

Postmigration: Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe

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Anna Meera Gaonkar, Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen,
Hans Christian Post, Moritz Schramm (eds.)

Postmigration

Art, Culture, and Politics in Contemporary Europe

[transcript]

Postmigration Studies

Anna Meera Gaonkar, Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen,
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Postmigration

Editorial

The postmigration discourse gains ever more interest, not only within the social sciences, and expresses a resistant practice in the production of knowledge – a perspective both critical and optimistic. That attitude of mind is of central importance for reflection on postmigration phenomena and their complexities. The prefix »post-« does not simply designate a chronological state of coming after, but rather an overcoming of past ways of thinking, a new enterprise of thinking through the entire field of studies in which discourse on migration is embedded – in other words: a contrapuntal interpretation of social relations. In the radical abandonment of the customary separation between migration and being settled, migrant and non-migrant, an epistemological turn is occurring. The »postmigrational« thus functions as an open concept for examining social situations of mobility and diversity. It renders fractures, ambiguity, and marginalized memories visible that should not be situated on the periphery of society but express central social conditions. Creative reinterpretations, new inventions and theoretical discourses increasingly associated with this concept – postmigration art and literature, postmigration theater, postmigration urbanity and plans for life – signal a new, inspiring point of view. With the series »**Postmigration Studies**«, we seek to shed new light on this idea and its trailblazing relevance for critical research on migration and society viewed from a range of different perspectives – and to invite further exploration of this focus in social inquiry.

The series is edited by Marc Hill and Erol Yildiz.

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Anna Meera Gaonkar, Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen,
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Introduction

Anna Meera Gaonkar, Astrid Sophie Øst Hansen, Hans Christian Post, Moritz Schramm

In recent years, the concept of postmigration has begun to gain traction across European academia. Journalists and politicians in Germany frequently refer to postmigration in their attempts to describe and cope with complexities of contemporary society shaped by past and ongoing migrations. In the German context, there has even been talk of the concept's "triumph march" (Piening 2017).¹ Interpretations of postmigration have also begun to circulate in countries including Denmark, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Italy, Austria and Sweden, especially within the field of cultural and social studies.²

Recent studies engage the concept of postmigration as a means of addressing the social transformations and cultural struggles that are unfolding in contemporary European societies.³ Meanwhile, other approaches use the term as a marker for specific generational experiences or attempt to conceptualise and historicise the concept. The concept of postmigration thus emerges from multiple genealogies, all circulating simultaneously, and which are both distinct and overlapping. In one predominant reading, postmigration is described as a recent development within the cultural scene in Berlin, Germany. In this context, the concept is understood to have emerged primarily from artist-led activities and discussions between 2004 and 2008, when theatre director Shermin Langhoff, along with other

1 Note on translation: where translations from other languages than English were available these have been used; where this was not possible all translations from other language sources are our own.

2 See academic references in: France (Geiser 2008, 2015; Vitali 2011; Kleppinger/Reeck 2018; Luna-Dubois 2019), Sweden (Nilsson/Bunar 2016; Frykman 2017), Switzerland (Espahangizi 2016, 2018, 2021), Denmark (Vitting-Seerup 2017, 2018; Moslund 2019a; Petersen 2019a; Petersen/Schramm 2016, 2017; Schramm 2018, 2019, 2020; Schramm/Moslund/Petersen et al. 2019), Germany (Sharifi 2011, 2015, 2017, 2018; Kosnick 2015, 2018; Ritter 2018, Spielhaus 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2018; Ratkovic 2018, Tewes/Gül 2018; Foroutan/Karakayalı/Spielhaus 2018); Italy (Romeo 2006, Schramm 2020); UK (Bromley 2017; Meskimmon 2017; Stewart 2015, 2017; Gamal 2013, Moslund 2019b), Austria (Yildiz 2010, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018; Yildiz/Hill 2015, 2017, 2018; Hill 2018; Gaugele 2019).

3 Foroutan 2016, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Schramm/Moslund/Petersen et al. 2019.

activists and cultural practitioners, began to label their work as “postmigrant theatre”.⁴ Much of the academic reception in Germany is directly influenced by the public success of postmigrant theatre in Berlin after 2008 (cf. Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 3-7).

We also find attempts to connect postmigration to previous theoretical approaches, postcolonial studies in particular. On a methodological level, many scholars working with the concept of postmigration seem to be strongly influenced by postcolonial thinking, often pointing to analogies between discourses of postmigration and postcolonial studies, asserting that “postmigration presents the voice of migration” (Yildiz 2018: 22). In this sense, both postmigration and postcolonial approaches make “marginalized knowledge visible”, they challenge “national myths” and demand a new historical consciousness (ibid.). On an empirical level, however, some approaches employ post-migration, here with a hyphen, as a term to distinguish between various forms of migration movements – e.g. differences between internal European labour migration and postcolonial migration from former European colonies to their respective “motherlands” after the Second World War (Terkessidis 2017; Blanchard 2018). For example, Pascal Blanchard distinguishes between “two migrations” in France that are separated by the “colonial fracture” – a division which is often overlooked. Blanchard argues that there exists:

[...] a difficulty—or fear—in recognizing the existence of two separate “immigrations”. One of colonial origin, also coming from the near peripheries of the Empire at precise moments of our national history [...] and the other, of Western origin, which since two centuries is structured in waves (Germans, Belgians, Swiss, Russians, Italians, Poles, Spanish, Portuguese, Pied-Noirs), which experienced moments of violence and rejections, but gradually blended into the “national identity”, without experiencing a permanent return to their ancestors’ origins and situation. (Blanchard 2018: 181-182)

By emphasising the differences between migrations from the former colonies and more recent migrations from other European countries to France, Blanchard draws attention to the limitations and the specificity of postcolonial theory as a

4 See Kosnick 2015: 8, footnote 2, in reference to the organisation of the film festival Europe in Motion in 2004. Also mentioned is the festival Beyond Belonging from 2006, as well as the emergence of the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse as an arts and theatre space “that became nationally and internationally known for its focus on post-migrant cultural productions” (Kosnick 2015: 8, footnote 2). See also: Langhoff 2018 and the contributions of Lizzy Stewart and Roger Bromley to this volume.

model of explanation, arguing for the need to use concepts that refer to different, though overlapping, migration histories.

Some scholars do also focus on the empirical overlapping between postmigrant and postcolonial experiences, e.g. labelling the descendants of migrants from the former colonies as “post-migratory postcolonial minorities” – born and raised in France, but affected by “a racial and ethnic hierarchy inherited from the colonial period” (Kleppinger/Reeck 2018: 3). In this reading, postmigration is employed mainly as a generational marker, used to qualify and differentiate among the various postcolonial experiences. Meanwhile, other scholars argue for the need to expand postcolonial perspectives by including the forgotten histories of migration to Europe (see e.g. Regina Römhild’s contribution to this volume).

In this introduction, we do not seek to homogenise or obliterate the different usages of the concept of postmigration, nor do we want to trace the concept’s multiple genealogies and its contexts of emergence. Instead, we intend to provide an overview of some of the various contemporary conceptualisations of the term – indications that some of the interpretations have been developed independently.⁵ Our aim with the book is thus to allow for a substantial dialogue between different scholarly traditions on postmigration, without necessarily judging the validity of the various approaches. In our reading, the multiplicity of usages of the concept is a methodological and empirical strength, rather than a disadvantage (see also: Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 6). To begin with, we will look at academic publications from a 1990s UK context from which the term postmigration first surfaces in European academia. While the term itself is not at the centre of these theoretical works, we argue that they nevertheless anticipate and pave the way for discussions and conceptualisations to come.

The usages of the term in the UK in the 1990s illustrate how notions of postmigration initially appeared in postcolonial negotiations of ethnicities and identities. It is clear that from the outset, the concept of postmigration challenged the field of migration studies, especially in regard to the rethinking of national identities and ideas of stable cultures and ethnicities. That is to say, the term functioned as a critical intervention in research and public debates long before it was employed in a similarly strategic vein by artists and activists in Germany in the mid-2000s. Through this intermingling of scholarly, political, cultural and artistic engage-

5 Many discussions on postmigration in France do not include the German debates in their texts, and vice versa. Likewise, the debates in the UK and other countries often seem to be unaware of the existence of other interpretations or downplay alternative interpretations as insignificant (see Foroutan 2019a: 50; see the German and French reception in Lizzie Stewart’s contribution to this volume). One notable exception is Myriam Geiser, who connects different scholarly traditions in her reading of German and French literature (Geiser 2015).

ments, the concept can offer complex, interdisciplinary understandings and conceptualisations of contemporary Europe and its challenges.

In this introduction, we seek to provide insight into the diversity and potential of postmigration studies. First, we present the initial thoughts on postmigration from the 1990s and their relation to postcolonial thinking. Secondly, we introduce recent conceptualisations of the term, which often include methodological considerations of traditional migration research and its pitfalls. Thirdly, we address some of the criticism of the concept of postmigration, and how it is possible to oscillate between its various usages. Finally, we introduce the contributions to this volume.

Early conceptualisations

Within some academic discussions, we find a persisting belief that the concept of postmigration has a singular cultural origin. Earlier academic usages of the term are sometimes downplayed as being limited to “concrete concerns, which affect migrants after they have migrated” (Foroutan 2016: 231; see also: Foroutan 2019a: 50). Contrary to this perception, our reading of several 1990s texts emphasises how postmigration emerges as part of earlier academic attempts to comprehend transformations of societies shaped by previous and ongoing migrations. The term “post-migration” – written with a hyphen initially – first surfaces in academia in the UK in the mid-1990s.⁶

Anthropologists Gerd Baumann and Thijl Sunier explore the concept in their 1995 anthology *Post-Migration Ethnicity: De-Essentializing Cohesion, Commitments, and Comparison*, which includes chapters on countries such as England, the Netherlands and Germany (Baumann/Sunier 1995a). In his studies on multiculturalism and national belonging some years later, political scientist Tariq Modood uses the expression “post-immigration ethnicities” to focus on transformations in multicultural Britain (Modood 1999: 39). Neither articulation of postmigration contextualises it theoretically, nor do they define the term specifically. The term remains at the periphery of their theoretical thinking and is used mainly to highlight general tendencies in society. From a historical perspective, the emergence of the term is telling, in particular when reading it against the backdrop of the

⁶ We write the terms post-migration, post-migrant etc. with a hyphen when discussing these earlier scholarly usages, but otherwise use the term without hyphen. Furthermore, we translate some of the German usages of the term – such as the term *das Postmigrantisches* – as “postmigration” or “the concept of postmigration”, in order to offer a better understanding of the conceptual intervention envisioned by those who created and embraced the term. On the translation of the term *das Postmigrantisches* into English see: Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 8-9; for another translation of the term see the contribution by Juliane Karakayalı and Paul Mecheril in this volume.

intellectual and academic debates of the late 1980s and early 1990s. At that time, the expanding postcolonial theory and the emerging cultural studies in the UK began to engage concepts such as “culture”, “identity” and “ethnicity”. Previously, these concepts had been perceived as stable and as ahistorical dimensions, which determine individual and collective identities. Founding father and scholar of British cultural studies, Stuart Hall, challenged this predominant understanding of culture and ethnicity by focusing on the emergence of new ethnicities and new identities (Hall 1991).

While neither Hall nor other influential UK figures in postcolonial thinking or cultural studies specifically mention postmigration, Hall’s thinking directly influenced Baumann and Sunier’s and later Modood’s use of the term, albeit in different ways. Hall’s two 1989 lectures, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicities” and “Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities”, became particularly influential. Here, Hall challenges what he called “ethnic absolutism” in an effort to dismantle essentialist versions of ethnicity and identity, and to replace them with “multiple social identities” and an awareness of “the critical dimension of positioning” (Hall 1991: 57).⁷

In the wake of these lectures, scholars in the fields of political science and anthropology began to focus on what Modood, in direct reference to Hall, calls the “emphasis on the *historical* nature of ethnicity” (Modood 1994: 872, original emphasis). So, instead of considering ethnic identities as static and ahistorical, an increasing number of scholars come to understand the concept of ethnicity as part of ongoing conflicts and struggles unfolding in so-called multiethnic and multicultural societies in Europe. The concept of postmigration was thus developed through attempts to question established approaches to ethnicity. This is especially notable in Baumann and Sunier’s use of “post-migration” in the previously mentioned anthology *Post-Migration Ethnicity* from 1995. They observe that since the beginning of the 1990s, traditional notions of ethnicity have been largely rejected and replaced with “a recent consensus on de-essentializing our approaches to ethnicity” in academia (Baumann/Sunier 1995b: 1). While “ethnicity” has been widely dismissed as an analytical term, Baumann and Sunier acknowledge that ethnicity has simultaneously “conquered a strategic space in the language and the self-understanding of millions of people in the wake of international migration” (ibid.: 2). Addressing this tension, Baumann and Sunier focus on “post-migration ethnicity” to examine how ethnicity is used and negotiated in social life. Their “post-essentialist study of ethnicity” (ibid.: 3) explores “ambiguities of commitments and identifications that people labelled as ‘ethnic’ minorities actually enter” as well as “the cross-cutting cleavages that are so fundamental to social life in any plu-

7 See a new reading of the historical setting and its influence on the present: Espahangizi 2021 (in print); see also Hall 1992, 1993.

ral society" (ibid.: 4). The anthology focuses on different forms of "ethnic visibility", "new identities" and "mixing cultures" in countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Greece and the UK (ibid.). It thus anticipates later approaches towards postmigration, such as more recent studies on the culture of "post-migrant youth" in contemporary Europe (e.g. Kosnick 2015: 8), and "transformation and cultural mixing processes" experienced by descendants of migrants (Geiser 2015: 127).

It is worth noting that while Baumann and Sunier are informed by postcolonial critiques, they do not focus primarily on the aftermaths of colonialism. With the term "post-migration ethnicity" their attention is on the overall negotiations of ethnicity and identity in plural societies that are shaped by past and ongoing migration movements from former colonies as well as from within and outside Europe. Their use of the term post-migration is part of the general expansion of postcolonial concepts towards other forms of migration, as mentioned above.

In the years that followed, a similar usage of the term postmigration began to circulate outside the field of anthropology. One of the most influential approaches is presented by political scientist Tariq Modood, who discusses post-migration, again with a hyphen, in relation to debates on Britishness and national identity. In his essay "New Forms of Britishness: Post-Immigrant Ethnicity and Hybridity in Britain", Modood seeks to map "new ethnicities", which have not previously been empirically described (1999: 34). In particular, he discusses Hall's assumption that new identities and ethnicities in 1990s UK can be subsumed under the political concept of "Blackness" (Hall 1991: 56-59; Modood 1999: 34-35). While Modood acknowledges the importance of considering ethnicities in Britain as fluid and hybrid to "expand the nation" (39), he is hesitant towards Hall's suggestion that ethnic groups are so internally complex that they have become "necessary fictions" – an assumption, which Modood deems to be "much exaggerated" (ibid.). Modood concludes that various empirical studies show that ethnic groups play a significant role in self-perception and group identities, especially among British Asians. In consequence, he rejects a unitary British identity based on one specific ethnicity and religion and instead embraces "British mixedness" and an "all-inclusive nationality" (ibid.). This leads Modood to pronounce a new "multicultural Britishness that is sensitive to ethnic difference and incorporates a respect for persons as individuals and for the collectivities that people have a sense of belonging to" (ibid.). Modood does not elaborate much on his theoretical use of the terms "post-migration" and "post-immigration", neither in the 1999 essay nor in his later work (Modood 2012). In his movement away from migration studies, which deals with questions of departure and arrival, and towards the study of the already existing multiplicity in European nation states, he is aligned with more recent theorisations of postmigration.

Contemporary conceptualisations

Contemporary conceptualisations of postmigration are often in line with the aforementioned early usages of the term, albeit with more theoretical focus and attempts to elaborate on the developing concept. Some research from British, French and Italian contexts centres on “postmigrant subjectivities” and on the specific experiences of “postmigrant generations” (Romeo 2006; Vitali 2011; Gamal 2013; Geiser 2015), which is also true for certain German-language conceptualisations (e.g. Foroutan 2010; Yildiz 2010). This approach is generally in accordance with early approaches from the UK in which the term “post-migration” is used as a specific label for the “third generation of migrants” (e.g. Yalcin-Heckmann 1995: 82). But as we will examine more closely now, the term has evolved in other directions in Germany in recent years. Since the 2010s, postmigration has especially developed into a critical practice within the fields of German culture and scholarship.

As previously mentioned, in Germany, the academic discussions are strongly informed by the success of so-called “postmigrant theatre”, which was established by artists and activists in Berlin in the early 2000s. The term was first used in 2004 by theatre director Shermin Langhoff together with Tunçay Kulaoğlu, Kira Kosnick and Martina Priessner during the Berlin workshop “Europe in Motion”. Later, postmigrant theatre was also employed at other cultural events such as the literature, music and film festival “Beyond Belonging” at the Hebbel am Ufer Theatre in 2006. In 2008, the term gained momentum when Langhoff and other activists and artists took over the independent Berlin theatre Ballhaus Naunynstrasse, which is situated in the multicultural neighbourhood Kreuzberg, and labelled it a postmigrant theatre. In the years that followed, postmigrant theatre became a major public success, which eventually led to Shermin Langhoff becoming head of the prestigious, state-funded Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin in 2013. After just one season, Maxim Gorki Theatre was named “Theatre of the Year” in 2014 by the influential theatre journal *Theater Heute* – an acknowledgement awarded to the theatre once again in 2016.⁸

In interviews, Langhoff has explained that she first came across the term postmigration in English-language academic writing.⁹ Her decision to label her

8 On the background of the postmigrant theatre see, Sharifi 2011, 2015, 2017; Nobrega 2011; Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 33-37; Stewart 2015, 2017; Langhoff 2018; see also Lizzie Stewart's contribution to this volume.

9 Langhoff may have been inspired by a conference organised in 1998 by Welsh literary scholar Tom Cheesman titled “Turkish-German Post-Migration Culture: Transnationalism, Translation, Politics of Representation”. German writer Feridun Zaimoglu participated, and Langhoff knew Zaimoglu from common activities and, presumably, through the Kanak Attak movement (see:

work as “postmigrant theatre” was strongly influenced by the challenges of cultural and political life in Germany. While the German film and music industries were becoming more representative of the diversity of society, the realm of theatre was still overwhelmingly white and homogenous. At the same time, labels such as “migration literature” and “immigrant films” were being discussed and inevitably rejected as external identity ascriptions by minoritised writers and artists (Ernst 2013: 291-294; Schramm 2018). For, as Langhoff explains in an interview in *Der Spiegel*, “since labelling is taking place anyway, then at least I want to take matters into my own hands” (Langhoff 2013). Langhoff elaborated on her motivation for exploring the postmigrant label in a 2019 documentary film:

The term had the effect that people now had to ask me: “What do you mean with ‘postmigration’?” It made it possible for us to define ourselves as artists and producers instead of being defined by others. [...] The term empowered us and made it possible for us to say: “No matter what we do, others will define us. Traits are ascribed to us. So, now we will take control and construct ourselves”. [...] Postmigration allowed for this. With the term we could finally decide how we want to situate and contextualise ourselves. (Post 2019)

Similar to the early debates in the UK, the postmigrant theatre was ignited by a demand to reframe one-dimensional notions of culture and belonging, and to make space for a plurality of voices and experiences. Arguably, Hall’s critical thinking on “new ethnicities” and “new identities” is mirrored in the artistic approaches by Langhoff and her contemporaries. Their self-labelling serves as a critical intervention against the persistent migrantisation of inhabitants as migrants or foreigners despite their belonging to Germany.¹⁰

The impact of postmigrant theatre led to ground-breaking academic discussions about possible conceptualisations of postmigration in Germany and in other German-speaking contexts, discussions that are ongoing. The concept was also embraced by a local artistic and cultural scene, and it took off from there, and was not directly influenced by scholarly discussions on “post-migration” or “post-migrant generations” that had been taking place in the UK and other European countries. A particularly influential academic initiative came with the founding of “Netzwerk für die kritische Wissensproduktion in der Postmigrantischen Ge-

Langhoff 2018; on the conference: Geiser 2015, Schramm 2018; on the influence of the Kanak Attak movement: Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 35-36).

10 The artistic and cultural dimensions of the concept of postmigration, often relating to critical interventions, also stands on the shoulders of earlier activist and empowerment movements such as the *Neue Schwarze Bewegung* (the New Black Movement) and the Kanak Attak movement in Germany. See: Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 35-36).

sellschaft” (Network for Critical Knowledge Production in the Postmigrant Society) in 2010, which included the scholars Iman Attia, Naika Foroutan, Viola Georgi, Urmila Goel, Juliane Karakayali, Birgit zur Nieden, Yasemin Shooman, Riem Spielhaus, Vassilis S. Tsianos and Gökce Yurdakul (Foroutan 2016: 230; Schramm 2020). The network was eventually absorbed into the later established section called “Postmigrantische Gesellschaft” (Postmigrant Society) in the German “Rat für Migration” (Council on Migration), a council connecting more than 150 German-based scholars from across migration studies.¹¹

In other words, an increasing number of scholars have begun to explore the new concept of postmigration as a critical intervention in migration studies, sociology, pedagogical studies, and in cultural and literary studies. In consequence, at least three different conceptualisations of postmigration can be distinguished within contemporary areas of study, including notions of a (I) *postmigrant generation*, (II) *postmigrant society*, and (III) *postmigration as an analytical perspective* (cf. Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 11-25).

(I) In some German-language usages of the term, we find an idea of a specific *postmigrant generation*, which scholars argue has been neglected in public debates and research. This approach is, as we have discussed above, very much in accordance with the early usages in the UK and other European countries. The postmigrant generation is mainly defined by their experiences as descendants of migrants, who are being silenced in public discourse. More specifically, the postmigrant generation’s experiences of having multiple, often transnational, belongings and mixed cultural heritages are not widely represented anywhere. As historian Kijan Espahangizi notes, the predominant discourse on matters of migration and integration failed to recognise and acknowledge these experiences (Espahangizi 2016, no page-number). Shifting the focus onto the identity of belonging to a postmigrant generation – and exploring the concept theoretically – can be understood as a reaction against this lack of recognition and representation.

Austrian sociologists Erol Yildiz and Marc Hill were among the first scholars in a German-language context to articulate the concept of postmigration as a “discursive approach against the ‘migrantization’ and marginalization of people who see themselves as an integral part of society” (Yildiz/Hill 2017: 277). In this way, they also contributed to highlighting specific experiences of the postmigrant generation in contemporary Europe. For instance, Yildiz addresses the postmigrant generation’s multiplicity of transnational experiences and shifting subject positions (Yildiz 2010). The conceptualisation of a postmigrant generation thereby challenges the predominant public discourse that “continues to treat migration as specific, exceptional, historical phenomena and in which it is habitual to differentiate between native normality and ‘immigrant problems’” (Yildiz/Hill 2017: 277).

11 See: <https://rat-fuer-migration.de/about-us/>

As is the case in the studies by Baumann and Sunier, as well as those conducted by Modood, the focus is on a postmigrant generation's transnational relationships, their life stories and ways of living (Yildiz/Hill 2017: 274).

The different articulations from both the UK and Germany contribute equally to the extensive attempts to move beyond the binary logic of e.g. leaving and arriving, and to acknowledge the existing diversity and multiplicity in European societies.

(II) In the 2010s, the focus on postmigrant subjectivities shifts to society as a whole, generating the notion of a *postmigrant society*. The concept of the postmigrant society emphasises conflicts, obsessions and negotiations taking place in societies shaped by migrations, including conflicts around representation, racism and structural exclusion. In a series of empirical studies titled *Deutschland postmigrantisch* I, II and III, political scientist Naika Foroutan and her research team examine Germany as a postmigrant society, as well as how postmigrant aspects materialise across its various federal states such as Berlin, Hamburg, Baden-Württemberg.¹² In those studies, as well as in Foroutan's individual research, the scope of postmigration expands to better address the conflicts, ambivalences and antagonisms unfolding in societies shaped by previous and ongoing migrations (Foroutan 2019a). Sociologists Juliane Karakayalı and Vassilis S. Tsianos propose a broad definition:

With the cipher “postmigrant society” we refer to the political, cultural and social transformations of societies with a history of post-colonial and guest worker immigration. The adjective postmigrant does not seek to historicise the fact of migration, but rather describes a society structured by the experience of migration – which is also relevant for all current forms of immigration (such as flight, temporary migration), both politically, legally and socially. (Karakayalı/Tsianos 2014: 34)

The movement away from a conceptualisation of a postmigrant generation and toward postmigrant societies marks a significant shift from singling out an individual social group to broadening the scope to transformations throughout the society. This shift is a result of crucial methodological questioning and can be interpreted as a reaction against what ethnologist Regina Römhild calls a “fundamental dilemma” for critical migration research (Römhild 2017: 70). According to Römhild, critical migration research seeks to identify migration as “a productive societal and cultural force” to counter anti-immigration discourses in the public sphere (ibid.). However, the strategy of “endlessly repeating this narrative of alternative, transnational, hybrid migrant worlds” leads to an impasse (ibid.). Römhild argues that while the life-worlds of migrants and their descendants are often de-

¹² Foroutan, Naika/Canan, Coşkun et al. 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2018a, 2018b.

scribed as “especially dynamic and mobile”, research often considers these life-worlds “fixed on the periphery, as a ‘special research area’ outside the ethnically unmarked, immobile ‘majority society’” (ibid.). Furthermore, she identifies a “migrantology”, which, by focusing on migrants and their descendants constantly, and possibly unintentionally, reproduces and reinforces the binary distinction between migrants and a “national society of immobile, white non-migrants” (ibid.).

In the 2014 essay “Was kommt nach dem transnational turn?” (What Comes after the Transnational Turn?) Römhild and fellow anthropologist Manuela Bojadžijev argue for the need to overcome this “migrantology” by shifting the research perspective to society itself. In relation to the growing interest in postmigration, they write:

In an increasingly popular interpretation, the term postmigration is currently being used and appropriated as a label for, and by, people who have not had any direct migration experience but who are still marked as migrants, sometimes for generations. (Bojadžijev/Römhild 2014: 18)

Postmigration thus becomes “a politically useful catchword” that helps highlight the “continual hierarchical inclusion of persons as migrants” (ibid.). It also shows how such hierarchies support the powerful and widespread “imperative of integration” dominating public discourse (ibid.). However, this interpretation of the term also bears the danger of reviving the old label, i.e. migrant, but now including young “post”-migrants of various generations (ibid.). Consequently, Römhild and Bojadžijev advocate a widening of the postmigration perspective:

For a radical renewal of this perspective, it seems more interesting to us to expand the term beyond the narrow circle of those who are marked as migrants, and rather use it in relation to the concept of a postmigrant society, which considers everyone to be “affected” by migration and as part of shaping and developing this new condition. (14-15)

Centring on postmigrant societies involves taking a closer look at the societal negotiations linked to migration movements. Postmigrant societies are seen as conflictual spaces characterised by polarisation, ambivalence, antagonisms and new alliances (Foroutan 2019a). From this perspective, the aim is to avoid singling out and scrutinising migrating and migrantised people, and to instead focus on the power relationships and struggles unfolding in society as a whole. Pointing to the potentials of postmigration research, Römhild asserts: “What is lacking is not yet more research about migration, but a migration-based perspective to generate new insights into the contested arenas of ‘society’ and ‘culture’” (Römhild 2017: 70).

(III) The conceptualisation of postmigrant societies is applied in conjunction with the notion of postmigration as an *analytical perspective* (Yildiz 2013: 177; Römhild 2017; Schramm 2018; Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 13-14). This third perspective has been taken up and discussed in cultural studies in the late 2010s by cultural theorists Anne Ring Petersen and Sten Moslund. In their essay “Towards a Postmigrant Frame of Reading”, they explore the idea of a postmigrant perspective as “a chosen research perspective” (Moslund/Petersen 2019: 67)¹³. Such a perspective, they argue, introduces a new mode of interpretation, which can be applied to any cultural or artistic phenomenon. Petersen and Moslund elaborate: “While some researchers try to define a corpus of ‘postmigrant literature and art’, and, by doing so, risk defining ‘postmigration’ as something reserved (in this regard) to cultural productions by migrants and descendants, we prefer to work with the idea of postmigration as an analytical perspective that can be applied to every art product” (ibid.: 68). Instead of reproducing the focus on a specific societal group – or even reaffirming what Bojadžijev and Römhild have deemed a “migrantology” – their analytical approach shares common ground with the perspective on postmigrant societies, as put forward by Foroutan, Spielhaus and others.

In a similar vein, cultural theorist Moritz Schramm argues that a postmigrant analysis should not be defined by its subject matter, but rather by its capacity to offer “an analytical view of the negotiations about migration and its consequences, which appear in the literary texts and cultural products themselves” (Schramm 2018: 89). As a consequence, the postmigrant perspective allows for what Foroutan has called a “critical-analytical meta-analysis” (Foroutan 2016: 237), which challenges prevalent perspectives. The postmigrant perspective thus makes apparent how dichotomies, which often go unchallenged, are “contingent and can therefore be changed” (Schramm 2018: 91). As Yildiz and Hill argue, the concept thereby helps “to counter the polarizing patterns of thinking that underlie common classifications like ‘native/migrant’ and ‘us/them’” (Yildiz/Hill 2017: 274). As seen in the discussions on de-essentialising ethnicity and culture in the UK context of the 1990s, contemporary conceptualisations of a postmigrant perspective can be understood as critical interventions in the public and academic discussions, offering, Yildiz asserts, a “radical questioning of the conventional view on migration” (Yildiz 2013: 178).

From an even broader perspective, we can place both early and current attempts to articulate postmigrant perspectives as part of what sociologist Boris Nieswand and ethnologist Heike Drotbohm have referred to as the “reflexive turn” of migration studies during the last decades (2014). In early migration studies, concepts such as “culture”, “society” and “ethnicity” were often considered unambiguous analytical tools and used as such. However, the reflexive turn was ignited

13 See also: Petersen 2019a; Moslund 2019a.

by an “intellectual crisis”, which led to a deeper examination of such concepts and their use. Since the 1990s, these concepts have become widely regarded as charged topics of political discourse, rather than neutral descriptors. They have lost their innocence and, accordingly, their persuasiveness (Nieswand/Drotbohm 2014: 1-2). The concept of postmigration is, in its different variations, an attempt to overcome this intellectual crisis and offer new critical analyses and perspectives in multiple academic fields. Despite any differences of interpretation or application, the concept allows for focus to be directed onto the struggles and conflicts around concepts such as “migration”, “ethnicity”, “society” and “culture”, without reverting to outdated, and in many ways problematic, notions of migration and its consequences.

Criticism and future perspectives

The concept of postmigration has, as we have seen, emerged in different ways: it has been adopted in artistic and cultural interventions, often with a clear political agenda, and has been used to provide an analytical perspective on transformations and struggles in contemporary society. In the 1990s, approaches to postmigration questioned the methodological potentials and pitfalls of migration research. While the plurality of approaches can arguably be considered a strength, the widespread usage of the term postmigration has also triggered various forms of criticism, mostly from within the field. Such criticisms are mainly concerned with normative uses of postmigration and especially how normative understandings may imply idealised societal improvements.

One critical response to the concept argues that it is the prefix “post” in postmigration that harbours a risk of being associated with progression and overcoming. In her 2016 work *Undeutsch. Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft* (Un-German. The Construction of the Other in the Postmigrant Society), cultural theorist Fatima El-Tayeb interjects that some uses of the term postmigration may have us believe that Germany has solved its issues with migrantisation and exclusion of certain parts of the population. Against this backdrop, she argues:

If we see “postmigrant” as analogous to “post-racial” as a description of a condition, as a claim of overcoming, of taking the next step in a continuous process of societal development and progression, then it can be ascertained that Germany, in the best case, has only taken the very first step to confront matters of migration, but that it is not reasonable to speak of “postmigration” (El-Tayeb 2016: 12).

El-Tayeb's argument that analogous uses of "postmigrant" and "post-racial" are misguided euphemisms for progression is contextualised by referring to notions of a post-racial society in a US context. After Barack Obama was elected president, there were controversial claims insisting that America had finally become post-racial (ibid., see also e.g.: Valluvan 2016; Bojadžijev 2016). Here, "post-race" implied that the US had moved beyond the notion of race and had thereby overcome structures of racism and exclusion – a conclusion, which El-Tayeb disagrees with and which forms the basis of her comparative criticism of postmigration. El-Tayeb's rejection of the term's idealistic and unrealistic aspects corresponds in part with other criticisms directed towards the notion of postmigration, in particular film and media scholar Nanna Heidenreich's reading of postmigration as a cipher for "progression" and "arrivedness" (2015: 300). While Heidenreich acknowledges that the term "expresses the certainly long-overdue acceptance of migration as fundamental fact for contemporary society", she criticises the term's often one-dimensional use in cultural and social studies (ibid.: 297). Simply put, the "post" in postmigration becomes the migrant's semantic integration into society. The problem with postmigration-as-arrivedness, Heidenreich argues, is that it does not accept the plurality and diversity of perspectives and experiences. Rather, this understanding of the concept advocates a linear history of integration, which presumes that former "migrants" become "postmigrants" to thus "arrive" in society (ibid.: 297-302; for more on Heidenreich's criticism see also: Petersen 2019b: 79).

The question remains: if critics of the "post" in postmigration are not on to something, then what can this "post" potentially do? While Sara Ahmed does not specifically address postmigration, she offers fitting criticism, which makes us aware of the danger of "overring" the past by noting: "In assuming that we are 'over' certain kinds of critique, they create the impression that we are 'over' what is being critiqued." (Ahmed 2012: 179). As we have set out to highlight, the majority of contemporary conceptualisations of postmigration acknowledge that migration is neither something that has ceased nor something to be overcome, to borrow from educational scholar Paul Mecheril (Mecheril 2014). This goes for scholars using postmigration as a descriptor for a *postmigrant generation* (I), scholars working with the concept of *postmigrant societies* (II) as well as scholars applying postmigration as an *analytical perspective* (III). On the contrary, in theoretical discussions, it is repeatedly argued that the notion of postmigration does not indicate that migration has been overcome, nor does it indicate a historical determination of a definitive period of migration. Rather, the different usages of the concept seem to converge around the fact that migration is a historically and continuously formative part of European societies, while the consequences of migration movements are often negotiated belatedly, both on individual and societal levels. Additionally, the concept is used to de-essentialise migrantising understandings of ethnicity

and identity, and also serves as a cipher for understanding the struggles and conflicts unfolding around migration and its aftermaths.

Postmigration thereby implies a steady focus on the complexity of contemporary societies in which the obsession with migration in the public sphere correlates with patterns of exclusion, racism as well as a multitude of life-worlds and experiences (Spielhaus 2018). In this context, the prefix “post” signals a theoretical troubling of the word rather than an idealised overcoming. Used in this sense, the term allows a focus on how migration is framed, negotiated or even silenced in public and academic discourse, without affirming the distinction between “migrants” and a white, and allegedly “non-migrating”, majority. From this perspective, border regimes, discourses on the subjects of migration and integration, as well as political obsessions with migration are all part of the contested struggles unfolding within postmigrant societies (Römhild 2018, Foroutan 2019a).

Islamic studies scholar Riem Spielhaus argues that the concept of postmigration even allows us to ask whether “debates and research on migration actually are about *migration*?” (Spielhaus 2018: 139). Spielhaus asserts that postmigration makes it possible to challenge the supposedly self-evident conjunction between “Muslim” and “migrant” and to reinforce the fundamental differences between categories such as “migrant”, “migration background”, “(former) nationality”, “ethnicity” and “religious affiliation” (ibid.). Following Foroutan, one strength of the concept of postmigration is precisely that it can expand on the complexity of modern societies, including ambivalences, ambiguities, antagonisms and the emergence of new alliances and solidarities beyond notions of ethnicity, gender or cultural heritage (Foroutan 2019a: 198–209). As is the case with other theoretical approaches that make critical use of the prefix “post”, such as postcolonial studies, the concept of postmigration thus seeks to question, deconstruct and rethink powerful categories, as Foroutan puts it, by “highlighting their empirical as well as analytical and normative limitations” (2019b: 149). She concludes:

“Post-migration” aspires to transcend “migration” as a disguised marker for racist exclusion, on the one hand, while embracing migration as social normality, on the other. Hence, the term post-migrant does not seek to depict – as falsely assumed and even criticized – a state in which migration has ended [...]. Rather, it provides a framework of analysis for conflicts, identity discourses and social and political transformations that occur after migration has taken place (ibid.: 150).

The concept of postmigration enables us to direct attention on the postmigrant reality of Europe and European societies, without reinforcing a problematic and distracting distinction between an presumably sedentary non-migratory in-group into which newcomers and immigrants have to integrate. Rather, the concept allows for new perspectives on the struggles and conflictual spaces unfold-

ing in relation to migration, whether from former colonies or from European or non-European countries. With the different usages applied to it, the term opens up for new and different approaches to examining societies that have been fundamentally shaped by earlier migration movements and are still being shaped by ongoing migration.

In this anthology we focus primarily on postmigration as critical interventions within the arts as well as in social and cultural studies. There are, however, an overwhelming variety of approaches, which extend beyond the scope of this book. Some of these approaches include a focus on the structure and influence of a “post-migration ecology” in educational studies (Nilsson/Bunar 2016), others focus on social mobility in postmigrant societies (Tewes 2018), and on the novel dynamics of postmigrant spaces (Tewes/Gül 2018; Nohl 2018). Cultural studies have also produced research on postmigrant club cultures (Kosnick 2015), Muslim comedians in Europe (Spielhaus 2018), postmigrant media (Ratkovic 2018), anti-racist curatorial work in museums (Bayer/Terkessidis 2018; Frykman 2017) and the politics of diversity in cultural institutions (Vitting-Seerup 2017; Vitting-Seerup/Wiegand 2019). Additionally, literary studies have focused on postmigrant experiences and forms (Lornsen 2008; Peters 2011; Geiser 2015; Moslund 2019b; Schramm 2018), philosophical scholarship has discussed “postmigrant reason” (Schmitz/Schneickert/Witte 2018b), while the political sciences have attended to discussions on postmigrant concepts of democracy (De La Rosa 2018) as well as emerging solidarities in postmigrant alliances (Stjepandic/Karakayalı 2018). This list of diverse approaches is not exhaustive and represents only a few examples which offer insight into the plurality and analytical productivity of the continuously developing concept of postmigration.

Contributions

In this volume, all of the contributions deal with art, culture and/or politics in contemporary Europe. The different chapters address distinctive, yet overlapping issues, which we believe are crucial for future research in postmigrant societies and postmigrant Europe. The contributions respond to theoretical questions arising from scholarly debates on postmigration by addressing cultural expressions and exploring the notion of a postmigrant condition, as well as contemporary issues such as visions of inclusive public spheres and urban spaces. The anthology is divided into three main sections dealing with 1) discourses and interventions, with 2) how postmigrant struggles and experiences are represented in cultural and aesthetic expressions, and with 3) the spatial dimension of the postmigrant condition, particularly in relation to postmigrant spaces and public spheres.

The contributions assembled in the first section of this book deal with discourses on postmigration, as well as with interventions into existing discourses on migration and integration. This section sets out with Regina Römhild's vision for a new research agenda in reading Europe as a postmigrant space. In her contribution "Postmigrant Europe: Discoveries beyond ethnic, national and colonial borders", she advocates a European dimension in studies on postmigration, including the conjunction between postcolonial and postmigrant influences and background stories. It is important, she argues, that the postcolonial realities of Europe are viewed in conjunction with the often silenced histories of migration, including the postmigrant presence in contemporary Europe.

Another theoretical approach is offered by historian Kijan Espahangizi in "When do societies become *postmigrant*? A historical consideration based on the example of Switzerland", where he discusses the historical specificity of postmigrant societies. While some researchers have argued that societies can be characterised as postmigrant the moment they politically recognise their migration reality, Espahangizi focuses on a "process of transformation during which different social or institutional organizations and actors – each with their own interests – realize that society is changing due to immigration and acknowledge the existence of a change that had hitherto not been part of their self-perception." Espahangizi determines that this process is contested and non-linear. It unfolds in the context of an expansive discourse on migration and integration that includes both anti-immigration sentiments and the recognition of societal changes caused by migration.

Societal negotiations and conflicts around migration are also addressed in the contribution by sociologists Juliane Karakayalı and Paul Mecheril, "Contested crises. Migration regimes as an analytical perspective on today's societies". Taking as their point of departure the recent social disputes on migration and flight in Germany, they discuss the societal function of "crises" and "crisis-orchestration" in relation to migration. According to their reading, the proclamation of a crisis is of particular significance, given that it allows competing actors to persuade others that their own interpretation of the social reality is valid. Various actors develop diverging and conflictual interpretations of crises, which make up part of the general conflicts taking place between politically opposed groups and different and temporary alliances. Karakayalı and Mecheril analyse those conflicts through the concept of a "migration regime" which allows for the analysis of the complexity of social negotiations and struggles that typically unfold around the proclamation and orchestration of a crisis.

Another take on discursive interventions and conflicts is brought forward in Lizzie Stewart's contribution, in which she draws attention to questions of the "brand value" of postmigration in theatrical and public spheres. With "'The cultural capital of postmigrants is enormous': Postmigration in theatre as label and

lens”, Stewart explores the ambivalence of the term postmigration among theatre practitioners often associated with it, and focuses on the tension between its potential to serve as a “lens” that offers new perspectives in the social sciences, versus serving as a “label” in the competitive cultural scene. By taking a step back from the more celebratory discussion of the term as a lens and returning to the term as a label, and by drawing on analogies to postcolonialism as “brand value”, Stewart discusses the entanglement of activism with the production of culture in a capitalist context, as well as providing important insights into the developing application of the term postmigration in the academic sphere.

The significance of artistic interventions in public discourse is also central to the last contribution of this first section, Marc Hill and Erol Yildiz’s “A postmigrant contrapuntal reading of the refugee crisis and its discourse: *‘Foreigners out! Schlingensiefel’s Container’*”. Here, Hill and Yildiz engage with the much-discussed “container action” by the German film and theatre director, author and performance artist Christoph Schlingensiefel, staged during the Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival) in 2000. They read Schlingensiefel’s art performance – confining twelve “asylum seekers” in a container in front of the Vienna State Opera, and letting the Austrian public deselect individuals among them for deportation – as an intervention into everyday routines and public discourse, disrupting the power of the asylum dispositif. Inspired by postmigrant theory, they propose a contrapuntal reading of the art performance, interpreting the performance as an inversion of the hegemonial apparatus of power, questioning exclusionary practices and logics.

While the chapters included in the first section deal with discourses and interventions, the contributions that make up the second section of this anthology all focus on how postmigrant struggles and experiences are represented in cultural and aesthetic expressions, particularly in the field of literature. What unifies these contributions is the specific attention to the ongoing negotiations and conflicts depicted in cultural and artistic expressions.

Such conflicts and tensions become visible in this section’s first contribution, Roger Bromley’s “Class, knowledge and belonging: Narrating postmigrant possibilities”. Bromley offers a reading of two contemporary novels from the UK, Guy Gunaratne’s *In Our Mad and Furious City* (2018) and Zia Haider Rahman’s *In the Light of What We Know* (2014). In Bromley’s readings of the novels, he observes the necessity to broaden the postmigrant perspective by emphasising the importance of class structures and social inequalities. In his view, a postmigration narrative must be based not only upon a full acknowledgement of the empirical reality of heterogeneity, but also upon the removal of social inequalities and injustices at all levels.

Negotiations and conflicts of postmigrant writers are addressed in the second contribution included in this section, Anja Tröger’s chapter “Postmigrant remembering in mnemonic affective spaces: Senthuran Varatharajah’s *Vor der Zunahme*

der Zeichen and Pooneh Rohi's *Araben*". In her reading of the novels, Tröger draws attention to the protagonists' experiences of marginalisation and othering, often engendering affective resonances between past and present. Tröger presents the different reactions to these experiences of marginalisation and shows how the protagonists' conflicts are embedded into, and induced by, the societies in which they live. By connecting their affective experiences to societal structures, Tröger depicts the need to shift the focus away from relating the protagonists' struggles to migration, and instead to focus on scrutinising prevalent exclusionary mechanisms in the societies themselves. As in the case of Bromley's contribution, Tröger uses her reading of the novels to challenge prevalent academic traditions, arguing for the need to reconsider and address interrelated patterns of exclusion and marginalisation.

Other forms of exclusion and marginalisation are addressed in Maïmouna Jagne-Soreau's chapter "'I don't write about me, I write about you'. Four major motifs in the Nordic postmigration literary trend". In her contribution, Jagne-Soreau addresses the racialising category of "migrant writers" and discusses the problematics connected to the thematisation of non-whiteness in contemporary Nordic literature, including novels and poems from Swedish, Finnish, Danish and Norwegian contexts. Her reading proposes shifting the focus from the authors' backgrounds to the literary content. By referring to a range of selected literary works, Jagne-Soreau instead shows how similar themes and strategies are used to portray a so-called *postmigration generation*.

In "Towards an aesthetics of migration: The 'Eastern turn' of German-language literature and the German cultural memory after 2015", Eszter Papis develops a comparative overview of contemporary developments in German-language literature, especially in relation to a recent tendency often labelled "the Eastern turn". This concept was coined by literary scholar Irmgard Ackerman to describe the growing influence of writers with Eastern European backgrounds in Germany. Papis examines the notion of an "Eastern turn" in German literature from a critical perspective, arguing that this concept does not always imply a change in perspective, or even a change of paradigm. Rather, it often reaffirms existing binary dichotomies such as the distinction between "migrant literature" and "German literature", sometimes even reinforcing ethnic categories of belonging. Accordingly, Papis proposes a different reading, combining elements of what is sometimes referred to as "the ethics of memory" with aesthetic dimensions. Following cultural theorist Mieke Bal's concept of "migratory aesthetics", she argues that all aesthetics are necessarily migratory, and that the "ethics of memory" should be expanded through research into the aesthetics of migration, in order to support the understanding of the complexities of the postmigrant condition.

Similarly, Markus Hallensleben's "Towards an aesthetics of postmigrant narratives: Moving beyond the politics of territorial belonging in Ilija Trojanow's *Nach*

der Flucht (2017)” also centres on the work of a German-language writer with an Eastern European background. Here, Hallensleben examines Trojanow’s collection of aphorisms *Nach der Flucht* (After the Flight, 2017), which he reads as a critical stance against current politics and societal processes of global (im)mobilities and forced migration. In Trojanow’s collection of aphorisms, Hallensleben finds a positive acceptance of exile and migration, which is seen as a transformative force, establishing and supporting “a new core narrative of plural societies”. Hallensleben reads *Nach der Flucht* as an attempt to replace a Eurocentric, linear narrative of territorial belonging with “one that aims to create multidirected memories and transitional spaces of belonging.”

This section is closed with Hans Christian Post’s “*We Are Here*. Reflections on the production of a documentary film on the theatre in postmigrant Denmark”, which presents the film project *We Are Here* and offers reflections on the production process as well as the finished product. Directed and produced by Hans Christian Post – as part of the collaborative research project “Art, Culture and Politics in the ‘Postmigrant Condition’” at the University of Southern Denmark between 2016 and 2018 – the film focuses on the concept of postmigration and on postmigrant developments in contemporary Danish theatre. In his contribution, Post discusses the considerations and challenges visualising and representing postmigrant developments in cultural expressions and also considers the reception of the documentary. A link and password are included, so that the documentary can be accessed online (with English subtitles) for teaching and conference purposes.

In a variety of ways, the contributions assembled in the second section of the anthology all try to map and discuss struggles and conflicts, which are at the heart of postmigrant societies, through artworks and cultural expressions. In this context, aesthetics are not perceived as a form of escapism, but rather as a specific form of knowledge production, which can help us understand, or even transform, prevailing structures and experiences.

The third section draws attention to the spatial dimension of postmigrant society, in particular in relation to postmigrant spaces, such as public art, shantytowns, cafés and refugee centres. The concept of postmigrant spaces has drawn attention in academia in recent years, including the fields of urban studies, art studies and philosophy (Yildiz 2013; Tewes/Gül 2018). The contributions in this section expand on such studies, in part by looking at art products and their role in contemporary society.

The final section opens with Anne Ring Petersen’s “The square, the monument and the re-configurative power of art in postmigrant public spaces”, where she engages with art in public spaces, taking her starting point in the demonstrations led by the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and the ongoing debates on whether monuments depicting colonial hierarchies should be demolished. She goes on to examine two art projects and the debate around art in public spaces: the

award-winning public park *Superkilen* (The Super Wedge) from 2012 situated in the multicultural Nørrebro district of Copenhagen, and Jeannette Ehlers and La Vaughn Belle's collaborative sculpture *I Am Queen Mary*, which is the first monument in Denmark to critically commemorate Danish colonialism and complicity in the transatlantic slave trade, and which was installed at the historically significant location of the Port of Copenhagen in front of the West Indian Warehouse. In her reading of these art projects, Petersen focuses on how "art in the public spaces of a society transformed by (im)migration can shape and is, in turn, shaped by the disagreements and negotiations resulting from the need to accommodate increasing cultural diversity and new claims for participation, visibility and the recognition of difference."

Álvaro Luna-Dubois' contribution also focuses on the spatial dimension of migration heritage. In "Recovering migrant spaces in Laurent Maffre's graphic novel *Demain, Demain*", Luna explores a recent narrative commemorating migrant housing in France. In reading the two-volume graphic novel *Demain, demain* (Tomorrow, Tomorrow, 2012, 2019) by Laurent Maffre, as well as engaging in theoretical discussions on the relationship between space and place, he examines the sociomaterial transformations in the greater Paris area from the 1960s to the 1970s, when people living in the shantytowns on the outskirts of Paris were relocated to a *cité de transit* (transitional housing estate). By exploring the hybrid visual and textual form of the graphic novel, Luna contributes to our understanding of France as a dynamic space marked by past migrations, a component that is central to the concept of postmigration.

In their contribution "Zamakan: Towards a contrapuntal image", Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Amr Hatem and Abbas Mroueh focus on another art project from Copenhagen. They revisit the video installation *Zamakan (TimeSpace)*, which they produced in 2017, and reflect on the process behind the production. They frame the video as a contrapuntal image, which is not only a representation of migration and flight, but which also forms a certain image where "the image in itself enfold the line of flight, the route of migration, in its very materiality and in the means of production". In this sense, they explore how the image of migration is dissociated from its current representation in society and "begins to form other affective assemblages, other modes of production, to become the very condition for the cinematographic image". Migration is thus seen as the very material condition of imagination, production and circulation. Finally, Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Hatem and Mroueh conclude by discussing the importance of the cultural venue and café Sorte Firkant (Black Square), which they co-established in 2016 in collaboration with filmmakers, writers, and cultural producers from Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, who came to Denmark during the period from the 1980s up to the present. The intimate space of the venue is able, they assert, "to attract various people across generational, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds", and thus

to create a place defined by pluralism and affect. In this context, the authors argue, it is no longer a question of making art that represents a migrant community or which addresses migration as a theme. The intention is to create spaces and infrastructures or “relational geography” (Irit Rogoff) that help to dislocate forms of migrant representations in a given space and to expand and push the limitations of the current hegemonic political climate.

In “‘Tense encounters’: How migrantised women design and reimagine urban everyday life”, Elisabeth Kirndörfer and Madlen Pilz draw attention to other venues dealing with plurality and diversity in urban spaces. Against the backdrop of a postmigrant perspective, which they combine with María Lugones’ works on decolonial feminism, they focus on different practices of migrantisation and subalternisation that women with migration experiences encounter in urban public and semi-public spheres in the cities of Leipzig and Munich. In particular, they focus on social settings created in order to foster encounters between urban residents with and without migration histories, such as neighbourhood centres or women’s cafés, and elaborate on how migrantised women resist the experiences of othering and differential inclusion. Kirndörfer and Pilz also explore the women’s repertoire of “infrapolitical practices” in the form of everyday practices of resistance and reimagination. The role of neighbourhood centres or women’s cafés are thus understood as spheres of critical negotiations, enabling the reimagination of urban life, based on multiplicity and diversity.

In the final contribution, “Contemplating the corona crisis through a postmigrant lens? From segregative refugee accommodations and camps to a vision of solidarity”, Claudia Böhme, Marc Hill, Caroline Schmitt and Anett Schmitz address visions of inclusive urban spaces. They take the coronavirus that first emerged in December 2019 as a point of departure for reflecting on how society deals with forced migration from a postmigrant perspective. Examining and discussing the living conditions in refugee accommodation centres and camps in Greece, Germany and Kenya, they demonstrate that the deficient housing circumstances of refugees constitute a global problem. Böhme, Hill, Schmitt and Schmitz propose that this problem can be overcome by exploring the potentials of living together in solidarity, negotiating “concepts of cosmopolitan, open and inclusive urban spaces as starting points for imagining a different future.” Accordingly, they present their vision for a plan to achieve a state in which belonging to an urban space is not viewed as being based on the criterion of national citizenship, and instead imagine a space beyond the politics of separation and exclusion, and conceptualise postmigrant visions of urban, cosmopolitan, inclusive societies.

Perspectives and acknowledgments

What unifies the various contributions that make up this anthology is their shared focus on art, culture and politics in contemporary Europe, as well as the understanding of the concept of postmigration as being a dynamic and conflictual state of negotiation. In multitudinous ways, all the contributions perceive postmigration as an open-ended concept that can help us better comprehend the dynamics, conflicts and struggles of contemporary societies. This convergence is shared, even as the contributions cover as wide ranging matters as the power of migration regimes and the opportunities to intervene and to potentially reframe existing discourses, cultural expressions and the representation of postmigrant affective memory structures and patterns of exclusion, as well as spatial dimensions such as the housing conditions of refugees and immigrants in postmigrant societies. As was already pointed towards in the early conceptualisations of the term, the contemporary focus is not on presumably stable identities, or on struggles between cultural groups or ethnicities. Rather, the focus is on the antagonisms and ambivalences in contemporary societies, which have been inevitably shaped by former and present migrations. This anthology therefore centres on the related struggles and dynamics of the ongoing negotiations unfolding in the wake of migration.

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Part I: Discourses and interventions

Postmigrant Europe: Discoveries beyond ethnic, national and colonial boundaries

Regina Römheld

The critical debate of postmigrant research was initially an intervention focused on Germany. But does this limit its validity to Germany and other national contexts in which migration and its consequences are thought about in a similar way? Or is it also possible to identify overarching European realities postcolonial that have not yet been sufficiently explored? To what extent is European postcolonial history and its conjunctions marked by the mostly invisible, long-term presence of migration? And, conversely, to what degree is migration repeatedly perceived and treated as ‘Other’ in the context of historical and current EU/European borders? Can and should the postmigrant perspective, in other words, also be considered when looking at the construction and practical realities of Europe? And which marginalised, hidden European ‘Others’ can be exposed and brought into focus from such a perspective?

I would like to address these questions here and, in doing so, first draw on aspects of the discussion in Germany that I consider particularly important for a Europeanisation of postmigrant thinking. In a further analytical step, I will then explore the possibilities of a post-migrantisation of Europe – and conclude by asking what significance this European dimension has for the German discussion.

From the margins to the centre: Migration and the nation state

The critical intervention, related to the concept of postmigration, was originally formulated by Shermin Langhoff within the world of theatre. It was quick, however, to take root in parts of German-language migration research, in particular in those parts of the research which were struggling with a specific – and partly self-produced – concept of migration and its political impact. In this context, Langhoff’s demand for a postmigrant theatre that does not focus on the “Other”, but instead on the society created by the “Other”, was inspiring: it resonated strongly with those parts of the migration research that wanted to overcome

migration as a “special research area” and replace it with a critical, postmigrant social analysis (Bojadzijev/Römhild 2014).

In the Migration Lab at the Institute for European Ethnology in Berlin¹ those discussions led to intensified criticism of traditional migration research, typically conducted as research into migrants and their seemingly separate worlds. In repeatedly new narratives, such as “migrantology” (ibid.: 10) reproduced the image of the ethnicised, racialised, religiously connoted ‘Other’, defining migrants as foreign minorities on the margins of society. And, in doing so, it also constructs a ‘white majority society’ positioned at the centre of the nation as its unmarked counterpart.

Migration research has, in this way, continuously – and often unintentionally – contributed to the production of the self-image of a society, which is characterised by a seemingly clear distinction between ‘domestic’ and ‘foreign’. This also counts for most of the transnational research, often inspired by new concepts of diaspora. Typically, transnational research aims to provide insights into the cross-border, networked, mobile lives of migrants and thus, by doing so, to expose the idea of the culturally homogeneous, sedentary nation as fiction. Despite those critical intentions, however, it did not really question the inner boundary between potentially mobile migration and a fixed nation. Rather, this distinction is further strengthened by situating people in the transnational space of migration even after generations and, resultantly, leaving them permanently marginalised and still to be integrated, both academically and politically (Mezzadra/Neilson 2013).

In the discussions within the Migration Lab this inner relation between migration research and the border politics of the nation-state was addressed self-critically and often strongly rejected (Labor Migration 2014). During those discussions, we came to the conclusion that a change of perspective is urgently needed: in particular, we voiced the need to move away from a “migrantology” in migrant research, focussing exclusively on migrants and their descendants, and to work towards research that examines and analyses society as a whole from the perspective of migration. To this end, we developed the often-quoted formula that migration research must be “demigrantised”, while, at the same time, there must be a “migrantising” of social research (Bojadzijev/Römhild 2014: 11). This change in perspective allows to depict the postmigrant realities of the society and, in addition to that, to counter the obsession with treating refugeeism and migration as seemingly new phenomena with ever new arrivals. A postmigrant perspective unveils the migrant prehistory of today’s refugee and migration movements and helps to understand how the society as such is shaped by this prehistory of migration and flight.

¹ Institute for European Ethnology, https://www.euroethno.hu-berlin.de/en/standard?set_language=en (accessed October 31, 2017).

Refuge, migration and borders in a postcolonial Europe

To what extent can this perspective of migration be extended to Europe? Can such a perspective help to uncover a decidedly European dimension beyond the context of the individual nation state with its postmigrant realities? And to what extent is national and transnational European migration research still lagging behind existing postmigrant realities? Accordingly, I am not concerned here with other European member states and their respective ‘national’ negotiations of migration – even though interesting comparisons with and cross-references to different European countries are already being discussed (cf. the contribution by Kijan Espahangizi in this volume, as well as Schramm/Petersen/Wiegand 2019: 26-49). Rather, I am concerned with a specific ‘European’ dimension, as it occurs within the framework of the EU-European debate on migration and, in particular, within the scope of current border politics.

It is important to remember that, for a long time now, migration and border politics have not been administered solely by the nation states, but have also been shaped by the European Union, even beyond its external “European” borders established after 1989. It is precisely in this field of border demarcation that the EU co-governs the policies of its member and neighbouring states.

Typically, the EU seeks to balance and to negotiate the contradictions and conflicts emerging in this context: for example, in the context of possible membership negotiations with neighbouring countries such as Turkey, or in the tension between normative humanitarian invocations on the one side, and the demands that countries such as Italy and Greece, whose coasts are besieged by stranded migrants, secure their borders by military means if necessary on the other. The paradoxical strategy of preventing the stranding and multiple deaths of people at the EU-European borders by controlling and battling migration movements into the EU is the result of those struggles. Accordingly, the border-political intervention in national sovereignty has to be understood as one of the areas of the Europeanisation process, in which the EU generally tests, designs and expands its own political space beyond its borders (Transit Migration Forschungsgruppe 2007).²

Moreover, on closer examination, the border space of the EU created in this way is by no means a new construct, but rather stands in the tradition of long-term colonial, imperial spaces and identity politics. The distinctions made at today’s borders of the EU are, in other words, not just the postcolonial result of current political calculation alone. They are rather the consequence of postcolonial interdependencies that are biopolitically remobilised in today’s construction

2 Cf. also the MigMap cartography developed as part of the Transit Migration project as an attempt to make clear this close interweaving of border politics and Europeanisation policy, http://www.transitmigration.org/migmap/home_map3.html (accessed October 31, 2017).

of “Europe” and its “Others”. At the borders, for example, it is not a question of combating mobility per se, but of implementing a mobility regime in which very specific migrations, namely those from the former colonies and from “crypto-colonial” spaces (Herzfeld 2002) are regulated and limited, while others, namely those from the European West and the ‘global North’, are explicitly permitted and promoted (Glick Schiller/Salazar 2012). This shows an old biopolitical commitment to colonial patterns and power relations that, at the borders of the EU, is working to identify and to affirm the idea of a “European people” (Balibar 2003). In other words: Within the framework of its border politics, the European Union invokes an identity-based political space in which a certain ‘white’ history of enlightenment and modernity, of Christianity and secularism, of the nation state and democracy (as well as associated values), are effectively elevated to the standard of an alleged ‘European’ identity – and, furthermore, as a general model of social development (Randeria/Römhild 2013; Stam/Shohat 2012: 61-67).

Consequently, assumingly “natural” boundaries are established in relation to an “Other”, marked by a cultural distance to that idealised “European” standard. This applies to Islam, which is located beyond the idea of Christian-Jewish influenced, enlightened secularism (Asad 2003), to not (completely) “white zones” on the margins of or even beyond Western European modernity (Herzfeld 2002) as well as to postsocialist regions and players of the formerly “totalitarian Eastern bloc” (Buchowski 2006; Hann 2007). In Gayatri Spivak’s words, “the West” has, in a powerful process of “othering”, created a world order in which both “others” and “the West” themselves have been placed in separate, hierarchical positions: a process of “worlding” that has become so powerful precisely because it has succeeded in concealing the history of its production and in naturalising its result – the knowledge of “Others” on which the order of this world is based (Spivak 1985).

Despite all the changes, intersections and decentralisations that this secular arrangement of the “West and the Rest” (Hall 1992) has experienced since then in real political terms, the images and figures behind this “Other” of European-Western modernism prove to be surprisingly durable. The immediacy and easiness with which these images and figures can be invoked and used politically in our days suggest that their naturalisation is still effective. In particular, Islam is becoming the traditional “Other” again, against which “Europe”, in its old tradition, forms itself in terms of identity politics. This construction of an European identity is built on the idea of a confrontation with a supposedly external Islam, ostensibly carried across borders by migration – completely ignoring the inner presence and history of a European, for instance Bosnian, Islam. Nowadays, this confrontation with a Muslim “Other” is almost exclusively the place where public debate about a European self-understanding is conducted (Göle 2015; Bunzl 2005; Korteweg/Yurdakul 2016). And this unifying concept of Europe is extremely influential, building bridges between liberal positions and the extreme right: even

where the arguments and rationalities are different, both nationalist right-wing populists and left-liberal democrats appear to transform themselves into ‘Christian’ and/or ‘secular’, ‘enlightened’, ‘white’ Europeans with the help of this “Other” (Mutluer 2017).

Today, such othering also functions without territorial worlding, that is, beyond a geopolitical locating of the other. This can be seen in the dominant figure of the Muslim migrant: this figure bears the mark of belonging to a ‘foreign’ space beyond secular modernity and beyond the borders of Europe, thereby implementing a de-territorialised border demarcation within European societies as well (Spielhaus 2010). In the paradoxical hybrid of the ‘secular Muslim’, this de-territorialised border becomes all the clearer (Amir-Moazami 2010; Tezcan 2010). At the same time, Eurocentric and modernist ways of thinking also belong to the notions of analysis and self-understanding in non-European societies and European border regions – including processes of self-othering. The colonial matrix of “modernity and its Other” has long since become a global cultural heritage that can be reactivated anywhere and reinterpreted in the interests of varying power politics. Instead of defining the postcolonial world order geographically, for example in geopolitical discourse of the “West” and “South”, it therefore seems more appropriate to look at the de-territorialised forms of “coloniality” (Quijano 2007), which contribute to the global persistence of colonial power relations and raise the question of a decolonisation of epistemic and political world orders that is far from being completed (Quijano 2000; Morana/Dussel/Jauregui 2008; Mignolo 2007; Grosfoguel 2008).

Behind the scenes: The colonial and migrant history of EU/Europe

As far as I can see, these postcolonial continuities of current EU-European border and migration politics remain insufficiently addressed by research that considers both borders and migration-movements as more or less new phenomena, detached from the colonial history. This also applies, in part, to research that is critically interested in the new European border regime, but even more so to migration research that omits these European dimensions as a whole, continuing to refer to the nation-state context as seemingly the only politically relevant one, and thus remaining firmly attached to methodological nationalism.

Behind this postcolonial gap in the current debate on the borders and identity politics of the EU/Europe, another issue opens up: the omission of an equally long history of migration as a long-term foundation for the present. It is necessary to bring colonialism and imperialism into the discussion much more intensively than before, with particular consideration given to the migration regimes and the resulting global interdependencies in Europe. Stuart Hall has addressed

this largely obscured context against the background of his own migration history, which brought him from Jamaica to Great Britain: “People like me who came to England in the 1950s have, symbolically, been there for centuries. I was coming home. I am the sugar at the bottom of the English cup of tea. [...] That is the outside history that is inside the history of the English. There is no English history without that other history.” (Hall 1991: 48-49). It can be concluded that there is no European history without this other history: the history of its colonial mobilities and interdependencies. For the genealogy of today’s Europe includes the colonial and imperial-induced migrations of the “middle passage”, in which people emigrated from Europe to the “settler colonies”, while people from Africa were enslaved and forced into the “New World” of the colonies where indigenous populations were violently expelled. After their liberation from colonial rule, many people, as described by Stuart Hall, set off in the direction of the former colonial “mother countries” within the framework of postcolonial mobility. The “Black Atlantic” (Gilroy 1995) became one of the main passages of this enduring history of mobility and interconnectedness. Viewed as a whole, colonial migration movements and their consequences as well as the exodus of Jewish Europeans fleeing from the Holocaust have decisively shaped and changed the world and its populations since the 15th century. Neither Europe nor other parts of the world can be imagined today without this history of intertwining and overlapping migrations.

Looking at present day Europe through the lens of this prehistory, it becomes inevitably clear, that the present Europe can only be understood as postmigrant. For past migrations have long since inscribed themselves on present Europe and its societies, influencing and shaping Europe since generations. Categorising those histories again and again as “migratory” follows the logic of an exclusionary migration policy, conducted by societies that refuse to recognise and acknowledge the migratory-foundations of their own present. Critical migration research can, therefore, only speak of postmigrant realities, in which migration is *aufgehoben* – with the ambivalent duality of this term referring to both the overcoming and the preservation of migration. And, just as it is the case of the nation states and their nationally focussed migration research, the history of migration seems to play little role in the current negotiations of EU/European borders and identities. Also in this context, we see a lasting amnesia and ‘dis-membering’ of the transnational, postcolonial interdependencies with the worlds of those who today are perceived as ‘strangers’ at the borders of Europe. On a European level, in other words, the same obsession of constantly seeing refugeeism and migration as new phenomena, as new arrivals without a common history, is dominating – including the tendency to scandalising them accordingly (Spielhaus 2014). Additionally, it is often overlooked that refugees and migrants enter postmigrant societies, typically with a long-term presence of migration from their respective countries of origin. This long term presence of migration helps to facilitate the

conditions of their arrival and creates the supporting structures, which they can rely on – and which can be activated in different times and contexts. Accordingly, in Germany a large part of the considerable “welcome culture” in the long summer of migration in 2015 was not achieved by “white Germans” as suggested by Angela Merkel’s dictum of “Wir schaffen das!” (We can do it!) – often understood as a national self-affirmation –, but rather by a postmigrant society beyond the bounds between the “majority” and the “minority” (Gerlach 2017; Schiffauer 2017). Similarly stories of migration characterise all Western European immigration societies with a colonial history of interconnectedness, but the same also applies, to a lesser extent, to Eastern European societies that have pursued their own globalisation projects throughout their socialist history, for example, in the context of supporting anti-colonial struggles in the so-called Third World or within the framework of the transcontinental non-aligned movement (Slobodian 2015; Hüwelmeier 2017; Miscovic/Fischer-Tine/Boskovska 2014). Following the example of Western Europe, these interconnections and the mobilities associated with them are also being dis-membered today, which is encouraging new racist nationalisms in both East and West.

As at the national level, it can be critically asked to what extent research on Europe, its borders and migration-movements, fosters this amnesia – in particular when submitting itself to identity categories of the nation state and Europe: for example, by constantly creating and affirming “migration” as a category of “Otherness” – albeit with an emancipatory and activist intention. Instead of focusing on connections and new alliances beyond the bound of the ethnic, new separations are created within and in opposition to those marked as “Other”. Accordingly, the ubiquitous focus on “refugees” – including the new branches of research that follow – is counterproductive as long as the implicit connections with the seemingly different categories of illegal migrants or those migrating with a tourist visa are concealed instead of revealed; as long as dividing lines are strengthened between “other” migrants, for whom “economic” reasons are attributed instead of “humanitarian” ones – and as long as these politically effective, classificatory boundaries are adopted into research instead of being called into question. It was not for nothing that earlier critical research on migration and borders had been resolutely opposed to such distinctions, which were understood as part of the border regime: the aim of this earlier critical research was typically to not separate the often overlapping multiplicity of reasons for migration, avoiding the risk of pitting them against each other. Research on so-called guest worker migration has shown that economic reasons were not the only determining factor here, but that this specific migration also offered many people the opportunity to escape the southern European dictatorships of the postwar era. Thus ‘guest work’ was in many cases often synonymous with political exile (Kölnischer Kunstverein et al. 2005). Accordingly, the flight from political persecution and the desire for a life

without material deprivation are not mutually exclusive. The attempts to establish categorical distinctions between those different forms of migration inevitably leads to exclusion. For example, the humanitarian impetus often cited in political speech about refugees today is discredited by the fact that it focuses only on very specific origins, from certain war and crisis zones, while others, such as Roma EU citizens, are not granted the same right to escape from existentially threatening conditions. The distinctions effective in this context allow human rights to be measured according to double standards.

With regard to migration too, the critical question emerges as to how this category operates in the context of mobility and the mobility regimes that differentiate and govern it.³ Additionally, it proves counterproductive to try to distinguish struggles for residence rights and citizenship according to subject categories, i.e. to separate political fights for rights of migrants from those of refugees, as well as separating them from the struggles of those born in the country, which are marked as “Other” by their “race”. It is rather important, one can argue, to acknowledge what connects them and how they are intertwined. The questioning of the purported cultural homogeneity of the ‘white nations’ of Europe against the background of the call for recognition of their postcolonial realities is an important goal of scientific analysis and political critique. However, this can only succeed if these postcolonial realities are viewed in conjunction with their preceding and constituent migrant mobilities and postmigrant presences, instead of separating them as “Other”.

Between the posts: Overcoming x-exclusions

Do we then need another “post” construction at all, and in relation to which “X” would it have to be constructed (Mecheril 2014)? My answer to this question is that, with the concept of postmigration, the role of “migration” as political category, demarcating inner and outer borders, can be criticised without invalidating the significance of migration as a political practice. On the contrary, it seems to me that it is only possible with this concept to identify the (often neglected and forgotten) constitutive and shaping role of migration within the society – now described as “postmigrant society”. And it is only with the concept of postmigration that migrant histories and struggles can be brought to the fore and be seen as the foundations of today’s arrivals and be used to counter the social obsession of defining migration as the “Other” and, by doing so, constantly excluding it from the society’s own self-perception. Thus, it is not a question of questioning migration itself, but of questioning

³ According to a discussion launched at a Migration Lab conference: “Migration_Mobilität_Gesellschaft. Umkämpfte Politiken der Klassifikation”, Institut für Europäische Ethnologie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 10.-11.06.2016.

its academic and political instrumentalisation as a designation of a specifically hierarchical subject relationship between “natives” and marginalised “Others”. Similar to gender, migration also designates a biopolitically normative and hierarchical setting – and, at the same time, also a place from which this regime can be fought. This in turn links postmigration with other attempts to challenge existing border regimes. The concept of postmigration opens up the possibility of identifying new connections and interfaces between those struggles – for instance in relation to gendered and postcolonial power regimes – and of establishing cross-disciplinary alliances. A postmigrant perspective allows to explore and to challenge x exclusions in academic and political discourse about European “nations” and their borders – filling gaps and intervening in the existing research in the field.

