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Representation, Victimization or Identification.
Negotiating Power and Powerlessness in Art on Migration

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Abstract

A commonplace idea, and worry, in much political art is the emphasis on not to victimize the object/subject in artistic strategies, and to portray people as subjects with agency. And the way to do this is to allow for identification. This article asks if this strong idea might be shaped by an ameliorating guilt for victims, which in turn is partially informed by an inability to free the gaze from a hegemonic view of people as agents. Instead the article looks at some contemporary artists who surface an opposite recognition, the radical lack of power for large groups within the global migration system, without attempts at temporary symbolic solutions. It will be argued that ththe recognition of powerlessness is and has always been a ground for political as well as artistic representation, mobilisation and solidarity.

Keywords: Migration, identification, representation, victims, powerlessness.

Art about migration confronts us today with the problem of how to *represent* the often politically unrepresented and how to exhibit an ongoing and man-made catastrophe – the deaths at the borders. The so-called refugee crisis appear to have created a productive crisis also of images and facts. What should be in focus: the refugees, the victims, the camps, the drownings, the smugglers or the systems and countries that propel this crisis? How can commonplace questions in *political art*, such as those of *identification*, *agency*, *power*, *exclusion* and *inclusion* be incorporated and dealt with in an exhibition project? Neither of these questions have only one answer. But the argument in this essay holds that the migration issue challenges a set of prevalent ideas in contemporary political art, and, that a closer look at some artistic strategies can deepen our understanding of the relationship between political activism and political art, and also force us to question a few commonplace assumptions about political as well as artistic representation.

Erik Berggren

Political representation is not the same, of course, as artistic representation. These concepts denote quite different activities, most of the time, yet they are connected, especially when we speak of art that is clearly motivated by a political and social condition, and carries forth a critique and an explicit or implicit demand for change. In the most straightforward meaning of the term, drawing on Hanna Pitkins work, (Pitkin 1967) political representation is "to make present again." A reminder. Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on behalf of others in the political arena. Normally, political theory have discussed this in terms of someone or something (a person or a party) speaking for a *citizen or group* within the polis. Already here we run into a problem, which is also a point in this article, political as well as artistic representation have had a hard time grappling with politics across borders (Nail, 2015). Representation in politics is of course also a practical matter related to the democratic functioning, to let a party or someone speak for a group or an interest is to make interest aggregation and articulation possible and to make something present in the political arena. Representation in art can be understood in a related way, especially when the object/subject of art is a group of people and their current condition. The artist take on the role of re-presenter and makes the condition of the group present, and thus aggregates both interest and audience and articulates, with them. The truth of the representation is not so much the critical issue, as its accuracy relative to the condition. I will use the notion in the original simple form, to speak and act for others and to make someone or something "present again".

In the following I will discuss a set of curatorial choices for the exhibition project "Is This the Time for Art" (2014-2017) which I produced for *The Museum of Forgetting,* a nomadic curatorial project that have for 12 years created art exhibitions at various venues often with a political critique as entry point. I will suggest that the topic matter itself – migration – opens up for rethinking some of the traditional positions and common place ideas within political contemporary art by considering the location and the real or imagined power or powerlessness of migrants, artists and audiences. As the title of the exhibition reveals, the project was consciously shaped by the difficulty of matching the gravity of the issue with an appropriate artistic expression. How *represent* an ongoing catastrophe in the art context? A mere

aestheticization of the human suffering and lethal exclusion of the migration system appeared perverse. The weight of the problem and the severity of the crisis, didn´t seem to fit with an art show and it´s peculiar finality, limitations and otherworldliness. In the curatorial work the realization emerged that it was possible that some events seemed to disallow exhibition. Yet still need it. Thus the question, 'is this the time for art?' It became a temporary solution to the ethical problem of aestheticizing a crisis. It also expresses the difficulty in finding a bridge between political and artistic representation. The question turned the project into a curatorial investigation with a double aim, to find artworks that reflected our sense of crisis and to understand the potential role and problem of aesthetics in this crisis.

