that stand for themselves, are confident in their abilities and skills, respectful of their environments, origins, and culture.

Peace is needed, fairness is needed, a language based in something other than economy is needed, so that we can create safety and health in the world. This safety starts where each of us is treated as an individual, and not as a commodity, a consumer, or a number. Where each individual is proud of who they are, where they have come from, and each is recognized as a member of this planet, with a voice, a desire, and a dream. We actually have all we need, and have the ability to provide for every being: peace, safety, healthy food, healthy soil, clean water, clean air, clean energy, and the opportunity to pursue what makes us happy. We are being asked to address the current situation where money and combating religious interests alone fuel our wars and drive us from home, 50% of our food is wasted, agricultural land is used not for food but for the ever hungry overconsumption of a few, and resources are squandered for the sake of price wars, and we strive for the what the market tells us we need to have to be happy.

I, in some ways agree with this idea of re-centring brought up in Tim Zulauf's lecture *Narrating Spaces. Interdependencies of Spatial Frontiers and Verbal Production and Verbal Frontiers and Spatial Production* (2015): what if those of us who stay and those of us who flee commit to re-centring the places we have chosen and best contribute to their uniqueness. We can do this by preserving and respecting the places we migrate to by valuing their language, their culture, their balance, and their integrity. What is special about Switzerland? For me, many things that I uphold and value. I sometimes buy two train tickets if I accidentally forget, as I value the trust in the system and want to make sure I act with trust back. I value the language, and am learning as fast as I can. I value the traditions, food, land, and the way communities look out for each other, and I do my best to learn and honour these things. I think as migrants we must also accept that we are also coming into someone else's home and must respect what is given and find ways to contribute positively. I think it is through these acts of empathy, solidarity, generosity, and acceptance that we

find the way back to ourselves and are able to return home.

Frédéric Bron

1 When I visited the ‘social sculpture’ project, Grandhotel Cosmopolis in Augsburg with my colleague Silvia Converso, we were invited to participate in the workshops and community procedures that are part of the collaborative alignment. We had the chance to experience the “Emotion Room”. It’s a part of the daily work flow where participants meet on an optional basis to sit together on the floor in a room only illuminated by some candles. The word is passed over in a ritualized way and the participant can speak out to express or deposit his/her emotions of the day or he/she can simply remain quiet and get the silent awareness of the others when it’s his/her turn. This intense experience provided me a practical insight in the understanding of terms like collaborative, dialogical work as mentioned by Grant Kester, or the creation of inter-human relations, elaborated by Nicolas Bourriaud in “relational aesthetics”.

Through this insight, I gained a more concrete comprehension of the concept of ‘social sculpture’, which is a description with different significations and which is also preoccupying the makers of the Grandhotel Cosmopolis. On a personal level, it made me think about ethics and the enormous gap between my first-world preoccupations and the precariousness of the migrants. And subsequently this encounter made me reflect on curatorial ways that in the end can really have an effect for migrants.

2 I only migrated within Switzerland in my childhood. But as it was a migration from a different language and cultural region to another, so I can relate to some of the feelings and experiences migrants might have. The loss, the search, and the definition of identity in particular are aspects of migration that interests me, and I wanted to emphasize this topic and their view on identity in the actual situation but also their expectations of the new country and the new surroundings as a facilitator of identity to find out more about this aspect of personal geopolitics.

3 When a subject matter becomes a face and a personal, often tragic story, you react more emotionally to it and it starts to affect you on a different level. Again, the notion of ethics came up and the question about “the right thing to do” being confronted with such inequality and being the one standing on the privileged side. It also made me more aware of the

responsibility as a curator to work with art as part of a social practice and that an interdisciplinary collaboration with social workers is needed. Further, the notion of solidarity came up and what it means to engage so that the theories of socially engaged art play out in practice without exploiting the migrant crisis to make yourself feel better, but to actually make a difference, even on a small scale, for the concerned community.