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When do societies become *postmigrant*?

A historical consideration based on the example of Switzerland

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When and under what conditions do societies become *postmigrant*?¹ While the search for historical starting points is always a delicate undertaking, it becomes most productive when searching for historical genealogies, junctures and moments of upheaval, rather than absolute origins: In the current – predominantly German-language – debate, “postmigrant societies” have been discussed on the whole from the point of view of social and cultural studies.² Yet, a historiographical approach is equally vital to the development of a concept that already bears the mark of historical change in its very name: *postmigrant* societies – in short, societies “structured by experiences of migration”, existing in a space “after migration” (Yildiz/Hill 2015; Karakayalı/Tsianos 2014: 34).

If migration has always been a constitutive factor in history (Bade 1992; Bade/Oltmer 2004), then all modern societies have always been postmigrant. Considering the astonishing temporal expansion of the study of migration history in recent scholarship (Lucassen/Lucassen/Manning 2010), one could even go so far as to agree with historian Klaus Bade that, “migration is a constituent of the human condition such as birth, reproduction, disease and death. The history of migrations is as old as the history of mankind; for *Homo sapiens* has spread as *Homo migrans* across the world.” (Bade 2002: 55). But in adjusting the historiographical lens to encompass this universal horizon, our perspective on more recent historical developments becomes increasingly blurred. As such, the very question of why we now consider migration as a universal component of human history (or

1 This chapter is a translation of “Ab wann sind Gesellschaften postmigrantisch? Wissenschaftliche Überlegungen ausgehend von der Schweiz” in Naika Foroutan, Juliane Karakayalı, Riem Spielhaus (eds.): *Postmigrantische Perspektiven. Ordnungssysteme, Repräsentationen, Kritik*, Campus: Frankfurt a.M., pp. 35-55, 2018. References have been updated. I would like to thank the editors, and Julia Sittmann for the translation.

2 On the contribution of historians to migration research, cp. Gabbacia 2015.

alternatively: how the discussion around postmigrant societies has recently become such a visible subject of societal discourses) begins to fade from view. Terminology thrives on precision: From an analytical point of view, it is not terribly useful to consider all communities and societies with histories of migration as “postmigrant”. Conversely, what would a meaningful historical category look like if it were capable of neatly determining whether a society is “postmigrant” or not? On a time-axis that reaches from the beginning of human civilization to the present, political scientist Naika Foroutan’s proposal – that societies can be characterised as postmigrant the moment they politically recognise their migration reality – is firmly rooted in the contemporary end of the scale (Foroutan 2016). This approach generalises the consequences of the so-called “Süssmuth commission” which, for the first time, officially recognised Germany as a country of immigration in 2001. This marked an important paradigm shift in German politics ending a long period of ignorance under the Chancellorship of Helmut Kohl, during which the lived social reality of the country simply remained unacknowledged. From a historiographical point of view, focusing on the recent German past, what appears to be a plausible and precise criterion, nonetheless, raises new questions. How legally binding, effective, widespread and sustainable does such an act of political recognition have to be in order to function as a recognizable threshold for a society to become postmigrant? How far must the political recognition of the “fact of immigration” penetrate societal institutions as well as everyday culture in order to count? (Mecheril 2011: 50). Compared to the role of migration in the national self-images of “classic” immigration countries such as the United States and Canada, Germany’s self-perception as such remains rather contested. Moreover, current postmigrant approaches clearly emphasise Germany as a case study, which limits the analytical power these approaches have offered so far. Not least in relation to other comparable cases – such as Switzerland – that do not necessarily have a ‘recognition date’ based on a specific governmental act, report or commission. Nonetheless, very similar social processes and ‘obsessive’ media debates around questions of migration and integration can be discerned in the two countries (Spielhaus 2012: 97; on Switzerland: Espahangizi 2019c). Akin to Germany, Switzerland is also an immigration country *à contre cœur* – despite its dominant self-perception (Wimmer 2013: 114).

If Germany is the only country that can accurately be described as postmigrant, then little is gained analytically. In contrast, Juliane Karakayalı and Vasilis Tsianos suggest a notion of “postmigration” that emphasises “the political, social and cultural transformations of societies with a history of postcolonial and guest worker migration” (2014: 34). From this perspective, it becomes possible to analyse different thresholds within processes of societal transformation rather than specific acts of government – presenting a promising analytical framework through which to understand the contemporary history of Switzerland as well as

that of various other European countries, all of which share a similar ambiguity toward their immigration realities. Such an approach might also help prevent the re-emergence of a narrow methodological nationalism in the name of the postmigrant society (Wimmer/Glick-Schiller 2002). Instead, social dynamics within nation-states must be understood as part of transnational entanglements, resonances and processes of exchange, while at the same time accepting the fact that *society* as a fundamental political frame of reference continues to be actively shaped by nation-states despite – and to a certain extent because of – globalisation. The concept of postmigrant society therefore must be flexible enough to capture the interplay between different levels, national, international, transnational and supranational, spaces of socialisation, communities, networks and life-worlds.

If one considers the many constitutive connections between colonial and guest worker migration since the 19th century (McKeown 2008; Zimmermann 2010), it becomes clear that further conceptual clarification is necessary in order to adequately narrow in on the historical shifts in post-war Europe that are ultimately at stake in the debate on postmigration. The formula “after migration” thus not only refers to previous migration processes (not to an end to immigration), but above all to the specific ways in which social realities resulting from individual and collective stories of immigration, are negotiated in political, cultural, legal and media spheres. In the following, I will elaborate on these dynamics by considering the 20th century history of migration to Switzerland, a case study that provides a useful comparison to Germany in terms of the major patterns of immigration after WWII.

A new insight

Shortly after the end of World War II (and a few years earlier than in Germany), a new era of mass labour migration began in Switzerland in response to the first recruitment agreement signed with Italy in 1948. Until the early 1970s, several million foreign workers arrived in Switzerland, laying the foundation for economic growth and post-war prosperity. Similar to Germany, Switzerland adopted a “rotational model”, in which the foreign labour force was both to remain temporary and seasonal, and to serve as an economic buffer. The legal basis of this Swiss migration regime was the ANAG Act (Bundesgesetz über Aufenthalt und Niederlassung der Ausländer, foreigner admission and settlement act), introduced in the 1930s on the basis of an earlier national referendum. In the interwar period, as in other countries at the time, liberal *laissez-faire* migration policies in Switzerland were replaced by a restrictive immigration and naturalisation policy based on an ethnicised, and to some extent racialised, understanding of the Swiss national state (Kury 2003; Argast 2007). At the end of the 19th century, the number of immi-

grants to Switzerland superseded the number of emigrants out of the country for the first time, due to a growing demand for labour, but also due to the number of people fleeing antisemitic pogroms in Eastern Europe. By World War I, the proportion of foreign residents in Switzerland had risen to over 15 percent of the population; in the cities, it was as high as up to 30 to 50 percent (Kury 2003: 35). Newly established state authorities such as the Aliens Police (1917/19) were supposed to prevent Switzerland's ostensible *Überfremdung* (overforeignisation) – a Swiss neologism that was quickly adopted in Germany (Bürger 1929) – and to guarantee a proper “selection” of immigrants, in accordance with social Darwinist ideas. Restrictive admissions policies and the mass return of foreigners to their home countries during the two World Wars massively reduced the proportion of foreign residents compared to the total population to around five percent by 1945. It was not until the post-war economic boom that demand for foreign workers increased again – this time massively. But as early as the late 1950s, the Swiss rotational model came under pressure for several reasons. Firstly, the growing competition on the European labour market – as a result, in part, of new recruitment treaties signed by Germany beginning in 1955. Secondly, the tapping out of existing sources for “foreign workers” from countries such as Italy without an end to the economic boom in sight. And finally, the influence of international norms and legal obligations toward the countries of origin with regard to the working and living conditions of recruited workers, as well as their increasing average length of stay. Contrary to government plans, members of the foreign workforce also did not necessarily hold themselves to the official rotational model, not least because of employers who, for reasons of efficiency, often had no interest in a permanently temporary workforce (D’Amato 2008). The massive increase in the number of foreigners and the prospect that the Swiss economy would be permanently dependent upon them concerned the Swiss Aliens Police. At their initiative, the Swiss government set up an expert commission in 1961 with experts drawn from the economic and social sciences. Their task was to deal with the so-called “problem of foreign workers” and to develop appropriate policy proposals. The introduction of a quota was expected to “stabilize” the influx of immigrants, while a new “active” assimilation policy for those workers and their families who remained in the country was designed to support the anti-overforeignisation policy of the Aliens Police, which had been established since the interwar period (Espahangizi 2019a). It quickly became clear, however, that the commission’s findings also opened an avenue for the recognition of very different demands, including measures to strengthen inclusion, such as better working and living conditions and greater rights for immigrants in Switzerland.

In the years that followed, a new understanding emerged, which can be traced back to the early 1960s and the aforementioned study commission. A position paper, released by a second, now permanent Federal Consultative Commission

on the Problem of Foreigners in 1970, articulated the discussion around this new “insight”:

Notwithstanding the differences of opinion surrounding the number of foreigners to be admitted to Switzerland, the insight has prevailed in recent years that foreigners who have been admitted here and whose presence appears to have been consolidated should be offered the possibility of far-reaching integration into the social, economic and cultural life of Switzerland, and that their integration process should be promoted by all appropriate means. (EKA 1976: 1)

The final report of the first expert commission, completed in 1964, however, made clear that it was not a symbolic act of political recognition akin to the 2001 German Süßsmuth commission, but instead a multivocal, even contradictory document that contained both proposals for inclusion (*ius soli*) as well as a racialised paranoia about overforeignisation reminiscent of the 1920s and 1930s (BIGA 1964). Although the text’s polyphony can be interpreted as a materialised expression of the power relations between those individuals, institutions, positions and interests who were involved in the drafting of the report, it does contain one major common denominator: an understanding of the unforeseen reality of immigration. The “incorporation” (*Eingliederung*) of foreigners was now understood as a task for Swiss society as a whole, to which all members, foreigners and nationals, were required to contribute – albeit not to the same extent and from different positions (Espahangizi 2019a).

Ultimately, the polyphonic and ambiguous nature of the report by the Swiss commission on foreign workers in the 1960s offers a more powerful historical model for understanding the “postmigrant condition” (Schramm/Moslund/Petersen et al. 2019) than the German Süßsmuth commission. This particular historical lens allows instead for an understanding of the genesis of postmigrant societies as a genealogy of different paths toward “realising” immigration realities, rather than a single origin story punctuated by a decisive act of government. The recognition of immigration is then by no means synonymous with a political awareness of the need for inclusion. In fact, the formation of anti-immigrant discourses in Switzerland since the 1960s (Skenderovic/D’Amato 2008) has also been a major contributor to *acknowledging* the social reality of immigration – to perceiving it, to thematizing it, reacting to it and making it ‘real’ – emerging in tandem with other voices arguing for “integration”, in the sense of participation and inclusion. By focusing on the broader concept of *realisation* (both in terms of cognitive insight and the practical dimension of constructing reality), it becomes possible to consider the different social contexts and genealogical threads of a postmigrant society in the making – both individually and inter-relationally (Espahangizi 2021; Mecheril 2011; Jasanoff 2004). In Switzerland, for example, not

only state actors and government institutions, but also civil society actors, such as the media, arts and culture, trade unions and the churches – often through international and transnational exchanges between NGOs, for example within the ecumenical Churches Committee on Migrant Workers in Western Europe – and ultimately also immigrants themselves began to face the reality of a society “after immigration” in the 1960s and 1970s. Here, too, insight into one’s own immigration reality was not necessarily a given, but the result of individual and collective processes of realisation and shifts in perspective. The diverse and complex forms of diasporic, trans- and post-national life plans and the multiple forms of belonging that subsequently emerged would increasingly come into conflict with the discursively dominant “choice” of “arrival” or “return”. Opposition to anti-immigration and xenophobic popular initiatives (an instrument of direct democracy in Switzerland) against “overforeignisation”, as well as the battles against discrimination, for equal rights and a better life – especially for one’s own children – played a central role in the realisation of individual immigration realities (Maiolino 2011). The introduction of the notion of a “second generation”, members of which increasingly became the focus of education policy initiatives in Switzerland in the 1960s and 1970s, into the popular discourse created a bridge between various contexts, including the implementation of government programs, the experience of individual immigrant families and the pursuit of research studies on the subject (Eigenmann 2017; Espahangizi 2019b). The powerful binary interpretive scheme of *settling down/returning home*, often embodied by the figure of the “foreign child”, is closely associated with a form of realisation and acknowledgment that has gained importance in recent historiography on migration: the production of knowledge on the subject of society during and after migration (Harzig/Horder/Gabaccia 2009; Hahn 2012; Gabaccia 2015). In the following, this aspect will be examined in light of the emergence of migration and integration research in Switzerland in the 1960s and 1970s.

What comes “after migration”?

The realisation of immigration in post-war Switzerland was followed by a strong desire to know and understand. In different social contexts, people wanted to know more about the nature of social realities “after immigration”. Interests ranged from a technocratic desire to register the resident foreigner population and control various processes of assimilation, to social-liberal paternalistic concerns for the socio-cultural integration of foreigners in general and the “second generation” in particular, all the way to demands by foreign worker associations such as the Federazione Colonie Libere Italiane in Svizzera for data and political

arguments in the service of self-empowerment and specific campaigns for integration and social justice (Baumann 2014; Espahangizi 2017b).

In the early decades of the 20th century, debates on the subject of immigration were mostly based on legal opinions and demographic calculations. In the 1960s however, sociology became the leading discipline for the study of “integration” (Piñeiro 2015; Espahangizi 2019a). Inspired by the work of the 1960s-era Swiss commission on foreign workers, numerous papers on questions of integration were produced. Groundbreaking empirical studies by Rudolf Braun (1970) on “the socio-cultural problems of integration” and Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny (1973) on the “sociology of the problem of the foreign workers” were the first to examine “both sides”, namely, the mutually transformative relationship between immigrants and their Swiss host society, thereby laying the narrative foundation for a new discourse on integration. In short: integration is not a one-way street. These studies had a significant impact within Switzerland but also, in the case of Hoffmann-Nowotny’s work, on German migration research (cp. Thränhardt 1975; Bade 2017: 34). Hans-Joachim Hoffmann-Nowotny’s life and work are particularly revealing for our understanding of the role of transnational epistemic entanglements in the formation of postmigrant societies such as Switzerland and Germany.³

Hoffmann-Nowotny was born in Germany, the child of Polish immigrants. He studied in Cologne under the renowned sociologist René König, moving to Switzerland in 1966 for his doctoral research. Although he habilitated at the Institute of Sociology at the University of Zurich in 1973 and continued to work there until his death in 2004, he also remained engaged in the German debate on migration and integration. Between 1996 and 2000, for example, he chaired the commission in charge of producing the German Federal Government’s Sixth Family Report.⁴ Even before the publication of the Süßmuth Commission’s report, this report declared that any meaningful policy had to be based on the “diversity of life-worlds”, “the irreversible immigration process” and “factual development” of social reality in Germany. Hoffmann-Nowotny’s work not only personifies the coupling of academic realisation processes in Switzerland and Germany, but also illustrates the international context of knowledge on migration and integration produced since the 1960s.

Hoffmann-Nowotny’s interest in integration issues was first shaped during studies abroad in the United States in the early 1960s. In exchanges with his mentor Hannah Arendt, he considered the racial divide and the Civil Rights movement

3 The following section is based on research conducted as part of a larger article on the history of migration and integration studies in post-war Switzerland, see Espahangizi 2019a.

4 Due to Hoffmann-Nowotny’s serious illness, Klaus Bade would stand in for him on the commission (cf. Bade 2017: 49).

in the United States, including the American parallel of black workers, who had migrated from the south to the industrial cities of the north. Although these reflections were foundational to his early studies on foreign workers in Europe, traces of this transatlantic connection would fall away by the late 1970s (Goldberg 2006; Lentin 2014). International debates in the 1960s also shaped Hoffmann-Nowotny's thesis of the social "sub-stratification" (*Unterschichtung*), in which a host society is undergirded through labor migration, in particular the work of Swiss development sociologist Peter Heintz (Hoffmann-Nowotny came to Zurich as his assistant). Since the late 1950s, Heintz had been active as an expert for the UNESCO Social Science Division in supporting the establishment of sociological research institutes in Latin America under the leadership of the British sociologist Thomas H. Marshall. During his time as director of the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) in Santiago de Chile, Heintz was involved in what has subsequently been called the "discovery of world society" within the history of sociology (Greve/Heintz 2005). Together with his colleagues at FLACSO, he developed a theory of social stratification and structural tension based on an analogy of national and international stratification systems (for example, with the FLACSO Secretary General; Lagos 1963). It was in this context that Hoffmann-Nowotny, under Heintz's doctoral supervision, developed the model of sub-stratification through immigration in Zurich between 1966 and 1969. By the 1970s, this approach had become an influential reference point for the study of guest workers in Switzerland and Germany. Hoffmann-Nowotny's life also illustrates the importance of personal migration experiences for knowledge production on the subject of migration and integration (Espahangizi 2017a; Lässig/Steinberg 2017): His emphasis on the need for structural integration through labour, law and – above all – education is reflected in his own experience of upward social mobility as a child of Polish immigrants in Germany.

An analysis of Hoffmann-Nowotny's work also reveals a specific historicity in his perception of migration, which has subsequently become almost universal. The very word "migration" did not enter the German-speaking academic discourse until the late 1960s and did not become part of everyday language until the 1990s.⁵ In fact, Hoffmann-Nowotny's doctoral thesis is the first German-language sociological monograph with the word *Migration* in the title, instead of the expected *Wanderung* which seems to mean the same in German, but holds much more traditional connotations (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1970). This semantic shift was not

5 For earlier uses of this word, cp. Hahn 2012: 24; for a rough orientation, see the frequency with which the concept of migration has appeared in German-language books since 1800, available at <https://books.google.com/ngrams>. In Switzerland in the early 1960s, the term was only systematically used in the context of the international networks set up by migration commissions within the churches.

purely superficial but points instead to a tectonic shift between the 1960s and 1990s in terms of how global mobilities are thought of, perceived and reacted to. The notion of a bird's eye view on "international migration", initially developed in the interwar period and freed from the weight of its traditional prefixes, *emigration/immigration* (Stricker 2017), gained a new quality in the post-war era and, in particular, over the course of decolonisation. For Hoffmann-Nowotny, migration was the mechanism that provided the necessary structural relief in a new world order made up of national states that, according to post-war modernisation theory, were at different stages of development. He thereby introduced the notion of structural functionalism, borrowed from development sociology, into the public German-language debate on guest workers. Within the Swiss state, the concept of migration was not deployed until the mid-1980s, when it first appeared in two specific contexts: First, the Federal Statistical Office started to model Swiss population growth scenarios, which for the sake of greater accuracy was no longer based primarily on the legalistic distinction of Swiss nationals and foreigners and included a sociological perspective on migration (Haug 1988). This development ultimately led to the introduction of the category of "population with migration background" around 2000 (Rausa-De Luca 2005). Second, by the end of the 1980s, migration was introduced as a conceptual umbrella for two traditionally distinct areas of state regulation: foreign workforce admission and asylum law. A new "integrated migration policy" was demanded to control and coordinate the admission and residency conditions of both foreign workers and asylum seekers and refugees, whose numbers had risen sharply in the 1980s in the wake of global "migration flows" and "growing migration pressure" (Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit/Bundesamt für Ausländerfragen 1991: 16, 87).

Parallel to this gradual implementation of a sociological concept of migration within official Swiss policy in the 1980s, Hoffmann-Nowotny extended his notion of migration to all of human history, anticipating Klaus Bade's "homo migrans" (Kubat/Hoffmann-Nowotny 1981; Hoffmann-Nowotny 1988). The increasing universalisation of migration as a "total phenomenon" (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1970: 49) in recent decades, including in the historiography (for Switzerland, cp. Holenstein/Kury/Schulz 2018), has undoubtedly obscured the historicity of the concept of migration after World War II.

The influence of Hoffmann-Nowotny's work on the academic study of modern immigration realities underscores the necessity of considering transnational entanglements in a postcolonial world and the role of knowledge production in the contemporary emergence of postmigrant societies, thereby illuminating those discursive changes that are fundamental to the formation of postmigrant societies in post-war Europe. The emergence of a new discourse on migration and integration – its narratives, images, figures, concepts, research programs, knowledge and data sets – is crucial to this development. From this perspective, migra-

tion and integration are not universal categories in human history, but rather very specific epistemic forms of perceiving and acting upon those social realities that have undergone a process of transformation in Switzerland and Germany since the 1960s. In short: Migration research plays a constitutive role in the history of postmigrant societies (Dahinden 2016; Haug/Kreis 2017). Thus, the conceptual approach developed here takes into account the epistemic foundations of the societal “migration-integration complex” (Espahangizi 2019c) that has emerged in recent decades. This migration-integration complex refers to the heterogeneous social infrastructure, the assemblage of forms of realisation and obsessive problem management, that developed in the second half of the 20th century in countries such as Switzerland and Germany and revolved around the signifiers of migration and integration.⁶ This knowledge-power complex demarcates the socio-political terrain on which forces of inclusion and exclusion compete, shifting and rearranging the lines of national, ethnic, cultural, and racial belonging (Espahangizi et al. 2016). It is important to underline here that the term “postmigrant society” is therefore not synonymous with “post-racist”, “post-racial” or “multicultural society” (Chin 2017).⁷ It refers instead to an analytical perspective that allows for the examination of the extent to which the notions of migration, integration, diversity, racism, multi-, inter- and transculturality have, in recent decades, created not only new opportunities for inclusion (for some), but also new distinctions and configurations of exclusionary structures (for example Lentin/Titley 2011; Ahmed 2012).

Ambivalences of migration and integration

Naika Foroutan rightly stresses that ambiguity and contradiction are fundamental characteristics of postmigrant societies. As the 1964 report by the Swiss Study Commission demonstrates, ambiguity can be understood as a symptom or snapshot of ongoing processes of negotiation and struggle whose outcomes are by no means pre-determined. The postmigrant perspective is not teleological: The future of any given society is as uncertain as it is contested. Global developments and specific events, such as economic crises of the mid-1970s, the marked increase in asylum and refugee migration in the 1980s and 1990s (as a consequence of various wars and crises, and the fall of communism), the rise of political Islamism

6 In this sense, the notion of a migration-integration complex is not congruent with that of a migration regime aimed at regulation and governance, a concept used in a study group at IMIS in Osnabrück (<https://migrationregimes.com>).

7 The corresponding critique of the concept of postmigrant societies thus misses the mark; cf. El-Tayeb 2016.

after the Iranian revolution, the *cultural turn* in the humanities and social sciences, and popular and public debates (Espahangizi 2021), as well as post-9/11 terrorism and various “refugee crises” have all ultimately contributed to transformations of the climate and parameters for negotiation and struggle in postmigrant societies such as Switzerland and Germany. Moreover, national migration and integration discourses and regimes are becoming increasingly interlinked – a process observable on a European and a global level (Pecoud 2014).

Since the 1980s and 1990s, new multicultural integration programs have been implemented in Switzerland and Germany, negotiated between migrant and non-migrant actors, civil society associations and state authorities (Piñeiro 2015; Chin 2017). The transition toward migration and integration policies based on an inclusive acceptance of immigration and diversity has opened up new spaces for political recognition both in Switzerland and in Germany. But these gains have been paralleled by counter-reactions, as the new migration and integration discourse has been mobilised both for projects of inclusion as well as exclusion. This dynamic becomes evident in the notion of individuals with a “migration background”, a category that initially emerged at the turn of the millennium. What can be used to broaden national identities in one context (to be *German or Swiss* with a migration background) becomes a means of drawing new lines of difference in another (*German or Swiss with a migration background*). In government statistics, migration background is a “color-blind” category (Lentin 2014), although within everyday acts of racism, it has become increasingly tied to racist markers such as appearance, name, and language (Supik 2014). Statistical tabulations are one thing, but which individuals are singled out as carriers of a migrant background is another entirely: Who is addressed, problematised and scandalised in everyday life, in the media and public discourses as such? Correspondingly, the discourse of migration and integration has produced very different subjectivities and identities that must be understood as historically variable stakes in social negotiation processes.

While, in the early 2000s, it might still have been empowering to do away with the designation of “foreigner” and to refer to oneself instead as a “migrant” (a term that did not become prevalent as a autonym in German until the 1990s),⁸ the tone of the word has by now shifted away from empowerment toward stigmatisation, both in Switzerland and in Germany.⁹ Even the calls for a historiography “from the point of view of migrants” (Skenderovic 2015) and the emphatic turn toward the migrant and nomadic subjects in critical theoretical discourses since the 1990s

8 See the use of the term in the newsletter published by the Movement for an Open, Solidary, and Democratic Switzerland (Bewegung für eine offene, solidarische und demokratische Schweiz, BODS).

9 Accordingly, Mecheril's (2014) criticism of the concept of the postmigrant also misses the point.

(see Flusser 2007) have taken on a new, more ambiguous “migrantological” flavour against the backdrop of recent shifts in the discourse (Bojadzijev/Römhild 2014: 10; Dahinden 2016). Finally, the re-articulation of exclusionary forces in recent years, filtered through the new semantics of migration and integration, has become the starting point for – and here the historical circle closes – new political and academic debates on the concept of the postmigrant – a term taken up in Germany in the early 2010s and in the years that followed in Switzerland and beyond (Espahangizi 2016).

Two sides of the same coin

The starting point of this chapter was the search for a meaningful historical periodisation of “postmigrant societies”. In light of the considerations outlined above, it can be argued that postmigrant societies emerge within a process of transformation during which different social or institutional organisations and actors – each with their own interests – realise that society is changing due to immigration and acknowledge the existence of a change that had hitherto not been part of their self-perception. This contested process takes place in the context of an expansive discourse on migration and integration, which in recent decades has increasingly become a central form of social self-understanding and self-perception in Switzerland and Germany. Given that more and more social issues have fallen under the rubric of issues related to migration – from public security to gender relations – it can also be said that disputes over the issue of migration represent a new constitutive mode of socialisation (*Vergesellschaftung*) in postmigrant societies. Migration is indeed becoming a “norm”, but not in the sense of a politically inclusive acceptance and socially valued integration of immigrants. Instead, we are witness to the rise of a permanent problematisation of the figure of the migrant that has in particular gained momentum recently in the context of the digitalisation of (social) media communication. Ultimately, Hoffmann-Nowotny’s characterisation of Switzerland as a “non-immigration immigration country” (Hoffmann-Nowotny 1995) appropriately sums up the constitution of various postmigrant societies. Postmigrant societies are in a state of uncertainty, wherein two opposing interpretative regimes have superimposed themselves on society: Migration and diversity are seen as integral to society *and* as foreign to it – as threat *and* enhancement, as risk *and* potential. Through diverse entangled historical processes, these contradictory, even antagonistic, perspectives have merged to form two sides of a coin. Or to use a different image – to form two poles of a discursive oscillator capable of generating regularly recurring *moral panics*.

The modern history of Switzerland is illustrative of the reality that one cannot assume a linear history of progress, in which a society that initially does not see

itself as a country of immigration becomes reasonable and gradually transforms itself into a “immigration society”. The example of the United States since the end of the 19th century illustrates that developments can also move in precisely the opposite direction, and that national immigration narratives do not automatically immunise against populist anti-immigration reactions. As in the United States and Germany, deeply contentious social debates on immigration and assimilation took place in Switzerland around 1900 (Kury/Lüthi/Erlanger 2005; Zimmerman 2010). On both sides of the Atlantic, it is possible to identify elements of a *postmigrant condition* already over a hundred years ago. The process of nationalisation, which intensified in Switzerland with the outbreak of World War I, pushed back these developments to the side until they were revived after World War II. A similar trajectory can also be observed in the United States, where the narrative of the land of immigrants only regained in strength in the 1950s (Handlin 1951; Kennedy 1959).

There are powerful lines of continuity, as well as major historical path dependencies, on various discursive, epistemic, institutional and legal levels that extend from the Swiss immigration debates at the turn of the 20th century to the 1960s, the 1970s and beyond. And yet the post-World War II migration and integration debates took shape in a fundamentally different historical context, both within Switzerland and globally, demarcated by catchwords such as decolonisation, modernisation theory, developmentalism, Cold War, the United Nations, human rights and economic globalisation. As discussed above, a perspective that draws on the history of knowledge can sharpen our ability to tease out shifts in the discourse, but it must be supplemented by perspectives from social, cultural, media, economic and political history. Instead of searching for a unambiguous birth date for any given postmigrant society (or all of them), it is instead much more meaningful to understand this concept as a productive approach to the present, which allows for the possibility of understanding its multiple genealogies, each with specific temporal and spatial logics. Furthermore, an overview of the early 20th century also makes clear that considering only the turning points and moments of upheaval in the processes of realizing and acknowledging immigration realities is also shortsighted; it is equally vital to understand the myriad processes of *de-realisation* – of forgetting, repressing, learning to forget, marginalizing and sometimes also suppressing immigration realities. In so doing, postmigrant approaches might also be able to create a space for new discussions that also engage with the debates surrounding the question of “(post)colonial amnesia” (Albrecht 2010; Falk/Lüthi/Purtschert 2012).

A consideration of Switzerland as a case study of a postmigrant society highlights the fact that such societies are always constituted within transnational interdependencies and complex temporal structures. The simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, as Ernst Bloch called it, can be observed throughout Europe

in the national migration and integration debates that the media has long since connected to each other, both socially and politically, in spite of their different historical trajectories. Against this backdrop, the postmigrant perspective can also be understood as an opportunity for a transnational dialogue – for a critical multivocal reflection on the reorganisation and constitution of society in the era of migration, integration and right-wing populism in Europe and beyond.

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Contested crises

Migration regimes as an analytical perspective on today's societies

Juliane Karakayalı and Paul Mecheril

“Maybe there are some of you who will ask me or who would ask me what I think about the future of right-wing radicalism. I think this is the wrong question because it is much too contemplative. This kind of thinking, which views such things as natural disasters about which we make predictions like we do about hurricanes or other weather events, this already contains a kind of resignation. In this resigned view, we don't see ourselves as political actors – our relationship to reality is that of an audience, and a poor one at that” (Adorno 2020: 55)

Introduction, or: History does not repeat itself

Are we back in the 1990s? This question has been repeatedly raised in German debates when the discussion centres around the increase in racist violence and attitudes for some years until now. In this context, the 1990s act as a sort of appalling reference. In Germany at that time, the end of the political confrontation between East and West developed a specific dynamic. On the one hand, there was a rise in the number of asylum seekers immigrating, and on the other hand, nationalist attitudes and policies increased with so called German reunification. The division of Germany between 1949 and 1990 had by many been viewed as a symbol of the country's crimes during the National Socialist era. After reunification, the memory of these crimes and Germany's particular responsibility seemed to fade, while a new kind of racism emerged at the same time. City names became bywords for racist violence that was often murderous – Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Hoyerswerda, Mölln, Solingen, Lübeck, and the list goes on. German politicians allowed catch-

words to be placed in their mouths by neo-Nazis, and the necessity of a change in asylum law was paradoxically justified by racist violence. This change was then enacted, leaving the right to asylum in Germany to wither away until it was unrecognisable.¹

Understanding 2019 as a return to the sentiment of the 1990s is not appropriate, however, because it means looking at societal developments from only one perspective. To take up a term which is frequently used, we do not think that the current situation is characterised by a ‘shift to the right’. Instead, society is now marked by an increasing number of conflicting positions: right-wing extremist, openly nationalist and racist statements on the one hand, and affirmative actions for plurality in the migration society on the other. Statistics also point toward this situation. In 2018, 173 attacks took place on houses where asylum seekers were living (Bundesministerium des Inneren/Federal Ministry of the Interior 2019), and in the same year, the number of right-wing acts of violence in Berlin and the eastern German states was 1,212 (VBRG, 2 April 2019).² The AfD (Alternative for Germany) represents the first contemporary right-wing party that has been able to recruit a large number of members in a very short period of time and get elected to the state parliaments as well as to the Bundestag. In contrast to the political parties preceding it, the AfD has not lost its ability to act despite internal disputes (Friedrich 2015), at least for the time being. If we look at studies on attitudes, we find that authoritarian perspectives are becoming more widespread (Zick et al. 2019). Meanwhile, these attitude studies also show that the number of people who view immigration positively has increased as well (ibid.). In some respects, these findings correspond with demographic developments. In 2017, 23.6% of people living in Germany were considered as having an ‘background of migration’, according to the German definitions.³ Among residents under 18 years of age the percentage was one third (Destatis 2018). Identifying with multiple communities, multilingualism and transnational ties are becoming the personal and/or social reality of life for a growing number of people who live in Germany (Foroutan et al. 2014). The

1 A related version of this text was published in German in: Foroutan, Naika/Karakayalı, Juliane/Spielhaus, Riem: *Postmigrantisches Perspektiven*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, pp. 225-237.

2 The official statistics on right-wing violence usually only represent a small portion of the actual violence, as many acts are not reported or the acts are not classified as right-wing violence. That is why independent advisory centres document right-wing violence in alternative statistics. For the year 2018, as in previous years, these advisory centres have recorded a continued increase in right-wing, racist and anti-Semitic attacks in all German states with the exception of Schleswig-Holstein (Verband der Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt e.V. 2015).

3 “Background of migration” or “Migrationshintergrund” in German defines that a person was not born with German nationality or has at least one parent who was not born with German nationality.

huge number of volunteers, who in recent years have supported newcomers and refugees in Germany, can – not only, but also – be understood as an expression of a fundamental acceptance of immigration and plurality (Karakayalı/Kleist 2015).

The term “postmigrantisches Gesellschaft” – typically translated as “postmigrant society” – attempts to describe this polarisation of society (Espahangizi et al. 2016; Foroutan et al. 2014; 2015; Karakayalı 2015; Tsianos/Karakayalı 2014; see also the introduction to this volume).⁴ Although the term may be considered problematic (Mecheril 2014), it refers to the history and present of (postcolonial, immigrant worker [‘Gastarbeiter’] and refugee) migration and the related political, cultural, legal and social transformations that go hand-in-hand with new forms of solidarity and alliances as well as new forms of manifest and subtle racism. But how exactly can this polarisation or this simultaneity of divergent developments be understood theoretically and hence analysed? In order to do so, we need a perspective which can expose the dynamics and contestedness of conditions in society. In the following paragraphs, we suggest such a perspective with considerations related to the term migration regime.

Crises, subjects, migration regimes

At this moment political conflicts are intensifying and multiplying. This is partly because migration poses the fundamental question of the functionality and legitimacy of the social order. Antagonists and protagonists of an open and plural society are not clearly juxtaposed with one another in this process. Instead, complex patterns of overlapping, complementary and tension-filled conflicts take place between politically opposing groups and alliances who are not only diverse but also fluid, temporary, dynamic and less clearly defined.

The term regime, which we would like to use for the analysis of these conflicts, can be traced back to especially regulation theory (Lipietz 1989) and has been further developed in the context of migration research (Karakayalı/Tsianos 2008; Mezzadra 2007). A regime is to be understood as the consolidation of a compro-

4 In our opinion, the English translation of the term “postmigrantisches Gesellschaft” as “postmigrant society” – certainly against the intentions of the respective authors – contributes to the idea that the social present is a present in which migration and the social and societal form of “the migrant” is a past (cf. the corresponding criticism of the term “postmigrantisches Gesellschaft”, Mecheril, 2014). This is why we choose the term “postimmigration society” here (see also Lentini/Lentini 2006). The term “postimmigration society” is intended to point out that current social contexts are characterised by diverse forms of migration, whereby social normality is not limited to permanent settlement and mono-national affiliation and migration cannot be understood solely as a one-time change of location with the subsequent requirement of integration into the “new” nation state

mise arising from contradictory societal processes and conflictual confrontations in which various actors participate. The term regime questions the central role of the nation state in the regulation of social matters, thereby enabling us to include many different actors in our analysis. The practices of these actors are of course related, but not in the form of a central (systemic) logic (Tsianos 2010). The regulation of the phenomenon called “migration” is thereby understood as product of the actions of many different actors such as local, national governmental, European political, transnational, NGO, self-help migrant organisations, media and foundations. In turn, these actors have many diverse, complex and competing associations with one another – round table discussions, conferences, expert reports and declarations, to name a few – in hierarchical and vertical (power) relations.

This differentiates the concept of the migration regime from that of the migration system, which in contrast puts emphasis on the centrality of political, economic and legal structures vis-à-vis the individual or collective practices of the subjects in societies shaped by migration. Furthermore, the concept of the migration regime can be distinguished from other approaches that understand migrants, directly or indirectly, as oppositional and subversive individuals who circumvent logics of state and national identities in many ways, regardless of the reality of structural imperatives (*ibid.*).

Antagonistic relationships structure the reality of postimmigration societies. Competing actors (for example federal politicians, business associations, activists, local politicians, or the potential victims of racial discrimination attempt to realise their own interpretation of the social reality (for more, cf. Mecheril, 2018a). The actors have access to various forms and resources to do so. These resources are not necessarily used intentionally or according to a plan as the actors try to assert their own interpretation of social reality. One constituting element of migration regimes is social disputes, which have also been called migration disputes (Bojadžijev et al. 2001). These disputes take place not only as organised protests but also as “invisible” practises of border-crossings, of appropriation or the breaking of rules (Ataç et al., 2015). Migrants are “not dead bodies that are mobilised by the objective dynamics of capitalism” (Mezzadra 2010, without page number). Rather, with their many activities, they participate in the ongoing transformation of social relations. By doing so, even though this is not necessarily and not always explicitly accompanied by political intentions or programmes, they are a part of the political shaping and transformation of social relations.

In this context, the proclamation of a crisis is of particular importance to convince others that one’s own interpretation of the social reality is valid and true. The various actors develop diverging interpretations of crises. They orchestrate them accordingly, and utilise them in the fight for the most convincing interpretation of the social reality and the conflicts unfolding in society. To be perceived as a crisis by the public, crises must be communicated as such and made credible.

Diagnosis of crises give rise to practical effects when they are considered plausible. In this case crises affect the practical shaping of social order. Key moments in creating and restoring political order are regulatory requirements that seem to be inevitable following the crisis diagnosis. This is the case because specific regulatory principles can be the consequence of recognised crisis diagnoses. By specifying needs for regulation and the possibilities for creating these regulations, diagnoses of crises in societies shaped by migration continue to offer different subject positions and can therefore be investigated to offer different subject positions with regard to subjectivating consequences. In particular, the subjectivating effect of crisis diagnoses lead to the definition and framing of people as specific kinds of subjects. They are e.g. considered as affected by the crisis or as the cause of the crisis, as either belonging or not belonging, as either valuable or not valuable, as migrants whose status of belonging is precarious – granted with conditions in a certain sense – or as non-migrants, whose natio-racial-cultural membership is neither formally nor informally in question (cf. Mecheril 2003; Mecheril 2018b). Migration regimes therefore do not only regulate the options of *migrants* for acting and thinking, but are also constitutive for the definition of who is perceived as migrant and thus for the societal conditions as such. Once a certain description of a crisis has become accepted, possible solutions to the crisis are discussed and then implemented if they can be legitimised (for more details, Mecheril, 2018a). It is often the case that not just one dominant description of a crisis is accepted in a certain political space. Instead, various descriptions of the crisis compete and in consequence, differing and often contradictory forms of regulation arise. Accordingly, the reference to the migration regimes offers an analytical perspective for understanding the social struggles taking place on the field of migration – and their dynamics and ambivalences. Here, a connection exists between the concept of the migration regime and the thesis of autonomy of migration (Boutang 2000), which is influenced by the considerations of workerism. This political movement and theoretical school, also known as *Autonomia Operaia* or workers' autonomy, was particularly strong in Italy in the 1960s. In this movement, autonomy is understood not as an individualistic form of independence (as is repeatedly, and falsely, attributed to the concept of the autonomy of migration), but is instead considered to be the collective “blocked out ability of living workers to escape the structures of (re-)production” (cf. Hess/Karakayalı 2017: 31). According to this, the development of the capitalist method of production was not the consequence of technological developments, but instead the outcome of labour disputes in which workers fought against their role in the production process, especially in factories, either offensively (strikes) or in daily practices (sabotage, calling in sick, go-slows) (Alquati, 1974; Lazzarato et al., 1998). Workerism thus analyses capitalism with the focus on resisting it. When adapted to migration, this implies the importance of

focussing on the regulation and on understanding it as the product of complex negotiations among unequal actors.

Current, contradictory orchestrations of crises

In Germany, as in the rest of Europe, we can currently observe differing, publicly important descriptions of crises that are competing against one another. One of these crisis diagnoses focuses on integration. Discursive, political and physical disputes about the boundaries of natio-racial-culturally coded affiliations are carried out in ways characteristic of postimmigration societies. One example: In the second half of the 20th century in the Federal Republic of Germany and in the German Democratic Republic, migrant strategies overcame restrictions in daily life primarily via practices of social self-inclusion and via subversive practices in relation to acquire a sense of belonging. At the same time, a decades-long political, cultural and daily battle took place to recognise the life of immigrants as a respected part of social reality (Bojadžijev 2010; Karakayalı 2008).

Around the beginning of the millennium, at least rhetorically, immigration was recognised as fact in Germany (cf. Bade/Oltmer 2004). Germany's history shows that for a long time, first a nationalist and then republican understanding was predominant both in the treatment of so-called minorities and when dealing with the question of what it meant to "be German". This understanding, and the structure of belonging based on this understanding, was challenged by actors who were neither migrants nor addressed as migrants, but nevertheless supported the concept of a plural society.

These actors contributed to the evolvment of more fluid structures of belonging – and the blurring of its boundaries. The more intensely contested the natio-racial-culturally coded structure of belonging is, the more important are the orchestrations of crises which we understand as engagements in the battle for the legitimate interpretation of the present. The dominant crisis orchestration from the beginning of the 21st century was constructing migration as a problem of integration. Significantly, this happened just after the reality of migration was recognised by German society. And the assertion of the necessity of integrating the nationally, ethnical-racially and culturally marked Other – instead of focussing on, for example, the prominence of racism in the context of a nation-state that still holds on to a national concept of belonging, even after the Holocaust –, was accompanied – and still is accompanied – by one-sided regulatory requirements, demanding that only those who are labelled as migrants has to make efforts to adapt. Following these requirements, 'migrants' can 'refuse' or 'miss their chance' to adapt, and their efforts can hence be 'unsuccessful' or even 'fail'. Relevant subject positions included in the crisis diagnosis 'integration' can thus be found not

only in the position of the 'person willing to integrate' or the 'person who refuses to integrate', but also in the unquestionably integrated position of the 'authentic German'. The continual demand for integration is regulated by sanctions, for example by penalties under residency law, or penalties that are symbolic and economic. And it, also functions by producing charismatic (unquestionably integrated) and subordinate (potentially non-integrated) subjects (Mecheril 2011). In the context of the refugee migration in recent years, this particular orchestration of crisis has become even more prevalent: scenarios of over-foreignisation and, in particular, the image of the Muslim immigrant in urgent need of disciplination, have been and continue to be created in public discourse (e.g. Karakaşoğlu/Klinkhammer 2016). These scenarios use historically well-known figures (cf. e.g. Attia 2009) of a *religious Othering* (Mecheril/Olalde 2011) and link them to the present day.

Another current crisis orchestration has set its sights on the *overburdening* (of municipalities, states, the nation state, or Europe) that can only be solved by isolationist politics, closing borders and a *policy of turning people away*, which results in two important subject positions: *embodied subjects* (whose sensitivity and vulnerability is talked about as fear and anger, for example; cf. Mecheril/van der Haagen Wulff 2018) and objectified *corporeal beings* who become a threat as a mass. At the same time, however, yet another crisis orchestration has become extremely influential: the diagnoses of an emergency *need for human capital*, including a potential future human capital emergency. This requires *selective immigration* and offers subject positions that can be placed along a spectrum between (*permanent*) *uselessness* and (*temporary*) *usefulness*.

These crisis descriptions, which are given by way of example here and sometimes/often compete against each other, and the subject positions produced therein, lead to highly contradictory regulations. Whereas the aforementioned regulatory moment 'discipline' was predominant for years, the increased refugee-immigration in 2015/2016 and the crisis orchestrations developed in that context have strengthened the regulatory principle of selection in particular: overburdening and a simultaneous human capital emergency come together in rejecting inner-European migration from the Western Balkan states and an increased recognition rate for refugees from Syria. Additionally, also the competition between the crisis orchestration of a humanitarian emergency on the one hand and the crisis orchestration of overburdening on the other leads to contradictory regulations, e.g. when local authorities financially support volunteers supporting refugees, while at the same time deporting refugees to Afghanistan, or when a moratorium is being put on deportations to Greece in 2014 but not to Afghanistan in 2017.

Closing remarks

Migration regimes represent a heterogeneous ensemble of regulatory practices of natio-racial-culturally coded structures of belonging that are preceded by the assumption of certain crises, which then lead to regulatory solutions that are viewed as being plausible and legitimate according to the assumed crisis.

Migration regimes arise when various actors compete for the recognition of their respective crisis orchestration. This competition ends, at least temporarily, when certain specific subject positions are opened up and the probability of certain regulatory needs increases significantly compared to the probability of others. In the end, the regulations that most convincingly correspond to the dominant crisis orchestration are implemented. As we have described in this chapter, the concept of the migration regime allows us to analyse current relationships in postimmigration societies as contested, antagonistic realities characterised by complex constellations of actors at various social levels. Tendencies of pluralisation and polarisation, unfolding on an interactive-everyday, cultural-discursive and political-institutional level, can thus be understood as expression of a conflictual struggle between different crisis orchestrations. In this chapter, we have therefore suggested and argued for making the conflict between those different crisis orchestrations the key focus for the analysis of the social reality in postimmigration societies, not ideas of social development that could proceed linearly or circularly, but in any case in ascertainable and possibly predictable ways.

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“The cultural capital of postmigrants is enormous”

Postmigration in theatre as label and lens

Lizzie Stewart

Postmigration: Label, lens, selling point?

The term ‘postmigrant theatre’ emerged from theatrical practice developed by a group of artists and cultural producers in Berlin in the mid-2000s, who aimed to counter a lack of space in German theatre for nuanced narratives of Germany as a country of immigration and for theatre practitioners with a so-called “background of migration”.¹ As Kijan Espahangizi puts it, the terms ‘postmigrant’, ‘postmigration’ and ‘postmigratory’ are “not the newest invention of a cultural studies in which the production of new theories has run wild [...] It developed at the point at which this experiential reality, despite all the hurdles, began to step out of the shadows of the dominant cultural discourse and into its privileged institutions, i.e. the editorial rooms, artistic institutions and universities” (2016: unpagged).² The term stages within itself a nexus of competing, and often paradoxical, positions or social pressures: a proximity to, and difference from, discourses of postcolonialism;³ a tension between repeating and challenging a reductive and

1 The term “Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund” (“people with a background of migration”) is the official term used in demographic censuses carried out in Germany to refer to individuals who were not born with German citizenship or who have at least one parent who was not born with German citizenship (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* 2017). The definition used by the Office for Statistics altered in 2016. The new definition replaces that used in the 2011 census which encompassed all foreign residents of Germany, as well as those who themselves migrated, or who have at least one parent who migrated, *after* 1955 to the geographical area currently occupied by the Federal Republic of Germany (*ibid.*).

2 Note on translation: where existent translations from the German were available these have been used and are cited as such; where this was not possible all translations from German-language sources are my own.

3 The degree to which the power relations occasioned by large-scale post-war labour migration to Germany can be considered analogous to those in contexts where large-scale postwar migration took place from former colonies to the former imperial centres of France and Britain has of course

marginalising framing of those with personal or family histories of migration; a usage as normative descriptor versus transformative lens.⁴ Circulating beyond the theatrical sphere into broader public discourse, it has since been taken up as a term within the social sciences in Germany and in an interdisciplinary study in Denmark (cf. Schramm/Moslund/Petersen et al. 2019).⁵ Such work stresses an understanding of the term as a lens which can “release conventional migration research from the position of exception which it has occupied until now and establish it as societal analysis” (Yildiz 2014: 22). At the same time, it does seem to be the success of the term in the cultural field – referred to in one interview as the “the triumphal march of the term ‘postmigration’” (Foroutan 2017) – as much as its ethos, which has led to its adoption in the work of social scientists in Germany.

While the perspective identified in the theatrical field has been taken up in the social sciences (cf. Römhild 2015: 46, 2017: 73), the theatrical work itself has often been left behind. Yet ‘postmigrant theatre’, as an experimental artistic practice concerned with roles, bodies, and as an organisational process in itself, has a lot to offer the social sciences as a practice of knowledge construction. Particularly notable in this regard is the ambivalence with which the term ‘postmigrant’ is regarded by theatre practitioners often associated with it. Despite the term’s enthusiastic adoption in the public sphere and the social sciences, in the theatrical sphere, the social actors (directors, artistic directors, actors, dramaturges, viewers, reviewers) who engage it might often be said to do so in a manner which displays a degree of distance: pointing to it, rather than identifying as it. The author and playwright Deniz Utlu, for example, “understands the postmigrant theatre as a kind of label under which political theatre is made by ‘theatre-practitioners of colour’” (Sharifi 2013: 104). This distance or ambivalence might seem surprising

been much debated (see, for example, Steyerl/Rodríguez 2003). Turkish migration to the FRG, for example, is not a direct result of Germany’s colonial past and Turkey itself was previously the centre of the Ottoman Empire. However, the role of Orientalism, a mode of thought arising out of French and British colonial encounters in the Middle East, in the perception of Turkish-German subjects and their cultural production has been the subject of much analysis (ibid.). The role of Turkish-German artists as “cultural brokers” and “native informants” analogous to postcolonial writers is frequently broached, for example, see Mani 2007: 35-36.

4 My points in these opening paragraphs draw on and extend the discussion of the term in Stewart 2017.

5 ‘Postmigration’ as a conceptual term is also simultaneously gaining currency within French Studies, but the usage there seems to be more influenced by usage of the term in studies by Elleke Boehmer (2005) and Ahmed Gamal (2013) of English-language postcolonial literature written in the British context, than by developments in Germany. The introduction to Kathryn Kleppinger and Laura Reeck’s edited volume *Post-Migratory Cultures in Postcolonial France*, for example, highlights the influence of Boehmer and Gamal (2018: 8), but makes no mention of the popular take-up of the term in Germany. For a comparative discussion of German and French-language literature “of postmigration”, see Geiser 2015.

given the effective work the term has done in terms of creating visibility for the theatrical productions and performances which sit behind it and in terms of the funding, commissioning and organisational practices that create space for those productions. However, writing on the branding of writers of Arabic origin in the French publishing industry as “beur” authors, Kathryn Kleppinger highlights the potential inherent in branding in racialised contexts to increase visibility in ways which enable these authors’ success, but also to label such authors in a restrictive manner which enacts a kind of symbolic violence: to become a kind of “indelible mark” (2015: 16). Similarly, the ambivalence shown towards the term ‘postmigrant theatre’ by some of the very practitioners associated with it indicates a need for care in valorising the term whether as lens or as label, particularly as the term’s usage moves into circulation in the academic context.

In this chapter then, my aim is to take one step back from the more celebratory – and certainly compelling and productive – discussion of the term as lens and return to the term also as label. In doing so I draw on the explicit analogies to postcolonialism present in the term’s construction by making use of insights from anglophone and francophone postcolonial studies which take a critical perspective on the ‘brand value’ of postcolonialism. Following earlier critiques by figures such as Arif Dirlik (1994), these studies have positioned postcolonialism as an “index of resistance, a perceived imperative to rewrite the social text of continuing imperial dominance” (Huggan 2001: ix), but highlighted that the term also “functions as a sales-tag in the context of today’s globalised commodity culture” (ibid.). As Raphael Dalleo puts it, on one hand, having established itself successfully, during the late 1990s–2000s postcolonial studies “was [...] characterized by anxiety about the field’s institutionalisation and the extent to which the proliferation of postcolonial studies programs, courses, university positions and anthologies undermines the field’s self-conception of marginality and critique” (2016: 4). On the other hand, work which addressed that anxiety, such as Graham Huggan’s influential *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), was able to “engage with commodification and institutionalisation not only as processes contaminating intellectuals’ political purity, but as an enabling condition for any potentially oppositional political project constructed within the context of capitalism” (Dalleo 2016: 5).

This work, continued by scholars such as Richard Watts (2005), Sarah Brouillette (2007), Sandra Ponzanesi (2014), Caroline Koegler (2018) and Madhu Krishnan (2019), to name just a few (cf. Dalleo 2016: 7), has led to insights with regard to the material ways in which labelling, branding and marketing both shape and enable the reception of cultural products which offer a non-normative perspective on questions of nationhood, empire, race, ethnicity, history, and identification. As such these scholars “have also popularised terms such as marketing, branding, the market, or market forces – terms that have their roots in business studies – which suggests a significant extension of postcolonial studies’ materialist

framework” (Koegler 2018: 1). Discussing the French context, Kathryn Kleppinger, for example, suggests via a detailed examination of the media framing of authorship that “authors of North African heritage have likely received more attention from scholars and journalists due to the ‘beur’ label’s marketing appeal. Their stories of growing up within France’s largest immigrant population have created a recognizable and newsworthy brand, one that touches upon questions regarding French identity in the contemporary era.” (2015: 16). In this chapter I suggest transferring this attention to the framing of cultural production to discussions of ‘postmigration’, but at the same time I suggest ways of deepening this approach by bringing in reference to recent work by Anamik Saha (2018) on cultural industries in the UK context. Saha compellingly explores what he terms “the rationalizing/ racializing logic of capital” in those industries, i.e. the ways in which seemingly neutral processes of rationalisation in the cultural industries can have racialising outcomes. If there is an interest in establishing postmigration as a lens for “social analysis” (Yildiz 2014: 22), here I want to suggest that returning to the ‘postmigrant’ in ‘postmigrant theatre’ as a label in the context of branding highlights the importance of retaining attention to the workings of capital in the analysis carried out under this name.

Branding and the Ballhaus

The term ‘postmigrant theatre’ first gained currency in Germany through its usage in two festivals curated by Shermin Langhoff; the “Beyond Belonging Festivals” which ran at the HAU theatre, Berlin, in 2006 and 2007. These festivals were supported by a network, kulturSPRÜNGE e.V., which had been founded by Shermin Langhoff, Tuncay Kulaoğlu, and Martina Priessner in 2003 with the intention of “supporting and making visible the artistic and cultural achievements of migrants and postmigrants, as well as initiating an exchange and dialogue between artists, political activists and academics about the topics of migration and urban culture” (Kultursprünge e.V. 2003).⁶ The success of these festivals enabled the opening of the Ballhaus Naunynstraße, a small-scale space in Berlin Kreuzberg, which was established as a longer-term home for the theatrical work trialled in Beyond Belonging. Langhoff herself then famously took up the role of artistic director of the Maxim Gorki theatre, Berlin, in 2013, while Kulaoğlu who had led the dramaturgical department of the Ballhaus in its initial years, stepped into the role of artistic director there from 2012-2014, a position he shared with the current artistic director, Wagner Carvalho.

⁶ Translation as provided on the website.

Langhoff, Kulaoglu, and the team around them at the Ballhaus were hardly unaware of the ways in which capital circulates in the theatrical and broader cultural sphere. Indeed, it is their canny navigation and steering of that capital (both financial and symbolic) which did so much to put the Ballhaus and the postmigrant theatre practiced there on the map. In an interview in 2010, Kulaoglu, who has been co-artistic director, curator, and dramaturge at the Ballhaus, made reference to this brand value, when he stated, “the cultural capital of postmigrants is enormous” (Kulaoglu 2010: 159). In such comments we see the way in which a perceived ‘lack of culture’ projected on to migrants to Germany, and their children, through their association with the so-called ‘undereducated classes’⁷ is transformed into a perception of an abundance of culture and creativity. The specific reference to Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital here draws attention to “a form of capital that is at first glance non-monetary but produces [...] structures, practices of exchange, and forms of valuation that are analogous to those produced in the economy” (Koegler 2018: 17; summarizing Bourdieu). For Bourdieu,

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state [..., e.g.] in the case of educational qualifications [...]. Because the social conditions of its transmission and acquisition are more disguised than those of economic capital, it is predisposed to function as symbolic capital, i.e., to be unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence [...].” (Bourdieu 2004 [1983]: 17-18)

A lack of recognition of competence can be traced in the reception of earlier work by Turkish or Turkish-German theatre practitioners in the Federal Republic of Germany (cf. Boran 2004), and in conversations I have had with more established directors a ‘lack’ of theatrical culture in, for example, Turkey is something I have heard often erroneously referenced in explaining why they had not engaged with work for audiences or by artistic practitioners with a so-called “background of migration”. The concept of cultural capital also makes its way into other interviews with the Ballhaus’ core team, for instance in an interview with Barbara Kastner from the dramaturgical department: “The ambition is to give migrant artists from the second and third generation a form, to enable new stories from new perspectives. The Ballhaus thus draws on a cultural capital which has hardly been used in the theatre landscape” (Langhoff/Kulaoglu/Kastner 2011: 399). Such strategic positioning by key figures within the Ballhaus’ dramaturgical team and leader-

7 ‘Bildungsferne Schichten’ is the term often used in Germany.

ship thus works to counter assumptions that have previously governed the lack of engagement with migration and migrantised audiences and artists on the part of the German theatrical establishment. In turn it highlights the importance for scholars following the work of postmigrant theatre of carefully considering systems of “exchange as shaped by materialisation beyond the (strictly) material, i.e. (symbolic) currency flows, valorisation and devalorisation, strategic niche-claiming, and identity performances; by commodification, marketing, branding, and consumption practices” (Koepler 2018: 11). Indeed, the navigation of such systems of exchange can be seen as integral to the politics of the artistic work under consideration, while the critical reception and documentation of this theatrical work itself forms a part of these systems.

In engaging with what one Berlin official has separately described as “a paradigm shift from a ‘deficit’ to a ‘resource’ perspective on cultural diversity” (in Bodirsky 2012: 460), Kulaoglu’s phrasing within the quotation above also seems to carry echoes of the ideas of Richard Florida (2003) and of Phil Wood and Charles Landry (2008), whose work on cities and the creative class has helped created an association between spaces characterised by ethnic diversity and creative industries. Termed ‘culture for competitiveness’, this association has in turn informed policy in cities including Berlin. The logic can be summarised as follows:

[T]oday’s global economy is increasingly knowledge-based and innovation is more and more central to competitiveness. Thus, competitiveness relies on appropriately skilled ‘human capital’ that can contribute creatively to innovation. Successful economies have to form and attract such creative workers, and because culture – the arts, human development, and ways of life – is central to their creativity and lifestyle, policy-makers need to foster it. This includes support for creative and cultural industries, openness to immigration (of the right kind), and diversity-sensitive integration of migrants. As the argument goes, using culture for competitiveness in this way will lead to economic growth and consequently to more jobs. This ‘culture for competitiveness’ approach (CfC in the following) has been popularized in particular as strategy for the economic development of cities afflicted by deindustrialization and social polarization. (Bodirsky 2012: 456)

As Bodirsky highlights, “Berlin partakes in the CfC approach in treating creative industries and the arts as well as migrant diversity as a resource for innovation and economic competitiveness” (ibid.: 461). Florida’s work usually positions the two separately, with ethnic diversity forming a desirable background for creatives, rather than looking at race and ethnicity within the creative class. Kulaoglu here, however, highlights the symbolic and economic potential of acknowledging the creativity and wealth of cultural references at the disposal of creative practi-

tioners with ‘a background of migration’ (to use the unhappy terminology of the German state).

In the language of branding, claims such as Kulaoglu’s ‘add value’ to the artistic product: association with the label of postmigrant theatre thus raises the symbolic value of the work in question. To turn to Saha briefly:

Marketing in the cultural industries [...] entails turning cultural commodities / producers into brands, constructing their identity and promoting them as such. They are brands in the sense that extra values and qualities are associated with them – a guarantee of worth, which deems a brand to be superior or at least equal to other brands (often based around fantasies of upward mobility and increased status). (2018: 131-32)

This is something Kulaoglu has reflected on elsewhere, for example in his consideration of the much-vaunted late 90’s claim that “the new German film is Turkish” (1999). This claim linked the new generation of emerging Turkish-German film makers with the auteurship of the New German Cinema of Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Wim Wenders (Berghahn 2006: 141), allowing the symbolic capital of one to rub off on the other.⁸ In turn, the most prominent member of this new generation, Fatih Akın, lent his celebrity power, or to use the language of Bourdieu, symbolic capital to Dogland, the opening festival of the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theatre in 2008, appearing in press images with Shermin Langhoff at the opening (Ballhaus Naunynstraße 2008).⁹ Considering the artistic work developed at the Ballhaus from 2006 onwards in relation to the role of branding in the cultural industries helps bring into focus the politics and creativity of the work which sits behind and frames the theatrical performances we tend to focus our analysis on.

Equally, Shermin Langhoff’s 2018 nomination for a prize in the awards for European Cultural Branding (13. Europäischen Kulturmarken-Awards) as cultural manager of the year reminds us that her work as artistic director, creating an identity and narrative for the theatre she leads, is also a form of work in the field of branding and marketing. There is, then, an interesting intersection between the activist and commercial arts of persuasion here, one which is however to be understood as symptomatic of, rather than at odds with, the challenge of trying to create anti-hegemonic artistic work; indeed, this is an intersection which approaches from cultural studies can help us understand. As Cayla and Arnould

8 Symbolic capital being “a form of recognition and prestige that can be variously constituted (e.g. through cultural capital or social capital), and accumulated, reduced, and traded in exchange for (other forms of) symbolic and/or monetary capital” (Koegler 2018: 17, summarizing Bourdieu 2004 [1983]).

9 Image on the following webpage: <https://p106499.typo3server.info/index.php?id=21&evt=13>.

highlight: “To talk of brands as cultural forms is to acknowledge that branding is a specific form of communication, which tells stories in the context of products and services, addresses people as consumers, and promises to fulfil unmet desires and needs. In other words, branding is a specific symbolic form, a particular way of talking about and seeing the world” (2008: 88–89). Similarly, Koegler stresses that “any form of enthusiastic promotion of particular ideas, theories, or aspects of the self is interwoven with symbolic valuation processes” (2018: 9).

I find this particularly important to highlight as it speaks to the way in which postmigrant theatre at the Ballhaus, and its iterations beyond that particular theatre, can become caught up in the recognition of postmigrant audiences as both excluded taxpayers (see, for example, Temiz 2013), but also potential consumers needed to support a cultural industry often perceived to be in crisis or decline. In the UK context, Saha suggests that, “[t]he politics of recognition – that is, the demand of minorities to be recognised – has been reframed as a commercial imperative (rather than as an ethical/moral one) where particular demographic groups become “recognized” as market niches” (2018: 89). This is certainly something I would suggest we see in the emergence of postmigrant theatre in the context of a tension between concerns of market and governability, and rights-based inclusion.¹⁰ I highlight this not to in any way downplay or disparage the work of the Ballhaus but rather because I think it is illuminating to explore the institutional structures and ideological landscape this important work has to navigate.

Certainly, branding provides an interesting lens through which to view the interaction between the core team at the Ballhaus and the loosely-structured network of artists surrounding it. We see significant consistency of the presentation of a wide range of very different artists’ work in advertising materials at the Ballhaus under Shermin Langhoff and Tunçay Kulaoğlu via the use of Esra Rotthoff’s photographic arrangements from 2011 onwards. Rotthoff’s work was featured, for example, in the promotion of the “Almanci” festival (2011), the “Voicing Resistance” festival (2012) and “§ 301 – Die beleidigte Nation” (Article 301: The Insulted Nation, 2012). When Langhoff left the Ballhaus in 2013 to take up the position of artistic director at the higher profile Maxim Gorki theatre in the centre of Berlin, this relationship with Rotthoff was then continued at the Gorki.

Describing her involvement with the initial visual identity of the Gorki, Rotthoff’s website details the following:

Esra collaborated with the core Gorki team on developing all the visual aspects of the theatre. She started with the theatre’s logo, flipping the R of GORKI backwards – which in Russian is the letter ya [Я] – meaning I/me. This idea of the actors’ personal identities runs as a leitmotif through all of the Gorki’s stagings, as a mirror

¹⁰ This is the subject of discussion in Stewart 2018.

of the contemporary Berlin. Esra photographed and recorded every actor who graced the Gorki stage, as if in a precise biometric image. If you look closely, you see her leitmotif of the flipped R reflected in each actor's eyes – the result of being lit by a flash with a stencilled “ya” in it, imprinting their gaze with a notion of their own identity. (Rotthoff, n.d.)

While the “Я” or “I” at the centre of the eyes is positioned by Rotthoff as a reference to individuality and humanity, the branding of each individual's gaze with the institution's new logo also reminds us of the broader aim of such presentation: the establishment of a recognisable identity for the theatre house under its new artistic directors and for the theatre to be produced there. Looking more broadly at the rebranding of the Gorki under Langhoff, the use of the Russian letter within the new logo defamiliarises the now-familiar name of the theatre for Berlin audiences and so draws attention to an aspect of transnationalism long present within the history of the German theatrical establishment: it is, after all, the Soviet post-war occupation of East Germany and East Berlin and the subsequent establishment of the GDR which led a theatre which is today located in the centre of the capital city of a united Germany to be named after the Russian playwright, Maxim Gorki.¹¹ The postmigrant theatre practice already established under Langhoff at the Ballhaus is thus positioned both as in the tradition of, and as a new direction in, transnational flows of political theatre.¹² The biometric i.e. passport style imagery is also of interest here, however, referencing as it does a focus on demands for uniformity and the use of an undifferentiating gaze as means of governance of bodies which cross borders. The potential violence of such framing sits in ironic tension with the vulnerability of each actor's naked shoulders.

It is not only the marketing of the work produced at the Ballhaus which helped create a distinctive identity for the theatre. Continuation of dramaturgical techniques between plays written, developed and directed by a range of authors and directors at the Ballhaus can also be seen. As discussed in detail elsewhere, one

11 Although the ‘r’ becomes a different letter of the alphabet in Russian, so the result is not the creation of a translingual pun here. In the title of the Gorki's associated Studio Я, in contrast, the Russian word for ‘I’ combines phonologically with the German word for ‘yes’ (ja) creating a bilingual affirmation of the identity work within the German theatrical establishment that this studio allows, and perhaps signalling more visibly engagement with the experience of artists who have immigrated, or whose parents had immigrated, from the former USSR and former Yugoslavia.

12 For a close reading of the ways in which the programming and casting of plays such as Gorki's *Children of the Sun* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, combined with the dramaturgy of the theatre's marketing to make the new direction of the theatre “legible”, see Simke 2017: 110–160. Simke also discusses Rotthoff's photography there as part of a broader and very detailed discussion of the posters and advertising materials used in the opening season.

example of this is the experimentation with striptease across plays performed under the label of postmigrant theatre from 2006 onwards. Early examples include *Schwarze Jungfrauen* (Black Virgins, 2006), developed for the early festivals which preceded the Ballhaus' establishment, where a false striptease down to flesh-coloured bodysuits and bald wigs thematised the issue of potential audience voyeurism within the staging of a play which took Islam and sexuality as its theme. In later examples such as *Lo bal Almanya* (2011) striptease is used as part of an extended parody of a particular political figure, Necla Kelek, or, as in *Verrücktes Blut* (Crazy Blood) as part of a critical exploration of the relationship between the racialised and islamified body and the demands of the German state.¹³ This particular technique engages a common tendency toward nudity in Germany's experimental "postdramatic" theatrical scene, signalling the theatre as aesthetically aligned with the provocative, anti-establishment stance such work still affects. However, it also distinctly combines this with attention to the disciplinary and racialising dimensions of such tendencies, giving an established anti-establishment practice new and much-needed political bite. The movement of productions such as *Schwarze Jungfrauen* and *Verrücktes Blut* to the Gorki means that this aesthetic and the "brand" of political theatre-making initially developed at the Ballhaus has continued there, while further consistencies have grown up between productions within the Gorki and its associated Studio Я (on dramaturgy at the Gorki, see Simke 2017: 149-160).

Postmigrant theatre and the "right to imagine"

Of course, artistic ownership in theatrical production is always diffuse. However, this is particularly interesting with respect to Anamik Saha's suggestion in his exploration of the cultural industries and race that "authorship under capitalism is increasingly shaped by industry practices [...] In other words industry practice takes on an authorial authority in itself" (2018: 115). This leads him to argue for an extended focus on "unpack[ing] the industrial processes, including the behaviours and actions of those who operate within them, that determine the production of representations" (ibid.). Such unpacking is certainly of interest with respect to what Mark Terkessidis calls the "entanglement of 'documentary and migration' in the theatrical sphere" in Germany (2010: 7). Here I want to draw on Saha's theoretical insights to take an analysis of this entanglement further.

Drawing on Murali Balaji's work on Black and Asian cultural production in the music industry in an anglophone context, within his broader discussion, Saha

13 This is discussed in detail in Stewart 2017. On striptease in *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, see also Sieg 2010.

points to the use of ‘formatting’ i.e. “creating a cultural text according to a production format or formula” (2018: 131-132) or “producing an original to type” (ibid.: 131) as a means of navigating the tension between the need for innovation and low risk investment in the cultural product. Such formatting ensures the cultural product both meets audience demand and is reproducible in relation to further demand for similar material (Balaji 2009; Saha 2018: 131): “On the first level, it helps to guide creative intermediaries in commodifying an artist in a way that is consistent with consumer expectations. [...] On a higher level, however, formatting is a ‘safe’ way for corporations to (re)produce commodities with little risk and the potential for high reward” (Balaji 2009).¹⁴ Both Balaji (2009) and Saha (2018) locate such formatting primarily in the sphere of corporate cultural production. However, it is also reminiscent of the vast growth in postmigrant documentary theatre we have seen in Germany over the past ten to 15 years, and what I would see as the associated continuation of the documentary format in engagements with newer migrants to Germany.¹⁵ This development marks a stark change to a previous reluctance to stage stories of migration by, with, or about postmigrant artists: and we can perhaps see the attraction of a reliable format for theatres trying to either sell postmigrant theatre to established audiences or use it to open themselves to new audiences.¹⁶

A result of such formatting practices though is that “the right to imagine [...] is structurally relocated and authorized as the (cultural) task of the general management” (Ryan 1992: 168; quoted in Saha 2018: 131). Such a ‘right to imagine’ is

14 Both Balaji (2009) and Saha (2018) here draw on earlier work on formatting by Ryan (1992) which, however, “does not account for how race and gender influence production formats” (Balaji 2009: 229).

15 Saha notes that scholarship on cultural and creative industries focuses on cultural production in a context where a shift has taken place from systems of patronage to a corporate era (2018: 130). The German theatrical system might be said to function somewhere between patronage and corporate systems, given the high level of state subsidy in many theatrical institutions including those under consideration in this chapter (see Weiler 2014 for a detailed explanation of the German theatrical system). It is also not industrialised to the same extent as the music or film industries insofar as the product itself (the play) does not generally circulate via mechanical reproduction (exceptions to this include occasional DVD recordings and streaming events). However, both in accessing additional funding and in promoting productions to local, national and critical audiences, theatres in Germany do engage in what Saha calls the “employment of rationalizing techniques” typical of other cultural industries, “encompassing bureaucratization, formatting, packaging and marketing” (2018: 130). Thus, Saha also brings in reference to his work on Rasa Productions, a British South Asian theatre company, in making his argument (ibid.: 136).