The question shares some kinship, with Adorno´s famously depressed question about the impossibility of writing poetry after Auschwitz and, as he later qualified, if one can "go on living" (Adorno, Negative Dialectics, 1966, p. 362). The regular yearly numbers of drowning migrants confronts us with a morally challenging fact, which bears a dark kinship to Adorno´s concern. There are two aspects of this. One is the mentioned difficulty to represent the deaths along the borders of Europe, and the other is the fact that in regard to the current migratory system, the European audience, artist and curator, no matter how critical, are also members and in part representatives of a *polis* which has put this system in place.

Here the argument is that the migration issue is in bad need of powerful and critical representations, and thus have to revisit and rethink typical links in political art today, such as the widespread suspicion against *artistic representation*, i.e. to avoid the power move it is said to entail "to speak for someone else." The response to this concern have been to try to climb down from the authoritative position as privileged speaker and mix with the audience in strategies that embrace various expressions of relational aesthetics (Bourriad, 1998). Here, crudely lumped together, we thus find interactive, participatory, direct-action and performative approaches. They all share to some degree the skepticism about representation and a concern to avoid objectification and exploitation. With an analogy from the political world, these artistic strategies seek to come in a more direct contact with their 'constituency'. Moreover, whenever representational strategies aren´t completely abandoned, as they rarely can be, an often suggested remedy to the problematic power position entailed in representation are aesthetic

strategies that allow for *identification* together with the assertion of the *agency* and *subjectivity* of those represented as opposed to representations that *victimize*.

Many of these strategies have brought an important reflexive critique of taken for granted positions and divisions of labour within political art. It has been part of a widening of the voices and a 'partitioning of the sensible' and a dismantling of the unfair distribution and privilege of voice (Rancière, 2013). However, the argument here is that, in a world marked by radical exclusion, the salience of some of these standard positions in much contemporary art must be revisited and at times called into question. The radical exclusion that art on migration is thus not only exclusion from art, but from the political world as such. An inquiry following this lead may surface some of the taken for granted national, territorial and bordered premises that the world, including the art world, have operated with, even in politically radical and critical modes. As migration challenges borders, and our knowledge and oblivion about them, art on migration gets a few of its premises exposed. The concern behind the often recurring claims and positions regarding what art about "the other", or art on suffering, must or must not do, is often framed as one of "ethics". However, a closer look at these concerns can reveal how they are also, at times, inhibiting a critical view of what it portrays, represent or re-enact – today´s migration regime. I will discuss this with a note on art´s political potential in general and its relation to success or failure, and furthermore through a short look at how contemporary art is bound up with a special relationship to space. The spacial dimension of political art, and its political potency, is as I will try to show an innate quality of contemporary art, yet one in need of scrutiny at times. Lastly, a few examples of works by artists will be discussed as they have deviated from some standard ethical demands within political art and taken on the migration issue in innovative ways, and moreover, ways that grapple with representation and place, the presence and absence of people as subjects and objects. These are Nuria Güell, Daniela Ortiz and Xose Quiroga, Oscar Lara, and Kimbal Quist Bumstead. But before I look closer at these artistic strategies, I think it is essential to get a grip on what is at stake in and behind the issue here discussed, the regular and well known deaths that seem to be an integral and even accepted part of the current migration regime.

1. Facts on the ground, and at sea.

The "migration issue" or the "crisis" addressed here, is, to be more specific, the deaths and deportations, incarcerations and the destruction of lives, that the current migration regime of Europe produce on a regular basis. In the curatorial project "Is This the Time for Art?", this, the most lethal, excluding and unbearable aspects of migration today was what triggered the project.

Today, about 25 million people are judged to be officially recognized 'refugees' by the UN and UNHCR. However, near 70 million are regarded to be subjected to forced migration, including also economic, political- or climate refugees, as well as internal refugees. (UN: International Migration Report, 2017.) During the recent peak years of asylum seekers to the EU, 2015 and 2016, 1,3 and 1,2 million people respectively sought asylum to the Union. Granted asylum in 2015 were almost 1,3 million, yet in 2016 this had been halved, with no corresponding drop in asylum seekers 2016. (Eurostat: Asylum statistics 2017.) This should be seen in relation to the vastly larger pressure of refugees on countries near Syria. One example, Lebanon, has taken more than 1 million refugees from Syria in this period.

