

THE LARGE GLASS

No. 29/30, 2020

journal of contemporary art,
culture and theory

ISSN 1409-5823



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The Large Glass No. 29 / 30, 2020
(Journal of Contemporary Art, Culture and Theory)

Published twice a year. Price for a single copy 500 MKD, Annual
subscription: 1000 MKD

Publisher: Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje
Address: Samoilova 17, MK - 1000 Skopje
Tel: (+389) 389 2 110 123
E-mail: info@msu.mk
Web site: www.msu.mk

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Layout: PrivatePrint

Printed by: Cokolografija, Skopje

Copyediting/proofreading: Nick Abraham

Copies: 1000

The postage fee for sending the magazines abroad is charged according
to the current price list of Post of Macedonia and is paid when the
subscription is purchased.

ISSN: 1409 - 5823

Financially supported by:



Republic of North Macedonia
Ministry of Culture



MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY
ARTS SKOPJE
УЗЕЈНА СОБРА
ЕМЕХАТАУМЕ
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Cover: Richard Mosse, *Still from Incoming*, 2014-17

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Tihomir Topuzovski

Introduction

THE MIGRANT FLOWS AT THE EDGE OF ARTISTIC-POLITICAL

Images of migrants being transferred between borders or places have become a key tool for understanding migratory phenomena. These include images of migrants being caught up in processes of intensive territorialization, which result in the bounding and organising of territories and the shaping of demarcation lines as a result of the current waves of human movement and pressure on borders. The image of the migrant 'allows us to understand the common social conditions and subject positions of a host of related mobile figures: for example, the floating population, the homeless, the stateless.'¹ The political and geographical significance is that 'border areas - zones, countries, and cities - are not marginal to the constitution of a public sphere but rather are at the center.'² Further, the importance of this lies in various social fields in which 'the organization of space, even formal materialisation and demarcation, imbuing borders and boundaries with significant regulatory power'³ depends on the visions of society projected by the state authorities regarding who belongs and who does not, in that sense, 'the figure of the migrant is broader than specific groups of migrants defined by crossing national borders'⁴ where 'flows are not only physical, metabolic, or statistical but also social'⁵ and cultural. This implies that 'the construction of reality, quite simply, depends on borders, or 'the meaning, content, form, and discourse in the physical, social, and political worlds require distinct delimitations, formulated by, through, over and under different kinds of borders and boundings'⁶ where 'everything begins with them, and all paths lead back to them.' Thus, according to Agamben, the question of borders becomes crucial, where 'refugees (whose number has continued to grow in our century, to the point of including a significant part of humanity today) represent such a disquieting element in the order of the modern nation-state, this is above all because by breaking the continuity between man and citizen, nativity and nationality.'⁷ Further, Mebembe draws attention to the dominant perception of foreigners and 'hordes of migrants in whose faces our doors must be slammed shut; about the barbed wire that we must hastily erect lest we get swamped by a tide of savages; about the borders that must be reestablished as if they had never disappeared.'⁸ In this way, they are arrested and excluded from cities because 'the truly dangerous classes are not so much the uncivilized ones thought to undermine society from below, but rather the migrants who move at the borders between classes'⁹ in a broad range of overlapping social contexts.

A key proposition that guides this issue of the Large Glass is that human flows in specific geographical and historical circumstances involve a series of representations, images and visual evidence. Moreover, the importance of such representational practices can be better understood by first grasping the visibility of different migrant groups, and their potentialities for political agency and emancipation through new forms of knowledge. According to Berardi, these points can be understood in some sense as a kind of a rebellion against extinction and he goes on to state that 'this is the beginning of a culture of transitoriness and of rage against'¹⁰ the present social conditions and political regimes. As the preceding discussion indicates, a broad range of substantive themes in a variety of interconnected contexts and perspectives are presented in this volume of the Large Glass. The set of examined points and works of art relate to a wide selection of themes, which are broadly associated with migrant agency and borders, detentions, spaces in in-between, inclusion and exclusion. I decided on a division of parts that emphasizes three distinct interconnected aspects closely linked through their common engagement regarding the theme of migration.

The materials in part one attempt to illustrate how human flows and the new arrangement of borders can be embodied in artistic practices, creating 'migrant art'. Migrant art, or bordering art is based on migrant experiences and can critically approach and describe how 'borders are not just hard territorial lines - they are institutions and the territorialisation process results from bordering policies - they are, thus, about people; and, for most settled territories, they are predominantly about inclusion and exclusion, as they are woven into varied cultural, economic and political fabrics'.¹¹ Artistic practices can critically respond to these processes, and to a certain extent, this results in representations of journeys that give migrants voices, which can be heard by others. Migrant artworks

are exhibited through various venues and channels that make a vital contribution to the formation of spaces of resistance and the mobilisation of public opinion.

Part two aims to generate discussion of the migrant phenomena and to provide a 'lens' through the use of maps and data to assist in visualising and understanding human flows. On this basis, I have selected a series of texts and projects that generate insight and knowledge about flows of migrants in vast areas that are not directly observable. This can be clearly seen as a precise, but also symbolic, shorthand for complex situations of migration where 'boundaries are automatically recognizable as the straight geometric lines running through'¹² political spatialities and the human movements in betweenness of spaces, borders but also beyond the official control by state authorities. The findings demonstrate variations in mapping between different cases, and in addition, some artworks illuminate the process of mapping of displaced populations in alternative, and much more figurative, ways.

The final section highlights the spaces of detention where contributions are focused on the conditions in camps, spaces which can be characterized as a landscape of exclusion. Thus, these 'new patterns of inclusion and exclusion implicate a modern form of territoriality, and the concomitant discursive and conceptual structures which support them'.¹³ In relation to this, Davies and Isakjee state that 'from Lampedusa in Italy to Calais in France, a constellation of camps has spread across'¹⁴ the world. Indeed, as noted, the politics of exclusion define more than ever the power struggles of contemporary politics and this modern form of territoriality, the refugee camp is becoming or, indeed, has become Europe's response to the crisis continuing to unleash privation and mortality on the bodies of countless migrants...¹⁵ The features of such a space characterise a landscape of exclusion, where the spatial structure, therefore, can 'both strengthen and weaken social boundaries, by either exposing a population and making it more conspicuous or, conversely, rendering the group less visible.'¹⁶ This shrinking visibility is important because it is 'the way in which they appear among us that create within populations a chronic, existential anxiety'¹⁷ in understanding how borders migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers might be considered as being excluded from their surroundings, detained in betweenness, where borders are the name used 'to describe the organized violence'.¹⁸

The present volume, therefore, offers insights into these three diverse aspects of 'migration' and 'migrant art' in relation to the present migration crisis. This contributes to the contemporary debate and visual articulations regarding the on-going displacement and exclusions that are happening today and where much remains to be done in terms of the humanitarian response.

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**MIGRANT
ARTS
AS
PRACTICES
OF
BEING
POLITICAL**

Thomas Nail

What are the Migrant Arts?

"Art is a migrant - it travels from the vision of the artist to the eye, ear, mind and heart of the listener."
-Shailja Patel, Migritude

Thirty years ago, there were fifteen border walls around the world. Now, there are seventy walls and over one billion national and international migrants. International migrants alone may even double in the next forty years due to global warming. It is not surprising that we have also seen the rise of an increasingly powerful global climate-security market designed to profit from and sustain these crises over the past two decades. The construction of walls and fences to block rising sea levels and incoming people has become one of the world's fastest-growing industries, alongside migrant detention and deportation. Economists project it to reach \$742 billion by 2023. This increase in human migration and borders has been a defining feature of the 21st century so far.

However, alongside the spread of global borders and security markets is also an incredible proliferation of "the migrant arts." As I understand them, the migrant arts include art made by migrants or about migration, or both. Migrants have produced works of art on cell phones, on canvas, in stories, or assemblages of objects carried on their journeys. They have documented their journeys in collaboration with others, and many of these artworks have traveled as "migrant artworks" through curatorial networks, the Internet, and museum circuits. Such museums, thus, have operated as relay systems for circulating migrant art around the world.

However, the process of migration is exceptionally uneven and highly ambiguous. This because societies marginalize migrants and exiles to varying degrees along axes of race, class, and gender. The migrant arts have, thus, given birth to great joy, freedom, beauty, novel expression alongside great sadness, trauma, loss, and untimely death. We should not romanticize or exile the migrant arts. Nor should we merely pity those forced to leave their homes or homelands.¹ Their situations are far too complex for either.

No generalizations about "the migrant arts" suffice to capture the extreme and uneven diversity of the situation of migrants' today or in history. Migrants have gone by many names throughout history. They have been called "nomads," "barbarians," "vagabonds," and "proletarians." Today, the United Nations simply calls them "migrants." Whatever their names and motives, migrants have also been great inventors of new artistic and social forms, though they have often suffered terribly.² The explosion of the migrant arts today foregrounds a unique social and aesthetic experience of ambiguity. Creativity and hope mixed with profound sadness and loss.

The migrant arts are the result of a dialectic between political *borders* and aesthetic *orders*. The more social borders there are, the more they tend to leak with new experiences of mobility. It is a common misconception that borders stop movement. Borders are not static barriers, and they cannot stop human movement. Rather, they tend to proliferate it, although in mostly destructive ways. Borders are continually shifting, being skirted around, eroded, burrowed

through and under, and rebuilt. For example, the U.S./Mexico border can funnel people into the middle of the desert, trap them inside the U.S., drive them under it, above it, or through it, and can even kill them. Borders can inspire countless works of art and stories, but can never stop people from moving.

How many times can a false idea like borders stopping movement cause death and destruction before we see what is going on? How many exceptions to the rule of "stopping movement" have to emerge before it's time to find a new rule? I think the migrant arts can help us see what is going on. The more barriers there are, the more differences and aesthetic hybrids multiply under the constraints. The migrant arts can help show us all the ways that one can move and how these ways can be experienced differently. They may not always be liberating or joyful, but at least they show us what migration is about in all its complexity and singularity whereas borders, however, do not.

One can think of how a single leak in a pipe begins to multiply the more duct tape one put's on. At first, the water seems to slow down, but then it begins to drip out several sides of the tape at once. Taping only redirects the flows but does not stop them. Alternatively, think about the dialectic between Internet advertising and ad-blocking software. Each new ad wants to control your movement and direct you to its source, and each new version of ad-removal software intends to let you move as you wish. The more new kinds of ads there are, the more new kinds of ad-evading software there is. The attempt to control your browsing through ads does not reduce differences but multiplies evasion techniques and ad techniques. Similarly, think about how each new law or increased enforcement strategy increases the number of criminals and ways of avoiding detection. The point is the same: attempts to block mobility only diversify it, although often with terrible consequences.

The dialectic between borders and proliferating margins is what is fueling the spread of the migrant arts today. The more widespread and differentiated mo-

bility is, the more new experiences and stories there are to tell. Many of these stories are just as heartbreaking as they are beautiful and poignant. Novel aesthetic orders proliferate under new political borders. More borders then respond to these new orders, in a feedback loop. For example, governments can try to keep migrant artists out by making artist visas harder to get and more expensive. New organizations then emerge to help fund visiting artist visas. Governments can patch the holes in their borders and destroy water and food left for migrants, but it only redirects future movements without stopping them.

The global border crisis is a performative contradiction of murderous proportions. It is part of a more general breakdown of an older static worldview. Now, at the turn of the 21st century, we have crossed a critical threshold in which the old paradigm of stability punctuated by moments of crisis is giving way to a whole new paradigm of ongoing flux punctuated by moments of stability.

What will the next moment of stability be? The migrant arts, by their existence, prompt this question.

The Art of Transformation

The first of two points I want to make about the nature of the migrant arts is that they incite and prompt a transformation of the existing (b)orders. Today, it is crucial for citizens of all countries to support the migrant arts. What does this mean? It means that we all, as we can, should pay attention to the migrant arts to hear what is going on and feel the singularity of the process.

The current interest in the migrant arts is a burgeoning academic and cultural phenomenon. It is now difficult to keep up with all conferences and exhibitions on migration, exile, and the arts. If forced migration ended tomorrow, though, what would curators share and academics study? Is the migrant arts' aim to abolish itself or perpetuate the conditions that created it, or something else? This is yet another ambiguity that makes the migrant arts so powerful and dynamic. They ask the world to change

the conditions that produced the art.

This is part of the profound aesthetic *and* political ambiguity at the heart of the migrant arts. How are we to make sense of this tension? As a philosopher trying to understand migration in contemporary art and politics, I would like to offer a few thoughts regarding the migrant arts.

My first thought is that supporting the migrant arts should not be about assimilation or fetishization but *transformation*. The migrant arts' primary political and aesthetic aim is the transformation of the most fundamental of political categories: the "we." Works of art produced by migrants and shared with the world are not representations *of* something, but real material transformations of the world and the viewer. It is not just that the migrant artwork shows the viewer a globally divided world. Rather, the work of art prompts social and aesthetic change by highlighting the *process of movement* that made the work possible.

For example, a Syrian migrant artist may do abstract art in Oslo that is not about or tied to their migration "story" at all. Still, the fact that they are in Oslo is a geographical feature of the work of art that cannot be bracketed out. The migrant's real movement was part of the material conditions for creating the artwork. The journey is immanent to the artwork even if the artwork does not represent that experience or does not address it directly.

Art can never be located its historical and geographical conditions. The migrant arts, thus, have as their constitutive condition their lived mobility. The migrant arts are not necessarily representations of migrant experience but create art explicitly in dialogue with the broader geopolitical and aesthetic world. Of course, even in a single work by a single artist, the processes that went into the artwork remain various and multiple. However, because they are also entangled in the performance of migration, the migrant arts prompt the viewer to transform themselves and the world.

A political parallel here is the role that migrants and their labor have played in creating and reproducing almost every social form throughout human history.

Migrant artists transform sensation and experience, just as migrant laborers transform economies. This is true even when art or economy do not explicitly reflect the contribution of migrants as "migrants."

In this way, there is a unique political aesthetics of the migrant arts. Aesthetically, viewers may have seen more migrant art recently that appears to be the exception to the rule of national art and artists. However, migrants and migration have always been constitutive aspects of art and art worlds, although they may not have been thematized as such. In other words, what is happening now is that artists and museums are rendering visible the previously invisible labor and experiences of what was previously invisible, or at least less visible.

A similar shift is happening in contemporary politics. Migrants are calling for an explicit recognition of their constitutive importance *as migrants*. Activist groups such as 'No One is Illegal' are demanding rights *for migrants* and not just the right of migrants as potential citizens.³ Migrant artists are transforming the art world, just as migrant laborers are transforming economies.

Migrant Art in Motion

The United Nations defines a migrant as someone who moves from country A to country B - from one fixed social point to another. This definition presupposes social stability as primary and defines the migrant as the one who temporarily or permanently lacks this stability or social membership. This definition has political and aesthetic consequences.

This definition represents movement along the line AB, but since this line is nothing but a series of spatially immobile points, real movement is ultimately unrepresented. Similarly, states do not represent or value the moving political figure of the migrant in the social system.

In this geometrical definition, points are primary, but in reality, movement makes the points, just as nation-states are made and reproduced by migrants. Migration and migrant writing, for example, is the unwritten movement that

makes writing possible. Just as the hand, arm, and body movement remain unrecorded in writing, human migration is often rendered invisible in what is written.

I am arguing here that migrant art does not just exist between fixed points of legible national traditions and texts. Migration is the material historical condition of all social writing. Migration is part of the immanent performance of writing or art-making itself. Therefore, the migrant arts are at the very limit of the arts because they are so challenging to exhibit or archive.

This does not mean that there are no migrant arts but rather that migrant bodies, labor, and culture are constitutive elements of reproducing other people's artistic social orders. Artists wrote the Western literary canon on backs of migrants, including slaves, displaced Indigenous peoples, and the colonized. In this context, the challenge of the migrant arts is twofold. First, they challenge one to see that artistic inscription (in any medium) is a constitutive and material *act* or *motion*. Second, they prompt one to transform the definition of writing to include both oral and performative cultural productions. Speech and writing share a common migrant, performative, and mobile core.

Instead of an opposition between the archive and the repertoire, we can look to the material, historical, and kinetic performance of the archival process itself as a material condition of such a division. This is what migrant writing can reveal.

The Art of the Dispossessed

Migrants, however, have always been "constitutively excluded" from history. That is, they have been included but *included* aterritorially, politically, legally, and economically deprived peoples. They have been occupied, enslaved, militarized, criminalized, and economically exploited in the name of progress and civilization. In the Neolithic world, they were dispossessed from the land by agricultural fencing. In the ancient world, they lost their right to free movement and inclusion with the development of walls to keep out foreigners. In the European Middle Ages,

they were criminalized using legal techniques and incarcerated in the first prisons that led to the rise of the early modern state's. In the modern era, capitalism has economically exploited them.

Civilization has always expanded by expelling a portion of its migratory population. I call this "expansion by expulsion." When we look around today, we see all these devastating dispossession techniques at work in various combinations.

This will be the century of the migrant because the return of these historical methods of social "expansion by expulsion" can reveal, if we look carefully, that the migrant and the migrant arts have always been constitutive of political aesthetics. In other words, migrants are neither marginal nor exceptional figures, but rather essential groups through which all hitherto existing societies have sustained and expanded their social and aesthetic forms. A list of great migrant artists, scientists, and philosophers would be so long that I will not even attempt to present one here.

I want to stress, though, that it has been a structural feature of all hitherto existing states and economies to expand and reproduce themselves by expelling migrants.⁴ The recent explosion of migration and mobility today demands that we all rethink the "we" of political history from the perspective of the migrants who produced and continue to reproduce it.

Unfortunately, the dominant framework for thinking about the migration crisis and the related climate crisis is entirely upside down because it starts from stasis. It assumes that the earth and human society are separable and static, or at least stable structures. It believes that the future should continue to be stable as well and that, if there is no stability, then there is a "crisis." However, mobility is a crisis only if we assume that there was or should be stasis in the first place.

From a more movement-oriented perspective, we can see that the opposite is true. Humans were first migratory in nature, and only later settled into more metastable patterns of social-circulation. These patterns were made historically possible by the social expulsion and dispossession of migrants. Migrants are not

outside society but have played a productive and reproductive role throughout history. Migrant movements are constitutive and even transformative elements of society, rather than exceptional or marginal phenomena.

The real question is how we ever came to act and think as if societies were not processes of circulation that relied on migration as their conditions of reproduction. In addition, the earth itself, was first also migratory in nature, and only later did it settle into metastable patterns of geological and atmospheric circulation (e.g., the Holocene). Why did we ever think of the earth as a stable surface, immune from human activity in the first place?

The problem with the prevailing interpretation of climate change and migration is that the flawed paradigm that has defined the "crisis," the notion of stasis, is also proposed as the solution, "Let's just get things back to normal stability again." In short, I think we need a new paradigm that does not use the same tools that generated the "crisis" to solve it - i.e., capitalism, colonialism, and the nation-state.

Today's migrant "crisis" is a product of the paradox at the heart of the capitalist, territorial nation-state form, just as the climate crisis is an expression of the anthropocentrism at the heart of these forms. Therefore, the solutions will not come from the forms in crisis but only from the birth of new forms-in-motion. These new forms begin instead with the theoretical importance of the figure of mobility that is dissolving the old forms.

Unfortunately, many of the same historical techniques of expulsion are still in effect today. Many migrants in the US and Europe, both documented and undocumented, sustain whole sectors of economic and social life that would collapse without them. Even when migrants are not directly producing art, they are continually reproducing the material and social conditions of the arts and artists.

Simultaneously, these migrants remain largely depoliticized and denied status compared with the citizens their labor sustains. Just as Greeks and Romans were capable of incredible military,

political, and aesthetic expansion only on the condition of the political expulsion of cheap or free migrant labor, so it is with Europeans and Americans today.

Dangerous Waters

The migrant arts can also help develop a better image and language of migration compared to most media and xenophobic portrayals. Consider how the media tends to describe migrants. In the United States, people such as Samuel Huntington and Patrick Buchanan have worried about a "Mexican immigrant invasion" of "American civilization." In the United Kingdom, *The Guardian* published an editorial on Europe's crisis that ended by describing refugees as the "fearful dispossessed" who are "rattling Europe's gates" - a direct historical reference to the barbarian invasion of Rome.

In France, Marine Le Pen said at a rally in 2015 that "this migratory influx will be like the barbarian invasion of the fourth century, and the consequences will be the same." Even the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, has described refugees with the same "dangerous waters" and military metaphors used by Romans to depoliticize barbarians. Tusk says that refugees are a "great tide" that has "flooded into Europe," producing "chaos" that needs to be "stemmed and managed." "We are slowly becoming witnesses to the birth of a new form of political pressure," Tusk claimed, "and some even call it a kind of a new hybrid war, in which migratory waves have become a tool, a weapon against neighbors."⁵

This rhetorical description of immigrants as dangerous criminals is a malicious repudiation of migrants' real material, social, and aesthetic contributions. The migrant arts are under attack by anti-immigrant representations and rhetoric and this rhetoric often has the pernicious effect of criminalizing migrants.

In particular, the media depiction of the recent South American migrant caravan as a form of military "invasion" of the United States had disastrous consequences. President Donald Trump called the caravan an "invasion" and "an as-

sault on our country." The Associated Press called it an "army of migrants" and used social media to describe "a ragtag army of the poor."⁶ Robert Bowers then murdered eleven people at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh because a Jewish group was supporting the migrant caravan. President Trump even told border patrol agents to shoot migrants with live rounds if they threw stones near the border.

This rhetorical criminalization of migrants, alongside the rise of online racist hate groups, helped mobilize anti-immigrant militia groups and helped turn public opinion *against* refugees. Now refugees are being deported from the US and detained in cages, *as if* they were criminals. The explicit media framing of migrants as a violent, criminal, and military invasion is an old historical tactic with a massive popular resurgence in the US and Europe. All this rhetoric seeks to undermine migrants' ability to make the art that exposes the real constitutive political and aesthetic order at the heart of post-colonial Western countries. Xenophobic rhetoric is a response to the migrant arts that propose a transformation of the global "we."⁷

Just as the migrant arts are not merely symbolic, neither are the anti-immigrant rhetorical strategies that disavow them. Public commentary about migration is not neutral but can have real effects for migrants by maintaining a culture of racism. These consequences demonstrate my point that speech and writing are more than *what* they say. The act of speaking or writing is also a material act with material affects and practical consequences. "Free speech," is neither free nor merely speech.

We should think about borders not just as dividing lines between countries but as cultural and aesthetic structures that also affect legal policy, law enforcement, electoral politics, the arts, and the lives and deaths of migrants. This is why we need to refuse the rhetorical criminalization of migrants. It is also why we need the migrant arts to help shape a language, vision, and way of thinking that is not xenophobic or nationalistic. Migrant voices should be more directly part of public

discussion. Art museums are one way of doing this. While anti-immigration rhetoric uses a rigid and closed definition of a national "we," the migrant arts invite people to feel, see, and understand others so that the "we" itself opens up and changes.

A Right to the Arts

The mixed feelings and thoughts that accompany exile and arrival - including imagination, creativity, hope for a new home, and the commitment to making a new world - tend to travel alongside the migrant arts as the potential for political and aesthetic transformation. They open the possibility for everyone to make a new home and a new world; one that is not closed off to others. The migrant arts are not about mere bodies endowed with human rights but are singular demands for the right to have the right to make art.

In this way, there are at least two barriers to receiving the migrant arts. The first is the nationalist refusal to change the social and aesthetic "we" who receive the art. The second is the humanist tolerance of difference that also refuses to change the "we" who tolerate and assimilate art. Both, in their way, deny the transformative power of the migrant arts.

The migrant arts ask for a political commitment to the project of migrant justice and solidarity. It is not enough to receive the migrant arts against their nationalist disavowal. The migrant arts are inseparable from the political project of a collective social transformation of the "we" who receive and experience these arts. "We" must make a world in which many worlds fit.

Just as activists speak of a "right to the city," might we also imagine "a right to the arts," that includes everything needed to make and experience art. Solidarity cities that provide protection, social support, and services are not enough if migrants do not have a place to share their voices and stories. Art is part of how the social "we" changes and widens. Sanctuary without art is only humanism. Solidarity, therefore, is a necessary but insufficient policy without the aesthetic transformation of national, cultural, and personal identities.

This will be the century of the migrant not just because of the sheer magnitude of the phenomenon, but because the asymmetry between citizens and migrants has reached a historical breaking point. We cannot move forward at this point without massive violence until the “we” itself is different than it presently is.

The prospects for any structural improvements in this situation are hard to imagine, especially amidst a global pandemic. The alternatives, though, are not without historical precedent. However, before applying any specific solutions, I think societies have to start with one significant move. People need to transform the political decision-making process such that everyone affected by any proposed changes, regardless of their status, can participate.

We cannot begin to answer, much less solve, the so-called “migration crisis” until “we” effectively transform “ourselves” to include *everyone*. This is not just a question of adding or integrating “others” into the same social or political processes. It requires a transformation of society as a whole, something the migrant arts and politics can help everyone achieve.

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Stefan Jonsson

Aesthetic Knowledge of Social Transformations: Migrant Agency and Political Emergence in the Artwork

It is a truism, of course, that scholarship changes with the times. We adapt to historical pressures and respond to societal challenges. Yet, such changes are usually contested and controversial, especially if they are of a paradigmatic kind. For example, it is only with difficulty that sociology and political science have been able to incorporate into their pursuit of knowledge issues that were once seen as irrelevant or marginal but that have since gained in importance - and when it happens it usually occurs under the sign of interdisciplinarity. Migration, Europe's colonial legacies, and political protest are three examples of such issues today. They fit poorly into the 'model society' that the social sciences

traditionally sought to analyse and explain. With regard to such new issues, the critical humanities and the arts here seem to be a step ahead.

In this essay, I would like to focus on this problem of knowledge and its relationship to sociohistorical change, and the role art can play in this relationship. My starting point will be my own sense, shared by many others, that mainstream social sciences seem to be at an impasse because of their structural inability to interpret and explain systemic crises and contradictions. In my own work, I am exploring three expressions of this impasse. First, the social sciences often analyse migration without acknowledging its profound political implications.¹ Second, Eu-

ropean history and sociology rarely recognize histories of imperial dominance and anticolonial resistance as intrinsic to European history and society.² Third, mainstream social and political theory often ignore the significance of collective protests and resistance movements for the realization of democracy.³

Simultaneously, we can observe ongoing conceptual or methodological shifts or 'turns', which apparently respond to the said impasse. In studies of democracy and citizenship, there has, thus, been a clear turn toward *borders*. In migration studies, there is a corresponding turn toward *agency*. Finally, contemporary artistic and literary practice shows an increasing interest in *migration* (or *migrant experience*). Let me briefly discuss these 'turns' in order.

The turn toward borders in debates on democracy and citizenship

Migration or migrant presence is undoubtedly *the* major topic in the political discourse of Europe. What happens if we relate this fact to a parallel context in political theory, where we observe vital efforts to rethink democracy and sovereignty in relation to borders and boundaries? If these two contexts are combined, we approach a precise understanding of the political implications of migration. This is because, together, they display how most conceptions of society depend on the idea that sovereignty is a *bounded* entity. Put differently, if a community is defined by the way in which it demarcates itself in relation to the world, and if it attains its political identity through such demarcations, this amounts to saying that the political community is *constituted* by the imposition of a boundary.

It follows from this argument, and from the theory of Carl Schmitt that is one of its sources, that we can distinguish between two notions of politics, a distinction which the English language signifies in the difference between *politics* and *the political*, which in German translates into the difference between *die Politik* and *das Politische*, and in French between *la politique* and *le politique*.⁴

'Politics' can be defined as the affairs and actions of states and other structures of governance while 'the political' refers to the constitution and delimitation of a state or polity. In this view, 'politics' concerns the maintenance of common, public and already constituted political order. (For instance, we encounter politics in the shape of the prime minister, the parliament, party meetings and newspaper editorials.) By contrast, 'the political' refers to the constitution, consolidation or disintegration of such an order. The political is normally taken for granted as the pre-existing, unshakeable and, therefore, invisible foundation of politics, but it comes into focus in critical phases of history: in revolutionary moments when states are created or collapse, when constitutions are rewritten, and when political borders and populations are reshuffled. Today, we encounter the political in the shape of migration.

Given this distinction, we realize that we need a corresponding distinction within the field of migration studies. On the one hand, we can study *migration politics*: how state authorities, employers and civil society seek to manage migration flows and individual migrants according to particular needs and interests. Typically, this assumes the form of studying migration and integration *politics*: legal frameworks for entry, rights of residency and citizenship, paths of migrant groups toward education, employment and social benefits, frameworks for migrant integration or mechanisms of discrimination.

On the other hand, we can study *migration as an instance of the political institution of society*. In this case, agency is no longer considered from the point of view of the state, the police, or other governmental or political institutions, but from the perspective of migration, now re-conceptualized as a proper social force that, by transgressing borders that have been established in order to demarcate communities, contributes to the reconstitution of these communities. This is not to say that migrants make up a constituent political agency (conscious of itself as a power in itself). However, to the extent that migration today manifests

specific responses to global crises and contradictions, it represents a plural and transformative influence on the sending as well as the receiving societies.

A first conclusion is, thus, clear. The fact that migration and migrant presence has emerged as Europe's major issue means that migration forces us to address the political as such. This conclusion generates additional questions. From the perspective of the bounded polity, efforts to address the political typically imply changes in existing systems of inclusion and exclusion. It is, thus, no surprise that the tensions that I have outlined often snap in struggles over citizenship. Who are we? Who are the others? Who can become a citizen? Who cannot? Where should we draw the boundary between us? Should there be a boundary? The fact that growing numbers of Europeans take such questions to be of primordial urgency suggests that, in the guise of migration, the constitutive antagonisms of the political are invading the polis.

Social and cultural theory cannot resolve such questions, but they can explain their conditions of emergence and clarify the ethical viability of different answers to them. 'Border struggles', a term coined by many and picked up by several contemporary thinkers, is an apt description of the predicament that moves to the centre once political theory recognizes migration as a major concern.⁵ It should be placed at the same level as its predecessors: class struggles and gender struggles. The term indicates that the political struggles that are likely to define the future are no longer primarily those that involve parliaments and parties but those that concern borders of exclusion and inclusion, which in turn determine criteria for qualifying as a citizen. Just as class and gender struggles have their particular aesthetic expressions and resonate *within* most aesthetic expressions in general, so do border struggles. Like class struggles and gender struggles, border struggles concern exclusion and inclusion. Who counts as citizen? A worker? A woman? A migrant?

In the contemporary world order of nation states, a person's citizenship and

residency are increasingly made conditional on their *value*. This happens in two ways. First, paths to citizenship increasingly seem to depend on somebody's identification with and support of particular values, the adherence to which makes a person a deserving candidate for citizenship, whereas a person's violation of or non-adherence to these same values may immediately disqualify her from all chances of becoming a citizen. In certain cases, holding certain values or engaging in certain actions may even be a reason to de-naturalize people and void their citizenship (as has happened to EU citizens converting to militant Islamism, or the Islamic State). Conferral of citizenship upon a person is, thus, increasingly contingent on that person's values. This often takes the form of a contractual arrangement, whereby the conferral of citizenship upon somebody requires test-taking, courses in civic values, and an explicit agreement and signature on a contract that ensures that a person will subject themselves to the laws and values of the land.

Second, paths to citizenship are increasingly becoming commodified, that is, the values attached to them comes with a price. Citizenships are in today's world bought and sold - sold by states who want rich investors, and bought by people with considerable wealth but with less desirable passports, and brokered by go-betweens such as the UK company Henley and partners (H & P), which calls itself "the global leader in residence and citizenship planning". Companies such as H & P offer "high net-worth individuals from, say, Zimbabwe, or China, or Sudan to become a citizen of Ukraine, Cyprus, Malta, or Antigua, simply by buying property or depositing a certain sum of money with the state's treasury."⁶

What we see in both of these cases is that citizenship has become a particular form of value, a form of value comparable to and sometimes identical to capital, that is, citizenship is an investment enabling the acquisition of a higher return on future operations.

Given these developments where access to citizenship is offered to people with capital - be it moral, cultural, or eco-

Wasis Diop, Scenography
Credits: Screengrab by author





Bintou Were, Theatre Chatelet 2007
Credits: Screengrab by author

conomic - it is perhaps no surprise that we have also witnessed the opposite development, which in effect means that people without that kind of capital seem to be at an ever greater disadvantage in their quest for real civil rights and a livelihood; again, I am here speaking of the migrant.

In this context, we may revisit a question posed by Etienne Balibar in a seminal essay of the 1990s: 'What is a Border?' In the wake of the East European *Mauerfall*, Balibar codified the apparent paradox that is at the heart of all serious theories of sovereignty and globalization. Globalization entails new forms of enclosure as much as it entails mobility. One interesting aspect of Balibar's work is its precise analysis of the border as the preeminent scene of violence, a place where politicians get their hands dirty.⁷ Furthermore, borders give rise to contempt and brutality, be it in the form of the behaviour of occupying soldiers against civilians or in the methods used by European security services in the deportation of asylum seekers.⁸ The border manifests a modality of power that invests its guardians with the dangerous 'privilege' of ethical impartiality and indifference.

Balibar quotes the French psychoanalyst André Green: 'You can be a citizen, or you can be stateless, but it's difficult to imagine how you can be a border.'⁹

What would it mean to be a border? Balibar asks ominously. A life lived nailed to the fence, or in the no-man's land between the border controls of different states? You're not let in. You can't turn back. You get caught by the frame; you're neither inside nor outside.

Such reflections warrant the proposition that there are today a number of people about whom we can say that *they are borders* in the sense just described. We get an idea of the implication of this proposition by considering a life where one's 'migration status' leads to constant, daily surveillance and control – in schools, public institutions and libraries, at hospitals and clinics, by landlords, employers and even neighbours. A life so affected by endless 'border checks' generates structures of subjectivity through which migrants are constantly interrogated and forced to justify their presence

in and access to the public arena. Such subjectivities are comparable to borders in the sense described by Balibar.

This leads to an exceedingly difficult question: how to relate the category of *people who are borders* to the category of *people designated as migrants*? From a legal or empirical point of view, it makes no sense to place all migrants in this category of people who are borders. Yet, the suggestion that migrants are borders generates possibilities for conceptualizing the polity in ways that question accepted conceptions of how belonging and mobility affect somebody's identity. The migrant can no longer be defined solely as a negation of a normative and often idealized model of sedentariness and belonging; nor can s/he be described as 'uprooted', as a newcomer in the process of integration, whose dual or multiple identities we can understand as simple traces of 'lost homelands'. In sum, the migrant can no longer be defined primarily by categories of 'identity'. Rather, s/he would be better be defined as 'a being in situation', as Sartre once put it, the situation in question being characterized by the proximity to the border and a corresponding structure of affect, belief, action, and repression.¹⁰

Such subjects embody what we call 'the political'. On their very bodies, we glimpse the ways in which political communities are today reconstituted and transformed. This is the deep context underlying many contemporary concepts in migration studies, such as deportability, permanent temporariness and precarity.¹¹ This is also the context in which we can understand the rationale behind the recent turn to *agency* in theories of migration. If there are people who have become borders, and hence incarnations of the political, the question of migrants' political agency becomes inevitable. Let me now turn to this topic.