16 An obvious example of such formatting would be Rimini Protokoll’s work which falls somewhere between these two models. Garde and Mumford discuss plays such as Rimini Protokoll’s 100% City plays as touring formats (2016: 112), but do not link this to scholarship on formatting in other cultural industries.

traditionally more dispersed in theatre, and within the German theatrical establishment often an integral part of the role of artistic director. Indeed, such ‘formatting’ and the assumption of the ‘right to imagine’ by figures such as Langhoff and Kulaoğlu had a useful, that is to say, enabling role to play in the early and specific context of the initial festivals where the term ‘postmigrant theatre’ was used: the Beyond Belonging festivals held at the HAU theatre, Berlin, in 2006 and 2007, and at the Ballhaus. Here Langhoff and Kulaoğlu actively drew on production techniques they were familiar with from the film world, and the emphasis was on creating a structure which would allow artists based primarily in the other arts, such as literature or film, to enter the theatrical sphere (Langhoff/Kulaoğlu/Kastner 2011: 400). The classic example of this practice is now the piece which was the first big success to come from Langhoff and Kulaoğlu’s postmigrant theatre: Feridun Zaimoglu and Günter Senkel’s *Schwarze Jungfrauen* (2006), a semi-documentary play based on interviews with young Muslim women living in Germany, and directed in the premiere production by Neco Çelik. Here such formatting perhaps has more the character of practice as research and provided an enabling framework for bringing artists with an established literary or filmic practice into the theatre, thus redressing the lack of recognised training and associated cultural capital which had previously been a factor in restricting access (on access, see Nobrega 2013).

Arguably, however, such formatting can become restrictive when it becomes a format particular artists and themes cannot escape, or when the practice informing its usage changes. In the following section I turn to the example of *Schattenstimmen* (Shadow Voices) a play commissioned in the documentary vein in 2008 from Feridun Zaimoglu and Günter Senkel. *Schattenstimmen* was commissioned and premiered as part of Karin Beier’s much-publicised project at Schauspiel Köln to reflect “the social reality” of Cologne as a city in which one in three people are considered “people with a background of migration”. Accordingly, Beier recruited new members for the Cologne ensemble so that 30 per cent of the actors themselves had a “background of migration” (in Sharifi 2011: 100) and commissioned a new set of plays from directors and playwrights such as Zaimoglu, who is of Turkish origin. While the commission of *Schattenstimmen* seemed like an attempt to emulate the success of *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, the resultant text is generally considered significantly weaker by reviewers (see, for example, Granzin 2008; Keim 2011) – aesthetically, politically, and both as text and as performance.¹⁷

17 It was nevertheless also performed at the Ballhaus under the direction of Nurkan Erpulat in the same year as part of the Dogland festival.

Formatting engagement via documentary theatre

The commission of *Schattenstimmen* reflects not only the success and impact of earlier semi-documentary theatre at the Ballhaus; the structure of the piece also mirrors the structure of Zaimoglu and Senkel's first semi-documentary play-text, the aforementioned *Schwarze Jungfrauen*. *Schattenstimmen* consists of nine monologues based on interviews with undocumented immigrants to Germany and reworked in Zaimoglu and Senkel's own stylised idiom. The resultant play-text includes figures ranging from a homophobic and grossly generalised "African" male prostitute, a Russian widow who cares for the old ladies of a German village, a Moroccan kitchen porter who initially came to Germany to study and dreams of marrying a German woman, and a Ukrainian ex-au-pair who lives a party lifestyle in Berlin. They are joined by a migrant who longs to return to his life as an immigrant without papers in Rome (the "Roman"), an Eastern European high-end prostitute, a Kurdish honour-murderer who idealises the lives of other undocumented immigrants, an "African" drug dealer, and a vengeful Roma woman.

Generally considered a less successful piece than *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, in *Schattenstimmen* the highly sexualised and often racialised language of several of the characters is certainly noteworthy. The "Minus-Moroccan" of monologue two asserts his sense of self via his narrative of success and expertise in the "Dance Palace", for example:

'n Arab is no Arab, he's 'n enemy who every arse-cunt here wants a war with [...] As long as I can wash-up here, I don't give a toss about the rest of the shit, human relationships – I get those elsewhere.
To be exact, in the Dance Palace. [...] I come into the dance palace and know how the game goes. (Zaimoglu/Senkel 2008: 13-14)

The quotation above is typical of the outwardly defiant tone of the monologues and the language used by characters throughout *Schattenstimmen* to gain some power from within a disenfranchised position via the infliction of symbolic violence on other vulnerable groups. Arguably, the banality of the monologues and the prominence of racial slurs reflects an element of the 'reality' of the subjects which the monologues purport to depict. The arrangement of the monologue also creates a distinct suggestion that this can be seen as a response to the situation of exclusion in which the figure's racialised and illegal status leaves him. The use of hate speech in the texts is particularly unrelenting, though, even for Zaimoglu and Senkel's work, which often dances close to the line in this regard (cf. Schmidt 2008: 196-213; Günter 1999: 15-28). As one reviewer of the later Ballhaus production states, the dramatic text "challenges even the willing recipient" (Granzin 2008).

Indeed, even Zaimoglu himself appears to have had reservations about the commission, both in terms of the subject matter and the form involved. In a personal interview I conducted with him in 2012, he recounted:

It was immediately clear, from the theatre, that they wanted something documentary. And that is what we then suggested to them and they were really fired up with enthusiasm. And, I have to admit, in the meantime I had got to a point where I said “Oh God, not this again, not monologues again. Lord, can’t it go differently for once!” But [...] no, they wanted monologues.

Tom Cheesman and Karin Yeşilada have already noted that Zaimoglu’s unusual monologues “are a gift for performers in the currently dominant idiom of ‘shouty’ theatre [theatre of the In-Yer-Face or postdramatic school]”, but also that “calls upon him and Senkel to vary *Kanak Sprak* [his breakthrough literary work] for new occasions cannot be very productive for his development as a writer” (2012: 9-10). The desire on the part of the commissioning theatre for “something documentary” can also be situated within a broader tendency in the German theatrical establishment at that time towards documentary theatre as a form or format which provides access or insight to the ‘authentic experience’ of a group not otherwise ‘available’ to the mainstream theatre’s typically middle-class, white German audience. In such cases the documentary format seems no longer to function as a structure enabling a form of practice as research from within communities, but as, will be discussed in more detail below, a format more akin to the kind of reality television that brands some societal groups as the object of the sociological gaze of others. A sense of fatigue at the request for a repeat performance is certainly present in the statement above. Here Zaimoglu’s own success in working with semi-documentary monologue forms in other contexts, together with his position as a prominent artist within the initial postmigrant theatre festivals at the Ballhaus, seems to brand him in a way which restricts rather than enables his artistic development.

In *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, the relationship between the voice of the author and that of the ‘original’ women has been both praised – due to the shared religious affiliation of both parties – and problematised with regard to the lack of shared gender identity. In contrast, the relative lack of critical academic reception of *Schattenstimmen* means that the question of shared identity between ‘source’ voice and author remains largely uncommented on. This is particularly notable as this relationship is arguably yet more tenuous and politically and ethically fraught in *Schattenstimmen*. Zaimoglu and Senkel are themselves not undocumented immigrants; however, the label of “migrant” or “person with a background of migration” seems to be used to place Zaimoglu as a representative figure despite his own remonstrances against this and the difference in terms of citizenship between a German citizen such as himself and an undocumented immigrant in Eu-

rope. While questions of access and connection to the experience of the situation of undocumented immigrants may have affected the play, read generously, the ‘weakness’ of *Schattenstimmen* as a whole, compared to *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, may also register a certain resistance on Zaimoglu’s part to the commission and the role assigned to him through it. In an article which also briefly addresses *Schattenstimmen* in its production by Nurkan Erpulat at the Ballhaus, Katrin Sieg argues that: “[t]he documentary theater’s appeal to sociological notions of the real, coupled with the conflation of actor and character in some documentary performances, risks laminating social behaviour to a particular national psychology or even a racialized anatomy” (2011: 172-72). Here we also see the extent to which the documentary turn risks “laminating” particular aesthetic expectations onto post-migrant theatre practitioners, highlighting a highly constraining aspect of the documentary ‘formatting’.

Head dramaturge Rita Thiele has stressed that part of the intention of the commission was for the theatre to distance itself from “multicultural kitsch” and other potentially problematic approaches to the theme of migration which it had adopted for that season (2009: 14; Sharifi 2011: 99). This was reflected in the choice of commissions:

There is a very concrete search for plays such as the Zaimoglu we have in the programme or the Nuran Calis, [practitioners] who concern themselves with the situation of migrants very concretely in their plays. [...] But as I said, always understood not as a kind of conservation programme on our part, but rather as a contribution to our urban hybrid culture, which should be taken as being as self-evident as possible. (Ibid.)

While the theatre rejects the idea of a “conservation programme” and talks the talk of hybridity, it is interesting to note that both the Turkish-German dramatists Zaimoglu and Senkel and Nuran David Calis were commissioned to provide semi-documentary, rather than fictional, plays. The turn to documentary and semi-documentary theatre when it comes to themes of migration is often justified by directors as a response to the supposed lack of plays which tell migrant and postmigrant stories. As the commissioning of *Schattenstimmen* suggests, however, the theatre’s own expectations may also play a role in creating this self-perpetuating situation. Interesting parallels emerge here between the re-use of the documentary format, and even the same playwright, and “the role of formatting in cultural production” discussed by Balaji which “often puts the artist at odds with the corporation and creative management tasked with her commodification. The artist’s role in this process is often determined by the amount of leverage she has entering into her relationship with the cultural industries tasked with producing and distributing her as a commodity.” (2009: 227).

Saha highlights the ways in which in cultural industries in the UK such formatting also leads to significant investment in marketing which becomes even more necessary in order to sell similarly formatted products as distinct. Here in the German theatrical context, the more important implication seems to be the parallels which emerge with the function of formatting as “a form of creative control that is the corporate response to the uncertainties of the cultural marketplace” (2018: 131). Rather than taking place in a corporate environment, within a semi-funded but still market-orientated system such formatting appears to be the artistic direction’s means of controlling their own uncertainties, as well as the financial and aesthetic risks potentially associated with shifting the practice of a theatre in a postmigrant direction.

Postmigration in capitalist contexts

While Kulaoglu, Langhoff and the creative teams at the Ballhaus and Gorki have made strategic use of “brand acts [...] transferring symbolic and cultural capital” (Koegler 2018: 8) to artistic practitioners and practices otherwise positioned as lacking such capital, at Schauspiel Köln that transfer of cultural capital, at least in the example given here, appeared to run in the opposite direction: to improve the standing of the theatre and its leadership with regard to shifts in discourse around the relationship a state-funded theatre should have to its surrounding community, and a new funding climate. Balaji suggests that within the music industry formatting allows a corporation “to commodify an artist without much alteration to an established mould” (2009: 229). Similarly, within the German theatrical sphere, we may see the commission of documentary plays about migration as a “transferrable paradigm that corporations can use to replicate a commodity, thereby maximizing the corporation’s potential for profits without the need for innovation”, in this case allowing the theatre’s artistic direction “to maintain control without appearing to do so” (ibid.). Notably the failure to alter the higher and administrative levels of the organisation along with the ensemble was a key point of critique in Azadeh Sharifi’s analysis of Schauspiel Köln (2011: 102, 127-128, 205).¹⁸ Discussing the challenges she has to deal with as an artistic director, Shermine Langhoff has also drawn analogies to the music industry and alluded to the “typical laws of the market” in which “the big labels buy out the bands from the small labels” (in Widmann 2019). In the example above, we see the effects of such

18 Peter M. Boenisch also draws on Sharifi in a 2014 chapter, where Beier’s project at Schauspiel Köln is brought briefly into discussion alongside the work of the Ballhaus Naunynstraße to give a Žižekian analysis of the relationship between theatre and nation in contemporary Germany (Boenisch 2014: 148-52).

dynamics not only on the smaller theatres, but also on the artists involved, and on the politics and aesthetics of the formats developed under the label of 'postmigrant theatre' as they move into new commissioning and production contexts.

Again though, my intention in using the privilege of academic distance from the difficult work of cultural production in an institutional context is not to suggest a negative intentionality at work in the practices at Schauspiel Köln or to simply set up an easy opposition between 'good' documentary practice and 'bad' formatting. Rather it is to use these examples to explore the possibility that within the context of postmigrant theatre, it is partially "[t]hrough rationalized processes such as formatting, packaging and marketing [that] historical constructions of Otherness (in its racial and gendered forms in particular) are reproduced, despite the motivations of individual actors to do the opposite" (Saha 2018: 26). It is my contention that exploring how these issues are dealt within the theatrical sphere, in other words by front-line practitioners, highlights that postmigrant theatre as a practice has more to offer the social sciences than a new label and perspective which can be taken up while leaving those theatrical experiments behind. Exploring how theatrical practice produced under the postmigrant label or in the 'postmigrant society' deals with the tension between label and lens which this terminology induces, can provide a way into organisational analysis which centres migration, in line with the agenda set out by scholars such as Yildiz, Römhild, and Foroutan. It also draws attention to questions of the 'brand value' of postmigration in the theatrical and public sphere – and thus to the entanglement of this activism with production of culture in a capitalist context – in ways which provide important lessons for its developing usage in the academic sphere.

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A postmigrant contrapuntal reading of the refugee crisis and its discourse

'Foreigners out! Schlingensiefel's Container'

Marc Hill and Erol Yildiz

Introduction

When it comes to migration, the European Union is above all one thing, namely *not* united. Rather, predominant in the EU is a perspective that can be characterised as methodological nationalism. Refugees and especially asylum-seekers constitute one of the major points of contention between member states, and such persons are often represented in political debates and media reports as posing a threat to life in Europe. That was recently made clear *inter alia* in the controversy that erupted surrounding the signing of a symbolic UN document entitled “The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration” (United Nations/General Assembly 2018) – in the event not all member states could bring themselves to agree to the compact. Likewise, recurrent negotiations arise regarding the numbers of refugees that the individual host countries should accept, and whether maximal limits should be instituted for how many refugees can be accorded entry in a given country. Furthermore, reportage about refugees and asylum-seekers, in the main media make use of the semantics of crisis; the upshot is that terms such as ‘refugee crisis’ and ‘economic migrant’ have been virtually inscribed into the collective popular memory. Given that the EU has the avowed aim of a just, peaceful and mobile Europe, viewed from a postmigrant perspective, the sheer dominance of border and security issues in discourse on refugees and the criminalised representation of refugees have come to constitute a problem for society as a whole.

Upon closer examination of this problem, we must ask: what might transpire if a social-critical perspective on refugees and asylum-seekers were to take root, and the general public were to be confronted with a counter-hegemonial corpus of knowledge and analysis? What alternative disturbing elements, fractures in attitude and conception, what manner of postmigrant readings would then emerge? The postmigrant lens in this context means a kind of contrapuntal

way of thinking that would have a destabilising effect on established orders of knowledge and stimulate critical reflection. Such an epistemic approach directly interrogates conventional knowledge; it calls upon us to confront and re-examine everyday routinised practices. In the case of refugee flight and migration, it is a fact that countries in Europe are sealing themselves off from admitting refugees and migrants and that powerful deportation practices have become common and widespread. This article seeks to illumine this routine, reading it critically from a postmigrant vantage.¹

In the quest for illustrative examples – in a European, and specifically an Austrian context – of how the powerful production of knowledge on refugees, their flight and asylum can be robustly challenged, we take note of a striking art action in Vienna, the much-discussed ‘container action’ by the German film and theatre director, author and performance artist Christoph Schlingensiefel, staged during the Vienna Festival (Wiener Festwochen) in 2000.

Fig. 5.1: Still from Ausländer raus! Schlingensiefel's Container [Foreigners out! Schlingensiefel's Container]. Paul Poet, 2002.



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1 This chapter is a reworked version, incorporating the postmigrant perspective and translated into English, of a chapter “Europa in der Flüchtlingskrise? Schlingensiefel's Container kontrapunktisch betrachtet” in the collective volume: Wiebke Sievers/Rainer Bauböck/Christoph Reinprecht (eds.), *Flucht und Asyl - internationale und österreichische Perspektiven. Jahrbuch Migrationsforschung 5*, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2021, Open Access. Translated from the German by Anna Galt and William Templer.

In the art performance, Schlingensiefel confined twelve people in a container in front of the Vienna State Opera, where they assumed the role of refugees who had fled their home countries and were embroiled in a procedure of seeking asylum. They could be observed here both directly by passers-by as well as an international public via livestream. In addition, the Austrian public was called upon to evaluate the asylum-seekers and deselect individuals among them for deportation, doing so according to the 'Big Brother principle' via telephone voting. This also took place live and in full public view. Not only were the prospective asylants inside the container and the passers-by thus integrated into the staging, the action also incorporated the entire cultural industry bound up with the Vienna Festival, sundry associated journalists, newspaper moguls and media-makers, politicians and onlookers across the world. Outsiders had no way of knowing whether those inside the container were actual bona fide refugees or simply actors. The persons inside were indeed real asylum-seekers, employed in the staging to play prospective asylants. Some years later, Paul Poet, a film director involved in the container performance, explained in interview exactly how the art action had been organised:

Setting up the container took scarcely any time to prepare. By contrast, what was time-consuming was the effort to find and engage genuine asylum-seekers, who were then hired on to play real asylum-seekers. In so doing, the Vienna Festival was operating on the very margins of legality, since they had engaged persons who were living in Austria in a sense 'submerged', employing them so they could work in the container performance. Fictive biographies were constructed to conceal their real biographies, although naturally there were real life stories behind them. (Poet 2011, 461)

The Festival management even put up a sign explicitly stating that it was an art performance, i.e. a staging. Earlier on the performance had already caused huge outrage. The Austrian ambassador in France complained about the way in which the performance had been staged, since French businesspeople had interpreted it as something real rather than art. To mitigate the confusion, information leaflets in several languages were distributed. They stated: "This is a Wiener Festwochen art performance" (Lilienthal/Philipp 2000: 132).

The container performance thus drew its vital power from this blurring of boundaries between real life and art, between reality and fiction – a fact that was subsequently discussed in detail in the research literature. In her reconstruction of the events in Vienna, Catherina Gilles, a cultural studies scholar, noted for example: "What is true is what is probable, and sometimes art is more true than reality, because it shows what is true behind our self-constructed reality, even if we do not want to perceive it as true" (2009: 50). Schlingensiefel was consciously experimenting with this circumstance.

This article will also refer repeatedly at points to this blurring of boundaries sketched above. It will be discussed in connection with public discourse on refugee flight and asylum, and the associated aspects of knowledge production and systems of order. Relevant theoretical points of reference are contained inter alia in Michel Foucault's reflections on discourse and the network-like connections within power-knowledge complexes (Foucault 1980). Based on Foucault, for example, the theatre studies scholar Ann-Christin Focke has investigated the different positions the individual was accorded in the container project – what roles were occupied by the “refugees” and the “public”. In her Foucaultian analysis of the distribution of power in the performance, one of her conclusions is that the prospective asylants in the container appeared as a faceless collective, while the passers-by in the public repeatedly expressed a mindset operating with rigid ethnic stereotypes and national categories (2009: 38–40).

The article's first section examines the dominant discourse on refugees and asylum from a postmigrant perspective. The characterisation of this as a '*dispositif*' of asylum in the sense of Foucault's theory of power plays an important role here. In the second section, Schlingensiefel's art performance will be described in greater detail and interpreted as a rupture with this *dispositif* of asylum. Based on that, conclusions are drawn in particular for the further development of critical-reflective perspectives in research on migration and education.

The postmigrant perspective: A different type of reading

There are many different reasons why people leave their places of origin, seeking to secure their survival elsewhere. If nothing changes in the precarious living conditions in their countries of origin, becoming a refugee will continue to be a question of survival for many in the future. At the moment, political discussions in Europe centre mainly around possibilities for controlling the movement of refugees and border controls on one hand, and issues like participation, equality of opportunity and processes of empowerment on the other.

The current situation makes it clear that the European “fortress” mentality regarding immigration from non-European countries has left only very few routes open, and that the borders since the beginning of the new century have become ever tighter (Sassen 1996). Where options for immigrating in a regular way are in short supply, individuals harried and battered by war, persecution, hunger or poverty will endeavour to find new ways and strategies to migrate. Access to global mobility is one of the most important stratification factors of our current global society. In fact, a kind of global hierarchy of mobility exists (Bauman 1998).

At the same time, there is scarcely any discourse today that is so influenced by myths as the one on refugees. When people talk about refugees, they are often

portrayed as a homogenous mass and imagined as so-called 'economic migrants' who will flood our society. In this context, there are often undertones that mark them as criminals, "as if it were tantamount to a crime when someone leaves their home in order to survive" (Haslinger 2016: 22). This de-individualising, generalising and criminalising view obscures the fact that these are individuals: human beings who have left their places of origin for various different reasons and who bring with them a whole range of differing backgrounds and experiences. In Europe they seek safety and a chance to build a new life.

In order to be able to see these persons in contemporary "*Human Flow*" (Ai Weiwei 2017) more clearly, their diverse experiences of migration and the new opportunities they seek, a transformed way of seeing them is required. In the last few years, the need for shifting the phenomenon 'refugees' and 'migration' from the periphery to the centre and viewing it as a significant asset for social development has been addressed particularly in approaches termed 'postmigrant'.

The postmigrant perspective presents and highlights the *voice* of migration, just as the postcolonial lets us hear the voice of the colonised. It renders visible marginalised forms of knowledge, serves to help destabilise national myths, reveals new understandings of differences and generates a new awareness of history. It therefore sees itself as a political perspective that also includes subverting and ironic practices, and in its reversal, it has a provocative impact on hegemonial conditions.

The history of migration and its consequences are retold anew, and different images, practices of representation and different ideas of subjectivity – in short, a different understanding of society – are generated. In the process, entrenched established views and concepts of order are deconstructed. In this context, Homi Bhabha refers to an "innovative disruption of our current world" (1994: XI). Binary constructions such as modern/traditional, Western/non-Western, foreigner/native become increasingly questionable.

Similar to postcolonial discourse, the prefix 'post' in postmigrant does not just denote the state of coming 'after' in a chronological sense. Rather, it is about a fresh retelling and re-interpretation of the phenomenon of 'migration' and its consequences.

Unlike the nationalist perspective, a postmigrant perspective means breaking with the customary prevalent discourses of migration and integration and re-thinking the past. This rupture with the present, including a "conversion of one's gaze" (Bourdieu/Wacquant 1992: 251), means seeing and interpreting the world differently and formulating new ideas.

This way of looking has the potential to reveal new differences that make conventional conceptions of difference appear questionable. It represents a "radical revision of the social temporality" (Bhabha 1994: 246) and a "critical interruption into that whole grand historiographical narrative" (Hall 1996: 250).

The conventional discourse on migration describes migration stories as specific exceptional historical phenomena and makes a distinction between developments in the countries of origin and host countries, between indigenous local normality and immigrated problems. In this way, certain constructions such as 'dominant culture', 'integration' and 'foreign mentality' have become established and normalised.

However, today's global situation demands the radical questioning of the conventional view of migration and so-called Western values and opens up new perspectives on the world (Beck 2017). Those new global processes of opening up point to other local practices of positioning, facilitate new kinds of readings and require a different understanding of the world. It is precisely through migratory movements that new social constellations, traditions and creative life plans are created that do not fit in with and conform to common norms.

The public sphere and discourse

When one takes a look at current discourse, at reports, assessments and analyses of the situation of refugees and migrants in Austria and Germany, three patterns of interpretation are notable that channel public perception and both shape and reflect the prevailing mood:

First, the current situation is dramatised in an ahistorical fashion – it seems to appear as if our societies are being confronted with the issue of refugees for the first time and therefore are overstretched, largely unable to handle the influx (Althans et al. 2019: 7–9). But it is precisely Austria and Germany in particular which have already dealt with several 'refugee crises' in their recent history: after the Second World War, before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain and during the wars in former Yugoslavia. Yet the current discourse barely mentions these experiences, which – as history itself shows – did not lead by any means to the disintegration of the host society due to refugee influx, but rather should be evaluated as largely successful (Ette 2017).

Second, public controversies are often triggered with the help of sensationalist imagery. This also calls to mind the multitude of nature metaphors with which the movement of migrants and refugees is almost automatically described in postmigrant societies: 'currents', 'waves', 'floods', 'dam burst', 'deluge', 'influx', etc. These terms shape the perception of refugees in public discourse (Friese 2017). The focus is on scandalising and sensationalising refugees, human flows, their temporary camps, overcrowded boats and large halls where they are herded together. These one-sided images reinforce the impression that Europe must robustly protect itself from refugees in order to confront and tackle the 'crisis'. The welcoming attitude towards refugees – observable in large segments of the population in many

Western European countries, especially in September 2015 and the months thereafter – has now morphed, increasingly pervaded by security concerns. Within the media, there is a mounting tendency toward de-subjectification of refugees and asylum seekers: all we see is persons en masse – not individual human beings.

Third, in the meantime within the political discourse of the European Union, the distinction between “genuine” and “fake” refugees (Scherr 2017: 91) is often viewed as part of the solution. The term ‘economic migrants’ suggests an illegitimate desire for comfort and luxury. Over against that stands a distressing fact: the multitudes of persons who flee their countries do so because their lives and safety are under threat, as the annual reports of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) substantiate. At the end of 2017, the number of those worldwide deemed persecuted because of conflicts or violence amounted to 68.5 million (UNHCR 2018: 2). However, that same year, only about 650,000 persons applied for asylum in the European Union (EU) (Eurostat 2018). Thus, compared to the number of human beings in acute danger, the number of applications filed in the EU is relatively low. Moreover, with regard to the supposed abuse of asylum law in the EU by “economic migrants”, rarely mentioned is how many millions of Europeans themselves have departed their home countries for economic reasons in search of a new life overseas – or migrated even to save their own lives, at home at risk.

Not least, it is important to note that these three interpretative patterns regarding refugees and asylum-seekers sketched above also impact on ever new demands for integration. In many cases, refugees are currently viewed either as needy victims (victim discourse) or hostile foreigners (threat discourse) who will ‘flood’ the country. In this connection, Zygmunt Bauman writes that “all societies produce strangers; but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers, and produces them in its own inimitable way” (1997: 17). This statement points to nationally focused ideologies, to the power of certain interpretations, through which individuals who have crossed borders become Others, become strangers, who must be investigated and understood, warded off and controlled, utilised and integrated. Hence, we see in public discourse the construction of a mythology of difference, which in turn is then naturalised. Thus, media reports, political debates and sometimes scientific papers as well give the impression that being a “refugee” is a characteristic of a person: by using “refugee” as a *social* category, the fact that it is a basic *legal* category is excluded or ignored. The sociologist Katharina Inhetveen also investigates the social figure of “the refugee”:

In wealthy Western counties, the figure of the refugee is unthinkable without the suspicion that he or she might not be a refugee at all. The refugee can hardly shake off the suspicion of ‘asylum fraud’. Do they come from a poor country? – They probably just want to live in prosperity and are not really escaping persecution

and violence at all. He or she does not have any papers? They probably just want to make it more difficult to deport them. In Europe the refugee becomes an 'asylum-seeker', not someone who is seeking refuge, but rather a person who wants to obtain better living conditions, illegally, illegitimately and deviously. (Inbetween 2010: 154-155)

This quote makes it clear: in public discourse, a person does not become a refugee because of the personal decision to leave the place they are from, but by crossing national borders on the one hand, and through legal norms and institutional practices in the host country on the other. These kinds of classifications have far-reaching effects that construct realities and generate certain frames for reality perception. Without question, the media also have a significant influence on the social imaging of refugees and people who have fled their homes and homelands.

Contrasting with attempts to present more differentiated images and representations of refugees, mass media reportage appears in many cases to have long since become a kind of campaign with an agenda, especially in terms of the imagery and figurative language. In visual terms, an effect emerges that is in part strikingly threatening, menacing, in part it appears even more often in motifs more subtle. Media reports often exacerbate public debates: movements of refugees in flight are portrayed with excessive exaggeration, the Otherness of the refugees and newcomers is often presented absurdly as something 'degenerate', sensationalised stories and a specific focus on scandalous aspects are superimposed on everyday life, shaping reports and position statements (Yildiz 2006).

Such patterns of interpretation amount to a de-contextualising of the practices and experiences of refugees and migrants. They function to exclude social power relations on one hand, and the diverse plurality, ambivalence and complexity of their lifestyles and orientations on the other. It is precisely ambivalence and the attachment to "multiple homes" (*das Mehrheimische*), a sense of hybrid identity, that are a central element of postmigrant societies. However, this is largely marginalised, ignored and excluded by the hegemonial tenor of refugee discourse. In discourse about migration, the idea repeatedly surfaces that migrants are in cultural terms ambivalent, divided, torn between two poles of identification. In this context, the sociologist Robert E. Park already spoke about life as a "marginal man" (Park 1928). In the meantime, the metaphor of life 'caught between two stools' or 'in-between' has established itself in everyday understanding and language. What is signified here in cognitive and emotional terms is a presumably interior conflict that migrants must cope with, since they are living in another country, with another culture, and as a result become Outsiders. Park even characterises this condition as a threat to mental health, one which could trigger depression.

The condition of being 'in-between' is thus viewed as problematic from a cultural and national vantage, but on closer scrutiny this perspective turns out to be

overly determinative and stigmatising by dint of its pathologising features and territorial and culturalising orientation. Yet in many respects this hybrid ‘in-between’ harbours the possibility to deal creatively with challenges, to develop an innovative social praxis, thus opening up spaces for one’s own individuality. For that reason, categories of national origin are only seemingly analytical and need to be robustly interrogated. In reality their effect is rather to (re)produce reality, to guide our perception of reality, and in this way ultimately impact once again on society. At the same time, they blanket out and thus obscure our perception and vision of the actual complexity of real life.

To disrupt this logic, a different way of approaching the subject is required – a “contrapuntal reading”, as Edward Said has proposed for analysing images of the “Orient” and “Occident”, and at the same time destabilising them (Said 1994: 66). His idea is to read anew and differently the “cultural archive” (ibid.: 51), which is based on Western hegemony. As a literary scholar, his interest lay in the conventional formation of Euro-American “high culture”:

We must therefore read the great canonical texts, and perhaps also the entire archive of modern and pre-modern European and American culture, with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent and marginally present or ideologically represented [...] in such works. (Ibid.: 66)

In our view, the contrapuntal reading of canonical texts that Edward Said proposes can also be applied to public discourse on refugees and migrants. In it, the experiences and perspective of people who have fled their homes and are trying, under difficult social conditions, to find ways/detours/unusual pathways to live or survive, are often left out. In this context, contrapuntal thinking means taking a new look at the historical and current developments, where what is marginalised and what goes untold is taken as the starting point. But contrapuntal thinking also means consolidating thinking about restrictive living conditions and migration regimes on one hand, as well as strategies for action and self-empowerment on the other. This new mode of reading is also required in academic and scientific discourse – even here the personal knowledge of refugees and migrants has scarcely been dealt with as a thematic focus. One such exception is Louis Henri Seukwa’s *Der Habitus der Überlebenskunst* (The Habitus of the Art of Survival, 2006); he sought to utilise and interpret refugees’ experiential knowledge. Currently, this contrapuntal perspective is also employed in the new collective volume edited by Birgit Althans and colleagues *Flucht und Heimat* (Escape and Home, 2019).

Taking the experiences and perceptions of refugees and migrants as the starting point means viewing them as active subjects with agency and recognising them as experts on their own life practice, who are confronted with social patterns and challenges, and who create their own plans for living and spaces for ac-

tion within them. This kind of counter-reading means rethinking the hegemonial discourse on asylum from the perspective of refugees, recognising and using their background of experience as a point of departure. Not only is hegemonial normality deconstructed in doing so: perspectives on marginalised, not yet told stories and everyday experiences are also opened up in the process (Hess 2015: 49-51).

The standardising power of the asylum *dispositif*

That refugees are human beings just like everyone else, with certain skills, strengths, resources, but also beset by problems, is not visible in either the discourse of victimisation or the discourse of threat. Instead, their existence is reduced to social problems and conflicts, which are often stylised as unresolvable obstacles to integration. The refugee thus gradually embodies the non-national Other, the stranger – and correspondingly, the obstacles to integration seem to continuously grow. These historically constructed orders of knowledge and power relations that continue to be reproduced in the present can be called a *dispositif* in Foucault's sense (1978). He understands *dispositif* as a

[...] heterogeneous ensemble that includes discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. (Foucault 1980: 194)

The value of using this term lies in its incompleteness and therefore transferability in terms of the theory of power to socially relevant events that are discussed intensively in the public sphere and have a certain influence on institutional realities. Foucault can be used to show how public discourse about refugees comes into being (discursive formation), how a certain (prescribed) knowledge is disseminated by scientists and scholars, the media, politics, etc., and how this interpretative knowledge produces a normality that functions to channel and direct perception in institutions and everyday communications, a kind of implicit knowledge that is barely reflected upon. This interpretative knowledge also partly determines the interaction between refugees and the local population. The fact that “being a refugee” is seen as an unalterable characteristic of a person can only be understood in relation to this hegemonial discourse.

Louis Henri Seukwa also refers to Foucault when in an interview he uses the term “asylum *dispositif*”. He employs it to address the link between restrictive asylum legislation, discriminating institutional practices and negative social constructions, which dominate public discourse on refugees and accompany their everyday experience of discrimination (Seukwa 2015). This is a huge challenge for

those concerned: only individuals with a special ability to resist and capacity to act can overcome it. Seukwa calls this specific ability “the habitus of the art of survival” (*Habitus der Überlebenskunst*), likewise the title of his book (2006). The concept has recently been discussed anew in social-pedagogical discourses under the heading “agency” (Hill 2019).

The asylum *dispositif*, which this article focuses on, implies a network of practices, institutional mechanisms, actions and discourses that over time have become a dominant pattern of explanation and a specific practice of representing social reality. The term thereby describes a certain type of power that is exercised over refugees, a knowledge that is produced about them. Stuart Hall writes: “Those who produce the discourse therefore have the power to *make it true* – i.e. to enforce its validity, its scientific status” (1992: 294). With such an interpretive knowledge in the treatment of refugees, it is therefore not just about personal attitudes or judgements, but about social bodies of knowledge, an order of knowledge, which produces a certain group in the first place or makes it visible and then identifies it as a source of conflict (Terkessidis 2004). This kind of objectification of the supposed other has a normalising effect that reaches deep into everyday praxis: social problems are automatically identified as ethnic cultural problems, and the refugees appear potentially criminal, needing therapy, or repair, to “be made a patient is to be remade into a serviceable object” (Goffman 1961: 379). The epistemological basis of this kind of prescribed knowledge is a homogenous Austrian or German society, which must find the appropriate way to deal with these Others. Like a *self-fulfilling prophecy*, this generalising focus on social problems ultimately engenders its own reality and forms the basis for further interventions.

This perspective ignores how the refugees see and position themselves, which elements of self-identification they utilise in those positionings, what types of life-constructions they explore, in what ways they tackle the social conditions (objective possibilities) they live in and how they find their own life paths (subjective possibilities). Cultural, ethnic or national categories that turn humans into “refugees” – thereby reducing them to a special status – ignore the contexts in which strategies for survival are developed.

Such social constructions may be symbolic structures acting as discursive effects, which become fixed as ideological constructs in people’s minds. But above all, in reference to the thinking of Pierre Bourdieu, they should be viewed as a social praxis that involves many actors and institutions of power (Bourdieu 1987: 163). “Being a refugee” is not a natural characteristic, but is embedded in multiple ways in social structures and institutional practices; and precisely because it is a social praxis with which actors permanently produce and reproduce, the distinction “us and the others” or “refugee”/“non-refugee” seems to be such a stable category of classification. The actors appear to have only limited awareness of these everyday practices. They function mainly as routines that only become evident when “dis-

turbances” occur, when unexpected or unfamiliar interactions force the participants to reflect on their actions. Anyone who wants to develop new perspectives and options for action must always bear this social praxis in mind.

Schlingensief’s container performance

If we take a look at the current situation in the EU, it becomes clear that ‘maximum limits on the numbers’ of refugees who are allowed to enter the country, border controls and the rejection of ‘welcome culture’ are the dominating topics. In the age of migration and globalisation, the fears associated with these topics are just as scarcely a new phenomenon as are the experiences of flight from one’s homeland. Recently, in the 1990s, it was persons from former Yugoslavia who fled to Austria, Germany and other European countries. At that juncture, the Austrian politician Jörg Haider – governor of the state of Kärnten 1989-91 and 1999 until his death in 2008 – garnered a lot of media attention with his restrictive refugee policy (Ottomeyer 2009). When a coalition government was formed in 2000 on the federal level between the ÖVP (Austrian People’s Party) and the FPÖ (Liberal Party of Austria), this political shift to the right in the heart of Europe sparked substantial international controversy.

Fig. 5.2: Still from Ausländer raus! Schlingensief’s Container [Foreigners out! Schlingensief’s Container]. Paul Poet, 2002.



Against the background of these developments and that same year, the German film and theatre director, author and performance artist Christoph Schlingensiefel initiated his container project, briefly alluded to earlier, which we will now examine in greater detail. The project, which was part of the Wiener Festwochen, was staged right in the heart of Vienna, in front of the State Opera on Herbert von Karajan Square. Here Schlingensiefel erected a container in ‘Big Brother’ style, confining 12 actual real-life refugees playacting as refugees inside it. After that he asked the population to decide by phone vote who could stay and who would be “ejected” from confinement and “deported” by security forces. The performance was shown livestream on the internet.

Incensed residents and members of the public, politicians and artists all had something to say. Their occasionally abstruse and perplexing public appearances and attacks on the container transformed Schlingensiefel’s artistic engagement into a diffuse field. The artist had at times arranged to have himself doubled by actor André Wagner and then joined the scene as a representative of the FPÖ. He also frequently made use of statements by members of the public, proclaimed them loudly via megaphone, confirmed them or made them his own (Focke 2009: 40). There were also the ‘celebrities of the day’, including the German politician Gregor Gysi and the Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek (Gilles 2009: 50-51).

Fig. 5.3: Schlingensiefel and actor André Wagner performing on top of one of the containers.



Photo by David Baltzer. © David Baltzer/Bildbuehne.de

Given his double Wagner on the scene, the staging of quotes from members of the public and the ‘celebrities of the day’ – but also embroidered with music performances by bands like Einstürzende Neubauten and claims that it was actually a political campaign organised by the FPÖ and the *Kronen Zeitung* newspaper (Focke

2009: 36) – it always remained unclear for outsiders whether the reactions to the performance were real or fictional. What was staged was constantly declared to be real, and what was real declared to be staged. This expressed itself symbolically in the double roles that all participants had willingly or unwillingly been allocated. Even the asylum-seekers in the container were real and yet at the same time playing the role of asylum-seekers, albeit with different biographies. The newspapers railed against the high costs of such an anti-Austrian campaign. Moreover, some tourists thought the performance was the implementation of an actual public initiative to arbitrarily deport as many refugees as possible. Subsequently, Schlingensiefel was either verbally attacked on television, completely ignored or even derided as politically corrupt, someone who had been ‘bought and paid for’. With his political performance, the artist evidently managed to cause an uproar in politics and the general public. This suggests that a previously valid order of refugee discourse had been disrupted by the performance, thereby initiating a rupture in knowledge.

Fig. 5.4: Tourists passing by Schlingensiefel's containers.



Photo by David Balzer. © David Baltzer/Bildbuehne.de

Through his art performance, Schlingensiefel showed that such anti-migrant politics can be pursued with impunity, apparently everywhere and in every election campaign, openly expressing resentment and negativity towards refugees and asylum-seekers, but that it is undesirable to deliberately make people aware of this situation. Additionally, the performance exposed and highlighted the fact that people feel attacked when they are directly confronted, right in the heart of Vienna, with the *dispositif* of asylum. On an ORF radio show, Schlingensiefel described outraged reaction among some people as self-provocation; he stated that the performance revealed that the everyday racism amongst people had apparently been turned against themselves:

Provocation is a tool for stupid people. This is a self-provocation. Here is an empty surface that they project their image onto, play their film upon. And they have the constant problem that the images turn against themselves. (Schlingensiefel in Lilienthal/Phillip 2000: 117)

Schlingensiefel's idea of self-provocation was elaborated on in greater detail by the journalist and art historian Mark Siemons (2000). According to Siemons, the effects of performance are based on ideas from system theory, which states that the actual diversity of people's real lives is barely represented in the dominant political system. Every attempt to transport everyday life into the dominant system must fail. If we apply this to the container performance, it means that Schlingensiefel's project should not only be seen as a left-wing, liberal statement about the practice of deporting refugees. Rather the project appeared much more to identify existing negative feelings about refugees and to engage and confront them actively. He used images from the media that are against 'foreigners' and even reproduced and strengthened them. Central thus was the utilisation of a whole flood of already existing right-wing populist imagery – and not a vocal criticism of right-wing populism, which would only have provoked a counter-rhetoric. It can be assumed that parties like the FPÖ and a politician such as Jörg Haider are immune to openly expressed disapproval of their asylum policy and prepared to react to such efforts, since this quasi is part of their everyday business as politicians (Siemons 2000: 125).

The performance unfolded as a kind of image-producing machine, in the process establishing a connection between the political and media orders. In this context, it is telling that the performance was clearly inspired by the paradigm of 'Big Brother' and that Schlingensiefel claimed to passers-by that the container was a joint project between the *Kronen Zeitung* newspaper and the FPÖ (Focke 2009: 36-37). The filmmaker Paul Poet directed the online broadcast of the container performance and in 2002 released his debut feature-length film of it, *Ausländer Raus! Schlingensiefels Container* (DVD 2006). The film shows not just the residents of the container, but also the visitors and passers-by in the broader public, all of them becoming a part of a media performance. In an interview, Paul Poet described the media attention that the art project provoked:

The followers on the internet ranged from Australian fan groups to Croatian skin-head gangs. Because the elimination game based on the Big Brother concept was pushed to its very limits by the performance on one hand and by reality on the other, the mask was torn off Austrian xenophobia. (Poet 2011: 460)

In order to be able to create this interplay between art and reality, fiction and truth, it was necessary to never fully reveal whether the people in the container were

actors or not, and whether it was a political action. Additionally, according to Siemons, particular emphasis was laid on the aspect of emptiness – a vacant space in reality where people have the possibility to confront themselves and their own thinking. This emptiness became visible, for example, when demonstrators tore down the “Foreigners out” sign and desired to liberate the “container prisoners”. According to Schlingensief, the demonstrators themselves were shocked about the fact that the asylum-seekers were real refugees (Siemons 2000: 127). In Schlingensief’s performance, reality itself became a protest (Forrest 2015: 69). Thus, Schlingensief did not, as was claimed in the media, become a ‘hired’ provocateur.

The counter-hegemonial core of this action was mirrored in the outrage that fumed in reactions by members of the public, politicians, activists and representatives of the media. The asylum *dispositifs*, internalised in individuals’ minds and mindsets, were called into question by the container. From Schlingensief’s statement quoted above – namely that the container worked like an empty surface, onto which people projected their own image of something – we can conclude that he wished to induce the observers on the outside to “provoke themselves”. This form of confrontation is at the least a means for generating awareness and reflection.

In addition, the performance evoked numerous different types of confusion. Numerous people viewed the ‘refugee container’ as ‘real’ and genuine, which is why signs and information leaflets had to be used to inform people of the artistic nature of the work. The grave uncertainty about whether the performance was art or not seems to support the assumption that racism is an integral part of social normality. Interestingly, others, such as participants in a demonstration organised by Viennese Antifa groups, opposed certain elements of the performance, such as destroying the sign mounted on the container that read “Foreigners out”. Looking back, Schlingensief himself refers to the art performance in Vienna as a “tipping point”:

I have touched these intersections of reality and fiction, of life and art, quite often before, not just during that week in Vienna. I sometimes thought I was dealing with reality but had to recognise that no one around me was taking the situation seriously. Or, at other times, I didn’t take the situation seriously myself, and suddenly realised how serious and bitter it was. I’ve gone through these kinds of tipping points many times. Perhaps too many times. Because what I caused wasn’t just unclear and contradictory for others. Often, I didn’t know what exactly was going on either, which side of the line I was on at that given moment. (2014: 99)

Accordingly, Schlingensief took numerous “risks of resistance” (Scharathow 2014) with his container performance, provoking a multitude of strong reactions in the city’s public sphere. Among the main risks were in particular that he was personally devalued as an artist, that his action was represented as having been ‘bought’,

and that the project did not simply contribute just to deconstructing but also to reproducing *dispositifs* of asylum.

In the research literature on cultural studies dealing with Christoph Schlingensiefel's art, his personal commitment and moral actions are described as the most essential elements of his performances, which as a rule take place live. It is therefore the 'live' contradictory situations beyond a fixed script that made the container performance so current and relevant, and also so unpredictable in how it would unfold. In the beginning was the concrete idea about how the conscious disruption of everyday life should be staged, but the action itself was based on the event-based nature of the discourse.

Conclusion and prospects

Historically shaped orders of knowledge flow into everyday discourses, political debates and pedagogical methods. In this sense, they are relevant to the way people act. Moreover, they shape "behaviour through official classifications and organisational routines" (Brubaker 2007: 43). In so doing, they frame individual and institutional spaces of action and possibilities, offering an interpretive knowledge that disburdens individuals, allowing them to identify with unambiguous perceptions of the world. These kinds of orders of knowledge, which Pierre Bourdieu in his theory of habitus has described as unquestioned, deeply-ingrained "doxic background convictions" – a system of the perception and evaluation of social relations of order that underpin the real and imagined world – take on a concentrated form in images and patterns of interpretation (Bourdieu 1982: 734-735). This is why we require approaches necessary in order to challenge these orders of knowledge, here in particular the asylum *dispositif*, and to take the phenomenon of migratory 'flight' and contemporary global "*Human Flow*" (Ai Weiwei 2017) as the point of departure for future analyses.

The postmigrant perspective constitutes a change of perspective, offering a different way of understanding the social spheres. It engages the predominant restrictive and generalising discourses on refugees and migration critically and supports a form of hands-on resistance against social hegemonies. "Postmigrant" in this context also means turning in opposition against a hegemonial historiography and production of knowledge, thereby bringing different historical and current connections to light (see esp. Yildiz 2017; Römhild 2017).

The Schlingensiefel performance with the refugee container in front of the Vienna State Opera touched and moved people, angered them, or inspired them to reflect critically on their own prejudices and preconceptions. Forcefully engaging with this 'predetermined breaking point', the artist disrupted the power of the asylum *dispositif*, at least for a brief interval. In this way, the performance vehe-

mentally intervened in everyday routines – and thus also in the normality of the restrictive treatment of refugees in ‘Fortress Europe’. The general public usually encounters the violent deportation of refugees carried out by EU member states with forms of “civil inattention” (Goffman 1963: 83), if not with total ignorance and cognitive repression. Rendering this situation visible – in a central space in Vienna where people from across the globe converge and Vienna presents itself and its picture postcard image to the outside world – inevitably creates a kind of potential tipping point. Schlingensiefel used the civil vulnerability of the place to draw attention to the exclusionary policies of border regimes. By choosing a central locus in the heart of Vienna, frequented daily by numerous tourists, Christoph Schlingensiefel managed to attract considerable attention with his artistic-political initiative. Quite specifically in an urban place that also functions as a key advert for Vienna, the city and its politicians are reluctant to be reminded of a concrete fact: that in their country, individuals are being deported due to their origin. It is singularly unpleasant for a city to display itself on one hand from an idyllic perspective – as a vibrant center of tourism – while on the other to be confronted with its own restrictive policy on asylum and refugees and its practices of expulsion. The vulnerability of the place thus hinges on the fact that everything happening there takes on a major significance – the venue of the container action in Vienna is centrally located, heavily frequented by roves of visitors. It is clearly in the observant eye of the public. Ultimately, the performance revealed in this manner that racism, to echo Mark Terkessidis, is an everyday phenomenon. Racism is not something that only occurs on the peripheries of society, for example in relation in the guise of neo-Nazis ready for violence; rather, it is an apparatus of power, a kind of knowledge that is produced right at society’s centre, permanently transforming people into “strangers” (Terkessidis 2004).

From a postmigrant perspective, the performance in Vienna can be interpreted as an inversion of the hegemonial apparatus of power. “The banality of racism” (ibid.: 1), which reduces people to the figure of the refugee, was unexpectedly directed against passers-by in the broader public, who – as citizens of Vienna, of Austria or as citizens in general – were addressed and often felt attacked. Individuals found the container action disturbing, it caused confusion and led people to reflect on their sense of perplexity, while simultaneously looking for ways of dealing with their newly acquired knowledge. The film “*Ausländer raus! Schlingensiefels Container*” by Paul Poet (2006 [2002]) and the written documentation of the performance by Matthias Lilienthal and Claus Philipp (2000) visualise the broad palette of different aspects of how people reacted when they were confronted with the deportation of refugees: They reacted with ignorance, anger and defensiveness towards the performance.

What was unique about the container project was that it did not primarily focus on the knowledge of refugees, but rather engaged the knowledge of society. It

was about people's experiences and their reactions to the informal confrontation with European practices of deportation and isolationist policies. The performance transformed the so-called 'refugee crisis' into a critical social analysis of nationalist mindsets and sensitivities. And by suspending binary patterns of thinking and social imaginaries, the performance also put forward a postmigrant perspective on the interrelations between different conceptualisations, making visible those forms of knowledge and practice that are rarely acknowledged in public discourse (Terkessidis 2017).

This contrapuntal perspective on flight, displacement and asylum offers a real chance to rethink existing patterns of social justice, democratising and reshaping the various institutions of the society, such as the education system, the labour and housing market, for the benefit of all who live here – enabling a fully novel discourse on society and societal conditions. What is germane here is not about jettisoning terms such as 'refugees' and 'migration'. Rather, they should be seen as important concepts capable of energising novel perspectives for social analysis in the global context.

Art performances like that of Christoph Schlingensief – which by representing the real as fictional and vice versa, disrupt or even nullify the discursive order of refugees and asylum – are able to expose racism as an everyday phenomenon, affecting all of society (Terkessidis 2004: 2017). By dint of its unpredictable progression as it unfolded, i.e. its event-based character as spectacle, the Vienna container performance generated a great deal of tension in the public and helped to deconstruct taboos about conventional refugee and asylum politics. By doing so, the performance identified racism as a problem in normal quotidian life in Austria; it made visible institutionalised practices of Othering predominant in the political sphere in Austria at the time, such as the tendency for media outlets to transform human beings into 'foreigners'. A subsequent step forward, following upon Schlingensief's art performance, would be to resolve to examine racism more continuously, exploring it as a general and longstanding problem in the society as a whole. Accordingly, this would constitute a task and challenge for the society as such: crucial is to focus on racism robustly over the long term, to constantly question and re-question exclusionary practices and logics. In this light, Schlingensief's container performance has provided a thought-provoking impulse for fresh perspectives, sparking new ways of thinking and active engagement.

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Part II: Cultural representations

Class, knowledge and belonging

Narrating postmigrant possibilities

Roger Bromley

One of the tasks involved in the theorising of the concept of postmigration is that of de-essentializing so-called migrant coherences and homogeneities and breaking up ascribed identities, bearing in mind the ways in which dichotomised cultural differences can be overstated in ethnic discourse. Postmigration is often used as a critique of terms such as migrant, or person with foreign background, used to describe someone born in a particular country whose family origins are elsewhere (cf. Foroutan 2019). It is also a useful concept for exploring the conflicts and contradictions, the dialectic of belonging and unbelonging, the split subjectivities which, in many cases, are a feature of postmigrant belonging. The use of the prefix 'post' is, therefore, epistemological in the sense that it raises the question of how, and at what point, someone ceases to be thought of as a 'migrant' or in terms of their supposed ethnicity.

The focus in this chapter will be on two postmigrant writers and postmigrant writings in the current British context and on those factors which enable the recognition of a postmigrant condition, moving beyond assumed stable binaries, and those which militate against it. Among the latter are an imperial legacy, revived since Brexit, the new nationalisms in Europe, and the liberal illusion of postraciality. Allied to this are the attempts to undermine the fact that migration is itself a historical condition, and that postmigration is, as has been said, a new historical condition, which shifts the focus from the exceptionality of the immigrant/migrant (see in detail, Schramm/Petersen/Moslund 2019).

The 1990s saw the normative articulation of cosmopolitan, deliberative, and multicultural politics. While such politics were indicative of the political optimism that flowed in those years, they may seem dated and quaint in the world of volatility and crisis we now inhabit since 9/11, the so-called 'war on terror', the 7/7 London bombings and the Manchester bombings of 2017, as well as the 2008 recession, and the refugee 'panic' of 2015. Furthermore, the fact that the killing by police of George Floyd in Minnesota on 25 May, 2020 gave rise to Black Lives Matter protests in the USA and in Europe which continued for several weeks suggests racialised injustices and inequalities are still major problems. Add to this the fact

that more people from BAME backgrounds in the UK, US and many other European nations are dying from coronavirus, and it is possible to argue that, apart from poverty, inadequate housing, and low pay, structural racism is a key factor. Both texts I shall be referring to Guy Gunaratne's *In Our Mad and Furious City* (2018) and Zia Haider Rahman's *In the Light of What we Know* (2014) need to be seen in this context: a deeply troubling and troubled society. Firstly, I want to look at Gunaratne's *In Our Mad and Furious City*, partly in terms of Paul Gilroy's concept of 'conviviality' but also to stress the pressures, symbolic, political and physical, which threaten to make this conviviality increasingly difficult. Gilroy sees conviviality as "the process of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculturalism an ordinary feature of social life in postcolonial societies" (2004: xi). The book in which he develops this concept is called *After Empire*, a title which I am coming to feel is a little optimistic, perhaps. 'Conviviality', he says, "is a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not – as the logic of ethnic absolutism suggest they must – add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication" (Gilroy 2006: 40).

Spaces of possibility in Gunaratne's *In Our Mad and Furious City*

In examining Gunaratne's novel I shall attempt to develop a partial answer to the question posed by sociologist Sivamohan Vulluvan: "What features are constitutive of convivial multiculturalism when it is indeed manifest and how, in turn is it substantively distinctive from the ideals of co-existence formalised by integration?" (Vulluvan 2016: 2). The novel traces the everyday lives of three late-teenage friends, at relative 'ease in diversity', from a suburb of North London over the course of 48 hours against the background of the killing of a white soldier by a black Muslim. Based on the killing of Lee Rigby in 2013 and the upsurge of white nationalist protests, the book does not celebrate the political idea of multiculturalism but locates it as an accepted way of life in a specific part of the suburb although cordoned off, literally and metaphorically, by the presence on the edges of the community of police tapes and white protesters. As will be seen in the case of the character of Yusef, the conviviality the three friends achieve is precarious, their ethos of 'indifference to difference' (Amin 2013: 3) hard won and always subject to the threat of violence.

Each of the teens – Selvon, Ardan, and Yusef – is given their own narrative and these are intersected with those of Selvon's father – Nelson (his name with its possible slave echoes) – and Ardan's mother – Caroline. For the latter, West Indian and Irish respectively, their ethnic origins form much of their identity and memory. They are enclosed by it – the legacy of colonial racialisation. For Nelson, his memory is of the violence of earlier race riots and Mosley, for Caroline it is

the Troubles of Northern Ireland (1969 to 1998). Yusef's father – the Sufi-following Imam of the local mosque, has been dead a year when the narrative starts, but his gentle and enlightened presence – he wanted co-existence – echoes throughout the text and is contrasted with the coarser narrative of the new, imported Imam, with more reactionary and segregationist views. I have mentioned the ethnicity of the parent generation because that of the sons is relatively unmarked.

The opening chapter – Yusef's narrative – situates much of the novel in terms of local context, specific uses of language – idiom/idiolect, slang, street voices – and, above all place, their medium, habitus, and their class:

We'd all spy those private-school boys from Belmont and Mill Hill and we'd wonder, how would it have felt to come from the same story? To have been moulded out of one thing and not of many? There was nothing more foreign to us than that[...]Ours was a language, a dubbing of noise, while theirs was a one note, void of new feeling and any sense of place" (Gunaratne 2018: 4).

This is an inclusive narrative, predicated upon 'we' and 'our': "Place was our own. This place. Whether we heard the whispers of our older roots never mattered" (ibid.: 4). Each of the boys' narratives shares the same language – "our friendship we called bloods, our homes we called our Ends" (ibid.: 3); 'ennet-tho', 'my-man', 'pussy-o' are terms common to all the young males, irrespective of colour or ethnicity. They share a vernacular – 'a young nation of mongrels' – but this is no multicultural utopia as they also share 'violence in our brotherhood', their bodies were locked for verbal assaults, "violence shadowed our language and our lines tagged the streets. They'd read us on walls" (ibid.: 2). The pronominal use of 'our' and 'us' shapes an indifference to race, even while acknowledging its history is part of them. The 'one note' mentioned in respect of the private-school boys and their lack of any sense of place is 'white privilege' which is everywhere, and will be explored later. Growing up in the Estate the friends told racist jokes for fun, a mark of postmigrant confidence. Once, the *de facto* multicultural nature of the Council Estate is mentioned – "my breddas on the Estate they were from all over. Jamaicans. Irish. Pikeys, Nigerians, Ghanaians, South Indians, Bengalis. Proper Commonwealth kids" (ibid.: 3) – but, otherwise, their origin or ethnicity is never mentioned, apart from the reference at one point to Serbian and Somali football teams, more recent migrants from the 1990s and still 'ethnicised'. Otherwise, although the 'breddas' *'had an elsewhere in their blood'* (my emphasis), they are British born, London based; the past is irrelevant as they live in the present with an eye on the future: they are literally post migrant, although there is a presence, on the edges, of the white protesters who wish to 're-ethnicise', re-essentialise them.

Not only are they postmigrant but they convert their place into a space of possibility, empowered, entitled and not in thrall to the dominant discourse of

power. Belonging to the objective margins of the working class they carve out a new, shared subjectivity, a point of post-ethnic convergence embodied in music, football, and personal ambition. It is a site of violence and struggle, of deprivation (miseducation) and racialisation, of potential confinement and containment, but confronted by a refusal of ascription, or to be defined by those in power or the white nativists surrounding the estate or, for that matter, the Mujarihoun of the mosque, although these will pull back Yusef into their defensive, segregationist mentality eventually with tragic consequences – “the mosque of our father is no longer a place I saw as ours” (ibid.: 27). For Yusef, the mosque has been emptied of place and of shared possession. The three friends develop a common language that speaks locally and connects globally. The Black British music which gives the overall narrative its soundtrack, its beat and rhythm, is no longer of the ghetto, or the Caribbean, but is home-made yet recognised globally, through chart placement, the Mercury prize, Glastonbury and the exporting of sounds (even Stormzy’s scholarships at Cambridge). So, it is no longer the music (Grime) of a migrant space – a place on the periphery – but is now asserting itself as a new centre.

This ‘centre’ is metaphorically enacted in Ardan’s ‘bars’ – his Grime verses, the ritualised clash on the top of a bus, and his studio contract: “London’s got its own good moves” (ibid.: 58). Ardan is at ease with what was originally Black British music, is at home with the French rappers in the local gym, speaking a new language with its own rules and codes (Selvon calls it ‘a next language’), ‘our meaning, our own’, with the ambition to ‘raise a London of we own’, echoing the constant refrain of specific ownership and belonging and not just something borrowed or derivative. As we will see in detail this contrasts with the longed-for, but ultimately specious, integration of Zafar in Zia Haider Rahman’s *In the Light of What we Know*, an integration on the terms of the dominant power.

Selvon lives off-Estate which gives him a certain status. As part of his dedicated, almost obsessive, training, however, he runs through it every day and if he is not *of* it, he is *in* it but at a distance from what he calls “the orphaned corner – full of absent people stuck between bus stops and bookies” (ibid.: 9). His running marks out the space of the estate, territorialises it in a sense so it becomes part of him by association because of his friends and where he plays football. The football arena (known locally as the cage) gives them all respite from the surrounding violence, a site of unspectacular conviviality and collectivity, of ownership – an oasis or space where difference is staged or performed but within an everyday exchange of interaction, creating their own habitus, relaxed in the context of diversity. This interaction is not romanticised as, although this is a space of potentiality, prefigurative of, perhaps, an enlargement of convivial belonging, it is also a place of encirclement, as I have said. Selvon – named for a new generation of no longer lonely Londoners – uses Stones Estate and its four grey towers around him as an

incentive to “Earn my place and make my way out – the blue spaces above” (ibid.: 11). He has a place at Brunel University, in London.

Yusef is at peace only on the football scene. At one point, he relays a whole litany of names of international footballers, some bearing the marks of migrant origin, but all melded together in a convergent, new, if precarious, multicultural:

For a few hours the Square would cast us as the Nou Camp [Barcelona] with our Gerrards and Ronaldos, Figos and Rivaldos and a few Cruyffs. These names ghosting through our movements as we played, the cage with its concrete turf and cracked centre circle, made us free...our common thread was footie, Estate, and the ill fit we felt against the rest of the world” (ibid.: 66)

It is a form of resistance. There is another ‘cage’, of course, which will gradually enclose them but, for the moment, they dwell in solidarity and the continuities of mutual experience. Suspended in time and place, in possession of the Square, the friends become aware of the sense of an ending, the temporariness of their bond. The killing of Lee Rigby gave a fresh impetus to British Islamophobia.

As they gradually lose Yusef to the mosque – he is torn away from the road where he found refuge – Ardan and Selvon grow together in an alliance which will enable them to go beyond the local and exercise choice; they are in training for adoption of the postmigrant condition, so to speak, shaping the resources for exit capacity in order to become something other than ‘Other’, the migrant designation in an increasingly polarised society. Selvon’s father is confined to a wheelchair by a stroke and this symbolises the restraints placed on the Windrush generation – treated appallingly by successive UK governments – in an ever-contracting world; he listens only to the *local* news, the *local* headlines: “that’s the only window to the world for him” (ibid.: 228). The novel constructs in this way two versions of the local, a point of arrival for Nelson and Caroline, but a point of departure for their offspring.

Yusef’s brother has been found to have indecent photographs of children on his computer and, as a cover up, the new Imam determines that both Yusef and his brother should be sent to Lahore for education. One moment in a chicken shop, however, marks out Yusef’s cultural distance from that world. Referring to the new shop assistant – fresh off the boat – Freshie Dave, Yusef says that this man sees no difference between the two of them, the linkage being Pakistan but that faulty logic revealed the gulf between them. Home for Yusef is the Estate, Pakistan a world away. He also acknowledges that not all the white people gathered in protest are racists as nothing could be explained away that easily: “I watched Dave salt my chips. I had more in common with the goons that broke his window in truth” (ibid.: 30) (Earlier he had said to his brother, “It’s not the West. We are the fucking West, bruv”).

What these 'breddas' have is a form of horizontal affiliation, an associationism which anchors their belonging in the local place which they adapt and customise, negotiate and make over in their own terms and discourse, something politically 'unremarkable' and 'insignificant'. No longer seeking 'permission to narrate' (Edward Said), they carve out their own first person stories in an overlapping language. This is shown in a moving way when Yusef dies and Selvon is not allowed to see him in the hospital. The text develops a new style of direct address; outside the hospital Selvon soliloquises: "See there empty hollow" (ibid.: 275). The lack of punctuation underscores the emotional depth. Eight times in the paragraph, each sentence begins with 'See', directing us to the hospital space – from the outside – of Yusef's dying. The word 'see' is used several times in the succeeding paragraph with its repeated first-person pronoun refrain, "I couldn't see him, doctors wouldn't let me through". The loss of place takes a metaphorical turn: "His blood spilling inside where there was no place to go. See my eyes cry for my bredda. See my anger at the places and people that took him" (ibid.: 275). Selvon shapes a memorial from the dying of his Muslim friend: "I never used to run for no-one before. But now I run for him" (ibid.: 276).

Out of the vocabulary of the urban, Gunaratne is developing a challenge to hegemonic English, with postmigrancy becoming a stylistic register, a mode of new vernacular writing, one among many Englishes – vocal, oral, the sound of the street. Yusef died in a fire at the mosque and as the fire in the mosque begins to engulf its surroundings, the chapters become shorter and change rapidly, enacting the pace of the mad and furious city, gradually imploding.

Imposter Syndrome in *In the Light of What we Know*

Zia Haider Rahman's *In the Light of What we Know* (2014) is a long, complex novel of ideas situated in the context of 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis, with multiple shifts of time and location which cover deceit, disloyalty, finance capitalism, mathematics, love, class and belonging. It is also about homelessness and displacement but perhaps above all, about *value*. Basically, the novel is structured around a dialogue between two friends, both migrants of South Asian origin, the unnamed narrator and his old Oxford acquaintance, Zafar. For much of the novel, it is more of a monologue by Zafar, which the narrator sometimes records as well as quoting from notebooks left by Zafar, punctuated by bouts of inner reflection by both characters. The narrative as a whole is filtered through the first person which raises questions about reliability, partiality, trust – themes in the novel at large. After a gap of many years, Zafar appears on the narrator's doorstep in South Kensington: "a brown-skinned man, haggard and gaunt [with] an unkempt beard" (Rahman 2014: 1), unrecognisable at first.

The narrator, born in Princeton, New Jersey, is from a landed family in Pakistan, his grandfather a former Pakistani ambassador to the USA, his father an Oxford professor. He is separated from his wife and about to lose his job in the 2008 crash. Zafar, by contrast, was born in an obscure part of Bangladesh to a mother raped by a soldier in the war of liberation, and brought up by her brother and his wife, who emigrated to London when he was young, and lived in poverty, with the 'father' working as a bus conductor and then waiter. The violent nature of Zafar's conception shadows him throughout.

I have detailed these backgrounds because the class asymmetry forms the basis of my argument about the potential and limits of postmigrant possibility. Both men go to Oxford, the narrator via Eton, the iconic British public school, Zafar from a comprehensive school. At Oxford, both men are able to adopt a postmigrant identity, beyond the notion of the 'migrant' although Zafar is awkward and haunted by shame at his origins. At Oxford, and throughout the events of the narrative, Zafar suffers from so-called 'imposter syndrome', feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, fraudulence despite his success. In his case, this is not pathological but results from residual colonialism, class, and 'white privilege' as will be shown. After Oxford, the narrator and Zafar both work in finance (specifically, derivatives) in 'the City' – London's financial district – and on Wall Street, in spaces which are – or claim to be – horizontal, inter-ethnic, intensely local but global, postmigrant and postracial spaces. However, as (critical race theorist) David Theo Goldberg suggests, the illusion of postraciality is the new form of racialisation (2015). I mentioned value earlier and, it has been argued that "the dizzying fluctuation of financial markets do seem to have a common origin, namely, in the process of value production and its increasing alienation from reality under financial capitalism" (Angelini 2016: 2). This has a bearing on Zafar's increasing alienation from reality, although it is a reality itself which is, ultimately, specious, and the source of his postcolonial melancholia – the failure, or refusal, to mourn the lost object. I will come to this 'lost object' later; it is, essentially, a version of a class and of Englishness, always in a sense mythical, and now rapidly becoming obsolescent but clinging onto its power.

What the novel does is, on the surface, produce a narrative about 'successful' migrants entering a host society on their own terms, apparently, at the most prestigious levels – finance capitalism being the epicentre of power nowadays. Interestingly, the novel then goes on to critically distance itself from this apparent mobility and, instead, interrogates the conditions in which postmigration might be possible in a modern, liberal democracy but one which is still replete with imperial echoes and with an only intermittently penetrable class system. The narrator is not named because, in a sense, it is not relevant given his class provenance and US citizenship. Zafar's name marks him out as 'other' in a society where an unspoken whiteness is sovereign. Lulled by the illusory egalitarianism of American society,

after hearing the narrator mention a US customs officer saying ‘Welcome home,’ Zafar says, “If an immigration officer at Heathrow had ever said ‘Welcome home’ to me...I would have given my life for England, for my country, there and then. I could kill for an England like that” (Rahman 2014:107). This is the nub of his ambition, to cease to be thought of as ‘Bangladeshi’ or ‘Indian’, or ‘brown’, as a *migrant* but as British and to find a narrative self connecting with his experience.

As geographer Doreen Massey has argued; “Different social groups have distinct relationships to... differentiated mobility; some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it” (Massey 1994: 147). In this power-geometry of time-space compression, both the narrator and Zafar initiate the flows and movement of capital but, within this differentiated mobility, Zafar is both ‘in charge’ and, simultaneously, imprisoned by it. Zafar is under the illusion that the world of finance is freed from the old family background of received privilege and hierarchy of the narrator and, later, the woman who becomes Zafar’s wife, Emily. The gaunt, haggard, unkempt, brown man at the start of the novel gives the lie to this.

Zafar leaves his job in derivatives and retrains as a lawyer, so he has now opened the doors of two citadels of class and power in modern Europe. As a lawyer he is posted to Pakistan and Afghanistan, where he is a UN adviser, after 9/11 and during the invasion – or human rights intervention, depending on where you stand. While there, he meets a young lawyer from the Home Counties who assumes that Zafar is from India – “for a certain kind of Englishman the subcontinent remains India. Yet I didn’t get a single knowing look from anyone around the table, a glance to say that I was British too. But there was another presumption that was harder to bear, one of class” (Rahman 2014:30).

As Zafar discovers, one space relatively untouched by mobility is that of the upper, or ruling, class – the Establishment –the master political narrative about identities in the United Kingdom. The narrative partly ‘talks back’ to this by means of literal and metaphorical border crossing but this is also marked by incompleteness. Part of Zafar’s love of mathematics is Godel’s ‘Incompleteness Theorem’ which, as his story develops becomes a metaphor of his own condition: “Within any given system, there are claims which are true but which cannot be proven to be true” (ibid.:10). In the class system, on the other hand, there are claims which are untrue but which cannot be proven to be untrue, which is an assumption that power operates upon. At Oxford, he finds out that knowledge was just ‘a social act’ and that “the root of true, rightly guided power, the essence of authority was not learning but the veneer of knowledge” (ibid.:120). These perceptions may have arisen from defensive and consolatory reactions but they are partly evidenced by the proliferation of forms of knowledge in the text – weighty epigraphs to each chapter, extensive, pedantic footnotes, but I am not sure how far these can be

taken as satirical; this overload, the sheer accumulation of knowledge as ‘a social act’, is part of a stage-managed display or performance of class. Performance, of course, is an important feature of class – gesture, accent, dress, insider codes, body language and, above all, the unspoken rules: the infrastructure of the cultural fortress of class but, ultimately, a confidence trick backed by money.