The regular safe roads to the EU have been all but closed. In 2015 one million migrants crossed the Mediterranean in an effort to reach Europe. Since long, but increasingly since 2015, a set of systems, coordinated by EU:s border agency Frontex, have been installed to prevent the entry in to Europe. This has reduced the numbers trying to cross. So in 2017 EU saw only 650 000 asylum seekers. But the danger has increased. Since 2014 to 2018, the deaths on the Mediterranean have averaged 3500, shifting from 5000 in 2016 to 2300 in 2018, yet the number who have embarked on these journey have, as said, gone down dramatically. (UNHCR: "Desperate Journeys – Refugees and migrants arriving in Europe and at Europe′s borders." January 2019, 5). Most commentators thus conclude that EU:s efforts at stopping migrants from reaching the shores of Europe have vastly increased the danger.

This has been long in the making. Since the 1990′ s, EU have adopted a "remote policing" policy, in which detention and re-sending migrants are central tools. (MigrEurope, 2013). The huge bureaucratic apparatus, with Frontex - EU:s border surveillance agency at the center - involves smaller

agencies, private firms and military units and local police forces. A reason for all the deaths on the Mediterranean is a EU directive, put in place already in 2001, which makes it illegal for airliners, ships and other transport companies to let people travel to the EU without residence permit (Council Directive 2001/52/EC).

The lethal aspects of EUs migration policy is not only about drowning. The number of EU-supported detention centers were in 2012 almost 500 (473), inside EU (Migreurop, 2013). Yet, there are also a number of sites in neighboring countries financed by the EU, in North Africa, Turkey, etc. Ad to this a large number of invisible, clandestine and temporary sites, ad-hoc transit stations and "hot spots" with little or no transparency or regularized management at all, many run by private subcontractors, some by smugglers, and so forth. The total number of camps and detained persons in EU:s "remote policing" system is thus largely unknown, as is the number of deaths within them. Ad to this that reports of an epidemic of suicides in the camps have surfaced during the last years. (The Guardian, 2018).

There is today a strong consensus on a hard line on migration and calls for evening stricter, i.e. more dangerous, policies. The movements across Europe, often called *right wing populism*, but which in many instances should be described as varieties of *fascism turned main stream*, have had a clear influence over government policies on migration regulation. Anti immigrant parties, and policy, is no longer the marginal exception underlining the liberal-democratic rule. This has changed both laws and the political discussion in ways that was to most Europeans literally unthinkable 30 years ago (Berggren, 2007).

So, in sum, the migration regime in Europe today is a *system* that in many ways surpass the dystopic visions expressed some two decades ago with the notion of a "Fortress Europe". A notion ridiculed by the defenders of European integration, whose idealized language spoke of peace, humanitarianism, cosmopolitanism and open borders. By and large, there are reasons to speak of a reshaping of *the political* as such, i.e. the boundaries, structures and constitutional framework of the ground on which our political systems reside and operate.

2. Art´s burden.

All art can be read politically. The distinction political vs non-political art is thus most often an impossible one, or at best, contingent upon perspective. Yet, I will here by-pass this central boundary problem in art by simply referring to art that explicitly speak to an issue that is already politicized, or that seeks the attention of its audiences in order to politicize an issue. In short, an 'issue' that ultimately is settled outside of the art event. Here, two elements are central in thinking about political art. One is the weight it must carry in terms of fulfilling or failing in its political ambition and the other has to do with its location, as the political in art has always been intimately bound up with its space and place.

In fact, most theoretical works on art and politics treat this issue as one of aesthetics, direct their attention to how art works include political dimensions or how they can be interpreted within an aesthetic or critical theory framework. Yet, more rarely as a burden or a problem which connects the art work to the world or the gallery to the street and world outside in a more direct way (Alliez and Osborne, 2013), say in terms of the for politics pertinent questions of success or failure.

But, in spite of its powerlessness, I maintain that political art must take seriously what eventually happens to the problem addressed, otherwise it would be a mere aestheticization of a political matter. And indeed this concern haunts much political art. However, we sense if the engagement is sincere. I believe most is. Yet, at the same time, art cannot take full responsibility for offering and realizing political solutions. Rancière reminds that art also must account for its powerlessness:

> Aesthetic art promises a political accomplishment that it cannot satisfy, and thrives on that ambiguity /…/ That is why those who want to isolate it from politics are somewhat beside the point. It is also why those who want it to fulfill its political promises are condemned to a certain melancholy (Rancière, 2002).