The 'turn' toward 'agency' in migration studies

My illustration here is Thomas Nail's *The Figure of the Migrant*. This book releases a torrent of interesting models that help us rethink political philosophy

from the point of view of mobility and the migrant. As Nail puts it, migration has hitherto 'been predominantly understood from the perspective of *stasis* and perceived as a secondary or derivative figure with respect to place-bound social membership'. It follows, he claims, that migration has 'been predominantly understood from the perspective of *states*'. Nail argues that the weight with which migration imposes itself on politics and scholarship today forces us to reconsider this paradigm. The contemporary situation makes evident what previous historiography and social science have failed to recognize: 'that the figure of the migrant has always been the true motive force of history'¹²

Nail's project is to reconfigure 'flows', as he puts it, as a phenomenon that is primary in relation to territorialized power structures. Hence, a theoretical framework built on the opposition of 'kinopower' and 'pedetic motion'. Kinopower is a force that regulates *flow* and contains mobility, be it the flow of rivers, of the seasons, or of people. Kinopower synchronizes human mobility as well as slower biological and geological processes to the accumulation of value. It exploits movement through various forms of containment and expulsion. By contrast, pedetic motion ('ped' means 'foot') is a counterforce exercised by human subjectivities for the purpose of securing a life where they are free to move and live as they want. It is worth noting here that Nail's 'migrant' is no empirical entity; the concept refers to a generic agency appearing in several historical incarnations, which employs pedetic force to circumvent the machinations of kinopower.

In one sense, Nail concurs with state-centred political theorists on the topic of borders. He, too, regards borders as materializations of socio-political systems that are used to control who belongs and who do not belong to *the polis*. What distinguishes Nail's paradigm, however, is that it allows us to theorize countervailing forces of resistance against such processes of sorting and selection. By this route, he arrives at the contested topic of migrant agency and resistance.

For example, Nail's historical ontology of kinopower may serve as a foundation for Michael Hardt and Toni Negri's affirmation of the multitude's migratory movement. For an empirical illustration, you can turn to Amir Heidari, a political activist who for long periods was imprisoned in Sweden. Heidari was convicted for 'migrant smuggling'. Proudly claiming that he has helped 37,000 asylum seekers to Sweden, and as many as 200,000 if we add destinations such as Germany, Great Britain and Canada, he consistently rejects the accusation that he has engaged in illegal activities for financial gain. In his view, he is part of a resistance movement. Heidari has spoken of 'refugees [as] a new military power without weapons': 'They neither rely on nor believe in the world order that has been created. Neither do they recognize where the borders have been drawn.'¹³

The gist of the argument is that, aggregated to a collective level, migrants' search for safety, security, and work becomes a social movement, a pedetic pressure, with specific voice and agency. This pressure is often conceptualized as 'autonomous migration'¹⁴

However, the 'pedetic force' exercised by migrants and activist organizations that support them seems weak when compared to the 'kinopower' of states. On what grounds, then, should migrant agency be epistemologically conceptualized and politically defended? This issue divides political theory and migration studies as well as political debate in general. On the one hand, migrant agency is defended by appeals to what Hannah Arendt called 'natural rights': regardless of states, every person is endowed with a capacity for mobility that should be exercised freely. This alternative is today often coded in Deleuzian language that posits the migrant as a figure of becoming and transformation: in the beginning, there was mobility.¹⁵ On the other hand, migrant agency is also upheld with reference to civil rights. As Engin Isin argues, each human being has a right to citizenship, which also entails the right to mobility.¹⁶ Etienne Balibar captures this alternative concisely: 'the right to full citizenship is indissolubly

linked to freedom of movement.'¹⁷

My point here is similar to the one I made above in regard to borders and belonging. Social theory is a poor guide to first principles upon which claims for migrant agency can be founded. To break this impasse, a perspective is needed that accounts for migration as 'normal', to paraphrase Balibar, rather than exceptional in the political constitution of political community and citizenship. This brings me to the final leg of my study, which concerns the prominent place of migration in contemporary art and literature.

The 'turn' toward 'migration' in contemporary aesthetics and arts

I have discussed the turn toward *boundaries* and *the political* in studies of democracy and citizenship and the turn toward *agency* in migration studies. Now, how are these related to the concurrent turn toward *migration* in contemporary aesthetics?

I will make two remarks in relation to this question. First, how do we acquire a perspective that perceives migration as 'normal'? How to place citizen and migrant on an equal level, rather than as opposite poles in a binary or as top and bottom in a hierarchy? To ask for such a perspective is to ask for another world, where sovereignty does not translate into exclusion. Or, put differently, it is to ask for aesthetic imagination and judgment.

Social movements that appear outside established political orders typically have weak political leverage; the movement of migrants being a case in point. Even if their sociopolitical power is recognized, it is often perceived as a social problem and subjected to state interventions, policy or the police. Sociological discourse has described such movements as cases of 'social emergence'.¹⁸ This is sometimes followed by what I would call 'political emergence', which involves collective mobilization and the development of a public voice. Against this background, I would like to hypothesize that aesthetic presentations offer unique ways of registering and understanding political emergence. Aesthetics can expose features of the political pro-

cess that rarely receive attention in the social sciences: before collective actors emerge as subjects and objects of *political*/representation they always appear as subjects of *aesthetic* self-presentation through the simple fact of claiming voice and presence in the polity.¹⁹

Jacques Rancière's theory is the obvious reference for this argument. It defines aesthetics as the power to be seen and heard in public life, which is a threshold to political articulation.²⁰ Because of their multivocal character and their adherence to voice and lived experience, aesthetic expressions are able to situate themselves at this threshold, so as to disclose deep mechanisms of political emergence that political discourse and conventional political science cannot reach. In this view, the task of aesthetic criticism is to unravel the political dimensions of such subtle figurations, thereby, showing how political emergence presents itself primarily in aesthetic registers. By showing how migration 'enters into art', to use Anne Ring Petersen's expression, we perform a critical task, demonstrating that artworks 'know' something about political processes that other forms of knowledge barely register.²¹

For instance - this is my second remark - aesthetic works afford an insight into how people are turned into borders; and why it makes sense to speak of migration in such terms. It makes sense, because literary and artistic works show how the migrant finds herself in a situation in which her existence is split by hard borders, just as the artistic mediation of migrant experience discloses how socio-political communities are made by political boundaries.

Let me offer an example to illustrate this point: Manthia Diawara's recent film *An Opera of the World*, commissioned by the Documenta 14 in 2017. The Malian-American filmmaker's visual essay describes the production and reception of Wasis Diop's opera *Bintou Wéré: A Sahel Opera*, with a libretto by Chadian poet and novelist Koulsy Lamko.²² At its premiere in Bamako in 2007, the production included an ensemble of leading West African performers who staged an

epic of migration through a repertoire of modern and traditional West-African song, music and storytelling.

'Who is the hero in today's world? Might it be the migrant?' Diawara asks. The opera's plot centres on the destiny of Bintou Wéré. A pregnant teenage girl, who joins other recruits from the jobless and landless class of the Sahel on a trek North, as they see no other way forward in life than to brave crossing the border into Europe. Bintou has been sexually abused by most of the men in the group of travellers, who all claim to be father of the unborn child, and they quarrel over whether the child will be better off in Europe or in Africa. Their desperate and delusive hopes bring forth strange projections. At one point, Bintou points at the moon that towers over the horizon, and she exclaims: 'Look, there is Europe!'

In his film about the opera Diawara interviews Alexander Kluge, who argues that Diop's opera appropriates the preeminent form of European high art and brings it back to 'its *plebeian* origins' (my emphasis). Interestingly, Diop's search for the social roots of the operatic form have, thus, led him toward the socioeconomic destitution and political messianism that surround the topic of migration in the popular imagination of contemporary West Africa. The result is remarkable: *migration turns out to be the popular origin of political change*. Through the artistic medium of the opera performance, a group of miserable West-African migrants transform themselves into secret missionaries of coming social movements.

In this way, too, the opera breaks the threefold impasse that I mentioned at the beginning. They show that the history of imperialism is a major cause of Europe's inability to deal with migrant populations. They capture the significance of contemporary protest and resistance for the renewal of a democratic agency that strives to move beyond national and/or imperial frames. Moreover, they do so by using the profound political implications of migration as their basis. *Bintou Wéré* may, thus, be seen as a culmination of a postcolonial tradition of West-African narratives that probe the experience of

living in a society in which failed national projects of development elicit social unrest as well as migratory movements toward the North.

To say that migration entails new forms of political emergence amounts to the proposition that migration today constitutes a 'hypothesis' of a coming society, where, as I said, sovereignty does not translate into exclusion. Over the past two-three decades, the human sciences, helped by art and literature, have begun to explore this hypothesis. This is the context of several recent interrogations by artistic practices and aesthetic works of notions such as citizenship, borders, sovereignty, statehood and community. In this context, we can recognize migration, including the colonial legacies from which it derives and the agency that it exercises, as a political process constitutive of our future. At the core of such analyses is the miraculous process whereby the aesthetic presentation transforms political negativity, and objective historical constraints, into agency, a site of becoming. It is this process that stands at the center of *Bintou Wéré* as a piece of art and artistic practise, exemplifying how an aesthetic presentation can transform the objective circumstances of the situation into a site of becoming. The artwork shows how the victims become the future.

The final tableau of *Bintou Wéré: A Sahel Opera* is an exact rendering of how agency emerges from negativity. Having sold off her infant to cover the trafficker's fare, and now mounting the shaky ladder to cross the electrified fences into Melilla, the EU's outpost on the African continent, Bintou Wéré is halted and killed midway in her upward movement towards the distant moon that symbolizes Europe. The three nodes of my discussion fuse in this scene: migration, politics, and aesthetics, all three now embodied by Bintou's corpse, a dead migrant brutally affixed to the border.

The young woman is even transformed into a border. Yet, she is then suddenly transubstantiated in the opera's concluding *lamentatio*, as the choir of mourners, incarnating generations of Sahel migrants, resurrect the memory of

Bintou Wéré and testify to her undying, persistent agency. In this way, the opera's aesthetic figuration is an expression of a collective Pan-African resistance and protest. In this way, too, *Bintou Wéré* shows the importance of aesthetic actions for the revelation of the true importance of migration and collective protest in our time.

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22 For a documentation of the opera, see Koulsy Lamko, *Els van der Plas, et al, Bintou Wéré – African Opera* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Prins Claus Fonds, 2017).

The risk of being a-political: can “border art” become a polity-call?

Border art is a strange and multiple category, which questions the figurative capacity of an artistic artefact to encapsulate a political space. Hard to define, it encompasses both site-specific productions that are created in the vicinity of an international limit and works that relate to the imagination of that type of political space in infinite ways. Enhancing the spectacularization of control, the security turn in border management seems to have provoked an increase in what may appear as counter-manifestations to the hypervisibility of borders, i.e. political art that claims to combat that “rebordering”.

In fact, *border art* may be as old as borders themselves, if we define them as a permanent interaction between power relations, a jurisdictional system that normalizes the collective imagination, and a place which materializes these links. This propels representation as an essential component of the bordering process. Indeed, most of the time, borders are not self-evident in the landscape: in many cases, it appears impossible to reach a border without a map or any orientation tool such as a GPS to check that one does indeed set foot on the imaginary line¹... Conversely, maps were needed to “invent” the idea of a linear limit between territories and populations. No concept or experience of border is possible out of this dialectic. On the field, the surveyors who sketched the new border monuments and milestones in the landscape were probably the first *border artists*. Going there and finding the border implies an acceptance of the abstract convention and the possibility of enacting it through a spatialized and embodied presence.

From the early historical steps of border making, material artifacts have been produced to construct the idea of division: framed by social practices, they are normalized and legitimized by way of law. Visibility is, thus, an essential dimension of border work, which explains why the defunctionalisation of certain borders, notably in Western Europe under the Schengen agreements, have led many to think that borders were disappearing. However, the multiple dimensions of the control management that operate at the border play, in very complex ways, on the

visibility and invisibility of operations; these operations include a great number of violent processes that escape democratic accountability by being hidden from media exposure.²

What I propose here is to explore the potential of *border art* to renew our political imaginary, beyond the rational binarity that traditionally grounds it, holding citizenship within the bounded framing of an us vs. them alternative. In conditions where borders can no longer be simply defined as the external limits of a national territory governed by a state, *border art* questions not only our representations of them. It but may also challenge the very political dimension of the term “representation”, understood as a delegation of power that is bestowed through elections, in democracies. It, thus, becomes essential to discover how and when *border art* does achieve this capacity to call for a new and inclusive polity.



Title: Initial Point, View of the surveyor's initial point south of San Diego, February 19, 1852, Source: John Russell Bartlett collection

Art of the global border, a fast track for fame?

Border art is a controversial category, claimed by few, yet which appeals to many. In August 2008, the cities of Konstanz and Kreuzlingen at the border of Switzerland and Germany, issued a common press release claiming that the “first artistic border” had just been erected between them, in lieu of a fence which the inhabitants of the small twin city had been previously invited to tear down in a very official manner. The online media SwissInfo.ch publicized the sculptures that Johannes Dörflinger, a successful sculptor born in the region, wished to donate to his community.³ Very few people know of this anecdote and recalling it means, for many, discrediting a more broadly told story about the birth of such a category of art on the divide between the US and Mexico.

The first artists to claim the designation of “border art” actually did it in two languages: they initiated a collective in 1984 called “Border Art Workshop/ Taller de Arte Fronterizo”, better known by its double acronym BAW/TAF. The seven founding members are worth citing (in alphabetical order), even if some later became more famous than others, leading them to forget some of their initial principles: Isaac Artenstein, David Avalos, Sara Jo Berman, Jude Eberhardt, Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Victor Ochoa and Michael Schnorr. Bringing together « Chicanos, Mexicanos and Anglos », according to Gómez-Peña’s own words,⁴ meant confronting the concept of the borderland, out of the Chicano identity which had existed in previous regional collectives such as “Tlaltecas in Aztlan”, and “Border Incorporated”. One of the best known members, Guillermo Gómez-Peña left the BAW/TAF in the early 1990’s, denouncing the fact that “instead of turning the margins into the center, it was bringing the center to the margins.”⁵ This was the time when the inSite bi-national art fairs were inaugurated between Tijuana and San Diego (1992-2006), marking both the circulation of art productions and artists in an initiative that totally straddled the border and increasingly attracted artists from around the world.

This condensed summary suggests that the USA/ Mexico delineation, and the San Diego/Tijuana region in particular, constitute the cradle of *border art*. However, one could argue that its origins are wider, generically related to conceptual art and to land art, more specifically. A certain fascination for the figure of the line and the multiple ways to challenge it are indeed very central to *border art*, particularly in its first decades. With the recent transformations of international boundaries into networked devices of control and the growing technological dimension that “pixellizes”⁶ them, the works belonging to this category have undergone profound changes.

The striking characteristic in the deployment of *border art* is the way that it has disseminated, as if spurred by the securitization of international limits: it first reached segments of the US/ Mexico that were far from being distinguished for their cultural production (cf. Taller Yonke’s work in Nogales) and then diffused over the planet as walls were being erected. On the South African/Zimbabwean border, the “Border Farm Project”

(2009-2010), conceived by South African artist/filmmaker Thenjiwe Nkosi, and Zimbabwean writer, farm worker, and community spokesperson Meza Weza is one of the many examples (Guinard 2018)⁷ that I have been able to trace. The first proposed interpretation of this planetary multiplication was that artists were trying to find answers to the growing visibility of borders by the production of counter-images⁸ (Amilhat Szary 2012).

A closer examination reveals that art works produced in explicit connection to the most mediatised borders in the world may not have such a strength. They could, on the contrary, be seen to be contributing to the further dissemination of the very artifacts that they wish to denounce. Works like JR’s or Banksy’s have not always been very well received by the people living in the vicinity of these closed borders, and, for whom, this kind of intervention cannot be qualified as “resistance”. Indeed, by offering idealized visions of barrier trespassing, they help reproduce our imaginary of binarity and division. In so doing, they could be much less political than they first seem.

Old man: You paint the wall, you make it look beautiful.

Banksy: Thanks.

Old man: We don’t want it to be beautiful, we hate this wall, go home.”

Cited in: Martini Michele, 2010, Banksy in Cisgiordania: graffiti sul limite. http://www.ec-aiss.it/pdf_contributi/martini_29_03_10.pdf

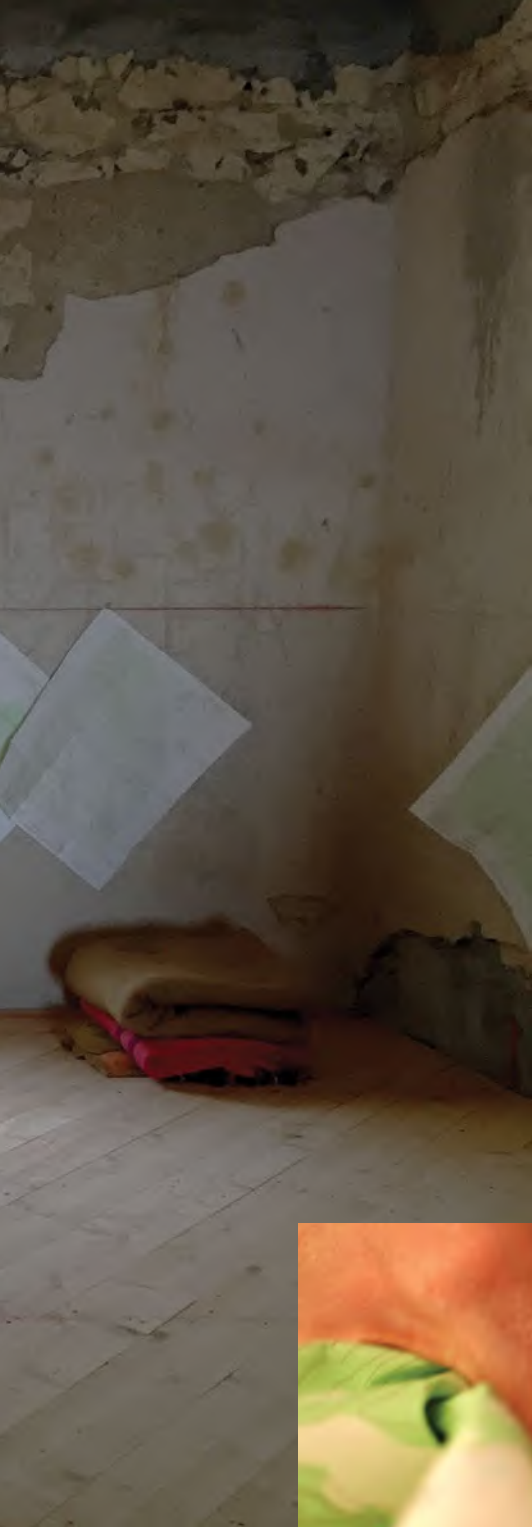
Whatever the political status of *border art* works, their relationship to one specific border seems to connect them together, in a process of what I define as “intervisuality”. This phenomenon can trigger an immediate outburst of the artist’s exposure to global critic, for better or worse, as the contrast between the two very similar performances discussed on Twitter reveals:



On one hand, the gathering of common people in a “flash mob” to denounce the young Aylan Kurdi’s death is criticized as “very bad taste” by a leftist mainstream French newspaper. On the other hand, the same gesture by the world-famous Ai Weiwei is praised for its powerfulness. Over the years, *border art* has evolved from being site-specific to situation-specific or, better-said, defined by a multidimensional spatiality depending on the relationship between different borders in the common imaginary with which we embrace them.



Susan Harbage, Sewn Border (2014)
Courtesy of the artist



Susan Harbage, Sewn Border (2014)
Courtesy of the artist



The complex interplay of art and politics at borders

Surprisingly (to some), art at the border, paradoxically, does not take sides: it doesn't seem to fit into partisan-like politics, which could appear both a strength and a weakness. This is especially the case over the last 20 years that have witnessed the generalization of a concern for security that transcends previous cleavages such as what now looks like the old "left-right" divide. In this context, "oppositionality"⁹ becomes a true challenge.

This ambiguity is particularly true of the participatory art that is being deployed at the border. Implementing work with communities whose lives are brutally transformed by the fencing of the border or its militarization bears two almost opposite specificities. It does allow the participants to express their concern for the geopolitical situation and their possible opposition to the ongoing "rebordering" processes. However, by offering a theater for the expression of that anger, the artist's intervention also participates to a cathartical development. In so doing, it contributes to soothing the wounds and possibly healing them, thus, reducing the political combativeness of the concerned community.



Title: Final act of Althea Thauberger's performance with the community of Stanstead's inhabitants (Québec, Canada), on July 28th, 2012.
Credits: François Lafrance

In a project curated by Geneviève Chevalier in 2011-2012, the artist Althea Thauberger brought together the people of Stanstead, a small town of Québec, Canada, neighbouring that of Derbyline in Vermont, USA to participate in a collective performance. She managed to invite them onto the stage of the Opera House located in the Haskell library, a building famous for being situated precisely over the international line that divides both countries, a symbol for their renewed empowerment over the newly materialized borders that now cut through their streets and gardens. However powerful the moment, its ephemeral quality did not allow for a real re-assessment of power relations in the locality. Conversely, the pictures taken that night by François Lafrance can resonate with the efforts and struggles of other such communities around the world and enhance their political engagement.

What also appears problematic is the difficulty in bringing

people from both sides into such initiatives. In this case, United States nationals were welcome, but, since the project was developed from the Canadian side of the border, they remained a minority. In more conflictive contexts, participation can become totally impossible, as is today the case over the Israeli/Palestinian divide where artistic cooperation is subject to the global boycott against Israel. The *Liminal Spaces* project held in 2006 was one of the last to involve artists from both sides and, even then, Palestinian artists did not always have regular authorization to participate in events on the Israeli side and often travelled without them- which was still doable at the time. In border contexts, it may, thus, not be strong enough to restore commonality through participatory work if, as happens much of the time, art takes place on one side only.

The issue of participation is also complex because of how many interventions are framed, especially those which bring in protagonists of border violence. The will to restore agency to "migrants" by enabling them to participate in *border art* projects always needs to be thoroughly addressed. Firstly, because doing art with people who have crossed borders in extreme conditions bestows the quality of "migrants" upon them long after they are done with the border crossing, essentializing this way of qualifying the human beings who are invited to these creative sessions. Secondly, because it is very rare that exiles who participate in such projects are given a leading voice within the setting of the aesthetic process, while the artist imposes the form of his/her project upon them. In the case of the *The Mapping Journey Project* (2008-2011), Bouchra Khalili records the narratives of migrants' journeys while filming the their hands drawing their routes on a map. As the gestures of tracing superimpose a black thick line on a map, they seem to prioritize the latter over the colored flat tints of the political planisphere. However, because of its presence in all of the interviewees' films, the map becomes hauntingly powerful and imprisons the migrants' gaze... and ours, too.

By opening up healing spaces, one can denounce *border art*, not only in its participatory form, for reducing rather than enhancing political ardor. This is because being too consensual about denouncing a situation may miss the initial point of an intervention. As *border art* is spreading over the planet, it risks losing its political power. In such circumstances, it remains possible for an artist to keep on opening gaps within common representations and setting the frame for effective dissensus.¹⁰ I would suggest here that the - politically - successful border works are the ones which tackle the dialectics of visibility at the border (Mountz; *ibid.*) by suggesting or revealing what visible elements the border elements hides.

Worlding *border art*: restoring multiplicity within border imaginaries

If *border art* does not necessarily allow people to cross political borders that are unattainable to them, because of the violence of the contemporary migratory regimes or just because of misreading or mistrust, or simply for lack of time... it should,

however, propel its audience into “border thinking”.¹¹ Even if we, border theorists, argue that the impact of the incessant contemporary “debordering” and “rebordering” is now felt in the everyday life of all human beings, even those living apparently far from the physical delineation, the “border condition” needs to be further discussed. Avoiding this may well propel us all into the pitfall of romanticizing works that can be deprived of their political power. The image of mending the border is very present in *border art*: some works answer one another without explicitly referencing each other, such as the two performances by Ariane Littmann (Israel, *Sewing wounded land*, 2009-2013) and Susan Harbage Page (USA - *Sewn border*, 2014) where each woman patiently stitches maps in public as a way to participate in bridging the overarching political divides.

At the border, the meaning of aesthetics is reshuffled altogether: it cannot be about being moved by art, as we generally define the relational link that an artistic creation initiates with the spectator. Since this is precisely the place where movement is hindered, placing art in such spaces implies having access to, and in turn giving access to, such places, a condition that is active. Paola Zaccaria calls it an “action-condition” and she makes it very clear that, to be critical about border thinking or acting, we must radically open ourselves to the “one who is crossing” and delve into “the territories of uncertainty about origin and destination experienced by people on the move”.¹²

One of the ways to attain this goal is to work on the gaps and breaches rather than on the line itself. From this perspective, multi-media installations are quite effective and I have commented on Adrien Missika’s work entitled *As the Coyote Flies* which strengths lie in its capacity to work on the interplay between argentic and digital images as well as between still and animated visuals: this complex itinerary thereby offers a very strong experience into the multilayering of border building and maintenance, through surveillance.¹³

Another recourse is working online to explore yet another possible dimension to overturn of the ordering of society induced by bordering. This is what Joana Moll does when she makes subversive use of vigilantes’ webcams at the US/Mexico border from her home in Spain (*The Texas Border*, 2010 and *Arizona: Move and Get Shot*, 2011-2014¹⁴) or infiltrates these same vigilantes’ Facebook page (*The virtual watchers*, 2016¹⁵) allowing us to witness and hijack their conversations. These net art pieces locate themselves at the interplay between technology, art and research: they pinpoint the importance of the documentation and conceptual framing of aesthetic enterprises that tackle the contemporary border, a nexus from which the *antiAtlas of borders* collective¹⁶ was conceived.

This demands reflection on the unicity of the “border art” category, as framed by its initiators, in light of the distortion it has undergone since the 1980’s. Fighting back against the globalization of narratives on *artivism* is essential for artistic practises that tackle political spaces and issues that concern subaltern subjects (and this may be even more important to art productions that deal with migration than with *border art* per se). This questioning of cultural appropriation was reframed

by Gayatri Spivak¹⁷ in order to claim agency for the subalterns, whom she presented as having a voice in globalization, but one that was never heard, even by those who pretended to be in empathy. In this process to “reject the recuperation of subaltern subjects”, Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong, two geographers, have proposed a “worlding” method that would allow the “singular or fixed standard of urban globality” to be counter-balanced and capture instead the “many forms of ‘the global’ in play”.¹⁸ Their reasoning about the urban could in some ways be replicable to the artistic realm, where one could wish to promote “worlding exercises”, i.e. “those lateralizing micro-processes that remap power by opening up new channels or reconfigure new social universes” (ibid.). Worlding *border art* would, thus, mean re-injecting multiplicity into aesthetic endeavors that claim to address political divides of all kinds. In a way, this opens up intersectional approaches in *border art*, such as those explored by Alessandra Cianetti and Xavier the Sousa in the *Performing Borders* project,¹⁹ where other boundaries, rather than the international, are documented beyond their metaphorical dimension.

More generally, it brings multiplicity back, in terms of time (the importance of memory in a works such as Anja Melved’s *Smuggler’s Confessional* - 2010, a video on the Slovenian- Italian border) or materials (Michele Magema’s *Under the Landscape* installation - 2015, in rubber tree wood, about African border mapping and extractivism). The fact that *border art/ arte fronterizo* was officially born in two languages is a vital testimony to the primacy of a multiplicity of languages to address the aesthetic dimension of the border.

This question is at the core of a fabulous project simply called *Passaport project*, based on a small object created by Antoine Cassar: a multilingual passport with poetry inside.²⁰ Originally from Malta, Cassar first wrote and published this protest poem in his own language, spoken by around 360,000 people. “*Passaport* is an anarchist love poem, a declaration of universal citizenship, the vision of a world where the fear of barriers and frontiers has long been overcome”. It speaks to this ambiguity of *border art*, both in as much as it denounces and as much as it offers a tool to overcome inequalities in migratory control and to reframe a universal citizenship. Cassar worked with a designer, Rafael Rivera, to edit his text in a passport like leaflet, the cover of is reproduced below. One can order it online and *chose* the language in which they want their copy printed. As such, it has been translated into many languages, including rare ones, and disseminated in written and oral forms (performances, theater...). The last page states that this object is a safe-conduct to all people: it is not meant to regulate movement between territories but to enable encounters: it promotes “the vision of a world where the fear of barriers and frontiers has long been overcome”.

Conclusions

Border art - or even worse, migration art, can easily become hegemonic: if it only addresses the visibility of the bor-



Title: Cover page from the passport imagined by Antoine Cassar, The Passport Project, Malta, 2010-present. Credits: A. Casar

der and the places where the international order is displayed, it has probably missed its initial aim. Furthermore, the exhibiting of *border art* obeys the classical rules of the art market and, therefore, threatens to re-establish *border art* in the exact system it claims to escape. One must recall that the sublime and the obscene are very close to one another, both genres play with distance, with being too far or too close to a person, an object, or a landscape. Moreover, as we understand borders as tools that “pour distance within proximity”,²¹ we could envision interventions at the border as works on what proximity means. Within the context of the contemporary COVID19 crisis, this issue is even more relevant.

Effective border art is, thus, a creative process that is successful in debunking the invisibility of the control apparatus that dehumanizes people at the border, and does so in an unequal manner. It is essential to understand and address the inequalities that binary territorial divisions engender. Contrary to what is generally asserted, the use of lines as political tools to build zones of exclusive sovereignty is not a universal construct, rather it is a historical one, that dates back to European modern times and had undergone a global dissemination through colonization. Countering that project needs to unfold its contingency on the one hand, and exploring counter-fictions on the other hand. It means exploring the hardships of the border condition to renew an emancipatory border thinking and “arting” that goes beyond dissensus and sets the path for a commonalization of renewed political imagination.

In calling for a renewal of polity, Cassar achieves what many border artists would like to achieve by investing their work with a political power in order to change the world. However, as “agonistic”²² as these may be, they may not succeed in transforming the profound inequity of the border condition. For all who want to think, care, create and act at the forefront of societies that international divides represent entails work which profoundly reframes what citizenship signifies. Intervening at the border means questioning access to political agency and

power for all, promoting an inclusiveness that opens up the polity. *Border art* could well be that polity-call!

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N.B.: I ask the reader to forgive me for self citations, but this paper is an excerpt from an ongoing book project that builds upon long accumulated material to which I refer here without having the needed space to detail it all.

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Maggie O'Neill and John Perivolaris

Critical Theory in Practice: Walking, Art and narrative as conjunctural analysis

In a recent edition of *The Large Glass*, Chantal Mouffe¹ discusses the following question 'how can artistic practices still play a critical role in societies where every critical gesture is quickly recuperated and neutralized by the dominant powers'? Her answer highlights the importance of critical art in unsettling hegemony, contributing to counter hegemonic politics (through a process of articulation and rearticulation), engaging with institutions, such as the culture industry (involved in the creation of new needs, desires and consent) 'with the aim of fostering dissent'² through multiple 'agonistic spaces, where the dominant consensus is subverted and where new modes of identification are made available'.

'Agonistic spaces' are 'public spaces where conflicting points of view are confronted without any possibility of a final reconciliation'. Public space is defined as striated and hegemonically structured, not a terrain where a Habermasian 'rational consensus' can be attained, but spaces, produced, for example, through critical art practice, where alternatives to the current political order can be articulated - in diverse spaces, 'making visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure, giving voice to those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony'.³

Mouffe makes two points: first, to facilitate/construct 'oppositional identities', critical artists must be aware of the need to engage the passions and 'affect' 'to bring about a transformation of subjectivity'. Second, 'it is by their articulation with affects that ideas can gain real force and crystallize in desires'.⁴ Hence, the impact of critical art should not simply be at the cognitive level, at the level of concepts, and rational understanding, but engage affect, 'mobilising the passions' in order to deepen democracy and counter hegemonic struggle.

As an undergraduate (on an education degree majoring in

creative arts before a PhD in Sociology), I was grabbed by the transformative role of art articulated in Adorno's work on art and society and Benjamin's work on the role of art in an era of mechanical reproduction, specifically in relation to the role of stories and storytelling and the role of images/dialectical images. Art, was for me, a critical theory in practice, offering a change causing gesture, a vehicle for the critical analysis of society, making visible what the dominant consensus obscured, and facilitating (not giving voice to) the voices and experiences of those who are silenced 'within the framework of the existing hegemony' as counter hegemonic practices that were also *feeling forms*. My subsequent work developed at the intersection of critical theory, lived experience and arts practice, especially through combining ethnographic, life history and biographical work with arts practice, working with artists and marginalised communities to address sexual and social inequalities.

Combining ethnographic research with arts practice led me to the concept of ethno-mimesis, drawing upon Adorno's⁵ use of 'mimesis' heavily influenced by Benjamin⁶. I argued that working in the hyphen^{7 8} between ethnographic, biographical research and art making opened a 'potential space' for transformative possibilities and counter hegemonic politics as praxis - a critical theory in practice. This is not to reduce art practice or art making to method as in visual ethnography, but rather, working in collaboration with artists, with makers, the inter textuality of artmaking and storytelling unfolds in the space between. I have defined this as 'ethno-mimesis' a counter hegemonic space, practice and process.

The first example below illustrates this process and practice. Working with a community of Bosnian refugees in the East Midlands UK in the late 1990s and four artists, we worked with the community association to facilitate their experiences into

voice, through the process and practice of ethno-mimesis.⁹ Biographical interviews (life story interviews) were followed with creative arts workshops where, supported (not directed) by artists, community members represented their stories in art-form. The narratives of refugees are usually mediated by others, journalists, academics/researchers, human rights activists whereas, in this project, we made visible what is often hidden, the voices of refugees speaking for themselves in and through artforms. Biographical narratives emerged in the art forms, that elicited recognition, voice, a means of sharing experience in feeling forms.

Art as a 'feeling form' is created in the act of sensuous knowing, between the creativity and playfulness of the artist/producer and the techniques of production at a given point in time, marked by social, cultural and political forces. The stories we tell about ourselves are how we share and make sense of our social worlds, as part of human understanding. We lead storied lives. Walter Benjamin and also Janet Wolff¹⁰ examine the way in which art represents the sedimented 'stuff' of society, in that 'society' emerges or unfolds in works of art. The tension in Adorno's writing, on the relationship between art and society, between mimesis and constructive reality, expresses the dialectic of art and society. Mimesis is not to be understood as mimicry or imitation but rather play, sensuousness and through the 'mimetic moment of cognition we can develop a critical perspective that includes empathy as 'sensuous knowing'.¹¹

Benjamin's¹² work on the importance of stories and storytelling is of importance here, for him, storytelling plays a central role in the household of humanity, in contrast to the role of information, which 'does not survive the moment in which it was new'. Narrative storytelling is a sensory/sensuous experience and a story 'does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time'.¹³

In the example below, the relationship between art making and storytelling is powerfully expressed in Fahira Hasedzic's installation - a dialectical image (See Fig. 1 below). In the arts workshops, the hyphenated spaces between art and ethnography/biography, a 'potential space'¹⁴ is created for dialogue, images and narratives to emerge that approach the world in a different way, facilitating understanding and counter hegemonic narratives that 'depict something of reality's alienating character',¹⁵ and challenge what Adorno called 'identity thinking' in relation to the label of the 'refugee;' in this case in relation to themes of transnational belonging. In Fahira's image, memory and action find articulation in images and - the combination of the sensory sensuous experience of storytelling with the sensory sensuous immediacy of visual articulation or representation (a thinking in images) elicits a hyphenated space that is dialogic, visual and psychic, or which elicits 'affect'. I have previously argued that this combination of art/mimesis and biography or oral history opens a potential space, dialogic space reflective space that is also a counter hegemonic space (in Mouffe's terms 'agonistic'¹⁶) but, in my own analysis, one that can open a radical democratic space offering a radical democratic imaginary.¹⁷



Fig.1 Good neighbour, 1999, (Fahira Hasedzic/Karen Fraser)

The image was created first as an installation, then digitally photographed. The narrative in English and Bosnian tells how Fahira's neighbours hold a meeting and decide to protect the three non-orthodox families in the block. Her neighbour gives her a key and she hides in her neighbours flat when soldiers are looking for Muslims. Having obtained supplies from the Red Cross, Fahira bakes bread for her neighbour. A soldier is in her neighbours flat and he asks 'who are you?' Fahira replies 'you know who I am, I would not be here if I were Muslim'.