Trying to shed his ‘migrancy’, his ascription as ‘Other’, Zafar performs ‘Englishness’ – through accent and gesture – painfully aware of his imposter status, but not aware that what he is modelling himself upon is actually nothing other than the legacy of violent seizures of power and entitlement. Displaced as a migrant, initially homeless in London as a child, Zafar spends years in an extended form of displacement and metaphorical homelessness, nomadic, never settling, unbelonging. In Afghanistan at one point, Zafar’s wife – Emily – introduces him to a man

blond and handsome, his hair cut short, stubble roughening the edges of his youthful complexion. His khaki jacket was open and its collar upturned. The pockets of the breast and waist were buttoned down, all four. There is method there, I thought. It was a jacket design with pedigree, tested and proven: even the clothes have a colonial descent. (Ibid.: 424-5)

The jacket is probably a safari jacket which confirms its colonial provenance. What Zafar is doing here is reading ‘Englishness’, contrasting it with his colonised descent: “My black hair, dark skin, and dark suit would have made it difficult for this man, I thought,...to see me” (ibid.: 424). The configuration of light and dark, paranoid though it may be, has long, imperial echoes. This confirms what Stuart Hall has argued, that *race* is “the modality in which class is lived, the medium in which class relations are experienced” (Hall 1978: 394).

Zafar’s search to belong, to be something other than migrant, is focussed upon the figure of Emily Hampton-Wyvern – her brother had been at Eton with the narrator, her mother is a Baroness – titled, and thus, entitled. The double-barrelled name was once a signifier of an upper class belonging. The name ‘wyvern’ is taken direct from heraldry, a coat of arms being another signifier of class and power. She is the quintessence of white, English beauty (the narrator has an affair with her and gets her pregnant), “from the stock that populates the foothills of the aristocracy” (Rahman 2014: 95). It is these ‘foothills’ that Zafar longs to reach; he says at one point: “Emily was England, home, belonging, the untethering of me from a past I did not want, the promise, through children of a future that was rooted, bound by something treated altogether better by the world than my mother, the girl who loved me” (ibid.: 477). This, in a nutshell, is the route to postmigration, the completion of his trajectory from Oxford. Postmigration is, in a sense, not just a mode of self, and shared, recognition but almost a physical space, somewhere: “in

order to lay ground for his feet to stand upon; in order, that is, to go home somewhere, and take root" (ibid.: 533).

Emily is also in Afghanistan, with a class-sanctioned, suitably liberal Human Rights organisation – "that breed of international development experts unsparing in its love for all humanity but having no interest in people" (ibid.: 133). Her passion, mixed with her cold indifference, destroys Zafar – he rapes her at one point in an attempt to seize control, not necessarily of her, but of what she represents, thus repeating the masculinist violence of her own class and of his own conception. Afghanistan is the catalyst for his growing awareness of the hollowness of his striving to belong to a meretricious class of no real value and colludes, at one point, in its corruption. The country has become the site once again for a replay, a modern version, of the 'Great Game' – the 19th century confrontation between Russia and the British Empire over trade routes, resources, and cheap labour. The word 'game' reprises the chance, risk and uncertainty characteristic of finance capitalism, unravelling by 2008. Zafar comes to see the West as playing a game based upon subterfuge, violence when necessary, specious claims to democracy and human rights, and cynicism. In a complex way, Zafar's awakening is conflated with his awareness that Emily is part of this 'power geometry', at least partly if not in herself necessarily, and overwhelmed by loss and insurmountable contradictions, he has a breakdown and ends up in a psychiatric hospital: "Did she not grasp how much I wanted to be rid of my history, not how little it mattered to me but how much it mattered not to see my child walk any part of the road I'd travelled?" (ibid.: 463). Ironically, they have been speaking of public schools for their child, which is not his; the public (private) school is the road travelled, of course, by the class of the narrator (the baby's father) and of Emily. Later she has a medical abortion.

Zafar's disintegration (failure to *integrate*) his collapsing under a heavy cognitive load has, of course, a negative effect on his task completion; this task, metaphorically speaking, is incomplete because what he is trying to learn, in the light of what he doesn't know, is, on the terms with which he engages, impossible. This is crucial because what is on offer to the migrant is 'integration' (no longer a migrant); integrate and you can have belonging conferred upon you. Zafar embodies the plight of the migrant trying to make the journey to a state of postmigration, not in terms of his own agency – as with Selvon and Ardan in *In Our Mad and Furious City* – but almost in the form of a surrender on those grounds laid down by an illusory model of integration and class mobility – the already existing 'we'; 'just like us'. Zafar is lost in transition, lost in translation.

What I am not saying is that the concept of postmigration and its attempt to overcome binary distinctions and ascribed identities is illusory, but rather that for it to become meaningful in a British context it needs to be a matter of creativity and agency, going beyond the allocated spaces of liberal multiculturalism, and

based upon a new grammar of belonging – like that of Ardan, Selvon and, partially, Yusef – “not the English grammar of Victorian texts” (ibid.: 50) sought by Zafar, but beyond the binaries of white native and migrant ‘Other’, majority and minority; binaries predicated, ultimately, upon the ‘power-geometry’ of a modern class system based upon the latest incarnation of capitalism.

While class remains so rooted in British – but particularly English – society, it will not be easy for a postmigrant world to emerge, except perhaps in local and/or generational instances. I have deliberately juxtaposed two sharply contrasting class belongings in order to emphasise this point and to suggest that a postmigration narrative needs to be based upon a full acknowledgement of the empirical reality of heterogeneity, the removal of social inequalities and injustices at all levels – housing, education, unemployment, opportunity – so that a postmigrant society can be developed through a process of cultural, social and political negotiation between equal partners.

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Postmigrant remembering in mnemonic affective spaces

Senthuran Varatharajah's *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* and Pooneh Rohi's *Araben*

Anja Träger

Introduction

In his astute discussion on postmigration, literary scholar Roger Bromley argues that postmigration can serve as “a useful concept for exploring the conflicts and contradictions, the dialectic of belonging and unbelonging, the split subjectivities, which, in many cases, are a feature of postmigrant belonging” (2017: 36). This suggests that, for postmigrant individuals, belonging is not necessarily a straightforward concept, and that processes of forming a sense of belonging may be disrupted or strained in the individual's relationship with their surroundings. Two texts which illuminate this condition in detail are the German novel *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* (Before the Increase of the Signs, 2016) by Senthuran Varatharajah and the Swedish novel *Araben* (The Arab, 2014) by Pooneh Rohi.¹ Both texts depict protagonists whose migratory journeys are over, and who look back on their trajectories of travel and settling in in Germany and Sweden respectively, while, at the same time, addressing the tensions in the protagonists' lives in relation to the societies they live in. *Araben* weaves together two storylines, that of a man only called the Arab who fled from Iran to Sweden, and that of Yasaman, a young woman who, as it turns out, is the Arab's daughter. *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* is presented as a Facebook conversation between two people in their mid-twenties who arrived in Germany as children with their parents; Senthil from Sri Lanka, and Valmira from Kosovo. In Senthil and Valmira's conversation, and particularly in the Arab's strand of *Araben*, memory plays an undeniably strong role in influencing the ways that the protagonists negotiate their sense of belonging. The Arab's parts of Rohi's novel comprise one single day, and Senthil and Valmira's Facebook conversation

1 The translations from *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* are by me, for the translations from *Araben*, I am indebted to Dr Ian Giles for his generous help. Translations are for reference only.

takes place within one week; embedded into the set frames of these time windows are analepses in which histories of marginalisation and othering unfold, which become significant to the protagonists' realities in the narrative present. The protagonists, however, react differently to these experiences of marginalisation, as the Arab turns inwards, and Senthil and Valmira towards each other. Focusing on the protagonists' different reactions to past and present, this chapter follows two vectors of enquiry: firstly, it traces the affects that emerge from the protagonists' processes of remembering with respect to the present; and secondly, it displays the protagonists' conflicts as embedded into, and induced by, the societies they live in. The examination of the protagonists' affective experiences in close relation to societal structures seeks to shift the focus away from relating the protagonists' struggles to migration, and instead towards scrutinizing prevalent exclusionary mechanisms in the societies themselves.

When attempting to trace the affective resonances between past and present, affect offers itself as a critical angle for the textual analysis, but it can prove to be a somewhat unruly category to be comprised in one binding definition. Put simply, affect can be understood as the power to affect the world and be affected by it in turn. Affect circumscribes our capacity to think through and feel, to act in and react to, this world, and the encounters we have with others. In this sense, affect reaches beyond the physical boundary of the skin and includes all those forces that pass between bodies. This makes affect simultaneously corporeal and intellectual, as well as situational and relational: not only human encounters become affectively charged, but also the situations and places where these encounters take place. With regard to the texts considered here, this amounts to asking which affects emerge in those spaces and situations where memory is produced in relation with the present. These affects, in turn, make it possible to gauge the impact of memory on the protagonists' lives, and to examine, to paraphrase the anthropologist Regina Römhild, the societies in which the protagonists live from the margins these societies have themselves created (2017: 69).

The texts' protagonists are postmigrant characters insofar as their migratory journeys have reached their conclusion and they have settled into the societies of their so-called host countries. In this respect, the term postmigrant is understood as a temporal phrase, but it also holds an epistemological dimension in the sense that it encapsulates the question of when and how "someone ceases to be thought of as a 'migrant' or in terms of their supposed ethnicity" (Bromley 2017: 36). When, as Bromley suggests, the term migrant is used to categorise someone from the outside, it becomes problematic, as it is "often mobilised as part of aggressive identity-ascriptions and processes of othering" (Petersen/Schramm 2017: 6). These identity ascriptions are particularly questionable considering that, as Römhild contends, European societies in general "are characterised through and through by the experiences and effects of coming, going and staying" (2017: 69), so

that migratory experiences shape not only the lives of those migrating and their descendants, but have an effect on any given society as a whole. Nevertheless, as Römheld further argues, “in the established discourses, which revolve around ‘immigration’ and ‘integration’, migration is still treated as a separate problem as if the ‘majority society’ (conceived as its opposite and automatically assumed to be national and white) had nothing to do with it” (ibid.). According to Römheld’s observation, postmigrant societies are by no means societies that consider migration and pluralisation normal or uncomplicated; rather the opposite in fact, as Islamic studies scholar Riem Spielhaus clarifies when she identifies those societies as postmigrant which struggle with the effects of past and present migration movements, and “with the pluralization of their populations” (2012: 97).² In this light, I understand the term postmigrant, or postmigrant society, not as positively utopian, but as a term that implies all those negotiations and conflicts that arise in the whole of any society whose discourses insist on a separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Rephrasing Bromley’s earlier mentioned epistemological dimension of the term postmigrant, the question would then be why someone does not cease to be thought of as a migrant, and why people are continuously judged by their supposed ethnicity.

Remembering: Turning inwards

In *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen*, Senthil and Valmira present themselves as intelligent young people who have strong affiliations with the German places Marburg and Berlin, but also with places such as New York, Tokyo, Oslo, London, Toronto, Boston and Montreal, where they visited their diasporic families, or spent longer periods of time. Navigating their mobile lives confidently, Senthil and Valmira share a sense of belonging to Germany, while they, simultaneously, transnationalise a perceived notion of a homogeneous German national identity. Looking back on similarities and differences in their respective lives, Senthil and Valmira compare their experiences of settling into German society in a process of remembering that consist of conscious and deliberate acts, as memory is constructed and, at the same time, questioned, in dialogue. In *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen*, memory is presented as the workings of attention and focus, whereas in *Araben*, memory occurs as a force with very different dynamics than that of a conscious reconstruction. The Arab is overwhelmed with a flood of memories that he, although he would like to, cannot control, and the reiteration of similar phrases such as “it flows to him” (Rohi 2015: 155),³ or that the memories are “like an ice cold

² “mit der Pluralisierung ihrer Bevölkerung”.

³ “det strömma till honom”.

shower" (ibid.: 28),⁴ illustrates that the force of these memories is irrepressible. Yet, these memories instigate conscious reflections in which the Arab makes connections between his life in the present and his past. Although these two processes of remembering are so different in nature, memories are, in both cases, instantiated from the vantage point of the narrative present to make sense of present realities through reflections on past events. Before examining in more detail how memories emerge or are constructed, and how they affect the protagonists' self-understanding, I shall first turn to the question of where remembering takes place. These spaces are more than just a backdrop, as they facilitate the emergence of particular affects, and thus become themselves imbued with affect; in an adaptation of literary scholar Frederik Tygstrup's term "affective spaces" (2012: 204), they become mnemonic affective spaces.

As previously stated, the Arab's parts of Rohi's novel comprise one single day. Outwardly, nothing much happens on this wintry Tuesday just before Christmas: from morning until evening, the Arab travels through Stockholm, changes from commuter trains to the underground and back to the train and looks out of train windows onto the snowy cityscape, without an obvious purpose or destination. Yet, within this apparently arbitrary outward journey, an inward journey unfolds in the form of memories which, seemingly without any order or control, overwhelm the Arab. The train journey becomes an inward journey of reminiscence, and the anonymous public spaces of the trains turn into one single mnemonic space that gives these memories room to surface. Although the Arab appears turned inwards and towards the memories of his past when he sits "absorbed, almost inapproachable" (Rohi 2015: 20),⁵ the first paragraph, introducing the Arab through free indirect discourse, suggests otherwise: "The Arab, who is probably a Turk or a Kurd or a Persian, is like a piece of garbage [...] he thinks himself" (ibid.: 7);⁶ and, when we learn that, "He laughs for himself about the thought" (ibid.: 7),⁷ the Arab's reflections reveal a complex and intricate entanglement of past and present, self-attributions and ascriptions by others. The fact that the Arab considers himself a failure while he is involuntarily flooded with memories suggests that this self-perception is triggered by the past. Yet, as the Arab finds this thought ridiculous, he distances himself from this perception, which implies that he, instead, engages with the ways in which he assumes to be perceived from the outside. This outside, as it is presented through the Arab's consciousness, sees him not only as a failure, a piece of garbage even, but also as one of many, as a man

4 "som en iskall dusch".

5 "[f]örsjunken, nästan okontaktbar".

6 "Araben, som nog egentligen är en turk eller kurd eller pers, kan liknas vid en avfallsprodukt [...] tänker han själv".

7 "Han ler för sig själv vid tanken".

without a name and an identity, as one of an undifferentiated mass of 'Arabs'. This view is reminiscent of dominant exclusionary discourses that tend to stereotype and construct anyone as 'other' by way of racialised differences. In the anonymous space of the trains, we see an anonymous man, whose anonymity, however, is undercut, since he is anonymous, yet othered, and who is, moreover, acutely aware of being othered despite his absorption.

As the anonymous space of the trains is in motion, it is a transitory and contingent space, a liminal zone, which highlights not only the contingency of memory itself, but the uncertainty that the Arab experiences while he himself is confronted with his relation to the past, and his surroundings in the present. While, within the Arab's outward journey, time follows the linear temporal sequence of changing trains, and precise arrival and departure times, within his inward journey, the linearity of time is suspended, as the remembered past unfolds in associative leaps without linear order or coherence, so that present and past become juxtaposed, and can be read next to each other. In the Arab's, as well as in the reader's perception, they exist simultaneously in the same time zone, and past events come into view, "clearer than the platform he walks on" (ibid.: 55).⁸ Hence, the places and events of the Arab's past spread into a network before the eyes of the reader, who can follow closely how failure is produced in the intersections of past, present, self-perception and ascriptions from the outside.

The windows into the Arab's past further reveal that a sense of failure is generated inter-relationally, and that it is closely linked to a hegemonic notion of masculinity, which Raewyn Connell defines as "the configuration of gender practice [...] which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (2005: 77). In a conversation between Yasaman and her mother (in one of Yasaman's parts of *Araben*), the mother tells Yasaman: "Your dad earned good money when he led the factory. We lived a great life. House, car, money [...] Every week he came home and put the entire salary on the coffee table [...] And I could use the money as I wanted" (Rohi 2015: 218).⁹ Yasaman's mother laments the loss of a time in which she lived a comfortable life because of the money her husband earned and placed at her disposal. For the Arab, being "Mr. Engineer" (ibid.: 133) entails what we can call a "patriarchal dividend" in the sense that he gains "a dividend from patriarchy in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command" (Connell 2005: 82).¹⁰ However, as this role is socially, culturally and inter-relationally constructed, it "will come under pressure when it becomes impos-

8 "tydligare än perrongen han går på".

9 "Din pappa tjänade jättebra med pengar när han ledde fabriken. Vi levde ett jättebra liv. Hus, bil, pengar [...] Varje vecka kom han hem och la hela lönen på soffbordet [...] Sen fick jag använda pengarna som jag ville".

10 "Herr ingenjör".

sible for men to win the bread” (ibid.: 90). Indeed, when the Arab is sent to prison in consequence of his involvement with the Communist Party, he loses his job as an engineer, which, concomitantly, jeopardises his marriage as he cannot win the bread any longer, and it precipitates a crisis for his masculinity: “He couldn’t bear that she saw him for the man he was. That he had become” (Rohi 2015: 135).¹¹ Failure emerges here in the tension between husband and wife: the Arab is not only emasculated in his own eyes, but his loss of masculinity is confirmed by her gaze, and the Arab knows that he has failed his wife as a man.

Through yet another window into the Arab’s past, we learn that his immigration to Sweden is motivated by the Arab’s aspiration to recuperate his sense of masculinity: “Over there, everything would start over. Another life, a second chance. A house, a car. Freedom [...] He would give this to her” (ibid.: 131).¹² By regaining his masculinity and the status he has lost in Iran, the Arab hopes to win back the love of his wife by proving to her that he can be the provider that she expects him to be. However, the Arab’s new reality in Sweden is not congruent with his dreams: his engineering degree is not recognised in Sweden, and although he studies engineering in Stockholm and subsequently finds work with the telecommunications company Ericsson, he is soon made redundant, even though, as the Arab says to himself, “you’re the most qualified” and “Olsson, Petter, Moberg and Ålind were all employed after you” (ibid.: 256).¹³ Considering that these names are stereotypical Swedish names, the Arab’s dismissal rather appears to be the result of discriminatory racist practices than personal failure, and systemic barriers impede the Arab’s chances to realise his expected role as a man.

Be that as it may, the Arab comes to realise that he has changed: “His belly bulged out and was taut against his belt. He had aged [...] He was someone else here. Another man” (ibid.: 163).¹⁴ The Arab has lost his former sense of masculinity on an inter-relational, societal and embodied level, which is, once again, confirmed by his wife, who divorces him once it becomes clear that he cannot provide for her anymore. During his reflections on the train, the Arab recognises that even his life-long credo is a fallacy: “The one who sacrifices most and lives the hardest life reaps the profit in the end” (ibid.: 96).¹⁵ Divorced and alone, estranged from his children, unemployed and on benefits, there is no profit to reap, and all the Arab is left with is “the shame that he has brought upon himself and his name”

11 “Han klarade inte av att hon [...] såg på den här mannen som han var. Som han hade blivit”.

12 “Där borta skulle allting börja om. Ett annat liv, en andra chans. Ett hus, en bil. Friheten [...] Han skulle ge det till henne.”

13 “du är en med mest kompetens”; “både Olsson, Petter, Moberg och Ålind [kom] in efter dig.”

14 “Magen putade ut på honom och spände mot bältet. Han hade blivit äldre [...] Han var en annan här. En annan slags man.”

15 “Den som offerar mest och lever svårast får utdelningen på slutet”.

(ibid.: 202).¹⁶ This shame is increased by the fact that the Arab tries to keep up appearances, as he travels with a briefcase that “contains nothing but a few white sheets of paper” (ibid.: 86).¹⁷ While we learn that the train journey’s purpose is to make it look like the Arab is on his way to, or back from, work, he questions himself: “His face is reflected back. He sees himself. So old now. So worn out [...] Is it possible that he was wrong?” (ibid.: 192).¹⁸ The Arab’s life is mirrored back at him in the same way that he sees his face reflected in the dark train window, and he admits to himself that he not only sees himself as a failure, but that his life is a fake. Through the network of sites that the analepses into the Arab’s past create, we can follow the trajectory of failure; how failure is produced, and how it dominates the Arab’s reminiscing in the narrative present. Hence, failure affectively develops the narrative architecture of the Arab’s part of *Araben*, and “the related emotions”, to borrow Carrie Smith-Prei’s argument, “offer us windows on contextual configurations, be these social or political” (2015: 70). On the one hand, these contextual configurations become evident in the clash between a particular perception of masculinity and restrictive exclusionary immigration policies (at least at that time), and, possibly, racist exclusionary work practices; on the other, they are made visible in the ways in which the Arab establishes relations between his own life experiences, now remembered, and those of the (native, white) Swedes around him.

At the beginning of the text, the Arab feels stereotyped by his surroundings, and towards the end of the text he ‘stereotypes back’:

These people who haven’t seen dictatorships, imprisoned teenagers and endless corridors lined with isolation cells, or heard the screams of tortured students [...] who instead have seen welfare states and pensions, stood in queues without any pushing [...] Had faith and felt safe. Is this reality? (Rohi 2015: 198)¹⁹

This direct comparison between the Arab’s violent past and contemporary Sweden highlights the extent in which his reality deviates from a perceived typical native Swedish reality. Moreover, in the Arab’s view, his reality remains unrecognised by those Swedes whom he stereotypes, and instead, he is seen as a threat to the

16 “skammen som han dragit över sig och sitt namn”.

17 “endast rymmer några vita ark”.

18 “Hans ansikte reflekteras tillbaka. Han ser sig själv. Så gammal nu. Så sliten [...] Kan det vara så att han haft fel?”

19 “De här människorna som inte sett diktaturer, fängslade ungdomar och oändliga korridorer med isoleringsceller eller hört skriken från torterade studenter [...] de som istället sett välfärdsstater och pensioner, ställt sig i kö utan att trängas [...] Haft tilltro och varit trygga. Är detta verkligheten?”

welfare state he describes so cynically. This is implied when the Arab assumes the viewpoint of a derogatory perception of 'others' that he ascribes to the woman opposite him on the train: "a potential wife-beater and rapist who also quite possibly talks too loudly in the library and probably brings his own packed lunch to the café and is likely to be a scrounging benefits recipient" (ibid.: 9).²⁰ This woman comes to stand for the majority of white, native Swedes who, in the Arab's anticipation, construct him as someone who does not know the rules, exploits the Swedish welfare state, and is potentially a criminal. The Arab juxtaposes this perspective with his own opinion not only of Sweden, but of the whole North, which seems to him like "a narrow-minded, lousy little town in the European expanse [...] Like a remote backwater" (ibid.: 253).²¹ From the Arab's viewpoint, the ostensible remoteness of the North is responsible for the insularity of the Swedes, who, with their supposed lack of experience and diverging realities, will never be able to understand him, and this incompatibility of conflicting realities interferes with the Arab's sense of belonging. The narrators' focalisation of the Arab and the use of free indirect discourse allow the reader to share the Arab's reflections and emotions; and, when the Arab distances himself, and simultaneously the reader, from the perceptions he presumes the outside have of him, the text invites the reader to assess the Arab on his own terms, while it, at the same time, grants the reader a view on Swedish society from the Arab's marginalised position.

Through the prism of the Arab's disillusioned perspective of himself and his life in Sweden, the train can be seen as a liminal zone that is suspended in time, and the train journey becomes a metaphor for a life pending in non-belonging. When, as Sara Ahmed asserts, "being-at-home is a matter of *how one feels or how one might fail to feel*" (2000: 89, original emphasis), and when belonging is equated with a sense of being-at-home, the fact that the Arab feels, and is made to feel, a failure, would explain that he does not feel he belongs. Yet, the ending of the text suggests otherwise. Ahmed suggests that home, as "the lived experience of a locality" (Brah 1996: 192), is experienced with all senses as it "involves the enveloping of subjects in a space which is not simply outside them: being-at-home suggests that the subject and space leak into each other, *inhabit each other*" (Ahmed 2000: 89, original emphasis). Whilst the Arab travels through Stockholm, he repeatedly comments on the weather, and insinuates that the appreciation of the Swedish winter is yet another national cliché that he is supposed to adopt: "You have to love the winter in this country" (Rohi 2015: 200).²² This comment distances the Arab from a stereotyped Swedish appreciation of winter, but when his train journey

20 "han, potentiell kvinnomisshandlare och våldtäktsman som även är en potentiell högpratare på biblioteket och kan tänkas medha matsäck på kafé och vara parasiterande bidragstagare".

21 "en inskränkt liten byhåla i det stora Europa [...] Som en liten avkrok."

22 "Man måste älska vintern i detta land."

comes to an end, the Swedish winter inhabits the Arab on his walk home, and he, in turn, fully inhabits his own appreciation of it. The Arab and the space around him leak into each other: “but it is so wonderful to look at the snow and love it [...] The cold invades him without him noticing [...] He feels how it takes over his whole body” (ibid.: 281).²³ Through the Arab’s appreciation of the Swedish winter, failure, which hovered affectively over the Arab’s train journey, yields to a feeling of gratitude, and, at least in this instance, failure and shame are transcended in the Arab’s sense of connectivity and embodied fusion with the cold, which becomes synecdochical for Sweden, and the narrator concludes, “In this moment, he is a grateful man” (ibid.: 281).²⁴

Remembering: Turning towards each other

The mnemonic affective space in which Senthil and Valmira construct their memories in *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* is also, although in different ways, a liminal and contingent space: it is online and virtual, their encounter is not embodied, and their conversation is non-committal insofar as they could leave it at any moment without any consequences. Weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of the online and the offline world, Zygmunt Bauman argues that in the offline world, “I am *under control*” because I am “expected [...] to obey, to adjust, to negotiate my place, my role”, whereas in the online world, I am “*in control*”; in addition, an online existence promises “liberation from the discomforts, inconveniences and hardships” (2016: 104, original emphasis) that characterise the offline world. In this sense, the online world grants Senthil and Valmira the freedom to share the hardships of their respective pasts without the regulating forces of the offline world, and with remoteness from the exclusionary discourses which the Arab negotiates in direct contact with his surroundings. While the Arab turns inwards towards his past, and outwards to engage with these discourses, Senthil and Valmira turn towards each other; they are in control, as they can manage and direct their reflections in this alternative online space. However, when Valmira states, “We can only talk to each other from this distance” (Varatharajah 2016: 120),²⁵ and Senthil confirms this with “I know” (ibid.: 121),²⁶ it suggests that it is not only the remoteness from an exclusionary society, but also from each other, which grants

23 “men det är så härligt att se på snön och älska den [...] Kylan tränger in utan att märkas [...] Han känner det ta över hela hans kropp.”

24 “Han är i detta ögonblick en tacksam man.”

25 “Wir können nur aus dieser Entfernung zueinander sprechen”.

26 “ich weiß”.

them the freedom to share and work through memories that are, potentially, painful.

Senthil alludes to the advantages of the online world when he, in a direct reference to Wittgenstein's limits of language, says, "nobody will know from which edges we speak" (*ibid.*: 30).²⁷ On the one hand, these edges can be viewed as the margins of society from which Senthil and Valmira observe this very society; on the other, this reference reflects Senthil's doubts to capture the significance of their memories with words. At the same time, Senthil uses language to express the contingency of these memories when he says, "I remember",²⁸ only to correct himself immediately afterwards to "I think I can remember" (*ibid.*: 210),²⁹ suggesting that the events he is recalling might have taken place in the way he recounts them – or slightly different. Discussing the social function of narrative memory, Mieke Bal asserts that the meaning-making process happens in dialogue, as "narrative memory offers some form of feedback that ratifies the memory" (1999: x). As Senthil and Valmira reiterate particular phrases and images to define their memories, they make use of this function: they make their memories tangible not only in their own imagination, but also in that of their interlocutor, and thus ratify their memories and give them reliability in dialogue. In addition, Senthil and Valmira's mutual reassurances imply that there is a certain knowledge of truth within these contingent memories that does not require words anyway. Senthil says, "you know it" (Varatharajah 2016: 129),³⁰ when he assumes that Valmira knows what he means without him having to explain it, and she echoes this notion with, "You know it, I don't need to tell you" (*ibid.*: 191).³¹ This knowledge of truth is that, although their experiences differ, they produce the same affects. Words might be insufficient to express Senthil and Valmira's experiences accurately, but the unspoken understanding of shared affects grants their memories veracity. Not every detail of what they remember might be correct, whereas the affects are: the truth lies in what these experiences felt like.

Senthil and Valmira not only compare their own experiences, but also mirror their parents' professional histories. Valmira says about her mother, "she wanted to become a neurologist" (*ibid.*: 75),³² and that she has worked in doctors' surgeries for thirteen years, but as a cleaner; and Senthil responds with, "my mother has

27 "niemand wird wissen, von welchen rändern wir aus sprechen". (Senthil consistently writes German with lower-case initials, thus self-consciously flouting orthographical conventions.)

28 "ich erinnere mich".

29 "ich glaube mich erinnern zu können".

30 "du weißt es".

31 "Du kennst es, ich muss es Dir nicht sagen."

32 "Sie wollte Neurologin werden".

worked as a cleaner for almost twenty-five years.” (ibid.: 84).³³ Although Senthil and Valmira do not explicitly mention it, there is a tacit understanding that their mothers’ careers did not become diverted for lack of ambition, but rather because of exclusionary politics which consider asylum seekers such as their mothers only fit for unskilled work. Moreover, Senthil talks about the “council flat” that they “were allowed to move in” (ibid.: 90),³⁴ and Valmira remembers the time when she “was allowed to go to school” (ibid.: 74).³⁵ The reiteration of the verb to allow – in German *dürfen* – emphasises that Senthil and Valmira are at the mercy of the German government, as their mothers’ work, where they live and what they learn is contingent on German immigration regulations. Harald Welzer asserts that, “[c]ommunicative memory denotes a willful agreement of the members of a group as to what they consider their own past to be, in interplay with the identity-specific grand narrative of the we-group” (2008: 285). From this perspective, Senthil and Valmira seek agreement on their respective pasts in communication and relate their memories to the we-group, in their case German society. In consideration of Astrid Erll’s argument that “memories are never a mirror image of the past, but rather an expressive indication of the needs and interests of the person or group doing the remembering in the present” (2011: 8), Senthil and Valmira’s way of remembering serves a particular purpose in their lives in the narrative present: in dialogue, they find recognition for a past that is usually disregarded or marginalised by the predominantly white majority of their so-called host country.

In *Araben*, it is the devaluation of the Arab’s degree, the loss of his wife and job, and the ensuing unemployment which produces a sense of failure and shame, whereas in Senthil and Valmira’s case, shame emerges in the generational gap between the protagonists and their parents. Valmira remembers “the shame” (Varatharajah 2016: 92) about her mother’s lack of German when she was speaking to the officials in the Home Office,³⁶ and Senthil relates that he turned a corner before reaching “the house that my mother cleaned” (ibid.: 243) when he walked home from school with friends.³⁷ In these instances, shame becomes tied to a perceived lack of (linguistic) integration and to social status, even though the cause for this shame (the cleaning job) seems to be brought about by discriminatory policies and practices. Shame, however, also inscribes Senthil and Valmira’s own experiences. Recounting a memory from nursery, Senthil describes how he drew “people with dark skin”,³⁸ and how the nursery teachers pressed a pink crayon between

33 “seit fast fünfundzwanzig jahren arbeitet meine mutter als putzfrau.”

34 “Sozialwohnung”; “beziehen durften”.

35 “die Schule besuchen durfte”.

36 “die Scham”.

37 “das haus, das meine mutter putzte”.

38 “menschen mit dunkler haut”.

his fingers, instructing him, “this colour is called *skin colour*, they repeated it, *this colour we call skin colour here*” (ibid.: 94-95, original emphasis).³⁹ In this context of institutional racialised discrimination, Senthil’s ostensible difference from native, white Germans is simultaneously emphasised and refused on the embodied level of the skin. With using the words ‘we’ and ‘here’, the nursery teachers speak for the whole of German society and assume this society to be overwhelmingly and normatively white. Senthil’s racialised difference is pitched against this norm, and negated: his difference is recognised, but merely as an aberration from the norm, while he, simultaneously, is asked to accept this norm as the status quo and abide by its rules despite his alleged difference.

The fact that Senthil and Valmira are children of asylum seekers adds to their marginalisation, and when it intersects with being othered for their appearance, it elicits a racialised xenophobic rhetoric in their peers. Thinking of her class in school, Valmira remembers that she was called “*filthy beggar* and *dirty asylum seeker*” (ibid.: 93, original emphasis),⁴⁰ and Senthil recalls how some children referred to him and his brother as “the sons of the bogeyman” because there is “dirt” on their skin “that rubs off when you touch us” (ibid.: 94).⁴¹ These practices of othering mark Senthil and Valmira as different, and when this difference is associated with dirt that could potentially ‘contaminate’ the we-group, “the threat posed by strange bodies to bodily and social integrity is registered on the skin” (Ahmed 2000: 46): the separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ works affectively via the skin. Seen this way, Senthil and Valmira are made into Kristeva’s abjects, for “what is *abject* [...] is radically excluded” (Kristeva 1982: 2, original emphasis). The association of otherness with dirt is used to construct Senthil and Valmira as a threat to the immediate members of the white, German we-group, and, by extension, of the whole German body politic. On their path through nursery and school, Senthil and Valmira are purportedly integrated into German society, while they are actually stigmatised, and remain excluded for their embodied otherness.

When Senthil and Valmira change from the past tense to the present tense, it demonstrates that their lives in the narrative now are, despite their belonging to a German student community, still affected by exclusionary discourses and practices. Valmira tells Senthil that her lecturers at university often take her for “an exchange student”,⁴² and further, that one lecturer complimented her on her “*flawless German*” (Varatharajah 2016: 192, original emphasis).⁴³ Armin Nassehi’s notion of a “paradox of the visible” (2014: 2) is instructive in relation with Senthil’s

39 “diese farbe nenne man *hautfarbe*, sie wiederholten es, *diese farbe nennen wir hier hautfarbe*”.

40 “*dreckige Bettlerin* und *schmutziges Asylantenkind*”.

41 “die söhne des schwarzen mannes”; “schmutz”; “der abfärbt, wenn man uns berührt”.

42 “eine Austauschstudentin”.

43 “*fehlerfreien Deutsch*”.

comment on the lecturer's patronizing attitude,⁴⁴ "we are only granted broken German" (Varatharajah 2016: 191).⁴⁵ Nassehi defines this paradox as a conscious oversight, which paradoxically leads to an explicit way of seeing, as visible differences produce a particular kind of attention that is usually mistaken for information from which conclusions are drawn: because someone is visibly different, it is impossible, for instance, that they have a full grasp of the German language. Nassehi summarises whether those perceived as 'other' become "positively or negatively discriminated, makes no difference under aspects of logic" (2014: 2).⁴⁶ This paradoxical way of seeing can be understood as one technique of othering that fetishises Senthil and Valmira. According to Ahmed, stranger fetishism implies that white Westerners produce the stranger as a figure, or a fetish, by recognizing the other as different, and fixing them in a juxtaposition of proximity and distance (2000: 3). When Senthil and Valmira become fetishised in this way, their otherness becomes ontological, as their being is determined from the outside by their status as 'other', or strange. The slide of these processes of othering from the protagonists' past into the narrative present emphasises the continuity of these processes, with a somewhat bleak outlook for the future, as it suggests that such practices will not cease, and that Senthil and Valmira will always be thought of in terms of their supposed otherness.

Conclusion

We have seen how, in *Araben* and in *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen*, histories of marginalisation and othering unravel within the protagonists' memories, and how such histories work affectively as they produce a sense of failure, and shame. For the Arab, this failure is transcended when he feels grateful in a moment of reconciliation with the Swedish cold, and Senthil and Valmira's conversation equally ends on a positive note. Towards the end of the text, Valmira states, "We arrived at the end" (Varatharajah 2016: 240).⁴⁷ In a temporal sense, this indicates that they have worked their way backwards through their memories until they arrived at the moment of their respective departures from Kosovo and Sri Lanka to Germany; and, within the context of their conversation, they have arrived at a point where they can accept the shame (and pain) inherent in their memories. When Bal discusses traumatic memory, she argues that the threatening quality of memory can be alleviated when another person bears witness, and that listening, or dia-

44 "Paradoxie des Sichtbaren".

45 "nur gebrochenes deutsch wird uns zugestanden".

46 "positiv oder negativ diskriminiert, macht unter Aspekten der Logik keinen Unterschied".

47 "Wir sind am Ende angekommen".

logue, can aid to “narratively integrate what was until then an assailing spectre”; and, as Bal continues, “a second person is needed for the first person to come into his- or herself in the present, able to bear the past” (1999: xi). Disregarding the question of whether Senthil and Valmira’s memories qualify as traumatic or not, Bal’s words facilitate an understanding for Senthil and Valmira’s need for each other in this conversation to state the truthfulness of their affectively shared experiences. By stating that this is what their histories felt like, and having it confirmed by their interlocutor, the shame does not necessarily disappear, but Senthil and Valmira find recognition, at least *vis-à-vis* each other, which allows them to come into themselves. It is not surprising then, that these marginalised memories can only emerge in similarly marginal, or liminal spaces, considering that they run contrary to those discourses that usually sustain this kind of marginalisation. In this sense, the protagonists’ histories are pitched against what sociologist Erol Yildiz calls “the prevailing knowledge of the dominant society” (2018: 29),⁴⁸ and the liminal zones of the online world in *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen*, and the trains in *Araben*, are transformed into spaces of resistance in which histories of marginalisation find recognition. By revealing these processes of marginalisation and othering to the reader, both novels demonstrate that, indeed, postmigrant belonging can be pervaded by conflicts and contradictions, and grant the reader a view on German and Swedish society respectively from the margins these societies have created for the protagonists.

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“I don’t write about me, I write about you”

Four major motifs in the Nordic postmigration literary trend

Maimouna Jagne-Soreau

Introduction

In 2003 an intense debate engaging both the media and academia began in the Nordic countries, following the publication of the debut novel by Swedish writer Jonas Hassen Khemiri, *Ett öga rött* (One Eye Red, 2003). The book was then marketed as “the first novel written in authentic broken Swedish [...] the language sounded as if you had put a microphone in the immigrant area of your choice” (Tunedal 2006),¹ while critics commented that “it is lucky that the Swedish editor helped Jonas with the language, otherwise it would be difficult for Swedish readers to understand it” (Björn af Kleen 2006).² Subsequently, Khemiri was made a figurehead for the so-called “immigrant writers” writing “immigrant literature”. Khemiri, however, was born and raised in Stockholm with his Swedish mother and studied economics and literature in a privileged area of the capital. The language and story in the novel are entirely invented by him.

A couple of years later, the Swedish author Astrid Trotzig wrote the essay “Makten över prefixen” (The Power of the Prefix, 2005) and denounced the growing trend of inviting non-white writers to cultural events and expecting them to present an authentic inside voice about “the migrant perspective”. She blames this *ethnic filter* for being a consequence of racialising structures and a problematic amalgam between non-whiteness and immigration. Building upon this idea of an ethnic filter, Magnus Nilsson in *Den föreställda mångkulturen* (The Imagined Multiculture, 2010) later showed how current readings in Sweden are limited by a reduced culture-sociological understanding of the writers’ background. Further,

1 “den första romanen skriven på tvättakta Rinkebysvenska [...] språket lät som när man ‘sänker ner en mikrofon’ i valfritt invandrarområde”. Unless otherwise indicated, the translations are my own.

2 “det är tur att den svenska lektören hjälpt Jonas med språket, annars skulle det vara svårt för svenska läsare att ta till sig det”.

Nilsson develops the idea of “exotic ethnicity” as a capital (in a Bourdieusian understanding) and he posits that a writer’s non-whiteness actually became a capital in the Nordic literary market in the past fifteen years and is used by publishers as a selling hook. Since Trotzig’s essay, the epithet “(im)migrant writer” has been widely criticised and mostly ousted in a Nordic context – at least for when the writer is not an actual migrant writing about the act of migrating itself. Nonetheless, as shown by Nilsson, the reception, the publishers and part of the research have not perceived the problem to the same degree, and the category “migrant literature” is still used to this day (i.e., Löytty 2015; Gröndahl/Rantonen 2018). Almost every month, new writers are highlighted for describing “multicultural life”, “the new Nordic” or “the migrant’s reality”.

However, it should be noted that in this Pan-Nordic phenomenon, most of the writers labelled “migrant writers” lack an actual experience of migration. Furthermore, the homogenous category makes very little sense, as the writers do not have any actual common background, ethnic similarities nor a common language. Nevertheless, they obviously share their non-whiteness.³ With that in mind, I will discuss aspects brought up by the field of Critical Race and Whiteness Studies (cf. Morrison 1992; Delgado/Stefancic 1997, 2001; Habel 2008; Hübinette 2012 etc.), and challenge the alleged colour-blind analyses, focused on, for example, cultural differences. While Trotzig claims that she cannot see any “thematic or literary similarities in the content of [the Swedish racialised authors] Leiva Wenger, Anyuru and Khemiri” (2005: 116),⁴ I will argue that, with the right contextualisation, aspects of the literature portraying racialised characters⁵ actually show marked similarities worthy of analyses. In this article, I focus on four major themes and strategies found in the targeted literature. The motifs are: (1) the play with authenticity and ethnic capital; (2) generational conflicts; (3) problems of racialisation

3 The term non-whiteness is in this context always relative and must be understood in the lines of otherness rather than an actual skin tone. This is typically the case of some Sweden-Finns writers that are interestingly experiencing a shift of category, being white in Finland but not necessarily in Sweden, especially when they write in the genre of proletarian literature. But these cases fundamentally anchor in the broader problematic of social classes, I chose here to focus my analysis around the perception of black, brown and Asiatic people among white majorities, hence focusing on the consequences of racialisation due to visible body markers. Consequently, I will in this article refer to white and white-passing people as non-racialised – a simplification that is not always accurate, but that can arguably be done in the current Nordic context. Nonetheless, it would also be interesting to think in terms of postmigration about the debut novels of for instance Susanna Alakoski (*Svinalängorna* [The Swine Rows], 2006) and Eija Hetekivi-Olsson (*Ingenbarnsland* [No Land for Children], 2012).

4 “Men finns det sådana tematiska eller innehållsmässiga litterära likheter hos Leiva Wenger, Anyuru och Khemiri? Jag menar att det inte gör det”.

5 Wenger, Anyuru and Khemiri are racialised themselves but Trotzig refer here to the *content* of their respective debuts, in which the characters also are all racialised.

and betweenship and (4) the multiple imagined readership. My findings are that while these themes and strategies can have varied significance depending on the publications there are found in, their recurrence reflects the emergence of a new trend in Nordic literature, which I call postmigration literature.

Migrant, postmigrant and postmigration

Having noted the racialising amalgam made between non-white and immigrant, I will now insist on the need to distinguish between the literary works depicting an actual experience of migration and the works that do not – as this particular experience and the eventual accompanying trauma most often shape the narratives in a specific way that defines the literary strategies.⁶ To offer a viable alternative to the racialising (when used inappropriately) epithet “migrant writer” and “migrant literature”, I propose a shift of focus from the migrants as individuals with a specific experience, to migration as a phenomenon with transgenerational impacts. Consequently, I suggest using the term *postmigration generation* to refer to individuals in the Nordics who have a connection to migration and are racialised but have no experience (or memories) of migration themselves: typically, second-generation migrants, mixed-race people and transnational adoptees. My attempt while discussing postmigration literature is, in other words, to specifically look at the stories about a generation that has been raised in the shadow of migration as a phenomenon, but not primarily expressing the experiences of a migrant. In a Franco-German context, Myriam Geiser takes a similar approach in her work *Deutsch-türkische und frankomaghrebinische Literatur der Postmigration* (German-Turkish and Franco-Maghrebian Literature of Postmigration, 2015). Furthermore, she insists that:

6 Walking away from the concept of migrant literature when not suitable, one may eventually stumble upon the concept of “postmigrant” – which at first sight can seem more appropriate. Actively first used in Germany by the artistic director of Ballhaus Naunynstraße theatre in Berlin, Shermin Langhoff, she explained that “postmigrant means that we critically question the production and reception of stories about migration and about migrants which have been available up to now and that we view and produce these stories anew, inviting a new reception” (Stewart 2017). Progressively this concept emerged in academia too, for now mostly in Germany and Denmark and in the fields of social sciences and cultural studies (cf. Petersen/Schramm 2017). But however critical and relevant, the idea of postmigrant still focuses on “stories about migration and about migrants” (ibid.) and does not help in our reading of cases like Khemiri’s debut. In my understanding the idea of postmigrant literature is more including and less specific regarding the actual experience of migration or the absence of it, as long as the literature depicts the life *after* someone has migrated – regardless of the generation perspective, and without explicitly questioning the amalgam between non-white and immigrant.

The biography remains crucial for the context of creation of the works, but 'ethnic' traces are far less important than the specific social and cultural experience of the 'descendings' who are confronted with a reality in which the migration of their parents plays a role both in their self-perception and in the perception of others. (Geiser 2015: 308)⁷

In contrast to Geiser however, I propose that taking this definition into a Nordic context, we carefully shift our reading from a socio-political perspective that essentialises the writers, to a literary one, which focuses on the books themselves. I therefore use the term *postmigration literature* (to echo the discussion on migrant and postmigrant literature) and assert that contemporary Nordic literary works which depict the postmigration generation's experience through its main character(s), regardless of the writer's background, actually have a number of common themes and use similar literary strategies.

In this overview article I will systematically apply my findings from my close-reading and analysis of four works that feature characters from the postmigration generation: Norwegian Maria Navarro Skaranger's novel *Alle utlendinger har lukka gardiner* (All Foreigners Have Closed Curtains, 2015); Danish Yahya Hassan's poetry collection *YAHYA HASSAN* (2013); Finland Swedish Adrian Perera's poetry suite *White Monkey* (2017) and Swedish Erik Lundin's rap lyrics in "Suedi" (The Swede, 2015).⁸ By relating the elements of these single readings to a dozen other literary works, which feature characters of the postmigration generation, I will argue that there are enough occasions to speak of a new distinguishable tendency in Nordic literature. I do not mean that all the themes and strategies are necessarily present in every work and I will not have the opportunity to illustrate all these themes and strategies, even when they are present in the books. Moreover, it can be specified that the same themes and strategies also arise in most of the other works that touch on the postmigration generation's experience. The material I use to support my findings has been selected only because it presented clear examples and explicit quotations. Thus, the materiel is far from exhaustive, not necessarily proportionally representative, neither statistically nor from a gender perspective, but it will include works from most of the Nordic countries. It would be interesting to do a quantitative study, but that is beyond the scope of this

7 "Die Biografie bleibt entscheidend für den Entstehungskontext der Werke, allerdings fallen dabei 'ethnische' Spuren weit weniger ins Gewicht als die spezifische soziale und kulturelle Erfahrung der 'Nachgeborenen', die mit einer Realität konfrontiert werden, in der die Migration ihrer Eltern sowohl in ihrer Selbstwahrnehmung als auch in der Wahrnehmung anderer eine Rolle spielt." (Geiser 2015: 308)

8 See the respective articles: Jagne-Soreau 2018a, 2018b, 2018c and 2019.

article.⁹ Nonetheless, from a global, Nordic perspective, my impression is that the tendency of writing postmigration narratives is today mostly present in Sweden. Norway comes second with surprisingly many female writers. Third would be Denmark, and last Finland, although I considered contributions both in Finnish and in Finland Swedish. Regarding Iceland, Greenland and The Faroe Islands it does not seem to be an actual phenomenon in the literature there yet.

Apart from the primary analyses, my examples from Sweden are taken from novelists Jonas Hassen Khemiri's *Ett öga rött* (One Eye Red, 2003), Marjaneh Bakhtiari's *Kalla det vad fan du vill* (Call It Whatever You Want, 2005) and poet Athena Farrokhzad's collection *Vitsvit* (*White Blight*, 2013). For Norway I will take examples from Namra Saleem's novel *I morgen vi ler* (Tomorrow We Laugh, 2016), Sarah Zahid's poetry collection *La oss aldri glemme hvor godt det kan være å leve* (Let Us Never Forget How Good It Can Be to Live, 2018) and Sumaya Jirde Ali's poetry collection *Kvinner som hater menn* (Women Who Hate Men, 2017). For Denmark I will refer to Hassan Preisler's novel *Brun mands byrde* (Brown Man's Burden, 2013), and Maja Lee Langvad's poetry collection *Hun er vred* (She Is Angry, 2015). For Finland, I will refer to Johanna Holmström's novel *Asfaltsänglar* (Asphalt Angels, 2011), and Koko Hubara's narrative essay collection *Ruskeat Tytöt* (Brown Girls, 2017).¹⁰

Authenticity and ethnic capital

Before shifting our focus from the authors to their writings, we will need to note that most of the writers from the collected material are themselves from the postmigration generation (although not only). On the other hand, writers from the postmigration generation do not necessarily all write postmigration literature. Some racialised authors fall out of the scope of postmigration literature, because they actually write about migration – in this case, they are often giving a voice to their parents' generation and this can then be read as migration literature.¹¹ This can be found particularly with Finnish writers – like Nura Farah, Ra-

9 It is yet worth mentioning that Tobias Hübinette in his last book *Att skriva om svenskheten* (To Write About Swedishness, 2019) proposes a very complete quantitative study for the case of "the non-whites' literature in Sweden", including more than 500 book titles.

10 To my knowledge none of the books have yet been officially translated to English except for Farrokhzad's collection (translated by Jennifer Hayashida). Part of Jirde Ali's poems are in English in the text and Perera translated his suite to English himself, although this version is not officially available. Other than in these cases, the English translations in this article are all mine. I will quote these works indicating in parentheses the writer's last name and page number of the publication in the original language.

11 Some books sometimes include more than one perspective and depicts the experience of several generations (typically the grandparents, the parents and the children, cf. Farrokhzad or

nya ElRamy Paasonen and Pajtim Statovci or the Danish authors Halfdan Pisket and Sara Omar, among others. Others fall out of the postmigration scope simply because they write about themes other than racialisation and postmigration. Other non-racialised authors are included because of the topic of their novels. For example, Holmström's *Asfaltänglar* tells the story of two young mixed-race sisters in Finland. Another example could be Danish Julie Sten-Knudsen's poetry collection *Atlantehavet vokser* (The Atlantic Grows, 2013) which includes the perspective of the protagonist's mixed-race (half-) sister. Instances where white writers write about the postmigration generation are however mostly exceptions. This leads us to the first recurrent literary strategy, which is the blurring of the issues of authenticity and performative biographism. Indeed, there seems to be an intention on the authors' side to confuse the reader. These writers are most often writing from a first-person perspective, using a profusion of biographical elements, like their own name, background, age, family constellation or even their own birth and adoption certificate in their works (cf. Langvad's first collection *Find Holger Danske*, 2006). Paradoxically, these same writers simultaneously criticised the biographical reading of their works, maintaining that their books must be seen as performative literature and not as authentic personal testimonies. While Langvad, in fact, published manipulated birth certificates (Ivenäs 2017: 247), Perera for his part warns the readers provocatively, in the forward of his debut collection, *White Monkey*, by saying that "Everything in this poetry suite is fiction/ except the problems".¹² However, later in the poems, he establishes a metafictional game with the reader, writing about a poet discussing the marketing possibilities of his collection with a publisher. He is evoking the idea of a commercial niche for "wog poetry", supported by intertextual references to other successful non-white Nordic poets Farrokhzad, Anyuru and Hassan. A reference to the literary process is also made in most of the other works dealing with the experience of postmigration: describing the writing school (Hassan: 161; Saleem: 177), referring to the publisher or editing process (Hassan: 135; Jirde Ali: 125) or, climax of the *mise-en-abîme*, by explicitly mentioning the Norwegian author mostly known for his polemic autobiographical novel in six volumes, Karl Ove Knausgård (Hassan: 66; Zahid: 47).

Bakthiari). In these cases, it is conceivable that the categories of migration and postmigration will start to go in each other, but for the clarity of my argument I will maintain a clear distinction in this article by separating the two depending on the experience of the main character/protagonist.

12 "Allt i denna diktsvit är fiktion/ förutom problemen".

My reading of the play around authenticity as engaged in postmigration literature is that some authors, more than just responding to the public demand for “real histories”, are showing that they are aware of the existence of the *ethnic capital*. In this way, they denounce it, while they simultaneously ironically capitalise on it (see even a similar conclusion in Geiser 2015: 514). On the other hand, authors who are lacking this ethnic capital run the risk of being accused of cultural appropriation (see for example Melkas/Löytty 2016).

Generational conflict

Another theme central to the idea of postmigration literature is the expression of a generational conflict between children and their parents; the migration and postmigration generations. The manifestation of the conflict takes various proportions, involving a broad series of affects. One could, for instance, distinguish the rage expressed in Hassan’s collection where the parents are wished to be “still-born” (Hassan: 104), from the resentment and deception in Langvad’s collection, where the protagonist is angry with both her adoptive and biological parents for different reasons. A mode developed by Holmström, Perera and Farrokhzad has been to use pathos in depicting a perpetual and tragic misunderstanding between the parents and the children. Authors like Bakhtiari, Khemiri or Skaranger, on the other hand, play down the conflict with humour and irony, mainly by portraying the parents’ alienation through comical anecdotes of culture shock or amusing language mistakes that annoy the children. In fact, even Lundin plays with this register, when he describes the day he “found himself” and decided to assume his Swedish identity, and suggests an absurd and uncomfortable coming-out scene. Some other works partly describe the conflict from the parents’ side. For instance, Jirde Ali writes: “I think she has infected me/ with her disobedience/ My daughter is dangerous” (65).¹³ In these cases, it is interesting to note that a double conflict may be played out. Also, Lars Wendelius in his study of migrant literature in Sweden (1970–2000) analysed the recurring mention of a generational conflict between the migrant generation and their own parents, who stayed in their home country and did not necessarily understand or approve of their children’s decision (2002: 187). We can grasp a spark of this first conflict between parents and grandparents in Farrokhzad’s verses: “My mother said: A woman dug out her mother’s eyes with her fingers/ so that the mother would be spared the sight of the daughter’s decline” (Farrokhzad: 11),¹⁴ although these verses could as well have

¹³ In English in the text.

¹⁴ “Min mor sa: En kvinna grävde ut sin mors ögon med fingrarna så att modern skulle slippa se dotterns förfall”.

been meant by the mother to make her daughter feel guilty, here again confirming a second level of conflict between parents and children.

It is interesting to note that the reason for the conflict appears from time to time as being diametrically opposed. In Skaranger's, Zahid's, Saleem's, Hassan's, Bakhtiari's and Perera's stories, the parents are mocked and teased for not managing to fit in their new country, not mastering the language and societal codes or conflicting with their religion.¹⁵ However, in some other works, such as Khemiri's, Farrokhzad's, Bakhtiari's and Perera's very same books, the parents are criticised for their mimicry and acculturation. This is often illustrated by a change in their culinary practice and the traditional Swedish casserole *Janssons frestelse* is mentioned in the three first works, while the mother in Perera's text is described flushing away all exotic spices and "says she's trying to cook like the other moms:/ mixing blueberries/ with cookie crumbs,/ sausage with water and potatoes" (49).¹⁶ In Jirde Ali's poem, it is through the cleaning of the house that the motif appears, when the mother "scrubs the white walls even whiter" (113).¹⁷ Underlying the symbolism of the food or the whiteness of the metaphorical walls lies the problematic of *hegemonic whiteness* as problematised by Sara Ahmed (2007). The *reorientation* of the parents after this whiteness and its impact on the family dynamic is something Kristina Leganger Iversen says can also be understood on the lines of Homi Bhabha's concept of the *unhomely*, thus creating a link between the privacy of the home and the political of the nation (Iversen 2018: 205).

The first inference of this recurring generational conflict is a confirmed need for distinguishing between the manifestations of the immigrated parents' generation and those of their non-migrated children. The immigrated parents typically manifest tropes of submission, resilience, mimicry and can appear "white washed". The postmigration generation on the other hand uses very different strategies, along the lines of provocation, indignation and open rebellion, thus challenging the classic postcolonial reading strategies and refocusing instead on the question of racialisation. A similar reasoning is made in Langvad's collection, when the protagonist resents her adoptive parents' whiteness and becomes angry at herself for making a correlation between transnational adoption and colonialism: "It may well be that in the majority of cases, children of coloured parents have been adopted by white westerners, but from there to say that transnational

15 Holmström's *Asfaltänglar* would also fit in this category, although it is the white Finnish-Swedish mother that has radicalised herself and clashes with the established Finnish values.

16 "Min mor säger att hon försöker göra mat som de/ andra mammorna:/blandar blåbär och kexsmulor,/ korv med vatten och potatis."

17 "Hun vasker huset fra topp til tå/ Skrubber de hvite veggene enda hvitere".

adoption is a modern form of colonialism, there is still some way to go” (65).¹⁸ Koko Hubara’s thematizing of a third possible generational conflict also confirms this assumption, as the conflict with a third generation clearly appears to go beyond the experience of migration and/or colonialism. By referring to her white mother and addressing her daughter (mixed-race of second-generation and so called “white passing”), Hubara expresses a split in the vision and experience of the (white) world between racialised and non-racialised members of the same family, her own:

For you I am mum, exactly like grandma is my mum regardless of anyone else. But it affects, that our language, our culture, our religion, our history and our bodies only partially cross, even though you are my only biological offspring. It affects you in ways that I cannot imagine and that will be hard to talk about, if I have learned something from being a daughter. (160-161)¹⁹

Also divided by whiteness from the second to the third generation, Preisler observes along the same lines that “it is actually weird that [his] sister Rebecca’s boy is white as chalk when [his] daughter is black as coal” (23).²⁰ The same intrusion of dividing whiteness in the family nucleus was also to be observed from the first to the second generation, in for instance Perera, where the mother is estranged from her son the instant he is born, as the doctor says that the son is “too white for a Sri Lankan woman” (10).²¹ Later she learns to see salvation in her son’s lighter skin tone: “You are not black./ You are white”, she insists, although the son says that he is brown (22).²²

18 “Det kan godt være, at det i langt de fleste tilfælde er børn af farvede forældre, som er blevet adopteret af hvide vesterlændinge, men derfra og så til at sige, at transnational adoption er en moderne form for kolonialisme, er der alligevel et stykke vej.”

19 “Sinulle minä olen äiti, aivan kuin mummu on minulle äiti riippumatta kenestäkään toisesta. Mutta se vaikuttaa, että meidän kieleemme, kulttuurimme, uskontomme, historiamme jakehomme risteävät vain osittain, vaikka sinä olet minun ainoa biologinen jälkeläiseni. Se vaikuttaa sinuun tavoilla, joita en saata kuvitella ja joista tulee olemaan vaikea keskustella, jos mitään olen omasta tyttäryydestäni oppinut.”

20 “det egentlig er underligt, at søster Rebeccas dreng er hvid som kridt, når nu min datter er sort som kul.”

21 “Han säger att jag är för vit för en lankesisk kvinna”.

22 “Jag är inte svart./ Jag är brun./ Du är inte svart./ Du är vit”.

Racialisation and betweenship

While whiteness happened to create a distance between the parents and their children, it is actually the children's non-whiteness that happens to create distance between them and the rest of their surroundings. The depicting of this theme in postmigration literature clearly illustrates the link that still exists between whiteness and the nation in a Nordic context (even mirroring the link between non-whiteness and immigration). Skaranger turned it into an absurd reasoning with the formulation "half-Norwegian, real foreigner" (22),²³ while Lundin addresses the issue by offering the Arabic substantive of 'suedi' as an alternative way of being Swedish. Jirde Ali for her part goes straight to the point: "think of how many people allow the external to decide/ who is Norwegian./ I will forever be an immigrant in your eyes" (37).²⁴ While the ethnic filter questions the reading of the literature written by non-white authors on a meta-level, the topic of otherness which leads to racialisation is omnipresent in the books themselves. In the case of the postmigration literature, a surprisingly recurrent motif is present in stories involving hair:

In high school, he bleached his hair. Or yes, it became more orange, but still. It was like proving. Prove that, like, that, what you see doesn't have to be what you think you see. (Bakhtiari: 127)²⁵

Your brother saw the terrorist's face in the mirror
and wanted a flat iron for Christmas. (Farrokhzad: 19)²⁶

The [skin heads] have no idea that I'm a girl with quite a lot of dark hair on my head,
and I don't want to know what they would do if they knew it. (Holmström: 17)²⁷

Everyone says I have such beautiful hair.
"It's so thick.

23 "halvt norsk [...] ekte utlendinger".

24 "Jeg tenker på hvordan mange lar det ytre bestemme/ hvem som er norsk./Jeg vil for alltid være innvandrere i dine øyne".

25 "I högstadiet blonderade han håret. Eller ja, det blev mer orange, men ändå. Det var liksom för att bevisa. Bevisa att det liksom, alltså, det man typ ser inte behöver vara det man liksom tror man ser".

26 "Din bror såg terroristens ansikte i spegeln/ och önskade sig en plattång i julklapp"

27 "De [skinnskallarna] har ingen aning om att jag är en flicka med ganska mycket mörkt hår på huvudet, och jag vill inte heller veta vad de skulle göra om de visste det".

Not at all

Finnish". (Perera: 42)²⁸

My hair is straight, thick and rough. People have always touched it without permission, and it has often been compared to a horse mane or the fur of a shepherd dog. (Hubara: 68)²⁹

She is angry about being told she has horsehair. (Langvad: 36)³⁰

during the break, the janitor came into the auditorium
complains that there is long black hair everywhere
I say *don't look at me*
there are several pakis
in the parallel class. (Zahid: 49)³¹

I was bullied for [...] my black frizzy hair – all the other Pakistani girls in the class had long and smooth hair, I don't quite understand what happened with my smooth hair genes. (Saleem: 37)³²

The similarity of the features in the anecdotes above is striking and even goes beyond these short excerpts. In Preisler, the protagonist has a kind of fetish for blonde hair and explains that he “prove[s his] Danishness by loving women with white skin and blonde hair and blue eyes” (16).³³ The blond hair as a synonym to success is also the main topic of Alejandro Leiva Wenger's short story “Elixir” (in *Till vår ära* [To Our Honour], 2002) while it is a strong leitmotiv in Khemiri's play *Jag ringer mina bröder* (I Call My Brothers, 2012) just to name a few more. All use black, thick or frizzy hair as a metonymy for physical otherness, which eventually results in a societal otherness involving bullying, shame and fear. These racialising encounters have the clear function of denouncing the Nordic whiteness standard, and it is this aspect of the narratives that once again motivates the need

28 Alla säger att jag har så vackert hår./ “Det är så tjockt./ Inte alls/ finskt”.

29 “Minun hiukseni ovat suorat, paksut ja karheat. Niitä on aina kosketeltu ilman lupaa ja usein verrattu hevosen jouhiin ja paimenkoirien turkkiin”.

30 “Hun er vred over at have fået at vide, hun har hestehår”.

31 “i pausen kommer vaktmesteren inn i auditoriet/ klager på at det ligger langt svart hår overalt/ jeg sier don't look at me/ det er flere pakkiser ++/ i parallellklassen”.

32 “Jeg ble mobbet for [...] det svarte krusehåret mitt – alle de andre pakistanske jentene i klassen hadde jo langt og glatt hår, jeg forstår ikke helt hva som skjedde med glatt hår-genene mine.”

33 “[jeg] beviser min danskhed ved at elske kvinder med hvid hud og blondt hår og blå øjne”.

for a concept as specific as postmigration generation, as opposed to, for instance, Cross-Cultural Kids.³⁴ While this last category addresses the question of belonging created by the parents' travel experience, the study of CCK is developed in a colour-blind tradition, which also biases the reading possibilities. In contrast, acknowledging the recurring patterns of racialisation in the stories, highlights the similarities of the experience of three otherwise quite different groups of people: the children of non-white immigrants, the transnational adoptees and the mixed-race people.

These same three groups were in fact already brought together, relating to the experience of *betweenship*:³⁵ the understanding of identity in a neither-nor dialectic, caused by constant racialisation and the absence of an alternative. The researcher Daphné Arbouz and the Swedish collective *Mellanförskap* describe the betweenship as the challenge of growing up as non-white in a mostly white Europe. It encompasses feelings of illegitimacy, rejection and exclusion paralleled with enclosure (Arbouz 2012). This double rejection is also a recurrent motif in postmigration literature, most often built from two different anecdotes: typically, first through an experience of racism in the Nordic home country and then later by an experience of othering in the (biological) parent(s)' home country. Thus, in Perera's poems the protagonist is called a "mulatto", when he plays in a sandbox in Finland and later his grandfather affirms that he would never fit in Sri Lanka anyway, since he is a "white monkey" (22, 35). Lundin raps about being called a "negro" in Sweden and presented as a Swede by his cousin when traveling to his relatives' home country. In Hassan's poetry we read about several racist encounters in Denmark, but once in Lebanon the protagonist is called a "Danish dog" and is yelled at to "Go the hell back to Denmark" (44).³⁶ Likewise, when Hubara is yelled at to "go back to where [she] came from", she ironically wonders if this means the Finnish suburb of Vantaa or Yemen? (19).³⁷ In Jirde Ali's writing, the dilemma is shown in the paradoxical nature of a pair of questions repeated sixteen times in a row, suggesting the frequency of the confrontations involving various perpetrators asking "When are you going home again?/ Why don't you feel that you belong?" (47).³⁸

34 The Cross-Cultural Kids (or CCK) is a term used to refer to "Traditional TCKs [Third Culture Kids], Bi/multi-cultural/ and/or bi/multi-racial children, Children of immigrants, Children of refugees, Children of minorities, International adoptees, and 'Domestic' TCKs" (Pollock/Van Reken 2009).

35 *Betweenship* is the translation of the Swedish neologism *mellanförskap* that reminds of Homi K. Bhabha's concept of in-betweenness (1994) while still taking a distance to the postcolonial disruptive performativity included in his definition (see Jagne-Soreau 2019: 49).

36 "Danske hunde!/ Skrid tilbage til Danmark råbte han".

37 "mene sinä n-huora sinne mistä olet tullutkin. (Vantaalle? Jemeniin?)".

38 "Når skal du dra hjem igjen?/ Hvorfor føler du ikke tilhørighet?".

A manifestation of *betweenship* that deserves attention occurs when the double exclusion almost seems self-inflicted, as with Zahid's protagonist, who herself thinks that a "summer holiday in Pakistan is not meant for us Norwegians", while two pages later she complains about the Norwegian coldness and conclude that "we foreigners do not tolerate that cold like, *wallah!*" (16-19).³⁹ The association between nation and whiteness appears in these cases to have become an unbeatable reality for the postmigration generation itself and an internalised distancing process can be observed. Education, cultural and financial success and the understanding of what would be a "correct language" are also associated to whiteness in these texts. These negative associations are to be found in the postmigration literature, either as something the protagonists use themselves to criticise others, as in Skaranger's and Khemiri's stories, but more often it is a situation in which the protagonist is a victim, once again being excluded by the community. This can be seen in Hassan when the speaker of the poem is mockingly being called "Gyl-dendal" (like the publishing house) by his peers from the suburb, or when the main character of Saleem's novel moves from the secluded town of Stavanger to a busy multicultural part of Oslo and is there criticised for being "too Norwegian and speaking strangely" (44).⁴⁰ Lundin interestingly identifies this recurring dead-end and first raps about the voluntary role of the "bad boy" and the use of the slang as something that gives respect, since "the one who doesn't fit in does everything to stand out" (54).⁴¹ Later, he nonetheless tackles the problematic fusion of whiteness, Swedishness and success, by confessing the honest penchant for conservative values that he and his friends share, including the stereotypical package house-Volvo-kids and snuff! The same turnaround can be found in Zahid's verses, that I here read as genuine rather than ironical: "When I will be 45/ I will buy a cabin/ in western Norway/ celebrate Christmas there/ light candles and decorate the tree/ with pink glass baubles/ bake all the Christmas cookies/ on TV2" (74).⁴²

39 "sommerferie i Pakistan er ikke ment for oss nordmenn [...] vi utlendinger tåler ikke sånn kulde ass, wallah!".

40 "jeg fikk masse komplekser på grunn av kommentarene på ungdomskolen om at jeg var stygg, at jeg var "for" norsk og at jeg snakket rart [...]".

41 "Den som inte passar in gör allt för att stå ut".

42 "når jeg blir 45/ skal jeg köpe en hytte/ på Vestlandet / feire jul der / tenne stearinlys og pynte treet/ med rosa glasskuler/ bake alle julekakene/ på TV2".

Two imagined readerships

The use of clichés, stereotypes and references is the last recurrent literary strategy I will analyse in connection to the postmigration generation. In most of the works, we can see simplified and stereotypical descriptions, mostly revolving around the status of the language and the vision of multiculturalism vs. Swedishness/Danishness/Finnishness etc. According to my analysis, the use of the stereotypes is a form of distancing performative irony, that eventually leads to two possible mechanisms: laughing with and laughing at. Realising the impact of this mechanism, readers are consequently invited to note that the texts involve two kinds of imagined readers; which I mean, here again, are characterised by their whiteness or non-whiteness. This exact same duality was problematised in the case of Afro American fiction already in 1928: “It is more than a double audience; it is a divided audience, an audience made up of two elements with differing and often opposite points of view” (Weldon 1928: 477). That said, some books work with both readers in mind, although eventually creating an elusive gap between the “critical readers” and the “less perceptive readers” (Eco 1979: 9-10; Richardson 2007: 259). These books can be complicated to spot, as they often operate on several levels, depending on whether or not their satirical irony is perceived – and if it is, to which extent. This is the case in both Khemiri’s and Bakhtiari’s debut. These novels have been analysed in numerous high schools as well as in Swedish For Immigrants (SFI) classes, since they are seen well suited for discussions with people of various backgrounds. On the other hand, they are also often invoked as almost canonical in discussions about multiculturalism in a cultural and political white sphere.

Other books seem to have another kind of ambition and use defined strategies to address a specific readership. Hubara, for instance, explicitly writes for “other brown girls”, and the motto of her publishing platform *Ruskeät Tytöt* (Brown Girls) is “for us, by us”.⁴³ Consequently, her essays offer many invitations to identify (or not) with her, like the engaging question: “Do you also always forget that you are brown?” (19).⁴⁴ Similarly, Lundin by the various language shifts he operates and the nature of his message seems to directly address a racialised audience, one that he on other platforms calls “all the proud *suedis*” (46).⁴⁵ In Skaranger’s and Zahid’s books, mostly the subcultural references suggest an address to a young multicultural readership. These productions do not necessarily actively exclude white readers, although they may sometimes turn them into “strategically placed misreader” (Hedin 1993: 193). More generally, we could conclude that these texts

43 “Meiltä meille”.

44 “Unohdatko säkin aina, että olet ruskea?”

45 “alla stolta Suedis”.

work on the sidelines of the hegemonic whiteness and challenges its limitations, as well as eurocentrism.

On the other side of the spectrum, the implicit reader seems to clearly incarnate whiteness in Perera's, Jirde Ali's, Hassan's and Holmström's stories for instance. This can be seen in the more or less direct address, like when the reader is entangled and called out by the pronoun "you" in Jirde Ali's verses: "*You* ask me to show some skin/ so I can prove/ an unsteady relationship with God./ Then *you* like me better/ *You* like to degrade" (22, my emphases).⁴⁶ Hassan's collection (which I argue is picaresque, see Jagne-Soreau 2018b) also abounds with similar examples; the following verses reveal in passing that he specifically makes fun of the Danish cultural elite, who use old-fashioned expressions like "stepping in the spinach" (meaning "put one's foot in it by accident", i.e. to make an unintended and foolish mistake): "Me I am a wog/ Me I don't understand Danish idioms/ Me I haven't run in no one spinach/ and if *you you* start to/ speak about spinach/ well *you you* will get a problem!" (142, my emphasis).⁴⁷ Perera is less confronting in his poetic discourse, but one should see beyond the embarrassing character of a blonde journalist a systematic tackling of diverse manifestations of racialising micro-aggressions (8, 21, 43, 53, 75). Even next to the character of the friend overcome by white guilt, the protagonist of the poem subtly deplors how he has to put up with an invading whiteness, because "it is clear that [the] friend needs the comfort/ more" (55).⁴⁸ Later on, Perera ultimately stated in an interview following the publication of his poetry suite, "I don't write about me, I write about you" (Lindqvist 2017).⁴⁹ In these cases, we will conclude that the stories are directly targeting the racialising paradigm of the implicit white and privileged Nordic society.