Emilie Bruner

1 ASZ interview.

The interview, a quiet hour, an hour to listen. A poet, philosopher, and activist, softly spoken with a peacefulness and clarity. The January afternoon chilled the makeshift room, a garage on the property of the old ZHdK where we three sat. A space used for parties, art openings, and graffiti. The interview began. I said nothing. The recorder documented.

New idea. Iconic interview, a script to follow. Deadline fast approaching. A try for something artistic. Bah agrees.

2 & 3 Emancipation, occupation, freedom of movement: Ideologies I hadn’t termed, examined, or contemplated but forged through. Mandatory applications, interviews, ignoring deadlines, fitting the requirements, American passport.

German visa approved, UK visa approved. Temporary setbacks and strategizing. Swiss visa denied. Freedom of movement. I work around it.

I suffered no military struggle, hunger, illness, death, violence, hatred, race discrimination, lack of money or transportation limitations.

Silvia Converso

1 I got the chance to get in touch with Grandhotel Cosmopolis and a Zurich-based artist, Vreni Spieser. Both interviews were enriching and offered me really good insights with which to continue my research on this topic, expand my knowledge about this issue, and relate to this on a human level as well.

2 My perception of the migration plays a big role in the interviews I led. I am well aware that I am in a privileged migrating position, that is, I have access to education, the health system, and employment, whereas asylum seekers and other migrants have to go through never-ending processes of registration in order to get their status recognized. Still, when they get to that point, they have no access to the benefits and the welfare system of the country

they are living in, and they are stigmatized by their status. This is a really big inequality generated by our society and politics that dates back to the past and the colonial system.

3 This project inspired me to deepen my research on this topic and to travel to Lesbos in order to get a hands-on experience of what is currently happening in Europe. To me, it felt really important to witness all this with my own eyes, get direct impressions in relation to my life, opinion, and perception in order to process this experience and see what it's really like and what we can really do, since the states and the EU are unable to provide real answers.

Cordelia Oppliger

1 It was when an undocumented woman was telling her story to the three of us, and we all got physically closer and closer. We formed kind of a conspiring circle, the Colombian (with a B permit for students), the Italian (with a tourist visa), the “sans papiers” (with no papers), and me, the Swiss citizen. It was very intense and touching.

2 I never understood this concept of nation—and I still don't. Working on the migration topic reconfirmed my understanding that nation is a construct in the sense of an arbitrarily forced inclusion and exclusion. For example, why are we talking about German people in Switzerland as expats but Bolivians as migrants?

3 I always considered the whole discussion in Switzerland about migrants and refugees—categorized as real, false, and economic refugees—as an embarrassing one. People are moving from A to B, that is my understanding. And the movement/migration won't stop; on the contrary, it will increase.

Working on the migration topic didn't change this perception but I am more sensitized to the seriousness of this—in my opinion—false and racist discussion. And I'm even more convinced that we Swiss citizens should be more confident about our own beliefs and values instead of blaming foreign people for bringing their own to our country. And that we should embrace the diversity that people with different backgrounds and cultures offers to Switzerland.

Diana Padilla

1 The most memorable moment while inter-

viewing Melanie Muñoz was when it was noticeable in her voice and her expressions how much she really cared for the women that she worked with and for. She has a genuine respect for what she does, and I will always remember how she pointed out that she works for her beliefs and that all the people involved in Lysistrada cooperate with selflessness and have a strong sense of community. It's all a big, strong, and powerful sisterhood.

2 I guess I've been always very interested in how women should be protected. I have “migrated” in a very privileged way, I came to get a postgraduate degree, I have a good economic status, support from my family, I am not disabled in any way, and still I have encountered some difficulties by coming to Switzerland, starting with the fact that my visa was denied at first. The bureaucracy that someone has to go through to come from a non-Schengen/non-European Union country is enormous. Now imagine a sex worker trying to make a living, considering the entire stigma that still exists around sex work, but still being alienated because of your nationality. These women have to face a lot of obstacles, and their rights deserve to be respected, acknowledged, and protected. I admire very much the courage of all these women and also the people who have set a goal to fight for them.