The image and text tells of the possibility, and actuality, of a greater humanity, than experienced by many during the war, of protection, care and thanks offered through gifts to her neighbour - the good things denied during war and sanctions - bread, chocolate, lights, fruit - it is a hopeful image. A crucial point here is that in her experience of being 'protected' by her neighbours, Fahira's Muslim identity was acknowledged, and she was able to hold on to this. As a feeling form, this image represents this experience, as well as the emotions involved, in the space between image, biography and the text.

Does this example work as a counter hegemonic imaginary? Does it pierce us and bring us in touch with intractable reality in ways we cannot forget, as well as avoiding recuperation, neutralisation, and hence remain unappropriated?

A central message of Adorno's Aesthetic Theory is that 'if artworks have any social influence at all it is not by haranguing, but by changing consciousnesses in ways that are so very difficult pin down'.¹⁸ Moreover 'works of art affront prevailing needs by throwing light on the familiar, thus, meeting the objective need for a change in consciousness might ultimately lead to a change in reality'.¹⁹ How does Art do this? For Adorno,

A legitimate subjective response to art is a sense of 'concern'. Concern is triggered by great works. Concern is not some repressed emotion in the recipient that is brought to the surface by art but a momentary discomfiture, more precisely a tremor, during which he gives himself over to the work. He loses his footing, as it were, discovering the truth embodied in the aesthetic image has real tangible possibilities.²⁰

This is how the mediation of art and society unfolds, speaks, and shudders in artforms. For me the work of sociologists and artists is interpretive, it helps to counter identity thinking, hegemony, makes critical interventions, enables us to get in touch with our social worlds that demand critical reflection, and fosters counter hegemonic articulations and re-articulations by facilitating, and keeping open, space for radical democratic thinking, radical democratic imaginaries.

Walking Borders: art, biography conjunctural analysis

In the next example, we share some images created from a walking arts project combining arts practice with biographical storytelling, using walking and photography as the artistic medium or art form. In a research fellowship, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, on *Walking Borders*, I invited participants, artists, researchers, people, and residents to walk with me along a route of their choice on the theme of borders, risk and belonging. The idea was to use walking as an arts practice to explore border spaces and places, to advance understanding but also to develop conjunctural analysis in the space between art and ethnography.

Walking with Photographer John Perivolaris in Chios

John and I have worked together periodically over a number of years now and I greatly admire his work; he manages to combine making wonderful images, that capture something really tangible about people and places, with an anthropological or ethnographic eye.

I invited him to take a walk on borders, risk and belonging with me for the Leverhulme fellowship and he agreed. Shortly after I received notification that the Leverhulme bid had been successful, John contacted me to say he would prefer to walk in Chios, where his parents had lived before their migration to London and where he had spent so much of his youth. For John,



Fig.2. John Perivolaris, Chios 2016, (©Maggie O'Neill)

this was an important time for Greece, particularly concerning the relationship with Turkey and the refugee crisis.²¹

We agreed to share a walk in Chios. The walk connected with our work and previous collaborations on forced migration, exile, displacement, belonging as well as biography and the transformative potential of images and image making. In a decade long research trajectory working with Charnwood Arts and artists in exile in the East Midlands, John had led an image makers sub-group on an AHRC knowledge transfer grant I gained for our collaborative work with arts organisations and refugee communities.

The humanitarian and refugee 'crisis' that was being played out in the Mediterranean, and represented in the mainstream media and on our television screens, was experienced very starkly in Greece, layered onto austerity, austerity politics and the Greek citizens' historical and cultural experiences of forced migration and a complicated relationship with Turkey. The theme of borders, risk and belonging was writ large in this history and in John's biographical remembering, and so we walked in Chios.²²

Our walk in Chios took us through time, place and memories and on the first day of our walk, there was also a conversation between John, his father and his great-grandfather. Our conversation led me to thinking about Adorno's work on the importance of 'working through the past' as a theme that had also arisen in two of my previous walks in Belfast and which is central to life story research.

John: Embedded in these walks we are taking is the continuing conversation between my great-grandfather, my father, and me, spanning three generations. My father was born in 1928, shortly after the exchange of populations, but my grandfather is very much of another world, which is the Ottoman and immediately post-Ottoman world. Meanwhile, I belong to the generations of the post-WW2 diaspora, having been born in Canada, and grown up in England.

Walking along the seafront from the family apartment overlooking the sea towards Çesme, John spoke about his Father and Grandfather, the traces of history carried in memories and the importance of thinking in images, as a photographer.

John: An image comes to mind. Unsurprising, since I think in images. If you think in images often you don't join the images together. I have always carried with me some very strong images of Chios and one of the most persistent images I have is one I didn't personally witness. It's an image I inherited from my father. He told me that when he was a little boy he used to stroll in the evenings with his grandfather, my great-grandfather, along the town's seafront. This faces Turkey and is situated underneath our current flat. My father had a very close relationship with his grandfather, even closer than the one between himself and his father. They used to have long conversations on these walks. My dad must have been around ten, I imagine. My great-grand-



Fig.2. John Perivolaris, Chios 2016, (©Maggie O'Neill)

father was elderly at that time. During these walks, they would talk. However, there was always one point along the walk where my great-grandfather would go completely silent and they would sit on the low wall that runs alongside the pavement. My great-grandfather would suddenly be lost for words. He'd just gaze out across the water to Çesme, the Turkish town opposite. He was an Edwardian-era gentleman, restrained in his manners. He would have frowned at anyone showing too much emotion. He was a measured person, usually in control of his emotions. At the same time, he had a warm relationship with my father. My great-grandfather was generally liked and respected as a man of honour. A decent, fair-minded sort, by all accounts.

On a couple of occasions, my father saw tears in his grandfather's eyes, silent tears. That image of tears got me thinking... I have this image in my mind of an old gentleman who had come to Chios as part of the exchange of populations in 1922. He was a rich merchant in Smyrna who lost almost everything and came to Chios, where he'd never lived before. A typical experience shared by those who were exiled from their previous lives in Asia Minor. Suddenly finding themselves Greek citizens, they had to adapt to a country they didn't know, after having lived in Asia Minor alongside Armenians, Turks, Jews, and others as part of the Ottoman world.

I have always been haunted by the image of my great-grandfather looking back across the water with a sense of loss and longing.

Later that day we walked to Souda refugee camp, located where his Grandfathers generation of refugees from Turkey would have set up camp, and John motioned to me to look past the monument towards the refugee camp where one sight line revealed several periods of history. It was an intense moment in our walk, made so by the presence of a young boy, a refugee, sitting by the monument looking into the distance.

Our walk led to 'conjunctural analysis' that engaged in unsettling, troubling and unpacking a historical / political moment in relation to Europe's borders, the refugee 'crisis' and the history in the present. Walking as art practice enabled us to think 'conjuncturally' and, through our dialogue and analysis of the complexity in the present, towards possibilities for a better future - a radical, democratic imaginary.

What became clear through walking with John and other co-walkers in the *Walking Borders* project is that life stories, biographies are created over time and connect to places and that our cultural identities are formed in relation to these histories, people and places. As Stuart Hall²³ argued in *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* cultural identities are not:

eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned

by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.

In documenting and analyzing the particular history of the present, through walking with John in Chios, the combination of walking, photography and biographical research opened space for a politics of articulation and rearticulation connecting John's biography to history, politics and culture with rhythm, pace, connection to the environment, in and through time, real time and phenomenological time. And, it allowed us to challenge the dominant power/knowledge axis embedded in the governance of and hostile environment for asylum seekers and migrants. Our walks elicited conjunctural analysis, in the moment and on the move.

John: From where is it possible to begin? All Greeks are used to living among ruins, even those, like me, who are offspring of two diasporas: the exchange of populations after the end of the Ottoman Empire, and the second great diaspora after World War Two. The latter scattered Greeks to several countries and continents, primarily to the United States and Australia and, in my case, England. How is it possible to present a continuous narrative out of diaspora, when diaspora involves interruption, a shattering of history, biography, and identity? I have come to think that my tendency to write in fragments and, as a photographer, to deal in fragments, has something to do with such uprootedness. But maybe openness to other people, other histories, other cultures, is also the result of being a child of the Greek diaspora. Borders offer limits but also invite us to exceed those limits. By this stage in my life, I have come to the realisation that borders cannot be drawn as rigid straight lines. Rather, they follow the curve of the question mark with which the Cameroonian philosopher, Achille Mbembe concludes when he writes: 'Is the edge of the world a place from which to speak the world?'²⁴

By exploring the hyphenated space between life story research/biography and art, we may occupy a third space a hybrid space where visual/textual 'making' happens through 'subjective-reflexive feeling'²⁵ (Witkin 1974) that can, as in the examples above, counter misrecognition of the asylum seeker, the refugee, the migrant and help processes of social justice via a politics of recognition, as counter hegemonic.

Acknowledgement: With thanks to John Perivolaris and Fahir Hasedzic for permission to print their images.

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Richard Mosse Incoming and Heat Maps

Richard Mosse, Still from Incoming, 2014-17
© Richard Mosse. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York





Le Lieu Unique – Incoming, 2019
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Le Lieu Unique – Incoming, 2019
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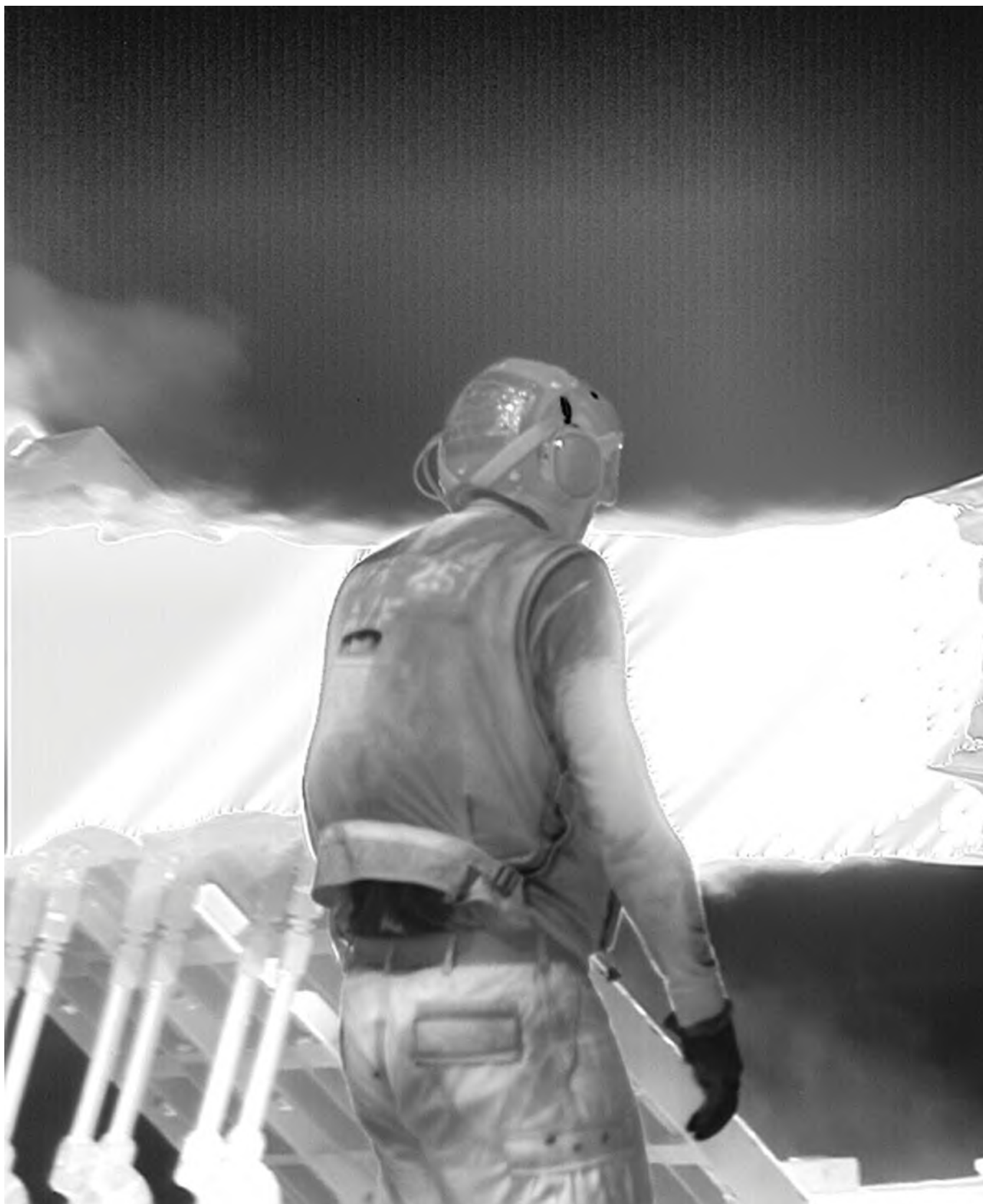
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Richard Mosse, Softball Stadium, Hellinikon Olympic Complex, Athens, Greece, 2016
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Richard Mosse, Idomeni Camp, Greek-Macedonia Border, 2016
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Richard Mosse, *Moria Camp, Lesbos, Greece*, 2016
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Richard Mosse, *Moria in Snow I, Lesbos, Greece*, 2017
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MAPPING BORDERS AND FLOWS

Nishat Awan

On navigating horizonless worlds: a counter-geography of border regimes

The lives of the undocumented are spent attempting to be somewhere else, so it is ironic that in such lives the question of temporality emerges more urgently than that of space. This is because the price exacted for moving across borders without papers is time. For example, people wait to earn enough money, they await decisions on their asylum applications, or simply wait for an opportune moment to go further. Therefore, migration policies and border securitisation create huge uncertainty in people's lives; there may be periods of stasis but that does not necessarily signal the end of a journey, which can encompass settling in, finding a home, deciding to move on or being deported. At the same time, deportation regimes and militarised borders keep people moving, this is what Shahram Khosravi terms 'circulation' '[...] a controlled movement of people sent back and forth between undocumentedness and deportability: between countries, between laws, between institutions.'¹ The condition of undocumented migration

becomes a state of living in a persistent present for those trapped within the border regime, yet within mainstream media and certain art contexts migrant lives are only represented through singular and tragic events. What political possibilities remain for engaging with this situation through visual culture, when we have seen that the migrant image itself has become a commodity to be traded in art galleries? Even with the best of intentions migrant lives are caught within a logic of spatial violence so that ordinary people and their dreams become spectacular tragedies. In dealing with such difficult topics, some contemporary art practices have deliberately blurred the line between fact and fiction, the real and the imaginary, in ways that question the very basis of documentary modes. Yet, in our 'post-truth' world, another strand of artistic production positions evidentiary practices as an antidote. This can be seen in the recent forensic turn that has also been heavily influenced by architectural practice and techniques of spatial

analysis. Here, I discuss some work we have been conducting as part of the research project 'Topological Atlas', that sits between these two strands, on the one hand mobilising techniques of spatial and visual analysis and, on the other working with multiple and overlapping narratives that do not necessarily produce a singular truth.² The project aims to create a counter geography of borders and an account of undocumented migration that resists the use of violence as the sole analytic and looks instead for forms of life that emerge within, and in relation to, the dynamics of the hostile environments of border control.

Katherine McKittrick's argument for 'a black sense of place' is useful here in thinking of forced migration and displacements not only through violence and death but also to turn our conceptual attention to the practices of resistance and modes of enduring that emerge in response.³ What relationalities are produced through the movement and displacement of people and how do these ordinary people affect the border regimes that they pass through and are not *only* subject to? Here I would also like to pause for a moment to consider the term 'border regime', which has been incredibly useful in developing a Foucauldian analysis of state control of people on the move, including an understanding that such control is deployed not only at the physical border, but also emerges in all of its dispersed forms through the deployment of technologies and bureaucracies of border securitisation and control. Yet, one of the consequences of the ubiquity of this term in migration research is that by only analysing the workings of power and its violent effects, we are left with the problem McKittrick, alongside many Black feminists, has identified, which is the erasure of certain modalities of living as some lives are only ever considered in death. We can think, here, of the many projects, articles and artworks that have rightly addressed the weaponised Mediterranean as the liquid incarnation of deathly migration policies. However, the people who die on those boats did not arrive from nowhere, their lives and afterlives extend far beyond European shores



Bus station on the outskirts of Karachi, Pakistan where many start their journey towards Europe (2019)
Photo: Nishat Awan

and the guilt that triggered an interest in them. For the purposes of this text, the border regime is understood as a technology of power that allows certain relationalities and disallows others and my analytical focus is on those relations that short circuit this logic and produce other geographies, no matter how fleeting. This requires paying attention to the communities that coalesce around the border understood in all of its complexity, including geographies that arise out of European concerns, narratives that do not produce perfect victims for humanitarian redress, and the varying forms of precarious labour that service everyday aspects of contemporary borders; from the petty official who checks IDs 'at random' to the smuggler who can help people pass through a checkpoint somewhere near the Pakistan-Iran border.

Territorial formations at the border

It is helpful to think of the border not only as a method for 'the multiplication of labour', as Mezzadra and Neilson have posited, or as an ordering and sifting device for managing flows, as has been discussed more generally in border studies, but to also view it as a shifting territorial formation that is itself affected by the displacements it enacts. This requires a

return to the question of territory and that of the environment.⁴ Shifting territorial formations coalesce around geopolitical borders as we have seen in the case of Europe in 2015 when states opened and closed their borders in response to the movement of people, actions which went against their commitments to international treaties. The case of the Mexico-US border, in particular, has shown how the environment itself is being weaponised to deter migrants becoming an integral part of the border regime. However, what is perhaps important to note is that while people are funnelled into environments that are extremely dangerous and where survival is often impossible, the landscape, as an actor within the formation of territory, is ambivalent, that is to say that there are also examples of people being able to hide and evade border control through harnessing aspects of the landscape. At the Pakistan-Iran border, for example, knowing how to foretell the coming of a dust storm is a crucial skill for those hoping to guide people across undetected as is an embodied knowledge of the rugged terrain. The journeys of undocumented migration are, thus, producing new counter-territories and forms of resistance that for some are analogous to the underground railroad, the network of secret routes that allowed enslaved

African-Americans to escape to northern free states or to Canada. It is too tempting, perhaps, to make such easy correlations, but it is hard not to think of the legacies of slavery and colonisation in the context of the bitter words of one person I met in Turkey, working tirelessly to help migrants along their way. He noted how, in the past, colonial powers came and took the labour they required, but, today, the slave walks to their indentured servitude all by themselves. For this person, tired of witnessing such injustices, these were words of despair, but, perhaps, he would have found some comfort in thinking of himself as a conductor on a contemporary version of the underground railroad. Yet, Frederick Douglass' critique remains apposite; that many abolitionists by publicising their work too much were detracting from the clandestine nature of the underground railroad and the extreme danger the conductors, who were themselves former slaves, exposed themselves to by travelling into southern states where they could easily have lost their hard won freedom.⁵

In addressing the border as a geographical and territorial phenomenon, a technology of government and a device that produces its own communities, our emphasis has been on producing accounts that allow space for the fragile

movements of the undocumented while retaining a degree of opacity. We understand these not only as lines of evasion but also as a faint web of sedimenting relationalities that produce a particular sense of place and a counter geography to border management. In this respect, our approach is indebted to Ursula Bie-mann's substantial body of work that has elaborated the notion of a counter geography as bringing together a theoretical analysis of globalisation, ethnographies of the material realities of life, and a critical approach to the abstractions inherent in technological representations.⁶ The project, 'Topological Atlas', therefore, takes as its topic of interest not only the border, migration and territories of displacement but also the technologies that curate our relationship to places at a distance. I have written elsewhere on the prevalence of forms of digital witnessing in relation to places that are considered out-of-bounds and the fraught issue of how we might then construct an ethical engagement with such places where it may be difficult to spend time due to conflict or where access is restricted by state actors.⁷ Distance, in this sense,

is not just about being located far away or being inaccessible, but also speaks to those places that, through their material conditions, repel us in some way, or from which we are repelled. Distance is, here, considered in a topological idiom, as resulting from a lack of relational connections that stretch topographical notions of nearness. While such places might disallow a situated or embodied engagement, for some, increasingly, they are made available through visual regimes of modelling and mapping.

From NASA's Blue Marble, which is a composite image of our planet to computational models produced through data aggregation and the virtual realms of computer games, there is a certain sense that we inhabit a world of totalities where the horizon beyond which things might remain uncertain or incalculable seems to have disappeared. As visual and spatial practice embraces these technologies, what critical questions emerge around the political potential of such methods? These platforms, on the one hand, give us information overload and, on the other, produce a sense of a world made completely visible through

forms of data analysis. Platform visibility seems to have exploded notions of perspective and embodied forms of knowing that might be the usual mode of navigating visual culture as lived and perceived. Instead, the challenge posed is similar to what Harun Farocki identified as that which computer animation presented to film; the relationships between space and time that are usually made by the film maker through techniques of montage are now to be produced by the viewer (or the user) themselves as they navigate through and across platforms. Yet, this navigation occurs in a totalising world that resists any outside meaning beyond the closed and often obscure circuits produced through the exchange and analysis of data across platforms.⁸ Recent debates in visual culture have discussed what a machine or a platform sees (as opposed to what it makes visible). These range from Trevor Paglen's exploration of machine vision that does not produce images that can be seen by what he refers to as 'meat-eyes' to the question of how visibility transforms in relation to algorithmic production.⁹ Here, the notion of image ensembles emerging



Dust storms are frequent near the Pakistan-Iran border (2019)
Photo: Nishat Awan

across hardware, software and various external inputs produces a form of seeing that, according to Adrian Mackenzie and Anna Munster, [...create new opacities that even the most advanced seeing-devices - the machine learning-based predictive models used to organize and order image flows - cannot dispel.¹⁰

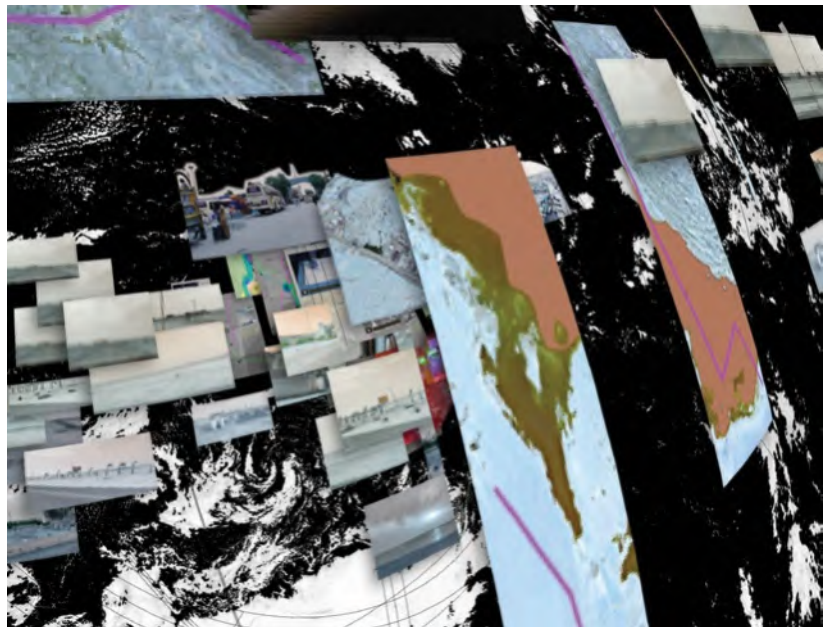
This opacity sits uncomfortably next to the claim to make far away places visible or to reveal the processes that are producing and transforming territories and suggests that the pertinent political question may not be what we can see but how we see and what this does to our ability to act. If we take Farocki's insight that navigation is a key mode through which we can critically engage with new forms of the visual, which seems to still hold true for the image ensembles described above, then the question of how to navigate through opacity seems to be crucial, knowing also that opacity, as described by Édouard Glissant, is in certain contexts for certain people a mode of survival.¹¹ If we consider the practice of navigation in the context of seafaring, it requires an external datum provided by the horizon or the stars, which, in contemporary times, is provided by the ping of our phones to the satellites orbiting overhead. These offer a relation to a known object from which a position can be triangulated and then pinpointed on an already existing map. Orientation is different, however; it does not require an external datum in the same way. Here, I am thinking of Sara Ahmed's notion of orientation where she writes that bodies and objects are affected by the orientations they take towards each other through sharing space, and that these orientations depend on certain tendencies and social norms. Ahmed is writing about queer lives but her insight into how orientations act both as 'straightening devices' as well as providing 'fleeting moments', where something slips and other inhabitations are possible, is I think also applicable here.¹² We are finding such orientations in the lives of the people who are making their way across difficult borders, while we are also thinking orientation as a methodology for approaching modelling and mapping platforms so

that we do not reproduce their totalising effects. Instead, we focus on producing a series of narratives that resist reproducing the all encompassing violence of the border regime, while, at the same time, involve a critical distancing from the regimes of visibility, embedded within digital platforms of mapping and modelling.

Topological maps

Based in the mathematical study of continuous transformation, topological thinking privileges relations over spatial proximity. In a topological culture, movement and change are experienced not as fixed forms traversing space and time but are themselves composed and recomposed in relation to each other. A topological approach to mapping would therefore be able to represent the border as a dynamic entity that produces its own culture through different types of practices. Since topological thinking views culture as intensive, units of measure and notions of value also emerge in relation to each other rather than as external metrics.¹³ In the context of migration and the functioning of borders, it is an attempt to understand border conditions as highly specialised while also being constituted through a series

of unexpected connections across multiple temporal and spatial registers. This is especially pertinent for imagining the relation of scale to mapping. Scale, as a relationship between measure and ratio that is used to index the spatial, could also be considered in flux so that contingent and dynamic relations emerge that transform according to time, context and location. This transformed relationship between measure and value also maps onto the relations between ontology and epistemology, the inescapably intertwined nature of which has been at the core of a feminist politics of location or situated knowledge. In such intensive relations, the role of participative research becomes important as it intervenes in the process of creating value through ways of knowing and apprehending the world. Here, the multiple roles of mapping as a mode of participative engagement, a way of collecting data and a form of spatial analysis has much to offer.¹⁴ While concerned with network thinking, a topological mapping practice would not make a strong distinction between emphasising connectivity (as is the case with actor-network theory) and emphasising nodes within a network (as object-oriented ontology does). Instead what is of importance is how forms of life emerge



The partial and patchy representations of the Topological Atlas
Photo: Yelta Kôm

across asymmetric relations and through the interplay of vertical pressures and lateral affinities that are also highly localised. Thus, a topological map would be necessarily spatial to account for such local conditions while at the same time operating with a relational paradigm that transcends questions of scale.

Maps in a topological atlas would work with partial and patchy representations, resisting the evidentiary urge within some contemporary mapping practices. In particular, the project conceptualises the 'atlas' as an unfinished, impossible and colonial representation of a world, but also as a form of world-making or worlding. We wonder how this topographical representation *par excellence* can be reimaged differently. One important avenue for a critical practice would be to trace the genealogy of maps and mapmaking not through the usual route of thinking with geographical maps that are completely entwined with the colonial endeavour of charting and appropriating new territories. If we, instead, trace the lineage of mapping in the field of architecture a different set of concerns emerge. Since architecture, at its most traditional, deals with the design and construction of buildings, forms of drawing and working with buildings have been constitutive of what architectural mapping is today. Architecture embraced the axonometric drawing as a mode of visualising buildings and objects from two different sides but with a view from nowhere. This was not the bird's eye view of the geographic map but a composite image that created a view that no one could see, so it could be considered an early precursor to the totalising models discussed above. Yet one crucial difference remains, which is that in most architectural mapping there is no claim to represent 'reality', rather reality is always constructed through the act of drawing, meaning that maps become propositional devices. Architectural drawings are also made with the purpose of communication, traditionally between architects, craftsmen and builders, and today between more diverse communities of practice. Architectural maps can range from the scale of regions and terri-

tories to that of a building interior and the intimate scale of the body. This ease of, and necessity of, switching and combining scales and views in a seamless manner is central to the use of maps in the discipline. For studying spatial and geographic phenomena, such mapping can be a powerful form of visual representation that allows the complexity gleaned from ethnographic methods to be reproduced visually in ways that can produce speculative forms of analysis. The question of perspective is therefore central to the mapping practice we are developing, which asks in particular how it might be possible to situate oneself within such visual and spatial regimes, and how we can account for racialised, gendered and other forms of exclusion within these increasingly ubiquitous worlds.

Border entanglements

For the last year, the Topological Atlas project team has been working on the Pakistan-Iran border to understand the nature of the territorial formations being produced and reproduced through the movement of people and goods, seasonal and climatic changes and the knotted entanglements of these flows and exchanges. We have explored these at key locations along the border, such as the Taftan border crossing which is the only formal border post between Pakistan and Iran. However, our main focus has been on the smaller crossings where inhabitants of the area can pass with a *rahdaari*¹⁵ - a word used for tolls or transit duties but also for the piece of paper required to pass the border at these smaller local crossings. It can only be used by those who can prove residence in close proximity to the border and allows for short stays of up to 15 days within 60km of the border. These small outposts are where grey border trade occurs, for example, the roughly 40,000 litres of cheap Iranian diesel that flows into Pakistan in small barrels on the back of pickup trucks and motorcycles every day, or the narcotics trade that connects Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.¹⁶ These are also the places where undocumented migrants can cross the border on their way

to Iran, Turkey or further into Europe. In using mapping, visualisation and spatial analysis to consider these phenomenon, the aim is not to reveal the routes and strategies of those who are evading the border regime in order to make their way to what they consider to be more prosperous lives in Europe, nor is it to reveal the partially hidden practices of low-level smugglers who are often trying to make ends meet in an area that has long been neglected by both the Pakistani and Iranian states. Instead, the aim is to make sense of the entanglements of power not through the language of sovereignty, as Elizabeth Povinelli has cautioned,¹⁷ and which is the usual modality in which exchanges at the geopolitical border are understood, but through the tension between terrain, technology and subjectivity. In concrete terms, this means, for example, understanding how ethnicity affects experiences of crossing the border - Pashtuns, Punjabi or Baloch will have completely different experiences of the technologies of border management including how they are treated at the frequent check posts along the highways. The system of 'lines' (bribes) and favours that allow some to pass through and others not are often brokered through low-level agents who are also drivers or conductors of buses or are in the guise of passengers. Their ethnicity, as well as the informal networks they have managed to cultivate, will ensure their survival in this dangerous business - it is an example of what Abdou Maliq Simone calls 'people as infrastructure'.¹⁸ The infrastructural relations in these border areas are less to do with the road, fence and wall building that we would normally associate with hardened borders (although these are also present), instead, the state modulates flows across the border that it never intended to stop and it relies on this infrastructural capacity of people to find a way through the various obstacles it places in the way, some intended and others not. Of course, the system of 'lines' ensures monetary value not only for those whose ingenuity allows them 'to derive maximal outcomes from a minimal set of elements',¹⁹ but also for the state at large that derives economic ben-

efit from the cheap oil and other goods that move across the border.

The informal nature of oil transportation means there is spillage everywhere, the pristine coastline along the Arabian Sea in Balochistan is often polluted by the small boats that carry and use the diesel. To trace the lines of toxins that seep into the land and the sea from the small scale industry that this diesel supports, and that is crucial to so many livelihoods, is to map out the ways in which our lives are interconnected across geopolitical borders. 'As we stretch the local across these seeping transits we need not scale up to the Human or the global, but we cannot remain in the local. We can only remain *hereish*.'²⁰ Povinelli's concept of the 'hereish' is what drives the types of maps we are producing that not only visualise from the perspective of human relations, and which are not only local or global, but also are glimpses into these complex entanglements that can only ever make sense from a situated perspective rather than the god's eye view of something like the Blue Marble or the total immersion of virtual reality type models. Some principles for producing 'hereish' maps for a topological atlas would be: to make patchy models that allow for moments of uncertainty and unknowing rather than producing totalising worlds; to privilege intensities of experience and relationalities over an attempt to produce a unifying vision; to use narrative as a device to navigate through such complex representations; and, perhaps most importantly, to produce analyses that not only reveal spatial violence but also the forms of life that resist and to contribute towards supporting those. The Topological Atlas project, thus, mobilises other ways of knowing that do not only depend on uncovering truths, but work instead with modes of opacity and forms of representation that can do justice to ordinary lives. Such lives are caught within what is often not the extraordinary violence of the tragedies that unfold on our television screens but rather it is the 'slow violence' of protracted environmental degradation that forces people to move or the quasi-event of violence that can span generations. What approx-

imate narratives and future worlds can we imagine that allow us to work with such 'uncertain futures'?²¹ Rather than basing our politics on a logic of pre-emption that reproduces a world based on its own narrow understandings of risk and threat, we are producing speculative models that work with multiple truths and actively create other realities.

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Nicolas Lambert

Every map is an act of creation and not a mirror of the World

Some rhetorical issues about migration mapping

“The importance of an image is measured by the magnitude of its imaginary aura” (Gaston Bachelard)

Mapping migration is nowadays a mandatory requirement for a thorough understanding of its spatial logic. However, it is also a huge scientific and methodological challenge. Indeed, how can we make the complexity of human movements worldwide visible by summarizing them in simple still images? Could there be some representational bias, hidden motives or something unspoken? Finally, what are the discourses carried by these geographical images? In this paper, we propose some decoding keys to try to understand how the maps represent the world, and allow us to change the way we see it.

Maps

Maps are representations of the world, which allow people to visualize vast areas at a glance that are not directly observable. No astronaut, for example, no matter how high s/he is in space, can look at all the countries of the world at

any given moment. In addition, no diver can observe the topography of the entire seabed. The map is a device that shows what no eye can see.¹ Therefore, in order to fit the whole world on a sheet of paper or a computer screen, it is then measured, triangulated, digitized, stored, simplified, and distorted by more or less traceable mathematical transformations. Following this, statistical data can be added to it in the form of graphic symbols to express a particular geographical phenomenon, which, of course, are also transformations. In short, every map is like a canvas on which dots, lines and areas are drawn. Every map is the result of an organized gathering of shapes and words, designed to narrate geographical phenomena. Indeed, this is what cartography is all about, telling geographical stories.

Cartography is a real scientific method, which makes it possible to catch and immobilize the invisible, it invites us to think about what surrounds us by extracting us from individual schemes of perception. In this way, it makes space objective.² Much more than a list of statistical figures in a table, maps bring out the underlying structures of reality, pro-

viding keys to understand how the world works. One thinks, of course, of the famous 1858 maps by Edmund Cooper and John Snow, which linked the Cholera epidemic in London to water contamination, allowing the identification of which pump was responsible for the disease.³ Through this example and so many others, we see that cartography is a rational methodology to access knowledge. It is a method to figure out the world and cartography is definitely the geographical researcher's favourite working tool.