Concluding remarks

By problematizing the discussion of "migrant writers" and "migrant literature" with a critical race and whiteness studies perspective, I proposed to shift the focus of our readings from being biographically centred to being centred around the literary content. This way we began by questioning the racialising amalgam between non-white and immigrants, as well as the attendant essentializing par-

46 "Du ber meg vise hud/ så jeg kan bevise/ et ustødig forhold til Gud./Da liker du meg bedre/ du liker å fornedre".

47 "MIG JEG ER PERKER/ MIG JEG FORSTÅR IK EN DANSKERS IDIOMER/ MIG JEG HAR IK JOGGET I NOGEN SPINAT/ OG HVIS DIG DU BLIVER VED/ MED OG SNAK OM SPINAT/ SÅ DIG DU FÅR EN PROBLEM!"

48 "Det är klart att min vän behöver trösten/ mest".

49 "Jag skriver inte om mig, jag skriver om er".

adigm of our readings. It became important to highlight the specific experience of the racialised postmigration generation in the Nordic literature, as opposed to a colour-blind approach. In this overview article, I demonstrated how the problematising of racialisation appears to be a red thread in the selected material, from the motif of generational conflict caused by the hegemonic whiteness, to the encapsulation of the postmigration generation in an alienating between-ship. In addition, this seemed to have consequences on the literary strategies used by the authors, including a play with authenticity and a specific address to the imagined readership, depending on whether this readership is expected to be white or not. Other themes and strategies I have mentioned in this article, and would be relevant to develop, would encompass an important discussion around the problematic of the nation, engaging perspectives like postnationalism and *glocalisation*. The use of the language in the books could also lead to a more in-depth discussion, as well as the intriguing use of humour, satire and irony. However, we can already assert that the contemporary Nordic literature, which engages the postmigration generation, clearly appears to display similar themes and strategies. This recurrence reflects the presence of a trend, which enables the recognition of a so-called *postmigration literature*.

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Towards an aesthetics of migration

The “Eastern turn” of German-language literature and the German cultural memory after 2015

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In recent years, writers from former communist countries have made a major impact on German literature. Writers including Katja Petrowskaja, Saša Stanišić, Melinda Nadj Abonji, Catalin Dorian Florescu, Ilija Trojanow and many others are highly respected by readers and acknowledged by critics. These writers have received important literary prizes, such as the Chamisso Prize (awarded to German-language authors whose works deal with multiple cultural heritages and are characterised by an innovative use of the German language), the prestigious Georg Büchner Prize (won by Hungarian Terézia Mora in 2018), or even the renowned German Book Prize (awarded to Hungarian-Swiss Melinda Nadj Abonji). The focus of these writers is not limited to the depiction of migration movements from Eastern Europe to Western Europe. Migration movements from Western to Eastern Europe are likewise explored in contemporary films and novels. In those cultural expressions, Eastern Europe is usually staged as either the setting of violent war crimes, criminal cases and investigations (such as in Juli Zeh: *Adler und Engel*, Gerhard Roth: *Der Berg*, Norbert Gstrein: *Das Handwerk des Tötens*), or as a surreal space where family mysteries, traumas and questionable business entanglements take place (Thomas von Steinaecker: *Das Jahr, in dem ich aufhörte, mir Sorgen zu machen, und anfang zu träumen*, Terézia Mora: *Der einzige Mann auf dem Kontinent*), or as exotic destination in adventurous road movies (Fatih Akin: *Im Juli*) and love stories (Ingo Schulze: *Adam und Evelyn*, Terézia Mora: *Das Ungeheuer*). Accordingly, the historical experiences of Eastern European states – including the regime change at the end of the Cold War, the Balkan Wars, traumas caused by terror, violence and communist dictatorships (as thematised e.g. in Herta Müller's prose works) – are now common topics in German literature and culture. Literary scholar Irmgard Ackerman speaks of an “Eastern enlargement” of German language literature (2008). German studies scholar Brigid Haines famously coined the phrase “the Eastern turn” (2008, 2015) to describe contemporary German literature, using it as an analogy to similar concepts such as “the *Turkish turn*” (Adelson

2005, original emphasis) and “the *Balkan turn*” (Previšić 2009, original emphasis) in contemporary German literature.

This exploration of an “Eastern turn” in German literature does not always imply a change in perspective, or even a change of paradigm. It often reaffirms existing binary dichotomies such as the distinction between “migrant literature” and the “German literature”, sometimes even reinforcing ethnic categories of belonging. In this chapter I propose a different reading, combining elements of what is sometimes referred to as “the ethics of memory” with aesthetic dimensions. Following cultural theorist Mieke Bal’s concept of “migratory aesthetics”, I argue that all aesthetics are always migratory, and that the ethics of memory should be expanded through research into the aesthetics of migration, to support the understanding of the complexities of the postmigrant condition. In the first part of this chapter I discuss the notion of “the Eastern turn”, including the reproduction of binary classifications in the discourse on the “Eastern enlargement”, before I turn to the construction of “Eastern Europe” and the ethical assumptions of the societies’ relation to the past. In the third part of the chapter I address the aesthetics of postmigration, as well as the migratory nature of aesthetics. This part of the chapter includes theoretical perspectives on the research on culture in postmigrant societies.

An “Eastern turn”

The concept of the “Eastern European turn” may have its achievements, yet it has limitations and ambiguities as well. The use of the term “turn” rhetorically implies a change of perspective or a shift of paradigm in literary studies. It remains, however, unclear in relation to the historical background, something that already observed in relation to the concept of a “Turkish turn”. As literary scholar Leslie Adelson has pointed out, the German-language literature being part of the Turkish turn should be regarded as conventional *Wendeliteratur* (literally: literature of the turn), that is, as a sphere for reflection on the cultural consequences of the transformation from division to unification in Germany:

Common wisdom has long held that the literature of migration, especially the “guest worker literature” that peaked modestly in the 1980s, reflects the social disorientation of hapless foreign laborers in Germany. I submit instead that the literature of Turkish migration archives an epochal sense of disorientation. Shared by Germans, Turks, and many others too, the epoch is characterized by categorical disorientation and historic reorientation. [...] [T]he Berlin Republic is one site among many where transnational labor patterns of the 1950s and 1960s contributed to a heightened sense of reorientation in the 1990s. In Germany the decade

marked, first and foremost, the multifaceted and rocky transition from national division to unification, a development to which people still refer colloquially as *die Wende*, the turn. (Adelson 2005: 15)

Furthermore, Adelson links the East-West German division with the distinction between, or, clash of, the Oriental and Occidental due to Turkish migration to Germany,¹ relating aesthetic or literary phenomena to both migration trends and the transformations of memory culture. This semantic drift of the East-West coordinates due to the German reunification on the one hand and immigration to Germany on the other can also be applied to the context of the enormous migration from Eastern Europe to Germany, which has had a considerable impact on German literature and memory culture since long before the *Wende* from 1989 and the Eastern European expansion of the EU.

Just like the “eastward enlargement” of German-language literatures had started much earlier than 1989 or the EU-extension towards the east, the scientific discourse on the Eastern turn as such can be put in a broader context. It is in particular helpful to take a look at the recent discussions on what has been called the “Chamisso literature”, that is: literature related to the Adalbert-von-Chamisso-Prize. Academic debates about the “Eastern turn” are shaped by tensions and ambivalences similar those in discussions of “Chamisso literature”. These discussions are framed by the opposition between aesthetic approaches that reject any strict classification into sharply defined normative categories, versus the homogenizing labelling of a text corpus according to a supposed thematic concern, such as the mother tongue and biography of the author, or, on the basis of binary distinctions between “migrant” and “non-migrant” writers. In a widely-cited article from 2008, Brigid Haines talks about an eastern turn of contemporary German literature, by taking note of the extraordinary number of authors writing in German and coming from countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Haines identifies a common “provisional unity” of the literature written by authors with Eastern European origins on the basis of similarities in content and form:

[...] the lived reality of communist rule during the stagnant period before the fall of communism; the alienating experience of migration westwards; the disillusionment with life during and after the economic and political liberalisation of the east

1 Cf. Adelson: “The East-West coordinates of the inner German division during the Cold War become more complicated through the East-West coordinates projecting an assumed oriental presence (‘The Turkish’) on an assumed occidental Germany” (“Die Ost-West Koordinaten der inneren deutschen Teilung des Kalten Krieges werden durch Ost-West Koordinaten, die eine vermeintlich orientalische Präsenz [‘das Türkische’] auf ein vermeintlich okzidentales Deutschland (die Berliner Republik) projizieren, kompliziert” (Adelson 2004: 53).

in the early 1990s; the shocking conflicts in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s; and the disorientation of life in post-Cold War Europe today. (Haines 2008: 139)

She immediately adds, however, that “this body of writing resists containment within historical, national or linguistic categories” (ibid). Thus, the emergence of the (German-language) literature of the Eastern turn seemed to challenge hierarchisation and exclusionary logic of the conventional distinction between “national literatures” and “divergent” literatures. Accordingly, the new classifications and categories proved to be ambiguous and unnecessary in the end, as a result of a general “literariness” or “*poeticisation*” of *literature* – as Haines put it:

[T]he Eastern European turn does not simply denote a wave of new immigrant writers [...] but designates also a conceptual stocktaking of the present, post-“Wende” European moment from a variety of perspectives. Perhaps it is time [...] to retreat from national or linguistic identifications and the concept of distinct cultures inherent in the term “interkulturelle Germanistik”, and to talk instead of the transnational and porous nature of writing. (Haines 2015: 147)

Similar ambiguities can also be discovered in the history of the Adalbert-von-Chamisso-Prize (1985-2017) awarded by the Robert Bosch Stiftung to honour German-language authors whose works are shaped by a change of culture and an unusual way of using the language. The prize has always been discussed as problematic – it has been accused of excluding and *ghettoising* “migrant writers” or of favouring them on the basis of a false differentiation between German literature (as a norm) and migrant writing (as an exception). The rejection of dichotomous thinking, as well as the argument of the universality of multilingualism, has contributed paradoxically to the confirmation of such problematic terms and differences as a kind of assertion in denial. The language of the literature of immigrant authors served, for example, on the one hand as the most powerful instrument of constructing a separate literary corpus based on aesthetic rather than exoticising and marginalising non-literary criteria like the author’s biography or origin. On the other hand, it was exactly the language, the aesthetic quality of a literary work, on the basis of which the authors concerned regard themselves as part of German literature, e.g. Terézia Mora (who considered herself to be “as German as Kafka” – Mora 2005: 28), or Sasa Stanišić: “For me, writing itself is a foreign language. [...] [I]t is neither impossible nor forbidden for a domestic author to experiment, to produce uncommon linguistic structures or to connect to another folklore. A language is the only country without borders” (Stanišić 2008). Aesthetic criteria were, in other words, simultaneously used as means to enforce and to reject the distinctiveness of ‘migrant literature’. In 2016, when the Robert Bosch Stiftung announced that the prize would cease, this ambiguity became visible again. In

their statement they argued that the prize had fulfilled its original objective, since the boundary between German and non-native authors has been overcome – this boundary, however, was assumed to be non-existent even at the time of the establishment of the prize, for example, when the founder of the prize, Harald Weinrich, stated that foreigners can write and speak in better German than native Germans.² The exclusive/exclusionary act of distinguishing non-native authors by means of an award led to their inclusion and to the opening of the literary canon to the Chamisso-literature, whose indistinguishability from the German literature was paradoxically assumed from the beginning. Weinrich in 1983 questioned the notion of “national literature” based on French and British models as well as on the works of canonised authors such as Canetti or Chamisso (as forerunner of later, amongst others postcolonial approaches to the transcultural or cosmopolitan German literatures or to the so-called Germanophonie – instead of Germanistik: Meyer 2012, Schmitz 2009, Sievers 2012, Amodeo 1996). Weinrich applied the dichotomisation between the own and the strange not to national or linguistic belongings, but rather he locates this difference within the (poetic) language itself and interprets strangeness – just like Sklovskij and the Russian formalists – as a precondition of aesthetic experience:

There are many signals showing that foreigners who are writing not in their mother tongue but in German, are urged by the obstructions emerging from the use of a foreign language, also in the case of its good command, to engage with the language more than others [...]. In this case, the language draws attention to itself, with an irreducible remainder of strangeness. (Weinrich 2017 [1983]: 45)³

Thus, German language literature of authors whose mother tongue is not German advanced from an exception (*Sonderfall*) to the rule (*Modellfall*), illustrating the aesthetically constitutive function of strangeness and alienation as well as the un-

2 Cf. Weinrich: “[F]oreigners [talk and write] in a better German than some Germans” (“die Ausländer [sprechen und schreiben] bisweilen sogar ein besseres Deutsch als mancher Deutsche”); “German authors coming from the outside can become, just like any author of a German origin, a master of German language and a model of the good use of German language” (“die deutschen Schriftsteller, die von außen kommen, [können] ebenso gut wie Schriftsteller binnendeutscher Herkunft Meister der deutschen Sprache und Vorbilder guten deutschen Sprachgebrauchs werden” – Weinrich 2017 [1983]: 46f.).

3 “Es gibt also viele Anzeichen dafür, dass Ausländer, die nicht in ihrer Muttersprache, sondern in deutscher Sprache schreiben, durch die Behinderungen, die ihnen die Fremdsprache auch bei guter Sprachbeherrschung noch auferlegt, angehalten werden, sich mehr als andere auf die Sprache einzulassen [...]. Mit einem irreduktiblen Rest Fremdheit macht die Sprache hier auf sich selber aufmerksam.”

tenability of any distinction between a German national literature and “migration literature”.

The theoretical and terminological debates surrounding both the Chamisso-literature and the Turkish or Eastern turn of German literature underline the primacy of aesthetic dimensions. Nevertheless, the majority of works on German-language literature of authors from Eastern Europe seek to propose a common ensemble of motifs, themes and narrative techniques and are affected by ethical rather than aesthetic considerations.⁴

The same applies not only to literary criticism on migration literature, but also to conventional research of migration: both are characterised by exclusionary binary demarcations (such as the one between the norm, that is “national literature” or “majority society” and the deviance, that is “migration literature” or “migrants”) and by settings of thematic and ethical priorities. As the academic discourse on postmigration recently pointed out, mainstream research on migration still makes use of normative and hierarchical categories, and thus treats migration narratives as exceptional or marginal phenomena and as cause for conflicts and struggles (Yildiz 2014: 22). Ethnologists Regina Römhild even refers to an exclusive “migrantology”, exclusively focussing on ‘migrants’ as the object of research (Römhild 2017: 70).⁵

Critical migration research, however, aims to explore the naturalised “centre” from the perspective of its ethnicised and racialised “margins” as being part of a post-migrant space (Römhild 2017: 69) – as a result, the presence of migrants would be regarded as a source of cultural transformation⁶ and migration research “would be cosmopolitanised and turned into a general study of cultural and social realities crossing ethnic and national boundaries” (ibid.) From the point of view of literary studies, this shift in perspective should go along with the restoration of the primacy of the aesthetic, that is with the analytic view of aesthetic negotiations of social dynamics and of the discursive construction of inclusive and ex-

4 Immacolata Amodeo explains the “silence on aesthetics” (Amodeo 1996: 22) with the fact that “migration literature” in general is received and read through the glasses of stereotypical moral categories, as an educational message, a state of moral commitment and a matter of a charitable German philology (“Wohltätigkeitsgermanistik”, ibid.).

5 Cf. Römhild: “One underlying problem here is that migration research is often understood merely as ‘research about migrants’, producing a ‘migrantology’ that is capable of little more than repeatedly illustrating and reproducing itself; a ‘migrantology’ that at the same time plays its part in constructing its supposed counterpart, the national society of immobile, white non-migrants. [...] What is lacking is not yet more research about migration, but a migration-based perspective to generate new insights into the contested arenas of ‘society’ and ‘culture.’” (Römhild 2017: 70)

6 “Migratory, in this sense, does foreground the fact that migrants (as subjects) and migration (as an act performed as well as a state to be or live in) are part of any society today, and that their presence is an incontestable source of cultural transformation.” (Bal 2007: 23)

clusive mechanisms, as recently described by Moritz Schramm. When seen from this perspective,

migration is not understood as a special case or historical exception, the consequences of which are only dealt with by a particular group in society, but rather as normality, through which current societies are shaped and which always precedes the production of literary and artistic texts. The specific view of a “postmigrant perspective” therefore aims to expand the focus on the experience of migrants and their descendants, which dominated in previous research, with the focus on the way migration and their consequences are negotiated in the society. [...] Accordingly, this perspective can be applied on the entire body of literature, and literature studies will in this way be *migrantised*: because from this perspective, all works, irrespective of their authors or their subject matter can be read anew. (Schramm 2018: 95)⁷

In this way, the aesthetics of postmigration would provide an opportunity to challenge naturalised binary categories (which are being reproduced in the discourse on migrant literature/ literature of the Eastern turn) – an opportunity that appears especially productive in the context of investigating the invention of Eastern Europe as a counterpart to Western Europe. The aesthetic dynamics of establishing categories (like ‘migrant’ and ‘non-migrant’, ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western-Europe’) has until now been somewhat unexplored, just like the discursive construction and imagination of Eastern Europe as such. Instead, East-West migrations within Europe (just like “migrant writing”) have been connected with ethical issues (concerning European values, Europe as a dialogue-based community of memory acknowledging responsibility for political crimes⁸ or human rights and their violations) and with questions of the politics of remembrance and cultural commem-

7 “Migration wird [...] nicht als Sonderfall oder historische Ausnahme aufgefasst [...], sondern als Normalität, durch die die aktuellen Gesellschaften geprägt sind und die der Herstellung von literarischen und künstlerischen Texten immer schon vorausgeht. [...] Zugleich wird der perspektivische Zugang auf die in den Texten verhandelte Migration und ihre Folgen auf den ganzen Korpus der Literatur angewandt, die Literaturwissenschaft auf diese Weise *migrantisiert*: denn aus dieser Perspektive können alle Werke, unabhängig ihrer Verfasser*innen oder ihrer thematischen Ausrichtung, neu gelesen werden.” (Schramm 2018: 95)

8 Cf. Aleida Assmann: “Two countries engage in a dialogic memory if they face a shared history of mutual violence by mutually acknowledging their own guilt and empathise with the suffering they have inflicted on others. As a rule, national memories are not dialogic but monologic. [...] In Western Europe, the national constructions of memory have become more complex through the acknowledgement of collaboration. In many Eastern states, however, the memory of the Holocaust has to compete with the memory of one’s own victimhood and suffering under communist oppression which is a hot memory that emerged only after the end of the Cold War.” (Assmann 2012: 58)

oration (concerning the historical experience and the memory of a totalitarian and violent past behind the Iron Curtain). This was the case not only after the Second World War, when the idea of the European Union was born, but also after the end of the Cold War in 1991, when the Holocaust and the Gulag were being discussed as transnational European memories, as well as during the so called ‘migrant crisis’ in 2015, when the notion of Eastern European “otherness” seemed to revive and come into conflict with Western (European) ideas and values.

Migration movements and the construction of (Eastern) Europe

Remembering and being on the move equally belong to the *condition humana*. The challenges of memory culture (such as coming to terms with historical crimes and traumatic experiences or the constitution of a transnational European community of memory) and migration (escape, displacement, deportation or freedom of movement) entangle with each other not only in special historical context but also on the basis of their moral and ethical discursive frame. The first example for this is marked by the date 1945: coping with the unprecedented crime of the Holocaust the internalisation of guilt (that is the formation of German perpetrators’ memory) led to a paradox constellation that Dan Diner called ethnicising of the own history,⁹ that is, when turning-away from the Nazi past functions as a precondition of being German, of belonging to the German nation as a community. The “negative memory” of the Germans (Koselleck) was controversially discussed in the context of Germany’s becoming a country of immigration (“Einwanderungsland”): recent studies analyse German contemporary history as migration history (Motte and Ohliger 2004), examine the relation of the youngest generation of migrants to the Holocaust (Georgi 2003), advocate the involvement of the historical experience of immigrants in the German memory culture and argue that the normative national pedagogy of memory based on guilt should be pluralised and de-ethnicised (Welzer 2012). In classic countries of immigration like the USA, the *stranger* (newcomer) was, as defined by the Austrian emigrant and sociologist Alfred Schütz in 1944, “a man without history” (Schütz 2011 [1972]: 65) and the detachment from the past insured successful naturalisation. In Germany, however, exactly the opposite is true: holding on to the past, taking on the burden of history is, as Assmann argues, a civil right of negative memory (“Bürgerrecht der negativen Erinnerung”), equally essential for immigrants and Germans (Assmann 2013: 125f). Michael Rothberg elaborates two forms of social paradoxes in this context:

9 “Those who define their belonging to the nation by turning away from the Nazi past are considered Germans” (“Als deutsch gilt, wer seine Zugehörigkeit zur Nation durch eine Abkehr von der Nazi-Vergangenheit definiert”) – Dan Diner, cited by Assmann 2013: 128.

Two dominant social logics in unified Germany regulate who inherits the past and what rights and responsibilities accompany that inheritance: a *German paradox*, in which ensuring responsibility for the crimes of the recent past seems to require preservation of an ethnically homogeneous notion of German identity, even though that very notion of ethnicity was one of the sources of those crimes; and a *migrant double bind*, in which migrants are simultaneously told that the Holocaust is not part of their history because they are not “ethnically” German and then castigated as non-integratable for their alleged indifference to Holocaust remembrance. (Rothberg 2014: 137)

Since Germany is simultaneously post-Holocaust and post-migrant (ibid.: 142), Rothberg attempts to bring together the histories of overcoming the past (*Aufarbeitung*) and labour migration, the legacies of the past and the complexities of the present by putting the question of Zafer Şenocak: “Doesn’t immigrating to Germany also mean immigrating into Germany’s recent past?” (Şenocak 1993: 16). His answer provides a way out from the paradox mentioned above: Rothberg argues for recognising the multi-directionality of collective memory and pursues “the conjunction of migration and Holocaust remembrance as a way of thinking through the emergent transnational turn in memory studies” (Rothberg 2014: 125). Accordingly, he suggests focusing on the ‘touching tales’ or ‘multi-directional memories’ of the ‘thickened places of post-migrant memory cultures’:

[C]onsidering under-explored migrant engagements with the Holocaust and the National Socialist past allows us to demonstrate that German memory cultures can open themselves to a redefinition of German identity that takes into account the fundamental demographic transformations and transnational flows of the postwar period without jeopardizing German responsibility for the Holocaust. (Rothberg 2014: 126)

Aleida Assmann provides another solution for the ethnic paradox when claiming that younger generations do not identify with the narrative of guilt and redemption, but rather tend to develop empathy with the victims of human rights abuses in general (Assmann 2013: 129). Entering an ethical (rather than ethnic) memory culture emerging after, and due to, the crimes against humanity committed in the world wars also provides a future prevention from anti-Semitism and racism, which Assmann calls “European dangers” (ibid.: 123). The universalistic discourse on human rights and responsibilities that emerged after 1945 was, according to Assmann, provided with new perspectives and impulses after the mass migration in 2015. Just like after the second World War, European societies were forced to confront indescribable and heretofore unseen suffering as well as the moral imperative of remembering and seeing them (ibid.: 208). Consequently, the foun-

dations of a transnational European community relying on human rights and solidarity were started to be discussed more often.

In both contexts – in 1945 and in 2015 – the constitution of a European community and a transnational memory culture based on universal ethical premises proceeded along with the discursive construction of Eastern Europe on the one hand and with coming to terms with the violation of human rights on the other hand. This was also the case in 1989 as well as after the Eastern European expansion of the EU in 2007. Regarding the traumatic history of Eastern European states transferring from dictatorship to democracy, a fundamental asymmetry emerged between the former Eastern European nations, and the Western European memory culture. In particular, the monologic national memories of Eastern European countries were opposed to the dialogic or European remembering of countries facing “a shared history of mutual violence and mutually acknowledging their own guilt and empathise with the suffering they have inflicted on others” (Assmann: 2010: 17). Assmann also stresses that Western European constructions of national memory rely on the acknowledgement of collaboration, as opposed to the Eastern states, where “the memory of the Holocaust has to compete with the memory of one’s own victimhood and suffering under communist oppression, which is a hot memory that emerged only after the end of the Cold War” (ibid.: 18). I cannot enter into details about debates on the Europeanisation of Holocaust memory and the significance of the *Gulag memory* of post-communist European countries, but it is important to explain that the difficulty of remembering traumatic and dictatorial memories in Eastern Europe was problematised not only after the reunification of East and West in 1989 but also during the European ‘migrant crisis’ in 2015. Whereas after 1989 post-Soviet memories were generally accused of oscillating between “self-victimisation and historical revisionism” (Assmann 2013: 142-180), following 2015 the migration politics of Eastern European states (especially their refusal to participate in the quota system) was not only interpreted as disrespect of fundamental European values and human rights, but also as ingratitude considering that Western Europe had taken Eastern refugees in large numbers, and without hesitation, after the Prague Spring of 1968 or the Hungarian revolution in 1956. Thus, the history of demarcating lines between an assumedly homogeneous, modern progressive Western Europe and its backward, corrupt and chaotic Eastern neighbours did not stop with the end of the Cold War, and has actually been much further reaching than we would assume: As Larry Wolff pointed out, the hierarchical othering of Eastern Europe as an exotic, strange and threatening counterpart of the West originates in the Age of Enlightenment (Wolff 1994) and started with a very early drawing up of a frontier between “*Europa occidentalis*” and “*Europa orientalis*” (Liebhart 2017: 30, emphasis in original). But, more relevant for our topic is the fact that this work of cultural creation (the role of the aesthetic manifestation in the representation and

deconstruction of the East-West dichotomies) has hardly ever been systematically taken into account, as opposed to the ethical issues concerning Eastern European history or European memory cultures occurring at their touching points with the complex of questions concerning migration.

Towards an aesthetics of post-migration

Remembering and migrating are not only both anthropological constants but they are also equally reliant on aesthetic representation and reflection, that is, they are narrativised, mediated by means of literary strategies and thus become parts of the cultural memory. The relation between migration and cultural product is therefore not only a thematic one, as Mieke Bal and Sam Durrant explain:

The relation between migration and aesthetics is not simply one of representation, in which the latter is simply a mode of representing the former. Beyond the question of how the multiple modern experiences of migration are represented in various art forms is the question of the impact of migration on artistic production and the category of the aesthetic. The formulation migratory aesthetics draws attention to the ways in which aesthetic practice might be constituted by and through acts of migration. (Durrant/Lord 2007: 11f.)

The migratory is not only a research subject but a significant force transforming societies (Yildiz 2014: 21) and similarly, the art of migration is to be understood in terms of its aesthetic implications and poetic construction and not on the basis of its theme, object or author. This is also due to the openness and processuality of the constitution of meaning and to the performativity implied in migrational processes.¹⁰ Transformations and bordercrossings (between the own and the strange, settledness and mobility, centre and periphery) possess an aesthetic-artistic potential: the questioning of what seems natural, obvious and unambiguous, the confusion and dissolution of normative differentiations and hegemonies, condensation or thickening and alienation, linguistic hybridisation and deterritorialization are both migratory and aesthetic practices and experience. The migrant position is po-togeneous and conversely, “aesthetics is by its very nature migratory” (Durrant;

10 “I would like to present the modifier [migratory, E.P.] as a constructive focus of an aesthetics that does not leave the viewer, spectator, or user of art aloof and shielded, autonomous and in charge of the aesthetic experience. If aesthetics is primarily an encounter in which the subject, body included, is engaged, that aesthetic encounter is migratory it takes place in the space of, on the basis of, and on the interface with, the mobility of people as a given, as central, and as at the heart of what matters in the contemporary, that is ‘globalised’, world.” (Bal 2007: 23f)

Lord 2007: 11). As Aydemir and Rotas convincingly argue concerning the “mutual implication of the aesthetic dimension of practices of migration and the migratory dimension of aesthetic processes” (Aydemir and Rotas 2008: 8), migration signifies a movement of arrival, in which both space and time equally become thickened:

Migration not only takes place between places, but also has its effects on place, in place. In brief, we suggest a view on migration in which place is neither reified nor transcended, but “thickened” as it becomes the setting of the variegated memories, imaginations, dreams, fantasies, nightmares, anticipations, and idealizations that experiences of migration, of both migrants and native inhabitants, bring into contact with each other. Migration makes place overdetermined, turning it into the *mise-en-scène* of different histories. (Aydemir/Rotas 2008: 7).

Dichotomous divisions between places (“migration as a movement from place to place” vs. “migration as installing movement *within* place”), between history or memory and migration (Rothberg’s “German paradox” and “migrant double bind”), between permanence and movement (*emplacement* vs. Migration) or between “‘real’ political, social, and economic” and “fictional, staged, imagined, perceived, or aesthetic [scenery, E.P.]” (Aydemir and Rotas 2008: 7) are thus suspended and overcome. Research related to the time (simultaneity) and place (spatial simultaneity) of post-migrant memory cultures can therefore not do anything else than to appeal to the aesthetics of migration, it is akin to the analysis of the linguistic or imaginative-literary thickening, as well as of the spatiotemporal relations within the diegesis.¹¹

Recent discussions on immigration let us recognise the hidden fact that mobility is a norm and all cultures are, in their genesis and at their core, polyphonic and determined by migration. Similarly, academic debates about migration literature and the aesthetics of migration only uncover the fundamentally metaphoric, that is to say migratory, nature of culture. The etymological meaning of the word metaphor (standing for transport, uncertainty, mobility and multi-temporality¹²) can be connected (and that is a telling point) to the meaning of migration:

11 “[M]igratory settings crucially indicate the spatial simultaneity of the histories and futures that various groups of natives and immigrants remember, project, and imagine. The prior anticipations of the new place of living by migrants, as well as their retrospective memories of the old place, become active parts of the new environment that they share with other inhabitants. [...] [T]hese memories are, in fact, ‘acts of imagining’ that produce cultural identifications that cannot be reduced to either place. At the same time, these actively imagined and re-imagined memories become part of the place where they take place, enhancing and transforming it.” (ibid.: 20)

12 “Metaphor exists in two realms at the same time; realms that are each enfolded in their own temporality. Hence, metaphor is able to bridge the gap between temporalities as well as spaces

Thus, migration becomes a double movement, a double metaphor: of transport, hence of instability – the first movement; and subsequent productive tensions – the second movement. Every culture has the aesthetics it deserves; contemporary culture, we contend, has therefore a “migratory aesthetics”. (Bal 2011: 12)

The imagination and cultural representation of Eastern Europe, as we have seen, provides a productive analytical frame for the study of the presence of Eastern European writers in German literature, whose position subverts East-West dichotomies and displays the axiomatic role of performativity and metaphoricity, of the permanent mobility (or instability) of meaning, of space (deterritorialisation), of time (heterochrony) and of identity narratives (pluralisation). Assuming that migration is not a topic but an aesthetic and that culture and aesthetics are fundamentally migratory, I argue that by completing the ethical terminology and approaches with research on the aesthetics of migration, one can not only adequately grasp phenomena like the Eastern turn of German-language literature, but also productively address the complex consequences of the post-migrant condition.

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or semantic units. Accordingly, metaphor is multidimensional and, specifically, multi-temporal. [...] This usefulness of metaphor resides in the concept's own materiality: its refusal to let go of its etymological past where it stood for transport and is persistent association with uncertainty, mobility, and, we insist, multi-temporality.” (Bal 2011: 13)

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Towards an aesthetics of postmigrant narratives

Moving beyond the politics of territorial belonging

in Ilija Trojanow's *Nach der Flucht* (2017)

Markus Hallensleben

Building on investigations of Ilija Trojanow's writings as counter-narratives to nationally centred models of narration,¹ I suggest evaluating his collection of aphorisms *Nach der Flucht* (After the Flight, 2017) as a critical stance against current politics and societal processes of global (im)mobilities and forced migration.² At times, when "great importance is attached to the principle of asylum but enormous efforts are made to ensure that refugees (and others with less pressing claims) never reach the territory of the state where they could receive its protection" (Gibney 2004: 2), Trojanow aims for an acceptance of exile and migration as inherent social movements of a pluralised world. He sees flight as an asset³ and understands "Auf-bruch" (2017a: 84) as a departure, breaking-up and uprising at once (ibid.: 73). Thus, he pictures immigrants and refugees as having an active political voice in establishing and maintaining a new core narrative of plural societies. For him, somebody "who is on the move can deal better with paradoxes" (ibid.: 108),⁴ whether these pertain diversity constructions, or the "cultural freedom" (ibid.: 113)⁵ of an individualised pluralism that is at the core of plural societies, as outlined by philosopher Isolde Charim (2018). Moreover, Trojanow's postmigrant narrative is not only based on diversity and multiplicity, but also sees migration as the driving force for creating a notion of belonging that goes against any hege-

1 See, for instance, Herrmann/Smith-Prei/Taberner 2015; Mittermayr 2011; Preece 2013; Taberner 2017; S. Wagner 2015: 137-208.

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3 All translations from German, including Trojanow's texts, are mine, if not indicated otherwise.

4 "Wer in Bewegung ist, kann besser mit Paradoxien umgehen."

5 "Es lebe die kulturelle Bewegungsfreiheit."

monic politics of sedentarist belonging.⁶ By recognizing forced migration, flight and exile as inherent transitional movements of global mobilities across times and places, “homelessness does not have to be wrong” (Trojanow 2017a: 71).

In particular, Trojanow introduces the notion of “U-topos” (ibid.: 95) as a being-*no-where-at-home*. Here, “U-topos” is literally understood as a dynamic cultural space, where, if “one does not belong anywhere, one can feel home everywhere” (ibid.: 95). Trojanow’s utopia thus entails a rethinking of cultural belonging: home is no longer bound to the place of origin, and land does no longer belong to anyone. Citizenship, which is based on ownership of land, on borders based on national territory, therefore can no longer be regarded as the decisive factor when determining ethnic and cultural belonging. Similarly, sociologist Erol Yildiz has coined the term *transtopia* in order to describe the super-diversity (cp. Vertovec 2007) of today’s urban social spaces, which go beyond nationality and ethnicity: “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.” (Yildiz 2016: 135). This image of a globalised urbanity cannot just be seen as another notion of a nomadic concept of modernity (cp. Schiewer 2018), it rather analyses migration as the crucial factor of any spatial belonging. Place itself becomes a transitional space:

The ontological priority of fluid space, which becomes productive through its correlation to ‘habitation’, i.e. the configuration of the environment (practices, contexts, mediations), gives meaning to the transitional as a category. [...] Place becomes a relational event, in an open way and through change. (Borsò 2015: 970-971)

Thus, Trojanow’s “U-topos” and Yildiz’s “transtopia” can both be interpreted as a dynamisation of belonging in postcolonial and postmigrant societies where the politics of territorial and mono-cultural belongings are turned into a plural belonging to multiple places and cultures.

Trojanow’s call for a new *transtopia* is a utopian imagination, no doubt, but it foremost makes clear that the common concepts of home and integration have to be distrusted. Whereas any integrative concept still carries on with a two-worlds-paradigm that brings with it the danger of placing refugees outside civic societies and even legalities, Trojanow’s postmigrant narrative promotes a belonging to more than one culture, a “trans-civic desire” (Kreitinger in Arslan et al. 2017: 217) that is directed against any integration policies, which are based on the principles of cultural and linguistic assimilation (cp. Yue 2011). Instead, in a global culture (and literature) that is inclusive of multiple languages and identities, and by which ethnic backgrounds are no longer seen as exclusive, migrative

6 For a distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging see Yuval-Davis 2006.

processes can be seen as central. In this sense, I will define literature in the postmigrant condition as a transitional literature, which demonstrates the dissolution of borders, the fluidity of cultures and languages, as well as the diversity of gender and ethnic identities. Its aesthetics is perhaps not only an “aesthetics of difference”, as cultural studies scholar Moritz Schramm (2016: 76) suggested for Abbas Khider, and a hybrid “aesthetics of *métissage*”, as he quoted literary scholar Myriam Geiser (Schramm 2018: 87, original emphasis), but also and foremost one of diverse and dynamic cultural signifiers of mobility, migration and movement. Postmigrant narratives thus shift the focus from Eurocentric hegemonies of belonging, from notions of homeland and sedentarist cultural identities, to plurality, super-diversity and multiplicity.

First, I will briefly focus on the concept of flight as a revolutionary act and social counter-narrative, before, in a second step, I will look at the multiple cultural attachments, social connections and confluences that are at the core of Trojanow’s postmigrant narrative in *Nach der Flucht*. Similar to the postmigrant theatre, Trojanow writes against what can be called migrantisation when referring to the marginalisation of people with a so-called “migrant background”. In this context, I will outline three interconnected key aspects for an aesthetics of postmigrant narratives: they play with alienation and its effects, they present culture as a dynamic category with multiple intersections between all cultures, and they create multidirectional memories and multi-perspective narratives of belonging and diversity. Third, I will explain the transformative aesthetics that are at place in Trojanow’s *Nach der Flucht*. His narrative makes the invisible losses of refugees visible and re-narrates the history of colonialism and racism, in rendering the notion of a monocultural belonging violent. By giving the victims and refugees agency, he sees forced migration as a chance for gaining an understanding of plural belongings, where origin, ethnicity and citizenship are no longer seen as sole markers of identity. With this fourth step of my reading, I will then conclude by returning to Trojanow’s concept of “u-topia” as a literally being-no-where-at-home. In short, if the refugee can be seen as an exemplary figure of social, political and physical movement, their permanent transitional state can be seen exemplary for a new core narrative of belonging in plural societies (cp. Petersen/Schramm 2017).

Flight as revolutionary act and counter-narrative

Trojanow’s first intention in *Nach der Flucht* is to provide a counter-narrative to the notion of the refugee as an outsider of society, who has been either seen as “a person who came from somewhere else. [...] Who wasn’t invited” (2017b: 3), or as an “object” (ibid.: 2) of political narratives. He thus writes against any modes of ‘othering’ that arrive from a politicised Eurocentric concept of identity. He also

advances the idea that migration and movement have become central elements within plural societies, “where a definition of the same is not based on similarity [and] where different people can also be the same.” (Charim 2018: 55).⁷ As Charim further notes, a new “pluralized individualism” (ibid.: 43) has replaced the minority and majority model of migrant societies. The German sociologist Mark Terkesidis’ concept of a plural society of “multiplicity” (“Vielheit”, 2017: 17, 38, 42-45), as introduced in a book that bears the very same title as Trojanow’s, can be seen as a similar approach: “In regards to the demographic multiplicity, ‘postmigration’ simply means ‘after the migration’, since – migration has already happened, and the refugees’ movements of 2015 and 2016 are part of a normality.” (ibid.: 19).⁸

Within the wider context of mobility studies and the established paradigm of mobility “as socially produced motion” (Cresswell 2006: 3), which includes a physical movement and “the meanings given to mobility through representation” (ibid.: 4), it is of further importance to note that Trojanow interprets flight as a *movement* in the double meaning of moving places (empirical movements) and changing the society (political movements): “Flight can be an act of resistance [...]. An uprising. The refugee can be an agent, an activist.” (2017a: 73).⁹ His wordplay with the German term “Aufbruch” (ibid.: 73, 84) not only highlights that “departure” is a necessity for societal change, but also illustrates that flight is an empirical and political movement. Thus, Trojanow reconstructs the refugee not only as someone on the move but also as someone who moves society and is able to actively change the politics of a stable and non-ambiguous belonging towards a new core narrative of plural belonging. Flight, in this sense, can be comprehended as a revolutionary and “vanguard” act.¹⁰ It is literally a re-revolutionary act that challenges the image of a sedentarist society, including its illusion of a national identity as being bound to one place. Flight portrayed by Trojanow turns the concept of a stable belonging into a continuous state of becoming, which could either be seen as an ongoing diasporic experience, or as one’s identity being incessantly in motion and flux.¹¹ The

7 “wo Gleichheit sich also nicht über die Ähnlichkeit herstellt [...] wo auch Unterschiedliche gleich sein können.”

8 “Im Hinblick auf die demographische Vielheit meint ‘postmigrantisch’ schlicht ‘nach der Migration’, denn – die Migration hat längst stattgefunden, und die Fluchtbewegungen von 2015 und 2016 sind Teil einer Normalität.”

9 “Flucht kann ein Akt des Widerstands sein. [...] Ein Aufbruch. Der Flüchtling kann ein Handelnder sein, ein Aktivist.”

10 Trojanow’s concept of flight could therefore be compared to Hannah Arendt’s notion, that “Refugees driven from country to country represent the vanguard of the peoples – if they keep their identity.” (1994 [1943]: 119).

11 In this regard, Roger Bromley rightly pointed out that, “The concept of diasporic communities will only be of value if it is not simply used as yet another extension of the tendency in cultural studies to ‘speak of the subaltern’. [...] By going beyond the discourses of boundary it is possible

question of (mono-) cultural belonging is replaced by a notion of plural and fluid identities, for which gender, race and ethnicity have become performative rather than normative.¹² Thus, Trojanow's narrative of belonging provides the perfect example for a postmigrant society with its constant struggles to overcome "racism and inequalities".¹³

Multiple cultural attachments, social connections and confluences

By moving migration from society's narrative periphery to its centre, postmigration analytically intends to avoid the implicit dangers of reiterating Eurocentric territorial relations and modes of marginalisation. Influenced by contemporary art productions of the postmigrant theatre at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße and the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin since 2008 (cp. Sharifi 2016: 341), which has artistically reclaimed the political agency for immigrants and refugees within society, recent sociological studies in Germany have critically redefined societies from a new perspective that has also impacted integration policies. While the notion of postmigrant theatre has been established and has been widely discussed within postmigrant social studies, the discourse about German-language postmigrant narratives in literature is still in its nascent stages.¹⁴ I will therefore briefly outline how postmigrant of a plural belonging could be redefined. Based on my analysis of Trojanow's *Nach der Flucht* as an instance of a postmigrant aesthetics, I suggest the following three interconnected key aspects:

[...] that in time the notions of 'diasporic' and 'host' may be rendered existentially and analytically redundant. At the present, they are used merely as terms of convenience, of transition. These new constructions remind us that identity is a matter of 'becoming' (negotiation, perhaps) as well as 'being' (maintenance, perhaps)." (2000: 9).

- 12 On the performativity of identity, see, e.g. Butler 2004; Mirón/Inda 2000; Sieg 2017.
- 13 For a definition of postmigrant society, see, among others, Foroutan 2019; Yildiz 2015. See on the background of the concept also the introduction to this volume.
- 14 Hansjörg Bay, in his entry "Migrationsliteratur" (2017: 323) dismisses the concept, while other studies on the postmigrant theatre (cp. Sharifi 2016: 342) instead refer to a thesis in German literary studies, which has been written under my supervision and which first defined this paradigm change by aesthetic rather than biographic categories (cp. Lornsen 2008: 11-12). Deniz Göktürk and David Gramling therefore also asserted a move away from the derogatory labels 'migrant background' and 'migrant literature': "Treating migration with the aesthetic and political complexity it deserves requires nowadays a scalar attentiveness that takes the national, the supranational, and the transnational seriously at once – understanding how these various scales of practice, policy, and representation intersect minutely in the lives of transnational artists, refugees, postmigrants, and multiethnic communities." (in Arslan et al. 2017: 218). See, also the discussions in Geiser 2015; Petersen/Schramm 2017; Schramm 2015.

1. According to Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand, “the use of ‘external Others’ in [political] narratives adds specific ‘dramatic’ elements to historical narratives, which play with the emotions and threats and tend, therefore, to turn them into myths.” (2013: 116). Postmigrant narratives undo these modes of ‘Othering’ and critically assess cultural identity as a Eurocentric concept that is etymologically based on sameness and similarity, and thus on making differences rather than doing away with them. Since immigrants should no longer be marginalised by a “home-born normality” (Yildiz 2015: 22), postmigrant narratives reflect upon narrative strategies of alienation and play with the paradigms of origin, originality, authorship and any kind of a homogenic cultural belonging.
2. Within postmigrant narratives, migrants and refugees play an active part in creating and maintaining a “multiplicity” of cultural belongings, which then intends to build a new core narrative for plural societies that aims for more inclusion. Cultures (their languages and literatures) are seen as globally interconnected, fluid systems of economic, political, social and intellectual exchanges beyond national boundaries.
3. Postmigrant narratives intend to transcend the binaries of sedentarist and nomadic belonging identified from colonialism and postcolonialism.¹⁵ In interpreting the inherent post/colonial histories differently, they create “multidirectional practices of migrant memory” (cp. Rothberg/Yildiz 2011: 37) and “transnational memories” of migration (cp. Assmann 2014), which, through multi-perspective narratives, promote transitional, transformative and performative strategies for reflecting upon ethnic in/equalities, transnational identities and plural modes of belonging when living within urban super-diverse places.

Nach der Flucht by Trojanow exhibits all three key aspects for such a postmigrant aesthetics that actively and (self)critically transforms Eurocentric concepts of culture and identity. As for my first proposed key aspect, that postmigrant authors reflect upon narrative strategies of alienation and play with paradigms of origin, originality and cultural belonging, I refer to the 52nd section of Trojanow’s *Nach der Flucht*. This section illustrates how the author rejects being labelled as different,

15 It is important to note that within critically informed (im)mobility studies, Tim Cresswell suggested to break with the traditional dichotomy of mobility and locus, by which mobility is seen as a threat. In adding “anachorism” as “a social and cultural category”, where “the world is seen through the lens of mobility, flow, becoming, and change”, to the logics of anachorism, he, however, also warned against a “romanticization of the nomad”, since it “is infected with the discourse of Orientalism.” (2006: 55).

and how he instead immerses himself in cultural diversity, which turns alienation into a productive effect:

It could be that his home is expanding a little, to the alley in front of his door, to the Italian food store, to the French Café at the corner, to the corner store across the street. He possibly finds refuge when meditating or running. Or when getting together with like-minded people. Everything other is a fruitful alienation. (Trojanow 2017a: 93)¹⁶

Here, the notion of the ‘Other’ is turned into a hybrid composite, pointing to the sociological concept of super-diversity. By turning the qualitative category of the ‘Other’ into concrete pluralities in order to describe the increasing diversity of the population beyond ethnicity – especially within immigrant communities since the 1980s – sociologist Steven Vertovec has coined the term “super-diversity” (cp. 2007). This concept has already contributed toward the dissolution of hegemonic principles and is especially helpful in breaking up the notion of a globalisation that is still based on economic concerns and a common (Eurocentric) identity, stable ethnicities, including their manifestation of nationalities.¹⁷ Consequently, Trojanow sees migration as an ongoing transformative, if not a driving factor for societal change, where one’s cultural horizon is constantly expanding.

As for my second key aspect, Trojanow’s text exemplifies that cultures (and their literatures) have to be seen as globally interconnected, fluid systems of economic, political, social and intellectual exchanges that extend beyond national boundaries. *Nach der Flucht* fosters the dissolution of Eurocentric concepts of culture and identity because it demonstrates multiple individual attachments, social connections and cultural confluences. I would also like to demonstrate that Trojanow goes beyond the notion of in-betweenness, be it in-between nations, cultures, or literatures. Although Trojanow and Ranjit Hoskote dedicated their critically discussed essay on *Confluences* “To the Inhabitants of the In-between” (2016 [2007]: 5), it is meant to be ironical and perhaps even directed to any scholars who theoretically locate themselves in an “in-between” state. Instead, Trojanow

16 “Vielleicht dehnt sich sein Zuhause noch ein wenig aus, in die Gasse vor der Haustür, zum Alimentari nebenan, zum französischen Café an der Ecke, zum Tante-Emma-Laden gegenüber. Unter Umständen findet er vorübergehend Obdach beim Meditieren oder im Laufen. Oder in der Gesellschaft von Gleichgesinnten. Alles andere ist fruchtbare Befremdung.”

17 Despite economic mobility, the control of citizenship rights and immigration policies based on these exclusive rights has led to borders being politically reiterated, be it physical or phenomenological borders. See, in this regard, Bromley’s assessment on the current politics of a “post-national cultural experience”, exchange and future narrative of a deterritorialised belonging (2000: 11-16).

and Hoskote reassure that “cultures don’t clash, they flow together”.¹⁸ As utopian analysts of any past, present and future ‘migration crisis’, they point out that in any age of migration, cultural identities are dynamic and that a cultural belonging is independent of places (ibid.: 10). While this kind of deterritorialisation could be mistaken for another form of nomadism, it is indeed the utopia of a borderless and nation free world, in which a belonging to multiple places creates a fluid cultural identity that can no longer be located somewhere in-between, but rather has to be imagined as a dynamic web without a centre.

This fluidity of cultural borders, and its effects on the narratives of belonging within a plural society, is not new. Trojanow and Hoskote further utilise the Buddhist metaphor of the “Indra’s net” (ibid.: 173), and within recent social studies, Terkessidis has expanded his own concept of *Interkultur* (cp. 2010), which further imagined culture as a process by correspondingly facilitating the metaphors of a polyglot network and a barrier-free movement (ibid.: 109), to a programmatic and societal “plan of multiplicity” (2017: 42-45).

While this inclusive worldview imagines fluid and dynamic cultural spaces without borders, a world without any border control and visa policies realistically seems not yet feasible, since political security, perhaps now more so than ever, still relies on maintaining national borders (cp. Bauman 2016). But as a utopian vision, “multiplicity” opens the doors to imagining a new global culture of common access, equality, diversity and mobility. As anything imagined is necessarily borderless, and space itself is an imaginative category (cp. Soja 1996), there is no inside or outside of culture as an imagined space (cp. Anderson 2006). In this sense, the post-migrant condition might always represent a utopian narrative, where all migrants, whether forced or not, are stateless refugees and global citizens at the same time.¹⁹ In short: By reading *Nach der Flucht* as a mirror of current societal processes of global (im)mobility and within an ongoing history of (forced) migration, I suggest to take Trojanow’s book as an instance for a new aesthetics of postmigrant narra-

18 See the subtitle of the German edition: “Kulturen bekämpfen sich nicht, sie fließen zusammen” (Trojanow/Hoskote 2016 [2007]). Please note that the English version of 2012 is not identical to the German edition, hence I am translating, where necessary, the latter, more comprehensive one.

19 However, it is important to note that in today’s political reality, the limited agency of survival migrants still stands in clear contrast to elite migrants. See in this regard, Antje Ellermann’s assessment of the relationship between the undocumented migrant and the liberal nation state, as one of “cat and mouse” (in reference to Jane Caplan and John Torpey): “This image aptly captures an important aspect of everyday resistance: it rarely succeeds in permanently turning the tables. As migrants develop new strategies of resistance, states follow suit in adjusting their identification strategies. This, in turn, prompts migrants to further fine-tune their actions.” (2010: 425).

tives that go beyond a politics of belonging that is based on the nation state or the principle of a hegemonic culture (Leitkultur).

As per my third key aspect of postmigrant aesthetics, Trojanow's *Nach der Flucht* illustrates how postmigrant narratives intend to break with the binaries of sedentarist and nomadic belonging identified from colonialism and postcolonialism. Trojanow provides a utopia for moving away from ethnically and nationally centred models of society. Instead of assuming a homogeneous society, into which a refugee and immigrant is asked to assimilate, a postmigrant society should be built by manifold cultural identities that coexist without hierarchies. By further emphasizing that cultures, including their narratives of nations, conflicts, and transnational memories, are performative in nature – as are ethnic identities – postmigrant narratives, such as Trojanow's, pose a constant challenge in negotiating and renegotiating social perspectives.

In order to understand *Nach der Flucht* as an instance for a new transformative aesthetics that goes across cultures, languages, literatures and other media in that it takes a critical stance against current im/migration politics and integration policies I will now turn to the third, main narrative strategy that Trojanow utilises. Especially the intermedial structure of the book allows for reading it as an example of multidirectional memory and as a multi-perspective narrative of migration, which makes forced migration visible as a valuable and important factor when creating and maintaining core narratives of belonging in plural societies.

Transformative aesthetics: Refugees as narrative agents of plural societies

One important element of transformative aesthetics within postmigrant narratives is the desire to make the invisible suffering of refugees visible. As theatre scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte explained through a performance by Philip Ruch, *The Dead Are Coming* (2015), it made the invisible mass graves of refugees in Greece and Turkey visible by performing individual Muslim burial rituals in Gatow and Berlin, and thus pleaded “to put an end to the dying of refugees”. And she pointed out, “the blurring of the boundaries between the aesthetic, the ritualistic and the political, as well as the constant oscillation between the three, rendered the fate of the ‘invisible’ refugees ‘visible’” (2017: 14). Trojanow's statement in section LII of his *Nach der Flucht*, can be interpreted along the very same terms:

The refugee mourns. About his country of birth, about his childhood, about his friend who disappeared at the state prisons without a trace, traceless, as we awkwardly say, although he did leave traces in the consciousness of those, who could not forget him. An incomplete mourning, which digs deeper and deeper into the

self, into the unforgiving, a not-be-able-to-let-go, damned, let me die, or die yourself. (Trojanow 2017a: 39)²⁰

When Trojanow makes the void space of such invisible losses visible, it is important to note that he draws analogies between refugee literature and visual arts, here by referring to a painting by Jacob Lawrence, which is entitled “One of the most violent race riots occurred in East St. Louis” (1940-41: panel 52) and carries an obvious reference to Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937). As Trojanow further informs the readers upfront in an author’s note, his whole book is “inspired by the artist Jacob Lawrence’s ‘The Migration Series’” (2017b: 1, 2017a: 8), which featured the Great Migration that brought, between 1916 and 1970, six million African-Americans from the rural Southern parts of the United States to the more urban areas in the Northeast, the Midwest and the West. Lawrence’s series was influenced by modern European art and especially by early 20th century avant-garde artwork that had a socio-political and critical impetus, such as Käthe Kollwitz’s *The Widow* (1923).²¹ Both, Picasso’s and Kollwitz’s works refer to a history of war and loss, and thus build the background for Lawrence work, which also features scenes of cruelty and grieving.

Trojanow’s intermedial approach therefore mirrors a mourning that goes well beyond individual experience and can instead be seen as an instance of a multi-directional memory triggered by a long history of European violence and white supremacy. As James Harding (2017) has pointed out within the more current North American political context, the documentation of undocumented refugees is the starting point to reclaiming their human rights, and for making them visible as humans, who are not only equal, but also embody a revolutionary message.²² Consequently, Trojanow sees these refugees, just as Agamben (1995) and Bauman (2016) have analysed their status, as “a provocation for the perfectly tedious order of the state. They actually should not exist.” (2017a: 44).²³ Yet, they exist and

20 “Der Geflüchtete trauert. Um sein Geburtsland, um seine Kindheit, um seinen Freund, der in den Staatskern verschwand, spurlos, wie man misslich sagt, obwohl er Spuren hinterlässt im Bewusstsein jener, die ihn nicht vergessen können. Eine unvollständige Trauer, die sich immer tiefer ins Selbstartige gräbt, ins Unversöhnliche, ein Nicht-los-lassen-Können, verdammt nochmal, lässt mich sterben oder kratzt selber ab.”

21 See Lawrence 1940-41: panel 16: “After a lynching the migration quickened.”

22 “To speak of the refugee as a vanguard is to recognize that there is nothing short of the transformative in his or her arrival, and the call echoing from Arendt through Agamben to the present moment is to embrace this invisible avant-garde and the radical potential it carries” (Harding 2017: 160).

23 “Er ist eine Provokation für die feinsäuberliche Ordnung des Staates. Eigentlich darf es ihn nicht geben.” Note, that the German language applies a male gender to the common use of the word refugee (der Flüchtling), hence, also within a biographical context, Trojanow’s use of the male

are “longing to arrive, which is the utopia of all refugees” (ibid.: 16), but not in a “homeland [defined] once and for all” (ibid.: 94). As for Trojanow, the fixation on (and of) a homeland would only imply “the continuation of violence” (ibid.), since perceiving “the other only as ‘Other’ is the beginning of violence” (ibid.: 55). With this claim that a sedentarist tradition of belonging is violent, Trojanow certainly takes up on the long history of European colonialisation and settlement politics, and against this backdrop today’s immigration politics could be seen as the other side of the same coin, at least when it comes to treating the refugees as ‘Others’.

The intermedial comparison between the colonialisation of North America and the current ‘migration crisis’ might end here. Although Lawrence’s main panel number forty, “The Migrants Arrived in Great Numbers”, becomes the 100th and central section of Trojanow’s book (68-69) and thus can be taken as an analogy to the increase in numbers of asylum seekers coming to Europe and mostly Germany in 2015, not all sections of the book align with Lawrence’s series. Trojanow’s book is composed of 99 sections in each part, whereas Lawrence produced only 60 panels. The binary structure of loss and gain, however, is common to both works and points to the double-entry bookkeeping structure (“doppelten Buchführung des Geflüchteten”, 2017a: 90) in Trojanow’s reflections when tackling the memorisation of migration and movements. He thus, in an intermedial and multidirectional way, plays with the binaries that are often part of immigration politics and that manifest the image of the refugee as an ‘Other’. By transforming the stereotypical perspective that outcasts refugees, Trojanow intends to turn the object status of the refugee to that of a subject who is a narrative agent rather than just a victim of history and society.²⁴

As Schramm, who analysed the narrative works of former refugee and author Abbas Khider as a comparable instance for an “aesthetics of difference” (2016: 76), pointed out, the “re-narration” of one’s life story also bears the chance of transforming social identity, as well as social space (2017: 191), and thus, ultimately, society. In a laudation for Khider on the occasion of Khider becoming writer in residence for the city of Mainz in 2018, Trojanow also interpreted the protagonist Karim Mensy from Khider’s *Ohrfeige* (Slap in the Face, 2016) as an example for a refugee who becomes a narrative agent of societal change: “The refugee becomes human again. [...] Karim Mensy [...], by telling his story, becomes an agent. Someone who rises up.” (Trojanow 2018b: 18).²⁵ Khider’s *Ohrfeige*, which is quite literally

pronoun: “der Geflüchtete” (e.g. 2017a: 16). It would be more appropriate, however, to speak of *der* or *die* Flüchtende.

24 See, in this regard, also Sablotny’s (2017) interpretation of Trojanow’s *Die Welt ist groß und Rettung lauert überall* (1996).

25 “Der Flüchtling wird wieder Mensch. [...] Karim Mensy [...] wird zu einem Handelnden, indem er selbst erzählt. Zu einem Widerständigen.”

a slap in the face of German integration policies, here serves as another prominent example for the transformative aesthetics of postmigrant narratives. It makes the mistreatment of refugees as undeserved citizens visible by reversing the power relationship between an asylum seeker from Iraq and an immigration officer in Germany. In providing an unstable narrative, it plays with the fact that refugees, in order to seek asylum, have to double their biographies and perform alternate identities.²⁶ In summary, both Khider and Trojanow show refugees and forced migrants, despite their failing success in being either recognised as asylum seekers or being naturalised by a country, as active narrative agents of a society of “multiplicity” that goes across border politics and against integration policies that are built on a linear narrative from departure (cultural origin) to arrival (host culture).

The reclaiming of agency is a recurring motif in the most recent publications, whether fictional or documentary.²⁷ It goes against the historical dimension of the refugee being defined as a person outside national border spaces, who is nevertheless bound within the national histories and politics of the mid-20th century.²⁸ In consequence, as Naika Foroutan asserts: “What is at stake, is to narrate the same history *differently*, to look at it from a different perspective, and to narrate it with different words.” (Foroutan/Huneke 2013: 45). This statement, however, also alludes to the aesthetics of literature in general and utilises it for the field of sociology. The social function of postmigrant narratives lies in their aesthetic power to transform society by retelling its history as a history of migration that goes across cultures. This retelling of history not only entails multidirectional memories but also the potential of changing monocultural core narratives of society to polyphonic ones in terms of a cultural belonging to multiple places.

Movement as gain: The transtopia of a plural belonging

In that Trojanow establishes “movement” (“Bewegung”, 2017a: 71, 77) as a socio-political category of mobility, it not only allows him to define flight as an uprising, with the refugee as vanguard narrative force, but to also introduce the concept of a plural belonging:

Old boundary stone, old law. New boundary stone, new law. Hence, exclusion is outlawing. The lived experience of belonging, instead, noticeably adaptive and as

26 See also my interpretation of Khider's *Ohrfeige* (Hallensleben 2021b).

27 For instance, Erpenbeck 2015; Jelinek 2014; Kermani 2016. See also my forthcoming publication on Erpenbeck's *Gehen, ging, gegangen* (Hallensleben 2021a).

28 For a critical history of the “modern refugee system [which] was designed in the late 1940s”, see Betts/Collier 2017.

complex and plural as each human being, never marginalizes other humans. (Trojanow 2017a: 108, original emphasis)²⁹

As an example, Trojanow refers to the Palestinian poet of resistance, Mahmud Darwish, and his variation of the Rimbaudian modernist notion of “I is another” in his epic hymn “Mural” (2008). Trojanow alters Darwish’s three repetitive lines “I am not mine” to “I am multi-layered ...” (“Ich bin der Vielschichtige ...”, 2017a: 84), which also recalls Michel Serres’s hybrid figure of the harlequin in his preface “Secularism” to *The Troubadour of Knowledge* (1997 [1991]: xiii-xvii), where it serves an image for diversity, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary education and knowledge gain. This educational context can be supported with the cover of Trojanow’s *Nach der Flucht* that shows Lawrence’s panel number 58, “In the North the African American had more educational opportunities”. When compared with the two book sections LVIII and 58, migration can therefore be understood as a chance to become more educated and subsequently to gain a higher social standard, hence the “loss” of a more rural homeland and liberation from slavery translates “into [an educational] gain” (2017a: 90).

Trojanow sees forced migration as a chance for gain, “since one creates the space for something new” (2014 [2009]: 156), as he himself explained within the context of diaspora as a model for living in a lecture curated by Charim at the University of Vienna on 20 November 2009. By further referring to Edward Said’s notion of exile as a “motif of modern culture”,³⁰ Trojanow interprets the Latin *exilium* not only as expressing the state of “being in [political] exile” (“verbannt sein”), but also as literally the state of “being elsewhere” (“in der Fremde weilend”, 2014: 157). In analogy to the German term ‘Langeweile’ (boredom), he creates the term ‘Fremdweile’ (elsewheredom), which underscores exile as a lengthy, permanent state of being, albeit with a “painful and contradictory reality” (ibid.).³¹ Hence, he constitutes the chance for a cultural “metamorphosis”, as well as for a “normative quality, which exile had for 20th century literature” (ibid.). In *Nach der Flucht*, he then introduces the ultimate gain that can be achieved through critically re-evaluating the ongoing history of exile and (forced) migration. As outlined in the beginning, his concept of “U-topos” stands for the state of being in transition, or a

29 “Alter Grenzstein, altes Recht. Neuer Grenzstein, neues Recht. Ergo ist Ausgrenzung eine Entrechtung. Das gelebte Heimatgefühl hingegen, so komplex und vielfältig wie jeder einzelne Mensch, von bemerkenswerter Wandlungsfähigkeit, grenzt andere Menschen niemals aus.”

30 This reference can also be found in *Nach der Flucht* (2017a: 88, cp. 102).

31 Trojanow does this explicitly by pointing out, that the term ‘exile’, when just being used as key term for “postmodern existence” (“postmoderne Existenz”) and as a meta term for other fashionable terminology in English, such as “*elocation, alienation, displacement, limination*”, as it has happened in cultural studies, is in danger of losing its “painful and contradictory reality” (2014: 157, original emphasis).

transitional space, which builds the foundation of a postmigrant society, aesthetics and literature where a postcolonial belonging to multiple places has become the new norm:

Our sedentarist assumptions about attachment to place lead us to define displacement not as a fact about sociopolitical context but rather as an inner, pathological condition of the displaced. [...] deterritorialization and identity are intimately linked. [...] To plot only 'places of birth' and degrees of nativeness is to blind oneself to the multiplicity of attachments that people form to places through living in, remembering, and imagining them. (Malkki 1992: 33, 38)

This concept of gaining a "multiplicity of attachments" has far reaching implications for defining cultural identity outside territorial borders, as Europe itself, according to Trojanow and Hoskote, is deeply rooted in the non-European cultures and traditions, from which most refugees depart, and European identity, along with its logocentrism, is nothing but a construct: "The idea of a settled identity is a chimera. Cultural existence is a cumulative process. [...] We do not have identities, but dynamic positions. More than ever before culture is not bound to a certain territory." (2016 [2007]: 172).

More so, as Peter Wagner (2008) and others have pointed out, identity in its literal meaning refers to sameness and similarity (cp. 357-358). It therefore can only lead to a normative approach of inclusion and exclusion when defining European cultural identity (cp. 359). Wagner instead suggests an interpretative, critical hermeneutical approach and claims that Europe has to constantly reinterpret its identity, not as unity apart from global processes, but based on its multiple ruptures within its own history (cp. 268). However, behind Wagner's approach stands the belief that an individual, with their personal identity, subscribes to the higher order of a collective or common identity by constantly renegotiating their freedom as an individual for the sake of keeping the society as a stable unity. Society here is thought of as an integrative space, in which social expectations are met in interaction with other individuals. As sociologist Armin Nassehi has shown from a system critical point of view, this kind of sociological approach only works by picturing society as a "container", to which an individual integrates, and which allows for keeping the social order through integration by "belonging" (2002: 219). These hegemonic politics of belonging, which, according to Nassehi, originate in 19th century European philosophy and nation building, can, nevertheless, still be found at the core of any immigration and integration policies. Furthermore, this hegemonic notion of identity building is a European concept itself and, by demanding integration, a Eurocentric concept of society is reiterated, which sees an individual's identity as always depending on a normative (and often value based) cultural space that is built on territorial inclusion and exclusion. In short, one

could assert that by applying successive methods of identification based on sedimentarism, colonialism repeats itself on a daily basis, within and outside Europe.

Trojanow instead replaces the mono-cultural concept of homeland and belonging with a plural society on the move. Whether a refugee's "land of his origin has become a [colonial] terra incognita" or he "pitches his tents" in "no one's land", Trojanow reverses the linear narrative of territorial belonging by turning the refugee's "land of origin" into an unknown factor (what originally has been the destination of colonialism) and by turning the host culture within a refugee's journey into a "no one's land" (what originally has been the receiving culture and known territory of European colonial powers). European identity thus becomes the void space of colonialism, rather than the other way around. By abandoning the assumption that home is a familiar place, Trojanow defamiliarises his readers with the concept of European (Eurocentric and territorial based) identity. "For me, leaving for exile was an explosion into plurality," as Trojanow asserted for himself (2014: 158):

Another point is that I am completely convinced that plurality is a blessing. [...] I myself feel very comfortable in my skin regarding intellectual influences and my own intellectual interests. I am enjoying the diversity, which lives and is flourishing within me. Thus, I see it as a huge gift. (Trojanow in Parwanowa 2010: 114)³²

Trojanow's aesthetic re-narration of his own life story in *Nach der Flucht* aims for exactly the same effect and is mirrored in the avant-garde structure of the book (with the sections of the second part being counted backwards in Arabic numbers and thus mirroring the first part that is counted forward in Roman numerals). The first part of the book covers the losses, entitled "Of psychological disturbances" (Von den Verstörungen, 2017a: 11; 2017b: 3), and the second part the gains of migration and *movement*, entitled "Of the rescues" (Von den Errettungen, 2017a: 71). When Lawrence's panel number 40 in the middle in the book, "The Migrants Arrived in Great Numbers" (1940-41: 68-69), is read together with section IL of the first part, it illustrates Trojanow's own experiences of loss, when fleeing Bulgaria with his parents in 1971 (2017a: 40). But within the context of section forty of the second part, the migrants could also be compared to anyone on the move who, by losing their possessions and being forced to travel lighter (ibid.: 90), can gain more cultural freedom (ibid.: 113). Thus, by being "trained in defamiliarization" techniques (ibid.: 97), one can eventually gain more valuable cultural experiences,

32 "Das Andere ist, dass ich völlig überzeugt bin, dass Vielfalt ein Segen ist. [...] Ich fühle mich sehr wohl in meiner Haut, was meine geistige Prägung und meine intellektuellen Interessen angeht. Ich genieße die Vielfalt, die in mir lebt und floriert. Insofern betrachte ich es als großes Geschenk."

just as Trojanow educated his students in experiencing urbanity as a transtopian space from a refugee's point of view, by asking them to walk through the city by day and night without any belongings and digital tools of guidance (cp. 97).³³ Here, an analogy could again be drawn to recent studies on urbanity and migration, which suggest that the postmigrant condition is and always has been a phenomenon of urbanity (cp. Bukow 2018: 86).

In such a postmigrant society, any synthesis can only be temporary, and for the very same reason, we are not automatically all in exile, but rather perform our multiple cultural belongings on a daily basis when constantly building, rebuilding and deconstructing our own pluralised identities. Trojanow, however, along the very same lines of cautioning against simply replacing any sedentarist belonging with an urban nomadism of modernity, still reminds his readers of all the possible social and political differences, which create forced migration and exile. He therefore wants them to not forget about the necessity of a local and conscious distribution of wealth in a world that has become mobile and global, but certainly is not yet at all equally accessible to all people alike (cp. 2017a: 89).

Summary and outlook

While Trojanow's *Nach der Flucht* intentionally does not offer a final synthesis to the double bookkeeping structure of loss and gain, he plays with the binaries that are inherent to migration narratives, their histories and politics. His utopian concept of *movement* promotes mobility and diversity in all its manifold aspects. It therefore provides an excellent example for how postmigrant narratives (and literary studies) can keep the societal discourses open for transitions and possibly provide the key for what Ulrich Beck saw as the missing narrative and "language through which contemporary superdiversity in the world [of global flows of migration] can be described" (2011: 53). However, the biggest challenge to any narrative of migration and belonging that goes beyond any Eurocentric concept of identity, is its linguistic boundedness to a European tradition of rhetoric, which follows a sedentarist logic. By thinking (and writing) in similarities and differences, and by drawing analogies, an inherent 'Othering' is performed through often dialectical argumentations, which only work through localisations and sedentarist metaphors, such as being "rooted", a term, which even Trojanow, albeit ironically, uses

33 See also Trojanow 2018a: 149, where he locates this experiment with students from New York University in Manhattan, Harlem and the Bronx.

when he claims to be “deep-rooted in utopia. Finally at home” (“Eingewurzelt ins Utopische. Endlich daheim”, 2017a: 96).³⁴

How then can we abandon the categories of place and space as something confined and dividing, especially in our own scholarly system of positioning ourselves through fields and areas of study, even within postmigrant social studies? If the so called postmigrant condition wants to open the doors to a new global culture of common access, equality, diversity and mobility, which welcomes migrants and refugees as active agents of a plural society, then we ought to find ways to leave the argumentative system of Eurocentric rhetoric and become “trained in defamiliarization” techniques. Perhaps, we could think of Mieke Bal’s criterium of “heterochrony” (2008: 154)³⁵ and describe a postmigrant society as one that imagines the not-yet-present ones as already present. As Trojanow states: “Language ought to show traces of our presence” (2017a: 91). However, we would then have to live in a world of imaginations, with Trojanow’s words, in a “no one’s land” (ibid.: 61) and in a “u-topia”, or literally be no-where at home (ibid.: 95-96).