3 I find problematic all this discussion about nationalities and the hierarchy of oppression that exists today. I understand that as a government it's not a piece of cake to take in everyone and just make it work, but I believe that we are all citizens of the world and no matter where you come from, your life is as valuable as anyone else's.

The problem I have encountered is that I wanted to include more people that I considered important for this project (I wanted to include more than one person's/organization's position on the theme) to be more cohesive, and the list is being more and more reduced for different reasons. Apparently the topic of sex work is not very approachable, but I will try and do my best to make it complete.

Paloma Rayón

1 The best moment when interviewing Rayelle Niemann was when she described what *heimat* means to her, which is something very different from the German concept of home or land, but more something related to the inner feeling of being at home, to be part of something which is not necessarily the place where you were born.

2 My personal experience as a migrant has probably changed my way I see or observe Spanish society, and myself. When travelling, the traveller changes in order to adapt him or herself to the new circumstances in which he or she is living. First of these changes, and probably the most important one, in my opinion, is the change on one's thinking, the consequence of speaking and thinking in other language different from your mother tongue, which changes the way you reflect and express yourself. You have, though, a bigger perspective; you are seeing "the whole picture".

3 In my opinion, the most important lesson to learn is that there are always at least two different ways to see things or to solve problems, and they both can be correct.

And the reflection that migration is a global and historical process. And maybe taking this into consideration should be considered when trying to solve the problems related to it. Migration has happened since human beings have existed, although the reasons for migration are very different.

Mariana Bonilla Rojas

1 The thing that stuck with me the most during the interview with Fany (a former "sans papiers" born in La Paz, Bolivia, currently living in Zurich) was not exactly a specific moment. Instead, it was more an aura around her. It was her unbreakable spirit and strong presence. Despite living very difficult moments through her life that most of us could not even imagine experiencing, she always spoke about it with immense gratitude.

2 It was, of course, a major influence. I have come to realize that living in a place as a foreigner is immensely gratifying and I am immensely privileged, but it also comes with important challenges. There are specific restrictions that condition the way you perceive, live, and understand your surroundings. You are immediately being categorized, in my case as a foreign student—there are more layers of categorizations, for example 'Latina', that also come with specific preconceived ideas that are binding and sometimes coercive—which gives me access to certain things and as well as controlling and restricting access to others, work-wise especially. Fortunately, mobility is not a problem and once you get the document that certifies your status, things that are taken for granted which right now we have become so attached and dependent on, like the possibility of opening a bank account, buying a cell phone line, a house contract, are now available. In this sense, you

have a glimpse of what it implies to be conditional or deprived of things, and you develop a strong sense of understanding, a great sensibility, and a sense of empathy.

3 I think migration is not a problem, it is a fact. I think the problem is the way in which we categorize it and how we 'deal' with it, or not. The thing is that it is not something new, and it is something that will not stop. People will continue to move for whatever reason. So, what we need here is first a change of mindset.

With respect to the impact that Fany and Bea had in my personal life it was quite a positive one. It was more about strength and empowerment. About the construction of the self. In the end it is about the people and their experiences, and how they deal with what life brings. That is what matters to me. It is about our actions and our position.

It has been also very important and gratifying to work with a great group of friends with whom I trust; when embarking on demanding journeys, it is always best to travel well surrounded because the learning experience is enriched. The most important realizations have materialized thanks to our talks around the subject, the project, the concept, the people involved, about us, and also about the challenges encountered and the emotions triggered.

I also was left with some existential questions that I can add to my collection. What is it that validates us as who we are? Is it a piece of paper? How can we deprive others of their identity by taking away the right to inhabit a specific place? The list can go on...