This is a condition for political art: it must reconcile, yet not solve, its political ambition with its limited capacity to actually create change. This conundrum is further complicated in art that, as has been common in the last decades, emphasize its *autonomy* while also seek to overcome or avoid *representation*, escape mediation and go beyond the symbolic gesture, leave

the allegedly segregated, privileged art space and break out, perform and let life and art merge into art-action, into art-life (Thomphson, 2012). With such "radical" aspirations, an even greater "failure" is lined up in terms of political accomplishment. Yet, Rancière seems to suggest that this partial failure is what artists and curators must bear. Only the failure save the knot that links the autonomy and heteronomy of art (Rancière, 2002).

I think this is right, as with the Greek tragedy, the 'failure' is not only honest, but also essential, as it *gives something back to the audience*, to contemplate, reconcile with or be inspired to act on. Illusion without delusion. This corresponds to what Adorno and Horkheimer suggested was lost in late capitalist cultural industry. Without the *tragic dimension* all that is left for the audience is a mimetic screening of fiction, a cover up (T. Adorno and M. Horkheimer, 1972/1947). The failure of the world, of politics, must of course also be included in art on failed politics. The unfinished, the tentative and probing is essential in art as well as politics in search of its battle ground. Uncertainty of impact is a shared quality in these spheres of action. Any contentment, closure or satisfaction in the activity, or the exhibition, on for example migration today, is strikingly out of place (See Thompson 2017 for a related thought yet reached through practice).

A first reflection on art on migration is that, beside involving an extreme clash between the gallery and the deaths on the Mediterranean, it reaches out, outside, not only the gallery, but the regular *Polis*, a specific real and imagined community. Like migration, it transcends borders, focus and raise questions about both the workings of art as a political tool and of politics based on a territorial logic, as TJ. Demos has explored and discussed with rich accounts of a variety works and their political significance in *The Migrant Image* (Demos, 2103). To understand why the spatial dimension is a challenge to contemporary artists addressing migration we must look back for a moment on art´s relationship to *space* in relation to politics and representation.

Contemporary art is described and defined in many ways, as starting at different junctions or breaks, the 1920s, WWII, the 1960s, 1989, or it is defined according to its content matter or its somewhat puzzling relationship to the 'contemporary' itself (Karlholm, 2014). One way of describing it however, is to think of it as being concerned with its place.

Thanks to, in particular, Marcel Duchamp, the room in which art is exhibited became charged in a new way. His ready-mades transformed everyday, banal, objects and placed them in the gallery. Ever since, art became art, cursed or blessed, also by being moved in or out of this space.

We can think of that as domestic art politics. Duchamp revolutionized the categories and meanings of art works and the art space, yet is rarely seen as a typical political artist. But he flung the doors open.

In the 1960s and 1970s many artists left the traditional art space, an idea conceptualized by Brian O´Doherty´s classic *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, published as three essays in *Art Forum* in 1976, later as a book (O´Doherty, 2000). Doherty broke down the normative underpinnings of the gallery. The whiteness of the cube served as an idealized screen standing in the way of the world, pretending to be neutral, pure and ideal, it contributed to mystify art, commodify it further as well as keeping the troubles of the world outside, or purify them into aesthetics. His critical intervention echoed aspects of Benjamin discussion of the art worlds response to the severed linkage to ritual in the form of *l´art pour l´art* as a "negative theology": "…the idea of 'pure' art which not only denied any social function of art but also categorizing by subject matter." (Benjamin 1936/2000).

Since Doherty, radical movements and energies of the 1960s and 1970s, its´ break outs from museum or gallery, have become almost in itself a trademark of radical political art, so as to avoid excluding those subjects one wanted to address and engage in dialogue. In fact, the critique of the white cubes, the gallery and the museum has become a standard trope today, even for museums. The general thrust of this move, to open up, move outside and 'take it (art) into the streets' was and is of course driven by a general inclusive and democratic aspiration. It is pursued through actual moves, as well as symbolic gestures, and expresses an often bad conscience about or lack of faith in the gallery space, as well as a search for the relevant battle ground, the democratic constituency (Sholette, 2011; Lacy 2010, Karlholm, Kaprow & Smithson, 2013; Lundström, 2015).