Either feeling no-where at home or being always in a transitional state are both paradoxical figures of thought. Therefore, if Trojanow quotes from Derek Walcott’s poem “The Schooner Flight” (1979): “*Either I’m nobody, or I’m a nation*” (2017a: 45, cp. 118, original emphasis), he actually illustrates his own experience of having been “stateless” for half of his life (ibid.: 44, original emphasis). He resolves it to “I am my own state”. This is not only a “risky” (ibid.: 45) escape from the bureaucracies that define a refugee as being caught in between states, but also a polyglot humorous way out of any figures of thought, which define the migrant as a nomad and as living in an in-between state. Instead Trojanow shows, that the hybridity of ethnically and nationally being in an either-or state could also be resolved into a paradoxical composite, where a refugee becomes the exemplary figure of *movement* and thus a political agent, who, through being in a permanent transitional state, can provide a new core narrative for a plural belonging.

By decentering ethnical and national models of narration, Trojanow pictures migrants and refugees as playing an active part in a plural society. He understands movement as a transitional state, in the double interpretation of moving places (empirical movements) and changing the society (political movements). Thus, by recognizing flight, exile and forced migration as inherent and powerful

34 See also the title of Trojanow’s collection of poems, *verwurzelt in Stein* (*rooted in Stone*), which refers to the last line in the poem “Überwachsen” (“Overgrown”): “Verwerfung wurzelt im Stein” (“Terminal detachment rooted in stone”) (2017c: 16-17, translated by José F.A. Oliver).

35 An aesthetics of postmigrant narratives insofar would correspond to the main categories that Mieke Bal has briefly outlined for a “Migratory Aesthetics” in the field of visual (video) arts: social agency (“movement”, 2008: 152), disruptive instead of linear narratives (“heterochrony”, ibid.: 154), multidirectional memories (“memory”, ibid.: 156) and the presence of a multiplicity of attachments (“contact”, ibid.: 157).

movements of global mobilities and by referring to Edward Said's notion of exile as a "motif of modern culture" (1994 [1984]: 137), Trojanow establishes the concept of "U-topos" as a transitional space or "transtopia", which builds the foundation of a postmigrant society and literature that is based on the super-diversity of a globally increased urbanisation. *Nach der Flucht* is an attempt to replace a Eurocentric, linear narrative of territorial belonging with a heterochrony and heterotopy that aims to create multidirected memories and transitional spaces of belonging. The dissolution of culture as Eurocentric, which includes the proposition of cultural identity as being based on ethnicity, nationality and hegemonial belonging, is therefore at the forefront of any postmigrant narratives. In short: An aesthetics of postmigration cannot be just one of ethnic hybridity, postcolonial third space, cultural in-between and transnational diversity politics, it also has to be a transformative aesthetics of multiplicity, heterochrony, heterotopy and super-diversity that allows for a barrier-free plural belonging.

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We Are Here

Reflections on the production of a documentary film on the theatre in postmigrant Denmark

Hans Christian Post

We Are Here is a documentary film on the concept of postmigration and on postmigrant developments in the Danish theatre. Readers of this publication can access it via the link at the end of this chapter and screen it for free at conferences or in connection with teaching assignments. The film was produced as part of the collaborative research project “Art, Culture and Politics in the ‘Postmigrant Condition’”, in which I participated from 2017 to 2018. The interdisciplinary project was funded by the Danish Council for Independent Research (DFF), in the years 2016-2018, and was hosted by the Department for the Study of Culture at the University of Southern Denmark. A rough cut of the film was screened at the conference, “The Postmigrant Condition: Art, Culture and Politics in Contemporary Europe” in Odense in late 2018, from which this anthology springs.¹

Link: <https://vimeo.com/325718208>

Password: Postmigration

In this brief chapter, I will present the film project *We Are Here* and offer some words of reflection on the production process as well as the finished product.

1 See on the research project: www.sdu.dk/en/postmigration, and on the conference: <https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/1975873/-postmigrant-condition-art-culture-and-politics-contemporary> [07.13.2020]. The research project was headed by co-editor of this publication, Moritz Schramm, and consisted of Anne Ring Petersen, Sten Pultz Moslund, Mirjam Gebauer, Eva Jørholt, Frauke Wiegand, Sabrina Vitting-Seerup as well as fellow co-editor of this publication, Anna Meera Goankaar, and myself. One of the outcomes of the research project was the book, *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts: the Postmigrant Condition*, co-authored by Moritz Schramm, Anne Ring Petersen, Sten Pultz Moslund, Mirjam Gebauer, Frauke Wiegand, Sabrina Vitting-Seerup and myself. (Schramm/Moslund/Petersen et al. 2019).

Planning the documentary

For the research group, the intention behind making the film was to reach a broader audience in the hope that it would enhance the academic and political impact of our project in Denmark, where political and public debates on immigration have been harsh and uncompromising for decades. To achieve this, the film was to be informative and to present the research questions and findings of the research group, while simultaneously being visually and emotionally compelling. A second objective was to explore the genre of the “science film” in the humanities. Can human science be translated into film in a meaningful way and can the film media contribute to the actual research process?²

Fig. 11.1: Still from the opening sequence of We are here. Hans Christian Post, 2019.



As it is in academic writing, producing a documentary is very much about making choices. Central themes and issues are selected, cases and material sought out, and meaningful arguments formed. In film making, however, choices made tend to be more binding in relation to both concept and process. The reality that is to

2 “Science film” is not a new genre as such since films depicting research developments and outcomes have been around for a long time. But the propagation and gradual canonization of the genre through a growing number of science film festivals worldwide and institutional focus programs certainly represents a new development. Up to the present, the festivals and the focus programs have generally been attentive primarily to the natural and social sciences and the role of these fields in finding viable solutions to global issues such as climate change. This year’s Science Film Factory program at CPH:DOX testifies to this: <https://old.cphdox.dk/en/industry/market-funding/science-film-forum/> [07.13.2020]. The human sciences and their possible potential for forming a new film genre has yet to be identified and recognised.

be documented cannot be fixated and controlled in quite the same way that empirical case material can be in written academia. Phenomena or incidents important to the film may have taken place in the past and are therefore inaccessible to the film crew; scenes recorded with technical failures can seldom be reshot; and cast members may not be available for a second or third interview that could help clarify certain issues or provide the director with vital new statements. Additionally, if choices made turn out to have been poor, and the director would rather head in new directions, film production is such a costly affair that starting anew is rarely an option. Once a filmmaker has chosen a path, it is often necessary to stick with it and hope that enough good material will be generated so that the desired end project is realised.

Most of the choices for *We Are Here* were made early in the process, as I – in close dialogue with the head of the research project, Moritz Schramm, and in briefing with the rest of the members of the group – developed the concept that was to accompany the film fund applications. It was clear that the film was to be a “science film.” However, we did not want it to be solely about science and scientists. That approach might work in films about scientists whose findings are visually stunning or spectacular, but since this clearly was not the case with our project, we decided that the film should primarily portray artists who engage with struggles and conflicts related to the postmigrant condition artistically.

Initially we focused on theatre artists in Denmark and Germany, in part because the theatre scene in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany has played a vital role in the expansion of the concept, and partly because we determined that the work of theatre artists would be especially rewarding to follow, as it would provide “action” in the form of readings, rehearsals and plays to document. Additionally, we chose to feature younger theatre artists, who were still in the process of establishing themselves and developing their artistic stance. We believed that this would be fruitful, since the concept of postmigration is associated with a similar notion of process and development. German political scientist Naika Foroutan points this out early in the film:

The term “postmigration” can be used to describe a transitory phase in society. We haven’t yet reached the point, where we can describe our society as a utopian pluralist society. But we haven’t freed ourselves of the national corset either. We’re leaving the old order, but haven’t arrived in the new yet. (Post 2019: 14:11-14:37)

The three theatre artists we selected were the Egyptian-Danish actor and playwright, Zaki Youssef, Danish theatre director, Anna Malzer, who was still attending theatre school at the time, and German theatre director Julia Wissert, who has been heading the theatre department of Theater Dortmund since 2019, becoming the youngest female theatre director ever in Germany. However, since we were not

granted permission to film the theatre production that Wissert was working on at the time in Luzern, and because we had great difficulties in fixing a date for the interview, we decided to cast the Iraqi-Danish theatre director Sargun Oshana as the film's third protagonist.

To accompany these artists portraits that formed the main thread of the film, we supplemented with interviews with cultural study scholars Moritz Schramm and Sabrina Vitting-Seerup from the research group, as well as head of the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, Shermin Langhoff, political scientist Naika Foroutan, and German scholar of Islamic studies Riem Spielhaus representing the fields of academia and the arts. The role of these intellectuals was to discuss the development of the concept of postmigration and comment on the themes and sentiments that were raised in the storylines of the artists.

Finally, we decided to add the voices of Martin Henriksen of the right-wing populist Danish People's Party (DF) and the then Minister for Immigration and Integration from the right-wing liberal party Venstre, Inger Støjberg, both of whom take up strong anti-immigration positions. Their voices were countered with that of Poul Madsen, the editor-in-chief of the tabloid newspaper, *Ekstra Bladet*, who has promoted the progressive concept of "New Denmark" in articles and at public debates in recent years, pleading for more pragmatic, realistic and above all transparent policies of integration.

Some members of the research group expressed reservations about inviting the above-mentioned right-wing politicians to participate in the film. Nevertheless, I stuck by my decision, as I felt it necessary to somehow show the harsh realities and discourses that the young artists were facing artistically and in their everyday lives. In addition, I hoped that I would be able to get the two politicians to set aside their tough stances for a while and express some empathy as well as some uncertainty around their policies – a thing much needed in a political sphere that is growing evermore cynical when it comes to facts and nuances.

Interweaving these different threads and types of characters meant that instead of producing a character driven, 'situated film', in which concepts and themes are depicted and treated implicitly, through the courses of action, we were producing a film essay that would contain some character driven action as well as meaningful illustrations, but would be primarily a word or dialogue driven film that would discuss the ideas and topics relating to postmigration.

Conducting the interviews

In general, shooting with the three theatre artists was a pleasure as they had lots of stories, experiences and artistic visions to share. They kindly gave me access to rehearsals and performances as well as additional interviews if needed. We want-

ed to give each of them an equal amount of space in the film and follow each of them through the same stages of an ongoing theatre production. In the case of Sargun Oshana, this proved difficult as at that time he was not producing a play that was clearly and thematically connected to the concepts of postmigration laid out in the film. In addition, he was not able to grant us permission to film inside the small and intimate night club where the play was being performed. But this minor obstacle was quickly resolved as we were given free access to film footage of the play produced by Aarhus Theatre for PR purposes. Although the play still did not match the film's depiction of postmigration exactly, the footage was so exciting in itself that viewers of the film were likely to accept this discrepancy.

Fig. 11.2: Zaki Youssef on stage in Der var et yndigt land [There was a lovely land]. Still from We are here. Hans Christian Post, 2019.



Conducting the interviews with Shermin Langhoff and the selected Danish and German scholars proved to be more challenging. Being new to the academic discussions on the subject of postmigration at the time, as I conducted the interviews, it seemed difficult to define the concept and its objective precisely, and it was likewise difficult to determine its value academically or politically. Some might think that herein lies the strength of the concept, in both artistic and academic contexts, but it made the interviews difficult to conduct, especially since in the back of my mind I was constantly wondering how I would be able to interweave these interviews with the storylines of the artists. At times my conversations with Schramm, Vitting-Seerup, Langhoff and Spielhaus were therefore more political than academic and somewhat narrow in their focus on issues such as racism, exclusion and policies of integration in a Danish context. This was not the case, when I interviewed Foroutan. In this interview, the concept of postmigration still seemed

vague and hard to grasp, but at least I was able to sense the many possibilities that the concept offers in the social and political sciences. However, since Foroutan spoke about postmigration solely from these perspectives, it later proved difficult to apply her statements to the rest of the film due to its primary focus on humanities and the arts.

My conversations with the politicians were challenging in other ways. Not only were the interviews difficult to set up, once the politicians were in front of me, they were unwilling to refrain from their standard hard-line phrases and positions. Several of my questions were designed to invite them to present more nuanced views and express doubt about their hard-line policies, but unfortunately, they chose not to take the bait. As the film shows, I therefore decided to present them as politicians who might be in power and might be defining current policies, but who nonetheless appear to be out of sync with a society that is slowly but surely embracing the diversity and complexity characterising the postmigrant condition and moving beyond the clear-cut dichotomies of current politics.

Initially, I started off the interviews with a couple of meta questions. First, I asked the cast members how they would prefer to be portrayed in the film, and second, in what ways it would be possible to make a film that refrained from “marking” its cast members and at the same time remained true in a formal sense to the concept of postmigration. Interviewing Riem Spielhaus in October 2017, I began with the following questions:

I want to start with two meta questions. As you know, I am making this documentary on postmigration and it will contain many people with a background of migration. How can I ensure that this won't be a film in which the cast members will somehow be 'marked' or marginalised, and how can I make a film that conforms to the concept of postmigration?³

Riem Spielhaus responded:

Ah, you pose the difficult question to begin with. Hmm. Maybe you can't do it. Maybe it's impossible to break out of the discourse. As soon as you pose the question, “How does it affect you?”, you immediately wind up in this strange constellation, where you have to deal with it. I would say, the best thing is to make a film that doesn't talk about it at all. If you don't want to reproduce this obsession that characterises the postmigrant condition, you will have to talk about something else. Otherwise you'll get caught up in it. (Ibid.)

3 Interview with Riem Spielhaus, excerpt from Post 2019, unpublished.

However, since to my surprise none of the cast members expressed real concerns or reservations in relation to their representation on the screen, and the question of how the film could become postmigrant did not really produce elaborate answers, I soon ceased to pose these questions.

The problem of marking – filming in the streets

Still, I did on several occasions experience the problem of marking that Spielhaus had mentioned in her response, not while conducting interviews, but when my camera operator and I were filming in the streets of Copenhagen and Berlin. I wanted to shoot street scenes that could function as bridges between the different scenes and/or help illustrate the various themes of the film. One idea was to make a collage of urban scenes, signs and situations to illustrate the diversity and complexity characterising the postmigrant condition. Giving the viewer a visual impression or sensation of this particular condition was an important objective of the film and a collage seemed like a good means of expressing it on the big screen. An important aspect of the postmigrant condition is the overall obsession in postmigrant societies with the issue of migration, and since this is so, even a traditional Danish village with an all-white population can be said to illustrate the postmigrant condition, if the obsession with migration can be traced in the mindsets of the population and the way they understand and live their lives. However, for the postmigrant condition to be depicted cinematically, I deemed it necessary to work with recognisable images that clearly represented ethnic diversity.

Fig. 11.3: Urban scene collage. Still from We are here. Hans Christian Post, 2019.



To achieve this, I worked with stereotypes, looking for people of colour as well as urban scenes, signs and situations that attest to ethnic diversity; in doing this, I clearly sensed that I was somehow *marking* the people, shops, signs, mosques, Islamic schools, urban scenes and situations the camera operator and I were filming. Although the overall objective was to reflect how the complexity and diversity of the postmigrant condition has already established itself in relatively harmonious ways in Danish and German contexts the means of achieving this seemed to be a process of marking. Even when I was filming situations in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods such as the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen, and was not singling out particular people, shops and urban scenes, it became clear that a history of marking and the expectations around it already existed, which meant that my actions gained this meaning anyway.

Fig. 11.4: *Confronted by shop owners during filming.* Photo by Uwe Bohrer.



Our filming in the streets and around shops always created tension. People reacted with wonder, reservation and sometimes even hostility, as if they sensed they were being singled out and marked for unknown purposes. Although I felt that my overall objective was legitimate, it was still difficult for me to defend the filming, as I so clearly experienced the act of marking. My solution was to do it as discreetly as possible and to halt the filming whenever anyone asked me to do so. A better way to go about it may have been to enter into a dialogue about what the filming was about first and then ask for permission to film. But most of the time, I felt it too laborious and difficult to introduce the concept of postmigration and explain the actual purpose of the film. Therefore, I decided to film discreetly and simply accept the tension and ambivalence, I was both creating and experiencing.

The final weeks of production

In comparison to the films I had previously made, the process of editing *We Are Here* went relatively easily. There was the overall challenge of interweaving the different threads of the film, and as always, there were a few difficult decisions to make along the way, such as our decision late in the process to not use the interview with Spielhaus, since I judged that there was too much focus on German academic discussions as well as a significant overlap between issues addressed in the interviews with Spielhaus and Langhoff. Apart from that, once we defined the balance between the film's different threads and laid out the storylines and accompanying themes of the three young theatre artists, the editing process went smoothly.

Looking back, I believe it would have been good to test screen the film a couple of times for an audience before finalising it. As mentioned, the film was screened in a rough version at the conference, "The Postmigrant Condition: Art, Culture and Politics in Contemporary Europe", which was held in Odense in late 2018. This early version of the film differed in two significant ways from the final cut. First of all, Anna Malzer appeared as the first of the three protagonists, and secondly, the political dispute was several minutes longer and was framed in a way that clearly disfavoured the two politicians. Both of these aspects were criticised in the question and answer session that followed the screening. Although it was recognised that a film about the postmigrant condition could indeed begin by featuring a white Danish woman such as Malzer, since one specific dimension in the discussions on postmigration and the postmigrant condition is about the long-ing to challenge and potentially overcome binary distinctions between "us" and "them", the general opinion at the conference was that it would be better to have Zaki Youssef or Sargun Oshana appear first.⁴ In regard to the political chapter, it was likewise recognised that it was legitimate to frame the politicians as I had done, as they had chosen to play these roles, but the framing was considered to be obvious and somewhat excessive and a re-edit was suggested.

During the last week of editing, I followed these recommendations. Instead of introducing Anna Malzer as the first of the three artists, I let Zaki Youssef appear first, a decision that worked out well, since we were able to use a funny meta-exchange about filters and appearances between Youssef and the camera operator.

4 Naika Foroutan points this out in the chapter, "The Post-migrant paradigm", in the book, *Refugees Welcome?: Difference and Diversity in a Changing Germany*: "The post-migrant paradigm deconstructs 'migration' as a dominant marker of social difference by stressing the normality of migration and mobility in a globalized world. [...] The post-migrant paradigm pushes migration and ethnicity as markers of social division into the background and seeks to describe the hybridization of societies beyond the migrant-native binary." (Foroutan 2019: 144)

Furthermore, I reduced the length of the political dispute considerably and downplayed the framing somewhat by changing the order of appearance.

Reflections on the final product

Looking back at the final week of editing, it would have probably been helpful to have tested the film in front of at least one more audience before wrapping up the editing process and screening it publicly. It is only when watching the film with an audience that I tend to notice its flaws. In general, I am happy with the film. Since it presents people from various fields and realities who do not actually interact in the film and could easily have stood alone, the film comes off as ruptured, potentially oversaturated as well as somewhat unresolved in its focus. But in the end, these traits can be viewed as qualities, at least if the film is screened in an academic context, where such deficiencies can be appreciated and lead to fruitful discussion. Still, some of the statements in the political chapter could have been left out. When viewing the film today, I notice many repetitive statements. Another problematic point is the Berlin chapter. Viewers already familiar with the concepts of postmigration will surely accept and be able to follow the radical discursive shift that comes with the chapter, but for more general audiences, the shift is likely to produce a degree of confusion.

This has probably influenced the screening history of *We Are Here*, which premiered at the Copenhagen Stage Theatre Festival in May 2019. Since then it has been screened at cultural festivals, in theatres, at theatre schools and in academic settings in Denmark. The international theatre and film festivals, to which I have submitted the film have elected not to screen it, and I think that one reason for this is that the film falls in between existing slots and categories. Regular film festivals find the film to be too academic, while science film festivals tend to regard “science” as meaning primarily natural science (as opposed to social sciences) and therefore consider the film to be just an ordinary documentary. The film captured the attention of theatre festivals, but apparently, the artistic examples were not deemed to be interesting enough to screen it. The Danish public service television broadcasting company (DR) reviewed it and declared it to be “a fine film”, but judged the subject to be “too narrow” and the approach a bit too academic or didactic for it to be broadcast.

Therefore, I decided to make a new and shorter version this year in which all explicit references to the concept of postmigration, as well as the entire Berlin chapter were edited out of the film, and the political chapter was further reduced.

In early June 2020, this version of the film was added to the free streaming service of the Danish library system, filmstriben.dk, where it has received good ratings.⁵

One bit of luck I have had with the film is the tremendous success that the three main protagonists have subsequently enjoyed. Zaki Youssef has since played important roles in several Danish films and more are to come. In 2019 Sargun Oshana won the Reumert Prize, the most prestigious Danish theatre award, for best director and has just been nominated for the prize again. Interestingly, in interviews Oshana has embraced the concept of postmigration as being helpful to describe the specific circumstances that we are all dealing with, and as a means of liberating himself artistically and in his daily life:

Viewing myself as “postmigrant” helps free me of the boxes that you become part of in the political world. [...] It made so much sense for me to hear that word [postmigration]. Because when one talks about refugees, it is almost as if they have no lived life after they have fled. But, of course, they have. [...] It is not so that I want to ignore that there are problems in society that result from people having fled here. But it quickly becomes a box that you are put into; a box that doesn't help anyone, because it prevents us from seeing the individual human being. (Wittrock 2019: 35)

Finally, in 2018, Anna Malzer took on the position as director of the Mungo Park theatre, becoming the youngest female director ever in Denmark; she immediately went on to form an ethnically mixed ensemble. Furthermore, in March 2020, Malzer was featured in a two-hour long documentary series by DR titled, *Dramadronning [Drama Queen]*. Although exactly how this series was inspired is unclear, I suspect that DR became aware of Malzer when they reviewed my documentary in early 2019.

It is possible that I have been less fortunate with the politicians featured in the film, since they no longer enjoy the power they once had. The Danish People's Party lost so many votes during the 2019 election that Martin Henriksen along with several of his fellow party members had to leave the Danish Parliament. At the same time, the sitting right-wing liberal government with its strong anti-immigration policies lost power to the Social Democratic opposition, causing Inger Støjberg to lose her post as minister. If I had considered these possible outcomes while making the film, I would have definitely asked for an interview with the Social Democratic leader and current prime minister, Mette Frederiksen. It would have been easier to set up an appointment with her before she became prime minister; and although a hardliner on immigration issues herself, she would have probably been more willing to enter into the concepts and discussions addressed

5 <https://fjernleje.filmstriben.dk/film/9000005290/vi-er-her>. To access this newer version of the documentary via “filmstriben”, it is necessary to have a Danish personal identification number.

in the film, which would have made the film appear less biased politically. So, this is maybe the most important lesson I have learned from making this documentary. It is always best to produce more material than the current situation indicates. In filmmaking you never know how the “reality” you are documenting will unfold.

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Part III: Postmigrant spaces

The square, the monument and the re-configurative power of art in postmigrant public spaces

Anne Ring Petersen

In these times, we see old monuments fall and new monuments being created, contested and sometimes embraced by local communities. News of such battles has reached far beyond art circles and reverberated in public debates across the world.¹ As W. J. T. Mitchell has pointed out, it is not uncommon that such struggles, and the public works of art themselves, involve some kind of violence and destruction, or their symbolic counterpart, iconoclasm, and the rejection or destruction of the symbolic objects themselves, including public icons and other forms of visual representation (1990: 883-884, 888-889). Oftentimes, such destructive struggles do not target monuments in their capacity of art but primarily because of their historical significance, i.e. for their power to monumentalise the version of history that reigns supreme.

The contestation of monuments revealed its violent and iconoclastic nature forcefully in 2020, after the Minneapolis police killing of black American civilian George Floyd in May ignited numerous *Black Lives Matter*-led protests across the world, calling for an end to systemic racism and an interrogation of the colonialist legacies of contemporary societies. During the course of these demonstrations, angry protesters tore down controversial public symbols of colonialism, slave trade and racism. These symbols are thought to sanction, and even glorify, the racist violence and prejudice against people of African descent that have persisted since the times of colonialism and colonial slavery.

Most of the attacked monuments were in the United States and ranged from monuments to the Confederate States of America to statues of Christopher Co-

¹ The work presented in this chapter has been undertaken within the framework of two research projects. It draws on an understanding of “the postmigrant condition” and postmigrant approaches to art and culture developed in the collaborative project “Art, Culture and Politics in the ‘Postmigrant Condition’”, funded by the Independent Research Fund Denmark, grant DFF–4180-00341 (2016-18), and it also presents some initial thoughts on the possible roles of contemporary visual art in postmigrant public spaces. These thoughts will be further developed in the project “Togetherness in Difference: Reimagining identities, communities and histories through art”, supported by the Novo Nordisk Foundation grant NNF19OC0053992 (2019-23).

lumbus – a symbol of the genocide of Native American people. Notably, similar and concurrent acts of destruction took place in countries such as: South Africa (in Cape Town, a bust of the mining magnate and politician Cecil John Rhodes was decapitated, cp. Patrick 2020); Belgium (statues of King Leopold II who brutally colonised Congo were vandalised in Brussels and Ghent, cp. Pronczuk and Zaveri 2020); Greenland and Denmark (statues of the colonial missionary Hans Egede were “recoded” using blood-red paint and decolonising slogans, cp. Bergløv and Herskind 2020); and Germany (red paint and slogans on memorials to the Chancellor of the German Empire Otto von Bismarck in Hamburg and Berlin, cp. Doerry 2020, Koldehoff 2020 and Anonymous 2020).

Of special significance is the statue of slave trader Edward Colston in the British city of Bristol. The statue was toppled by protesters on June 7 and dumped in the harbour. After the event, Black Lives Matter activist Jen Reid climbed onto the empty plinth and stood there with her clenched fist raised defiantly above her head as a “living sculpture”. British artist Marc Quinn saw the photo her husband had snapped and posted on his Instagram account. He asked Jen Reid to collaborate on a resin-and-steel sculpture based on the photo and a 3D scan of her body. A little more than month later, on July 15, a team directed by Quinn mounted the sculpture of Reid on the empty plinth in the early morning hours. Although this artistic and political intervention stayed in place for only twenty-four hours before it was removed by the authorities, the sculpture *A Surge of Power (Jen Reid)* gave the public an opportunity to reimagine (British) history by offering a proposal for what might replace Bristol’s old symbol of enslavement, racism and exploitation.²

The acts of iconoclast decommemoration listed here derive from historical precedents. The most important one is probably the “Rhodes Must Fall” campaign in 2015, when thousands of student protestors at the University of Cape Town demanded that a sculpture of Cecil John Rhodes be removed from the campus. The removal of this imposing symbol of colonialism and apartheid was closely linked to more extensive demands for structural change to end the racism still prevailing at the university (Schmahmann 2016). The history of battles over historical monuments in public space is too long to be recounted here.³ However, I would like to mention one more example as an entry point to the topic of this chapter: the re-configurative power of *contemporary* art in public space. In other words, instead of examining antiracist and postcolonial struggles over the monuments of the past, this chapter applies a postmigrant perspective to provide some answers

2 Because Marc Quinn is a white artist, the sculpture and his collaboration with Reid has been criticised by artist Thomas J. Price for being an “opportunistic stunt”, while others have commended Quinn on his gesture of “allyship”, see Bakare 2020 and Bland 2020 for key arguments of this debate.

3 For an authoritative in-depth study, cp. Gamboni 1997.

to the crucial questions of what kinds of art should replace the dismantled monuments, and what kind of blueprints for the future they may afford.

Seen from a postmigrant perspective, a particularly interesting case is the Nigerian-born American artist Olu Oguibe's monument for strangers and refugees, *Das Fremdlinge und Flüchtlinge Monument*. On this concrete obelisk, a verse from the Book of Matthew (25:35) reads "I was a stranger and you took me in" in German, English, Arabic and Turkish – the four most commonly spoken languages in the city of Kassel, where the monument was installed at the city's central square, Königsplatz. The work was commissioned for the Documenta 14 exhibition, held in Kassel and Athens in 2017. When the monument was inaugurated in June 2017, Oguibe was awarded the prestigious Arnold Bode Prize for what was perceived by many to be both a call to action and a homage to German hospitality towards refugees. In interviews given that year, Oguibe explained that he and his assisting team used the obelisk – a "timeless" form originating in and spreading from Africa – to project the "universal, timeless principles" of hospitality and charity, together with the principle of gratitude towards hosts as charitable agents who are also deserving of respect. Intending the monument to be a homage to both refugees and the host community, Oguibe thus emphasised that welcoming strangers and refugees involves the development of a *reciprocal* relationship between guest and host, based on an interplay between hospitality towards and gratitude from strangers (2017a: 0:40-2:00 min.).

Considering the polarised and hostile debate concerning refugees and asylum seekers in the wake of the European refugee situation in 2015, and the fact that the exaggerated media attention has aggravated popular anxieties about immigration, it is significant that Oguibe combines classical humanism's compassion with and ethical responsibility for our neighbours with an American postcolonial perspective on anxiety about strangers to explain why pro-refugee and anti-refugee sentiment, or hospitality and suspicion, are both intrinsic to the encounter with strangers. In Oguibe's view, "host anxiety" about newcomers is a natural and legitimate reaction. It is an awareness of the fact that "charity is an act of faith", and that even though newcomers bring new skills and culture that enrich the community, "you take a risk when you take people in" (ibid.: 9:30-10:00 min.). Consequently, host anxiety cannot be reduced to xenophobia pure and simple. Notably, Oguibe explains this point without making any concessions to anti-immigration sentiment, as he refers to the pertinent historical example of immigration to the Americas: European colonisers and settlers were strangers who brought a lot of pain, and not only good things. And they did not bring peace. Oguibe's own pro-refugee position becomes clear, however, when he repeatedly declares that the principles of hospitality and gratitude are a "natural law" that he himself

learned about in early childhood, in the late 1960s, when his family was forcibly displaced as a consequence of the Nigerian-Biafran War (ibid.).⁴

Oguibe reappropriated the monumental form of the obelisk, with its embedded history of colonialism and plunder, thereby summoning “the ghosts of the sedimented conflicts” (Sternfeld 2019: 60). Yet this is not a monument to colonial histories of violence. Colonial ghosts are rather the foil against which the monument measures “the present plights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers” (McLaughlin 2019: unpaget). The declarative mode of the inscription “I was a stranger ...”, and the fact that the words are spoken in the first person, invites the viewer to engage in a performative identification that relates to the voice and body of the refugee. As McLaughlin puts it, “the monument *speaks as* the refugee in the present” (2019: unpaget).

As the city council of Kassel and the artist failed to reach an agreement on the relocation of the work to another square, the monument was dismantled on October 3, 2018. The timing of the removal to coincide with Germany’s national holiday to commemorate reunification was an insensitive gesture and was seen by some critics as the city’s bowing to anti-immigration pressure from right-wing politicians. Earlier on, Thomas Materner, member of the city council for the right-wing-to-far-right political party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), had described the obelisk as “ideologically polarizing, disfigured art” – an uncanny evocation of the Nazi term ‘degenerate art’ (Batycka 2018; McLaughlin 2019; Sternfeld 2019: 52). The dismantling of the sculpture was openly celebrated by the Kassel City branch of AfD (Hickley 2018): on October 3, AfD Kassel-Stadt announced on Facebook:

The champagne corks are popping! The dismantling of the obelisk is a complete success of AfD Kassel and its symbolic significance cannot be overestimated! The symbol of the welcoming culture, in other words the signal of uninhibited entry of illegal, outlandish [*kulturfremder*] migrants into Germany, had to be removed from the center of the city and represents the coming turn in migration politics.⁵

4 McLaughlin links the monument in Kassel to the work that Oguibe exhibited in the Athens iteration of Documenta 14: *Biafra Time Capsule* (2017) comprised books, documents, archival objects and mixed media. Technically speaking, it was not a monument, but it fulfilled the function of a memorial, as it commemorated the experience of child refugees in the Nigerian-Biafran Civil War of 1968-70 and generated “a semi-sacred space consisting of the artist’s personal library materials of childhood memories” (McLaughlin 2019: unpaget). The human disaster of Biafra in the late 1960s thus mirrored the human tragedy of refugees and migrants drowning in huge numbers as they tried to cross the Mediterranean Sea to escape from the many troubled places in the Middle East and Africa.

5 “Die Sektkorken Knallen! Der Abbau des Obelisk ist ein voller Erfolg der AfD Kassel und kann in seiner symbolischen Bedeutung kaum überschätzt werden! Das Symbol der Willkommenskultur, anders gesagt das Signal für eine ungezügelter Einreise illegaler kulturfremder Migranten nach

Shortly after the removal of the obelisk, however, the city and the artist fortunately reached an agreement to relocate the sculpture at the pedestrian shopping street, Treppenstraße, also in the city centre (Neuendorf 2018; Anonymous 2018). As a result, the sculpture returned to its new, permanent location in Kassel on April 18, 2019 (Greenberger 2019; Stolzenhain 2019).

As these examples demonstrate, works of art in public spaces, and the controversies they generate, are expressions of the cultural and historical circumstances from which the works emerge. For this reason, they often provide communities and nations with important collective points of orientation and identification, or with points of counter-identification. In short, people struggle over art in public space because it matters.

This chapter focuses on how art in the public spaces of a society transformed by (im)migration can shape and is, in turn, shaped by the disagreements and negotiations resulting from the need to accommodate increasing cultural diversity and new claims for participation, visibility and the recognition of difference. It explores how artists have made interventions into what I designate as *postmigrant public spaces* and understand to be plural and sometimes tensional, or even conflictual, domains of human encounter impacted by former and ongoing (im)migration, and by new and old forms of nationalism, as suggested by the example from Kassel.

I examine two art projects in Copenhagen. The first project is the award-winning public park *Superkilen* (The Super Wedge) that opened in the multicultural district of Nørrebro in 2012. This extensive recreational area, wedged into one of the city's most ethnically diverse and socially challenged neighbourhoods, was designed by the Danish artist group Superflex, in collaboration with architects from the Copenhagen-based studio Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), and Topotek 1, a Berlin-based group of landscape architects. It is composed of three visually distinct areas, *Den Grønne Park* (The Green Park), *Det Sorte Marked* (The Black Market), and finally *Den Røde Plads* (The Red Square), on which I will focus below. The second project is Jeannette Ehlers' and La Vaughn Belle's collaboration on the sculpture *I Am Queen Mary*, which drew extraordinary national and international media attention when it was inaugurated in 2018. Installed in the Port of Copenhagen, in front of the West Indian Warehouse – an example of architectural heritage from colonial times – it was the first monument in the country to critically commemorate Danish colonialism and complicity in the transatlantic slave trade.⁶

Deutschland, mußte aus der Mitte der Stadt weichen und steht für die kommende Wende in der Migrationspolitik." (AfD Kassel-Stadt 2018). All quotations in German and Danish have been translated by the author.

6 Regarding the site-specific placement of the memorial, cp. Petersen 2018.

I will use these two outstanding projects to shed some light on what the re-configurative power of art can accomplish in postmigrant public spaces. These works may provide us with some much-needed answers to the question of the contested, yet crucial role of public art in democratic societies: How can works of art form a possible loophole of escape from dominant discourses by openly challenging, or subtly circumventing, traditional understandings of national heritage and identity that are no longer in keeping with the times, thereby helping us to imagine national and urban communities otherwise? After considering the two art projects, I will revert to this general question of art's role in shaping postmigrant public spaces.

The square and the monument

Superkilen is an example of how an urban renewal project can mediate between social groups in a heterogeneous area, since the people living in the immediate vicinity of the park have affiliations with more than 50 different nationalities. The involvement of local citizens is a staple of urban renewal projects in Denmark. In this project, it assumed the form of controlled participation whereby the artists and architects remained the ultimate curators of the project (Jespersen 2017: 122).

Led by Superflex, the *Superkilen* project team decided to involve citizens as directly as possible. Instead of using the standard equipment for parks and public spaces in Copenhagen, local people of different migrant and non-migrant backgrounds were asked to nominate specific city objects, such as benches, bins, trees, playgrounds, manhole covers and signage from other countries. The project group sought to engage as many people as possible in proposing objects, through posters in libraries, a call on the Internet and a catalogue of objects that could inspire local residents to think about specific objects, instead of mere functions (such as playgrounds, benches, and more light and green areas).

Even though the project team included proposals and wishes that were not “fully congruent with its own”, the team set the framework and made the final selection, so that *Superkilen* should be seen as a “curated project based on citizens’ involvement but not truly collaborative in all its single parts” (Steiner 2013a: 19). The selected objects were either purchased or reproduced in an adapted 1:1 version, depending on whether they met the Danish safety requirements and were suitable for the Danish climate. In total, there are more than 100 different objects from more than 50 different countries (BIG: 23). Interestingly, in five cases, Superflex adopted a far more personally engaging and experimental mode of “extreme” participation, by involving five groups of local residents, mostly elderly and younger people, who were chosen precisely because they represented segments of the local community who would not attend the public meetings on the urban renew-

al project. Together with one of the three artists from Superflex (Jakob Fenger, Rasmus Nielsen and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen), the groups travelled to Palestine, Spain, Thailand, Texas and Jamaica to acquire five specific objects to be installed throughout the area (Christiansen et al. 2013: 56).

Over time, local people may develop affective attachments to some of the objects. These attachments may operate on several levels. They may be highly individualised, but when shared, they may also build a spirit of community and a sense of belonging to a real or imagined micro-community. Residents may identify with 'their' object because they have chosen it; the object may trigger memories of a family's country of origin, places visited on holiday, or countries of temporary residence, i.e. past or temporary homes. The objects can thus function as a form of everyday memory site, where locals may recall places that they feel attached to. People may also feel attracted to certain objects simply because they are visually fascinating landmarks in their neighbourhood, like the giant Japanese Octopus that is cherished by local children, who use it as a climbing frame. Or an object may become a social meeting point, like the Moroccan fountain where young people gather (Steiner 2013a: 16).

Fig. 12.1: Octopus from Tokyo at Det Sorte Marked [The Black Market], part of the urban area Superkilen [Super Wedge], Nørrebro, Copenhagen.



Superflex, with BIG and Topotek 1, 2012. Photo by Iwan Baan.

As political scientist Michael Hanchard has inferred, individual experiences are part of a collective memory, and the boundaries between individual and collective

memory are fluid: “The actual constitution of memory, the cognitive distillation of objects and experiences in a recollection is in some crucial ways a *social* rather than an entirely individual exercise” (2008: 48, original emphasis). Arguably, the social character of memory is more forcefully evident when mediated through *public* displays, rituals, institutions, monuments and spaces. Hence, *Superkilen* prompts the question of how art in postmigrant public spaces like Nørrebro can help us to reimagine urban communities and generate new collective memories.

Fig. 12.2: *Den Røde Plads* [Red Square], part of the urban area *Superkilen* [Super Wedge], Nørrebro, Copenhagen.



Superflex, with BIG and Topotek 1, 2012. Photo by Torben Eskerod.

Zooming in on *Den Røde Plads*, this area is designed for various types of physical and social activity, such as boxing, basketball, resting on swings or simply passing through the area on foot or bicycle. The selection of urban objects is variegated and contradictory, giving visual and spatial expression to the demographic heterogeneity of the neighbourhood. Overall, the aesthetics of the square could be described as deliberately pursuing a *lack* of aesthetic uniformity (Jespersen 2017: 122). As Martin Rein-Cano of Topotek 1 has explained:

The brief was: ‘Deal with the issue of migration in this neighbourhood. Can you somehow make the situation better?’ So, the original subject was not our idea; migration was the point of departure. We just took it very seriously, almost literally. [...] Particularly in the Nordic countries, there is an amazing desire for harmony,

whereas I think we have to learn to live with certain conflicts that we are not going to solve. And maybe we should not look at all of them as being dangerous; some could even contribute to our wealth and enrich cultures. [...] With *Superkilen* the problems and conflicts are getting visible: they turn into a subject. We have created a place that is, instead of being harmonious, conflictual. Look at the objects: We have objects from Israel next to objects from Muslim countries. There are a lot of conflicts, and they are part of the concept. (Ingels et al. 2013: 70-71)

In an insightful essay on *Superkilen*, curator Barbara Steiner examines what she considers to be the key aspects of the project. Firstly, the project group's exploration of different modes of participation, and their limitations. Secondly, their attempt to make visible that Nørrebro is a conflictual and culturally heterogeneous area with a history of battles over urban space, such as the struggle over the children's playground Byggeren (a pet name derivative of "Building Site") in 1980, and the battle over Ungdomshuset (The Youth House) at Jagtvej 69 (Hergel 2019; Sørensen 2019). The young squatters and other regulars who had claimed the right to use the building as a venue for social and cultural activities were evicted in 2007 when the evangelical free church called Faderhuset (The House of The Father) bought the property and had the building demolished. This conflict with the church and the municipality engendered fierce protests from left-wing groups, together with riots in the streets. The protests were rekindled from time to time, most vigorously in 2011. Seemingly oblivious to the open wound of the local conflict, the American street artist Shephard Fairey decorated a gable end facing the vacant plot with a mural painting of a white dove entitled *Peace*. Fairey's mural started a veritable war of images, as *Peace* was vandalised with graffiti. Fairey eventually agreed to collaborate with former members of the 69 Youth House on redecorating the lower half of the mural with images of riot police and explosions, together with the combative slogan of the protesters: "Nothing forgotten, nothing forgiven" (Brooks/Rushe/Eriksen 2011; Nielsen 2015: 148-150).

Taking this local history into consideration, the artistic and conceptual conundrum that Superflex had to address can be summed up as follows: How can an urban park with an embedded art project 'express' a society or an urban community that is heterogeneous, fragmented and regularly riven by conflicts, yet destined to share a common space? Or to phrase it differently, how to express, or make visible, that the neighbourhood and the part of it that became *Superkilen* constitute what I would describe as a postmigrant public space where different vested interests clash, and where no final reconciliation is possible, but where socio-cultural differences are nevertheless negotiated and intertwined to create a convivial, hybrid urban culture of integration?

As opposed to *Den Røde Plads*, *I Am Queen Mary* was conceived as a monument to commemorate Caribbean anticolonial resistance in the former Danish West In-

dies – now the US Virgin Islands. It was the outcome of a unique collaboration between the Copenhagen-based artist Jeannette Ehlers and the Virgin Islands artist La Vaughn Belle, who is based in St. Croix.⁷

Fig. 12.3: I Am Queen Mary in front of the West Indian Warehouse, Copenhagen Harbour. Jeannette Ehlers and La Vaughn Belle, 2018. Polystyrene, coral stones and concrete. Height 7 metres, depth 3.89 metres.



Photo by Anne Ring Petersen. Courtesy of the artists.

7 For more elaborate analyses and discussions of the work, cp. Danbolt/Wilson 2018; Drachmann 2017; Petersen 2018.

Ehlers and Belle are both of Caribbean heritage – or Caribbean and Danish, in Ehlers' case. In what follows, I will briefly explain how the artists used the story of a black woman to rewrite the hegemonic version of Danish national history from a postmigrant and transnational perspective informed by a sense of decolonial solidarity, before I move on to discuss the general question of what roles art can play in postmigrant public spaces.

I Am Queen Mary pays tribute to Mary Thomas, one of the leaders of the Fireburn labour rebellion against the Danish rule in the (then) Danish West Indies. The colony became the US Virgin Islands in 1917, when Denmark divested the islands by selling them off to the USA, without involving the Virgin Islanders in this crucial political decision. The memorial was planned to be a contribution to the 2017 centennial commemoration of the transfer of the Danish West Indies to the USA but was not unveiled until March 2018. In the Caribbean, 'queen' was an honorary title for the women who headed the social life on the plantations, such as Mary Thomas. She was one of four queens who led the 1878 rebellion of plantation workers in Saint Croix, where the harsh conditions had only improved insignificantly since the abolition of slavery in 1848.⁸ The uprising was brutally quelled by the local Danish authorities, and the four women instigators were sent to a women's prison in Copenhagen until 1887, when they were returned to serve the rest of their life sentences in Saint Croix (G. M. Schmidt 2016). Today, they are considered to be key figures in the history of the Virgin Islands (Scherfig/Damkjær 2016).

Ehlers and Belle used a staged self-portrait of Ehlers posing in a peacock chair as a model for the sculpture, in which they literally and metaphorically embodied a heroine of the Caribbean anti-colonial rebellions. The photo derives from the recording of the video-filmed performance *Whip It Good* (2013-) in 2014. In *Whip It Good*, Ehlers critically re-enacted one of the slavery era's savage forms of punishment, flogging, by giving a white canvas a vigorous and callous beating. The photo depicts Ehlers enthroned in a large, wicker peacock chair, wearing the costume for the performance and holding the whip in her raised hands, ready to act. Crucially, Ehlers' self-portrait alludes to a famous photo of the African American activist and co-founder of the Black Panther Party, Huey P. Newton, posing in a similar chair, armed with spear and rifle. By allusion, Ehlers thus identifies herself as an heir to the black revolutionary and civil rights movements.

It should be noted that the monument complexifies the conflation of gendered, racialised and national identifications of the photographic image. For one thing, Queen Mary's insignia, torch and cane bill have been substituted for the suppres-

8 The three other queens were Axeline Elisabeth Salomon (Queen Agnes), Mathilde McBean (Queen Mathilde) and the recently discovered fourth queen, Susanna "Bottom Belly" Abrahamson (Scherfig/Damkjær 2016).

sor's whip, thereby subtly associating the figure of the Caribbean female rebel with the image and spirit of Huey P. Newton as a more recent protagonist of Black rebellion. Moreover, the figure itself has been transformed into an amalgamation of the physical appearance of the two artists. By dint of their different nationalities, they are able to symbolically renegotiate the exploitative colonial relationship between the two unequally positioned countries. They redefine this relationship on contemporary terms as a transnational collaboration that evokes the far-reaching transatlantic and diasporic connections between people of African descent struggling against similar forms of misrecognition and racism.

This symbolic hybrid body was generated by morphing 3D images of the artists to create a model that was subsequently used to produce the three-dimensional sculpture in a process reminiscent of the one that Marc Quinn used for the counter-monument *A Surge of Power (Jen Reid)* (2020) which is congenial with the homage to the power of black female protest in *I Am Queen Mary*. Cut out of large blocks of polystyrene and coated in layers of sealant and black paint to reinforce the surface, the figure of Mary was made to look like a classical bronze sculpture.⁹ Furthermore the artists also transformed and recoded the traditional European plinth by drawing on a local colonial architectural heritage: Coral stones from the Virgin Islands, sourced from Belle's historic properties, were incorporated into the plinth as a tribute to the enslaved who had been sent out at low tide to cut them from the ocean. By incorporating the material product of slave labour and approximating the foundations of the sculpture to those of most colonial-era buildings in the US Virgin Islands, Belle and Ehlers added to the monument a critical reminder that Danish colonial wealth was based on slave labour.

Moving on from the memorial's function as a monumentalisation of postcolonial critique, the questions I would like to pose concerning Ehlers' and Belle's project are: How may it help change the understanding of Danish heritage, history and identity? And how does it resonate with the ideas of the postmigrant condition and postmigrant public space?

As a Copenhagen-based artist, Ehlers grew up in the nascent "postmigrant condition" of the Danish population towards which this public art project is primarily addressed.¹⁰ I propose, *firstly*, that *I Am Queen Mary* should be acknowledged as a

9 See the project website of *I Am Queen Mary*, <https://www.iamqueenmary.com/new-page-2> (accessed October 16, 2019). In March 2019, the artists were granted permission to extend the project in front of the West Indian Warehouse for another year, and in April 2019, the Culture and Leisure Administration of the City of Copenhagen decided to support the artists' wish to have the statue cast in bronze, and to become a permanent part of Copenhagen's public space, by granting them DKK 52,500 for a preliminary investigation, fundraising and public consultation. Cp. <https://www.tv2lorry.dk/artikel/fra-flamingo-til-permanent-sort-kvinde-skal-blive> (accessed October 16, 2019).

10 In our co-authored book, the Danish-based postmigration research group have preferred the term "the postmigrant condition" to the term "postmigrant society" used in German social sci-

contribution to the “migrantisation” of Danish national heritage and official culture, because it aids the recognition that histories of migration are an integral and formative part of the history of the nation. Central to the story that the monument tells, and the way it tells this story, are stories of migration, including the forced voyages of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean, the journeys of Danish colonisers and merchant ships between Denmark and the West Indies, and those of Mary Thomas, La Vaughn Belle and Jeannette Ehlers between St. Croix and Copenhagen. *Secondly*, I submit that Ehlers and Belle have not used the black body to commemorate the victimhood of enslaved Africans. They have rather used the black body as an emancipatory means to rewrite the dominant narrative of Danish history and create a symbolic space for empowered racialised subjects in Danish society and public consciousness.

Fig. 12.4: Moder Danmark [Mother Denmark].

Elisabeth Jerichau Baumann, 1851.

Oil on canvas, 149 x 119 cm. MIN 891.



Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen.

Photo by Ole Haupt.

ences (Foroutan 2016, 2019), because the book gives a certain priority to Danish examples, and it is doubtful whether Danish society as a whole can be described as postmigrant, and whether the politically and sociologically oriented concept of the postmigrant society is apt for framing *cultural* analysis (Schramm/Moslund/Petersen 2019: xi-xii, 7-9, 38, 59-60). Terminological differences notwithstanding, German and Danish scholars share an understanding of postmigration as referring to a conflictual societal predicament, and this common understanding undergirds my examination of art's transformative potential in postmigrant public spaces.

In addition, the sculpture proposes another “face of the nation” (Antonsich 2018): a black, decolonial counter-image to the popular national-romantic female personification of Denmark; a counter-image to, for example, the perhaps most cherished incarnation of this allegorical figure, *Moder Danmark* (Mother Denmark), painted by Polish-born Elisabeth Jerichau Baumann in 1851.

Today, this painting is still deployed by some people to propagate a white nationalist image of the nation, for instance when, in 2000, the anti-immigration, national-conservative Danish People’s Party used it as the front-cover image of the party’s magazine *Dansk Folkeblad*. Inverting the figure of Mother Denmark, the magazine created the illusion that her determined forward stride and visionary gaze were aimed, not at some distant and undefined point on the horizon, but at the title of the party organ, “The Danish People’s Magazine”, with the anti-EU headline “It Concerns Freedom: Vote Danish – Vote No” appearing in bold yellow type below the name (Dansk Folkeparti 2000).

Postmigrant public spaces

Northern European societies are currently struggling to come to terms with globalisation- and migration-induced transformations of society. The conflictual nature of this process is widely recognised by academics engaged in researching “postmigrant societies” and “the postmigrant condition”. Drawing on these conceptual frameworks for analysing contemporary social change, I understand postmigrant public spaces to be contested contact zones. It should be added that I define public spaces broadly, as they comprise both material and symbolic dimensions, as well as various forms of public discourse, dissent and protest in both physical and media spaces.

The influence of Jürgen Habermas’ theory of the “public sphere” (Habermas 1989 [1962]) on theories of and debates concerning ‘art in public space’ can hardly be overestimated. As political theorist Chantal Mouffe has observed, Habermas understood the political public space to be “the place where a rational consensus takes place” among citizens with equal access to this democratic sphere, adding that Habermas has since accepted that such an ideal situation of equity and consensus is impossible, given the constrictions of social life (2007a: 3-4). However, in the discourse on artistic practices and public space, Habermas’s early formulation of the bourgeois model of rational-critical debate, and his ideal of the public sphere as a universally accessible place where a unifying consensus can be reached, have often been adopted as the very definition of public space (Baldini 2019: 10; Nielsen 2015: 50-51; Nilsson 2012: passim; Franzen/König/Plath 2007: 373-374, 431-433). As a result, there has been a widespread tendency to idealise art in public space as a means to generate, if not the actual consensus of a unitary public, then forms that

derive from that ideal, such as ‘social cohesion’, ‘shared values’ and the building of ‘community’ based on everyone’s democratic ‘access’ to interaction with art in a public-sphere environment. As literary scholar Michael Warner has argued in his authoritative book *Publics and Counterpublics*, Habermas’ theory of the public sphere has been the subject of much criticism, “much of it marred by reductive summaries” (2005: 50), but the very extent of the debate reveals the ability of Habermas’ theory to withstand it and lead to a rethinking of the public sphere. In his own revisionist reading, Warner uses Habermas’ theory to reconceptualise “the public”. To that end, he emphasises that Habermas acknowledged the plurality of discourses, voices and social contexts, and that there is, therefore, “no necessary conflict between the public sphere and the idea of multiple publics” (ibid.: 56). In the context of art in public spaces where people encounter art and each other coincidentally, and often as strangers, it is significant that Warner departs from Habermas’ concern with face-to-face argumentative dialogue in his later work on communicative rationality (ibid.: 56), and explicitly states that co-presence is not required to generate a public: “It exists *by virtue of being addressed*” (Warner 2005: 67, original emphasis). Following and at the same time diverging from Habermas, Warner defines a public as follows:

The ideal unity of the public sphere is best understood as an imaginary convergence point that is the backdrop of critical discourse in each of these contexts and publics – an implied but abstract point that is often referred to as ‘the public’ or ‘public opinion’ [...] A ‘public’ in this context is a special kind of virtual social object, enabling a special mode of address. [...] In modern societies, a public is by definition an indefinite audience rather than a social constituency that could be numbered or named. (ibid.: 55-56)

In continuation of Warner, I would like to propose that, in the discourses on art in public spaces, the Habermasian ideal still functions as such an imaginary convergence point and discursive nodal point that puts into place a normative idea of what artists and art projects should accomplish – especially where monuments and other permanently installed artworks are concerned. Importantly, it coexists with another imaginary convergence point and normative idea of ‘radical art’ that is capable of producing critical publics that are defined by their tension with the wider public and/or a dominant culture. Warner provides a helpful working definition of such counterpublics:

Discussion within such a public is understood to contravene the rules obtaining in the world at large, being structured by alternative dispositions or protocols, making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying [...]. A counterpublic, against the background of the public sphere, enables a horizon of

opinion and exchange; its exchanges remain distinct from authority and can have a critical relation to power; its extent is in principle indefinite, because it is not based on a precise demography but mediated by print, theatre, diffuse networks of talk, commerce, and the like. [...] participation in such a public is one of the ways by which its members' identities are formed and transformed. (Ibid.: 56-57)

At this junction, some observations on what bearing Warner's understanding of publics and counterpublics has on the concept of postmigrant public space seem in order. As explained in the introduction, I understand postmigrant public spaces to be plural and sometimes conflictual domains of human encounter impacted by former and ongoing (im)migration, and by new and old forms of nationalism. In their capacity as public spaces, they can accommodate multiple (counter)publics. Yet since these sites of contestation and competition are fraught with social fragmentation, and because they are regulated, like all public spaces, by mechanisms of exclusion that distribute 'access' unequally, postmigrant public spaces tend towards agonistic plurality, rather than gesturing towards the imaginary Habermasian convergence point of ideal unity.

Furthermore, unlike the notion of the nation as a public sphere, the concept of postmigrant public space does not draw imaginary geo-political borders around a 'national' public. Where membership is concerned, the boundaries of postmigrant public spaces are not coterminous with the physical borders of a place, site or territory. This feature links the concept to the idea of "post-publics", as defined by curator and art theorist Simon Sheikh (of which more below). Postmigrant public spaces are permeable and relatively open spaces because the indefinite (counter)publics that emerge within them, do so "*by virtue of being addressed*", as Warner submits (Warner 2005: 67, original emphasis). Put differently, the concept proposed here foregrounds the discursive and material anchor points that postmigrant public spaces have within a nation state, while also taking due account of another defining feature: Their complex and expansive connections with *transnational* publics, flows and spaces of productions beyond the local and the nation state.

As publics – and counterpublics – are not coterminous with postmigrant public spaces, they are better understood to be protean formations of participants that exist, and coexist, within them. As publics come into being by being addressed, they are arguably sensitive to and to some extent determined by the communicative context. In postmigrant public spaces, publics and counterpublics are formed in circumstances of considerable political and social tensions and struggles. "The omnipresence of the discourse on migration" may lead us to believe that these conflicts are only about migration and integration, but in reality they go far deeper into the core conflicts of modern plural democracy and its struggles about recognition, equal access to participation and an equal share of the assets

of society, to all of which immigrants and their descendants are now also laying claim (Foroutan 2019: 14).

These postmigrant conditions are likely to shape (counter)publics, and their content and form, in ways that may be both explicit and implicit. As these publics emerge from a climate of fierce debate involving strong feelings, clashes between opposing interests and protracted controversies about the smallest things connected with the vexed issues of immigration, integration and recognition,¹¹ the publics tend to contest each other's assumptions and protocols. Postmigrant public spaces are thus filled with frictions and negotiations, not only between any one counterpublic and a larger public (or 'the public'), as Warner suggests, but also internally among a plurality of sub- and counterpublics.¹² This tensional coexistence infuses postmigrant public spaces with a particular dynamic in which conflict mingles with conviviality. As explained below, the concept of postmigrant public space proposed here is theoretically underpinned by Mouffe's understanding of democratic public spaces as being inherently conflictual. The concept also resonates with Sheikh's diagnosis of the public sphere in the 21st century as being fragmented and almost impossible to locate in specific places; in other words, worlds apart from Habermas' ideal of a unitary public sphere. Referencing Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge's notion of a "proletarian" public sphere defined in opposition to Habermas's notion of the normative "bourgeois" public sphere, Sheikh identifies a change in how public spaces are commonly understood:

[T]oday, we would not describe public spaces only in dialectics of class struggle, but rather as a multiplicity of struggles, among them struggles for recognition, partly in shape of access to the public space, as well as the struggle for the right to struggle itself, for dissent. (2007: 5)

Sheikh crystallises his analysis of this transformation into the idea that, in the 21st century, the idea of a unitary public sphere, in particular the notion of "the-public-as-nation" (ibid.: 5-6), has been replaced by new kinds of public formations: post-publics. The concept of postmigrant public space can be understood as a parallel to Sheikh's concept in the sense that, in both cases, the prefix "post" signals that they are critical terms that do not represent a departure from, but rather a

11 For instance, the debates on the removal of the n-word from children's books, and on whether or not pork should be served in nursery schools, to mention two recent Danish examples.

12 Warner distinguishes between *counterpublics* that hinge on a self-perception as minorities with a subordinate status, and *sub-publics* that are organised as parallel discursive arenas centering on a particular content or thematic discussion. Sub-publics would thus include, for example, sub-cultures and youth cultures. The oppositional character of counterpublics, on the other hand, is a function of form, argues Warner, as counterpublics are structured by alternative protocols and "mark themselves off against a dominant cultural horizon" (Warner 2005: 119).

critical examination of, their basic modalities: The categories of the public and its adjacent counterpublics, and the categories of the public sphere and public space.¹³ The concept of postmigrant public space is thus a critical term that can help us transform the notion of the postmigrant condition into an analytical mode through which we can, in Sheikh's words, "understand our actuality in order to act in it, obviously, but also in order to reconfigure it, to imagine it anew" (ibid.: 7).

Lastly, but importantly, my conceptualisation of art's role in postmigrant public space as a plural sphere of multiple publics is also indebted to Warner's adamant insistence that the very idea of a public is a motivating and generative factor:

[I]t seems that in order to address a public, one must forget or ignore the fictional nature of the entity one addresses. The idea of a public is motivating, not simply instrumental. It is constitutive of a social imaginary. (2005: 12)

I do, however, deviate from Warner with respect to his general claim that a counterpublic always at some level maintains "an awareness of its subordinate status" in relation to a dominant one (ibid.: 56) – be it "the public", "the majority" or "the establishment". This may hold true of the queer and feminist counterpublics that are his primary examples, but I would argue that one of the characteristics of postmigrant public spaces is that the interaction between the different (counter) publics within them is contingent upon the recognition of differences and plurality, rather than relations of subordination.

Turning now to Chantal Mouffe's theory of conflict as integral to democratic politics, I would like to suggest that the two projects under discussion here could be characterised as "agonistic" interventions into urban spaces, because they seek to instigate a change of perception and collective identification by renegotiating, rather than simply rejecting, historical perceptions of community and history that still hold sway over collective imagination.

Mouffe's point of departure is German jurist Carl Schmitt's idea that a defining feature of politics is the identification of a friend and an enemy, and the ensuing conflict between them. She contends, however, that conflicts need not involve the identification of an enemy whom one wants to destroy, and that democratic politics are a conflict between adversaries who may disagree, but who ultimately respect each other's right to exist. Mouffe calls this kind of respectful conflict "agonistic pluralism", in contrast to both the antagonism of Schmitt's struggle against an enemy and the liberal ideas of the possibility of a universal consensus based on reason (2007a: 2).¹⁴

13 Cp. Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019a: 52-56.

14 For a critical in-depth analysis of Mouffe's theory of democracy and concept of agonism, cp. Papastergiadis 2017.

Mouffe's occasional essays on art and politics have ensured that her distinction between antagonism and agonism has found its way into critical analyses of art in public space (Nielsen 2015; Mouffe 2007b). Mouffe defines public space as a "battleground" in which "different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation". Not only does she emphasise that there is "no underlying principle of unity", she also proposes that the agonistic approach perceives public space to be "always plural", as it acknowledges that there is a diversity of voices and spaces, presenting different forms of articulation. The "agonistic confrontation" may thus take place on "a multiplicity of discursive surfaces" (2007b: 3). It is perfectly in line with this understanding of public space that Mouffe defines "critical art" as an art that "foment dissensus", i.e. art is a troublemaker that "makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate" (2007a: 5).

Recurring to the two art projects in Copenhagen, I ask: Are they critical troublemakers? If so, what is postmigrant about the way they "foment dissensus"? I raise this question because it could be argued that any artistic intervention into any public space may potentially produce agonistic, or even antagonistic conflicts, because art in public space often provokes controversy.

Think of the classical case of Richard Serra's minimalist *Tilted Arc*, installed in Federal Plaza in Manhattan from 1981 to 1989. Critics found this almost 37-meters long and 3½-meters high plate of rust-covered COR-TEN steel ugly and oppressive. They perceived it as a violation of public space, because it formed a physical barrier that cut across the square, ruining the site and interfering with the social life of the plaza. Following an acrimonious public debate accompanied by vandalism, the sculpture became the object of public legal proceedings and was eventually removed in 1989 as the result of a Federal lawsuit.¹⁵

I submit that both *Superkilen* and *I Am Queen Mary* are critical troublemakers in the sense that these art projects were created to provoke reactions by rupturing the ossified image of a homogeneous Denmark and claiming visibility in public space for under- and non-represented groups.

Although *Den Røde Plads* enjoys local popularity, it has provoked a critique similar to that launched against *Tilted Arc*. For instance, Kristine Samson and José Abasolo have described *Superkilen* as a "colonisation" of the authentic Nørrebro neighbourhood.¹⁶ Romanticising the past, they criticise the project for being "a formal, designed colonization of otherwise informal playful activities" (Samson/Abasolo 2013: 90). Similarly, Brett Bloom claims that the artists were "instrumentalised" by

15 Mitchell 1990: 883. See also Senie 2002; Jordan 1988 and <https://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/gallery-lost-art-richard-serra> (accessed January 25, 2019).

16 For a sociological study of how local identity is constructed among inhabitants of the Nørrebro district, cp. G. Schmidt 2019.

municipal city planners, architects and the private foundation Realdania to pursue their purpose: to furnish those in power with a democratic, integration-friendly face and conjure up the illusion that citizens have real influence on urban renewal projects (Bloom 2013: 57). Bloom thus maintains that *Superkilen* hides the truth that “the power of money has overruled the democratic process” (ibid.: 48).

Conversely, Barbara Steiner acknowledges that the creation of large-scale projects, such as a 750-meters long recreative space to be used or traversed daily by thousands of citizens, cannot be achieved without substantial funding (in this case by the Copenhagen City Council, Realdania and the Danish Art Council), and that funding providers will demand qualified results (2013b: 22). Unlike Bloom, who would like to see all decisions handed over to local groups and activists, she draws attention to the high risk of ending up with mediocre results and chaotic spaces if the artists and architects had staked the ambitious design of this large urban zone on local people and activists with no prior urban design and planning experience. In other words, for Steiner, the involvement of local citizens, with their often conflicting wishes and interests, must be subordinated to the overall design and functionality of the project (ibid.: 20-22). She asserts that by drawing on “the cultural practice of cut and paste” (ibid.: 17), Superflex succeeded in fulfilling some of the local people’s wishes. It should also be noted that Superflex’s contradictory, friction-filled constellations of urban objects suggest neither cohesion nor consensus; quite the contrary: They are emphatically anti-assimilationist and might even be seen as *questioning* the very possibility of public consensus and social cohesion. As Steiner concludes:

Superkilen is the expression of a society that is becoming more and more heterogeneous and fragmented [...] *Superkilen* allows various positions, values, and identifications without levelling or embracing them in an all-reconciling gesture. With *Superkilen* the project team has found a spatial and visual expression for an inherently heterogeneous, yet shared, space. [...] It pictures a utopian flare rather than a reality already achieved. It triggers the imagination of a plural ‘we’ that resigns from re-establishing a substantial and exclusive identity [...]. (Ibid.: 22-23)

To conclude, *Superkilen* is an ambitious, but also ambiguous project, infused with good intentions of expressing and building a new sense of community, but also blemished by some questionable effects. This recreational area appears as a heterogeneous, yet shared postmigrant public space that evokes a sense of global entanglement and intimates that multiple belonging and a new understanding of urban community as a plural “we” are possible. Yet the flipside of the project is that Superflex’s “cut and paste” aesthetic of appropriation – combining a deliberate lack of visual uniformity with a multiculturalist approach to diversity – does not evade the pitfall of ethnicisation. In the context of this chapter, it should be

noted that local residents were not asked to nominate urban outdoor objects specifically from their/their family's country of origin, but simply to propose objects from other countries. Although the project team's strategy of participation was not ethnicity-dependent, *Superkilen* does not eliminate the risk of people reading this giant permanent exhibition of found objects as a monumental instance of multicultural labelling, in which the totality of signs stands for 'cultural diversity' and the individual signs might be misinterpreted as synecdoches for the inhabitants' 'countries of origin'.¹⁷ If *Superkilen* is read this way, national/ethnic ancestry is too easily perceived to be the principal identity marker of Nørrebro's inhabitants, thereby potentially perpetuating stigmatising processes of othering and exoticisation.

Conversely, *I Am Queen Mary* engages critically with what Michael Hanchard terms *state memory* and understands to be the generalising and centralising, institutionally supported narrative of the nation's history. Hanchard distinguishes state memory from *black memory*, as a collective form of memory that has been deployed for different, sometimes adversarial purposes. Adopting spatial metaphors, he conceptualises state memory as vertically constituted and black memory as horizontally constituted, because the "archaeological deposits" of the latter are "strewn across several time zones and territories" (Hanchard 2008: 46). Although the two forms are not "co-terminous" (*ibid.*), they are necessarily interwoven, as all citizens – also black and other racialised, diasporic people – live within the structures of nation states. It follows that, even if diasporic memory is not defined and delimited by nation-state structures, it resides within, not outside these structures. Hanchard also submits that specific attributes distinguish black memory from other forms of memory, although these attributes are not exclusive

17 The fact that participation was not made dependent on ethnicity is seen, for example, from the ad campaign for *Superkilen* (2009), which states (in Danish): "So if you have seen, for example, a fantastic bench in Turkey, a lamppost in Sweden, a fountain in Portugal or a chess table in Egypt that you would like to have in your new park, then send your proposal to: forslag@superkilen.dk" (Steiner 2013b: 52). For instance, the double bench from Valladolid in Mexico was suggested by a young couple who saw it on their honeymoon. As regards Superflex's "Extreme Participation" initiative, the idea to have a spot with soil from Palestine was proposed by two young women of Palestinian descent, Alaa Al-Assadi and Hiba Marwan, while the sculpture of a Spanish bull was proposed by two elderly women from the Mjølnerparken Nordic Walking group, Tove Lerche and Conni Justesen, who had visited Spain many times in their lives and had "a feeling of being at home on that territory" (*ibid.*: 147). Likewise, the Boxing Ring from Thailand was chosen by two Thai-boxing youths from Mjølnerparken, Ali Asif and Billal El-Sheikh – names that suggest Arabic, rather than Thai descentance (*ibid.*: 145-60). However, the complexity of the participants' backgrounds and cross-cultural identifications is not communicated by the *Superkilen* itself. Judging by the three times I have discussed *Superkilen* with audiences before writing this chapter, people may be prone to read the objects as authentic identity markers of the inhabitants' migrant backgrounds, unless they are provided with this information.

to black memory: racism, slavery, reparations, anticolonial struggle with its associated forms of nationalism, and, importantly, migration (ibid.: 47).

With regard to *I Am Queen Mary*, it is vital to bear in mind Hanchard's point that "not just memory but *memorialization* is part of a larger political project, underscoring the relationship between memory and representation" (ibid.: 48, original emphasis). *I Am Queen Mary* decentralises the patriotic narrative of state memory and infuses new transnational memories and significance into the Danish-West Indian past by staging a transformative postcolonial encounter, in which Denmark and the Danish West Indies/US Virgin Islands meet and merge through a performative process of hybridisation involving the bodily and symbolic morph of Ehlers and Belle. In contrast to *Superkilen*, this work was not commissioned, but resulted from the extraordinary perseverance of Ehlers and Belle. It could be argued that not only the memorial, but also the preceding process, was based on a principle of transformative dialogism and collaboration. While the memorial was still in the making, La Vaughn Belle and Jeannette Ehlers engaged a group of dedicated volunteers to work on the project. The artists worked closely with them to clean tons of coral stones that were to be integrated into the plinth of the monument as a homage to the enslaved Africans who had once cut them from the sea for the foundations of colonial buildings in St. Croix.¹⁸ In addition, the artists gave a string of artist's talks in which they co-presented the project and discussed Danish colonialism and their own decolonising intention with different audiences in Copenhagen¹⁹ and the US Virgin Islands. The Virgin Islanders were more critical than the Danes, and in particular of the artists' decision to use their own bodies to represent one of 'their' heroines, and to picture Mary Thomas as a calmly seated ruler, instead of a fiery freedom fighter, and also of the location of the memorial in the (post)colonial capital of Copenhagen.²⁰ As critical Crucian voices pointed

18 See the website of the memorial: <https://www.iamqueenmary.com/new-page-2> (accessed September 16, 2019).

19 Among others, they gave a talk on October 1, 2017 at the Royal Cast Collection housed in the West Indian Warehouse in front of which the monument was eventually installed, and another talk at the Workers Museum in Copenhagen on October 11, 2017 when a small-scale plaster-cast model of the memorial was incorporated into the exhibition "Stop Slavery!" ("Stop slaveri!"). The talks that the artists consider to be the most important are listed on the memorial's website, see: <https://www.iamqueenmary.com/events> and <https://www.iamqueenmary.com/new-page-1> (accessed September 16, 2019). The collaborative, commemorative and transformative nature of the process of cleaning the coral stones is captured in this short video of La Vaughn Belle and Michael K. Wilson scrubbing stones: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7GgIOQoek> (accessed September 16, 2019).

20 La Vaughn Belle summarises some of the key ideas and points of critique in this interview with News 2 US Virgin Islands: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7GgIOQoek> (accessed September 16, 2019).

out, this location resulted in an unequal distribution of media attention, funds and access to the memorial. By giving an outline of the criticism at artist's talks in Copenhagen, Belle ensured that Crucian viewpoints were incorporated into the local Danish discourse on *I Am Queen Mary* and that the presence and transnational contribution of 'other voices' (and other counterpublics) were implied.