Thank you girls!

Silvia Savoldi

1 In collaboration with Mariana Bonilla Rojas and Cordelia Oppliger I interviewed Fany Flores, a woman who used to live in Zurich as a "sans papiers". Her story gave me shivers, especially hearing it from her very own lips. She lived as a homeless person, she was afraid of any policeman or control, and she accepted any kind of housework she could in order to send money in Bolivia to her four children, who had to be raised by the grandmother. At a personal level I was very moved.

2 My point of view is a migrant's, so I had a great empathy towards Fany, even though my own migration trouble is far less destabilising than hers. With the second part of the interview, which was with the president of the Zurich organisation that

helps sans papiers, we tried to be more focused on the technical matters, because it is important to understand the counterparts in such a complicated topic. How do locals, and the Swiss in particular, react? Why is there so much fear of the foreigner, of the stranger, of the other? Paloma Rayón and I also had a conversation about transnationality with Rayelle Niemann, a curator who reflected on the notion of homeland and who used to live in Egypt. Having a common background as migrants helped us to have a more natural conversation, starting from our personal experience in order to grasp and discuss the most diverse topics.

3 I think my vision of being a migrant with papers has changed a lot by now. First of all, I consider myself part of a system which on the one hand encourages people to move abroad, attend schools, buy goods, etc., and on the other hand tries to control the streams in ineffective ways. Then I have become very aware of how powerfully people could act in terms of legislation. Laws have to be respected, but also have to be changed when they are proved wrong. Through information, dialogue, and negotiation, a solution could be found to treat migrants as human beings rather than some kind of puppets.

Franziska Stern

1 It was a special moment, when only after some time of discussing did we realize that, of the six of us sitting around the table, there was one from the U.S., one from Austria, one from Germany, one from Japan and two from Switzerland.

Also always interesting with interviews is that only when afterwards listening to the record do you learn how sometimes questions were not accurately asked nor accurately answered, and nobody realized.

2 I don't have a migration experience in the common sense. Still I think the main difficulties for people exposed to migration/mobility issues—namely the problem of loss of identification—is an experience all of us have from time to time. Being excluded because of whatever different background—ethnicity, economy, education, generation—is a most irritating, sometimes even traumatic, perception. Working on the interview made me more attentive to such experiences. Where do I find myself excluded and how do I behave in such situations? Am I able to address it or do I withdraw?

3 I started reading more about the topic of migration/mobility. I can recommend a very impressive book—fiction—written by the German author

Jenny Erpenbeck. It tells the story of an elderly German professor who starts his own private approach towards the subject of refugees. Title: *Gehen, ging, gegangen*, by Jenny Erpenbeck. Read it!

What I do think is really most important with people migrating from areas where there are war conflicts going on: that we don't treat them as victims. And therefore also don't talk about victims.

In general, I think we do have to start thinking very intensively about hierarchies: who is setting the framework for integration? It might be important to think about collaboration rather than about integration ...

Makiko Takahashi

1 It was when migration was discussed in terms of civil rights. One of the participants, Philipp Lutz, a political scientist from the think tank foraus mentioned that, "It is our civil right as citizens to have individual freedom, but migration policies often restrict this freedom". I had read many arguments from the point of view of economy and paternalism for and in Europe, but very little discussion from the viewpoint of migrants' side. Maybe it is too essential even to think that everyone has a right and freedom to pursue happiness, and a safer and better life. Considering this point, I could relate myself very well to the migration issue today, because I came here for study to pursue better possibilities in my career. I also had the possibility that my application for a resident permit was turned down for whatever reason. I have a place to go back to if my application is turned down, but many refugees don't, which is a big difference though. But people move in pursuit of a better life, whatever the reason behind it is, and it is individual freedom that is guaranteed as a right. With this project I learned that migration is not only about refugees, and the migration issue is not someone else's problem but became my or our issue.