However, the way in which maps summarize geographical phenomena is often neither gratuitous nor disinterested.⁴ For the Frontex agency,⁵ maps are used, for instance, to determine where the external borders of the European Union are most vulnerable to the arrival of migrants, and, thus, are relevant tools to help in the deployment of troops to “protect” the borders (with push backs or other operations). On the contrary, for NGOs, they are a way of denouncing the absurdity and ineffectiveness of migration policies, but also highlighting practices that violate human rights.⁶ In the hands of nationalist political leaders, maps can be useful in planning and monitoring the construction of walls on their borders. In the hands of activists, maps take on a tactical dimension when it comes to digging tunnels or determining hidden paths to avoid police at border crossings.⁷ Maps are, therefore, sometimes tools in the favour of a dominant authority, and sometimes weapons to denounce it,⁸ and so they are actually deeply political objects.

There is, therefore, a dialectic within maps that is often misunderstood. They are both intrinsically scientific and objective, but also necessarily subjective and partisan. The subjectivity of maps, which geographers have been slow to accept as such, can be explained in different ways. First of all, no single map can claim to represent the complexity of the real world on its own. According to Goodman⁹ “There is no such thing as a completely unabridged map; for abridgment is intrinsic to map making”. It is a fact that clarity requires simplification and we cannot put everything on a map.

REFUGEES WELCOME

VS

WARNING INVASION

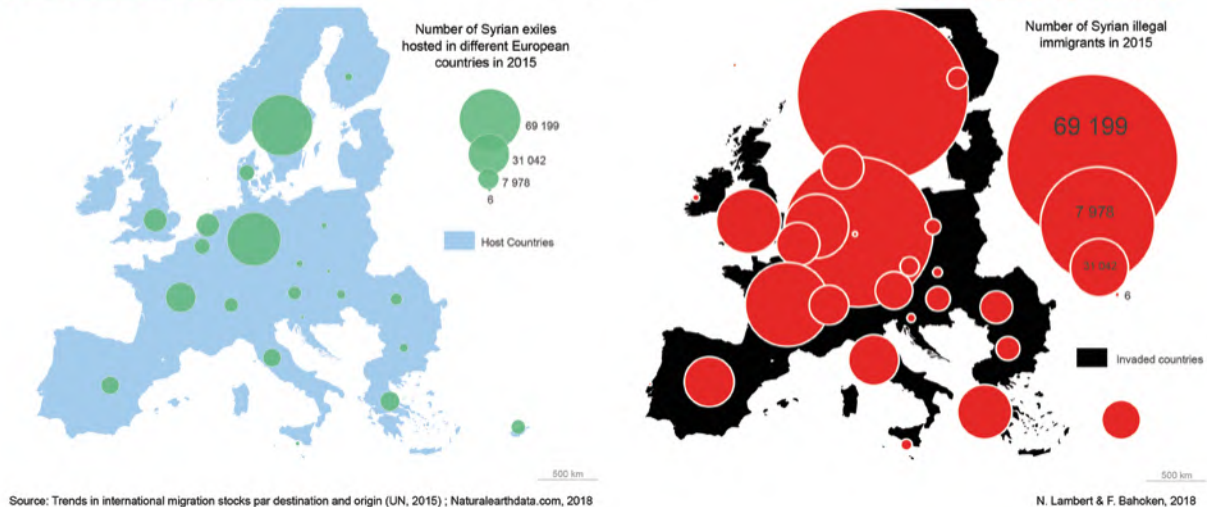


Figure 1: Two maps with opposite messages built with the same data

A good map will therefore be the one that simplifies, summarizes, prioritizes, omits, orders, in short, that makes a schematization of the reality necessary for the emergence of the keys to understanding. The map helps us to “understand and search for what’s behind the appearances”.¹⁰ Reasoning through the absurd, many authors, from Jorge Luis Borges to Lewis Carroll and Umberto Eco, have speculated about what an unsimplified map would look like.¹¹ It consists of a full-size map, which would represent everything in the world and would be superimposed on it at every point. It is easy to understand that, beyond the impossibility of such a realization, it would be a pointless task. It seems fair to argue then that simplification is an integral part of the mapping process. Consequently, because of their inability to represent everything, maps can be considered to untruthful, if only by omission. They distort the truth to help the users see what they need to see.¹² Ultimately, every map is the result of an intention, an intellectual vision. As Bahoken¹³ points out, the cartographic patterns are not mute, they are endowed with meanings that reflect the intention of the designer (or author) of a map. In short, every map is an act of creation.

Like a language, cartography has rhetorical weapons. Every map carries within it a purpose which is expressed

by colours, lines, words, exaggerations and omissions, that are not mechanical and automatic expressions of statistical data¹⁴ The fundamental concepts of rhetoric, which were defined by Greek philosophers more than twenty centuries ago, such as Aristotle, apply very well to contemporary cartography. They are based on three pillars: logos, pathos, ethos.

The Logos is the appeal to reason, to the intellect, to logical reasoning. It is the message as such and it is the content. It is scientific cartography and its wish to objectify reality (see above). On the other hand, Pathos is the use of affects, emotions and imagination. It is about choosing round, harmonious layouts rather than sharp, abrupt angles. It is a balancing act between choosing small symbols to minimise a phenomenon or enlarging them strongly to give it importance. It means choosing soft, pastel colours or aggressive, contrasting colours. For example, how should Syrian refugees in Europe be represented (Figure 1)? Which map is the best one? The one on the left? The one on the right? Which will calm, and which will warn? What is the acceptable level of migrant per country etc? Through these two maps on Syrian migrants are based on the same data, it can easily be seen that pathos is a fearsome weapon in cartography.¹⁵

Finally, Ethos is what refers to funda-

mental values, credibility and authority. This is the weight that will be given to the producer of the map: the academic reputation of a researcher, the fame of an institution, of a newspaper... Ethos is the authoritative argument.

In brief, a map will be more effective, the more eloquent it is and it will be able to captivate an audience to communicate the maximum amount of information in a minimum amount of time. And for this, the art of cartography will consist of constructing a coherent, meaningful image, where all the elements of the map will be linked together according to a discursive logic that will be able to speak both to mind and to affects.¹⁶ Therefore, cartography is definitely a powerful weapon of communication.

Flows

Mapping Migration is a topic that emerged quite late in the history of cartography. Let us recall that the first known maps come from prehistory with the so-called Bedolina Map, and that the first charts appear in the Middle Ages with Nicolas Oresme (1370), while the first maps representing statistical information have only been produced very recently. The first thematic map only dates from 1826, it is the choropleth map of the popular instruction of the Frenchman

Charles Dupin. Subsequently, several authors were then interested in the representation of the movement of people, at a period, it is true, of great international mobility. Let us also recall that between 1820 and 1914, more than 60 million people sailed to the United States. In 1913, on the threshold of the First World War, the number of migrants worldwide represented 5% of the world's population compared to only 3.5% today.

Among the authors who have left their mark on the history of migration flow mapping, is the French engineer Charles Joseph Minard who produced a map in 1862 depicting the world's emigrants with the help of coloured bands of varying thickness depending on the number of people. Another important contributor was Matthew Sankey who formalized and used these methods abundantly through his famous diagrams, and, finally, Ernst Georg Ravenstein and his map "Currents of Migrations" published in 1885, which was probably the first migration map using arrows (even if the first

use of arrows in cartography also goes back to Minard). Since then, the ways of representing international migration have proliferated, but the methodological and cognitive challenges remain.

Mapping migratory movements, i.e. immobilising a complex spatio-temporal, social and political system, is still a real challenge today¹⁷ We have to try to imagine how to catch, in a single image, bodies in motion, like dancers moving on a stage, crossing each other, tangled up in a variety of chaotic trajectories. How can all these particular traces be represented at the same time on the same image the size of a sheet of paper when we know that the number of migrants worldwide today is close to 270 million people?

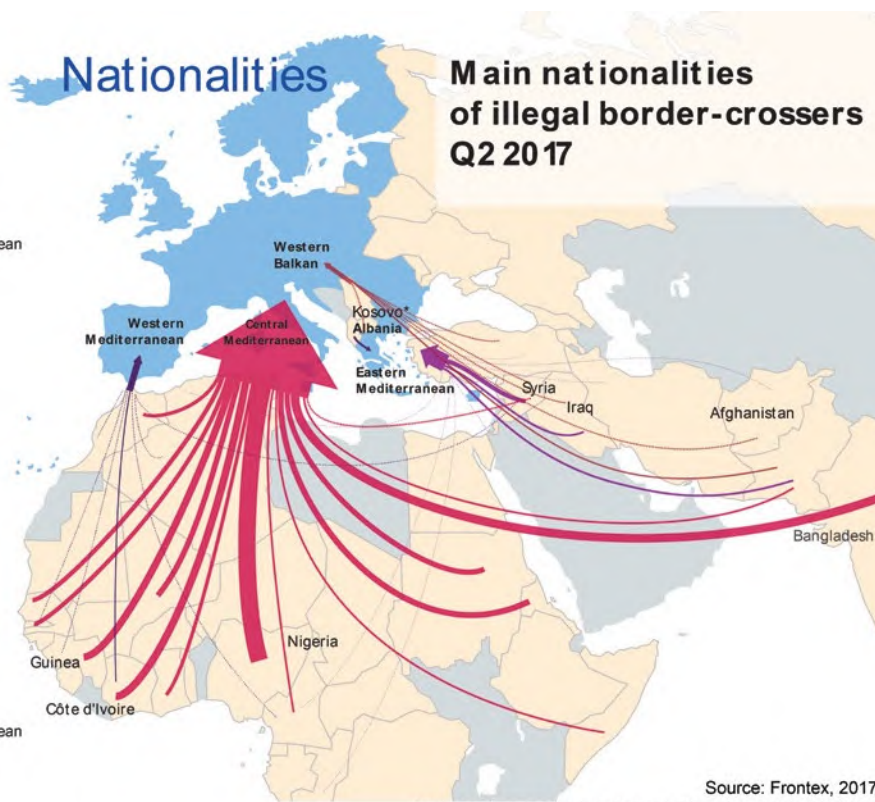
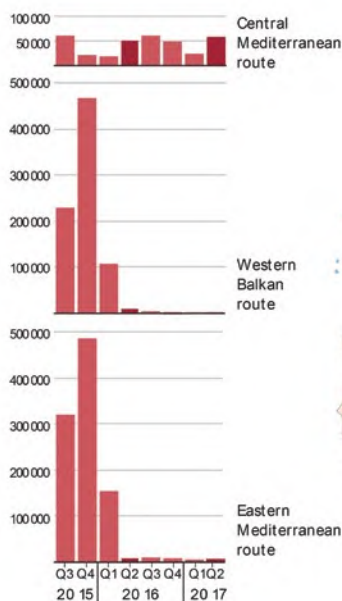
To better understanding, let's consider this issue in a concrete way. The United Nations currently recognises 197 states around the world. Representing population displacements between all the countries of the world over a given period of time would be like drawing nearly 40,000 lines on the same image.¹⁸ In addition,

even if only actual population flows are taken into account (migrants from all countries do not go to all countries), at least 10,000 links should be represented, which is still considerable. Even if the process could be easily automated and did not cause any technical problems, such a map has absolutely no chance of being readable and would, therefore, be completely useless. To solve these issues, cartographers, therefore, have to manipulate statistical and geographic data before representing them and there are several operations available. For example, filtering, or further statistical analysis, can be used to represent only the largest or most significant flows (but also hide the smallest) and this would no doubt lighten the map. Another possibility would be to no longer work at the country level, but to build regional aggregates (Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, etc.). The choices made here would have a very strong impact on the resulting image. For example, if one chose to aggregate all African countries

Trend

Quarterly detections of illegal border-crossing, 2015–2017

Number



Source: Frontex, 2017

https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Fran_Q2_2017.pdf

Figure 2 : The red arrows

into a single entity, there would be a significant flow towards Europe. On the other hand, if Africa is divided into smaller regional blocs (North Africa, West Africa, etc.), then the movement towards Europe would appear much less significant or even minor. Let us remember that only 37% of migration in the world takes place from developing countries to developed countries and that the majority of migration takes place between the countries of the South and, only 20% of African migrants migrate to Europe. Selecting the information and modifying the geographical units, therefore, produces images with opposite messages, even though they are based on the same data,¹⁹ which is sometimes the reason for controversy.

Maps play an important function in the way we collectively picture the world. Moreover, on an extremely political and controversial subject such as migration, maps will most of the time assume a particular angle that will influence our way of seeing. In Europe, the maps we see in the media will almost invariably discuss the subject of migration from the perspective of non-European migrants arriving in Europe, and this is quite logical because they underpin political issues that are present in our societies. Are there too many migrants arriving? Is the flow absorbable? Will it destabilize our societies? Wouldn't it be better to close the borders? The Eurocentric bias is, therefore, largely explainable. However, this bias works like blinkers that truncate the geographical reality of displacements. Thus, the question of Syrian refugees will be addressed by asking, for example, whether France should take in as many refugees as Germany, without ever seeing that it is in fact the countries bordering Syria that are the main host countries. Nor do we usually map migrants from rich countries, who we prefer to call expatriates. In the end, this Eurocentric viewpoint almost systematically carries the same discourse: the influx of migrants is potentially dangerous. This idea is often underpinned by extremely powerful rhetorical elements exemplified by the famous red arrow.

Most of the time, flows are mapped by more or less curved lines connecting

countries or regions of the world, the ends of which are marked by an arrow indicating the direction of movement (the thickness of the line representing the volume, as on the maps by Charles Joseph Minard mentioned above). While this type of representation may sound effective since it brings to mind the idea of movement, it is often based on stock data, i.e. a count of the number of migrants in a country at a given time. The arrows, therefore, often do not directly indicate the movements, or even the trajectories taken, but simply the countries of origin and residence of the migrants. This is a first bias while the second, much more critical bias, is related to what has been mentioned above. By considering only European countries as countries of destination or by choosing to represent only the migration routes heading towards Europe, this method leads to the construction of maps with all the arrows converging at the same place. This convergence effect, combined with the often thick lines, creates an anxiety-provoking graphic discourse: a rhetoric of invasion

(figure 2). This aspect is, moreover, reinforced by a choice of colours which are certainly meaningful: blue for our own camp and red for the "enemies".²⁰ Thanks to the work of Michel Pastoureau, we know that colours have strong meanings. Blue, for example, evokes calmness, peace, serenity and consensus. On the other hand, red refers more to danger, instability or risk.²¹ Of course, each colour has many meanings, sometimes contradictory, and which can vary from one culture to another. Nevertheless, it would be naive to believe that cartographers choose colours merely on the basis of their readability. Colour is one of the most powerful tools available to cartographers and they are well aware of this.

Finally, this map made by the Frontex agency, like so many others, tells the story of a Europe invaded by hordes of migrants. This map has become the 'normal' and ultimately hegemonic cartographic representation of its subject matter.²² This is the representation of migration flows that we have in our brains. Other representations are, however,

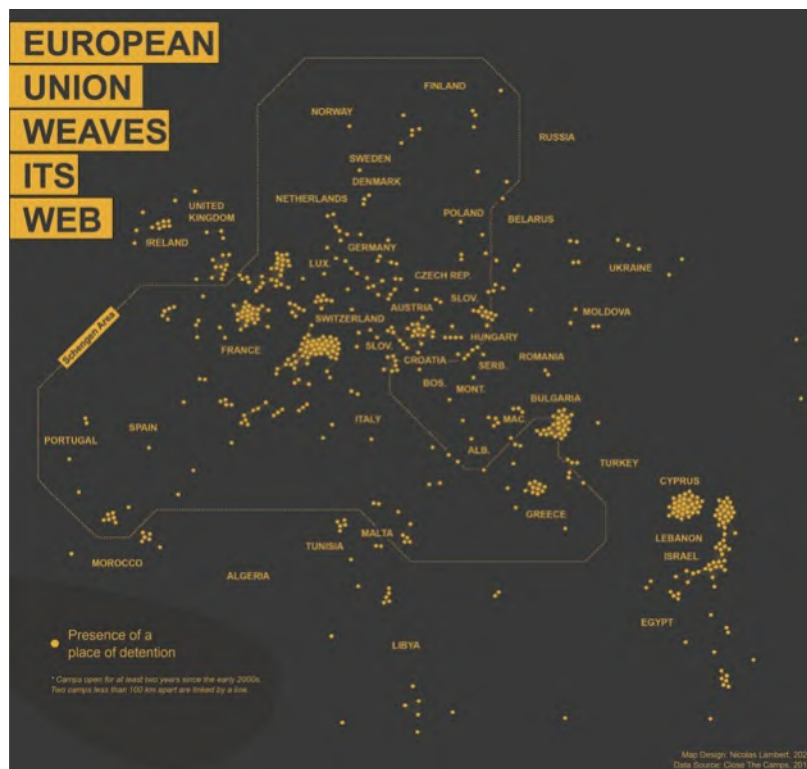


Figure 3: Where is the border?

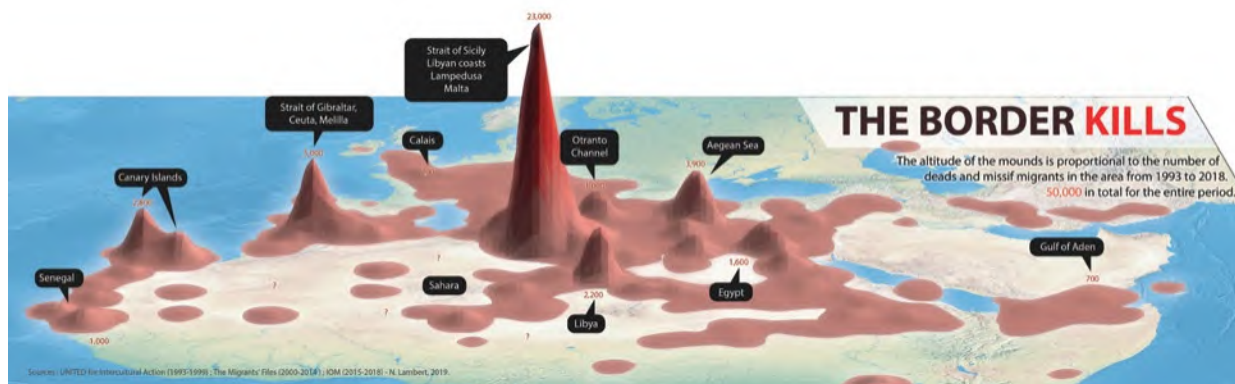


Figure 4: The red mound of migration

possible, but they remain peripheral. One can think, for example, of the “Great African Wheel”, hand-drawn by Philippe Rekacewicz,²³ which aims to break the linear and unidirectional logic of these representations by replacing them with a more systemic and circulatory aspect symbolized by the cogwheel. Indeed, perhaps all these hand-drawn maps, which, rather than representing aggregated data, represent real-life stories, accounts of itineraries, would be better representations because they attempt to humanize cartographic representations from the migrant’s point of view, reflecting his or her lived experience as closely as possible.

Borders

The struggle over the representation of migration, thus, carries within it a deeper, ideological fight over the appreciation of migration itself. Moreover, while flow maps give the impression of a certain fluidity in space, it must be noted that the actual movements of migrants are punctuated by numerous devices designed to hinder their movements. This is the burning issue of borders and how they are represented.

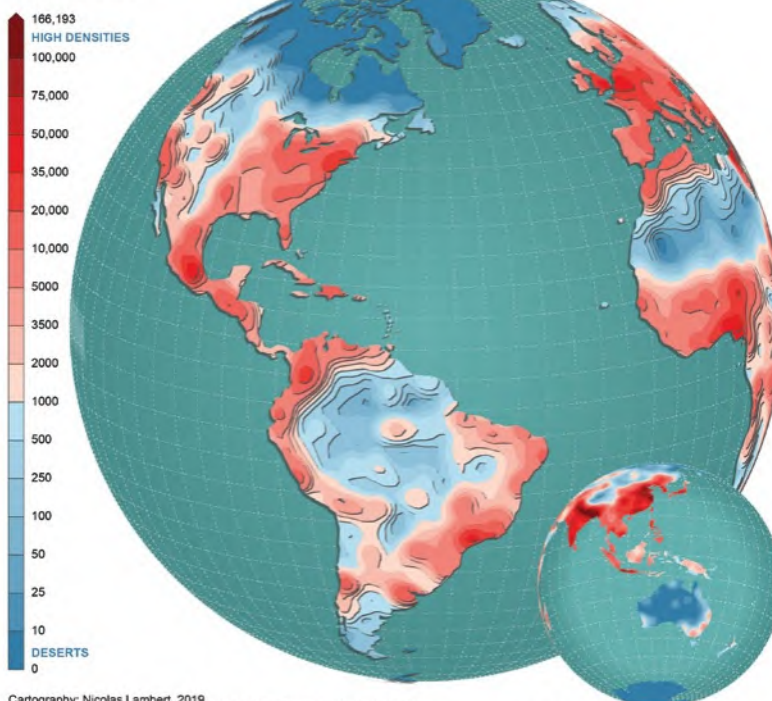
The first Schengen Convention was signed in 1985. Its primary objective was to ensure both the free movement of people and goods and the security of the European Union’s external borders. The *raison d’être* of this convention was to bring about the abolition of borders without losing control over the movement of non-European foreigners. In fact, out of

126 articles of the Convention, only one deals with freedom of movement while all the others concern the security of external borders. In reality, the aim of Schengen was to draw a dividing line between European countries and the others, and to make it as secure as possible. It’s the idea of the fortress. In our imagination, we often think of these boundaries as lines drawn in a binary way delimiting

an outside and an inside, separating the desirable from the undesirable. As Reece Jones²⁴ rightly reminds us, “borders are artificial lines drawn on maps to exclude other people from access to resources and the right to move”. In cartography, there will, therefore, often be a preference to represent these borders by linear plots precisely following the contours of the countries, with a certain flexibility

A BORDERLESS WORLD

World Population in 2020
(In thousands inhabitants)



Cartography: Nicolas Lambert, 2019.
Source: Gridded Population of the World (GPW) - Count, rev11, 2020, 1_deg.
Potentials as defined by J.Q. Stewart (1942) with these parameters: Function = exponential ; Span = 200km ; Beta = 3.
Made With R & D3.js. See <https://neocarto.github.io/noborder>

Figure 5: A Borderless World

regarding the maritime delineation. Some authors will sometimes give it a more angular appearance in order to break this aspect too smooth and too harmonious. Nevertheless, the idea of the line border is well anchored in people's minds.

Of course, barbed wire, walls and barriers are a ruthless reminder of the linear dimension of the border and the violence it can impose on migrants,²⁵ but they are merely one aspect of it. There are also places of retention in airports, prisons, hot spots... (that can be represented on maps by dots), which have been considered since 2003 as a major tool of migration policy in Europe. Nowadays, confinement takes place far away from the official borders of the European Union. This process of "externalisation" actually consists of having non-EU countries take over the surveillance of our own borders, which represents a de facto border delocalization. Countries designated as border guards often lack the legal framework, the material capacity and the political will to take on the role but, under European pressure, they have no choice. In the end, the map (Figure 3) shows a reticular and mobile border, a net-like boundary, which is woven over time until it extends its grip on neighbouring countries, which is a very different representation from the traditional linear one.

Finally, after the line and the point, there is the area (Figure 4). How can we not see the border as a large battlefield when we know that more than 50,000 people have died on it since the early 1990s?²⁶ Even if it is impossible to have an accurate account of the number of missing people, it must be said that this figure is comparable to a war; a war waged by the European Union against migrants. However, beyond simple accounting, these data also allow us to sketch a geography of this deadly border and to compare it with the migration policies of Europe. Every time Europe increases the controls on its external borders (and some of its internal borders), this tightening has no effect on the intensity of migratory flows while every time a crossing point is closed (Strait of Gibraltar, Canary Islands, Lampedusa, etc.), migratory flows are deflected but never stopped,

making trajectories to Europe each time more expensive, longer and much more dangerous. The migration border, thus, becomes mobile, like a polymorphous conflict zone that is being recomposed in response to the incessant movement of migration routes.

Conclusion: cartography and imagination

Maps shape our vision of the world. The representation of reality validates reality itself by giving it a concrete, simplified and perceptible form at a glance. In short, these representations of the world shape our way of living and interacting with it. They shape the way we occupy the Earth so why continue to produce maps where every national boundary is represented by a bold line and where statistical data is systematically locked into rigid administrative grids, like a 'corset' that is too tight? Why not join the old idea of the anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus of a world shared by all humans, in which each person can live in freedom? A world which is, therefore, without edges, without a centre, and where no one can be excluded (figure 5). Let us recall that even today, only 10% of children grow up in a wealthy country and that one person in ten suffers from hunger. "Borders and lines on maps are not a representation of pre-existing differences between peoples and places; they create those differences" (Jones, 2016). Drawing a world without borders is about overcoming them so that everyone can understand that there is nothing natural or inevitable about these lines drawn by hand on maps.

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Krista Lynes

How the World is not a Map: The Political Aesthetics of Mapping Migrant Journeys

"He told me I had to go first from Dhaka to Russia / No that's wrong / I went first from Dhaka to New Delhi / Where I spent two days / Then, I left from Moscow / Which is here / I arrived in Moscow / After a week in Moscow / The man told me we had to leave for Skopje / In a country called Macedonia... When I arrived in Skopje / They told me that my papers looked a little fake / They told me 'You cannot enter the country' / And they called the police / And I was jailed for 8 months and 20 days, something like that / Afterwards they sent me to Bangladesh... The man I paid to go to Italy said 'Wait a few months, we'll find another way...' " *Mapping Journey Project* (2008-11)

Bouchra Khalili's *Mapping Journey Project*, a multichannel set of video-graphic accounts of migrant passage, puts into play a critical tension between mapping and journeying. While map-

ping pulls toward a Cartesian coordinate system, made up of clear borders, identifying markers, and seamlessness, journeying pulls in another direction, towards eventfulness, misdirection, crossing and crossing back. Mapping is about representation, but it is also associated with border security regimes, nationalism, and control; journeying, on the other hand, is an attempt to flee the very conditions mapping seeks to enforce, which frequently includes racialized and gendered violence. The tension Khalili's project generates between the map and the journey exposes the differential conditions of movement in the 21st century.

Khalili's project is situated in a particularly charged context: FRONTEX (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency responsible for "border management") was signed into law in 2004 and reformed in 2007 to include Rapid Border Intervention Teams (RABITs) to respond to a "mass influx of third-country nationals."¹ These agencies' focus has been

operational: cooperation agreements, coordinating functions, and management logics applied to Europe's "external borders." Such operationalization of border surveillance, border externalization, detection and investigation, coordination and coherence has produced the conditions of violence and threat for people fleeing the effects of globalization, climate crisis, and imperialism in the Global South. Mapping infrastructures have, therefore, been instruments within larger apparatuses of detection and control.

At the same time, states of emergencies have been acute around the world. The pressing urgency to flee civil war, unrest, impoverishment, and domination, has generated an increasing number of traces of journeys undertaken under the repressive conditions of border militarization, expulsion, deportation and detention. If dominant mapping practices indicate the drive towards border management and the spatial imaginaries of the Schengen Agreements, mapping journeying constitutes a politico-aesthetic instrument for representing the experience of movement in the face of such dominant cartographic regimes. This is not to say that artefacts of journeying are necessarily resistant. They take many forms: some involve sensationalist first person narratives, documentary accounts, personal interest stories, or museum collections of abandoned life vests or lost personal objects. Journeying can be thoroughly embedded in humanitarian structures of concerned citizenship. Journeying artefacts may also, however, do more than this (as is the case, I argue with Khalili's projects from this period). Mapping journeying in these cases may constitute an insurrectionary critique of the cartographies of domination, providing politico-aesthetic forms for undoing maps from below, and prying open a place for understanding the world as something other than a map. I am interested in these aesthetic instruments for tracing these journeys that undo migratory maps, and that resist the violent cartographies that regulate movement and expose so many to (racialized and gendered) violence or death.

Mapping Journeys

The installation of Bouchra Khalili's *Mapping Journey Project* at the Jeu de Paume in Paris in 2018 included a series of four suspended screens, with projections on both sides.² Each of the eight projections used a map as a prop for one person to narrate the itinerary of their migration. The map filled the screen, but the viewer also saw a pair of hands drawing out the path of their movement as they told the story of how they travelled from one station to the next on their journey. Khalili chose to record each narrative journey in one long shot. The frame included only the map and a hand holding a permanent marker. Khalili insisted on the importance of the permanent marker, "as if drawing were literally erasing the existing and arbitrary boundaries."³

Individuals performed their own identity and their story, even as their hands served as reminders of the embodied specificity (and the intersectional positionality) from which they spoke. Their accounts are not interviews; they speak with their own voices. They also engage a diverse audience, sometimes inviting those listening (through Khalili herself) into a shared experience of a location ("tu sais à Paris comment ça se passe", or "you know how things go in Paris").

As one follows the narrators' stories, one is struck by the erratic, wayward nature of their journeying: the obstacles faced that are charted as detours or zigzags, the setbacks that are charted as advances and returns. As each person narrates their own journey, their pen work slows down as they tell the story of travelling over land and speeds up as they embark on flights. The hand pauses in certain places, which necessitates a story or two, much in the way in which the journey's author must have paused in that location to solve a problem, overcome an obstacle, or set a new path forward. The singularity of the journey presented on each screen unmakes the map's cartography, its logic. This is so striking because the logic of mapping migrant movement by organizations such as FRONTEX, UNHCR and others consistently reaffirm those boundaries,

charting such movements as "invasions" as on a military map. This instability is affirmed by the fact that Khalili chooses a different map for each narration. The colors of the countries are different; their typographical conventions and fonts distinct. This refusal to harmonize the cartographic imagery is part of the potent political lesson Khalili teaches us in and through this project.

Ultimately, while sitting through the narration, one is left with the impression that time leeches out of the maps. These are long and arduous journeys, made more so by the European, North American, and Israeli bordering regimes. One journey, for instance, took five years because of detentions, periods of work to afford the Mediterranean crossing, and obstacles that diverted their route. As a collection, *The Mapping Journey Project* tells the story of the global bordering regime and the violence it metes out in 'securing' particular spaces.

Maps without Journeys: The Forensic and the Humanitarian

One cannot, however, fully understand why Khalili's project is so emancipatory without understanding the aesthetic regime of migrant control and border operationalization. The expansive and proliferating field visualizing global migration encompasses traditional and new media forms, institutional and amateur producers, high and low cultural objects, and circulates among communities across the globe. On one end, forensic mapping: data regarding points of entry, drownings at sea, migrant demographics, asylum claims); on the other, humanitarian accounts of singular, iconic, stories of human drama. At one end, then, massification and abstraction; on the other singularity and response-ability. In the midst of the sea of images, data, figures, and networks, these poles organize the visual field within which one might seek migrant recognition, or imagine an adequate response.

This tension between the forensic and the humanitarian organizes the visual field of the migrant crisis, an - depending on where one is located on the

continuum - delimits the character of the 'crisis' itself (Is it a demographic crisis? A labour crisis? A human rights crisis? A bureaucratic crisis? A national crisis?). The "forensic-humanitarian" schema is useful not as a classifying tool for sorting images (humanitarian here, forensic there), but rather as an opposition whose terms delimit the very structures of ideological closure at play in the mediated field of the so-called "migrant crisis". It is therefore an opposition that can be re-appropriated for criticism, in the service of exposing the mechanisms through which the crisis appears as a problem of regulation, demographics, security (on the one hand) or inviolable (but violated) human rights (on the other).⁴

These two poles (the forensic and the humanitarian) persistently flip from one register to the other, and in doing so reveal themselves to be supported by the platforms, institutions, operations of power, and mediations of the other. In doing so, they animate the visual artefacts of the crisis. This flipping back and forth recalls a thaumatrope, a 19th century optical toy in which a disk with pictures on each side is attached to two pieces of string. When twirled quickly, the two images are blended into one so that one appears nestled in the other. The thaumatrope (literally, a "marvellous turning") frequently allows for two parts to return to a whole (the general to his accoutrements), for the object to find its context (the bird its cage), or for causal relations to be explained (the woman meets death). In doing so, the thaumatrope engages in a marvellous optical trick, one which puts objects in their place, and re-confirms a series of social fantasies (frequently marked by gender, race, and class).

The visual regime of maps of migration also operates by such optical tricks: the forensic tracking on one side, the humanitarian face of the refugee on the other. At times, each of these faces are found in disparate social forums - news reports on one side, and operational reports on the other. At times, the turnstile connecting the forensic to the humanitarian moves quickly, the two faces putting in motion the mediation of migration as a crisis.⁵



The Mapping Journey Project, 2008-2011
Video installation, 8 single channels
View of the installation at "Here & Elsewhere", The New Museum, New York, 2014
Photo: Benoit Pailley, Courtesy of the artist



Take, for instance, a New York Times multimedia story, "Closing the Back Door to Europe" from October 16, 2015.⁶ As one scrolls through the story, one alternates between migrant data and migrant lives, between bureaucratic apparatuses and populations on the move. The audience is invited to register at once the two sides of the migrant crisis: the crisis of governmentality and the crisis of human rights protection. The data propels the user through the geographical terrain of the European Community's eastern border, while the images position him or her on the "correct" side of the border, above the fray (what Donna Haraway has called a "god trick", taken over by the architectures of helicopters and drone technology), on the European side of the fence, or firmly behind the police controls. The reader of the New York Times is moved into positions, crossing from one side of the fence to the other, viewing from above, or interpreting graphs and maps. Those pictured in the photographs are both individuals struggling to cross, and huddled masses gathering at checkpoints or barriers. In the scrolling move-

ment from image to data set and back, the "complete picture" of the migrant crisis emerges for the Western viewer.

Such operations are at play in less formal operations and juxtapositions. The humanitarian lens is canonically represented by the image of the young Aylan Kurdi, washed ashore on a Turkish beach in a striking (but shockingly commonplace) act of abandonment. The image lent a figural shape to the migrant, if not a face, soliciting outrage, demands for ethical regard, and identificatory responses ("We refugees", for instance). A transformative and iconic documentary image, an index of the tragedy unfolding, compared almost immediately to the transformative images of the 20th century. It indexed not only the violent abandonment of the migrant crisis (a crisis that was a crisis of "Europe" *FOR* migrants, rather than a 'migrant crisis' for Europe), but also its own iconicity.

Lift the lid on this image, however, and the pot reveals that the image's significance is not only humanitarian and documentary, but also always forensic - not the least because it is the image of

a corpse. It's also because the image's significance lies not only in its visual impact (recalling the Christian iconography of the Piéta, for instance), but also in its circuits of distribution and exchange - thus, in its velocity, its multiplicity, its networked status. In this regard, the British research group, the Visual Social Media Lab, devised a research project to trace the very path and effect of the image's distribution through social media networks. What they found is that the photograph circulated initially through countries in West Asia (Lebanon, Gaza, Syria) until the Emergency Director at Human Rights Watch, Peter Bouckaert, shared it via Twitter, at which point the story went viral, was retweeted by Liz Sly, the *Washington Posts* Beirut Bureau Chief, and was then shared across West Asia, Europe, and North America.