The dialogic nature of the process and the memorial subverts the patriotic Danish narrative that glorifies the nation's role in the abolition of the slave trade and slavery, since the memorial redirects attention to the fact that the very *cause* of abolition was Denmark's complicity in the transatlantic slave trade and chattel slavery. It thus makes claims in contemporary society, not only about the past, but also about the relationship between past injustices and present inequalities. At the same time, the memorial engages with the absence of black and diasporic iconography and symbols in nation-state imagery, such as public monuments. It seeks to redress the balance by renarrating colonial history in a way that *makes visible* the colonised and people of colour as commemorable agents of historical change. As Hanchard observes, the absence of representation or black iconography in foundational symbols in the USA has resulted in "the absence of reflection, in two related but distinct meanings of the word. US African Americans would not see themselves reflected in the imagery of the nation; the white nation, in turn, would not reflect on the absence of black imagery until well into the late 20th century" (2008: 58). This observation also applies to the representation of people of colour in Denmark, except that the issue of absence has only begun to come into the reckoning in the 21st century (Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019b: 38-44).

By merging their bodies into one sculpture, Belle and Ehlers evoke an expanded notion of the national 'we' that is capable of encompassing a community of citizens with diverse ethnic backgrounds and transnational affiliations, based on co-ethnic identification. Such co-ethnic identification is central to diasporic subjects with a sense of belonging to an imagined ethnic or national community that is not defined and confined by nation-state borders. The merging of the artists' bodies could thus be said to encapsulate a sense of self that literary scholar Ato Quayson has described as "no longer tied exclusively to the immediate of present location but rather [extended] to encompass all the other places of co-ethnic identification" (Quayson 2013: 147). Quayson adds that such affective bonds may be forged through various instruments of commemoration, such as private heirlooms, stories, rituals – and public monuments (ibid.). *I Am Queen Mary* is one such instrument and reminds us that the nation state and its population are criss-crossed by past and present transnational connections. As I suggested in the above analysis of *Den Røde Plads*, people, especially local citizens, may develop affective attachments to artworks in the public space. Such attachments can be forged on an individual level, through identification with Queen Mary as she is embodied by two contemporary women of colour, although it should be remem-

bered that dis- or counter-identification with this figure of violent anticolonial resistance is, of course, also a possible response. The declarative mode of the statement that makes up the title *I Am Queen Mary* suggests that the artists intended the memorial to generate solidarity through identification, the idea being that by saying the title aloud, the viewer would momentarily incorporate Queen Mary as part of their own being – become her, or be allied with the cause that she symbolises. The title contains an intertextual reference to the closing scene of Spike Lee’s film *Malcolm X* (1992), in which the pupils in a South African classroom, one by one, rise from their seats to declare “I Am Malcolm X”, so that the assertive rhythmic repetition evokes a shared commitment to the transnational struggle for the equality and recognition of people of African descent. Thus, identification at the level of shared experience – that of the countless visitors to the memorial declaring to “be” Mary – may engender a sense of imagined community from which a new postmigrant and postcolonial sense of solidarity and collective identity with a “utopian flare” (Steiner 2013a: 23) may spring forth. By virtue of its declarative and monumental mode of address to anyone who is attracted to the site, *I Am Queen Mary* produces a postmigrant public space. It generates a fluctuating, heterogeneous public – an indefinite audience, rather than a social constituency, as Warner would say (2005: 55) – a public in which Danes and Virgin Islanders can participate, as well as tourists and strangers who just happen to pass by. Moreover, its identificatory mode of address points to yet another characteristic of postmigrant public spaces: although they are inherently agonistic, they have scope to build solidarity and alliances.

The re-configurative power of art

Art in public space is always a potential, and sometimes unwitting, producer of trouble (Mouffe 2007a) – as evidenced by the protests against Serra’s *Tilted Arc*, Oguibe’s obelisk and the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, as well as by *Superkilen* and *I Am Queen Mary*. This potential can, I contend, be mobilised for postmigrant ends. Seen from a combined agonistic and postmigrant perspective, critical art engages with the struggles that are part of the postmigrant condition. To boil them down into a single issue is impossible, but my overall impression is that much of the critical art that engages with postmigration sets out to “trouble the sameness-strangeness divide”, to use cultural geographer Marco Antonsich’s wording (2018: 1). In doing so, it tends to shift the focus away from the reproduction of what Antonsich aptly terms “the taken-for-grantedness of the nation in its racialised essence” (ibid.: 10). Instead, it creates interruptions that could possibly pry open the apparent semantic stability of European national self-perceptions and rupture the monoculturalism and hegemonic whiteness which underpin their cultural forms.

Furthermore, I propose that it is possible to identify a common *postmigrant* pattern that structures and interconnects critical artistic interventions into public spaces, which, at face value, present themselves as radically different. Superflex's collaborative artistic practice arguably seems to be at odds with that of Belle and Ehlers. I will nevertheless argue that they are based on a similar strategy or overall artistic approach to postmigrant public spaces. By seeking to identify a common pattern, I will answer my initial question of the re-configurative power of art in postmigrant public spaces: How can art open up a social and national imagination pervaded by anxieties about immigration and cultural diversity to other ways of thinking about collective identity?

To answer this question, I draw on a general point developed by Frauke Wiegand, Moritz Schramm and myself in *Reframing Migration, Diversity and the Arts: The Postmigrant Condition* (Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019a). I propose that, overall, 'postmigrant' artistic interventions into public space could be said to perform a tripartite gesture in that they seek to clear, claim and create space. As my colleagues and I have argued, postmigrant approaches to art and culture are often driven by a desire for societal improvement. As a potential vehicle of social change, they are driven, firstly, by an ambition to *clear* space, as they seek to be rid of polarising distinctions such as migrants versus non-migrants, and white people versus people of colour. Instead, postmigrant approaches emphasise interrelations between people. Secondly, they involve *claiming* space. Yet the very act of claiming implies taking or reclaiming something, such as historical narratives (i.e. claiming the right to tell other stories or to tell familiar stories differently) and narratives of who 'we' are (i.e. claiming the right to collective redefinition and self-identification). Claiming thus necessitates struggle. As a consequence, the concept of postmigration refers, in our understanding, to a conflictual process of societal transformation that entails difficult renegotiation of, among other things, public space, collective identity and national history, including the acknowledgement that colonial barbarism has been fundamental to the evolvement of modern European nation states. It should be added that this is a process which entails that formerly marginalised counterpublics claim access to public space as they "struggle for the right to struggle itself, for dissent" (Sheikh 2007: 8). Thirdly, my colleagues and I propose that postmigration is propelled by endeavours to *create* space. Some of these attempts generate actual spaces and material sites of negotiation, *and* they include ambitious art projects, such as the *Superkilen* and *I am Queen Mary*, that critically renegotiate the terms of representation and gesture towards a more equitable society and polyvocal public culture. As this chapter has demonstrated, it is in connection with the third ambition, the creation of new spaces, that the re-configurative power of art manifests itself most compellingly.

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Recovering migrant spaces in Laurent Maffre's graphic novel *Demain, Demain*

Álvaro Luna-Dubois

The substandard living conditions endured by postcolonial labour immigrants in France during the 1960s and 1970s are a reminder of the spatial dimension of migration heritage. Whether they be hostel rooms, shantytowns, or housing estates, precarious and temporary spaces defined immigrant life in France at the turn of the twenty-first century. Yet, consistent with other European societies where migration is treated as a separate issue not affecting the majority group (Römhild 2017: 69), French official and local memory of such dwellings remains relatively rare. Archival footage and fictional and autobiographical accounts by former shantytown inhabitants are some of today's main sources of memory of these sites that deeply inform contemporary French identities and landscapes.

This chapter centres on a recent narrative commemorating migrant housing in France: the two-volume graphic novel *Demain, demain* (Tomorrow, Tomorrow, 2012, 2019) by Laurent Maffre, which follows the journey of the Saïdis, an Algerian family living in a 1960s shantytown at the outskirts of Paris as well as their relocation in the 1970s to a *cité de transit* (transitional housing estate) also at the Parisian periphery. Written and designed in conjunction with archival research and collaborations with scholars and former shanty inhabitants, *Demain, demain* provides a reflection on the broad spatial effects of migration. This is demonstrated through the narrative's examination of socio-material transformations in the Parisian area during the portrayed era. *Demain, demain* also highlights the contribution of the hybrid visual and textual form of the graphic novel to understand France as a dynamic space marked by past migrations, a component that stands at the core of the concept of postmigration.

In order to interrogate the ways in which space is narrated and anchored by Maffre's graphic novels, I first contextualise his work with the existing fictional shantytowns narratives in France as well as provide a historical overview of the memory of the 1960s French shantytowns. This is especially important because Maffre's graphic novels belong to an emerging wave of twenty-first century texts reflecting on these sites nearly fifty years after their removal. My subsequent analyses concentrate on the narration of domestic place both as subjective and

material representations. This, in turn, will provide insights into critical issues that the graphic novel brings to the study of France as a postmigrant society.

An ever-returning story: French shantytown narratives

1960s France was an era marked by rapid industrialisation, major labour migration waves, and a longstanding housing crisis that forced numerous immigrants to find unusual housing arrangements (Blanchard 2018: 99-102). Some of their options included dwellings at shantytown networks, which at the Parisian periphery extended the 400-hectares (Schaefer 2017: 57). In 1966, it was estimated that about 10,000 people lived in the shantytowns at the north-western suburb of Nanterre alone (Cohen 2011: 33). Makeshift dwellings remained an integral part of French urban landscape until the early 1970s when they began to be replaced by marginalised temporary housing units, and by the 1980s most disappeared in the construction of public housing towers without leaving any physical trace (Delon 2014: 342).

As places that belong both to the colonial and postcolonial periods, the shantytowns of the 1950s and 1960s occupied a complex interstitial position between two understandings of French landscape. On the one hand, they resembled the impoverished colonial Maghrebi settlements of “*bidonvilles*” (literally, city of tin cans) from which they acquired their generic name.¹ Neil MacMaster asserts that similarly to their Maghrebi counterparts, French shantytowns were overpopulated migrant communities with a spatial logic and interior that resembled traditional Maghrebi architecture (2009: 75). Their inhabitants were also said to follow Maghrebi linguistic, religious, and social customs (*ibid.*: 80). On the other hand, the sites also reflected the reality of a French housing crisis dating back to the late 19th century which was exacerbated by the World Wars, the baby boom, massive rural migrations to cities, and the French-Algerian War (1954-1962), leaving them as a housing alternative for the most marginalised classes (Silverstein 2004: 92-94).

Despite their historical and spatial significance, sociologist Margot Delon notes that the memory of 1960s shantytowns and the subsequent *cités de transit* in suburbs like Nanterre, remains absent from most city records, leaving film and pictures of the era as well as oral histories of former inhabitants as the major historical accounts (2014: 342). This may not be surprising in view of nationalist

1 Christian Topalov notes that the term ‘bidonville’ was first used to describe a Casablanca settlement and it appeared in the French language during the 1920s (2017: 41). The semantics of the word soon widened to represent all shantytowns in the Maghreb as a 1932 postcard of the same neighbourhood confirms when it refers to it simply as ‘un bidonville’ (Cattedra 2006: 103). By the 1950s, the term entered continental France when it began to designate the country’s own shantytowns, replacing previous terms of ‘la zone’, ‘colonies de bicoques’ (dump colonies) or ‘village nègre’ (Topalov 2017: 41).

myths and the official government's reluctance to address France's long migration history (Noiriel 1988: 18–19) that contribute to inaccurately present migration as a recent phenomenon in France.² In the absence of significant sites of memory, numerous French writers and visual artists have developed for the last five decades new forms to commemorate migrant life during the 1960s. Their creative works can be considered a productive “anarchive” that reinscribes an absent memory and brings past migrations to the forefront. Suggested by Lia Brozgal in the context of the Paris massacre of 1961³ which faces major archival lacunae, the concept of the anarchive encourages the use of unofficial accounts such as literary works to evince archival functions and produce an epistemological system in oppositional relationship to an official archive (2014: 50). Applying such a framework to the study of graphic novels centring of the 1961 massacre, Claire Gorrara also highlights their capabilities to act as “anarchival” interpreters of historical events because they are produced outside of official media and challenge official narratives (2018: 133). Following these models, I will contend that Maffre's literary and visual representation of 1960s shantytowns and housing projects can serve as a tool to recover lost historical episodes of French housing history and further recognise the diverse past of French society.

It must be noted that the vast majority of French shantytown narratives focus on Maghrebi inhabitants who were, after all, disproportionately overrepresented in such settings (McDonnell 2013: 61). Literary representations of shantytown life in France appeared as early as in 1955 in Driss Chraïbi's novel *Les Boucs*, which follows a Maghrebi labour immigrant – then colonial subject – living in a misery-driven Nanterre shantytown. The breakthrough of French shantytown narratives did not come, however, until the *Beur* cultural movement of the 1980s when young Franco-Maghrebi writers and activists published their fiction, which at the time consisted mostly of *Bildungsromane* (Hargreaves 1989: 93) and was set at the shantytowns where the authors grew up.⁴ Many of the first shantytown narratives also documented historical events such as the 1961 massacre, the Algerian inde-

2 Noiriel notes, for example, that in 1930, following the American immigration quotas of the 1920s, France was the most important immigration country in the industrialised world (1988: 21).

3 The Paris massacre of 1961 was a police-led violent repression of a peaceful demonstration against the colonial rule in Algeria mostly by people of Algerian descent living in the Parisian metropolitan area during the French-Algerian War. The event led to multiple casualties, mostly of Algerian origin, estimated between 30 and 300, and mass imprisonments (Lewis 2012: 308).

4 Fictional depictions of shantytowns appear in Mehdi Charef's *Le Thé au harem d'Archy Ahmed* (1983), *À Bras le cœur* (2006), and *Rue des Pâquerettes* (2019), Mohammed Kenzi's *La menthe sauvage* (1984), Azouz Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1986), Brahim Benaïcha's *Vivre au paradis* (1992), Eléonore Faucher's *Un petit quelque chose de différent* (2008), Kamel Khélif's *Premier hiver* (2012), Hamid Aït-Taleb's *De grâce* (2008). Documentaries include *L'Amour existe* (1961) by Maurice Pialat, Monique Hervo's *Chroniques du bidonville: Nanterre en guerre d'Algérie* (2001), and Cheikh Djemaï's *Nanterre, une*

pendence movement, and the social movements of May 1968 from the perspective of the descendants of Maghrebi immigrants.

Most shantytown narratives from the 1980s traditionally end with their protagonists moving into public housing projects, an aspect that signals the end of the shantytown era and the beginning of literature about urban life at the outer cities – a setting that currently dominates contemporary French fiction depicting ethnic minorities. Shantytown narratives published after the 1980s shifted their focus by placing shanties mainly as historical background. For example, Leïla Sebbar's *La Seine était rouge* (1999), set in 1990s Nanterre, includes flashbacks of shantytowns within the context of the 1961 massacre. Rachid Bouchareb's film *Hors-la-loi* (2010) also features Nanterre shantytowns within the frame of the Algerian independence movement, thereby signalling a change in the authors' concern beyond the spatial dimension.

With a renewed interest on the material question of shantytowns and *cités de transit*, *Demain, demain* proposes a distinct approach to shantytown narratives that deserves critical attention. Compared to previous shantytown narratives, the graphic series narrates a story of an Algerian family living in a shack without offering any specific *Bildung* conclusion. Although the work makes direct allusions to the Paris massacre of 1961, the French-Algerian War, and the housing crisis, its main plot centres on the fictional characters' relation to their living sites. I also suggest that the series' graphic form provides substantial scenes of domestic spaces that have been often eclipsed by former representations often focusing on the external characteristics of the shantytown. By shifting our attention to intimate spaces such as the interior of the Saïfi family's shack, their friend's living room, or public spaces that are often overlooked in critical studies of shantytown narratives, we can discover new practices and insights about the spatial impact of migration. Analysing Maffre's graphic novel as an archive of shantytowns and *cités de transit* thus provides a renewed take on France as a space defined by and through migration and migratory narratives.

This is not France: Displacement in *Demain, demain*

The question of mobility and displacement is at the heart of both volumes of Laurent Maffre's *Demain, demain*. With the first part, *Nanterre, bidonville de la folie 1962-1966* (2012), narrating the reunification of the Saïfi family from Algeria to the Nanterre shantytown of *La Folie*, and the second part, *Genevilliers, cité de transit: 51, rue du Port 1973* (2019), tracing their days at a temporary housing project and the

mémoire en miroir de France (2006). Feature films also include and the film adaptations *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1997) by Christophe Ruggia, and *Vivre au paradis* (1999) by Bourlem Guerdjou.

father's experiences working at a car factory, the graphic author offers a reflection on the theme of spatial displacement that he depicts from multiple perspectives. The focus of the narrative, I stress, is not exclusively on the protagonists' migration from Algeria to France as it is often depicted in previous narratives and their critical studies, but on the articulation of multiple spatial experiences. While the Saïfis indeed move France, they continue to migrate within the territory, first to the Nanterre shantytowns, and later to the *cit  de transit*, which are two sites characterised by their spatial uncertainty and transitory nature. Concurrently, the very presence of new inhabitants, housing structures and industrial development exhibit major shifts in the French urban landscape. Conceiving Maffre's series as interwoven narratives of mobility, displacement, and transformation within France can allow the notion of French space to undergo changes in signification.

Following the logic of the narrative, the first migration experience involves the arrival of the characters not to the Nanterre shantytown but to an idealised image of Paris, a place associated with foreignness, beauty, and dreams. A brief flashback nearing the end of the first volume illustrates this migration. In their first drive to Nanterre, the Saïdis' eldest son, Ali, contemplates the city for the first time. Contrary to the images of mud-filled shantytowns dominating the novel, Ali stares with awe at the iconic landmarks of Place Denfert-Rochereau and the Champs- lys s, and eagerly takes out a postcard of the Paris Opera that his father sent him in Algeria: "Do you think daddy is waiting for us in his golden building?" (Maffre 2012: 113).⁵ The passage, which appears after many scenes of their life at the shacks, serves as a reminder of the spatial lapses that prefigure and shape the Saïdis' narrative.

While the Saïfi children and mother's first encounter with France is animated by excitement and curiosity, it is soon cut short when they arrive to *La Folie*. In this new destination, the protagonists endure a second displacement to a site that also surprises them by its materiality and foreignness as shown when the mother, Soraya, shocked by the shack's poor conditions scolds her husband: "Kader! We're not living in there!" (ibid.: 4) "Shacks, they're nothing but shacks!", "But how do you expect us live in there?" (ibid.: 5).⁶ Soraya's initial reaction also highlights the disconnection of the shack with her former conceptions of a dignified domestic place. Consistent with existing footage of 1960s shacks, Maffre's visual depiction of the family dwelling is made out of bricks with a wooden door and metal sheet roofs. Inside the one-bedroom shack, there is a coal kitchen stove with a stemming pipe, a trolley with buckets to bring water from the communal water source,

5 Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own. Original: "Tu crois que papa nous attend dans son immeuble en or?"

6 "Kader! On ne va pas vivre l -dedans!"; "Des baraques, ce ne sont que de baraques!"; "Mais comment veux-tu que l'on vive ici?"

a pot for washing, and the couple's bed facing the children's bunk bed. While the shack is distinguished from other properties by the number "1957" written on the front door and designating the year when it was built, Maffre's text notes that the Saïfis' shack as well as those of about 1500 male workers and 300 families living there possessed the same legal address (*ibid.*: 5-6). Later in the novel, it is also revealed that police-enforced safety regulations prohibited inhabitants to construct new shacks or improve them, an order that increases the precarious nature of the dwellings.

The first material descriptions of the Saïfis' shack by family members and other dwellers also emphasise its oddity as a domestic place. In fact, at the beginning of the novel, the shack is not described in relation to its domestic or affective properties. By calling it using the adverbial phrase "là-dedans" (in there) or simply "ici" (here) instead of domestic terms like "house", Soraya distinguishes the shack from a living space. Similarly, a neighbour opts to call it a "gourbi", a Maghrebi Arabic term that designates a traditional precarious dwelling that is also used in colloquial French to refer to a shack or a house in very poor condition. A family friend also points to the Saïfis that people in Paris seem to ignore the presence of the shantytowns (*ibid.*: 35) and that many of them call shantytown dwellers "gypsies" and "vagabonds", pejorative and ostracizing terms used namely to designate nomads, itinerants, marked by interstitial belonging.

If these repeated descriptions of the shanties in addition to their lack of a legal address (a legitimate attestation of their existence) are taken into account in their own right, they lead us to question the status of the family's shack as an actual place. In this regard, a very applicable approach to Maffre's spatial reflections is to analyse the shack directly as a "non-place". Conceptualised by Marc Augé, the non-place is situated in what he calls the supermodernity, the contemporary era that is marked by excesses of temporal references and material spaces (1995 [1992]: 29). Augé contends that these characteristics combined with the accelerated development of means of transport, significantly alter urban areas and populations, and multiply the so-called non-places (*ibid.*: 35) that he defines as follows: "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place" (*ibid.*: 77-78). It is relevant that later in his discussion, Augé explicitly lists shantytowns and refugee camps as examples of non-places given their status of a transit point, their inhuman conditions, and their everlasting threat of demolition (*ibid.*: 78).

Following Augé's considerations, it can be suggested that Maffre's narrative presents a literary and visual example of a migration movement from an idealised spatial image of France to the non-place of a Nanterre shack. The nature of this displacement therefore disrupts Michel de Certeau's spatial theory that defines space as a socially practiced "place" (de Certeau/Giard/Mayol 1990: 117). Follow-

ing this framework, the Saïfis' shack seems to not offer the option for a place to be practiced, thus denying the possibility of a social space. In such an impasse, one way to find a domestic space and place within the Saïfis' shack could involve tracing habitation acts that defy the shack's material reality. Proposed by post-colonial theorist, Bill Ashcroft, habitation acts consist of creative individual and collective actions that generate actual living spaces. According to Ashcroft, there is a perceived universality toward Western representations of place that disregards other systems of order and practices of place. In particular, he believes that within colonial, postcolonial, and migrant settings where place is often disputed or disrupted, space may actually acquire its material and ideological identity not by "practices of place" as de Certeau suggests, but through the actual practice of inhabiting a place (Ashcroft 2001: 158). Such habitation acts, he explains, function as "a dense fabric of interwoven acts in which the issues of inheritance, ethnic identity, belonging, history, race, land are all intertwined" (ibid.). Hence, Ashcroft claims that for subjects living in marginalised locations, habitation reflects the adaptations that its inhabitants must make in order to make sense of their living place, often determined or changed by outsiders:

Habitation is critical to the ability of a colonized or dislocated people to transform that external cultural pressure which constricts them because it extends through the widening horizons of the experience of place, from the intensely personal (often regarded as the province of poetics) to the global. As soon as we begin to see the construction of place as a factor of a *way of inhabiting* we see how dense and how *intense* is the rhizomic pattern of relationships in which place is located. The phenomenon of place extends from the most personal and intimate of relationships [...] to the most attenuated. (ibid.: 159)

With the concept of habitation, Ashcroft offers an additional spatial notion beyond the space-place dichotomy that consists of a series of acts (interpersonal, symbolic, and physical) that are deployed to create places and spaces. Such re-configuration captures the richness and complexity involved in the narration of shantytown dwellings and can deepen the analysis of the effects of displacement and mobility in the way place is described, experienced, and narrated.

Restructuring the non-place

Through the depiction of the Saïfis' life at a non-place, *Demain, demain* portrays a manifold of symbolic and material habitation acts that the family members must perform to resist their territorial realities and establish a safe domestic space. For example, from the perspective of the father, Kader, who came to work in France

years in advance, the family reunification represents in itself a first act of habitation and place-making. As historian Emmanuel Blanchard notes, Algerian immigration to France was originally conceived as colonial labour migration of single men without women or children in France (2018: 91).⁷ Yamina Benguigui adds that the life of immigrant Algerian men from the 1950s and 1960s was characterised by six days of arduous work a week, loneliness, nostalgia, frugality, so that they could send most of their money to their families, and plan a yearly trip to see them (1997: 19). Hence, with the arrival of his children and wife to Nanterre, Kader changes both his mobile life routine and the former spatial logic of his single man's shack.⁸ Such alterations to the non-place are also found in Kader's descriptions of the shack that often employ domestic terms such as "notre maison" (our house, Maffre 2012: 3) or refer to makeshift objects as furniture, strategies that function as speech acts to grant the shack with symbolic properties of belonging and material stability.

Once settled in the shacks, Soraya also invests in adapting the family dwelling into a lived space primarily through everyday household acts. This can already be seen in her daily household actions and is particularly well illustrated in a passage narrating a visit by neighbouring women. In an attempt to console Soraya from her disappointment at her new dwelling, a neighbour shares several habitation strategies to overcome her feelings of shame and dismay: "To fix up the walls I pasted flowery wallpapers and pictures [...] and then on the court they left a bit land to plant sweet potatoes. They're gonna grow and with the green, it'll be nice" (Maffre 2012: 11).⁹ Here, as Ashcroft theorises in his notion of habitation, house decoration operates as a form of protection against the external pressures that limit shantytown dwellers and widens their experience of place. Similarly, the cultivation of sweet potatoes—a plant common in Algerian cuisine – on the "court" shows another speech act that grants the shantytown with a social and wider material identity. The allusion to local agriculture also fosters feelings of appropriation of the land among the inhabitants. Indeed, sociological studies have proven immigrant agriculture to be an effective way to promote immigrant integration as well having numerous benefits such as access to fresh produce, reduced food costs, physical exercise, therapy, and urban greening (Beckie/Bogdan 2010: 78).

7 Emmanuel Blanchard specifically notes that in the 1950s the Algerian immigrant sex ratio was about one woman for fourteen men while in the 1970s one woman for five men. This ratio was significantly unbalanced compared to other immigrant groups such as Italians and Spaniards (2018: 91).

8 It is important to note that it was only in 1974 when the Jacques Chirac government led an official policy of family reunification.

9 "Moi, pour habiller les murs j'ai collé du papier peint à fleurs et des photos [...] et puis dans la cour ils ont laissé un peu de terre pour planter des patates douces. Elles vont grimper et avec le vert, ça fera beau."

Hence, by cultivating sweet potatoes, the women characters engage in the process of transforming non-places into domestic spaces where Algerian practices are performed.

Considering all of these scenarios, it can be suggested that after the several sequences narrating the Saïfis' arrival, their shack ceases to be the initial non-place. Indeed, with the different activities that the women and men perform to inhabit their shack, they are able to establish the sense of identity, relation, and history that Augé considers essential in his theorisation of place. Like the cultivation of sweet potatoes from Algeria in the harsh muddy ground of the shantytowns, the characters thus develop alternative ways to reproduce former domestic places and spaces within their environment, which in turn, help them endure their subpar migration to Nanterre.

This is not Algeria: Nuancing the image of the shack

As previously noted, most research on fictional and non-fictional shantytowns tends to conceive them as re-territorialised Algerian localities that were eventually replaced with housing projects that followed French practices and architecture. While it is undeniable that in *Demain, demain* numerous Algerian material and social practices inform the inhabitants' experience, they are not their only sources of habitation. It can also be argued that the contact of the Saïfi family with French public settings and their social interactions with French dominant culture also play a significant role in their conceptualisation of domestic space. In so doing, I will challenge former longstanding assumptions in literature and social sciences about Franco-Maghrebi shacks and assess more thoroughly the material and social reality revealed in Maffre's graphic novel.

Laurent Maffre makes use of visual documentation to reframe the understanding of 1960s migrant shacks, which were deeply influenced by the Nanterre environment and direct local needs. A pertinent example of domestic practices emerging from their direct reality can be found in a sequence that shows how a neighbour developed a viable system to prevent shoe damage and maintain her shack clean from the muddy shantytown grounds. Such practice consists in covering her children's shoes with plastic bags that are also used for storage (Maffre 2012: 42). Responding to the mud issue, which was unseen in their native Algeria, this practice is soon shared as local knowledge among shantytown women. Similarly, in the absence of storage space and furniture in the Saïfis' shack, another sequence shows how Soraya gives the family's suitcases the added role of dresser drawers (*ibid.*: 118; Figure 1). This depiction contrasts with Anne Schneider's work on the figures of suitcases and unopened cardboard boxes in Franco-Maghrebi literature, which she associates with the traumatic experience of exile (2013: 71) or

the myth of the return to the homeland (ibid.: 137). Thus, by displaying the added strategic and sustainable use, *Demain, demain* promotes a narrative of domestic space that challenges totalizing views of the shacks.

Fig. 13.1: *The Saïfis' suitcase*. Laurent Maffre, 2012, p. 118.



Another domestic act found within the Saïfis' shack that contrasts with their former Algerian reality pertains to their new relationships established with Franco-French guests.¹⁰ It must be stressed that the Algeria that the Saïfis left for Nanterre was that of the colonial rule amidst the French-Algerian War, which appears in numerous flashbacks featuring a strong military presence that often included abuses and intimidation as well as an overall absence of Algerian men due to the war and the labour emigration. Although their shantytown follows similar social patterns from the colonial period such as frequent police surveillance, poverty, and marked ethnic segregation, the Saïfis also encounter Franco-French characters who disregard these codes. Two of such characters are Raymond Jobert, the owner of the car repair shop where Kader works, and his wife Josiane, who build close ties with the Saïfis. Their intercultural relations are well illustrated in a sequence where Kader invites them to eat lunch with his family and close friends (Figure 2). The sequence is marked by numerous material and social exchanges and an atmosphere detached from colonial mores from both parties. Josiane, for example, brings an apple pie to the Saïfis and helps women cook and serve lunch, while Raymond gifts a card game to the children. Moreover, in one of their conversations, Kader admits to Raymond that for a long time he wanted to invite them

10 To avoid colonial terminology that would position whiteness and Christianity as a property of French identity, I opt to employ the term "Franco-French" to refer to individuals of European descent living in France.

over but did not do so out of shame, to which Raymond replies: “But you shouldn’t be ashamed, I know people who live in *châteaux* that I swear I’d never want to go inside” (ibid.: 21).¹¹ While brief, the passage serves a reminder that the Saïfis’ dwelling also hosts significantly different practices that invite them to alter their conception of French space and their inhabitants. Such a change is also articulated through Maffre’s juxtaposition of this scene with a flashback sequence of the last Eid that Soraya and her children celebrated in Algeria and which was violently interrupted by French soldiers. Hence, when Raymond and Josiane, call the Saïfis “people”, treat them with respect, and eat and dance with them, it reveals changes brought about from continental France into the Saïfis and the Joberts notions of domestic space.

Fig. 13.2: *The Saïfis’ lunch with the Joberts.* Laurent Maffre, 2012, p. 22.



11 “Mais il ne faut pas [avoir honte], j’en connais qui habitent des châteaux et je vous jure que ça ne donne pas envie d’y aller”.

Despite the characters' effort and relative success at modifying their shacks into a social homeplace, Maffre's graphic novel gives a strong hint at the end of the first volume that the shantytown remains a non-place that cannot be inhabited long term. Ultimately, the novel shows how Kader constantly tries to resettle his family at a *cité de transit*, which is attained in the last pages of the narrative. Differently from their previous displacement stories, on this occasion, the Saïfis are able to bring some of their own furniture to their new location, a material aspect that allows them to construct a sense of belonging, history, and spatial identity in their new dwelling. Yet, this final destination also leaves them with many indicators of precariousness: Kader, for his part, still evokes his wish to return to Algeria after some years, restating the myth of the return to homeland that positions his French household as a provisional site. Moreover, the spatial representation of their new dwelling, surrounded by an overwhelming dimension of vertical buildings and metallic electricity poles crushing a smaller building in the foreground, suggest even more anonymity, control, and seclusion. This image of temporary housing units as forms of precarious housing relates to Yamina Benguigui's analogy that the *cités de transit* were "sturdy shantytowns" made to last only the necessary time for families to get social housing units" (1997: 73). While the ending remains inconclusive, the first volume suggests that the characters have the capacities to establish through habitation practices a space and place to which they can feel attached. After all, in this shantytown narrative, place and space can be simultaneously contested, re-conceptualised, and remade.

This is France: Documenting a territory and society in transition

In *Demain, demain*, it is not only characters of Maghrebi descent who experience transformations in their spatial perceptions and practices, but also those born and raised in France. All the individuals and settings in the novel are directly or indirectly affected by the changes brought about by the represented migration wave, thereby providing a nuanced view of migration and its legacy in French society. In this regard, Regina Römhild's (2017) discussion on the contributions of the concept of postmigration is particularly helpful to thinking about the often-overlooked role of the social majority in migration studies. In fact, Römhild recommends critical migration scholars to extend their focus on society's negotiations over migration, instead of making migration itself the sole object of study (*ibid.*: 70). Following her suggestion, I now turn to analyse Franco-French milieus informed by the migration movements in Paris and question whether they also manifest adaptations in their dwellings and habitation practices. By looking beyond migrant characters, I will thus broaden and deepen our understanding of Maffre's work as an anarchic that dismantles established narratives of France.

Landscape changes are everywhere in the two novels, including spaces outside the shantytowns where Maghrebi dwellers interact daily with the majority group. Indeed, the omnipresence of construction sites of housing projects aimed at resolving the national housing crisis serves as a reminder of the fast-changing demographics and spatial reconfiguration of the French territory during the 1960s and 1970s. Like many Maghrebi immigrants who eventually must leave the shantytown due to accelerated urban projects, some characters such as the Joberts will also receive orders to relocate for the building of a new France. The fact that most of the construction and factory workers in such developments are immigrants also brings into light their active role in France's rapid postwar economic growth and reconstruction. Other alterations in the urban landscape such as graffiti tags with xenophobic messages (Figure 3) reveal adverse reactions to the social and cultural changes taking place, but even so, their presence acknowledges the emergence of a French territory where Maghrebi and Franco-French individuals coexist. These new sites and resulting conflicts thus signal renewed urban experiences and social dynamics among the social majority.

Fig. 13.3: "Beware of Arabs". Laurent Maffre, 2019, p. 17.



As a story of habitation, *Demain, demain* features several Franco-French characters engaging in negotiations and new daily practices as a result of their interactions with Maghrebi immigrants. One of such characters is Françoise, an inhabitant of *La Folie* who frequently visits the Saïfis' shack, offers them advice, helps them with administrative paperwork and school homework, and takes their children on holidays. It is worth noting that her relationship with the Saïfis is not characterised by paternalism or social hierarchies but rather by mutual trust and friendli-

ness. As the first volume notes in the appendix, the character is based on Monique Hervo, an activist and former shantytown inhabitant who in 2018 requested and was granted Algerian citizenship, a symbolic action that highlights the extent of the cultural and social exchanges that can occur in societies marked by migration.¹² Similarly to Françoise, the Joberts' relation to the Saïfis also shows a continuous disregard of boundaries of exclusion. For example, throughout the novels, Raymond and Kader always address to each other using the French pronoun “tu” which signals familiarity and is used among equals. In the second volume, Kader goes as far as calling him “his fourth brother” (Maffre 2019: 4). Finally, in a flashback recounting the Paris 1961 massacre, Raymond promptly joins Françoise to help the men brutally injured by the French police, a gesture that emphasises their close ties with a group that was repressed by their official leaders.

Fig. 13.4: Josiane folding the Maghrebi handkerchief.
Laurent Maffre, 2012, p. 31.



The adaptations that the Joberts make as a result of their interactions with the Saïfis can also be seen at their own dwelling. In a rare sequence displaying the Joberts' house after eating with the Saïfis, we are able to see a casual yet relevant pro-

¹² Hervo's naturalisation was featured in the Algerian government newsletter, *Le Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire*, no. 73. <https://www.joradp.dz/FTP/JO-FRAN-CAIS/2018/F2018073.pdf?znjo=73> (accessed December 28, 2018).

cess of hybridisation. Amidst their living room which is surrounded by objects associated with French folk cultures such as a Comtoise clock, a painting of French peasants, a Virgin Mary figurine, and a television screening the logo of ORTF (the national television agency), Josiane appears folding as a souvenir the Maghrebi handkerchief that Soraya gave her to dance with the shantytown women (Figure 4). While seemingly mundane, its incorporation into such a house may symbolize the imagining of a more heterogeneous community and social practices. After all, from Augé's conceptualisation of space, the Maghrebi handkerchief may function as a relational and historical marker. At the beginning of the second volume, the last scene featuring the Joberts' house shows Josiane inviting the Saifis' home after Raymond's funeral suggesting a continued friendship that originated from migration.

In a country struggling to recognise its migration past, *Demain, demain* operates as a documentary fiction that reflects on postcolonial labour migration, French urbanism, and standards of living during the 1960s and 1970s from multiple perspectives. It dismantles the idea of France as a homogeneous society in which only Algerians exiles had to integrate, redefining it as a plural society and territory transformed by these migration movements. The novel's title which stems from an interview by Monique Hervo with a shantytown dweller complaining about the conflicting information, slowness, and hassles of housing administrations reinforces the graphic novel's intention to make visible unacknowledged experiences for all readers¹³. More broadly, the uncertainty evoked in this title may also point to an implicit objective of changing established discourses in the twenty-first century. Hence, Maffre's narrative published five decades after the first major Algerian migration wave to France transgresses its historical boundaries and creates a graphic space that joins Erol Yildiz (2013) understanding of postmigration as "the re-narration and re-interpretation of the phenomenon 'migration' and its consequences" (Petersen/Schramm/Wiegand 2019: 13).

Conclusion

This chapter proposed to study the graphic novel *Demain, demain* as an anarchic of 1960s shantytown dwellings, which have been largely omitted from French official and popular memory. My analyses highlight that Laurent Maffre's work not only reinscribes stories of marginalised sites and subjects, its visual form and wide perspective also offer detailed descriptions of domestic space and practices

13 The interview of Mr. Chibane which uses the repeated phrase "I wait, today, tomorrow, today, tomorrow" was recorded by Monique Hervo in the 1960s can be found in the web documentary "127 rue de la Garenne" accompanying Maffre's series. (Cf. Maffre/Gabison 2012)

that have been overlooked in literary narratives or overshadowed by its large-scale settings or historical events surrounding them. The graphic novel's detailed depiction of changing landscapes and habitation practices in all sectors of society exemplify how they can change throughout time, an aspect that allows us to see France as a heterogeneous society and space.

Turning to a major question of the concept of postmigration, "how can art, culture, and theory contribute to a better understanding of changes brought about by migration?" (Petersen/Schramm 2017: 2), the studied passages of *Demain, demain* suggest that it is through processes of spatial negotiation and appropriation of place that past and new literary worlds can be produced. Indeed, Naïka Foroutan defines postmigrant societies as "negotiation societies" (2015: unpagé) that can potentially advance structural changes and the removal of structural barriers, such as positions, access, resources, and social standards of established cultural, ethnic, religious and national elites. However, the role of space in shaping such societies was not explicitly dealt with, leaving us to wonder how the reconfiguration of social positions are achieved. For this graphic novel anchored in space, some of the established notions of France as well as its political, economic, and symbolic borders are overcome through daily routines, interior decorations, and social mobility and inclusion. Intimate spaces along with its objects and social practices contribute to a better understanding of the postmigrant condition that is characterised by constant changes, practical knowledge, resistance, and cultural mixing. As the *Demain, demain* series unfolds into potential new volumes, it will continue to demonstrate the transformative power that the graphic genre can exert to the recovery of French social and spatial history.

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Zamakan: Towards a contrapuntal image

Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Amr Hatem and Abbas Mroueh

1981: Mohamad Tawfic shoots the film *Yaumyeat Mukatel* (The Everyday Life of a Fighter) about the Palestinian Fedayeen in South Lebanon.

1982: Israel invades Lebanon. Tawfic is stuck in Damascus, while his daughter, wife and the unfinished film are besieged in Beirut. In a daydream, Tawfic sees the film spools flying through the air and landing in a dumpster.

2018: Tawfic's apartment in Birkerød (a suburb of Copenhagen, Denmark).

He shows us the only remains from the film. The behind-the-scenes photos.

1996: The behind-the-scenes photos were developed in Birkerød where the family arrives, after Damascus, Tunis...

We assume that the original film got destroyed.

2018, we are shooting the video installation *Zamakan* (*TimeSpace*) in Copenhagen.¹ The title *Zamakan* is an abbreviation of the Arabic words Zaman = Time and Makan = Space, conflating the two together creating TimeSpace. While working on the film we were inspired by the Sufi-scholar Ibn Arabî's famous saying that "time is fluid space, and space is frozen time", to explore the following questions: How to understand "zamakan" as an experience of time, in which multiple different space-times can exist at the same time? And how to create a digital image that enables a multiplicity of space-times to exist within the same frame?

In *Zamakan*, we explore concepts of affect, memory and time, through the development of a two-channel video installation that encompasses experiences of heterogeneous space-times in the same image. The project was made through the

¹ *Zamakan* (*TimeSpace*), two channel video installation 35,30 min. 2019.

Participants: Ayman Abu el Hayja, Samira Abdel Hassan, Rania Tawfic, Mohamed Tawfic, Suleiman Juni, Walid Mezian, Abbas Mroueh, Daniela Agostinho & Ivan-Asen Mladenov.

Sound: Nanna Hansen & Arendse Krabbe; Director of Photography: Talib Rasmussen; Camera Assistant: Ivan-Asen Mladenov; Logistic: Tomas Pocius; Producer assistant: Daniela Agostinho; Research: Abbas Mroueh; Archive material: Mohamed Tawfic, Ayman Abu el Hayja and Samira Abdel Hassan personal archives. Directed and produced by Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld & Amr Hatem, with the support of the Danish Art Council and the Mads Øvlisen postdoc stipends for practice based artistic research.

cultural venue and café Sorte Firkant (Black Square), which we co-initiated in 2016, and in collaboration with filmmakers, writers, cultural producers from Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, who came to Denmark between the 1980s and 2015, and who are all part of a larger informal network around Sorte Firkant. The lives of the participants, who span different generations and different countries of origin, do not necessarily have anything in common before they arrived in Copenhagen. Many of them were part of the Arab left and participated in the Palestinian struggle. Many of the participants are cultural producers, they have their photographs, books, films, paintings and letters, but their work has been ignored within the Danish art context. They never received arts funding in Denmark, since, what they were told is that their work does not cater to a “Danish audience”. *Zamakan* is not lamenting that fact, but rather an attempt to explore how their works, memories and personal archives are relevant to a plurality of cultures and collective memories across borders, and how their personal archives might contribute to expand what is commonly understood as “Danish” collective memory.

Fig. 14.1: *Hands*. Stills from *Zamakan (TimeSpace)*. Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Amr Hatem, 2019.



While we were researching for the project, some of the participants voiced experiences of affective encounters in Denmark, which made a sensation from the country of departure come alive in the present sensation. This incidence, when affect enables a past sensation to unfold in the present, creates a possibility of two (or more) different temporalities to exist within the same sensation (Deleuze 1973). We term this experience “affect’s time”. Affect’s time can both be seen as a glitch to normative experiences of time, while at the same time marks a wandering in time that connects different space-times – what we situate with Edward Said as

contrapuntal. According to Said, who borrow the term from music, the contrapuntal is an awareness of plurality of vision privileged to exiles, which gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, in which new and old environments are occurring together (Said 2001: 148). As the video unfolds, their life paths overlap and intermingle, creating a relational ciné-geography (Eshun/Gray 2011a) and choreography that cuts across time, national boundaries and forms points of resistance.

In this essay we draw on our work with the video installation in order to speculate what we might call the *contrapuntal image* that *Zamakan* gives rise to. As this volume illustrates, the postmigrant condition does not refer to what society becomes *after* migration, but rather refers to how societies are fundamentally shaped by earlier and ongoing migration movements (Schramm/Petersen/Moslund et al. 2019). Moreover, the term postmigration, in particular how it was conceived by contemporary art productions of the ‘postmigrant theatre’ at Ballhaus Naunynstraße and the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin, is meant to press against the othering of people of colour and people with migrant experiences, to instead acknowledge their creative practices in all their plurality and how these enrich societies’ cultural life. Revisiting our work with *Zamakan*, it becomes apparent that the *contrapuntal image* also, and more importantly, forms a certain image in which the image in itself enfolds the line of flight, the route of migration, in its very materiality and in the means of production. It is not only an image *about* migration. It is not only a question of representation, but rather a question of conceiving filmic techniques, and milieus of enunciation, in which the image of migration is dissociated from its current representation in society and begins to form other affective assemblages, other modes of production, to become the very condition for the cinematographic image, which is always already a *movement image* (Deleuze 2009). Rather than a theme or object of representation, migration becomes the very materiality from which image-making is realizable. The *contrapuntal image*, then, is not an image about migrants, migration and postmigrant societies; but an image in which migration is its very material condition of imagination, production and circulation².

The *contrapuntal image* suggests a temporal complexity of overlapping narratives and generations, in which “newcomers”³ look at older generations’ archives

2 We are aware of T.J. Demos’ *The Migrant Image* (2013), an comprehensive and in-depth investigation of the effects that globalization and migration has had on contemporary artistic practice. Many of the art works he engages have been foundational to our thinking and practice, yet, what we want to advance with the contrapuntal image is how those structures comes to operate on the very level of the image in itself – its textures, its means of productions, its infrastructures.

3 We use the term “newcomers” to highlight the fact that many of the participants in the video arrived to Denmark in different times: some arrived in the 1980s / 1990s (first war in Iraq, Lebanese Civil War) some arrived in 2000s (with the invasion of Iraq) and some arrived in 2011- 2015

creating overlapping narratives that carry the previous generations and experiences within the same image. While the image of the migrant and migration that we are presented with in the news, in Denmark, are spectacular and rather “loud”, but void of human experiences, the *contrapuntal image* we suggest is *quiet* and *quotidian*, *tacit*, and *transient*. The *contrapuntal image* encompasses three or more different space times in the same image, it establishes a past that does not long for a past that one cannot return to but opens up to a futurity: an awareness that the future from hereon will be different. The *contrapuntal image* also suggests that migration is not unidirectional and geared towards a final destination, but rather that it is open ended, depending on the contingencies and urgencies intervening in our everyday lives. Finally, the *contrapuntal image* is post-production, it circulates within a different form of distribution that creates the very affective infrastructures that sustain it, and that enable us to live out the present as we want to see in the future.

To further elaborate this proposition, we will unfold and discuss five scenes from the installation that are closely connected to the different locations in which they are filmed:

- 1) Nordvest: The taste of yoghurt
- 2) Birkerød: The photos that remain
- 3) Contrapuntal Images: the quiet and quotidian
- 4) Telle (hill): Where do we go from here?
- 5) Sorte Firkant: Infrastructures for the Present’s Past-Futures

Nordvest: The taste of yoghurt

Ayman Abu el Hayja: I remember that the first incident that happened to me in that bright room was when they brought us food.

We were hungry, so they brought us yoghurt, I remember.

I took the yoghurt tub and ate the first spoon

and I was shocked.

The yoghurt was sweet.

Samira Abdel Hassan: Yes, the yoghurt here is sweet, it has fruits, unlike the one we have”

Ayman: Yes, the yoghurt we know is sourish and a bit salty.

(following the Arab spring and the war in Syria). At the same time, it is an attempt to bypass the political and media discourse that is centered around generational fixities of “first-generation, second-generation and third generations” as well as “new Danes”.

We are not used to yogurt with fruits.
 At that moment, I asked myself, why was I shocked?
 That means that the taste already existed on my tongue.
 Before tasting the spoon of yoghurt,
 the memory of the taste already exists on my tongue, right?
 So, the taste of the yoghurt I am eating should conform with the one already existing in my mind.
 Then I noticed that my perception of the world is pre-constructed in my mind.
 I understand the world through the images already constructed in my mind,
 if the image does not match then there is something wrong.
 Yet, practically the world does not exist only in my mind.
 the world exists outside of it
 So, this insight helped me a lot on later on
 It changed my understanding of my own life and the world, so I became less judgmental
 I became more attentive to the images I am perceiving
 Is it my cognitive image of a person I am seeing?
 or is it the person in front of me? (Zamakan, Dirckinck-Holmfeld/Hatem sec. 00:00 – 03:45)

In the opening scene of *Zamakan*, Ayman Abu el Hayja and Samira Abdel Hassan are sitting in their living room in Nordvest. Ayman recounts his initial encounter with the taste of sweet Danish yoghurt upon arriving at Sandholm refugee camp, outside Copenhagen in 1980s. This incident opens up to the cosmology of the *contrapuntal image* that *Zamakan* is trying to grapple with. As he recounts, the taste produced a shock or affective encounter in him, which created a possibility of different times coexisting within the same moment, what we call “affect’s time” (Dirckinck-Holmfeld 2015: 70). Within the studies of affect and time there can grossly be said to exist two philosophical traditions, one that pertain to a Deleuze-, Bergson-, Spinoza-, Leibniz- understanding of affect and time as an infinite enfoldment of sensations that are pre-personal and can open up to a multiplicity of spacetimes⁴, in the other, time and affect are understood as measurable neural firings, propelled by Helmholtz, Herta Strum, Benjamin Libet’s neurophysiological definition of a “short delay”, or missing half second between the registration of an affect and the cognitive response (Angerer/Bösel/Ott 2014: 10). What we term “affect’s time”, is siding more with the Deleuzian understanding of affect and time in which the affective encounter opens up to a multiplicity of space-times to ex-

4 Here the influence from Ibn Arabi on Leibniz is something that would be interesting to further explore in relation to the contrapuntal image, see also Laura U. Marks, *Enfoldment and Infinity* (2010).

ist within the same split of a second. In his reading of Marcel Proust, Deleuze uses the famous instance where the narrator takes a bite of the madeleine-cake to speculate about involuntary memory. In involuntary memory the sensation that unfolds in the present is not a *representation* of the past, but it is the thing in itself and its entire context that unfolds in the present sensation:

...it [the taste of madeleine-cake] internalizes context, it makes the past context inseparable from the present sensation. At the same time that the resemblance between the two moments is transcended in the direction of a more profound identity, the contiguity which belonged to the past moment is transcended in the direction of a more profound difference. Combray rises up again in the present sensation, in which its difference from the past sensation is internalized. (Deleuze 1973: 58-59)

Fig. 14.2: Stills from *Zamakan (TimeSpace)*. Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Amr Hatem, 2019.



Photos by Ayman Abou El Hayjar and Samira Abdel Hassan.

In a similar fashion, we ask, is it possible to understand Ayman's yoghurt sensation upon arriving in Denmark as enfolding the contexts of (Palestine, Syria, Lebanon) Levantian yoghurt? And that those contexts are being unfolded and re-folded in the taste of the Danish sweet yoghurt?

When we shot this scene for *Zamakan*, it became apparent that in Ayman's case it was not only those past sensations and contexts unfolding in the present sensation of sweet Danish yoghurt, as in the case of Proust's madelaine cake. The temporal collapse of those different sensations also enfolded a futurity: an awareness that the future from thereon would be different and that Ayman had to recalibrate

his entire perceptive system based on this affective encounter. To make himself open to a future to come.

As a consequence, the *contrapuntal image* encompasses three or more different space times in the same image. It establishes a past that does not long for a past that one cannot return to but opens up to a futurity: an awareness that the future from hereon will be different.

Birkerød: The photos that remain

Birkerød (a residential suburb of Copenhagen): filmmaker Mohamed Tawfic shares his archive: Tawfic is flipping through a series of still photographs – setting them in motion through the movement of his hands. Through the support of the two-channel installation in *Zamakan*, as one image leaves his hands, it appears on the second screen.

The images are from behind the scenes of a film that Tawfic shot in Lebanon in 1982: *Yaumyeat Mukatel* (The Everyday Life of a Fighter) about the Palestinian Fedayeen in Lebanon. The film follows four fedayeen from four different generations and registers their mundane, everyday lives to create a counter image to the predominant European perception of the Palestinian resistance at the time. When the film was almost finished, Israel besieged Beirut, Tawfic was stuck in Damascus while his wife and his daughter Rania Tawfic were besieged in Beirut. His wife tried to smuggle the film spools out of Beirut through friends, who in turn got rid of the spools when the Israelis got closer. In a daydream Mohamed Tawfic saw the film spools flying through the air and landing in a pile of trash. The only thing that remains are the still photographs that had been shot behind the scenes. The negative film migrated with the family from Beirut, to Damascus, to Tunisia and then only got developed in 1996 in the local photoshop in Birkerød, 14 years after they were taken.

Mohamed Tawfic's lost film can be said to form part of a larger global movement in the 1960s and 1970s, when filmmakers became part of the struggle for decolonisation and anti-imperialism, known as *Third Cinema* or militant cinema (Solanas/Getino 1973; Eshun/Gray 2011; Benfield 2011). In Third Cinema, the film is no longer a representation or documentation of a movement, but it becomes that movement in itself. The filmmaker joins the struggle and the camera becomes the weapon in the fight against imperialism and for decolonization. The militant image becomes matter and movement in itself. Similarly, Tawfic joined the fedayeen, he lived with them, yet his aim was not to show the armed struggle but the everyday life – the quiet and the quotidian life of the struggle. Another example within the history of third cinema is Jean-Luc Godard and Anne Marie Miéville's famous movie *Ici et Ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*, 1976). In this film the filmmakers try to

come to terms with the footage they shot in the 1970s as part of the Dziga Vertov Group with Pierre Gorin. The Palestinian Liberation Organization in Jordan had commissioned the group to shoot the footage for the film *Jusqu'à la victoire* (Until Victory). Shortly after the footage for *Until Victory* was shot, the massacre known as Black September took place, in which many of the fedayeen filmed were either killed or expelled from Jordan to Lebanon. Here one could speculate the possible overlaps to the fedayeen filmed in Tawfic's film, which where the continuation of the struggle after it relocated from Jordan to Lebanon, and which again in 1982, the same time as the Tawfic's film was destroyed, were expelled from Lebanon to Tunisia. In *Ici et Ailleurs*, Godard and Miéville reflect on what to do with this footage of a movement abruptly killed. This led them to question both *the movement*, the resistance movement filmed, and also the filmic medium – the movement image – employed to capture this movement.

Twenty minutes into the film a group of five people walk around a camera demonstratively placed in the middle of the frame – as if they are workers on the assembly line. The voiceover states:

O.K., here the images can be seen all together.
 At the movies, this is impossible.
 One is obliged to see them separately one after the other
 Which results in this:
 But it is seen as such because in gact when one makes a film,
 Things really happen this way:
 Each time, one image ceases to replace the other.
 Each time the image after expels the image before and takes its place...
 Keeping of course more or less the memory of it.
 This is made possible because the image is moving..
 And the images don't come all together, but separately to inscribe themselves
 One after the other, on their support:
 Agfa, Kodak, Orvo, Gevaert...
 And on the whole, time has replaced space, speaks for it, or rather:
 Space has inscribed itself on the film in another form...
 Which is not a whole anymore, but a sum of traslations,
 A sum of feelings, which are forwarded,
 ... That is, the Time...
 ... and the film that is, on the whole, chain-work image...
 Of my double identity, space & time chained to each other...
 Like two workers on the assembly line
 Where each is at the same time the copy and the original of the other.
 (Godard/Miéville 1976m sec. 20.25 min.)

Godard compares the chain of images, of the machinic production, to workers on the assembly line, in which time and space and time are chained to each other. For *Zamakan* we re-enacted that scene from *Ici et Ailleurs*, using the stills from Tawfic's lost film instead, however we ended up not using the re-enactment scene in the final edit. During the editing, it became apparent that Tawfic's recounting of the story while browsing through the still images with his hands, created another relationship to the double movement of the movement image (resistance movement and the filmic mechanical movement), in which his hands become the driving engine animating the lost film back into motion. This was further articulated with the movement from one-channel to two-channel video installation in which one image would disappear in Tawfic's hand only to recur as a still image on the second screen.

Fig. 14.3: Stills from *Zamakan (TimeSpace)*. Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld and Amr Hatem, 2019.



Above left and right: Mohamed Tawfic showing stills from behind the scene of the film *Yaumyeat Mukatel*. Below left: A.Mroueh, A. Abou El Hayjar, S. Al Hassan, A. Krabbe, S. Juni and A. Hatem on the Telle (Hill) in Copenhagen. Below right: archive image from Tawfic's film *Yaumyeat Mukatel*.

What we would like to speculate here in regard to the concept of the *contrapuntal image* is that the image itself moves, not only one frame after the other, but in this case there are other movements going on simultaneously that are ingrained in the very texture and materiality of the image, opening up to a different distribution of time-space that is not chained to each other (as in the assembly line metaphor) but able to relate a multiplicity of spacetimes in the very texture of the image. In other words, the film is a document of a movement, but it also becomes a movement in itself through its line of flight, when the negatives migrate from Beirut, Da-

mascus, Tunis, Copenhagen. Similar to the yogurt sensation in Ayman's anecdote, is it possible that the line of flight is enfolded in the very texture of the photos themselves? That the different contexts that the photos have travelled through are ingrained in the very surface and texture of the image?

Here the concept of ciné-geography, as advanced by the Otholith Group and Kodwo Eshun and Ros Grey, is useful to consider how the contrapuntal image draws other relational geographies:

Ciné-geography designates situated cinecultural practices in an expanded sense, and the connections – individual, institutional, aesthetic and political – that link them transnationally to other situations of urgent struggle. It refers not just to individual films but also to the new modes of production, exhibition, distribution, pedagogy and training made possible by forms of political organisation and affiliation. A critical component is the invention of discursive platforms such as gatherings, meetings, festivals, screenings, classes and groups founded by a range of students, activists, workers, film-makers, artists, critics, editors, teachers and many others at decisive moments in order to mobilise collective strategies that may have been evolving for some time. It includes the speeches, statements, essays, poems, declarations, manifestos and anthologies in which the aspirations of this transnational network of affiliated movements were clarified and articulated. And it refers to the medial circuits of dissemination through which these texts and films travelled and were (mis)translated in order to multiply the ways and places in which cinema could be 'instrumentalised', to use Getino's term, as a tool of radical social change in processes of decolonisation and revolution. Lastly, the term ciné-geography designates the afterlives of the militant image, the digital platforms, formats, applications, files, torrents and burns through which it continues to circulate as a fourth-, fifth- and sixth-generation travelling image; a fragmented sonimage that operates as a material index of social relations, capable, at unexpected moments and in tangential ways, of re-animating intense moments of upheaval. (Eshun/Gray 2011: 1-2)

Ciné-geography becomes useful to think with in relation to the *contrapuntal image* in the way in which the still photographs (that are the only remains) forms a cine-geography that connects the line of flight, ---Beirut, Damascus, Tunis, Birkørød --- in the same image. In the absence of distribution those images are put into motion again in Copenhagen, by connecting the personal archives/ memories of other Arab diaspora – as well as other migrant groups in Denmark that connect their archives to the chain of images. Here it is important to note that Ayman joined the Palestinian resistance in Lebanon before arriving in Denmark and could possibly had been one of the people portrayed in Tawfic's film. But the cine-geography also extends to the audiences, who bring their own archives to the screen. When we showed this scene at the conference 'The Postmigrant Condi-

tion: Art, Culture and Politics in Contemporary Europe', taking place in Odense in November 2018, a member of the audiences, recounted how she experienced the double channel effect as one screen referred to the actual film while the other was playing out the memory of that film. In addition to the two screens she projected a third screen onto the screen which were her personal archives of filmmakers in Germany that she had been interviewing – that were montaged onto the film⁵. It is that simultaneity of different conflated geographies that we call the *contrapuntal image*.

The contrapuntal image: The quiet and the quotidian

While we will return to how the *contrapuntal image* forms new infrastructures of shared histories and form communities we find it important for a moment to pause on the fact that Tawfic's filmic practice can be seen as forming part of the militant cinema/third cinema movement, but he chose to make a film about the fedayeen's everyday life, against the grain of the popular image of militancy at the time. As he explains, no gunshot was heard in the film. It was very much about the fedayeen's quiet and quotidian life and their relationships with their families, children, nature etc. In *Listening to Images*, media scholar Tina Campt propels us to listen to difference, to attune to the lower frequencies of migrant archives of Blacks in diaspora. Her aim is "to animate the recalcitrant affects of quiet as an undervalued lower range of quotidian audibility" (Campt 2017: 4). Asking "what is the relationship between the quiet and the quotidian?" (Ibid.: 4), Campt defines the terms as a reference to something unspoken or "unsaid, unremarked, unrecognised or overlooked. They name practices that are pervasive and ever-present yet occluded by their seeming absence or erasure in repetition, routine, or internalisation. Yet the quotidian is not equivalent to passive everyday acts, and quiet is not an absence of articulation or utterance. Quiet is a modality that surrounds and infuses sound with impact and affect, which creates the possibility for it to register as meaningful" (ibid.: 4). Campt's understanding of the quotidian as a practice, a practice honed by the dispossessed in the struggle to create possibility within the constraints of everyday life, is particularly interesting in relation to our work with *Zamakan* on several levels. To listen to images is once a description and a method, it designates a method of recalibrating one's perceptive system to attune to what we do not see in the image, or what is registered by the juxtaposition of images and archives. That haptic temporality is engrained in the *contrapuntal image* as we have shown, and being brought alive again through touch, through

5 We apologies for not being able to recall the name of the conference member.

browsing through the images. Yet there are other ways in which *Zamakan* also attest to the quiet and the quotidian life being lived in the suburbs of Copenhagen.

Mohamed Tawfic's film was called the everyday life of the fighter, and wanted to move away from the loud and rather spectacular image of the fedayeen, at the time, but there are certain ways in which his own practice as a filmmaker while being displaced from Baghdad, to Beirut, to Damascus, to Tunis, to Copenhagen has also been dissociated from the movement or struggle of which he formed part and moved towards registering the everyday life in Birkerød, the changes of seasons, the relationship to the lake. The everyday life of listening to the music of Uhm Kalthoum on the TV set in Birkerød. Here sound plays an important role in creating the contrapuntal relationship between different time-spaces that are conflated in the same moment. The method, Edward Said borrows from music, is exercised by excellence in the traditional Arabic music of maqam – that in itself is a *bending of time*⁶ and place and of polyrhythms, in which an awareness of two or more tunes collide at the same time. There is something in the voice, or timbre, of Ayman and Samira speaking that in itself might be the most powerful actant of the video, which is not translatable into this essay, but which was very much sensed in the room, while filming. *Zamakan* is an attempt to listen to the lower frequencies of migration, to attune to the everyday life stories of participants, as it unfolds in their apartments in Birkerød and Nordvest. Those silences and lower frequencies are not void of sound and meaning but is contrary to the rather “loud” and spectacular media image of migration politics as it is currently being played out in Danish media. What happens instead if we attune to the micro affects, the boiling of water on a stove, the everyday acts of walking around the lake?

Telle: Where do we go from here?

In the final scene of the video the group, comprised of the crew and cast in the film, is sitting at the “telle” (hill) overlooking the lakes in the city centre of Copenhagen. The group is discussing the current political situation in European Union, where

6 In 2019 Lebanese percussionist Khaled Yassine curated a musical program at Sorte Firkant called *Bending Time*, presenting his own as well as other artists' musical projects inspired by the rhythmic traditions of the Arab peninsula, the poly-rhythms found in the area and the unique swing feel, Yassine's project explores micro-time as a tool to alter grooves through bending their subdivisions where sextuplets and quintuplets become the main denominator of the grooves as opposed to the common 16th and triplet subdivisions. On the melodic and the harmonic side, the project dives into micro-tonal Arabic music and experiments with the unlimited/unexplored harmonic possibilities that can be developed out of it. Texturally, electronically processing traditional instruments (oud, bouzouk, Arabic percussions) and the use of synths (micro-tonal) constitutes the sonic palette of the project.

right wing parties are on the rise. The conclusion is presented as a joke. In 30-40 years from now, if the right-wing gains power, what should we do? – the idea is to buy a submarine and go to the nearest safest place, which is Greece, since “people have hair on their backs, and where people are brown” (Dirckinck-Holmfeld/Hatem 2019: 32,57 min). The group continues to discuss whether or not they should bring Katrine (the co-director), who is not present in the image but behind the camera, since she is white and could easily pass within the nationalist agenda. But since she is married to an Arab, they agree to bring her as well since she might be considered a traitor.

While editing the film, the extreme right in Denmark were running for the elections, burning the Quran on the square in front of the café Sorte Firkant, from where the film was produced. What in the film is presented as a joke of a possible future, suddenly became accelerated in the present. Here again the concept of cine-geography becomes useful to think with in that migration is not unidirectional and geared towards one final destination: it is not a movement from South to North, and then ending (t)here, but a continuous and relational process. The *contrapuntal image* is perceptible to the contingencies and urgencies intervening in our everyday lives.

Sorte Firkant: Infrastructures for the present's past-futures

Returning to how the *contrapuntal image* forms new networks of shared histories and community we want to end this essay by giving an account of the platform through which the video installation was produced and shown – Sorte Firkant. Motivated by the question: how to create other affective infrastructures for working on the cultural memory of Arab diaspora in Denmark, and to create other infrastructures for culture from the Arab world and beyond, we co-founded Sorte Firkant in 2016. Sorte Firkant is a café and cultural venue in Nørrebro, Copenhagen, in the most densely populated and diverse neighbourhood in Denmark. Since its inception Sorte Firkant has become a meeting point for people from various different backgrounds and professions, incl. artists, cultural workers and regulars whose work are not easy to situate within the current normative frames that is governing the Danish public. The name of the venue Sorte Firkant (meaning the black square) is a reference to the historical, popular nickname for Blågårdplads and the area around, where the venue is located. Sorte Firkant wants to work on the history of the neighbourhood, while acknowledging the square's historical and cultural practices and stigmas the aim is to open up to the possibilities of different spaces to exist within the same space. Sorte Firkant is an attempt to create infrastructures where artists and people from all walks of life can come together and develop their work collectively or individually; a space for sharing work and

experiences; a platform where to discuss your work in an intimate café-setting and to take that work further to the public. Sorte Firkant is inspired by its sister venue, the cabaret theatre in Beirut, Metro Al Madina, founded in 2011⁷. Metro Al Madina has created a self-sustainable cultural platform, which is not depending on funding, but capable of producing high quality and critical cabaret shows that reinvent and re-enact popular culture from the Arab region in newfound and subversive forms. This model depends on the development of a relationship to an audience that is willing to come back.

Sorte Firkant's café setting presents a venue where you do not need to be invited or inaugurated within the art world to feel welcome. The intimate space makes it possible to attract various peoples across generational-, cultural- and socio-economic backgrounds. *Zamakan* was produced within this community of people who are both in front and behind the camera.

The *contrapuntal image* in this context refers to that it is not a question of representation. It is no longer a question of making art that represents migrant community or where migration is addressed as a theme – rather, and like time, it is the interiority in which we move and change (Deleuze 1989) – but it is also dislocating and detouring migrant forms of representations expanding and pushing the limitations of the current hegemonic political climate. And it is about creating the infrastructures or what we might situate with visual culture and contemporary art theorist Irit Rogoff as “relational geography” in which objectivities and subjectivities that may appear antagonistic or isolated are brought together through a practice of mapping that acknowledges its own partiality as well as each constitutive part of the map's singularity. Rather than conventional geography, Rogoff reminds us, relational geography does not operate from

a single principle that maps everything in an outward-bound motion with itself at the centre. Instead, it is cumulative, it lurches sideways, it is constructed out of chance meetings in cafés, of shared reading groups at universities, of childhood deprivations that could speak to one another, of snatches of music on transistor radios, of intense rages, of glimmers of hope offered by ideas that enabled imagining a better world. (Rogoff 2003: 56)

Tina Campt calls them “everyday practices of refusal” (Campt 2017:4), Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call them “the undercommons” (Harney/Moten 2013: 28 ff.), what they have in common is that they advance a futurity that is capable of living out the present as the future which has not happened but must. Therefore, moving away from art about migration to art where migrants are central to the process of artistic creation on all levels (conceptual, aesthetical, affective and

7 Metro al Madina was founded in 2011 by artist Hisham Jaber and friends.

technically), is necessary to arrive to an art of an always-already transformed and mixed social reality – an art of a plural society.

The ingredients foundational to creating such infrastructures, in the case of *Sorte Firkant* has been pluralism and affect. Pluralism as put forward by Chantal Mouffe's work on agonistic pluralism. Even though her concept of agonistic pluralism was tailored for the field of democratic politics, her thoughts have been opted by artistic and social practices. Acknowledging the impossibility of consensus by deliberation, Mouffe suggests a distinction between what is politics and what is political. By political she refers to the ontological dimension within politics. i.e. the basis that our political acts are based upon. Since, for Mouffe, antagonism is constitutional of the political, consensus must necessarily be made on the ethico-political standards. Beyond this consensus, Mouffe calls to transform antagonism into agonism and therefore transforming enmity into adversarial relations. Hence it is only by understanding the political in its antagonistic dimension and the contingent nature of any type of social order "that one can grasp the hegemonic struggle which characterises democratic politics, (...) in which artistic practices can play a crucial role" (Mouffe 2007: 1-2).

Secondly, and related, affect plays a crucial role in creating experiences that communicate through the sensorial experiences, rather than rational deliberation. Since its inception *Sorte Firkant* has hosted and organised multiplicity of events ranging from book launches, poetry nights, exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, fashion shows, performances, workshops, round tables and food events, that communicate through taste, music, visuals, concepts and ambience. It is through those affective encounters, that we are able to adjust and modify our perceptive and normative system and make us open for a future to come.

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“Tense encounters”

How migrantised women design and reimagine urban everyday life

Elisabeth Kirndörfer and Madlen Pilz

“Can we accept that there might be different ideas about justice and that different women might want, or choose, different futures from what we envision as best?” Abu-Lughod (2002: 787f.)

“My home is a place I have struggled for. I have fought in order to feel comfortable calling Berlin my home. Fighting this fight has become part of my home. In the meantime, I love it.” Sharon Dodua Otoo (2019: 68)¹

Introduction

Migrantised² women, especially when identified as Muslims, are routinely depicted in public discourse as an object under the control of Muslim men, as the passive recipients of a backward and patriarchal culture and familial structure. What is reproduced here is the classical colonial bias, placing white Germans ‘ahead’ of migrantised minorities along with the category of ‘modernity’.

1 “Mein Zuhause ist ein Ort, für den ich gekämpft habe. Ich habe gekämpft, damit ich mich wohlfühlen kann, Berlin als meine Heimat zu bezeichnen. Diesen Kampf zu führen ist Teil meiner Heimat geworden. Inzwischen liebe ich es.”

2 Migrantisation, here, is understood as a process of racialisation which produces the minorisation of whole groups and subjects and their ascription to the role of eternal migrants: The ones who eternally arrive, who still always have to adopt and to integrate, who always need to prove their right to be here – although they might have been born here and are formalised as full citizens (Brodén/Mecheril 2010: 7-24; El-Tayeb 2011: xiv-xxvii).

Against the backdrop of the postmigrant perspective, which we combine in this contribution with María Lugones' works on decolonial feminism,³ we aim at focusing on different practices of migrantisation and subalternisation that women with migration experiences encounter in urban public and semi-public spheres in the cities of Leipzig and Munich, and on how they deal with and resist these practices. We focus particularly on social settings created in order to foster encounters between urban residents with and without migration histories, such as neighbourhood centres or women's cafés, which are very commonly promoted as 'germ cells' for the formation and stabilization of urban societies of migration. Utilizing this empirical focus, we want to carve out the persistent effectiveness of colonial patterns of power and gender (Lugones 2010) that affect the access to social, political and economic rights. In order to trace how migrantised women resist the experiences of othering and differential inclusion (Mezzadra/Neilson 2013), we elaborate on the women's repertoire of infrapolitical practices (Scott 1990; Marche 2012) that are conceptualised within the postmigrant paradigm as "struggles of migration" (Scheel 2015; Riedner 2018) and described by Lugones as "intimate, everyday resistant interactions" (2010: 746). Hence, in our analysis, we address questions such as: What kind of practices do encounter settings enable and disable and how do migrantised women adopt and appropriate them through their manifold practices and activities? How do women reinterpret their social reality and reconstruct the urban spaces of encounter and, therewith, foster negotiations about 'migration'? Which practices of reimagination – of society and the relationship between majoritarian norms and migrantised (Muslim) women – do they perform? Which city spaces do they create? In sum: how does coloniality (of gender) come into play within these sites of encounter?