Another side of this engagement has been the common rejection of *representation*, in favor of participation and action through performative strategies among artists. There has been a strong tendency to try to rearrange the power relations in the art situation, not only by moving out

from the traditional setting, but also in how one regards the relationship between artist and audience, speaker and listener. Negotiations that in the 1990s got renewed energy with Bourriad´s important intervention in *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 1998).

3. Art on migration - identification, subjectivity, agency and representation

In the following we shall look closer at some artistic strategies that have dealt with the challenge to art´s ethical and political strategies, that current migration entails. I shall discuss them in relation to some central concepts that these artists both expose and distance themselves from. These are as said the normative idea of *identification*, the couple *subjectivity-agency*, the problem of *representation*, lastly, I bring in a notion, less frequent today, maybe because of it´s bagage from past political projects: *the system* (Jameson, 1987). A view towards 'system', or its equivalent here, the 'migration regime', it is argued, can counter some of the problems that past notions lead us into.

An underlying thought behind this discussion is thus that all these strategies of recent contemporary art are challenged in the confrontation with the current migration regime. The roles of audience, artist and constituency must be rethought. The question of who the subject and object is and where art shall live its life, is altered, when the subject/object is radically excluded, both from the art sphere *and* the political community surrounding it or surrounded by it. And this in turn, changes the way we can look at, or try to escape, representation.

The offer or possibility to *identify with* a protagonist, a subject/object of an art work, has long been seen as an ethical requirement and possibly even more so as the reproduction and spread of images seem to grow endlessly. This is typically sharpened in art of a documentary, contemporary and political vein. The anonymity of suffering people should be broken. This was for example what Susan Sontag discussed in *On Photography* (Sontag, 1977) as the "voyeuristic relation". It was a basic ethical question, to put captions on photos of people, especially those in precarious situations. Hence, to name those we supposedly engage with through images, or wants to engage in or for. This is also a requirement for

how to engage an audience, only if we portray recognizable human beings and persons as individuals, can we *identify* with them, i.e. see ourselves in another. The images of anonymous people is said to *objectify*, turn them into objects for desire, (shallow) empathy, or simply decoration and thus runs the risk of becoming (and repeating) a form of exploitation. This is also expressed as a demand to grant *subjectivity* to those we speak of or with. This in turn, is connected to the notion of *agency* – which is also imperative in political documentation and art. That is, to show that those portrayed have a "will of their own", and a capacity to act, and to lift up this quality, rather than their positions as victims. Or better, to let them speak themselves and so give shape and form to their own narratives. Linked, or sitting adjacent, to these ideas are the equally common idea to *empower* somebody, a person, a group and/or the audience.

It is hardly controversial to state that these requirements have had a strong hold on artists, photographers and film makers. They are also good ideas. Behind them lies a will to hold up a victims´ or persons´ human-ness, and, in turn, the assumption that audience engagement and care is dependent upon an inter-subjective relationship, a "getting to know"-quality through a possibility for identification.

Yet, here it starts to get tricky. As the intimacy of a caption, a name, an age or a village, is a bit thin in terms of friendship. Also, the human-ness of people, elevated through emphasis on will, *subjectivity* and *agency*, seems to rest on an initial worry or even assumption about the opposite. The question is why we need to *identify* with someone to extend our sympathy, empathy and solidarity and recognize their innate humane-ness? Can one not, as we are speaking of art no less, *imagine* they have an identity and, also, a will of their own, are humans, with subjective feelings and desires? Of course, I do not question the power of identification as such. But in relation to migration, and thus drowning on the Mediterranean, rafts, and incarceration in detention centers: to what extent can we, as relatively safe, privileged and dry, Westerners, *identify* with that fate (Compare Bal, 2015)? Does not an image of people on a raft or of starving humans in the desert of Sudan carry just as much or even more information about our *differences*? For all the identification one can create, it can hardly counter the strong message of such images in a gallery or a newspaper, somewhere in Europe, that "their" situation is radically different from "ours". What I want to

suggest is that even though an image or art work can indeed educate and even erect bridges between groups of humans, that are different in culture, power, living conditions and experiences, it does so all the time, but interwoven in that perception, in the knowledge conveyed, is also a strong experience and plenty of information of *difference*.