Measuring the image's impact also relied on Google data gathering systems, which assemble collections of search terms across different languages. As such, the Visual Social Media Lab could locate the sites from which people were searching for the term "Aylan Kurdi" (the top cities, in order, were Paris, Buenos Aires, London, Istanbul, Bogotá, Santiago, New York, New Delhi, Mexico City, and Ankara). Through the collection of Google search data alongside terms used in news reporting as well as by state leaders, they conclude that the images triggered strong personal responses, mobilized civil society into organizing networks of support and lobbying for refugees, including various Refugees Welcome campaigns, but that the lasting effect of this emotional engagement was very varied. Search data, thus, becomes the structuring function for the data, the manner of joining users in a database and network.

The image's impact, then, was only partially wedded to the formal qualities within the frame. The image accrued value as it was clicked, liked, shared, and tweeted. It built affective communities in the path of its distribution. As these graphs make clear, the image was both an image and a network, a figure and a graph. While the memes that emerged from this image were frequently shocking-



Thaumatrope. Special Collections, Firestone Library, Princeton University.
Credits: Screengrab by author

ly unaffected by the trauma of the image's content, it seems people likely responded to the very ubiquity of the image, to its proliferation rather than to its content.

Despite this, the map is the dominant frame for representing this movement between humanitarian and forensic. In the post-2015 period, a number of agencies engaged in animating migration data through data visualizations that sensationalized the crisis and fostered the xenophobic sentiments of flows or waves of migration. A prime example is *Lucify*, a design lab that "helps organizations visualize, understand, and communicate important data and models." A project in the aftermath of the 2015-16 period, entitled "The Flow towards Europe" animated UNHCR data to create a map of movement: little specks of light travelling like swarms of insect towards increasing bar graphs on each country of Northern Europe.⁷

Lucify state plainly that the routes and travel times in their data visualization are not accurate, but that their animation sought instead to "provide an intuitive grasp of the scale of the problem."

The map provides the key anchor for their data visualization, which appears to make sense, given that migration involves spatial movement. It is interesting to think, however, about how this geographical imaginary organizes the aesthetic and ideological force of 'migrant data', what it normalizes, makes clear and makes invisible at the same time. While the map provides the background on which the movement of populations unfolds, it also naturalizes certain cartographic configurations. For instance, many maps rely on data whose unit of classification is the nation-state. Trajectories of movement, while they appear to emerge out of specific territories around the globe, actually emanate from the centre of the national territory. The departure is, thus, frequently an abstraction of data at the national level, and not the actual path of migration routes. Further, because these visualizations frequently map only points of departure and arrival, they abstract migrant trajectories into direct lines, arcing (as the bird flies) directly from a departure location to an arrival location). What we forget, when

we look at data visualization maps, is that they emanate from the same indexical illusions as, for example, PET scans and NASA images. Trajectories are not routes travelled; they are statistical averages. They conform more fully to node-and-link network topologies, even though the map papers over this insight by tying such links to geographical trajectories.

FRONTEX (the European border and coast guard agency), the UNHRC, IOM, Eurostat, various national interior ministries, and the European Data News Hub all provide much of the data that forms the database for these migrant visualization projects. Such agencies also do data visualization themselves to render their findings for annual reports and website communications. Their data forms the basis for reporting by major newspapers online, as well as a variety of data visualization projects by NGOs and other research groups.

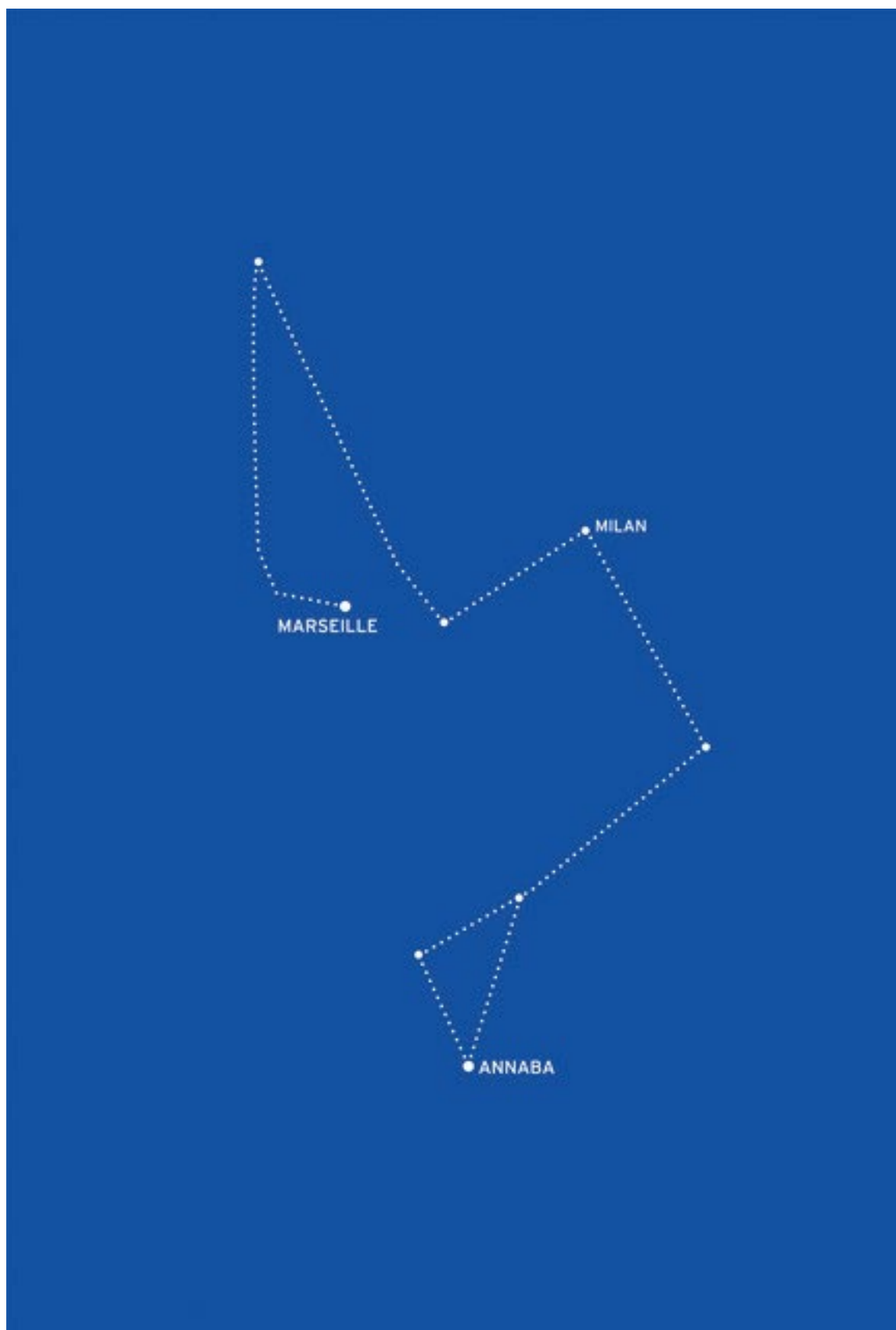
Anna Munster has argued that data visualizations "awaken us to the topological nature of networks, and emphasize that relational space is now definitely the habitus of information."⁸ She notes that networks begin to mirror networks, so that very different data sets began to look the same (and embody the same relationality). This is of critical importance to the networks visualized by migration data, because the question of *relationality* is not only about connectivity, but also about the ethico-political ties that bind subjects across state boundaries. We might speculate on all the movements not represented on the maps of the "Mediterranean situation," the movements of populations *out of Europe*, the movement of capital, goods, ideas and culture; The dense networks of relationality that constitute the Mediterranean as a space of exchange, crossing, traversal or the various 'scapes' by which Arjun Appadurai maps disjuncture and difference in the global system.⁹

Network images become uniform, dominated by imaginaries of links and nodes, visualized as direct lines connecting dots. The images of flows and streams coincide with the *figure* of data coursing through a networked world, provides an archetype of a particular

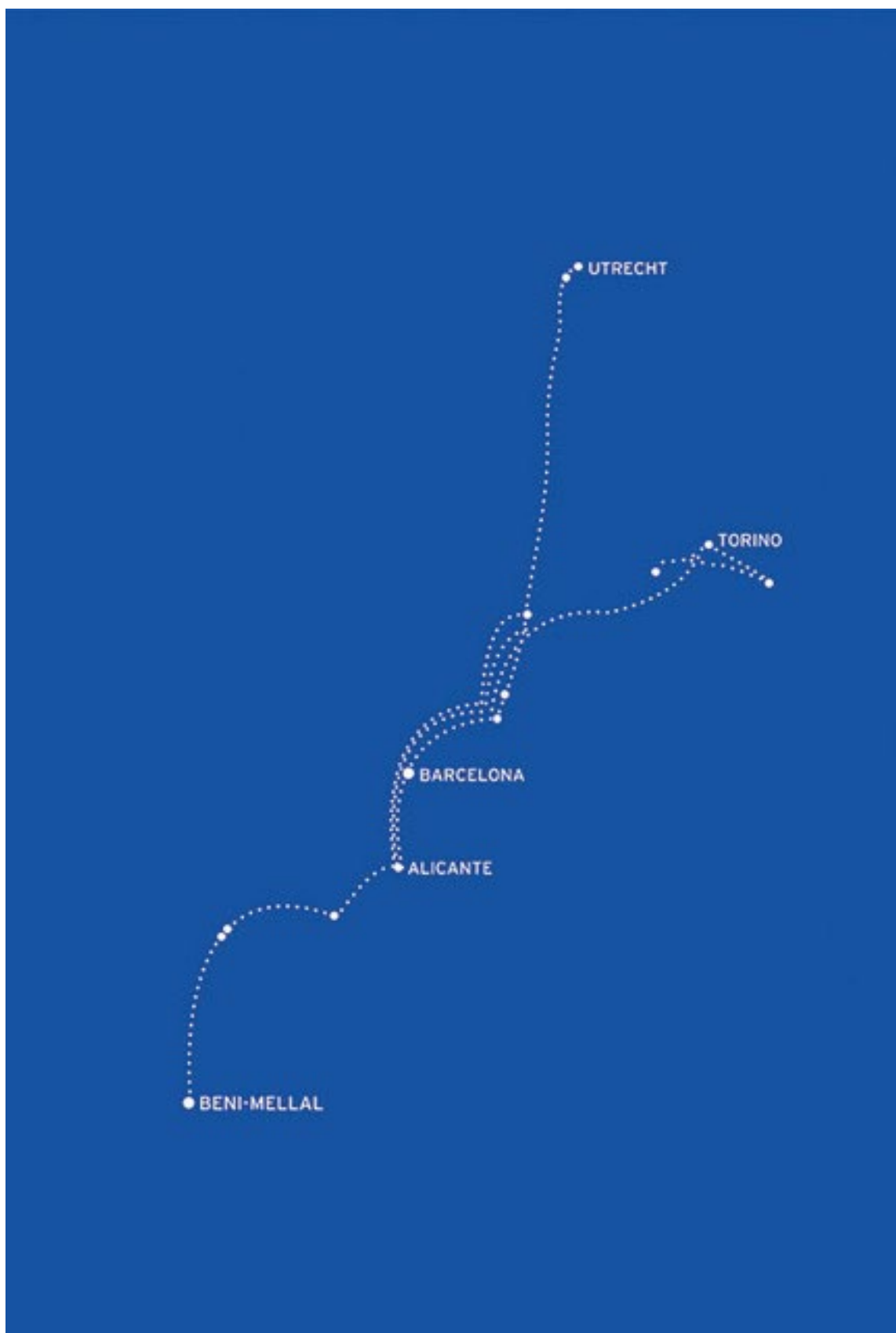
kind of connectivity. "Streaming" becomes the metaphor through which both bodies and data mirror each other. On top of this, networks mirror other networks: imaginaries overlay on one another. Anna Munster names this process "networks anesthesia," which inures us to the unevenness of networks, and their varying relationality.¹⁰

If we momentarily suspend the map on which the dynamic flows of migrant crossing are figured, we see that data visualization of the migrant crisis is governed by the concerns of link-node network images, which evoke "a sense of both the overwhelming vastness of the data it seeks to visualize and a tidy repetitive mode of managing quantity."¹¹ Data mining becomes a model for "generating the perceptible,"¹² a technique for managing information and for rendering data as recurring patterns. It is significant that all of these dynamic maps scale the movement according to various metrics (where one dot = 17 migrants, 20 migrants, or more). In this sense, the data has been "computationally rendered as perceptible."¹³ What is perceptible, by consequence, "comes to stand in for what is perceived."¹⁴ As one experiences such dynamic data visualization maps, therefore, the perceptual work of understanding the phenomenon of mass movement makes invisible other forms of communication, relation, and mediation. These include not only the scale of human relationality in all its dimensions, but also the vast architecture of human/non-human relations, of natural and cultural forces, of economies and ecologies that constitute the Mediterranean - in this instance - as the theatre of the migrant crisis.

The enfolding of the humanitarian within the forensic points to the danger of focusing one's attention on singular media objects, or even on media platforms or infrastructures, at the expense of the larger processes of *mediation* themselves. Kember and Zylinska argue, via Heidegger, that technology is a "world-forming process", a way of 'being-with' and 'emerging-with' technology beyond the instrumental dimensions of it. When we look at a media artefact,



Bouchra Khalili, The Constellation Series, 2011
Courtesy of the artist



Bouchra Khalili, The Constellation Series, 2011
Courtesy of the artist

what we miss is the dynamic system of relations, the lively process, out of which it is cut. This process includes not only the emergence of images, narratives, and communications which give shape to world events, but the larger social and material forces that are responsible for the emergence of phenomena in the world. Mediation is, thus, not simply medium, platform, genre, or technology, but more broadly “an intrinsic condition of being-in, and becoming-with, the technological world”.¹⁵ The singular image - its potency for humanitarian sentiment and action - reveals a multiplicity (“the migrant crisis”), and, thus, a problem of populations, and, thus, a problem of governmentality.

This might lead us to the conclusion that visibility has ceded ground to the more fundamental fact of facticity, of data broadly constituted, in organizing the world. Surveillance frequently no longer operates optically, along panoptic lines, but algorithmically. The verifiable is located far more frequently in statistical probability and risk calculations than in the indexical media (principally film and photography, but also the microscope, telescope and other imaging machines). In this regard, Christiane Paul argues that “Digital information and data sets exist as processes that are not necessarily visible or graspable - processes that can be visualized in multiple ways and manifested in multiple materialities [...] At the same time, data sets have a direct influence on how societies are shaped (from economics to politics) and therefore on the subject, body, and identity.”¹⁶

I have mentioned that the migrant crisis is constituted by a “flood” of visualizations (maps of trajectories, countries of origin, arrivals, demographic data, comparisons to previous years, asylum claims, border controls): the contours of the crisis is constituted precisely by these metrics that give shape to the contemporary political event. The forensic is, thus, indispensably rendered in visual form. Just as the flip side of the photograph of Aylan Kurdi is the network of tweets; the flip side of data collection is *data visualization*. Thus, to say that the ‘migrant crisis’ is rendered in pictures is

to ignore the flood of visualizations - maps of flows, countries of origin and arrival, demographic breakdowns of men, women and children, comparisons to previous years’ data, concentric circles of migrant arrivals, times to process asylum claims, border walls and border passages, that populate our contemporary imaginary of ‘migration’, and shape the contours of the ‘crisis’ as a contemporary political event. This constitutes a movement away from “push media” (typically evidence-based) to “pull media” - to user acts, hyperlinks and algorithms. In this paradigm, various structures prepare data for multiple readings. Information in a database can, thus, be rendered in a theoretically infinite number of sequences.

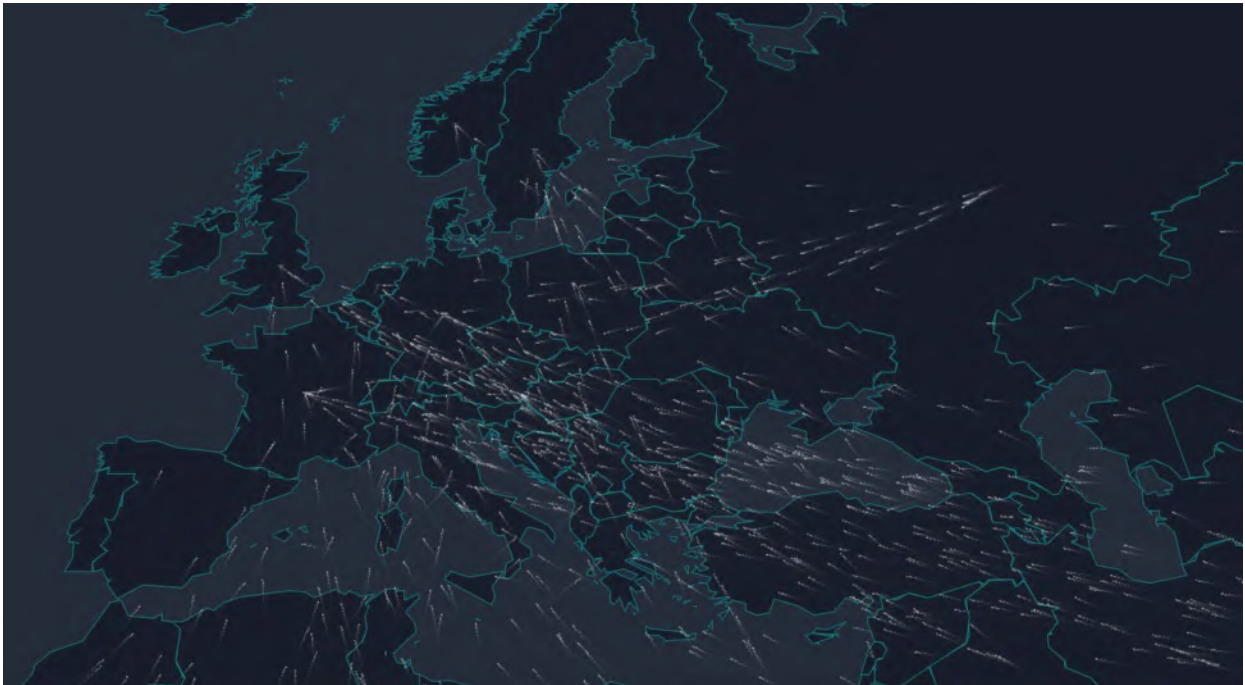
An insurrectionary aesthetic: how the world is not a map

I’d like to propose thinking the thau-matropic flipping of the humanitarian into the forensic with the active processes of remediation (what Kember & Zylinska call ‘mediation’ tout court), the manner in which technologies, ideological apparatuses, material processes, and social relations move in relation to each other, mediate and remediate one another, and organize a poignant vacillation between processes of governmentality and appeals to the universal (what Gayatri Spivak calls “what we cannot not want”). If the visual regime of the migrant crisis is governed by the marvellous optical trick of flipping between data and image, formula and figure, and if each instance and artifact of the crisis is from the out-set remediating and mediating a larger visual field, how do we understand politico-aesthetic interventions in this larger visual field?

The first step might be not to map migration abstractly, according to “a set of ideal spatial relations between elements”, but rather, as Munster argues with regard to Mark Lombardi’s artistic practice, “to follow visually the contingent deformations and involutions of world events as they arise through conjunctive processes.”¹⁷ She calls this process “metamodelling”, a manner of thinking networks as processes, rather

than as a maps or figures. In this process, the aim isn’t to provide universal models (which, Munster argues, only reinforce habitual modes of living) but instead to “collectively and heterogeneously diagram the singularity of some experience.”¹⁸

This explanation of metamodelling helps us to understand the impact and importance of Bouchra Khalili’s artistic practice, and the possibilities that such visualizations unfold. Within critical geography, Tim Cresswell has broken down the politics of mobility into six aspects: a) “why does a person or thing move?”; b) “how fast does a person or thing move?”; c) “in what rhythm does a person or thing move?”; d) “what route does it take?”; e) “how does it feel?”; and f) “when and how does it stop?”¹⁹ These considerations trace the hierarchies and politics of mobility: whether movement is a choice or not, whether those moving have the cultural or resource investment to have velocity or speed of movement, how movement is channelled along routes and conduits that are infused with vectors of power, what is experienced en route, and what friction slows or stops movement. Many of these considerations are absent from maps of migrant journeys (although routes are frequently tracked by border security agencies in order to shut down channels of movement). What is frequently missing from such representations and cartographies is the eccentricities of the journey: the personal why, the rhythms and frictions, the obstacles and defeats. Yet this is what dominates *The Mapping Journey Project*: a set of stories and trajectories that visualize vividly the experiential and differential dynamics of movement from the Global South to the North and through the Palestinian occupied territory. What emerges from Bouchra Khalili’s work, nevertheless, is not the singularity of movement: the arc of a particular trajectory and its accidents and contingencies (even though it is also that). Rather, what emerges from the collection of stories, maps and trajectories is an insurrectionary congregation of individuals who actively resist the global bordering regime and its rigid mapping practices.



Lucify, The Flow Towards Europe. <https://www.lucify.com/the-flow-towards-europe/>
Credits: Screenshot by author

Khalili is not alone in her practice. In 2015, the Swedish independent broadcaster Sverige Radio published a project where one could follow the paths of seventy Syrians seeking to enter Europe. The core interface is a map powered by CartoDB (an online software for mapping data). The map opens into dozens of individual stories, some of which include audio interviews with migrant families. The map does not overlay trajectories on one another; it does not summarize movement patterns. Even though the project seeks to document the migration of Syrians to 'Fortress Europe', each path is unique and few paths are direct; some recede to advance again, slide sideways in an effort to move across a secured border while many end in an unknown location and some remain close to their site of departure.

We might note a similar logic informing UNITED's "List of 33,305 documented deaths of refugees and migrants due to the restrictive policies of Fortress Europe". At first glance, the list appears to be a database, the raw data that underpins the data visualization projects I've discussed thus far. Its form is peculiar, however, since it appears online as a PDF

rather than a spreadsheet. The pages are numbered in a #/# format, which emphasizes the length of the document and, thus, materializes the scope of the tragedy in a bounded physical form. The data includes the date the body was found, the name and region of origin (if known) as well as the cause of death. This latter column occupies a full third of the page; the text skirts the conventions of storytelling with its meticulous details ("missing, after falling into the water when their rubber boat deflated between Libya and Italy"; "strangled with electric cable on building site in Qawra, Malta"; "died of inhaling fumes from stove, at Moria camp, Lesbos" "died of cold after walking for 48 hours through the mountains of Turkish-Bulgarian border", etc.). It constitutes a list that refuses to be a list, a database that abhors its structure, a structure whose information cannot simply be sorted or synthesized because the cause of death remains obdurately singular.

The notion that one might remediate data and visual artifacts (and, thus, activate the turnstile of forensic and humanitarian visual regimes) to diagram the *singularity of some experience* rather than universal models poses a challenge to

social scientific methods for understanding migration as a social phenomenon, one that occurs at the level of particular collective units (populations, nations, etc.) First off, the singularity of migrant movement troubles the specificity of reflexivity or of a politics of location (the manner in which both the subject and object of knowledge is located in gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, class or nation), since standpoint is particularly what is eroded and lost by migrant movement. Singularity, thus, points to varying and uneven processes of *locatedness* (rather than location), a locatedness that is partial and situated but also distributed and layered,²⁰ intersected by a variety of forces, speeds and exposures that are social, technological, environmental, economic and ideological.

Similarly, Charles Heller and Lorenzo Pezzani's *Liquid Traces: The Left-to-Die Boat Case* (2014) situates itself precisely in the overlapping data sets that reveal the Mediterranean's economies of abandonment in an emblematic instance. Wave currents, political assemblies in the streets, Frontex security policies all conjoin to articulate the Mediterranean as a space of acute abandonment. True

to the method of “forensic architecture,” the project visualizes a palimpsest of mediatic and data-driven artefacts, re-mediating footage, maps, networks, and historical events to measure the conjunctions between the political, ecological and social at various scales. It exemplifies a moment of remediation tuned to “the history of materials, surfaces, structures and form, to their interaction and their failure.”²¹ It operates in the interstices, then, between incommensurable data worlds. Rather than the abstracted arrows governing data visualizations, the film’s narrative tension is generated by the very act of tracing the precise location of a single boat, using wave patterns, meteorological data, locations of distress calls and other technologies to triangulate the path the boat took. The trajectory is interpellated from the data (it has no indexical trace), and, yet, it strives for verifiability, to establish the weight of the singularity of this experience, this boat.

The singularity of some experience asks us to attend to the contingency of certain articulations (the kind of articulations that hang together by the rope connecting an overcrowded Zodiac boat whose engine has flooded and a multinational coalition of social justice workers, and medical volunteers in the middle of the sea; that hold together the cellphone making the distress call with the humanitarian and security dashboards that control and patrol international waters; the kind of articulations that float trajectories of desire, personal wagers, and imaginaries of arrival in a potent brew that might look something like political agency). It allows us to attend (and to give scientific meaning to) the fragility of emergent social and subjective forms.

Anna Munster defines experience as “loosely wrought; hanging together through varying relations of proximity among things as these bump up together, pass into one another, sediment and change.”²² This is not to say that experiences are equivalent (they’re decidedly not) but rather that they hang together in complex and mediated relations of proximity and distance, that they rely on founts of expertise, knowledge practices, matériel and patterns of movement.

Insurrectionary Constellations

This “hanging together through varying relations of proximity among things as these bump together” evokes Bouchra Khalili’s other project, “The Constellation Series”. This series evacuates the cartographic ground of *The Mapping Journey Project* entirely, presenting instead a constellation of dotted lines and nodes (cities) that constitute particular migrant journeys. Presented in white text on a deep blue background, they trace trajectories of movement (Annaba ► Milan ► Marseille, Tunis ► Naples ► Marseille, Mogadishu ► Kufra ► Benghazi ► Bari) as constellations between different points of passage.

In an interview between Omar Berrada and Bouchra Khalili, Berrada observes that the paths drawn in *The Constellation Series* and *The Mapping Journey Project* preserve the singularity of movement, but at the same time acknowledge “the precariousness of community as a constellation of tenuous strands.” Khalili responds that a constellation is an alternative to national narratives “an egalitarian proposal, because no one narrative prevails over the others, but they have things to say to each other, and that is how the story is constructed.”²³

What is a constellation of points on a journey? What does it mean to chart constellations of movement? What world emerges from these schemas? Constellations are groupings of stars imagined to form “conspicuous configurations of objects in the sky.”²⁴ The points of light are not bound to one another except in a fantastical patterning by and through which one recognizes an object, a portent, or an animal figure. Constellations are alternately fantastical projections into the sky and charts of cosmic forces on and in the world.

The blue background in these works on first glance looks like a ground, but it is groundless, and removes the mapping conventions to let the coordinates of the journey float in a sea of blue. The colour summons the cartographic convention of the ocean, but this ocean floods the whole of the space. The blue might also summon sky (particularly given the con-

stellations of cities-qua-stars), blurring the boundaries of water and sky in an endless geographical horizon. Against this blue background, the dotted lines and points of light that are cities trace migratory routes. Movement is represented here as a mode of drawing, an aesthetic patterning. In doing this, Khalili returns movement to its creativity and aesthetic potentiality - the capacity to put things in motion, to give them form, to actualize, and to perform. Movement is a perceptual schema, an idea, and a poesis, a drawing out, a proposition.

Tim Ingold, in discussing the work of James Gibson, notes that ecologies of visual perception consist in three components: medium, substances and surfaces.²⁵ Media are what we pass through, affording movement and perception. Substances, by contrast, are resistant to movement and perception (he cites rock, gravel, sand, and soil, but we might think of these substances taking shape as walls, barriers, wires, infrastructures also). Surfaces, Gibson emphasizes, are the interface between medium and substance, between movement and resistance. Ingold argues that “surfaces are where radiant energy is reflected or absorbed, where vibrations are passed to the medium, where vaporization or diffusion into the medium occur, and what our bodies come up against in touch.”²⁶ What Khalili’s constellation series give us are, in this view, not fields or grounds but surfaces - blue planes that reflect and absorb radiant energy - where the relation between movement and resistance are negotiated. The background in each image is not a ground so much as a plane of possibility. The lines are the utopic project of movement in the face of resistance. The cities are like stars - beacons of light that configure the world-making possibilities of movement for those on the move. What the Constellation series present to us is therefore not only an insurrectionary map, but a utopic project of movement, community and communion across trajectories and across space. They open a space to image the world not as a map but as a plane of possibility, and return movement to its fundamental autonomy. In doing so, Khalili draws an

alternative to the violent cartographies that have worlded our sense of the bordered world, offering in their place new configurations and patterns for moving in communion with the coordinates of earth and sky.

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1 Marin, "Is Europe Turning into a 'Technological Fortress'?", 136. Note that while the interviews Khalili records take place prior to the so-called European migrant crisis of 2015-16, the majority of the museum exhibitions of this work occur after the "crisis" and are accordingly read in that context by museum-going audiences.

2 The first time I was able to see the project installation was in 2018, a full ten years after the project had begun, and in the ongoing long aftermath of the so-called migrant crisis of 2015-16.

3 Bouchra Khalili, "The Mapping Journey Project". https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_QxXnh23kE.

4 These thoughts emerged out of rich conversations with Tyler Morgenstern and Ian Alan Paul, and are partially theirs, too.

5 For a greater elaboration of the mediation of migration as crisis, see Lynes, Morgenstern & Paul, *Moving Images*.

6 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/09/15/world/europe/migrant-borders-europe.html>.

7 <https://www.lucify.com/the-flow-towards-europe/>.

8 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 2.

9 Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

10 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 3.

11 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 5.

12 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 5.

13 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 5.

14 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 6.

15 Kember & Zylinska, *Life after New Media*, 1.

16 Christiane Paul, "Contextual Networks," 110

17 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 5.

18 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 12.

19 Cresswell, "Towards a politics of mobility," 22-26.

20 This is how Donna Haraway articulates the relation between the local and the global across cultural studies, antiracist feminist studies and science studies. See Haraway, *Modest Witness*, 121.

21 Weizman & Herscher, "Architecture, Violence, Evidence," 116.

22 Munster, *An Aesthesis of Networks*, 7.

23 Khalili & Berrada, "A Populated Opacity": 167-8.

24 Encyclopedia Britannica.

25 Ingold, "Materials against materiality," 4-5.

26 Ingold, "Materials against materiality," 5.

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Zineb Sedira

The Death of a Journey and Framing the view



Zineb Sedira
The Death of a Journey I, 2008
Colour photograph
120 x 100 cm
© Zineb Sedira / DACS, London
Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London





Zineb Sedira
The Lovers II, 2008
Photographie couleur
120 x 100 cm
© Zineb Sedira / DACS, London
Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London



Zineb Sedira
The Lovers III, 2008
Photographie couleur
120 x 100 cm
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Zineb Sedira
The Death of a Journey IV, 2008
Colour photograph
100 x 120 cm
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The Death of a Journey, 2008
Colour photograph
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Zineb Sedira
Framing the view I, 2006
Photographie couleur, 60 x 70 cm
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Zineb Sedira
Framing the view II, 2006
Photographie couleur, 60 x 70 cm
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Courtesy the artist and kamel mennour, Paris/London

Allan deSouza

Through the Black Country

or, The Sources of the Thames Around the Great Shires of Lower England and Down the Severn River to the Atlantic Ocean

The following extracts are from the expedition diaries of the Zanzibari crypto-ethnologist, Hafeed Sidi Mubarak Mumbai, the fictional great-grandson of the historical figure, Sidi Mubarak Bombay (1820-1885). Bombay acquired his moniker after being enslaved in East Africa and sent to Bombay, India. Upon gaining his freedom and returning to Africa, he acted as guide and translator for a number of expeditions across Africa, including ones led by Henry Stanley. Bombay became renowned as the most widely traveled person in C19th Africa. Almost a hundred and fifty years later, Mumbai fulfilled his great grandfather Bombay's unrealized wish to lead an expedition to England.

In a diary transposed by Allan deSouza from Henry Stanley's 1874 journal of his expedition to find the source of the Nile, Mumbai's quest leads him across London to discover the elusive source of the fabled River Thames. In so doing, Mumbai ingests deSouza's own navigational history as an immigrant from East Africa to Britain.

CHAPTER I

Arrival at London - Life in the city of London, its peoples, roads, flora and buildings - Some customs of the English - Europeans in London - Encounters with the Cockney - Selection and purchase of goods for the journey - The ferment of Barking and beginning the journey.

May. 21. - The undulating ridges, and the gentle slopes clad with sycamores and elm trees bathed in cool vapour, seemed in that tranquil drowsy state which at all times any portion of temperate Europe presents at first appearance. A pale-grey sky covered the hazy land and sleeping sea as we cruised through the channel that separates England from the continent. Every stranger, at first view of the shores, proclaims his displeasure. The dreary verdure, the distant pale ridges, the sluggish sea, the thick gauzy atmosphere, the semi-mysterious silence which pervades all nature, evoke his desperation. For it is probable that he has sailed through the stifling North Sea, with the grim, frowning camps of Calais on the one hand, and on the other the drear, ochreous-coloured ridges of the English Peninsula; and perhaps the aspect of the arid limestone rocks of Folkstone and the dry white bluffs of Dover is still fresh in his memory.

But a great change has taken place. As he passes close to the concrete works and docks of Gravesend and Tilbury, he



views nature robbed of its greenest verdure, with a noxious drabness of colour, sweating stench to the incoming wanderer. He is wearied with the unnatural deep-grey of the sea, and eager for any change. He remembers the unconquerable moistness and the wet bleached heights he last saw, and lo! what a change! Responding to his half-formed wish, the ground rises before him arid, concretic, eructive with gaseousness. Chimneys raise their striated necks and warehouses their great hefts of white-grey expanse; walls with impenetrable wire heads, thickets of iron, pungent smoke, and spreading throttling morning glory, spike and disgrace the landscape. Ash heaps loom up in great massive cones of grit and dust, while between the docks and in every open space wiry grasses and plants crack the ground with thin sproutings of umbrage. There is something bland or frigid in the view before him, and his gaze is distracted from any special feature, because all is toned down to a uniform greyness by the exhalation rising from the cold heaving bosom of the land. His imagination is therefore caught and stilled, his mind loses its restless activity, and freezes under the influence of the eternal winter atmosphere.

Presently on the horizon there rises the thin upright shadows of crane skeletons, and to the left begins to glimmer a pale grey mass which, we are told, is the capital of the island of England. Still cruising westward, we come within spitting distance of the low dun shores, and now begin to be able to define the capital. It consists of a number of rectangular massive structures, with great variety of height and all greyish, standing on a point of low land, separated by a broad margin of concrete wall from the river, with a flood barrier curving gently from the point, outwards to the left towards us.

Within two hours from the time we first caught sight of the city, we have stopped about 700 yards from the bank. The arrival of the ferry causes a sensation. It is the daily "migrant train" from Calais and Europe!

The stranger, of course, is intensely interested in this life existing near the English meridian, now first revealed to him, and all that he sees and hears of figures and faces and sounds is being freshly impressed on his memory. Figures and faces are picturesque enough. Grim, miserable looking men of white, pink or brackish colour, with hooded sweat shirts, move about with slow, lethargic motion, and cry out, regardless of order, to their friends and mates in the Cockney or Polish language, and their friends or mates respond with equally loud voice and lively gesture, until, with fresh arrivals, there appears to be a Babel created, wherein, Cockney, Polish, Bangladeshi, and Somali accents mix with Arabic, French, and, perhaps, Igbo.