Theoretical approaches: Combining postmigrant perspectives with Lugones' 'coloniality of gender'

The postmigrant debate has initiated several epistemological shifts in critical migration studies that were highly inspired by post- and decolonial studies, such as the commitment to (1) the "perspective of migration" (Mecheril 2014; Yildiz/Hill 2015; Hess/Näser 2015) as a point of departure for social analysis and (2) the reconceptualisation of 'migration' as a social relation which mirrors society's transformation as a whole (Labor Migration 2014: 7). These shifts signify for researchers

3 The Argentinian sociologist and philosopher focuses amongst other questions, on how colonial rule has erased histories and relationships (spiritual, social, sexual, political) in formerly indigenous contexts through the enforcement of binary constructions such as 'man' vs. 'woman', 'human' vs. 'nature'.

that they should engage with the movements of migration and, drawing on de- and post-colonial studies, with marginalised knowledges and the manifold visible and invisible practices of interpreting and appropriating spaces of the dominant society. The approach of critical/urban citizenship (Isin 2008; Hess/Lebuhn 2014) focuses on the interdependent processes of differential recognition and inclusion, as well as on the various public resistant acts of performing citizenship by (re) claiming rights, (re)imagining and (re)producing society and urban space – and, therewith, scrutinizing majoritarian and, hence, nationally bounded understandings of belonging. Meanwhile, the notion of “struggles of migration”, as advanced by Scheel (2015), highlights the autonomy of migrantised subjects (Bojadžijev/Karakayalı 2007) and their manifold tactics enacted in spaces of everyday life, such as offices, private apartments and working places (Scheel 2015: 4). These struggles take place at the social, political, economic and affective borders of society and are neither affecting nor visible to everybody. These tactics, following de Certeau (1988: 77-97), subvert the spaces of the powerful – the dominant society – by making use of their tools and inverting them, for example, through jokes, irony and reinterpretations. Similarly, María Lugones, with her focus on “everyday resistant interactions to the colonial difference” (2010: 743), refers to the notion of “infrapolitics” advanced by Scott (1990: 183) in order to describe “acts, gestures, and thoughts that are not quite political enough to be perceived as such” (Marche 2012: 1). Lugones’ approach helps us to deepen our understanding of how migrantised women deal with the neglect of their particular histories and interpretations. It enables us to focus properly on “the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world” (Lugones 2010: 746) and, thereby, discern how colonial patterns of gender shape the researched urban spaces of encounter for and with migrantised women. Along with her notion of “tense encounters” (ibid.), we analyse how hegemonic ‘seizures’ of the non-Western, female subject, and hence, practices of subalternisation, are countered and resisted, constituting a “subjective/intersubjective spring of liberation, both adaptive and creatively oppositional” (ibid.).

Our empirical material

The material which will serve as the basis of our analysis was collected within our participant observations⁴ that we carried out in 2017/18 around a café initiative in Leipzig and in a neighbourhood centre in Munich.

4 Our research was realised within the research project “Locally Stranded, Globally Embedded? Dealing with Diversity on the Margins of the Postmigrant City” at the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, funded by the DFG (German Research foundation).

The empirical analysis in Leipzig is the outcome of a multidirectional fieldwork process with the aim of tracking negotiations – in very different sites of engagement – around the notion, or rather the ‘problem’ of ‘refugee women’. In order to carve out the ‘coloniality of gender’, reproduced within the spaces of encounter, the focus here is laid on a very particular moment documented within the research, namely: the negotiation of a micro-social conflict situation.⁵

The participant observations of the work and talks with the women who are employed in the Neighbourhood Centre (henceforth, the Centre) in Munich create the basis for focusing on (1) how they interpret and reconsider the relations and negotiations between German majoritarian society and migrantised population, and (2) which tensions they address within their work.

The two sites of encounter we describe disclose three main differences: firstly, the status of the women in the Centre in Munich differs from the one held by the women in the Leipzig café, all of whom have applied for asylum and find themselves in a position of waiting for the authorities’ decision. The women in Munich while having their own migration experiences, are some of those who, from the outside, would be described as “integrated”. Secondly, they are the ones actively conceptualising and designing the tools and initiatives of ‘help’ and social integration. Thirdly, in contrast to the Leipzig setting, the degree of institutionalisation of the Centre is more pronounced. Therefore, an important point in the analysis of our material was its relational conceptualisation (Hart 2016), which entails three central points: first and foremost, to analyse and describe the differences between our two case studies appropriately. This demanded that we apply different approaches at times or use the same approaches to a varying degree. Secondly, we should be sensible of commonalities in a broader understanding, i.e. to focus additionally on the trans-scalar entanglements between the cases, such as the impact of global, national and urban discourses, events and politics on the sites of encounter observed, as well as their impact on urban or national processes and, therewith, also on each other. Thirdly, we should think across different urban experiences (Robinson 2011), which, from the very beginning, involved a translation of the knowledge gained from one case study into questions for the other.

5 This focus entails the risk of devaluating the work, motives and engagement of the different actors involved, which is explicitly not our aim. All of them, we can say, pursue the highly valuable target of strengthening and shaping a society of migration beyond delimitating fixations on belonging and integration in fostering interactions and communications ‘at eye level’. What we aim for within this analysis is to shift the focus from the actions of particular people towards the effects and workings of a particular discursive setting.

Empirical insights: resisting the 'coloniality of gender' in encounter settings

a) The Women's Café in Leipzig: a fragile ensemble

The ethnographic material we base our analysis on in this section is concretely embedded within the relaunch of a Women's Café,⁶ organised by two associations in Leipzig with the aim of creating a space of encounter and fostering so-called 'low-threshold' artistic activities for women with and without a refugee background.⁷ This space stretches across different localities and subsites: It addresses mainly women who live in an accommodation for families with a refugee background which was set up in a historical apartment house located in the quiet backstreet of a very lively urban district in 2016. Activities within the Women's Café, however, are organised in another locality a few blocks and five-minutes walking distance away: an event space in a local community centre. In order to bridge the walking distance between the two spaces, which might function as one barrier to participation, the organisers have decided to pick up the women at the accommodation and walk over together.

It is the movement, temporariness and indeterminacy of boundaries (private – governmental) and functionalities (leisure time – status-related 'obedience') which shape the spatial and temporal arrangement of the Women's Café in Leipzig. It constitutes, therefore, a rather fragile, 'deterritorial' setting with a low degree of institutionalisation.

"What are your hobbies?" – A call to subj(e-a)ction

One afternoon in November, I meet the organisers of the Women's Café and two volunteers in front of the accommodation. We are four women, most with an academic background, between our mid-twenties and mid-thirties, born in Germany

6 As we will show, this format does not correspond to a classic 'café' but rather to an informal encounter space.

7 *Association1*, as anonymised within this text, is an initiative founded in 2016 with the aim of fostering encounters between young people with and without a refugee background through arts. The association disposes of one and a half paid positions based on a funding which has to be renewed annually. The activities, however, depend vastly on the work of volunteers. Young people with refugee histories are strongly included into their organisational body. *Association2* is a cultural centre and housing project that offers various projects, also artistic, with the aim of facilitating the participation of all residents – marginalised or not – in one of the most diverse urban areas in Leipzig. The money they dispose of depends on short-term funding applications and, hence, always, on voluntary engagement.

and have no obvious references to migration histories. Five women, most of them with babies, are waiting for us in the small common room inside the café. We begin with an introduction round, initiated by Ibrahim, one of the volunteers, who is there to provide translation from Farsi.⁸ Throughout the lengthy insight into his life – trained mechanic, implicated in communist politics in Afghanistan until the Taliban arrived, working as an interpreter in Germany for ten years – everyone in the room is listening patiently; the babies sleep or play on the laps of the waiting women. It is then Rasha's turn, who sits next to him. Like the other women, she reels off the introduction text she has learnt in the integration class: "My name is [...] I come from [...] I have been in Germany since [...]." Magda, representing *Initiative1*, tries to get a little bit more information in each case: "What are your hobbies?" "Do you like music?" "Are there table games in Afghanistan?" "What do you like to do?" The answers are rather avoidant and do not explain much. The atmosphere is friendly, but the women also seem a bit tense and, it seems to me, uncertain, what to reply. "Sports" is the only hesitant answer – some women indicate the centre of their bodies, laughing. "Yoga" – when introduced as one of the activities offered by *Initiative1* – is something they have not heard of: "That doesn't exist in our places," Ibrahim chuckles. The meeting remains rather unsatisfactory – is it because of language barriers and a somewhat awkward mode of unclear expectations? (Fieldnotes, September 14, 2017)

This description of the first encounter with the women demonstrates how a fracture runs through our meeting: 'We' arrive, 'they' wait; 'we' ask, 'they' answer. The notion of "tense encounter" (Lugones 2010: 746) proves helpful in order to grasp the 'silencing' and 'freezing' effects produced here. The five women in our meeting seem to be 'locked' in a Western/colonial gaze, which associates their social lives with limitation (family spaces), enclosure (patriarchal control) and monotony (childcare and household). There is no need to emphasise that in addition to this external gaze, the lives of the women in the accommodation is indeed characterised by restrictions and constraints – regarding communication, the implication in familial and social networks, workspaces and, generally, spaces of appreciation and recognition. Hence, while the aim of the meeting is to get in contact and involve them in a mutual practice of recognition, discovery and approximation, the distribution of speech and the overall discursive setting produce more of a silenc-

8 One can certainly say that this eloquent and extensive 'kick-off' of the meeting performed by a man who finds himself in an established position in Germany, contributes to a rather unfavourable communicative situation for the relaunch of the Women's Café: firstly, it somehow undermines the idea of a 'women's space' and, secondly, through this 'example' of (male) 'integration success', it even widens the gap between the 'newcomers' in Leipzig/Germany and well-established residents.

ing and invisibilisation of the women's individual stories, achievements, personal desires and sense of being. This is what we hint at with the wordplay subj(e-a)ction: a gendered, discursive practice which places the women in an active subjectivity along modern Western norms – from private realms into public spaces, contrasting family spaces with those for the (social, creative and civic) self.⁹ This discursive invocation combines a neoliberal imperative of activating the women with a colonial gesture of overwriting the affective personal histories present in this room.¹⁰ Lugones refers to a similar imperative with her notion of a “fractured locus” that colonised women inhabit, – a “wound where sense is contradictory” (ibid.: 752). The ‘coloniality of gender’, in her perspective, produces a kind of ‘split ground’, or rather a “borderland” (ibid.: 753) where non-modern knowledges, intimacies and histories are in constant tension with the Western-normative calls to action/subjectivity sketched above.

Before continuing to dissect the doings and undoings of our encounter and, in a second step, sounding out the possibilities of resistance to the ‘coloniality of gender’, we will continue with part two of the vignette. It starts with an unexpected twist which happened when our meeting seemed to be coming to an end without any plans being made for the future of the Women's Café:

I had asked my neighbour which kind of music she listens to at home, whereupon Ibrahim had opened a YouTube video with Persian pop music, accompanied by Afghan dancing. As all of the women, while remaining seated, joined in these dance moves, the idea started to circulate whether this couldn't be an idea for the next Women's Café – Afghan dance – and couldn't Rasha, most actively involved in our round, take the role of the dance teacher? She consents, on condition that there wouldn't be any men and using roller blinds to protect the activity from being observed from the outside. We agree on a date, all say goodbye and the organisers especially seem relieved: In the end, an idea was found. Two weeks later though, things turn out very differently. Claire, who was supposed to ‘collect’ the women at the accommodation, arrives alone at *Initiative2*, where Lisa, the person responsible here, and I are waiting with tea and cookies. None of the women had seemed to be motivated, and Rasha, our supposed ‘dance teacher’, had said she did not know anything. Besides, her husband had stood in the doorstep, “he had not left the doorknob with his hands”, Claire said, and, in the end, Rasha's children

9 This dynamic mirrors a dichotomic understanding of ‘public’ and ‘private’ spaces perpetuated in scientific debates since the 19th century and critically discussed by feminist scholars in the few last decades (cf. Gal 2002).

10 Accordingly, Lila Abu-Lughod, in her reflection “Do Muslim Women really need saving?”, conceives “difference” as the outcome of “different histories, as expressions of different circumstances and as manifestations of differently structured desires” (2002: 787).

had cried out: “Mum can’t dance at all!” The door had then been shut quite quickly. “It is frustrating”, Claire concludes.

The violence that is entrenched in this situation unfolds even more clearly when Laura, a professional consultant who had been hired by *Association1* many months before in order to support the practitioners in attracting more women within their activities, in the aftermath of the event, finds out the following: The women had thought of their attendance in the Women’s Café of being one of the conditions for receiving support and – ultimately – their residence permission from the German state. The organisers were shaken by this news. Throughout the following weeks, intense discussions took place and different interpretations of this situation were exchanged and reflected upon, most of them revolving around the question of ‘the women’. Non-Western women were turned, again, into a problem – one of Western participatory engagement.

In the first place, the interactive setting described above had produced a ‘colonial’ encounter in the way that it had engendered a practice of imposed modernity. The process of becoming-subject, which in Western thinking is seen as tightly interwoven with becoming-citizen, is initiated and fostered here along Western feminist conceptions of womanhood, supposedly flourishing through the participation in non-domestic activities. The women, while being implicated in this practice, are set in a “hierarchical relation in which the non-modern is subordinated to the modern” (Lugones 2010: 748). Coloniality, here, appears as a relational practice that denies these women their way of appropriating private and public spaces in new surroundings, their knowledges and cosmologies, which might be “at odds with the modern logic of dichotomies” (ibid.: 748), in sum: “co-evalness” (ibid.: 749). “This denial is coloniality”, Lugones argues (ibid.). It is this denial or neglect which ultimately impedes the enactment of citizenship. Bridging this reflection with the postmigrant perspective leads us to Yildiz and Hill, who argue for an “epistemological turn” (2018: 7) in dealings with migration in “uncovering marginalized stories and knowledges” (ibid.), their potential to subvert and ironise and, consequently, challenge social power relations (ibid.: 7-8). It is the postmigrant perspective’s normative claim “to breach with racist allocations” (Foroutan 2018: 15) and to engage in a struggle for recognition and equal rights (ibid.: 21) that underlies the following analysis of resistance against the ‘coloniality of gender’.

Resisting the ‘coloniality of gender’: Politics of withdrawal

What the postmigrant perspective, in combination with the ‘coloniality of gender’ lens, brings to the fore are the tactics and struggles enacted by migrantised citizens in order to appropriate majoritarian social, cultural and political spaces. It is precisely at this “fractured locus”, which shapes colonial encounters, that,

according to Lugones, “sense is made anew” (2010: 752), i.e. that resistance can sprout. Rasha, for example, at the (awkward) beginning of the meeting described, confronts the group with the reality of life as refugees with irregular status in Germany: “In former times, before the war, in Afghanistan, dancing, music, parties were part of our everyday life. Then the war came; now we’re refugees – it’s difficult.” (Fieldnotes, September 14, 2017). Therewith, she interrupts the unilineal arrangement of speech and confronts the group with the incongruity of conceiving leisure time activities for women who struggle to rearrange life for themselves and their children in vastly unfamiliar, insecure conditions. Resistance, however, can also be enacted in a much more hidden and less manifest way: Accordingly, we would go as far as interpreting the women’s withdrawal, their non-cooperation and silence as a tactic of taking part without really playing a part, as a minimal investment while remaining at a distance. This interpretation resonates with Lugones’ conception of resistance as “infrapolitical” (2010: 746): In focusing on the “everyday resistant interactions to the colonial difference” (ibid.: 743) and their liberating power, she highlights “that minimal sense of agency required for the oppressing<—>resisting relation being an active one” (ibid.).

In sum, the ‘coloniality of gender’ lens is made visible in two ways: firstly, the structures of oppression which forge non-Western women’s placement within Western societies; as illustrated with the wordplay ‘subj(e-a)ction’, this placement entails an activation – along with the Western conception of citizenry – and, at the same time, a subjectivation which renders the women’s individuality and plurilocal affective memory invisible. Secondly, the ‘coloniality of gender’ lens directs our focus onto the inconspicuous, inward-turned, subjective strategies of resistance, such as the withdrawal and non-cooperation performed by active subjects who claim an existence “other than what the hegemon makes [her] be” (ibid.: 746). The Women’s Café in Leipzig turns out to be a space which, also due to its spatio-temporal arrangement, gets ‘caught’ within a discursive dynamic that reproduces, unwillingly, the hegemonic invocation of ‘migrant/Arabic/Muslim women’, who, in turn, resist through a ‘politics of withdrawal’.

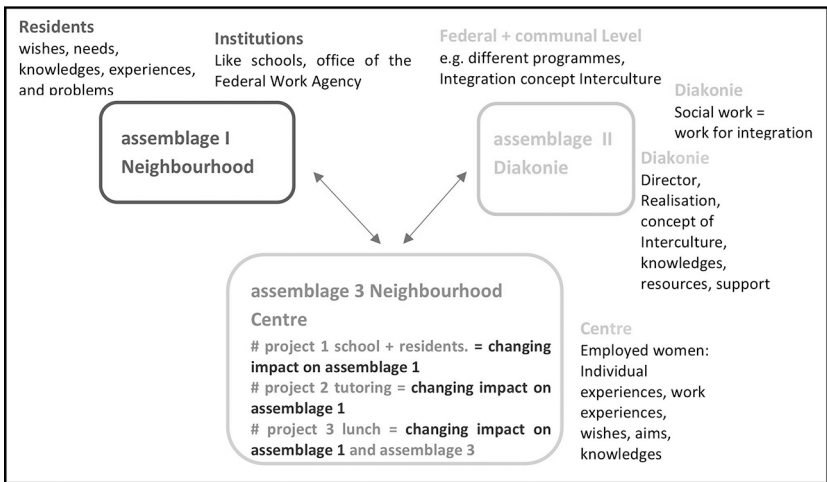
b) The Neighbourhood Centre at Munich’s northern edge: Reimaginings of urban everyday life

In this part, we will present the descriptions and analysis of the negotiations around ‘migration’ within the Centre by reconsidering the different elements that shape its structure. For the analysis of the negotiations, we will apply the concept of assemblages¹¹ as a tool to shed some light on how different elements constitut-

¹¹ Assemblage is here understood as the process of gathering and ‘co-functioning’ of heterogeneous elements which according to DeLanda (2006) is blurring human/non-human, near/far,

ing the ‘Centre’ – through their interaction – engender a process of reimagining and re-creating the Centre as an urban space. For the purpose of this chapter, we will mainly focus here on three central elements of the assemblage: (1) the women employed at the Centre and their manifold experiences of migrantisation and subalternisation in their everyday lives; (2) the Centre as a material urban space in the process of being (re-)imagined and (re-)constructed; and (3) the permanent activities and temporal projects realised at the Centre which represent the women’s acts of citizenship with the aim of reshaping society (e.g. consultations, room renting possibilities or school tutoring for pupils).

Fig. 15.1: Sketch of the assemblage ‘Neighbourhood Centre’.



The women: Labouring from a “fractured locus”

The women working at the Centre, are at the heart of the assemblage, and one of its central agents. Some of them have experienced migration themselves, which forms the foundation of the transnational understanding and organisation of their families and everyday lives. All the women are highly skilled; most of them have an academic degree. The women who came to Munich with a foreign degree, such as C.¹² from Turkey, O. from Belarus and E. from Hungary, have experienced

structure/agency, material/social divisions) engendering a temporal, provisional, sometimes fragile and/or contingent non-homogeneous grouping. With the help of the notion the stress is put rather on emergence, on how trajectories cross and engage each other (Anderson/McFarlane 2011: 124-127).

12 According to their wishes, we have used the initial letters of their names for anonymisation.

a professional devaluation typical for people who become subjectified as migrants by the dominant society. O. and C., for example, have attended several additional courses in order to be recognised as professionals by potential employers.

C., one of the consultants, told me, "I myself had to make so many requests, so I asked God, as he gave me this ability, please, help me to share it. I am very satisfied with my job [at the Centre, M.P.], it makes sense [...]. I came as a migrant, and now I can help other migrants." (Talk with C., February 6, 2018)

For some others, like E., the work in the Centre was an entry into the labour market, while for N., it was a possibility to escape from sitting at home. However, for most of them, the work is more or less based on precarious conditions: a few women work half-time or less on the basis of a regular contract from the institution Diakonie,¹³ which runs the Centre. The temporary projects, particularly, incur only a few hours work per week. Working under these conditions makes it necessary to cope with the future insecurity and economic dependence of the family or of the government's welfare institutions. In addition to these economic barriers the women face in their everyday lives, all of them have stories to tell which illustrate how their different experiences of migrantisation form a powerful part of their lives and of the public by delegating its expression relationships towards the majority society.

During our first meeting, S. told me that during her studies, she went as an exchange student to Italy. This stay was very important for her, as she experienced there what it was like to be recognised as a student from Germany instead of as the 'other', the Turkish girl. Once O. told the story about her neighbours, who are grumbling loudly when they meet that she does not belong here. M. tells several school stories of her sons: Once, for example, the teacher insulted her six-year-old son in front of the whole class calling him a dirty pig.¹⁴ The teacher of her elder son (of the German remedial classes, which he attended of his own choice) sent a letter to the local school authority notifying it of the son's inability to speak German. The teacher's preoccupation was caused by his quietness, which was interpreted as inability, but was due to the boy's shyness to say that he should be transferred to a higher level. N. remembered one day with a German friend, how at school in Munich's northern part in the 1980s they learned the German racist canon: "C-a-f-

13 Diakonie is the social welfare organisation of the Protestant churches in Germany and is responsible for all kinds of social work with all people regardless of age, sex and religious affiliation. Regarding the Centre's work, the respective headquarter of Diakonie offers additionally creative, technical and partial financial support to the projects.

14 This was also very harmful to the boy because, as M. told me, this is a very strong offence in the Muslim understanding. The boy was picking his nose.

f-e-e- Do not drink so much coffee. The Turk's drink ..."¹⁵ She reported her friend's reaction who considered the teaching of this song to Turkish kids at school as racist. (Talk with O., July 31, 2018; talk with M. and N., November 23, 2017)

Following Lugones (2010), we interpret the women's point of departure as a "fractured locus". It is fractured socially between their highly skilled professional background and their usually precarious, sometimes fragile integration into the labour market, which increases their vulnerability in front of familial and institutional power structures. The fracture produced by their experiences of being subjectified as the outsider (S. and O.), or the inferior (M.'s sons), or the exotic and uncanny (Turkish 'coffee'), on the one hand, and their subjective feeling and knowledge of being treated wrongly, on the other hand, is highly entangled. The women do not use the term racism to express these experiences, but they are aware of the affronts, of the stigmatizing othering – resisting it by ignoring it, such as in the case of O., or M., who is negotiating her son's situation at school, or N., who brings the critique into the public by delegating its expression to a German friend. These examples depict some of the women's everyday life "struggles of migration" (Scheel 2015), which they conduct almost silently and indiscernibly as a political action for others. They are dealing with the question of how to negotiate the dominant society's different practices of migrantisation in an "infrapolitical" way (Scott 1990: 184; Lugones 2010: 746), such as the refusal to recognise their foreign qualifications, the pressure to accept precarious contracts or the necessity of facing racist attitudes. It illustrates the women's permanent challenge to deal with the fractures determining their social lives after migration.

The Centre – as an urban space

The materiality and atmosphere of the Centre¹⁶ created by the women's activities form the second element of the assemblage we will focus on here. The rooms' organisation, their design, such as the coloured walls, the furniture, plants and pictures, all is imbued with their imaginations and concerns, well-balanced between functional needs and their wish to create a welcoming, cosy atmosphere.

15 Our own translation of the original German text: "C-a-f-f-e-e- Trink nicht so viel Kaffee, nicht für Kinder ist der Türkentrunk..." which was first published by Carl Gottlieb Hering in 1846.

16 The Centre is situated on the first two floors of a building constructed in the 1990s. It was built together with the whole neighbourhood on the northern edge of Munich reproducing the style of a garden city and, considering Munich's social housing construction regulations, offering equally social and middle-class as well as luxurious housing combined with different forms of ownership (private, corporate and communal).

When residents come to have a consultation, book a room for a meeting or a private event, they sit in the main room around the big table quietly waiting to get help — like in a public office — but still different. When one of the women is passing by, she asks if everything is fine or she offers some water. The residents can come with each problem,¹⁷ will hear about different possibilities, the demands and pitfalls of German administrations and will never experience any sanctions here. When I asked C. what she can do better than employees in public offices, she replied that she has no pressure of time and the staff in the public offices lack cultural knowledge. She is able to solve misunderstandings, language problems [...] and she understands that German bureaucracy is difficult for most people who are not used to being confronted with so many letters and different deadlines. (Talk with C., February 6, 2018)

This short description illustrates that the residents' needs and the women's openness towards their problems come together in the Centre. The women's intentions to welcome, mediate and help, contribute to create a kind of safe space in the Centre, where the residents' problems will not be turned against them. We experienced a very paradigmatic example of the women's ability to imagine and create space in the Centre with the lunch gatherings: they were open to everybody, offering a healthy meal including the wide gastronomic possibilities between east and west for a fee depending on age and income.

Usually a few more than 10 people are gathering around the table in the main room. Apart from the women and the cooks from the Centre, some children come around and some pensioners from the neighbourhood. Different languages go around the table, mostly Turkish and German, but, at the moment, Russian and Hungarian too. Other people come with boxes to get their ordered lunch for home. At one of the gatherings, one girl starts to talk about her math test and some of the lunch 'guests' starts to discuss her annoyance of having to study each day and encourage her. A. is praising the rice and asking the cooks for the Turkish way of preparing it; she admits that her husband is always joking about her rice. Everybody shares her rice cooking experiences and the way in which they organise the dinner preparations during the week, some together with their husbands, others more or less on their own. W. is a pensioner and is talking about her granddaughter, and is asked, which one. She replies, astonished, that she is talking about the Syrian refugee girl. A woman from the group of Turkish women joins the table. The group meets each

17 As C. and M. told me, the variety of problems people come with is big, including psychological and familial problems, problems with rent payments, dismissal from their flats, finding new affordable housing, getting a public rent subsidy or problems with making requests to and corresponding with public offices.

week in the Centre; now they are in trouble with another group that uses the room afterwards who complained about how the first group had left it. She discusses the problem with S. and some other women from the Centre. I do not understand very much, just feel their excitement. S. gives me a summary of the debate that was about stereotypes, different perceptions of order and disorder, about mutual understanding and indulgence and the acceptance of the rules of the Centre.

These weekly lunch gatherings somehow show a very normal lunchtime gathering among people who talk about what is happening around them, their interests and dislikes. The particularity of this weekly lunch is that it brings together people with diverse knowledge of language and culture and different migration experiences. It is only when considering this fact against the backdrop of the “obsession” in the German public and politics with issues of migration and growing diversity nurturing a general public fear of its negative impact on social cohesion (Spielhaus 2018) that the significance of these gatherings can be properly assessed. The women manage to create a space where, despite all differences, it is possible to meet regularly, talk about matters of everyday life and debate common rules openly. Moments like this – emerging due to the women’s imaginative and creative attitudes – are significant for the reconstruction/reshaping of the Centre into a space of emerging *Vielheit*, in the sense of Mark Terkessidis.¹⁸ Different cultural backgrounds, languages, assumptions, demands and life concepts interact and shape encounters in the gatherings, characterised by the mutual interest about each other, the recognition of the other’s right to alterity and the wish to act together. Emerging frictions and conflicts within the groups are taken as the starting point for negotiations about ‘who one is, each of us’ and ‘how we want to be together’. This example is one central aspect of how the women give life to their idea of a neighbourhood centre.

Projects/resources – shaping society/performing citizenship

The Centre offers a variety of resources to the residents of the neighbourhood through its permanently accessible activities and temporal projects, such as access to information, networks and education. The assemblage, however, comprises further agents, for example, the headquarter of Diakonie in Munich’s north,

18 German cultural theorist Mark Terkessidis describes the term *Vielheit* (which can be translated as multiplicity) as a notion to focus that society is constituted by many individuals, who themselves represent a bundle of differences, to counter, therewith, the dominant ideas of social norms, integration and deviation as mechanisms ensuring social cohesion – which makes it possible to think of a society as one of individuals acting together, negotiating and assembling their differences (2015: 126).

and the discourses, instruments and politics around migration/integration on the communal, regional and national scales. The Centre's projects and activities depend on the women's ability to gain the support of the responsible headquarter of Diakonie and the different political instruments at the communal, regional or national scale. Consequently, the ability to translate between everyday life matters unfolding on the local scale and different discourses, i.e. between needs, wishes and possibilities of the residents, and the wordings on the different scales where funding can be obtained is indispensable. This can be compared to what de Certeau describes as "to combine heterogeneous elements [...] the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is 'seized'" (1988: xix), and what Scheel, following de Certeau, calls "struggles of migration" (2015: 10). Despite this "infrapolitical" way of struggle, the women's sense of 'autonomy'¹⁹ is an important aspect. It is the prerequisite for making their own interpretations about the social reality, residents' needs, demands and wishes, and disclosing their limitations by the system of differential inclusion (Mezzadra/Neilson 2013), which is not providing all residents the same access to social, economic and political rights.

During a talk, S. reflects on the media coverage of the quarter, which is mainly identified with "migrant" problems, which she does not consider as justly describing the residents' problem, rather their economic situation due to low incomes and scarce work possibilities. (Talk with S., June 6, 2017)

Based on these own interpretations, the projects work in two ways at the social border lines: firstly, they create offers for the small pockets – the tutoring, for example, is subsidised²⁰ and the consultations are free of charge. Secondly, they create jobs in the area, although temporary and precarious ones – the tutors, many consultants and the cooks are from the area. It is one part of how the women negotiate the consequences of migrantisation by creating an affordable access to knowledge, information and economic resources in the area, therewith, participating in reshaping society.

19 Scheel (2015: 9), following Samaddar (2005: 10), describes autonomy as the "liberty" to initiate a conflictive relation, i.e. producing a "tense encounter" according to Lugones, between migration and the different attempts to control it.

20 The tutoring courses in the pupils' project cost two Euros per session. The children are tutored for one and a half hours in groups of five or six in mathematics, the German language and homework.

One day, a guest from Munich's city administration is visiting the Centre. S. presents different projects to her. After pointing to the school tutoring project for pupils from the area, the guest comments: "So the understanding of school attendance is different here." S. replies in a friendly way that it is not the understanding of school attendance which is problematic, but that people cannot afford the costs of private school tutoring if they wish it or if their children do not have grave school problems and do not belong to the group of social assistance recipients. (Observation, April 26, 2018)

The school tutoring project was a request of residents; it proves the degree of people's economic problems and their preoccupation with their children's school success, and not their ignorance – while the office worker's question is just one example of the misrecognition the women face in their everyday lives – of social problems interpreted as, in the context of 'migration', cultural or ethnic ones.

This example provides evidence of how the projects' work is dedicated to deconstructing racist argumentations and, therewith, to (re-)shaping the "tense encounters" that are produced by the process of subjectification of a part of the population as 'migrants' by the dominant majority and residents' subjectivities trying to resist the process in different ways. Hence, the women position themselves at the social fractures of the urban society with their thoughts, words, bodies and their professional aspirations, therewith, engaging in the collective *œuvre* of reshaping society and acting out their citizenship.

Concluding remarks: "tense encounters" in Leipzig and Munich from a relational comparative perspective

The aim of this last section is to discuss our analytical insights from a relational comparative lens. This enables us to overcome the 'classical' comparative bias which, when it comes to migration-related settings in East and West, easily reproduces a 'here more – there less' logic of linear development, being part of the overall logic of modernity. Munich, considered this way, would shine out as an example of the unfolding of an 'urban everyday diversity', while Leipzig, by contrast, would be declared as 'lagging behind' regarding migration and diversity, not as 'anchored' within the urban everyday yet. While we do not deny the impact of different migration histories, *durées* and institutional embeddings in both settings, we, however, wish to argue in a different direction.

The postmigrant perspective addresses a particular societal tension between racialising, colonial-modernist invocations of people with migration histories as 'others' and recalcitrant/resistant acts and movements which, tenaciously, unfolding in different speeds and ways, expand participatory spaces in urban societies of

migration (Espahangizi et al. 2016: 17). As we could demonstrate, sites of encounter are revealed as sites where this tension is displayed. With the following reflections, we wish to showcase in what way the postmigrant perspective can benefit from a relational comparative analysis that allows a nuanced elaboration of how this tension unfolds differently according to (1) the settings of the encounter and (2) the discursive invocations at work.

Concerning (1), the Munich case, although being marked by temporariness, testifies to a rather firm, institutionalised assemblage within which migrantised women, their precariousness notwithstanding, play an active part in shaping the spatial and social conditions which underlie the encounters they create. By contrast, it seems as if the indeterminacy of boundaries which shapes the Women's Café in Leipzig – arranged between self-organised spaces of empowerment and the state, between precarious privacy and public political visibility – favours the reiteration of the 'colonial difference' around the Western category of 'woman' instead of fostering a space of mutual recognition and female solidarity.

Concerning (2), while the initiatives in Leipzig aim at fostering a 'welcoming space' with empowering qualities and, therewith, reaffirm the category of 'refugee women', the Munich example reveals a different practice of migrantisation, namely, the invocation of 'integrated' migrant women recruited in order to facilitate integration processes for fellow residents with migration histories. Both subjectivations, constructed along differences in status and degrees of recognition, recount colonial histories of othering in affirming the Western/European subject as the norm. Instead of mirroring different 'stages of development reached' by particular urban contexts regarding the dealing with migration, we consider that both of these discursive appellations, in their capacity to produce particular sites of encounter, intersect within our current urban societies of migration.

The "change of perspective" (Foroutan et al. 2018: 10) suggested by the postmigrant perspective, taking migration as a starting point for social analysis instead of problematising it along binary constructions, in our view, requires an analysis that departs from 'the local', understood as a "product and site of production of global assemblages" (Labor Migration 2014: 20). This "methodological 'return' into the social everyday of cities" (ibid.) allows us to retrace the range of "discursive figurations" (Foroutan et al. 2018: 10) or, as Espahangizi frames it, "discursive impertinence[s]" (2016: unpagged) that exist in parallel within our postmigrant urban societies. Accordingly, the example of Munich uncovers how different appellations, addressing 'integrated women' as well as 'migrant women', both shape the women's everyday lives, depending on the perception of their status whether as professionals or private persons. The practices of resistance used in both examples – politics of withdrawal and silence on the one hand, practices of enacting a 'normalcy' of diversity which brings forth a new space of conviviality, potentially reshaping society, on the other hand – differ not only regarding the politics of em-

powering subjectivation but equally the status the women hold in the particular setting.

Sites of encounter, beside the tensions they comprise – being “sites of both differentiation and hierarchisation” (Ahmed 2000: 167) – are, at the same time, sites of *labour*(ing): Our material demonstrates the wide range of practices that reflect the (affective) everyday labour of forging, creating and appropriating a society of migration. This labour occurs in the form of various acts of empowerment that lead to an enactment of citizenship drafted against logics of migrantisation and racialisation, as well as against acts of silencing amidst the prevalence of precarious conditions. A range of different tactical struggles are applied, such as the formulation of critique via unmarked residents or under the guise of irony, for example, withdrawal, adaptation, interruption or appropriating practices turning conviviality into a solidary and empowering practice, providing mutual support through economic resources and knowledge. Urban spaces of encounter, hence, also bear the potential of becoming affective spaces of learning and unlearning across different histories and intimacies (cf. Abu-Lughod 2010: 787). This is what the postmigrant perspective can gain from a relational analysis that integrates a decolonial stance. It is on this rather opening tone that we wish to end – instead of concluding – in quoting, once more, María Lugones, who asks: “How do we learn about each other without harming each other but with the courage to take up a weaving of the everyday that may reveal deep betrayals? How do we cross without taking over?” (2010: 755).

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Contemplating the coronavirus crisis through a postmigrant lens?

From segregative refugee accommodations and camps to a vision of solidarity

Claudia Böhme, Marc Hill, Caroline Schmitt and Anett Schmitz

Introduction

This chapter takes the coronavirus pandemic that first emerged in December 2019 as a springboard to reflect on how society deals with forced migration from a post-migrant perspective. Such a theoretical vantage seeks to 'demigratize' research on forced migration (Römhild 2017). Analytical inquiry then is not a mode of special research on refugees but rather it investigates the societal power relations and social inequalities that affect all human beings. The experience of forced migration is relevant for research exploring living together in society as a whole. Taking that premise as a point of departure, the present study investigates dedicated refugee accommodation centers and camps as specific settings in which persons who have fled their homes and countries are largely separated, segregated and shielded from the rest of the population. The chapter addresses the questions: What are the life realities of human beings in these settings? What significance do they have for life together in society as a whole? How is it possible against this backdrop to conceptualise postmigrant visions of an urban, cosmopolitan, inclusive and open living together in solidarity?

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global crisis, impacting on all independently of their stories of migration, and provides a context for looking in greater depth at relations in the whole of society. In the midst of a pandemic, priority is given to protecting human lives and human health. However, social inequalities and inequity are reproduced in this crisis (see Scherr 2020; Triandafyllidou 2020; Wagner 2020), in particular in regard to how refugees are accommodated. We consider it highly germane for research to focus on these spaces of inequality in order to think anew and in fundamental depth about modes and forms of temporary accommodation.

This study is grounded on a step-by-step focus on the actual everyday life realities of refugees accommodated in dedicated facilities in Germany, the refugee camp Moria on the Greek island of Lesbos and the Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyi Settlement in Kenya, and looks at the exacerbation of living conditions there as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The effects of the pandemic do not just foreground the debate over closure of national borders and the EU policy of sealing off its external boundaries; those impacts also intensify the stressful consequences of refugees living cramped closely together in large-scale accommodations and camps.

In a first section, the chapter discusses the risks and dangers residents in refugee accommodations in Germany are exposed to as a result of deficient protection measures during the pandemic (and not only then). That perspective is extended in a second section, which examines the daily realities of life of refugees housed in the Moria refugee camp on Lesbos and the situation in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya. Case examples do also focus on beyond Germany and Europe's external borders in order to avoid a methodological nationalism (Wimmer/Schiller 2002) and Eurocentrism. The study seeks to show that the deficient housing circumstances of refugees constitute a global problem. A look at daily life realities directly in situ renders it possible to gather subjective individual assessments and biographical narratives and to interrogate hegemonial perspectives. The paper's third section confronts the problematic aspects of segregate accommodations and camps, now becoming ever more visible as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, with postmigrant visions of an open city (Hill 2018). That section explores the potentials of living together in solidarity as a highly promising transformative vision with relevance for the whole of society, negotiating concepts of cosmopolitan, open and inclusive urban spaces as starting points for imagining a different future. The concluding fourth section sketches the vision of a plan of solidarity. It views belonging to an urban space as something not based on the criterion of national citizenship, but rather thinks beyond a separation of refugees, contrasting such exclusionary wall-building with forms of residence and living together in dynamic solidarity.¹

Refugee accommodations and camps as danger zones

Even if individual countries and the EU are increasingly focusing their attention on grappling with Covid-19 and concentrating on the protection of vulnerable groups, the situation of refugees placed in refugee accommodations and camps

¹ This chapter was written March to May 2020. Developments extending beyond that period of time have thus not been taken into account. Translated from German by William Templer.

in Europe and the Global South is in danger of being overlooked. In this context, dedicated accommodations in these difficult times constitute spaces of special threat and risk for their residents. This form of accommodation is fundamentally characterised by ambivalence: on the one hand refugees live separated from the rest of society and are positioned at its very periphery; on the other hand, refugee accommodations and camps are social and political spaces where formalised and informal structures of support establish themselves, and forms of the capacity to take action, such as protests and/or everyday mundane and creative economic and survival strategies are manifested (Jansen 2016, 2018; Rygiel 2011; Turner 2016).

In recent decades, there has been increasing focus in research on refugee accommodations and camps in countries in both the Global North and South (Turner 2016; Krause 2015). Studies centering on the situation of refugee accommodations in Germany emphasise the institutionally determined situations of conflict and violence in such facilities as well as the associated huge mental and existential burdens and stress for the residents living in such circumstances (Täubig 2009; Kreichauf 2016; Wihstutz 2019). In Germany, there are also differences in the form of such accommodations. Basically, it is important to stress the need for further empirical studies on institutional specifics as well as on the commonalities between the formats of refugee housing arrangements in various different regions and federal German states.

In refugee accommodations in Germany, refugees densely crowded together – individuals who differ markedly in terms of their multifarious biographies, cultural backgrounds and experiences of flight – find little room for privacy. Medical and social care is limited. Being housed in a refugee accommodation is accompanied by extensive and strict social control and surveillance by the institutional mechanisms of asylum administrative practice. Distribution of goods such as clothing and furnishing is rationed. Shower facilities are often located outside their living quarters and can only be accessed during specific limited hours. As long as a decision on request for asylum has not been made, the place of residence is assigned to an initial reception institution (§ 47 AsylG)² and health care is restricted to a minimum. During the first three months after submission of a request for asylum and for the duration of stay in the initial reception institution, there is no access to the labor market, aside from a few number of exceptions (§ 61 AsylG).³ These regulations lead to a situation where life for the persons there is characterised by boredom, uncertainty about the outcome of the asylum request, worry about the future and a regimen of prolonged waiting. Under such conditions, a self-determined participation in societal subsystems is impossible. The degree of participation is precisely determined institutionally and legally. The po-

2 <https://dejure.org/gesetze/AsylG/47.html> (accessed July 17, 2020)

3 <https://dejure.org/gesetze/AsylG/61.html> (accessed July 17, 2020)

litically designed immobilization of the persons in a place (Schmitt 2020), the externally determined everyday life, and its realities in such an institutional setting restrict the use of the social space and social contacts with persons beyond the accommodations (Pürckhauer 2019). As “quasi-total institutions” (Schmitz/Schönhuth 2020), accommodations and camps are characterised by institutional power relations and the potential for violence and conflict (Hess et al. 2018; Krause 2018).

There is controversy in the research literature over whether refugee facilities in countries in the Global North and refugee camps in the Global South have similar structures or differ fundamentally (Nyers/Rygiel 2012; Johnson 2016). McConnachie notes that refugee accommodation does indeed differ across the globe, but nonetheless despite its differential aspects evinces a shared structure of logic through the segregation of their residents from a surrounding area (2016: 398).

Likewise, under the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, this structural logic is, our thesis contends, in clear evidence throughout the differing and varied forms of refugee accommodations and camps. The realities of everyday life of individuals housed in the refugee accommodations in Germany, for example – and also in the large camps in southern Europe and in countries in the Global South – threaten at least partially to be overlooked by protective measures instituted by various nation-states. National support measures seem to be applied only contingently in these places of forced lodging and cohabitation. The risks arising from such densely structured cohabitation in such institutional loci of separation and segregation appear especially evident.

The realities of everyday life in refugee accommodations in times of the pandemic

Physical social distancing in refugee accommodation facilities is scarcely possible due to the density of occupation and the overall living circumstances that prevail. In the facilities in Germany there is an operative minimum surface area of six to seven m² (Wendel 2014). However, refugees often share a multiple-bedroom of 12 to 14 m², with three to six further refugees (initially unknown to one another). The existing common kitchen facilities and washrooms are used by all residents. Distribution of meals and options for shower are regulated by the institution and specified for certain times. These regulations necessarily lead to confrontation with other residents and staff. The management of refugee accommodations is reacting to this situation during the pandemic and its constraints. They are altering regulations on meal distribution, for example: thus, residents no longer eat in the canteens but rather in their own rooms. However, in order to pick up their meal at scheduled distribution times, they come into contact with others and waiting lines form. Individuals do not have face masks or protective gloves in all

dedicated accommodation centers. There is a lack of disinfectant and soap is in short supply, negatively affecting hygiene (Riese et al. 2020).

Residents perspectives only come to the attentions of the public in individual reports: they complain about a lack of information regarding the virus, inadequate measures in order to be able to protect themselves from infection and a lack of sensitivity in the ways they are treated by the security personnel. As first Covid-19 cases were registered, whole refugee accommodations were put under quarantine without adequate information of residents and violent protests arose (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2020). Existing conceptions of violence protection (see <https://www.gewaltschutz-gu.de/>) – such as those formulated in Germany by seven federal states in connection with the initiative Minimum Standards for the Protection of Refugees and Migrants in Refugee Accommodation Centres (BMFSFJ/UNICEF 2018) in recent years – appear in the case of the coronavirus catastrophe not to be sufficiently effective and to be reaching their limit.

Civil society voices demands

It is principally organizations in civil society, the UNHCR and critically reflected scholars who call attention to the persons forgotten within the protective measures taken during the coronavirus pandemic. In a joint statement by the working groups *Migration* and *Public Anthropology* in the German Association for Social and Cultural Anthropology (DGSKA), scholars have called for political measures. It notes that the top priority is the protection of human life for all, especially against the backdrop of the current pandemic, in order to prevent the further spread of the virus by means of targeted measures (Arbeitsgruppe Migration et al. 2020). In an ‘urgent letter’, social organizations and initiatives in civil society have endorsed the need for a rapid provision of support for refugees housed in refugee accommodations and camps, and they call upon the EU to act.⁴ The campaign under the hashtag *Leave No One Behind* demands evacuation of persons in refugee camps.

Pro Asyl (2020a) points out that the flow of information regarding what is actually happening in and around the coronavirus pandemic cannot be regarded as secure and solid. Pro Asyl observes that there is a lack of personnel providing necessary information – for example, because responsible personnel fall ill and stop working, and the number of staff on the job are being reduced in order to lower the danger of infection for all. Another deficiency noted is that there are no institutional channels of information available. For that reason, Pro Asyl set up a digital news ticker for refugees with information on the coronavirus pandemic and raised demands for improving the situation. These demands were directed to

4 <https://www.urgentletter.at/> (accessed July 17, 2020)

the federal government, the federal Ministry of the Interior, the federal German states and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). They call for the following: release persons from deportation detention; an end to the practice of hearings; desist from issuing asylum rejection decisions; make use of decentral options for lodging refugees; express solidarity with refugees in the accommodation camps and evacuate persons from these structures (Pro Asyl 2020b). Calls for fundamental alternatives in accommodating refugees are growing ever louder now again. Nonetheless, in the spring 2020 there is still no systematic change in sight concerning living conditions of these individuals. In the refugee accommodations in Germany, one can note a reactive way of dealing with the coronavirus pandemic – action is taken if there is suspected infection with the coronavirus among the residents. In May 2020 ever more refugee accommodations were placed under quarantine (MiGAZIN 2020). The management units of the facilities now must grapple with the challenge of if and how cohabitation can be made safe and secure in the midst of a pandemic. Under the conditions of quarantine, residents' sense of powerlessness, mistrust and fears of isolation are being exacerbated. They are alarmed by the virus (Schredle 2020). Decentral lodging, such as in youth hostels, is being organised for some individuals infected or deemed highly vulnerable, but this is not being implemented across Germany and not for all concerned (Stieber 2020). Protests and conflicts with security staff are on the increase (Riese 2020).

Moria, Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Settlement

The life-threatening situation is worsening likewise for refugees living in the hotspots and camps in North Africa and at the Mediterranean as well as in refugee camps in the Global South. Necessary resettlement programs and evacuation measures have been put on hold as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, and harbours where rescue boats can dock were also closed. Groups in civil society are endeavouring to ensure that nobody gets forgotten in this pandemic crisis and are calling attention to the deprivation of rights of refugees in camps, for example in the Greek islands (Jakob 2020).

Focus here is especially on the camp Moria on Lesbos, which has an absorption capacity of 2,800 refugees; there are some 20,000 individuals now living there crammed together.⁵ Provision of food and drinking water, necessary hygiene products, adequate sanitary facilities and secure living space is not assured

5 Nevertheless, it is important to point out here that problem areas along similar lines can crop up in other camps as well. Empirical research is needed in order to be able to sketch a differentiated picture of the actual situation.

(Dischereit 2020). People are being housed in containers and tents or in provisional, self-constructed, makeshift dwellings. Long waits in line for water or to go to the toilet or wash up lead to sundry disputes, conflicts and fires and the lack of adequate medical care and sexual assaults lead to a situation of existential threat (Backhaus 2020). Quarantine measures cannot be definitely implemented given the presence of just a single hospital in the camp.

The situation is being exacerbated by the growing numbers of people in the camps and the absence of a European solution (Arbeitsgruppe Migration et al. 2020). In the spring 2020, eight EU countries declared their readiness to bring 1,600 especially endangered children to Europe. But as a result of the pandemic this initiative was postponed. In April 2020, 47 children were taken to Germany, and 12 children and juveniles up to age 17 in Luxembourg (NDR 2020). Since April 2020 if not earlier, the international press has also had increased reportage about a rise in cases of coronavirus infection likewise in the camps in southern Europe, with special attention to the Moria camp on Lesbos (Zoch 2020). Leaflets issued by the Greek authorities in various languages instruct those living there to preserve social distancing and maintain the necessary hygiene measures. The Danish aid organization Team Humanity provided sewing machines in an improvised workshop next to the camp and taught the residents how to make protective face masks. While aid organizations like Doctors Without Borders and activists in civil society are calling for total evacuation of the camp, to date only a selected few more elderly persons and families have been brought to the Greek mainland. In their plight, refugees from the Moria camp issued a second call in May 2020 demanding assistance from the EU, the governments of European countries and civil society (Moria Camp 2020).

Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Settlement in Kenya. Ethnographic Insights

If we turn to examining the situation in the large refugee camps in the Middle East, Asia and Africa, then a key question arises regarding the everyday situation in camps with a population in the range of six digits. One of these is Kakuma Refugee Camp, along with the bordering Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Kenya. With a population that has burgeoned in the meantime to almost 200,000 (as of March 2020)⁶ coming from over twenty countries with multifarious political social and economic structures, the camp resembles an “accidental city” (Jansen

6 The refugees come from the following countries: South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Democratic Republic Congo, Congo Brazzaville, Ruanda, Burundi, Tanzania and others (UNHCR Kenya 2018a, 2020).

2011). Its history extends back to the year 1992. At that time, the expelled “Lost Boys of Sudan”; young Nuer and Dinka children, who in the course of the second Sudanese Civil War (1983-2005) were separated from their parents or made orphans, and were in search of a place of refuge. The Kenyan government declared it was prepared to set up a camp for the displaced. Today the camp comprises four quarters (Kakuma 1, 2, 3 and 4) as well as the settlement Kalobeyei with its three self-administered villages (UNHCR Kenya 2020). Alongside the UNHCR there are other organizations active in the camp. The refugee camp is situated in the north-west of Kenya at the periphery of Kakuma town in the district of Turkana West, ca. 120 km from the nearest small town of Lodwar and 130 km from the border with South Sudan. It is surrounded by a semi-arid desert environment that experiences regular sandstorms, high daytime temperatures from 35° to 38° Centigrade and recurrent outbreaks of malaria and cholera (UNHCR Kenya 2018). The majority of the surrounding local population are Turkana, nomad cattle herders, who under the extreme prevailing climatic conditions have difficult access to water, grazing land and other resources essential for life. As the access to water and pastureland is restricted under these extreme climatic conditions, the area has become a place of regular intergroup and cross-border violence with the neighbouring Pokot, Karamojong and others. Likewise, the relation between the local population and the refugees is ambivalent and tense, since some of the Turkana – in comparison with the refugees that are supplied and assisted by the aid organizations – do not think their needs are being properly perceived and met (Aukot 2003: 74; Böhme 2019).

Gaining insight into the daily life realities of two women living in Kakuma

In the framework of a research trip by one of the authors to Kakuma (see in detail Böhme 2019), it proved possible to make contact with two young women, Jamilah and Fazilah.⁷ What their everyday situation looks like and how it was changed by the coronavirus is described below based on ethnographic fieldwork.

7 The names of the two women have been anonymised. The empirical material was gathered off- and online by Claudia Böhme from 2017 to 2020 in the common research project with Michael Schönhuth supported by the DFG (German Research Foundation) “Vertrauensbildung und Zukunftskonstruktion über Smartphones und soziale Medien an Zwischenorten transnationaler Migration am Beispiel von Geflüchteten aus Ostafrika” (Trust Building and Future Construction through Smartphones and Social Media at Transit Places of Transnational Migration with the Example of Refugees from East Africa). The authors of this chapter wish to express their heartfelt gratitude to these two women for sharing their experiences.

Jamilah fled from Somalia together with her parents in 1992 and has married and raised two daughters in Kakuma. After her divorce she has been raising her children by herself as a single mother. She works for an NGO and for an international organization in the camp. She hopes to be able to participate in a resettlement program in order to escape from life in the camp. In February 2020 Jamilah learned about the possibility of being accepted into the German Resettlement Program. The interview with the German delegation in March went well which fostered her excitement, hope and anticipation to a possible future in Germany. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, in mid-March 2020 all resettlement measures from Kakuma to other countries were halted. Her dream burst asunder.

Fazilah was born in Kakuma after her parents had fled South Sudan. She completed her secondary education in the camp and dreamed of a scholarship in order to be able to study abroad. Her engagement and work in the camp ultimately led to her being awarded a scholarship by the University of Nairobi in 2018 and she was able to leave the camp (see in detail Böhme 2019).

On March 20, 2020, the newspapers reported on the threat of coronavirus for the camp. Security personnel had stopped a Somali man returning from the US in his car on the road to Kakuma, who had symptoms of the virus. He and the passengers in his car were placed in quarantine (see in detail Lutta 2020). Shortly thereafter first rumours began to circulate that the virus had arrived in via Facebook. Since then Jamilah has been trying to remain with her two daughters in the small compound. Fazilah communicated her worries about the health of the residents in the camp via Facebook together with a selfie with children of the camp, along with a call for contributions for hygiene articles badly needed. People are dealing creatively with the lack of soap and disinfectant. A post on Fazilah's Facebook page shows the water canister suspended on the side of a corrugated iron hut, with soap installed on above it; this serves as the water faucet form the family.

At the end of March, a radio station reported that the Muslim camp residents were reciting prayers against the spread of the virus (REF FM Community Radio 2020). Schools and social facilities were closed, and the residents were told they had to remain at home within their limited dwellings. There was a national lockdown from 7 p.m. to 9 a.m. Whoever breaks the lockdown can be arrested. The Covid-19 lockdown caused bottlenecks in supplies for food and medical articles for the camp (Rodgers 2020). While the refugees waited for the distribution of food rations, they had to maintain social distancing marked out by chalk lines drawn on the ground (UNHCR 2020). As the first Covid-19 case was reported on May 25, the camp was officially closed for entrance and exit (Nation TV 2020). For the people living in the camp this means they even feel more imprisoned than before.

Move marginalised knowledge to the centre, develop perspectives for living together in solidarity

Our remarks here have sketched the situations of refugees in accommodations and camps in the Global North and South. Dangers threatening these individuals have become particularly evident. In March/April 2020 the World Health Organization formulated an answer for responding to these grievances described. The WHO recommendations for dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic in the large refugee camps underscores 5 central points:

1. Limit human-to-human transmission, including reducing secondary infections among close contacts and healthcare workers, preventing transmission amplification events, strengthening health facilities;
2. Identify and provide optimised care for infected patients early;
3. Communicate critical risk and information to all communities, and counter misinformation;
4. Ensure protection remains central to the response and through multi-sectoral partnerships, the detection of protection challenges and monitoring of protection needs to provide response to identified protection risks;
5. Minimize social and economic impact through multi-sectoral partnerships (WHO 2020a: 2).

In April 2020 an answer then followed about how to deal with the grievances beyond the large camps, as had become clear in the refugee accommodations in the member states (WHO 2020b). This set of proposals is conceived as 'interim guidance' and comprises recommendations for coordinating and planning preventive and reactive measures to protect from the coronavirus. Therefore persons housed in refugee accommodations should be granted the same rights, resources and access to medical care as all other groups in the population. Even if these recommendations suggest important points for dealing with the pandemic, they do not resolve and liquidate the basic problems connected with housing refugees on the periphery of society. Those fundamental problems constitute the point of departure in this section of the paper for developing visions for living together in society. Decisive here for being able to develop such visions is the knowledge of the people affected, their life realities and situation locally. Our reflections should be seen as an initial stimulus for thought on these problems and require further research and practice.

First of all, we argue for a *postmigrant perspective* which is highly relevant for research. Such a perspective focuses upon types of knowledge that are marginalised by hegemonic discourse— as the point of departure for research on forced migration that views itself as critical of society. This includes for example the knowl-

edge about the form of housing and innovative local life strategies and realities grounded in refugees' experience. Front and centre in this approach are the perspectives and knowledge of the actual individuals affected. That is because refugees cannot be viewed one-sidedly, reduced to having a single social role. Although a person who has fled her or his home is in many respects especially vulnerable or living in a precarious and at times dangerous situation, nonetheless specifically in such situations particular abilities for taking action play a large role (Kohli 2007). Refugees housed in camps should not be viewed per se or exclusively as victims. Rather, from a postmigrant perspective it is important to deconstruct the binary construction of 'victim' and 'helpers' (Seukwa 2006). Examples like those of Jamiilah and Fazilah make clear how people grapple as active agents with marginalising life circumstances and even under precarious conditions develop the ability to take action. In order to be able to deconstruct one-sided social roles such as the over-represented role of the victim, relevant from a postmigrant research perspective on refugees is also to point up and describe creative life strategies under the prevailing circumstances of forced migration: how individuals under the most difficult conditions of life can transform emergency situations into virtues. A critical, postmigrant perspective does not simply suffice with identifying these forms of agency. Rather, it reflects on how to change social environments. Our analysis in the section above makes clear that cohabitation in refugee accommodations and camps is marked by a severe lack of living space and uncertain prospects for the future. Camps in countries in the Global South, as exemplified in our remarks on the situation in Kenya – in contrast with refugee facilities in Germany for example – exhibit a different history and a high number of residents of hundreds of thousands. Some of these persons spend in effect their entire lives in structures similar to cities, the Palestinian refugee camps as the most prominent example. Despite these differences, in the customary debates on protection in connection with the coronavirus pandemic, refugees both in the North and Global South are not accorded sufficient attention, such as by the EU. Their life situation, in any case marginalised, is currently being exacerbated, giving rise once again to the question: how can the life situations be described, analysed and changed in joint participatory action with those affected (Donnelly/Ní Raghallaigh/Foreman 2019; Von Unger 2018)? This touches on questions about how to grapple with global inequality and requires further reflection and research on how individuals, independently of their nationality and life situation, can be protected from global emergencies, and also how they can be empowered to make their conceptions of a good life a concrete reality. In this context, viewing refugee accommodations and camps *not* as a fixed format of asylum administration cast in stone opens doors for thinking out-of-the-box about the current situation, confronting it with creative and transformative postmigrant reflections.

Viewed historically, flight migration is not a temporary phenomenon. For that reason, they have to be approached and thematised in a lasting and continuous manner. Human mobility is likewise an anthropological constant and the topics of residence, labour and social inequality comprise concerns for society as a whole. However, as a global phenomenon, the coronavirus pandemic raises anew the question of what kind of global society human beings live in and wish to live in. One sense and purpose of a postmigrant discussion is to make global challenges the point of departure for cosmopolitan, inclusive optimistic and solidarity-based reflections. From a postmigrant perspective it is necessary to turn around the prevailing angle of vantage and to think in terms beyond the borders of nation-states and rescuer/victim dichotomies. Drawing on reflections by Mark Terkessidis (2017: 73), it is necessary to develop an optimism relevant for the whole of society in order to actually achieve progressive solutions in the era of mass (forced) migration and Human Flow. In order to prevent protection and human dignity from being degraded into exclusive rights and to avoid further intensifying social inequality on all levels in society, the following questions have to shift from the margins to the centre of society:

- How can social security, protection and a life in dignity be organised and shaped under conditions of forced migration?
- In what way can forced migration be raised thematically in discourse as central components of social life and binary categorizations of human beings according to their origin and forced flight or migration status be suspended?
- How can the topic of forced migration be shifted to the centre of attention and be viewed from a pan-societal perspective?
- How in such a process can the manifold forms of knowledge developed by the affected individuals across the planet be taken into proper account?

The extensive exclusion of refugees – or their consideration only as peripheral in national and international protection measures and debates on protection – renders questions of living together in solidarity and respect relevant. That is because social security and social protection come up against their limits and boundaries in a world organised on the basis of nation-states. Serious gaps in support within the context of the current pandemic are becoming visible once again. They are an expression of fundamental asymmetries of power and a marginalisation of those on the move across an order based on nation-states (Raitelhuber/Sharma/Schröer 2018). The coronavirus pandemic makes it imperative to explore further solidarity-oriented concepts of inclusive social togetherness, to make that an object of in-depth inquiry and to test its potentials and limits. In this connection, it is especially crucial to take those into account who are constrained to live in uncertain and precarious spaces. Over the longer term, it is imperative, along-

side refugee accommodations, to investigate solidarity-based forms of residence, as are experimentally developed in various communal forms of living together. Likewise, it is important to perceive and recognise the strategies of coping and design adopted by refugees in their everyday life worlds, and proceeding from that to re-imagine anew residential and living areas. This can entail avoiding the destruction of solidarity-based infrastructures of cohabitation and economic activity that refugees in camps have conceived and implemented by and for themselves; we need only recall the case of the refugee tent city encampment in Calais in France forcibly dismantled in the fall of 2016 (Agier et al. 2018). Camps develop their own infrastructures and generate alliances in civil society, which in their organic growth – in tune with the needs of the residents living in the refugee accommodations – come to appear ever more similar to small or even big cities. Tiny shops, libraries or spots to charge a mobile phone spring into being within this framework (Volk 2017). It is important to take this human potential seriously; it needs to be welcomed and utilised as a possibility to create and fashion new forms of human togetherness. Crucial and central in this are in particular the knowledge of the local residents and the necessity to adopt perspectives close to actual realities on the ground. It is necessary to look precisely to those persons who are pioneers setting a public example of how they deal with dangerous and threatening life situations. This knowledge is significant and should be a focus of research. Central here is the question as to how the people involved wish to live, what visions arise in an existential conflict situation despite or due to such adversities, and what potentials for realization can be exploited.

Future prospects: on the way to a cosmopolitan, inclusive plan of solidarity?

We wish in closing to focus on specific examples of people's knowledge and concrete action that to date has been insufficiently examined – while simultaneously keeping in mind that this focus needs to be expanded.

In European countries since the 'long summer of migration 2015' (Hess et al. 2016), solidarity-based urban initiatives have developed, for example in Greece, Spain and Germany (Doomernik/Ardon 2018). These alliances grounded on solidarity espouse the notion of a *resident citizenship*; they pursue the aim of creating an urban space free from fear, inclusive and full of zest for life. The engagement in building solidarity is advanced in this connection by trans-urban networking (such as <https://solidarity-city.eu/de/>). What is meant is an organization of support not coupled with constructions of belonging to a nation-state. In this conception, access to social benefits – such as health care provision, education, a place to live and work – is enjoyed by all persons who are resident in a given locality

(Hill/Schmitt 2020). The conception seeks to break free from the potential barrier of having to have a specific nationality qua legal citizenship in order to participate. The notion of solidarity-based togetherness in urban space is oriented to the concept of the 'sanctuary city', which is an idea that has been spreading in the US and Canada since the 1970s (Bauder/Gonzales 2018). The urban vision of cities of solidarity foregrounds inclusive spaces of human beings living together. In this conception, forced migration is viewed as a central component of social and societal life. We contend that foregrounding and dealing with cities of solidarity can, under the impact and in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, provide new social and broader societal stimuli. Since 2015 numerous localities have declared themselves a 'solidarity city'. In the network Solidarity Cities (<https://solidarity-cities.eu>), mayors and representatives of cities have banded together in order to call attention to the central role of towns and cities in dealing with processes of forced migration and to call for political codetermination. Their aim is formulated on their homepage in these words: "Solidarity Cities is open to all European cities wishing to work closely with each other and committed to solidarity in the field of refugee reception and integration" (<https://solidaritycities.eu/about>). On the ground locally, in the neighbourhoods and city districts, it is mainly social alliances and groupings in civil society that seek to translate postmigrant visions in concepts for practical everyday living (Bukow 2018). Thus, already available are a range of knowledge resources and global experiences with forced migration, which specifically in regard to the coronavirus pandemic appear valuable to utilise in designing forms of accommodation in keeping with human dignity and cosmopolitan, inclusive ways of life. The book *So schaffen wir das – eine Zivilgesellschaft im Aufbruch* (That's how we can do it: A civil society on the move, 2017) by Schiffauer, Eilert and Rudloff contains portraits of support movements operative in civil society espousing progressive urban visions of living together. One example is Queere Unterkunft Berlin (Queer Accommodation Berlin), run by Schwulenberatung Berlin (Gay Advice Berlin), a residential facility for LGBTI* refugees. This form of residence has a unique character and is a cosmopolitan, inclusive measure that protects LGBTI* refugees from discrimination, forging innovative alliances in the sphere of social work. United together here are emergency and community facilities, psychosocial and legal counselling services, a special community 'integration kitchen' and a residential project that is oriented to diversity (Schiffauer/Eilert/Rudloff 2017: 47-49). The Refugio Berlin (<https://refugio.berlin>) is a cosmopolitan residential project that aims to achieve an equitable form of living together including both long-established residents and newcomers. Through providing rooms for local events and a café, it seeks with its own visions to influence attitudes and spur change in the urban quarter. It becomes clear here how the inventive absorption of refugee families can lead to revitalising of cityscapes.

Solidary alliances are also developed at the forgotten hotspots on the Greek islands as well as in countries which accommodate a large quantity of refugees in the Global South. On the island of Lesbos several NGOs and communal initiatives are working on concepts integrating refugees into the host communities: Lesbos Solidarity for example is a Greek NGO supporting refugees together with the local population. The NGO offers shelter and support, local integration by giving people a voice with their skills and knowledge. The NGO connects the different people in the area and aims to be a connecting hub (Lesbos Solidarity 2020). On a larger scale, UNHCR initiated a “Settlement Approach” to find alternative ways to the separated encampment of refugees. The approach aims to account for the long duration of displacement of refugees from certain regions and the strong beneficial socio-economic impact of refugees in certain regions. Its aim is to build up social and cultural co-operations between refugees and the local population. The Kalobeyi Settlement just next to the Kakuma refugee camp is one such example. In cooperation with the Turkana County Government, UNHCR, EU and other partners, the Kalobeyi Integrated Socio-Economic Development Programme (KISEDPP) was initiated in 2015⁸ to promote the self-reliance of refugees and the host population in Turkana West to enhance their livelihood opportunities, to create an enabling environment, to strengthen skills and capabilities of refugees and people without the experience of flight and to strengthen the community’s resilience as a whole (UNHCR 2018b). The settlement opened in 2016 and is up to date accommodating around 37,500 refugees. Kalobeyi represents an innovative model of the global refugee accommodation and is an alternative to closed camp spaces. Betts et al. (2020) differentiate in their comparative study of the Kakuma camp and the Kalobeyi settlement between benefits and limits of the two concepts. In Kalobeyi, many resources to enable the promoted self-reliance like public goods were limited for refugees. But as the authors note, due to an alternative aid model the extent of agriculture and cash transfer and in this way nutrition and perceived autonomy were much greater in Kalobeyi than in Kakuma. The authors conclude that Kalobeyi – while still in the first phase – could succeed if only the theoretical concepts of self-reliance would adequately be translated into practice (Betts et al. 2020: 220).

It is precisely these examples that clarify that forced migration does not necessarily have to be accompanied by immobilisation, rigid control and defensive measures towards refugees. Rather, people’s mobility can support cosmopolitan inclusivity and serve as engines for development par excellence for both the rural and urban areas. Within discussion in urban sociology, it is specifically the laws of urban life that allow for new residents being able to move freely and individually

8 The settlement project follows a three-phase approach with a preparatory stage in 2016-2017 followed by Phase I (2018-2022), Phase II (2023-2027) and Phase III (2028-2030).

in the cityscape without requiring the approval and consent of the residents in the neighbourhood (Bude 2019: 37-38). These diverse landscapes constitute a success paradigm for absorption of new arrivals. Yildiz (2013: 45-46) has commented pointedly on this aspect: “city is migration”. Without the in-migration of persons or structural options and facilities that make it possible for people to commute easily from one point to another – making almost momentarily their choice for where, when and with whom they establish solidarity alliances – today’s cities and our global conceptions of them would even be hardly conceivable at all.

It is these developments, that need to be taken in consideration when thinking of new ways of living together in a postmigration society (Foroutan 2019: 198-200). The solidarity-based alliances sketched in this paper develop new spaces of solidarity with strong visions of togetherness. They basically show how it is possible to react progressively in situ to human mobility (Hill 2018). This is bound up with a sustained rethinking and modification of the structural modes of designing of our diverse landscapes in respect to the increasing diversity that characterises them (Sennett 2018). Consequently, it is these progressive landscapes and solidary action that develop visions thriving on openness and further development. These alliances need to be recognised and taken into account. It is necessary to utilise their potentialities for an open, cosmopolitan and inclusive way of dealing with human flight and migration. The separating, segregative refugee accommodations call out for the need – not only during the coronavirus pandemic – of local action and the development and implementation of visionary concepts: in refugee camps and accommodations all across the planet, individuals and groups are forging creative strategies for grappling and coping with their situation from an isolated position. It is precisely the knowledge of those persons that must shift from the public periphery into the very centre of deliberation and action. Grounded on that central point we seek to initiate what we have derived from analysis in our critical confrontation with refugee accommodations and camps: the vision of a solidarity plan for society as a whole. This plan goes beyond the barriers of closure and separation of people in segregated accommodations. Instead, the knowledge of those individuals directly affected has to be placed front and centre, and proceeding on from there, new visions need to be imagined, thought through carefully and then made concrete reality.

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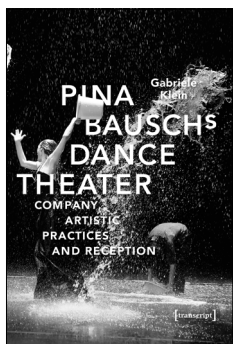
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Cultural Studies



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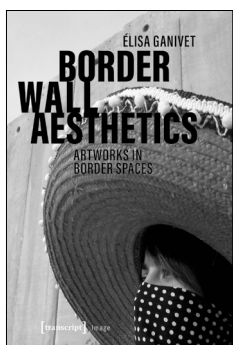
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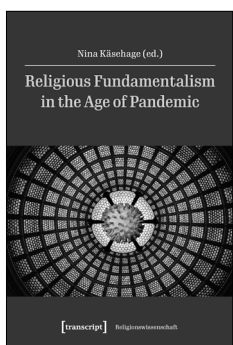
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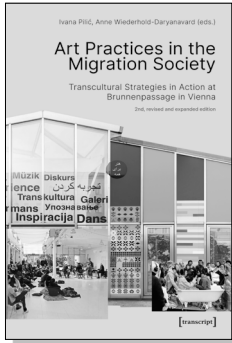
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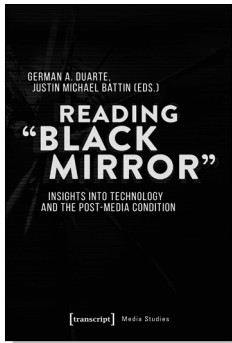
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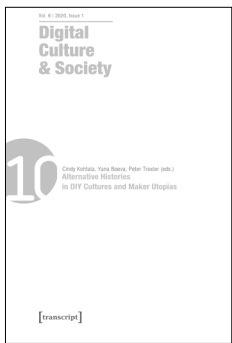
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