2 The migration topic is significantly related to me and to many of us. I approached the interview and the project itself by reflecting myself a lot, not merely as a hot social issue like everybody is talking about refugees coming to Europe. I'm also a migrant, as I came here to have better education for my career from far away.

3 I feel any kind of migration-related issue cannot be separated from me or us. Today, refugees coming to Europe is a big topic. They are migrants seeking a better life just like many of us do, and it should be guaranteed as an individual freedom. But

their freedom is severely restricted. As a migrant here, I also felt lots of restrictions. It seems there are always economic and political reasons, and we all have to fight for our rights. The migration project brought me all these thoughts.

Petra Tomljanović

1 Martin Krenn, the Austrian artist, shared his views on the politics of creating history, as something that is constantly being rewritten. He took a historical perspective with respect to migrants in Austria, and explained the patchworked, multidimensional history that consists of a mixture of social and cultural memory that was opposing the collective or national memory, i.e. the official version of history. With different approaches, it is necessary to understand that nothing is fixed. There is no final right version of history, and if one believes in the one official version of history, then one can be sure that this will also change in the future, because it also has changed in the past. I think it necessary to keep in mind that the myth of the nation state with strict borders was born only 150 years ago, whereas cultural exchange has existed ever since humans invented means of transportation to cross the seas and reach distant continents.

2 When thinking about the personal migration experience (and also coming from Croatia), I can't deny the historical trace of Balkan figure of a "Gastarbeiter" who immigrated to German-speaking countries from the 1960's onward, and marked the trace in Western European economies. Gastarbeiters were forming, no doubt about that, their own stereotype; they created melancholic mythical stories about their country, waiting to go back home anytime, but maybe not really now. They spent most of their life abroad, but failed to make that "abroad" their home. Gastarbeiter is something like a metaphor of a failed Yugoslavian regime, but at the same time, an expression of its vitality. The Gastarbeiter almost heralded global capitalism, which was able to re-establish the notion of the southern worker through persistent, dedicated work. So, the sentiment is that a Gastarbeiter is a constant guest, a displaced stranger who is ceaselessly coming somewhere else. What I find especially empowering and poignant in this perception is the very true deconstruction of national identity, national culture, and emancipation of hybridity. In the terms of global migration, I seek the idea of a Gastarbeiter as someone who is transnational and trans-social and demands the articulation of those new terms. And everything is so relative, after all: a Croatian, when living in Singapore, is an expat, a

"first-class Westerner", but when living in Western Europe, a "second-class citizen"—a "Yugo".

3 It was interesting to see last week in Zurich how the collective Laboria Cuboniks makes an analogy between aliens and the collective; for them being an alien is a way to create new worlds. They are maybe sharing a utopian, but surely an optimistic vision of identity politics. So they say, "We are all alienated—but have we ever been otherwise? It is through, and not despite, our alienated condition that we can free ourselves from the muck of immediacy. Freedom is not a given—and it's certainly not given by anything 'natural'. The construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; Alienation is the labour of freedom's construction." Therefore, I can be an alien, a Gastarbeiter, or a migrant, native to the universe.

Katrijn Van Damme

1 Petra and I interviewed the artist (he wants to be less qualified as a curator) Martin Krenn by Skype. The interview in its entire duration was very interesting.

2 I honestly hadn't my background in mind while setting up the questions. My parents moved from Belgium to Luxembourg, and I was born there. But I never felt like a migrant/expat in that sense, just like a free-floating atom in a big system where I connect with atoms from different cultural and social backgrounds.

3 Migration is already a hot topic in Luxembourg given the fact that the capital's population consists of 47% "foreigners". I am today more aware of the history of migration and that it is already an issue for more than a few decades. The problematic hasn't changed much but the way to deal with it from the political and administrative point of view is more visible now. Personally, the most shocking part is the terminology used to de-humanize—we can even say "instrumentalize"—the economically weaker "migrants".

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