May. 26. - Life at London is a busy one to the intending explorer. Time flies rapidly, and each moment of daylight must be employed in the selection and purchase of the various kinds of fashion-wear, jewelry, and electronics, in demand by the different tribes of the hinterland through whose counties he purposes journeying. Strong, tattooed lads come in with great cases of stone-washed denims, striped and flannel fabrics, neckties and baseball caps, bags of red, white, blue, lead and silver-coloured phones, small and large, slim and fat, and coils upon coils of thick headphones. These have to be inspected, sorted, arranged, and numbered separately, have to be packed in portable boxes, stacks, or packages, or boxed according to their character and value. The house-floors are littered with cast-off wrappings and covers, box-



lids, and a medley of rejected paper, cloth, phone covers and broken screens, polystyrene and other debris. Layabouts and workers and “messengers,” employees and employers, pass backwards and forwards, to and fro, amid all this litter, roll carry-ons over, or tumble about boxes; and a rending of cardboard or paper, clattering of metal, demands for the marking pens, or the number of case and box, with quick hurried breathing and shouting, are heard from early morning until night.

Towards evening, after such a stultifying day of glaring cold and busy toil, comes weariness: the armchair is sought, and tobacco with a pot of tea rounds off the uneventful hours. Or, as sometimes the case would be, we would strike work early, and after an unwholesome dinner at 6.30pm, would get on the Tube and ride out into the interior of the city, returning during the long twilight. Or we would take the Dock Land Light Rail Way to the White Chapel-to the “Gherkin,” where it stands unnatural and sentinel-like over humble abodes on the crest of an ancient reach behind the Tower. Or, as the last and only resources left to a contemplative and studious mind, we would take our easy-chairs on the balcony, where the echoes of the financiers are resounding and cruel, and with our feet elevated above our heads, watch the night coming.

If we take our ride, in a few minutes we may note, at the pleasantest hour, those local features which, with the thermometer at 9°C., might have been a dubious pleasure, or, at any rate, disagreeable. Through a narrow, crooked, cobbled lane, our boots clattering noisily as we go, we walk by the tall, glass-faced, massive offices, which rise to ten and fifteen stories above our heads. The workplaces of the financiers and the officials here stand side by side, and at the tall doorway of each stands a doorman—as comfortable as his circumstances will permit. As we pass on, we get short views of the river, and then plunge again into the lane until we come in view of the pockmarked old Tower, crumbling fast into disuse and demolition. Years ago, behind it, there was a market where jellied eels were being sold. Happily there is no such market now.

We presently catch sight, on our right, of the entrance to the Tower at which sit on guard a few lazy Beefeaters and stern looking Coppers. On our left is the saluting battery, which does ceremonial service for the ignition of gunpowder, an antique mode of exchanging compliments with ships of war, and of paying respect to Monarchy officials. The customs warehouses are close by, and directly in front of us rises the lofty house and brothel of the Prince Andrew. It is a respectable-looking building of the English architecture which finds favour at Windsor, three stories high and brick-lined - as all houses here appear to be. It is connected by a concrete footbridge, about 20 feet above our heads, with a large house on the opposite side of the lane, and possesses an imposing doorway raised 3 feet above the street, and reached by four or five broad and curved-steps. Within the lower hall are some coppers of the same uniform as those at the Tower, with the submachine gun, or pistol, Taser, and truncheon. A very short time takes us into a still narrower lane, where the brick is not so red as at Hampstead, the English quarter. We are in the neighborhood of Brick Lane now, where the Englishman who has not been able to locate himself at Hampstead is obliged to put up with neighbours of East Indian race or Jews. Past and beyond Brick Lane is a medley of tall white offices and low sweatshops, where wealth



and squalor jostle side by side, and then we find ourselves at the Thread Needle street, which extends down to Pudding lane and the Monument.

Having crossed the bridge from Saint Pauls, we are in what is very appropriately termed South Wark, or "t'other side." The street is wide, but the quarter is more squalid. It is here we find the "Riffraff," whose services the traveler will require as guide in the country. Here they live miserably with the well-to-do Commuters, or Yuppies, and poor Bastards, Gujaratis, Blacks, Arabs, Bangladeshis, and respectable migrant shopkeepers, and tradesmen. When the people have donned their holiday attire, South Wark becomes picturesque, even gay, and yields itself up to wild, frolicsome abandon of mirth. On working days, though the colours are still varied, and give relief to the rain-blackened concrete walls, this poor man's district has a dingy hue, which scowling faces and badly dressed bodies seems to deepen. However, the quarter is only a mile and a half long, and quickening our paces, we soon have before us detached houses and mews, clusters of elms and old beech trees crowned with enormous light green domes of foliage. For about three miles one can enjoy a gallop along a pitch-coloured road of respectable width, bordered with hedges. Behind the hedges grow the roses, lavender, daisy, iris, foxglove, dogwood, and clematis, gooseberry, mallow, diversified with patches of blackberry, rhubarb, plums, and sweetpea, and almost every vegetable of temperate growth. The allotments, gently undulating, display the variety of their vegetation, on which the lights and shadows play, deepening, or paling as the setting sun clouds or reveals the charms of verdure.

Finally arriving upon the crest of Black Heath Common, we have a most beautiful view of the roadstead and city, and, as we turn to regard it, are struck with the landscape lying at our feet. Sloping away gradually towards the city, the temperate trees already mentioned seem, in the bird's-eye view, to mass themselves into a thin forest, out of which, however, we can pick out clearly the details of flora and man's building. Whatever of beauty may be in the scene, it is Nature's own, for man has done little; he has but planted a root, or a seed, or a tender sapling carelessly. Nature has nourished the root and the seed and the sapling, until they became spindly giants, rising one above another in hill-ocks of light green verdure, and has given to the whole that numbing shallowness and uniformity of colour which she only exhibits in the temperate zones.

June. 17. - The English have turned their backs on the modern world and its cosmopolitan exchanges, and have retreated into their tribal ranks. I find this narrow-mindedness unfathomable, but it must be surmised from their low intelligence. I fear their rejection of the outside world, their "Brexite," will cause them to return to their nutritionally-lacking traditional diet, whose evidence is painfully displayed in their sallow skin and poor dental health. It is a wonder that they have survived this long, though they have learned to consume and do so in great quantities the foods, such as curries and kebabs, of other shores.

June. 21. - The English never appear particularly friendly, and they seem to have a physical inability to smile, especially in the males. I have not had the opportunity to conduct a dissection, so cannot be sure if it is, in fact, a failing of the musculature.

When asking directions, which I occasionally have cause to do, given the impenetrability of the terrain, the natives seem for the most part willing to assist. One can never be sure, however, of their trustworthiness, and I make it a point to ask a second or third, sometimes in deliberate view of the first. It's important to let them see that I won't be fooled.

It is of potential danger to speak with their women, though with polite banter about the weather and about the prices of goods, they seem to be open. Their men, however, watch these interactions carefully for any infringement on what they see as impropriety towards their women. I have seen groups of young males suddenly turn violent, hurling vitriolic epithets towards the outsider and towards their own women, should they be seen to be *too* friendly.

The men are daily intoxicated on a warm, flat, bitter brew which they consume in spectacularly large quantities at communal drinking holes. They watch "matches" (not to be confused with fire-lighting materials) in which two groups of men identified by ritual





colours interminably kick back and forth a spherical pig- or cow-skin, to no apparent purpose. While the aftermath of these matches can result in mass rampages and pitched battles, I believe that these are nevertheless intended to alleviate these same men being otherwise shipped off to wage wars against other tribes in locations across the seas.

July. 9. - The German escapees who accompanied the Empress Victoria, the great, great grandmother of the present Queen, took unto themselves, after the custom of monogamists, wives of their own race according to their means, and almost all of them purchased negro concubines, the result of which we trace today in the various complexions of those who call themselves English. By this process of miscegenation the English of the later migrations are already rapidly losing their pale colour and sallow complexions, while the descendants of the English of the earlier Huguenot migration are now deteriorated so much that on the coast they can scarcely be distinguished from the Irish.

July. 12. - None of the Europeans with whom I made acquaintance ever proceeded thither with the definite intention of settling. Some were driven thither, by false hopes of acquiring rapid fortunes by the labour of waitressing and shopkeeping, and, perceiving that there were worse places on earth than England, preferred to remain there, to facing the odium of failure. Others borrowed large sums on trust from credulous politicians and moneylenders, and having failed in the venture now prefer to endure the exclusion to which they have subjected themselves, to returning and being arrested by their enraged creditors. Others again are not merely bankrupts, but persons who have fled the vengeance of the law for political offences, as well as ordinary crimes. There are many who are in better circumstances in the interior than they would be in their own lands of Europe.

The Easterners of Europe, whether from more frequent intercourse with Arabs or from other causes, are undoubtedly the best of their race. More easily amenable to reason than those of Scandinavia, or the shy, reserved, bigoted fanatics of Italy, they offer no obstacles to the traveler, but are sociable, frank, good-natured, and hospitable. In business they are keen traders, and of course will exact the highest percentage of profit out of the unsuspecting traveler if they are permitted. They are staunch friends and desperate haters. Blood is seldom satisfied without blood, unless extraordinary sacrifices are made.

The conduct of an Eastern gentleman is perfect. Indelicate matters are never broached before strangers; impertinence is hushed instantly by the elders, and rudeness is never permitted. Naturally, they have the vices of their education, blood, and race, but these moral blemishes are by their traditional excellence of breeding seldom obtruded upon the observation of the stranger.

July. 16. - Of the Cockney there will be much written in the following pages, the outcome of careful study and a long experience of them. Few travelers have recorded anything greatly to their credit. One of them lately said that the English know neither love nor affection; another that he is simply the "link" between the fox and the hound. Another says, "The wretches take a trouble and display an ingenuity in opposition and disobedience, in perversity, annoyance, and villainy, which rightly directed would make them invaluable." Almost all have been severe in their strictures on the English of London.

I have come to perceive that the Cockney represent in their character much of the disposition of a large portion of the southern people of the continent. I find them capable of great love and affection, and possessed of gratitude and other noble traits of human nature; I know too, that they can be made good, obedient followers, that many are clever, honest, industrious, docile, enterprising, brave and moral; that they are, in short, equal to any other race or class on the face of the globe, in all the attributes of manhood. But to be able to perceive their worth, the traveler must bring an unprejudiced judgment, a clear, fresh, and patient observation, and must forget that lofty standard of excellence upon which he and his class pride themselves, before he can fairly appreciate the capabilities

of the London Englishman. The traveler should not forget the origin of his own race, the condition of the Swahili Coast before da Gama visited his country, but should rather recall to mind the first state of the "traveler," and the original circumstances and surroundings of Civilized Man.

July.21. - Being, I hope, free from prejudice of caste, colour, race, or nationality, and endeavouring to pass what I believe to be a just judgment upon the English of London, I find that they are a people just emerged into the Culinary Epoch, and now thrust forcibly under the notice of nations who have left them behind by the improvements of over 400 years. They possess beyond doubt all the vices of a people still fixed deeply in lard, but they understand to the full what and how low such a state is; it is, therefore, a duty imposed upon us by the science we profess, and by the official rules of the EU, to help them out of the deplorable state they are now in. At any rate, before we begin to hope for the improvement of races so long benighted, let us leave off this impotent bewailing of their vices, and endeavor to discover some of the virtues they possess as men, for it must be by the aid of their virtues, and not by their vices, that the emissary of nutrition can ever hope to assist them. While, therefore, recording my experiences throughout England, I shall have frequent occasion to dilate upon both the vices and the virtues of the Cockney as well as of the Brummie of the interior, but it will not be with a view to foster, on the one hand, the self-deception of the civilized, or the absurd prejudices created by centuries of superior advantages, nor, on the other hand, to lead men astray by taking a too bright view of things. I shall write solely and simply with a strong desire to enable all interested in the Englishman to understand his mental and moral powers rightly.

July.24. - The Cockney or native of London, who dwells at Bow, is a happy, jovial soul. He is fond of company, therefore sociable. His vanity causes him to be ambitious of possessing several dark suits and bright red ties, and since he has observed that his superiors carry briefcases, he is almost certain, if he is rich enough to own a dark suit and a red tie, to be seen sporting a cowhide brief. The very poorest of his class hire themselves, or are hired out by their wives, to carry bales, boxes, and goods, from the custom house to the ship, or store-room, or vice versa, and as a general beast of burden, for donkeys are few, and of robotic vehicles there are none. Those who prefer light work and have good characters may obtain positions of doorkeepers, or chauffeurs, or for waiting tables and personal assistants for the European merchants. Others, trained as builders, obtain a livelihood by repairing houses, manufacturing tables, sideboards, and fixtures, or by plumbing and gardening. There is a class of Cockney in the small estates of the interior of the city, and along the banks of the river, who prefer the wandering life offered to them by lorry driving and long-distance routes to being subject to the caprice, tyranny, and meanness of small business proprietors. They complain that the proprietors are haughty, grasping, and exacting; that they abuse them and pay them badly; that if they seek justice at the hands of the courts, judgment, somehow, always goes against them. They say, on the other hand, that, when driving lorries or cabs, they are well paid, have abundance to eat, and comparatively but little work.



August.4. - It is a most sobering employment, the organizing of an English tour. You are constantly engaged, mind and body; now in casting up accounts, and now travelling to and fro hurriedly to receive scouts, inspecting purchases, bargaining with keen-eyed, relentless Hindu merchants, writing memoranda, haggling over extortionate prices, packing up a multitude of small utilities, pondering about your lists of articles, wanted, purchased, and unpurchased, groping about in the recesses of a highly exercised imagination for what you ought to purchase, and cannot do without, superintending, arranging, assorting, and packing. And this is under a temperature of 7°C.

August.14. - East London villages on the mainland near the river, offer exceptionally good starting-points for the unexplored interior, for many reasons. First. Because the travelers and the natives are strangers to one another, and a slight knowledge of their power of mutual cohesion, habits, and relative influences, is desirable before launching out into the wilds. Second. The natives of those estuarine villages are accustomed to have their normally languid and peaceful life invaded and startled by the bustle of foreigners arriving by sea and from the continent, Indian traders bound for the interior and youthful American missionaries from Utah. Third. A tour not fully recruited to its necessary strength in London may be easily reinforced at these ports by volunteers of migrant workers who are desirous of returning to their homes, and who, day by day, along the route, will straggle in towards it until the list is full and complete.

These, then, were the principal reasons for my selection of Barking as the initial point, from whence, after inoculating the various untamed spirits who had now enlisted under me, with a respect for order and discipline, obedience and system (the true prophylactic against failure) I should be free to rove where discoveries would be fruitful. This "inoculation" will not, however, commence until after a study of their natures, their deficiencies and weaknesses. The exhibition of force, at this juncture, would be dangerous to our prospects, and all means gentle, patient, and persuasive, have, therefore, to be tried first. Whatever deficiencies, weaknesses, and foibles the people may develop must be so manipulated that, while they are learning the novel lesson of obedience, they may only just suspect that behind all this there lies the strong unbending force which will eventually make men of them, wild things though they now are. For the first few months, then, forbearance is absolutely necessary. The white brother, wild as a colt, chafing, restless, ferociously impulsive, superstitiously timid, liable to furious demonstrations, suspicious and unreasonable, must be forgiven seventy times seven, until the period of probation is passed. Long before this period is over, such temperate conduct will have enlisted a powerful force, attached to their leader by bonds of good-will and respect, even, perhaps, of love and devotion, and by the moral influence of their support even the most incorrigible "skin head" will be restrained, and finally conquered.

Many things will transpire during the first few weeks which will make the traveler sigh and wish that he had not ventured upon what promises to be a hopeless task. Madened by strong drinks and drugs, jealous of their status in the EU, regretting also, like ourselves, that they had been so hasty in undertaking the exit, brooding over the joys of the land fast receding from them, anxious for the future, susceptible to the first and every influence that assails them with temptations to return to the flock, these people require to be treated with the utmost kindness and consideration, and the intending traveler must be wisely circumspect in his intercourse with them. From my experiences of such men, it will be readily believed that I had prepared for the scenes which I knew were to follow at Barking, and that all my precautions had been taken.

Within three hours Barking was in a ferment, "The traveler has brought all the robbers, rapists, and murderers of Europe to take possession of the land," was the rumour that ran wildly through all the streets, lanes, courts, and pubs. Men with bloody faces, wild, bloodshot eyes, bedraggled, rumpled and torn clothes, reeled up to our orderly and nearly silent quarters clamouring for retribution and snacks. Islingtonians with raised shovels, and tanned Hampsteadites with brollies ready to be drawn, came up threatening, and, following them, a miscellaneous rabble of excited men, while, in the background,

seethed a mob of frantic women and mischievous children.

"What is the matter? I asked, scarcely knowing how to begin to calm this turbulent mass of passionate beings.

"Matter!" was echoed. "What is the matter?" was repeated. "Matter enough. The land is in an uproar. Your men are stealing, lying, robbing goods from the shops, breaking plates, killing our pigeons, assaulting everybody, drawing knives on our women after abusing them, and threatening to burn down the town and exterminate everybody. Matter indeed! Matter enough! What do you mean by bringing this savage rabble from Europe?" so fumed and sputtered a Riffraff of some consequence among the magnates of Shepherd Bush.

"Dear me, my friend, this is shocking; terrible. Pray sit down, and be patient. Sit down here by me, and let us just talk this over like wise men," I said in soothing tones to this *enfant kutisha*, for he really looked in feature, dress, and demeanour, what, had I been an imaginative raw youth, I should have set down as the "incarnate scourge of England," and he looked wicked enough with his besuited, striped sleeves, his brandished cowhide brief, and fierce blue eyes, to chop off my innocent head.

Francis Allys Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River 2008



Strait of Gibraltar, Morocco-Spain, 7:46min
Screen grabs

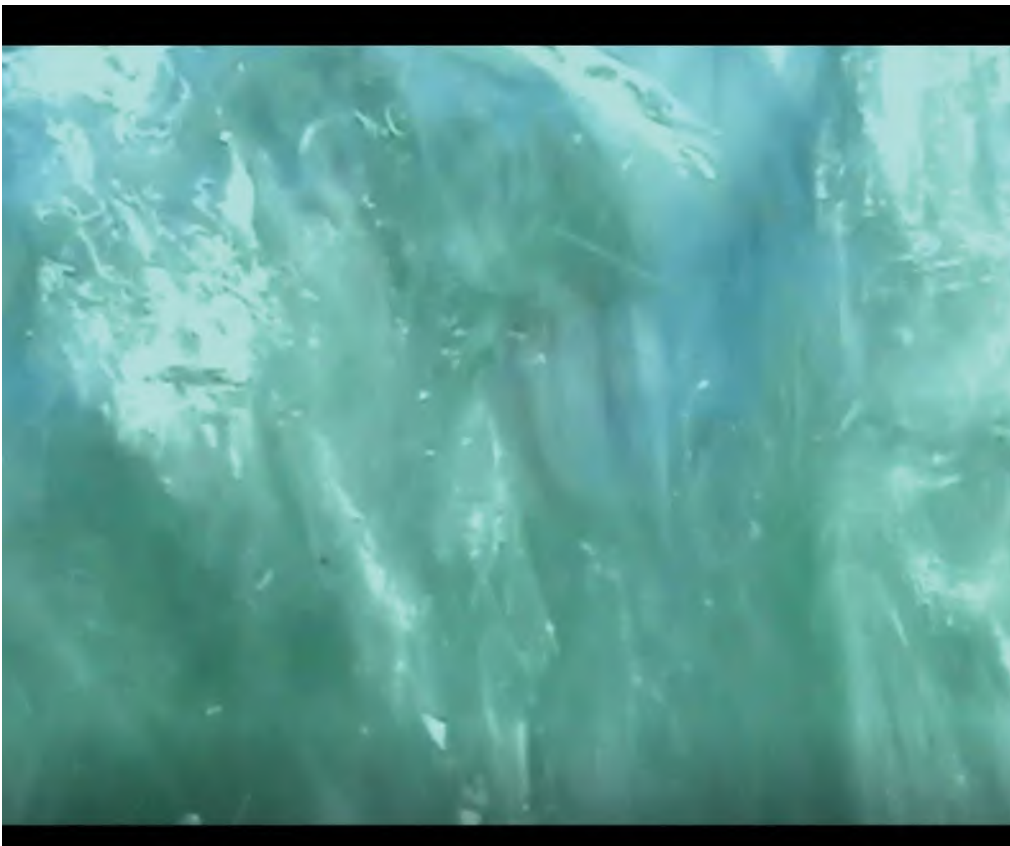




Strait of Gibraltar, Morocco-Spain, 7:46min
Screen grabs



Strait of Gibraltar, Morocco-Spain, 7:46min
Screen grabs



INTO THE DETENTION CENTRES AND PLACES OF SHRINKING VISIBILITIES

Robert Atanasovski

Refugees near the village of Idomeni at the Greek- Macedonian border 2015-2016















Bishnupriya Ghosh

The Refugee Within: Becoming Disposable in Modern India

Two scenes from India's burgeoning archives of migrancy invoke the violence of dispossession enacted by the Hindu nationalist state in the last year. Both disclose the making of refugees *within* the boundaries of the modern nation. We are accustomed to refugees as border-crossers, fleeing political violence and economic ruin. The apocryphal South Asian refugee story has its roots in the bloody birth of India and Pakistan in 1947 when 15 million crossed the newly

made borders. It is a well-documented story in histories, fiction, film, and photography. Since the 2019-2020 so-called "migrant crises," did not involve crossing nation-state borders, it might not count as refugee history in the strictest sense of the word. However, like the partition of India, in both these new scenes of dispossession, those who lived within the nation's territory suddenly found themselves displaced, adrift, and homeless. This essay focuses on the mediatic pro-

cesses constitutive of the "refugee within" and the implications of documenting these historic events. The new histories of disposability, I argue, expand juridical notations of the refugee that stabilized in the mid-20thC.² This expansion is a global phenomenon driving much contemporary thought on the future of political communities - what they have become and what they can be.

The first photograph is a screenshot from a video posted on the Indian media platform, *The Quint* (<https://www.thequint.com/>), one of the news sources still relatively independent of the government's draconian hold on information in general, and the news media, in particular. The video features several women at one of the detention centers in the northeastern state of Assam, where the first exercises of the National Registry of Citizens (NRC) was conducted. Assam is the crucible for the planned all-Indian registry in which all denizens within India's borders are required to furnish documents proving citizenship; those unable to do so are instantly rendered stateless. According to the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP-led government, the point was to weed out those who were illegal; but, as we shall see, when the NRC exercises were followed by the Citizenship Amendment ACT (CAA) in 2019, it became clear that the Hindu nationalist government's implicit targets were Muslims in India. In Purnendu Pritam's video, several women held at the Korkajhar Detention Center spoke about brutal treatment and extended detention, sometimes at the cost of their families (Fig.1). One of the detained women is forty-seven-year-old Momiran Nessa who was detained for almost a decade after she had been declared a foreigner by the Foreigners Tribunal.³ Allegedly, jail officials had moved her to the Guwahati Medical College to terminate her pregnancy with an injection. Nessa's story was not an anomaly; others, too, spoke up in interviews once the Assam NRC lists were published in 2019. The building of six detention centers in Assam links this refugee spectacle to its global counterparts; we live in times when crossing a border is not necessarily what makes a refugee, borders



Fig.1 Detention Center, Kokrajhar, Assam (2019)
Credits: Screenshot Purnendu Pritam video, Quint



Fig.2 Rampukar Pandit's long trek home (2020)¹
Credits: Screenshot Atul Yadav photo, Mojo Story

can also arise internally as denizens are hunted as newly stateless subjects. Processes such as NRC denationalize racialized populations, peeling away political rights that guarantee state protections. As we shall see, the Muslims targeted in the NRC exercises were subsequently not granted refugee status, essentially placing them in a suspended state of semi-permanent dispossession.

The second photograph became one of those iconic images of the 470 million migrant workers who embarked on a long trek home to their villages, following the abrupt COVID-19 lockdown announced by the Indian government on March 24, 2020. In retrospect, the lockdown order without transportation provisions for migrant workers from other states protected the Indian middle class while rendering the poor dispensable. The Press Trust of India's chief photo correspondent, Atul Yadav, had been driving through Delhi's Nizamuddin area when he came across Rampukar Pandit, the man featured in the photograph, crying into his cellphone (Fig.2).⁴ Like many others, Pandit was a construction worker who had started on a long journey back to Begusarai, Bihar, 1,200 kilometers (745 miles) away. He was detained for three hours at the gate through which one crosses from borders Delhi (the capital) to Uttar Pradesh (the adjoining state) for three days. In that time, Pandit's 11-month old son's health was in serious decline. Yadav snapped the grief-struck father on his Nikon D4

camera before checking on him. The photograph became instantly famous partly because of Yadav's institutional affiliation at the Press Trust of India (PTI), the largest news agency in the country. Like other iconic photographs such as Arko Datta's photograph of Qutubuddin Ansari (the face of the 2002 Gujarat riots) and Raghu Rai's buried baby (from the Bhopal Gas Leak disaster, 1984), Yadav snapshot went viral, circulating vertiginously in Indian and global news outlets.⁵ As the story goes, Rampukar Pandit reached home by various modes of transit - walking, train, and bicycle - once he crossed the Delhi-UP border. In going "home" to Begusarai, Pandit was not a refugee in the juridical understanding of the term. And yet, at a moment of national crisis, he had become utterly dispensable - one "gone in search of refuge," as the French etymology of the term suggests.

At the heart of both stories lies the distributive calculus of expenditure: What is the cost of offering refuge? When means are strained, who becomes dispensable? The question obviously haunts those who flee across borders, as the Syrian refugee crisis has shown. However, it increasingly impacts those displaced internally - whether that is as climate refugees or the urban poor drifting in and out of cities. This distributive calculus operates across the "industrialized" and "industrializing" divide, one that is more muddled than ever before in the COVID-19 crisis. In this global story,

what is the role of media in making refugees? As humans become data bodies for algorithmic capture, surveillance media sort and value citizens, turning some into potential refugees. The "undocumented citizen," oxymoronic as that might seem, is rendered disposable. We are faced with big data on citizens/non-citizens, on the one hand, and a lack of data on migrant/refugee deaths, on the other. As the disposable refugee vanishes from sight, documentary media - news bytes, stories, photographs, cellphone footage, oral recorded testimonies - offer scattered traces of brutal state indifference. In what follows, I consider how distributive calculations and mediatic processes operate together in the new histories of disposability.

Refugees as Expenditure

The NRC exercises denationalize Indian citizens to make them refugees within the sovereign state. However, the migrants of the COVID-19 exodus do not, at first glance, appear to fit the "refugee" as juridical category - at least as defined by the mid-20thC Refugee Convention of 1951 (and its 1967 Protocol). Their exodus was not forcible per se, but driven by prospects of starvation and homelessness; nor were the migrants stateless in their search for refuge. And yet, as we shall see, during a state of emergency declared by the BJP administration in March 2020, urban migrant laborers had no choice but to embark on a hazardous internal migration of mammoth proportions. Without adequate papers necessary to demand state dispensations, they became disposable in a matter of days. One might say that this catastrophe was just a massive bureaucratic failure. Nevertheless, as Michel Foucault has taught us, neglect and indifference are active modes of "letting die" some populations to "make live" others.⁶ This biopolitical logic ensures a precarity that becomes deathly for those who live without any safety nets. The migrants who depend on daily wages for their next meal walking home during the lockdown can therefore be placed on a spectrum, which includes the NRC refugees. I will argue that the

refugee spectacles of the early 21stC - migrants desperately fleeing violence and persecution, and noncitizen denizens awaiting decisions from Foreign Tribunals or deportation in detention centers - recasts the refugee as not one who awaits coming political rights (in naturalization or repatriation) but one who is an untenable expenditure: a “disposable human” whose expendability exposes economic value as foundational to inclusion in political community.

That the refugee is the figure of (racial-cultural) difference is nothing new: as Hannah Arendt reminded us in “We Refugees” (written in January 1943⁷), refugees have always laid pressure on the historical constitution of nations as a political community. Nor is the question of expenditure entirely surprising, since the “refugee problem” was always seen to be a “material problem of overpopulation” and not one of failed “political organization.”⁸ Arendt’s insightful notations hold ever more true today, except that the latter, the “material problem of overpopulation” now dominates the refugee question. This is why it is revealing to place the biopolitical “culling” of populations during the COVID-19 emergencies alongside the legislative processes of denationalization. A vicious term, culling refers to the sorting of wild animals for slaughter.⁹ As such, it is appropriate for the willful “letting die” of vulnerable populations in modern India - whether that is Indian Muslims facing prospects of deportation or the migrant poor whose deaths are deliberately uncounted. What is unfolding in India is part and parcel of a global phenomenon: we are witnessing mass, permanent dispossession in those who languish in detention centers; those who drown, starve, or die in search of refuge; or those who are actively attacked by agents of the state. Consider the recent Syrian refugee crisis: as European nation-states fight over quotas and resources, political agreements on refoulement advocated by the UNHCR are increasingly sidelined.¹⁰ Differences yawn between those who strain resources and those who build nations, a spurious divide that deliberately overlooks potential contributions of refugees who

transition into citizens to the nations that absorb them. The refugee is a *figure of expenditure* whose exclusion remakes nations as political communities, forming borders, limiting populations. Such a turn evacuates all pretense of ethical commitments to refugees as political subjects, placing life in a zone between the animal and the human - that zone of “bare life,” as Giorgio Agamben termed it, once protected by the divine. On the spectrum between human and animal, potential refugees in suspended states of dispossession become disposable. It is this disposability that enables the culling of populations.

Writing fifty years after Arendt, Agamben insists that, as a limit-concept, the refugee reveals the citizen’s inalienable political rights (*bios*) to be a fiction.¹¹ Political rights turn out to be alienable, after all, for those who are bereft of state protections. Devoid of political protections, refugees are purely human - that’s why they are often granted *human* rather than *political* rights. The list of the disenfranchised includes those who have “lost every quality and every specific relation except the pure fact of being human,” be that those gathering at the border or newly denationalized populations (Agamben 114). Read this way, the refugee is a “modern political condition” that “perforates” the naturalness of political rights guaranteed by birth (nativity) into political community (the nation) situated within a territory (nation-space).¹² There is also a significant difference between the human and the citizen, marking citizenship as a historical dispensation. Since nationalist fictions are premised on humans having *inalienable* rights, the refugee’s unprotected status must necessarily be temporary: the refugee must always be on the way to naturalization or repatriation. Indeed, there is no place for the human bereft of rights within sovereign territories; hence, the refugee camp, which can be understood as the state of exception. And yet, in the early 21st, with political rights on the wane, camps have become semi-permanent spaces. The refugee’s future as a citizen shrinks even as guarantees evaporate for the most vulnerable sections of the population.

The situation is even worse - or perhaps just more blatant - in the case of authoritarian regimes that are on the rise all over the world. Contemporary authoritarian regimes sort populations in efforts to delimit political community: we see this in white supremacist American settler colonialism as much as in upper-caste Hindu nationalism. In these populist nationalisms, the refugee continues to emerge as a figure of difference, one whose existence on sovereign territory must be attenuated either by deportation or willful neglect. The politics of letting die effectively cleanse sovereign territory, making way for the coming homogenized political community.

In the early twenty-first century, the refugee, as a figure of expenditure, forces a new reckoning. With the economic drive of neoliberal regimes consistently denuding state protections and dispensations, with deepening economic precarities, large numbers of various populations are without refuge/shelter. In common parlance, this is the new war of the 1% against the 99%. The COVID-19 health emergency has merely brought this well-known story to light once more. Consider the elite traders who made a killing early in the US pandemic because of a tip off from the Trump administration.¹³ One could multiply such examples as more than one state is in the business of entrenching and ensuring economic disparities within and beyond nations in the name of “the people.” The political will to *exclusion* rather than democratic inclusion has now become a rational choice in resurgent right-wing nationalism all over the world. Anti-refugee mobilization is one dimension of this general trend. Against this backdrop, potential refugees are figures of expenditure: their suspended dispossession foreshadows the coming disposability of vulnerable citizens and noncitizen denizens (including seasonal migrant workers, and the undocumented). Once more, as Arendt once suggested, refugees are at the vanguard of a new historical consciousness.

Becoming Disposable

Disposability invokes economic



Fig.3 Hit by lockdown, Migrants Walk Home
Credits: Vipin Kumar, Hindustan Times

value (as in disposable assets) as well as temporary or limited use. As such “becoming disposable” suggests citizens who are no longer useful to the nation-state and can, therefore, be discarded. Such a fate extends to larger and larger populations in increasingly oligarchic states that convert national resources - including energy, public land, and financial reserves - into speculative assets, thereby emptying the national coffers. Such accumulation logically reverses or refuses political dispensations. Populist authoritarian regimes present an extreme instance of the norm. Jair Bolsonaro’s Brazil, Donald Trump’s America, and Narendra Modi’s India, all represent such oligarchic formations that have successfully engineered populist fictions to ensure the wealth of a few. Notably, these are the nation-states with the highest COVID-19 infections in the world. As a Hindu nationalist state, India has made an authoritarian turn in recent decades, quelling opposition in no uncertain terms (in political murders and non-bailable imprisonment). A part of the BJP-led effort to reconstitute India as the sovereign territory for Hindus is to create a tiered model of citizenship, in which the “minorities,” notably Muslims and Dalits, are effectively second-class citizens. The cynical *realpolitik* is not only to ensure future electoral successes (assuming all Hindus will vote for the BJP) but also to consolidate the nation’s financial resources for its oligarchic elites. In exposés of BJP crony capitalism, we

know that at least half of India’s coal reserves, for example, have slipped into the hands of a few families; that six or seven businesses have bought up most national assets invested as global funds; and that the telecommunications infrastructures that occupy pride of place for the BJP regime are a family empire.¹⁴ Amid deepening economic disparity, the delimiting of the nation as political community guarantees the wealth of its elites. This means the population of 1.3 billion must be culled, either in the political project of *making new refugees* or the economic one of *making die* the most vulnerable sectors. In this new equation, the potential refugee is no longer the “pure hu-

man” who should receive state dispensations, but bare, less-than-human life, become disposable. The economic value of life, turning humans into expenditures or contributions, trumps life guaranteed by social contract.

The NRC exercises aim to denationalize Indian citizens. They are a part of the Hindu-nationalist BJP’s multi-pronged strategy for culling the Muslim population in India, so as to ensure an enduring Hindu majority. The strategy includes stemming Muslim migration (through the Citizenship Amendment Act or CAA) as well as pruning the size of the existing 200 million Muslim population (through the National Registry of Citizens or NRC) by requiring current Indian residents to furnish documentary proof of their citizenship. Fear and confusion followed the first implementation of the NRC, conducted in the northeastern state of Assam in 2014. Assam’s border with Bangladesh is one of the unsecured migration corridors in Asia (according to the U.N. Migration Report of 2020); hence, the state became the site of this political experiment. When the NRC was published in 2019, 1.9 million Indian residents (6% of Assam’s population) were declared illegal migrants. With many petitioning for reentry, 100+ Foreigner Tribunals were put in place. Of course, such tribunals have existed since the 1960s, and detention centers for ille-



Fig.4 Assam Detention Centre, Matia, Assam
Credits: Prasanth Viswanathan, Bloomberg

gal migrants, since 2009. However, after the publication of the NRC, new detention centers - sprawling infrastructures lying in wait to swallow newly denationalized refugees - caused a national outcry (Fig.4).¹⁵ "Designed to Exclude," as the title of the Amnesty International Report (2019) goes, the NRC process turned out to be fundamentally anti-poor. The burden of proof marginalized the most vulnerable (refugees, migrant workers, tribal communities, and women) who did not have the proper documents. Several sold property and livestock to make long journeys to the Foreigner Tribunals; some members of families excluded from the registry (including one twin!) committed suicide. More chilling was the arbitrary and discriminatory nature of the quasi-judicial Foreigner Tribunals. Not only were the tribunals granted extraordinary powers that bypassed protections of life and liberty guaranteed by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, but the officers were contractually employed and axed when they failed to declare foreigners at a rate less than 10%.¹⁶ The economic calculus at the heart of culling populations was on full display in the making of new refugees and the callous indifference toward the stateless poor. Meanwhile, horrifying stories emerging from the existing detention centers revealed states of semi-permanent dispossession.

The Assam debacle exposed the NRC as one step in the process of "weeding out" Muslim migrants so as to increase the Hindu majority. For when a substantial number of Hindus were recorded as illegal in the Assam NRC, one BJP Member of Parliament voiced the party's discomfort and proclaimed Hindus could not be "foreigners" in India.¹⁷ Thus, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) followed. Passed on December 11, 2019, the bill proposed a path to citizenship for all Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist, Parsi, and Jain refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who sought refuge in India before 2014. Refugees of these faiths who were excluded from the NRC could be fast-tracked to becoming citizens. Muslims were excluded from this list of "persecuted religious minorities," however, on the grounds that neighboring

countries were Muslim majority nations; thus, the Muslim minorities could find refuge there. Effectively, then, if a Muslim resident of India was declared illegal in the NRC exercises, they had no pathway back to Indian citizenship.¹⁸ Nor did the category "persecuted religious minority" include the Rohingya Muslim refugees, in a glaring lacuna. For the first time in the nation's history, religion has been introduced as a criterion for access to citizenship. The CAA-NRC together turned refugees into political instruments: Hindus from surrounding states were wooed, while Muslim citizens are potentially eliminated. The NRC exercises prompted the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) to urge India to provide the newly stateless with legal aid and legal recourse; with the CAA, the UNHCR petitioned the Indian Supreme Court. The BJP-administration's reply was that the NRC-CAA exercises were an internal matter that should not be subject to international regulation.

The second aspect in the culling populations comes out of the COVID-19 crisis. It was not a planned exercise; nor did it make refugees in the juridical sense of the term. Nevertheless, the state's utter inability to make any provision for some of its most vulnerable populations - migrant workers in the urban centers - made for a disaster with few parallels in modern Indian history. On March 24, 2020, the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi announced a national lockdown for 21 days, following a 14-hour curfew on March 22. It was a massive endeavor, locking down 1.3 billion - the largest in the world. All modes of transportation were suspended; all workplaces, including construction sites, closed. While those with homes hunkered down, daily wage laborers in the major cities found themselves without refuge. Many were living in temporary shelters, or sleeping in shifts in shared spaces while a majority relied on their daily earnings for sustenance. With no transportation provision to make their way back to villages and small towns, nor any time for preparation (for state and municipal governments), migrant laborers found themselves cut adrift, some evicted, others harassed

for curfew violations on their perilous journey home. In the stories and photographs being published on social media and independent news outlets, it became clear that in states like Uttar Pradesh, the migrants were publicly sprayed with bleach; on other occasions, they were beaten by state police to discipline their movements. When the government woke up to the necessity of making transport available (the "Shramik Special" trains were announced as late as May 1, 2020, 40 days after the lockdown¹⁹), migrants had to apply for e-passes to board buses and trains. With India's varying literacies, this was a bureaucratic process that many were not able to complete, while the offer was too late for millions who were already on their way home on foot. When state dispensations came, many found themselves without the necessary papers: for instance, only 18.8% of Delhi's construction workers had Building and Construction Workers (BOCW) identity cards required for receiving benefits from the state-sanctioned BOCW fund.²⁰ As the tragedy unfolded, 198 migrants died in road accidents on their way home between May 25-31, 2020 while others died of exhaustion and starvation. When asked about how many perished, in mid-September, 2020, the Ministry of Labor and Employment told the Lok Sabha (the Lower House) that there was "no data" available despite the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act of 1979 which required documentation.²¹ For an administration obsessed with surveillance data, the empty slate told its own story: the disposable human should leave no trace. Once more, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) exhorted the government to provide sufficient aid for those seeking new refuge.

What was striking in this unfolding manmade disaster was the negative value of the urban poor: once essential for building the BJP's infrastructure projects (held up as one of the administration's main achievements), the migrants became instantly disposable amid a looming economic crisis. Fig.3 is one of many photographs that frame migrants on foot, carrying all their worldly belongings, against the national highways, cellphone

towers, and high rises of modern India. The state appears as a giant maw of hot concrete and electrical grid, offering no refuge. The pictures disclose a nation built on the backs of migrant poor who were, in the final analysis, deemed unworthy of state guarantees of their lives.

Documents and Their Discontents

In the NRC story, the role of documents in making refugees is obvious. The NRC exercises demand “legacy documents” that establish proof of citizenship and include land and tenancy records, electoral rolls, and government issued licenses and certificates. If one was ever registered as a “doubtful voter” in Assam (the fate of many), one did not make the NRC. Challenging documentation, the demand to “show papers,” became the crux of the massive protests that broke out all over India between mid-December 2019 and March 2020: the young poet, Varun Grover’s evocative poem, “*Kagaz Nahin Dekhaonge*” (“I will not show my papers”) became the anthem for the anti-CAA-NRC movement.²² Papers become iconic of the dead state enacting violence through its document raj.

Documents in print and electronic mediums dominate these new histories of disposability. On the one hand,

they are eminently *scarce* as guarantors of access to state protections. As Lisa Gitelman’s has demonstrated in her media history of the document, with the emergence of hectographs, xeroxes, carbon copies in the print culture of the 1920s and 1930s, differentiations arose between the original document with restricted circulation and its proliferating copies; this becomes ever more complex in digital culture.²³ The scarcity of the document is all too evident in the NRC exercises with the Foreigner Tribunals authorized to accept or reject proofs of citizenship. However, it also pertains to the COVID-19 lockdown, when print or electronic passes were coveted for accessing transportation even as they proved to be unreliable in some situations: in Fig.6, one migrant worker holds up a e-pass that proved useless in getting him a place on overcrowded transportation. These bureaucratic snafus and long waits for passes are dime a dozen in the sorry tale of the emergency lockdown, exacerbated by restricted literacies and unregistered family members traveling with migrant workers. In such stories, documents circulate as objects of desire that can materialize political rights and dispensations.

On the other hand, biometric documentation is prolific in India today via

the Aadhar card (a state-issued identity card) that is become ubiquitous under the BJP regime. Citizens are now data points or “flecks of identity,” as Mathew Fuller has noted, in this “socio-algorithmic process” of electronic capture.²⁴ The capture infuses every part of daily life from getting treatment at free government hospitals to opening bank accounts and registering cellphones. Aadhar as documentary proof renders citizens as ‘dividuals (or less than individuals), some media theorists argue, who can be disassembled and reassembled as information bits.²⁵ Such data bodies make possible the calculability of the human. In other words, ‘dividuals as numbers enable the transformation of the refugee into national expenditure. Even though Aadhar cards are not allowed as “proof” of citizenship, they expand surveillance infrastructures. The NRC registries in Assam required biometric capture as part of the process: in Fig.5, a woman undergoes an iris scan at a hearing at the Passport Seva Kendra in the Barpeta District, Assam (August 2019). Thus, documentation proliferates in surveilling citizens; put differently, through documentation one enters algorithmic calculations through which one becomes expendable/disposable. Mediatic processes of electronic transcription, then, become the software for culling populations in modern India. In light of the BJP’s ambitious social engineering of the imagined community and its infrastructural capacity to document, it seems inconceivable that there was “no data” about migrant deaths during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Here, we see the other side of documentation, one which bucks state control and regulation. Against the vanishing refugee stands a fulsome documentary archive of disposability: a record of deaths, of refugee stories, of photographs as evidence of state violence, direct and indirect, intentional or not. The earliest accounts of migrants trekking home after the COVID-19 lockdown came in cascading photographs whose impact ricocheted around the world. Atul Yadav’s photograph went viral because of the distributive chokepoint, the Press Trust of India, enabled wide circulation. As



Fig.5 Woman takes iris scan, Barpeta, Assam
Credits: David Talukdar, AFP

Zeynep Gursel notes in her ethnography of news photos, behind such world press photos lie multiple brokers.²⁶ As such, the photograph was highly vetted and credentialed in its circulation. Within Indian news media, some journalistic narratives tried to contain any damage to perceptions of governmental incompetence (at best) or violence (at worst) accompanying the NRC exercises or the COVID-19 lockdown, especially in news outlets owned (or threatened) by BJP supporters. Human interest stories elicited sympathy for distant suffering, even as they celebrated the heroic migrants who made it home and the good samaritans they met on their way. Others following the time-honored traditions of rigorous investigative journalism, appeared on the remaining “independent” media platforms that have survived the BJP press crackdown. David Talukdar’s account of the women in the Assam detention center at Kokrajhar, Assam, for example, was published in one such outlet, *The Quint*. As exemplary independent media outlet, the platform’s history verifies its investigative heft. *The Quint* is part of the digital media company, Quintillion Media, founded by Raghav Bahl and Ritu Kapur, who left the Network 18 media conglomerate when it was taken over by Reliance Industries. As the flagship of the Ambani telecommunications empire, Reliance has a stranglehold on Indian media communications and serves the BJP-led coalition. Predictably, as part of a concerted

attempt to repress independent media, Bahl’s residence was raided by the Income Tax Department in 2018 on trumped up charges of tax evasion. Controlling journalistic documentation of population culling, then, is the long game as this history suggests. Those engaged in an archaeological dig into refugee histories, therefore, do not just gather scattered traces but also probe stories that make possible circulations of photographs, videos, and narratives.

Such slow analysis makes it impossible to do justice to the documentary archive on the NRC exercises or the COVID-19 migrant trek. I have provided just a taste, and the glimpse of an archaeological method. What is relevant to this inquiry on newly made refugees are historical traces attuned to the thanatopolitics of the Indian state - traces that remain after all refutations and data erasure. Among these traces, photographs of injury evidence direct and indirect state violence: the visual and narrative archive shows refugees behind bars, with bleeding feet, some bent over double, others collapsed on highways. Beyond accusations of consuming tragedy as spectacle, Arielle Azoulay notes that photographs of injury can be critical to renewing commitments to those bereft of state protections. When one stops *looking* and starts *watching*, she argues, a civil contract reopens between viewer and subject.²⁷ In the documentary archive of the trek home and the NRC refu-

gees, such a civil contract becomes possible for those who pause to dig further.

That civil contract underlies the documentation of migrant/refugee stories that captured their perspectives in digitized databases - some as raw, not-yet transcribed audio traces. These provide grist for criticism of the NRC exercises and the COVID-19 lockdown response. Much like Amnesty International’s aforementioned “Designed to Exclude” report, the international non-profit Freedom Fund conducted a rapid assessment of the COVID-19 lockdown debacle, in “Voices of the Invisible,” based on interviews with 3,196 migrant workers and their families in the construction sector (selected from the 60,000 registered on the Jan Sahas database).²⁸ Among many stories, one worker (Dilip) stranded with 30 others at the Gurgaon railway station (bordering Delhi) for some days, with scarce food or water, put it bluntly: “*Yahan ruk kar kya hoga? Hum bhookhey mar jayengey. Hum log paidal nikal jayengey*” (What will happen if we stay here? We’ll die of hunger. So, we will walk home). Facing disposability, Dilip sees both as equally risky: starving at his place of work or perishing on the journey home. Still others express appreciation for humanitarian relief efforts, while remaining unconvinced that such relief can be sustained over the long trek. In these accounts, a sense of the state’s economic calculus is resonant - a hard look, a demand for once-promised dispensations. A second database emerges from helpline records consolidated by social enterprises: Gram Vaani, for instance, mobilized a partner response team that included public health researchers, development communications specialists, community activists, and technology operations engineers, among others, that resolved more than 70 issues reported between March 24 and April 7, 2020. Gram Vaani’s mobile unit reaches as many as 1 million people across India.²⁹ Requests for help were recorded, some transcribed, in a publicly accessible database (<https://gramvaani.org>). Many of the stories corroborate what investigative journalists have reported: the evictions, the starvation, the police beatings, the impossibility of garnering relief from an indifferent state.



Fig.6 Nagendra with a e-pass, walking home
Credits: Himanshu Vyas, Hindustan Times

Together, the electronically-archived audio, visual, and print traces index a keen awareness of disposability: there are no illusions about state dispensations, only anger and mistrust. From these perspectives, a strong sense of betrayal emerges from the refugee within.

The pictures don't lie. At their center is the one who has gone in search of refuge. For oligarchic states, this figure spells expenditure. For those invested in open communities based on difference rather than commonality, the refugee is once more a guiding light in the darkest hour of the Indian democracy.

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MINIPOGON

Minipogon is an experimental production and recycling collective, dedicated to processing and transforming residual aspects of the capitalist system into useful and beautiful objects, and lively environments with more acceptable economic relationships. The collective was formed in 2017 in Belgrade by a group of artists, scientists and activists.

In order to counter dominant capitalist trends of exploitation, in Minipogon, we took up the challenge of devising and employing different kinds of relations of production that would be more respectful towards materials and social surroundings. For this reason, we chose to operate from the margins of the dominant society by placing our first working studio in the Krnjača refugee camp on the outskirts of Belgrade..

Here, we started building our own means of production (machines for processing waste plastic) and working with the rejected by-products of capitalist production, both in material terms (plastic, a crude oil derivative, today's most exploited element in nature), and in social terms (people excluded from or highly precarious within the dominant society/labour market such as immigrants, the unemployed and the informally employed, etc).

In administrating this process, Minipogon explores alternative methods of production, cooperative relationships and self-management. By jointly directing the manufacturing of newly designed objects (recycled plastic bowls, clipboards, a replica of the refugee camp/barracks in the shape of a gold bar), we are trying to create a space for the production of new values and supportive environments while we also aim to create a space where the politicisation of the relations of production is possible.

For over a year, Minipogon's workspace was installed in Krnjača refugee camp, which was built in Yugoslav socialist times, as a part of the industrial compound of the giant infrastructure factory, Ivan Milutinović. Like other socially owned properties, it had been subject to decay and the company went bankrupt during the 1990's 'transition'. The same accommodation unit for temporary workers (popularly called 'barracks') was curiously used for accommodating refugees from the Yugoslav wars during the 90's. With the outbreak of the 'migrant crisis' in 2015 the camp was 'adapted' with the help of EU funds - that is to say, reinforced with walls and system of control - to house Middle Eastern refugees. Adjacent to the camp are informal Roma settlements, which lack basic living infrastructure such as water, and electricity. Its inhabitants, similar to most of the Roma population in Serbia, base the majority of their economy on informal waste collection.

During a one year period (Nov 2018 - Dec 2019), Minipogon developed a continuous work dynamic in the camp with a regular time-table, working three full days a week. Throughout this process, various groups of young inmates (Krnjača camp is ostensibly designed to house underage refugees and to a lesser extent families, in reality, the average age is around 20) engaged in our work processes and received economic compensation for it, generated from the sales of products. Furthermore, a channel for sourcing raw materials (recyclable plastic waste) was established with the neighbouring Roma community. The project was not limited only to the aspect of monetary economy. Over time, our workshop became a dynamic space for encounters and meetings, hosting visits from art and design students, activists, artists, and others who were attracted by Minipogon's work.









Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix (MAP Office)

The Island of the Misfits

"The islanders weren't true Japanese, but were Japanese enough to die." \ Chris Marker, *Level Five*, 1997

"[W]hat is a home? Is it a place? A set of relationships? A group of possessions? A feeling state? There is no universal answer, nor is there even a simple answer to the question of where a person's home is. Not every person thinks of himself [or herself] as having one, and only one, home. Parents' dwellings and other houses, neighborhoods, towns, or countries may also be thought of as home and even referred to as "my real home."..."Home" may also refer to the roots of one's psychological life which may or may not be the same as one's behavioral life."

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The contemporary practice of MAP Office combines a diversity of subjects and media that slip boundlessly from one context to another, or deliberately, one island to another. Over the past 25 years, we have developed a research-based practice that has critically observed the development of the complex area of Hong Kong and the extended Pearl River Delta region of Mainland China. At first approaching the territory at large through its most recognisable densities of urban life and infrastructure, we gradually shifted our exploration to the region's invisible islands and hidden communities. These include the rapidly disappearing

fisherman culture and their remarkable knowledge about the edible and medicinal benefits of seaweed. These islands and their communities have motivated numerous multi-media installations, including *Hong Kong Is Land*, *The Invisible Islands*, *Ghost Islands*, *Disputed Islands*, and *Liquid Land | Solid Sea*.

After 25 years, recent radical political shifts in Hong Kong, as well as risks associated with global climate change, influenced our relocation to Japan. MAP Office's new base will be Ishigaki Island, one of the southernmost islands in the Yaeyama Archipelago of Japan, where we will shift our focus from a life of academic research to create a centre of practice and artistic retreat based on the ocean. This essay narrates the transition of our shift of focus, from Hong Kong to Ishigaki through the construct/idea of the 'misfit'. We have selected to present a selection of MAP Office recent artworks through a series of island narratives, *The Protective Island*, *The Pandemic Island*, *The Disputed Island*, *The Slavery Island* and *The Resilient Island*, weaving our artworks under these headlines with the aim of presenting an interpretation of the essential characteristics of Ishigaki Island.

The figure of the misfit and the question of social identity are central to our practice and as 'forever foreign', it is fundamental for us to make sure that we can fit into the 'Island of the Misfits'. From Hong Kong to the Yaeyama Archipelago, the multicultural nature of these societies has shaped broad-minded local discourses and informed our approach to these archipelagic territories in which

we place cultural diversity at the heart of your practice. The effort to recognise cultural diversity and a sense of belonging in foreign territories has been essential to the mainstreaming of multiculturalism. Influenced by Edouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*,¹ we have developed multiple analytical processes as a global guide to culturally significant islands, from the Caribbean to Nauru in the Pacific Ocean. In 2008, MAP Office began a new body of work "Island Is Land" that questioned the role played by islands as laboratories for the humanities. Following a Deleuzian concept from his text *Desert Islands*,² we saw the possibility of the 're-', a return to the origin. The 're-' is embedded in the figure of the castaway, that unfolds in two dimensions; the first is spatial, the second temporal. Spatially, through an involuntarily discovery, the castaway takes possession of a new land, which later becomes both a home and prison for the duration of an unfortunate exile. In this situation, the castaway is forced to domesticate the island. This can be achieved by re-constructing the place of origin or developing a new utopia, in any case, the castaway must dominate the new domain or otherwise perish. In the same way, the dispersion of the first seafarers onto small islands with few resources required them to develop new skills in order to sustain themselves in their new island homes.

Taking as a point of departure the effect of environmental change and human migration across the seas, this essay, 'The Island of the Misfits', delineates a new map which connects the maritime territory of Hong Kong to the Yaeyama Archipelago. Along with this spatial repositioning, in this essay, we will weave together the principal social and cultural constituents of the two territories through a discussion of a series of recent artworks and their future extensions. We begin by presenting some of the maritime routes that were taken by diverse groups of people who were seeking new homes. The islands' resilience and the migrants' specific methods of subsistence form a rich backdrop on which to map community values and traditional knowledge about coastal ecosystems.

The Protective Island

The Ryukyu Arc defined a dotted frontier between seas for early maritime travellers. Stretching northeast from Taiwan to Kyushu, the islands define a specific maritime territory, which is sometimes referred as the East China Sea Network. In medieval history, a system of multiple sea trade lanes and subsequent specific economies and ports defined the many diverse cultures of the archipelago. Therefore, the discussion of whether the Ryukyu has more Chinese or Japanese characteristics is irrelevant because it ignores the intense historical maritime trade and human flow through the area. In 1609, the island kingdom of the Ryukyu was incorporated into Japan and re-named Okinawa. The inclusion happened in a century where sea conflicts with Portuguese and Dutch merchants, Vietnamese and Chinese traders, and Spanish colonizers in the Philippines, weaved many narratives around the peaceful archipelago. The multicultural foundation of the Ryukyu Islands is also influenced by the cultures of Austronesia, and Micronesia, to which it is connected through the many routes that the earliest inhabitants took from China to the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

Humans first reached these wind swept islands in the Neolithic period. Crossing extremely rough seas and battling strong ocean currents, they found shelter in the protected waters of the atoll reef. Maritime adaptation and advanced fishing technology allowed people to subsist on islands that had few natural resources. Human bones dating back to 35,000-30,000 years ago have been uncovered in Okinawa Sakitari Cave³ and at the Shiraho Saonetabaru limestone cave in Ishigaki. Next to them, the relics of their subsistence include the world's oldest known fishing tools, beads, and seashell artefacts and tools shaped from bones. The hypothesis that bamboo rafts⁴ were used for early maritime migration is still considered a possibility, taking into account that the sea level was approximately 80 meters lower than today. The geography of the Ryukyu Islands is comprised of more than 150 large and smaller

islands, stretched along an arc of 1200 kms between Taiwan and Kyushu Island in Japan. This suggests that, as some of the larger islands are visible from one to the next, the chain could have been navigated relatively easily.

Returning to the Deleuzian concept, we asked ourselves what can islands do and re-do? MAP Office started a research project on the a world map of islands with the intention of producing a new map to understand for example one of the hidden mechanisms of the financial crisis striking the world in 2008⁵ or the annexing of Mayotte by France the same year.⁶ Identifying islands as an invisible arena for geopolitics, the island research emphasized the idea of the remote and of deterritorialization as a condition developed and mastered from the time of early island migration. Besides the visible geopolitics, there exists also an invisible one in the form of remote, sometimes secret,

appropriation of small isolated pieces of land. From American military bases in the Pacific Ocean, to fiscal paradises in the Caribbean, to pirates hideaways in various times, treasures and valuable components have found an ideal refuge on islands. Together, they form a complex network of possibilities for various communities to develop a new point of departure, back to the Deleuzian 're-'. Perceived as invisible, because they are remote and isolated, islands have played and continue to play an important role in world geopolitical strategies.

The installation Desert Island gave us a framework to develop on a new map of Hong Kong to address the question of identity that has been particularly relevant since the 1997 handover of Hong Kong back to Mainland China. Started in 2013, *The Invisible Islands* project details the specific positions and strategic importance of 33 islands found in Hong







Kong territorial waters. The functions of the islands include: surveillance and port defence (from China to the UK); storage of all sorts (e.g. opium, guns, and gold); aquaculture and agriculture; and refugee communities (e.g. drug addicts and escapees). Hong Kong can only be understood in its plurality of island communities - as an archipelago of multiple possibilities and trajectories. Many islands were occupied long before the British colonization and played an important role during the Opium War from 1804 to 1820. In the pre-colonial period, families migrated from Guangdong to start farming and fishing on these islands. Other islands have been important landing points for waves of migrants from China or Vietnam. Between 1949 and 1951, Hong Kong received 670,000 refugees, who often arrived in fragile boats or by simply swimming. As a result, a small island in Victoria Harbour, Sunshine Island,

became a model for the resettlement of refugees who found a unique opportunity to enhance their self-respect and productive capability. Fully embedded in the Quaker philosophy of Gus Borgeest, who leased the island for HK\$180/year, this little utopia sustained the life of a hundred families who were taught the skills of resourceful self-support. Looking back into the composite history of the Hong Kong archipelago frames a narrative of this complex society. The figure of the swimmer, escaping the nearby coastline in China through a shark-infested sea, is an apt metaphor which informs the collective memory of the archipelagic territory.

What kind of country is Hong Kong? Hong Kong is an island, which was and will become part of China. It has been in a state of perpetual transition, and often the focus of historical accounts has been the colonial occupation of the territory, as if nothing was there before 1841.⁷ In

relation to this, traces of the first settlements dating back to Neolithic times have been found mainly around Sai Kung district and Lantau Island. From small fertile valleys irrigated with fresh mountain water, to seas rich in shellfish and fish, the space between the mainland and the islands was settled. The later influx of the Hakka and Tanka sea communities⁸ influenced the further development of Hong Kong. Floating villages multiplied in the north-eastern part of the territory where the shallow waters are protected from strong winds and currents. The flotilla of boats included sailing junks, shrimp boats, or small sampans depending on their intended use. Over the years, they developed a unique cultural model that gradually observed and integrated the administrative rules of the territory. The *Invisible Islands* project aimed to shed light on these invisible communities and they also represent a turning point in our approach when we started to include perspectives from anthropology and art into our work.

The Pandemic Island

The Pandemic Island addresses a recurrent condition of the isolated islands as destinations for the forced or voluntary re-location of the population. In the midst of the current Covid-19 pandemic, it is fascinating to observe the current and historical impact of contagious diseases on these archipelagic islands. These traumatic human-related events have left multiple traces on the territory. Myths and legends, along with legendary creatures and heroes, are a significant component of the making of a place. When assembling various mythical creatures for the *Invisible Islands*, we encountered Lo Ting,⁹ who is part of the foundational myths of Hong Kong. Half-man half-fish, the figure of Lo Ting emerged in the mythological age around the bays of Lantau; and, as a form of punishment and/or revenge from gods, these creatures populated Hong Kong's coastline until 1197. The myth of Lo Ting re-emerged symbolically 800 years later in 1997 in a series of exhibitions curated by Oscar H. Ho based on new archeolog-



ical finds on Lantau Island.¹⁰ The myth has also become popular amongst artists recently as a counter-narrative to official historical accounts.

While the Neolithic account of Hong Kong's origins should not be ignored, the revival of the Lo Ting is more than symbolic. The various narratives illuminated by Oscar Ho, and the other invited artists in three consecutive shows questioned the sense of origin of Hong Kong as a territory impregnated by its surrounding waters. Besides the surreal figure of an inverted mermaid and the *mise-en-scène* of 'pretend' archaeological artefacts, the question of identity and distance from the dominant Han ethnic group was the main motivation of the various narratives. In opposition to the official story of returning to the Motherland (i.e. Mainland China), Lo Ting appeared as a key figure in the search of a post-colonial identity. This identity is defined through an amphibious way of life, and manifested as a new species to represent the original occupants. Here, again, the opposition between the land and the sea served to counter the orthodox narratives of the future of Hong Kong. It also advocated for the re-definition of the territory as one based on geographical realities, rather than on imposed constructed narratives intended to solidify colonial or Chinese power.

As a parallel to processes in Hong Kong, in Ishigaki, the traumatic displacement of the population is embedded within the toponymy of an epic mountain. Sitting at 285 meters above sea level, with a stunning panoramic view of the Hirabuko Peninsula and the surrounding sea, Mount Nosoko or coincidentally Mount Mape, is a testimonial of troubled pandemic times. The legend of Ishigaki Nosoko Maapee is indeed a sad love story. During the Ryukyu Kingdom, a new decree known as 'Michigiri' or 'Island-splitting' (*shimabagari*) forced half of the population of Kuroshima to relocate to the Ishigaki Nosoko district. The legend of Maapee tells the story of a young girl from Kuroshima, forced to leave her relatives and relocate to Ishigaki to break up an on-going contagion. Everyday, Maapee climbed the district's mountain to see her home island where

her lover Kanimui still lived. On reaching the summit, she was so heartbroken that no boats could be seen on the horizon, that her tears turned her into stone.

The Yaeyama islands also suffered a long period of endemic tropical malaria that shaped the distribution of the population¹¹ on, and between, these archipelagic islands. The malaria-carrying mosquito *Anopheles minimus* was found on the humid slopes of the tropical forest, which neighboured arable village land that was used for paddy rice growing. Today, the multiple waves of malaria epidemics could be interpreted as a defence system set up by the island to protect its primeval forest against agricultural development. Malaria deeply altered the geographical structure of the islands, and reflects the brutal taxation policy of the government of the Ryukyu Kingdom, which forced a nonstop flow of new migrants to carry out farm work.

In the history of pandemics, islands have been both vulnerable and also ideal places for quarantine. Hong Kong is prominent epidemic zone with the Hong Kong Flu of 1968 and 1969 killing an estimated 1 to 4 million people globally¹² and it had 1750 cases in the SARS epidemic of 2003, which had a massive psychological impact on society. In 2012, *Hong Kong is Land*, a new commission by MoMA,¹³ projected a series of new islands with eight scenarios to address the future of Hong Kong in 2047. In this series, the fifth drawing, *The Island of the Possible Escape*, addressed the hope for a possible recovery and reconstruction during a pandemic. Disconnected from urban density, a new archipelago of a hundred spongy islands proposed a setting where humans and animals would live harmoniously. Each island was depicted as self-sufficient, and a miniature version of a perfect environment. Being located reasonably far from one another, they did not propose any sense of neighbourhood or community. One fascinating aspect of this voluntary isolation - not quarantine - is that it transformed an idyllic landscape into a theatre of permanent anxiety. To contain potential contamination by threat or conflict - such as a virus or other form of attack - each island took the form of

an independent platform sharing the sky above them. Yet, with the figure of the "SARS Zombie" overlooking the enclaves, they offer an inadequate escape from the anxiety and uncertainty of the dangers to come.

The Disputed Island

Our artistic practice is embedded within specific territories but is also shaped by the news cycle and the rich canvas of contemporary crises. With rich fisheries and natural oil and gas, the islands are attractive geographical entities, especially in crowded regions where countries are competing for them in their own national interests. In 2014, *Disputed [25°56'N - 123°41'E]* responded to numerous escalations in island disputes around the world, and especially in the South China Sea. Six years later, the territorial dispute over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands is still making headlines. The increasing number of intrusions into these island's disputed waters by Chinese fishing boats and Japanese surveillance drones and submarines, became a tenuous diplomatic issue between the two countries. A major shift happened in the summer of 2019, when Japan's defence agency built a 'wall'¹⁴ made up of new military bases built on the Ryuku Islands. With an area of 1.08 km², these islands are much more than small, uninhabited rocks lost in the ocean. As well as being a source for the extraction of natural resources, these waters are becoming a precious extension of land, explaining countries', often violent, conflicts to claim them.

Geopolitical strategies to claim contested areas are fostering strong nationalist sentiments and xenophobia toward neighbouring countries. Since 1971,¹⁵ the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands have become sites where multiple forms of nationalism are enacted, including the planting of national flags by Japan, China, and Taiwan. With the multiplication of coast guard patrols and military naval forces, these small islands have become critical pivot points in the region. Borrowing tactics used by sovereign activists from competing countries, MAP Office created *Disputed [25°56'N - 123°41'E]*,

a dart game designed to allow different claimants to ‘conquer’ those disputed territories. The competition is, therefore, experienced by the players, who choose which country they want to represent in conquering an island. As more than one player can reach the island, the coexistence of three national flags on one disputed territory underlines the paradoxes of the claims.

When developing *Disputed*, MAP Office collaborated with Taiwanese artist James T. Hong to set up a fictional claim to the island of Tung Lung Chau in Hong Kong. As part of the exhibition, *Island Off the Shore of Asia*, the participating performers embarked on a boat trip where they could choose a flag (some national, some fictional, some old and obsolete) and swim toward an island. This re-enactment of an island claim echoed James T. Hong’s many unsuccessful journeys to land on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands with groups of activists departing from Taiwan.

The Slavery Island

Sustenance, through fishing and foraging seaweed is key to understanding the promising future of the Yaeyama Islands. This sounds a logical assertion of what the islands were in the past, but with the introduction of rice first, then sugarcane, the economy of food production became destructive. Intensive agriculture also requires considerable labour power in population-depleted lands. The relocation of populations, from one island to another, and the planning of new communities, is a process embedded in the social and economic history of these islands. The first wave of economic migration came to the islands with the forced relocation of people by the royal government of the Ryukyu Kingdom. From 1609, the islands were incorporated into a heavy land tax system, based on the production of rice; therefore, many new rice fields replaced the primary coastal forest. The expansion of rice cultivation can be analysed today as a violent domestication of both the people and the land. In the decentralised archipelago, the plurality of economies and cultural practices

has been homogenised by the imposition of national taxes and uniform cultivation.

As a consequence of these severe economic imperatives, the kingdom prohibited the migration of islanders to other islands. The imposition of a monoculture and the salinization of the soil through the marine winds and repetitive typhoons provoked frequent famines, infanticides, and desolation. This dark period climaxed with the Yaeyama Earthquake in 1771, causing a tsunami that killed 12,000, which was half of the population of the islands. Self-sufficiency and food production practices, beginning with self-sufficiency, are often the best ways to interrogate the coastline cultures. Our research on islands around Japan established a direct connection with the contemporary ama-san (woman of the sea) along the shoreline of Toba and Shima, in Mie Prefecture. Their stories aligned and influenced MAP Office’s research on seaweed, subsistence economies, coastal ecologies, matriarchal society, anarchy, and nomadic life. These topics comprise what we have named a ‘Zomia of the sea’. As an extension of a “Zomia

of the highland”, this term can be understood to describe a territory where ethnic cultures provide a counter-narrative to the traditional story about modernity with an economy of subsistence outside state regulations, as defined by Willem van Schendel and James C. Scott.¹⁶

In Ishigaki, the first exploration of the local island culture led us to investigate the lifestyle of the charismatic fisherman and public figure, Shokichi Taira. We began by documenting his fishing technique, especially *dentou-moguri*, an ancient nighttime spearfishing technique, and his rare knowledge of the near-shore sea and coastline. The story of Shokichi Taira and his role in the local community¹⁷ of Ibaruma is strongly connected to the life of his father Shoichi Taira who arrived on the island in the late 1930s at the age of 11 years old, as a child slave, to work on the sugar cane plantation. Subsequent to the disasters following the imposition of the harsh taxation and rice agriculture, there was a period when farmers converted their rice fields into sugar cane plantations. It also corresponds to a moment when Okinawans



were migrating to the mainland to work in factories, leaving the islands short of labour. As a result, children and young teenagers were sold by poor rural families from the North to participate in the new sugar economy of the Southern Islands. This youth labour rebuilt the post-war island economy by recreating a subsistence economy on sea and land. This heritage was revived in Ibaruma by the Taira family and demonstrates the potential of the old port and the future ecology of the sea community, or *satoumi*.

However, before introducing the concept of *satoumi*, we need to briefly introduce MAP Office's extensive research into the relationship between the life of the coastline communities in the Pacific Ocean and the abundance of seaweed found in those areas. Learning from the cultivation of algae in the region, we developed a perspective about how humans have sustained themselves in a dynamic exchange between nature and culture, sea and soil, subsistence and production. An important medical and dietary product, seaweed has fed and protected most sea life, fish and shellfish - as well as their surrounding human communities.

With a reputation for enhancing human longevity, the Okinawan diet is recognised as a unique combination of traditional cuisine *nuchi* and medicine *gusui*, and is, therefore, the primary site for our research. One important element of this diet is found in the local seaweed *mozuku*.¹⁸ This rare seaweed is low in calories, and rich in fucoidan, a molecule known to help reduce the risk of stomach ulcers and cancer. Celebrated as 'superfood', *mozuku* is cultivated all around the tropical coastline and harvested from boats with a unique vacuum technique. Extensive research on seaweed,¹⁹ from Hong Kong to Okinawa, is required so as to re-introduce a primary source of Omega-3 fatty acid back into the human diet,²⁰ especially as a way to protect poor and endangered communities.

The Resilient Island

In the age of climate change, the ocean is an important aspect of re-

search, which is integral to the future development of the planet. One important motive behind transforming MAP Office into MAP Ocean and moving to Ishigaki is to explore *in situ* the concept of *satoumi* as a key way to respond to the on-going global crisis of climate change.

First labelled in rural Japan in 1972, the concept of *satoyama* is defined by the uniquely human-shaped rural environment and its mosaic of ecosystems. It has shaped the traditional mountaneous landscape, and especially the border zone between the foothills and the arable flat land. As an analogy of *satoyama*, *satoumi* is the extension of this concept to the sea. This principle is quite recent and was developed by Professor Tetsuo Yanagi²¹ at Kyushu University and oyster pearl and nori seaweed producer Seiya Harajo. Together, they established a system of integrated coastal management around the theme of creating a new *satoumi* based in Ago Bay, which aims to create a sustainable symbiosis between local industry and the coastal environment.

To set up MAP Ocean, we studied another form of *satoumi* that connects fishermen and seaweed producers to the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology in Onna, Okinawa's main island. Published in *Our Ocean Guide*,²² the research on *satoumi* has allowed MAP Office to be in dialogue with marine academics, government officials, and sea foragers and document their work. In Ishigaki, the world largest blue coral reef is the heart of the eco-system, both in terms of biodiversity and marine resource management. We can see a unique opportunity to develop new marine laboratories here, combined with our artist research and practice, and to share this accumulated knowledge with an expanding multi-disciplinary community.

Today, while most of the dense urban world is being paralysed by a pandemic, life in Ishigaki appears to be as peaceful as when we first visited the island. With travel restrictions, *Instagram* has become a new communication system, giving visibility to a younger community who turned their back on urban Japan. Designers, artists, and cooks, they have transformed their lifestyle and are pro-

moting healthy food and cultural artefacts from the island. Remote, lonely, far from Japan and the world, as described by Okinawan scholar, Iha Fuyu, the Yaeyama Archipelago has become a newly established paradise where many dispirited urban individuals have moved to find refuge. We look forward to be among them soon, relocating our 25-year old Hong Kong based research platform, MAP Office to the new MAP Ocean multidisciplinary laboratory.

This recent attractiveness to outsiders as a new home underlines the extreme resilience of these islands. Yet, the history of the apparently idyllic island has been one of the most chaotic in Asia. Assembled on a timeline, the human occupation of this archipelagic region shows an on-going succession of disasters that successively depleted the islands. Malaria pandemics, tsunamis, food shortages, and extreme poverty have eradicated and displaced many populations, drawing in a continuous flow of new settlers. The complicated weaving of the complex history of Ishigaki is calling us to move to a foreign country, to a new island, and to begin a new artistic practice.

MAP Office is a multidisciplinary platform devised by Laurent Gutierrez (1966, Casablanca, Morocco) and Valérie Portefaix (1969, Saint-Étienne, France). This duo of artists/architects has been based in Hong Kong since 1996, working on physical and imaginary territories using varied means of expression including drawing, photography, video, installations, performance, and literary and theoretical texts. Their entire project forms a critique of spatio-temporal anomalies and documents how human beings subvert and appropriate space. Humour, games, and fiction are also part of their approach, in the form of small publications providing a further format for disseminating their work.

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<p><i>lands and Other Texts</i>, 1953-1974, translated by Michael Taormina, edited by David Lapoujade, LA: Semiotext(e), 2004, 9-14</p> <p>3 Hisashi Suzuki, Kazuro Hanihara, <i>The Minatogawa Man</i>, Tokyo, University of Tokyo Press, 1982.</p> <p>4 https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/antiquity/article/palaeolithic-sea-faring-in-east-asia-testing-the-bamboo-raft-hypothesis/0A30DF8514DF32E0E-9273AA3364B8055/core-reader</p> <p>5 The global financial crisis that struck in 2008 put in evidence the decisive role of islands transformed into fiscal paradises. Tax havens include Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Isle of Man, etc.</p> <p>6 Split from the Comoros, Mayotte was formally annexed in 2009 to become the 101st French Department. With this additional island, France became the second largest country including its sovereign territorial waters.</p> <p>7 Following 5 years of the opium war, January 20th 1841, Hong Kong Island and its harbor were ceded to the British Crown.</p> <p>8 Sometimes referred to as "Sea Gypsies", the Hakka and Tanka populated the China's Pearl River coastline during the early Qing dynasty.</p> <p>9 According to the story, the community of the Lo Ting was massacred in 1197 by Song Dynasty soldiers as a way to take over the salt production.</p> <p>10 Ho et al, 1997; Ho 1998, 1999.</p> <p>11 Tokuji Chiba, <i>Malaria and the Inhabitants of the Yaeyama Islands</i>, Okinawa, Japan</p> <p>12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong_flu</p> <p>13 "Hong Kong Is Land" was commissioned by curator Pedro Gadhano, for the exhibition <i>Uneven Growth: Tactical Urbanisms for Expanding Megacities</i>, MoMA, 2012.</p> <p>14 Simon Denyer, "Japan builds an island 'wall' to counter China's intensifying military, territorial incursions", <i>The Washington Post</i>, 21 August 2019.</p> <p>15 The 17th of June 1971, an agreement was signed between Japan and the United States, returning the island to Japanese administration. This signature triggered the first anti-Japanese protests in Taiwan.</p> <p>16 James C. Scott, <i>The Art of Not Being Governed</i>, Yale, Yale University Press, 2009</p> <p>17 Taira is also an educator and active manager of events, from <i>haarii</i> festival (dragon boat races) to beach cleaning. He is also a singer and musician, with his wife and children, and their songs are typical</p> <p>18 Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology, "Scientists crack genome of superfood seaweed, ito-mozuku", <i>Science Daily</i>, March 14, 2019</p> <p>19 MAP Office, <i>Floating Lives, Eastern Clouds, A Seaweed Archipelago</i>, <i>LEAP 41</i>, Shanghai, October 2016.</p> <p>20 Ole Mouritsen, <i>Seaweeds: Edible, Available, and Sustainable</i>, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2013</p>	<p>21 Tetsuo Yanagi, <i>Japanese Commons in the Coastal Seas</i>, Springer, Tokyo, 2013</p> <p>22 MAP Office, <i>My Ocean Guide</i>, Venice, My Art guide Publishers, 2017.</p>	
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Communism or extinction:

Interview with Franco “Bifo” Berardi by Tihomir Topuzovski

June 4, 2020



Tihomir Topuzovski: Your writing, to a large extent, reflects your activism and participation in important historical events and various political organizations, such as the Italian Communist Youth Federation, events of May '68, the Potere Operaio - Worker's Power group, and the Italian movement, Autonomia, etc. What events that you have witnessed informed the idea of 'No Future' or what temporal collision points overturned the vision for societal transformation and expectations that marked XX century?

Franco Berardi: The defeat of the worker's movement in the '80s and the neoliberal offensive in the '80s were not simply another political defeat among many but also destroyed the core of the 'Modern promise'. The promise of democracy and social progress, which was declared dead by Thatcher's dec-

laration that "there is no such thing as society, only individuals, families and nation fighting for competition."

Democracy has been cancelled by the inexorability of the techno-financial automatisms, and progress has been replaced by boundless pursuit of profit.

These destructive features of late capitalism are not the effect of ideological or political decisions, even if leaders like Thatcher and Reagan and Blair and Clinton were actively engaged in destroying social welfare and any hope of social justice. Capitalist destructiveness runs deeper, as it is the symptom of the end of expansion. Expansion was the keyword of modernity, and of capitalism in the industrial age.

But at a certain point, in the 70s, 80s, it became apparent

that the margins for expansion were shrinking and shrinking.

The Report on the 'Limits of Growth' (Club of Rome, 1971) anticipated what today is crystal clear; unlimited growth cannot happen on a planet with finite resources unless we engage in a process of active destruction of the environmental resources of the planet and of the nervous energies of the human race.

This is the meaning of the 'No Future' movement: announcing the end of the age of Expansion, and encompassing the need to re-organize social life and technology on different principles; namely, social equality, frugality and no competition. But capitalism is unable to go in this direction, so in the last four decades the survival of capitalism has implied the devastation of the human environment, of human life, and of the human brain itself.

Tihomir Topuzovski: In the analysis of capitalism, you've suggested the concept of the semio-capital which explains full integration of linguistic labour with capital valorization, and addresses the circulation of signs where one must become recognizable and socially compatible; To what extent has this semiotic regime instrumentalized cultural production into capitalist dynamics?

Franco Berardi: Semio-capitalism is based on the exploitation of the nervous energy and the cognitive ability of society as a whole. Obviously, cultural production has been largely subsumed and integrated into those dynamics. But you know, the concept of "cultural production" is so difficult to frame that it is difficult for me to answer the question.

I mean that cultural production is more than the sum of the products that are commodified by the market. It also encompasses the creation of spaces of autonomy from the consumerist cycle, and the elaboration of strategies for the insurrection.

Tihomir Topuzovski: In your book *'Breathing: Chaos and Poetry'* you point out that poetry can overcome and break the limit, escape measure and create a premise to a new methodology of thought; You refer to Guattari and what he named 'chaosmosis', or the process that goes beyond the limits of language and the limits of the world itself, and it relates to Wittgenstein's 'Tractatus' and 'language as a picture of the world.' In this escape beyond the limits of the world, can we expect that poetry can enforce some new societal imagination and political mobilization?

Franco Berardi: Well, this is the basic thesis that I advance in this book. When I say poetry, I mean exactly the kind of action that imagines a different rhythm in the relationship between the body and the surrounding flows of semiosis, that we currently name, 'the world'.

We are clearly traversing an age of chaos with excessive speed of the flows of info-stimulation, an inability to decipher the meaning of those flows, an inability to emotionally process those flows, an inability to follow those flows without panic

and distress. Breathing is at stake, as breathing means synergy of the individual organism and of the surrounding physical and semiotic environment. This harmony is broken, and violence erupts everywhere.

'I can't breathe' is the metaphorical and non-metaphorical synthesis of the current distress. 'I can't breathe' is the scream of rebellion that is mounting everywhere.

Tihomir Topuzovski: By linking poetry with the migrant crisis and waves of refugees from the Mediterranean Sea, from countries where devastating, misery and war are raging, you prepared a poem to recite as a part of Documenta 14, one of the most remarkable world art events today. The poem is named *'Auschwitz on the Beach'* with a clear analogy between the European border regime and the Holocaust. In the end, the poem was not performed because this event was cancelled, could you provide more details about this project?

Franco Berardi: The performance was scheduled on August 24th, 2017 in the Fridericianum building. Just a few days before the event, I received some messages from the press office of documenta14, then a phone call from Preciado. The German press was harshly criticizing (actually assaulting) "Auschwitz on the beach". Not the performance, but the title. Nobody knew and nobody knows what the performance actually was, but everybody could easily interpret the meaning of the title, and link the horrible past to the horrible present.

The main allegation was relativization of the holocaust. Mentioning Auschwitz in the frivolous context of the beach, raised sentiments of disgust, of guilt and rejection among the righteous journalists and their readers. Obviously, I had been expecting a reaction since when that title first came to my imagination resounding of Wilson and Glass. I had been expecting a reaction to the intentionally provocative title, but the reaction that I got was much larger and harsher than I expected with political authorities, some Jewish cultural centres, and the whole of the national press accusing me of trashing the memory of the Shoah.

When I received a second call from Paul Preciado, and noticed a certain understandable anxiety in his voice, I told him plainly, 'Let's cancel the performance'.

Some friends think that I bent to an act of censorship. It is not true.

When I realized that the performance was under attack, I focused on the message that I intended to spread around, not on the artistry.

And the message is: "Beware. What the Europeans are doing in the Mediterranean will be a permanent stain for generations to come. This stain will mark the European people like the Holocaust has marked the German historical memory, providing, of course, that historians still exist in the future, and that humans ever awake from the present nightmare. Here, it is not my freedom of expression that is at stake, but

the life of millions of women and men that European cynicism is exposing to extreme danger.

The first thing I did as soon as I arrived in Kassel was to go to the Sara Nussbaum Centre, the main Jewish cultural centre in town.

We sat around a long rectangular table: six representatives of the centre, me, Paul and Adam. The discussion was extremely meaningful, and friendly and there was a samovar was at the centre of the table.

First, we discussed the decision to host the performance taken by documenta14. One of the members of the centre told us: "We don't absolutely intend to censor artworks, but the political decision to host the performance is wrong, because the memory of Auschwitz has a character of specificity and of unicity that cannot be relativised."

As a reply Paul and Adam insisted on the point that their intention was absolutely not the trivialization of the memory of Auschwitz, but the contrary, an attempt to emphasize that memory as something that does not belong only to the Jews, but rather, belongs to human race as a whole.

Eva Schulz-Jander, coordinator of the centre Gesellschaften für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit, said that she was conscious that we were not motivated by antisemitic intentions, but reaffirmed that the name of Auschwitz belongs to the Jewish memory. Then, in order to emphasize her proximity to our critique of the European rejection of migration, she reminded us that, in 1938, German Jews trying to migrate to the United Kingdom and to the United States experienced the same rejection that migrants of today are receiving from the European authorities. Numerous Jews eventually died in the Nazi concentration camps because the Anglo-Americans rejected them in 1938 for the same reasons that European governments are now rejecting people from Syria and from Nigeria.

At that point, I stated that my decision of pronouncing those words was not frivolous, but dramatic. My intention was to provoke, to call forth, to put in the light of day something concealed in the dark.

My intention was to use Auschwitz as a shield, as a protection against the danger of a return of the horrors of Auschwitz.

Then, I quoted the words of Gunther Anders who, in *'We, sons of Eichmann'*, writes about the possibility of a return of Nazism in a society in which technique holds the upper hand over human beings. Auschwitz was the first experiment of an industrialized management of extermination so beware of the conjoined forces of technique and racism, today.

At that point, the person who is in charge of the assistance to the Auschwitz survivors spoke, and, with voice stricken with emotion, she described the suffering that my "artistic" use of the word had provoked to them.

I asked to speak again, and I said:

"I avow that I have not the right to provoke the suffering of people who have already suffered so much, no matter what my reason may be.

If I insist in pronouncing those words tonight, I may be right from a political and philosophical point of view, but I would be wrong from a psychoanalytical point of view, from the point of view of sensibility. Therefore I will not read my text at the forthcoming conference, and I will delete that text from the memory of my computer."

The meeting closed, and we left the room in friendship, promising each other to stay in contact. Paul and Adam invited the members of the Sara Nussbaum Centre to come to the evening event, *'Shame on us'*. Three of them actually came, and their presence during the discussion was overwhelmingly important, even crucial.

Tihomir Topuzovski: Speaking on the current coronavirus crisis that is continuing to spread across the world, you've discussed recently that we are in the situation when the biological reality is back as a contagion, as a fear; How do you think that this pandemic will reorder or re-semiotize the world?

Franco Berardi: The pandemic, and the lockdown that has resulted from it, has officially inaugurated the age of extinction. The bio-virus has put in motion an info-virus that has paralyzed the economic cycle of capitalism.

Then, as the bio-info-virus has triggered a psychopathological mutation of social life and of the very 'Unconscious', I don't think that the normal cycle of the economy can or will ever recover. Therefore, I assert that the expansive age of capitalism is definitely over, and, now, we must choose; either an egalitarian transformation of social life, a redistribution of wealth, and a frugal and respectful relationship with nature, or a cycle of war, environmental collapse, and, finally, the extinction of the human race.

Communism or extinction.

All that We Have in Common

December 2019 - March 2020

Mira Gakjina and Jovanka Popova

Artists: Hito Steyerl, Tania Bruguera, Artur Żmijewski, Julieta Aranda, Adrian Paci, Daniel Garcia Andujar, Sanja Ivekovic, the collective Chto Delat, Anton Vidokle, Hristina Ivanovska, Nada Prlja and Gjorgje Jovanovic.

All that We Have in Common is a collective work of art, which has been put together at a time of uncertainty in the capitalist realism. This work aims to analyse specific works of art and practices to reveal socially/critically produced discourse of the precariat and its manifestations.

Capitalism, of course, structures and dictates this model of obstructionism and immobilization, implicitly following the course of a history, which moves in a single direction, and generates a world of authoritarian and bureaucratic policies. Such a world lacks the policies and strategies for social transformation. Moreover, the power manipulations of this system seem unwavering in their support for the rich, while ignoring the disenfranchised and the marginalized. The starting point of the exhibition is the practices and actions treating the contemporary labour changes through a complex and diverse set of social, intellectual, emotional and communication processes into the reproduction of capital beyond the fixed hierarchies and categories which characterize modern global capitalism, under which labour becomes biopolitics - a life management tool.

Artists, who position labour within the wider arena of social activities, focus on the ambivalent, flexible and unsustainable dimension of labour today, often forcing the worker to function at the edge between self-actualization and (self)exploitation. A large number of the works exhibited aim to highlight the radical inequalities in society, support workers' rights and expose the vulnerability of precarious lives in the context of geopolitical struggles, as well as reflecting the artists' own positions as workers.

Therefore, the exhibition deals with topics such as the precariat, the expanded and hybrid nature of contemporary productivity of global capitalism, the economy of artistic production, as well as imagining a "new labour" in which artists work together in new forms of political action in general conditions of uncertainty.

If this general uncertainty, reflected in the work, education, popular culture and mental states of modern-day society, pro-

duces conservatism in culture, then the following questions are raised: How much do artistic practices depend on the current transformations of capitalism? What forms of economy can the artists imagine and what is their potential to detach themselves from the dominant methods of production? What are the forms of action and organization that may contribute to art rediscovering its excitement and usefulness again? Should art be a supplement to politics in the sense that politics may benefit from incorporating art-specific elements or should we politicize art? Are there possible ways of reinstituting the contemporaneity of the social forms of actions and associations and what are the ways in which art and culture can contribute to this?

The art collective **Chto Delat's** installation **Safe Haven. It did not happen with us** yet revolves around the video, *Safe Heaven*. Safe Heaven is the name of a network of residences for cultural workers living in countries where their lives, freedom and human dignity are under threat. In these residences, they have to decide on the next steps destiny - apply for political asylum or go back to their country of birth. Yet, something just won't let these refugees be at peace with themselves. The film depicts the conflict between the possibility of the artist living a normal, peaceful life and the idea of going back to real struggle and hazards. This raises the question of which option is actually better - to stay or to go? The boundaries between safe and unsafe space are changing. How does this impact the world of art and what are the limits to what art can achieve? The story could point to the future of Chto Delat or of many other artists, while also reminding us of the numerous people deprived of the privilege of shelter.

In his video, **Plein-air. Świecie**, **Artur Żmijewski** documents a project of cooperation between workers in a shoe factory and contemporary Polish artists through a process of joint creation of public sculptures. The project was conceptualized according to a model of similar cooperation between the artists and workers in the Zameh factory in Elblag in the '60s, inspired by the utopian ideas of a classless society and unity in the



Julieta Aranda, *Swimming in Rivers of Glue*, Installation, 2016-2017
Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje

creation of industrial art and technology. Żmijewski is not promoting the utopian dream of dismantling the class barriers between the proletariat and the intelligentsia, as a consequence of the division of the ideologies of the social class they belong to. He takes us back to Poland's communist past, a particular moment in Poland's artistic and political history, with the aim of investigating the ideology of utopia and the notion of equality, which is lost when the ideology becomes utopian itself. While the original idea of the project is aimed at overcoming divisions between the working and the privileged class, he underscores the present-day social and political realities of division, wondering whether it is possible to ever level out such differences.

Centro di Permanenza Temporanea is a video by Adrian Paci, portraying a group of potential workers climbing up a mobile staircase on an airport runway, waiting for a flight that will never arrive. The position of the workers waiting to be transported somewhere else - on the staircase of a plane that is not there, is identical to the position of a myriad of migrants who - even when crossing geographic borders - remain anchored into what they are and into what they are not, failing to integrate because politics lacks the knowledge of how to interpret the ongoing social changes.

Lilght_Accumulation of Capital is a research and informative piece of work by **Hristina Ivanovska**, which was made over a six 8-hour business days at the premises of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, as part of the exhibition entitled *All that We Have in Common*. Pursuant to a Single Service Contract, the author was paid ¼ of the minimum wage in accordance with the Law on the Minimum Wage in the Republic of North Macedonia, 30% of which was given back to the Museum as an initial donation for the creation of a "Participatory Fund" supporting socially engaged research projects carried out by women. The project title was partially inspired by the *Accumulation of Capital* by Rosa Luxemburg, the revolutionary German socialist and an economic theorist. Macedonia is not excluded from the present-day ruthlessness of the race for capital accumulation containing complex relationships of hierarchy of power and exploitation. On the contrary - being a "country in transition", it experiences all the disadvantages and cruelties of neo-liberal capitalism, including in the textile industry, which has the highest percentage (as much as 90%) of employed women, who are subjected to continuous and systematic manipulation and exploitation by their employers, which goes on ignored, tolerated and unsanctioned by the state institutions. The author is faced with the question: How do we understand what we read, see and hear? And can we know something without making an attempt to experience it? This part is of essential significance to this piece, becoming valid as from the moment at which the signed "Agreement" comes into force. To understand the economic situation of the other, one needs to know it; to know it, one needs to experience it.

In her series of photographs entitled **Gen XX**, **Sanja Ivekovic** portrays textual interventions on advertising photos of famous models. The photograph - recognized as an ad by any average media consumer - is supplemented by a text introduc-

ing the model by the name of a national anti-fascist heroine of World War II and includes her age at the time of her death. This work promotes the values advocated by these national heroines, values including equal participation in public issues and politics for women, unlike the general position in the '90s in Croatia, when family values and motherhood were emphasized as the proper domains for women. With the help of her symbolic power as an artist, Ivekovic enters the media to send the message that society is silent, allowing the media to do their job that they do anyway through the form of the artwork itself.

The installation entitled **Postcapital. Archive 1989-2001 by Daniel Garcia Andujar** constitutes an endeavour in reading the complex and divergent realities of the 21st century. Such long-lasting changes have emerged worldwide in social, political, economic and cultural arenas over the last two decades, emblemized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the September 11, 2001 attacks. The project also explores the transformations of capitalist societies and the shifts in their urban loci of power. *Postcapital* makes not so much an allusion to the utopias of a defeated capitalism as it does to the events affecting all walks of life, being brought to life and expanded out of the era of networked information.

According to the artist's theory, knowledge is no longer obtained by researching archives, but by actually living in networks and interpreting information. The project comprises a digital archive containing over 2,500 files, gathered from the Internet over the course of the past decade. In addition to the pictures, what is also of importance are the ideologies and realities behind them. Concerning these, the archives reveal omissions in our perception and explanation of political, cultural, economic, social and even technological conditions and realities. He indexes our cognitive mechanisms and tries to establish reasonable links between the mediation pictures stacked in an enormous and chaotic pile. His intention is to build a system that helps the viewer/user to link the incidents of certain periods via multidirectional links through the virtual and photo archive.

The concept of commemoration, as a politically significant act, is relevant in the work of Gjorgje Jovanovic. What would happen if the commemorative monuments that are found in our public spaces were not only a manifestation of power, but also were to become an inseparable part of our continuous struggles? What would happen if the monuments were allowed to leave their "fixed" position and be more dynamic in their use? How can a monument become subversive and advocative? These are only some of the questions he deals with in his work **Protest Monument**. The work re-examines the role of art in public spaces and offers a different reading of, and potential for, these monuments, their re-contextualization, and the manner in which the monuments may be - often from a nationalistic aspect - turned from mere reminders of history into public action. Can their role be changed from frozen frames of identity and turn into drivers of social change?

In his video **In Free Fall**, Hito Steyerl follows the "biography" of a Boeing 707 plane from the moment of its purchase by



Anton Vidokle, *Immortality for All: a film trilogy on Russian Cosmism*, Video, 2014 - 2017
Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje



Tania Bruguera, *Self-sabotage*, Video, 2009
Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje



Daniel García Andújar, Postcapital. Archive, 1989-2001, Installation, 2006
Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje



the airline TWA, through its role in military operations in Israel and its subsequent status of a movie star, as in the Hollywood picture "Speed" (1994), up to its "afterlife" as waste in the Mojave Desert and its recycling process to the DVDs in China. The artist follows the entangled economies through the lifecycle of a product. The 1929 essay entitled *The Biography of the Object* by the Russian critic Sergey Tretyakov, who claimed that art should not refer to the human biography, but to the lifecycles of mass produced objects, is the reference through which Steyerl investigates the 2008 financial misfortune through the airplane remains in the Mojave Desert. She demonstrates to us that even this archetypal symbol of global capitalism - the Jumbo Jet - may be the subject of shift in its meaning just as much as less tangible goods. The very biography of the plane manifests the social relations behind its production and consumption, the social neuroses and the occupational diseases of the capitalism of 21st century, full of catastrophes, economic depression, terror and globalization.

In his film project composed of three works, **Immortality for All: a film trilogy on Russian Cosmism**, Andon Vidokle sums up Russian cosmism in the statement: "Immortality and Resurrection for All". This is an idea articulating the relationships between Cosmism and Marxism concerning the equal distribution of resources, as well as the main objectives of Cosmism: achieving immortality as a first step, followed by resurrection of the entire previous life. The first part, *This is Cosmos*, encompasses a collage of ideas of various protagonists of the movement, including the philosopher and founder Nikolay Fyodorov. According to Fyodorov, evolution will be complete only when people defeat death - not on the Christian Last Judgment Day, but also through science, with the ultimate goal of "building new reality, one without famine, diseases, violence, death, need, inequality - such as communism." The second part of the trilogy *The Communist Revolution Was Caused by the Sun* deals with the poetic dimension of the solar cosmology of the Soviet bio-physicist Alexander Chizewski and his research on the effects of solar radiation on human sociology, psychology, politics and economy, to underline that the goal of the early Soviet discoveries in their attempts to conquer the cosmos was not so much a technological advance as it was a common struggle of humanity against the limitations of the life on Earth. The last part of his trilogy, *Immortality and Resurrection for All!* is a mediation on the museum as the place of resurrection - the central idea of numerous cosmic thinkers, scientists and avant garde artists.

The concept of transformation is also of key importance in the work of **Julieta Aranda**. **Stealing One's Own Corpse** explores the contemporary existential conditions emerging as the consequence of scientific and technological advances and examines the possibility of creating a "road to elopement" in such difficult times. The video acts as a contemplation on the planet and the value we ascribe to it, as well as a warning of its destruction, and as a vision of what the post-planetary future might look like. "Conquering space is a part of the planetary hope for an economic system, which - saturated by goods,

glasses and power - ejaculates into space upon its arrival at the end of the loop of its land controversies". This statement by the Venezuelan thinker Eduardo Rothe is the introduction to this work. The concepts of colonialism, space, escape, full speed, the Wild West, power, progress and arrogance overlap into a futuristic narrative depicting how the practices of unlimited extraction have led us into a world in which we overtake ourselves in the search for speed. In such a world, the artist explores the way in which digital infrastructures start shaping their own behaviour and how this impacts her political landscape. If power is a form of architecture, then the present-day digital infrastructure demonstrates "oxygen deprived politics".

Nada Prlja's project Subversion to Red encourages the return of "forgotten" ideas on idealism and ideology, as a form of motivation in today's society. The project proposes that the postulates of Marxist theory and leftist thought are reread, in order to make them more relevant to modern-day society by introducing subversive qualities and playfulness into the artistic practice, as a way of indirectly influencing reality. The project includes *Red Discussion II*, an experimental performance with the participation of contemporary thinkers and curators joined together in a common search for exit strategies from the current conditions of social uncertainty, exploitation and violence, in a search for alternative conditions for the "interesting times" we live in. It also includes *Subtle Subversion*, an installation redefining a series of historically significant works of art from the '60s, which had tried to escape from the strict frames of socialist realism through their modernist approach. The selected works come from the collection of the Museum of Contemporary Art Skopje, an artistic collection and a museum founded on the idea of solidarity. *Subversion to Red* does not support a radical revolution; instead, it proposes that the change should come through artistic actions and subversion of theories - an approach fostering the idea that everything is connected and merged.

The relation between art and reality is an important issue in the works of **Tania Bruguera**. The video **Self-sabotage** shows a lecture/performance in which she is sitting at a table, reading her own reflections on political art and the function of artists in the context of art, institutions and society. To her right, there is a box with a gun and bullets. At each break, the artist places the gun to her temple and squeezes the trigger. This eerie gesture illustrates the function of artists in society and the need for truthfulness in their actions as transformers of reality. The gesture is the experience of a total victim, it illustrates self-sacrifice as a possibility of maintaining the dedication to the ethical values, which should be established by the artists in their works and context. This is an exercise in Behavior art via self-aggression, a sort of a call to political art, brought to its ultimate consequences.



Chto Delat, Safe Haven. It did not happen with us yet, Installation, 2019
Courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Skopje

CONTRIBUTORS

Maggie O'Neill is Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology & Criminology; Criminology at University College Cork. She has a long history of doing critical theory as arts based research on the themes of borders, refugees and artistic practices. Her latest book with Brian Roberts *Walking Research: Methods on the Move* was published by Routledge in 2019.

John Perivolaris works as a photographer, writer, and teacher of photography. Often collaborative, his projects use photography, text, and related media to reflect on diasporic states of being. Revealing how places are layered by time, his work is concerned with how meaning is formed through migration, travel and our attachment to specific locations.

Thomas Nail is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Denver and author of eight books, including *The Figure of the Migrant*, *Theory of the Border*, *Marx in Motion*, *Returning to Revolution*, and *Being and Motion*. His work on the philosophy of movement has application across numerous fields of study.

Bishnupriya Ghosh teaches global media studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. While publishing on literary, cinematic, and visual cultures in *boundary 2*, *Public Culture*, *Screen*, and *Representations*, her first two books, *When Borne Across: Literary Cosmopolitics in the Contemporary Indian Novel* (Rutgers UP, 2004) and *Global Icons: Apertures to the Popular* (Duke UP, 2011) were devoted to the cultures of globalization. In the last decade, Ghosh turned to analyzing media, risk, and globalization: in the co-edited *The Routledge Companion to Media and Risk* (Routledge 2020) and a new monograph on viral emergence, *The Virus Touch: Theorizing Epidemic Media* (in progress).

Zineb Sedira works between Algiers, Paris and London. Over the fifteen years of her practice, Sedira has enriched the debate around the concepts of modernism, modernity and its manifestations in an inclusive way. She has also raised awareness of artistic expression and the contemporary experience in North Africa. She found inspiration initially in researching her identity as a woman with a singular personal geography. From these autobiographical concerns she gradually shifted her interest to more universal ideas of mobility, memory and transmission. Her work was shown in several solo exhibitions including at the Photographer's Gallery (London, 2006), New Art Exchange (Nottingham, 2009), BildMuseets (Sweden, 2010), Palais de Tokyo (Paris, 2010), Musée d'Art contemporain de Marseille (2010), Blaffer Art Museum, University of Houston, Institute of Contemporary Art (Toronto, 2010), Charles H. Scott Gallery in Vancouver (2013), *Art On the Underground*, London, (2016), Al Shuwaiheen, UAE, (2018), and lately at the Beirut Art Center (Beirut, Lebanon, 2018). Zineb Sedira has been celebrat-

ed at IVAM (The Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Espagne, 2019), at the Jeu de Paume (Paris, 2019-2020), and at Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, (Lisbone, Portugal, 2020).

Allan deSouza is a photographer and multi-media artist, and the Chair of the Department of Art Practice at University of California, Berkeley. Allan deSouza's cross-media works re-stage colonial legacies through counter-strategies of humor, fiction, and (mis)translation. As an example, a recent project, *Through the Black Country*, transposes Henry Stanley's 1870s East African expedition journals to England during the 2016 Brexit vote. deSouza's books include *Ark of Martyrs: An Autobiography of V* (Sming Sming Books, 2020), and *How Art Can Be Thought: A Handbook for Change* (Duke University Press, 2018). deSouza received an MFA in Photography from UCLA, a BA(Hons) Fine Art from Bath Academy of Art, England, and participated in the Critical Studies program of the Whitney Independent Studies Program.

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Franco 'Bifo' Berardi is a writer, philosopher, media-theorist and activist. He founded the magazine *A/traverso* (1975–1981) and was a co-founder of Radio Alice, the first free pirate radio station in Italy. He was involved in the political movement of 'Autonomia' in Italy during the 1970s, then fled to Paris where he worked with the French philosopher Felix Guattari in the field of schizoanalysis. In 2002 he was an integral part of setting up the Telestreet movement in Italy. Berardi is currently a Professor of Social History of Communication at the Accademia di Belle Arti of Milan.

Francis Alijs, original name Francis de Smedt, Belgian-born Mexico-based conceptual artist who used a variety of new and more-traditional media to evoke an often poetic sense of dislocation on social and political issues.

Robert Atanasovski is a photographer, who has collaborated with various daily newspapers and journals and agencies such as Forum, Nova Makedonija, EPA (European Press photo Agency), AFP (Agence France Presse). His photos visually document many important regional events in the Western Balkans, such as conflicts, various political events and the refugee crisis of the last several years. His photos from the refugee crisis have been published internationally and in 2017, he received the following awards: - Best Photography "Jean Monnet" - UNICEF's best photo for refugees - photographer of the year in the Balkans at the BETA competition.

Nicolas Lambert is Research Engineer in Geographic Information Sciences at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). His work mainly deals with cartography and data visualization. He is a member of the Migreurop network and of the French committee for cartography, he has taken part in the production of different publications such as the *Atlas of Europe in the world* (2008) and the *Atlas of migrants in Europe* (2009, 2012, 2017). He is the author of *Mad Maps* (2019) and the *Practical Handbook of Thematic Cartography* (2020).

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Valérie Portefaix is an artist and architect. She is the principal and co-founder of MAP Office. After receiving a Bachelor of Fine Art, and a Master of Architecture, she earned a Ph.D. of Urbanism from University Pierre Mendes France. She is an Adjunct Professor at the School of Design, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Richard Mosse is a contemporary photographer. He studied at Goldsmiths in London, and received his MFA in photography from the Yale School of Art in 2008. His photography captures the beauty and tragedy in war and destruction. Mosse has shot abandoned plane wrecks in the furthest reaches of the planet and the former palaces of Uday and Saddam Hussein now occupied by US military forces. His *Infra* series captures the ongoing war between rebel factions and the Congolese national army in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mosse is the winner of the 2014 Deutsche Börse Photography Prize. In 2013, Mosse represented Ireland in the Venice Biennale with *The Enclave* an immersive six-channel video installation that utilized 16mm infrared film.

Tihomir Topuzovski received his doctoral degree from the University of Birmingham in the UK. He also has two BAs in Philosophy and Art, and an MA in Art, and has received numerous academic achievement awards and research grants. He was also a postdoctoral researcher at the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies in the Södertörn University in Stockholm. His research is at the intersection of philosophy, politics and the visual arts. Topuzovski currently works as a research leader in the interdisciplinary programme of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje and is editor-in-chief of the journal *The Large Glass*. He has published a number of papers and participated in individual and group exhibitions. His latest work includes a contribution of chapter to an edited book: Topuzovski, T & Andres, L. (forthcoming) *Political protest, temporary urbanism and the deactivation of urban spaces*, Springer; and he is co-writing a book with Saul Newman 'Philosophy, Politics and Art in the Age of Covid-19', Bloomsbury.

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