Thus, the prerequisite of identification for sympathy or solidarity leaves those we cannot identify with, also without our solidarity. That, in turn, leaves us with a sad prospect for anyone, far away, in need of the solidarity and support of others, more powerful and thus better situated to speak to power, i.e. to take on the task of representing.

A suspicion emerges that all these efforts to break or correct the alienation of a situation and a relation, which often is suggested as a way to avoid a mere self-satisfying reassurance of conscience that stays in the gallery space, and the belief that this can be accomplished in the images, itself rests on a rather self centered attitude. For the last normative element mentioned above, *empowerment*, becomes as a demand on representation, peculiar in relation to images, art and performances that address people and situations that at first instance hardly ask for art, and are by any measure radically powerless. The thought that the art-situation have the power to distribute power, hand out or give agency, in relation to subjects that are clearly not the receivers of art, but in fact, closer to objects of it, is a bit grand and delusional.

My ambition is not to say that these are all misguided concerns, nor are they outdated. By and large, it has to do with direct contact, inclusion and relevance. And the question of who and where and how photos and images and art works portray people, is never irrelevant. All of the strategies above, have their place and will be continuously employed. No doubt, a shift of perspective is necessary for relevant critique, and for letting more voices be heard. (See Mazzara, 2019) Few things are ever completely outdated. However, the whole movement of breaking out of the museum and questioning the white cube ideal, have lived a vital, yet deeply paradoxical, life alongside the museum and the white cube gallery, and not rarely been passionately embraced by these institutions themselves. Maybe this was all, in part, contingent upon the safe *Polis*, surrounding the cube and museums with relatively stable categories of 'inside' and 'outside'?

To further discuss how the migration issue challenges contemporary art forms, I will bring in some artists that have chosen other strategies to address the migration regime and try to make us think and act and engage in a relevant way in relation to it.

Oscar Lara

The video installation "100 years" by Oscar Lara is a film that places the human subjects/victims at the center, yet convey no initiated experience of migration. The video shows the cropped faces of asylum seekers who have lived in a small cell in a Danish detention center. The mouths of these faces, which is what is seen, states how long each have been detained while waiting for asylum. This was installed at first in a show at *Fabrikken* in Copenhagen on a replica of a cell from the detention center. The piece is very straightforward, reminding of all the years destroyed. Adding up to 100 years. But the brutally cropped faces, de-individualize and explicitly hides or withdraw information, details, as to intentionally anonymize, most obviously by hiding the eyes. But a jarring sense of loss is forced upon the audience, hearing the years in detention: "7 years…five years…3 years", and so forth, while identification that also allows for a displacement of the trauma, outside of ourselves is inhibited by the opacity of the cut image. Lara uses the blocked identification as the tool with which to keep focus on the structural matter. The dehumanization of the image reflects the dehumanization of the system, which is on display through the installation on a replica of a detention cell, and in the quantity of faces and years, and also in fact, in the very anonymity of the protagonists/subjects/objects of the piece. Still, the work also stirs the emotional register, precisely because of what it leaves for the audience to figure out. The image reveals vaguely age, the number of years in detention, how much life has been robbed, and the repetitive character speaks of mass incarceration. But there are no names, countries, stories, relatives, hopes, dreams. We can fill in the blanks. And in so doing we have to engage our own references – hence become interactive through interpretation.

Image 1. Still from video, "100 Years", by Oscar Lara

Nuría Güell

Nuria Güells´ art works has another way of addressing the politics of the migrant situation. Güell participated in 2013 with a performance at the Gothenburg Biennale – "Offside. Too Much Melanin." She has developed the concept "displaced legal/moral application" to describe her method in which she starts out from a legal or moral principle but turns it around to reverse the power relationships involved. In this work she had the biennial employ a so called illegal migrant, Maria from Kosovo, who had been living with her husband in hiding in Gothenburg for 8 years, in fear of being deported. Her three children are born in Sweden. At the biennale Maria stood outside one of the art venues and invited people from the audience to play "Hide and Seek" with her. She went hiding and then the audience went looking for her. Afterwards she offered the audience to talk about her situation with her.

Güells performance did indeed present us to an individual, a very real person and her story as a victim of a migratory regime. And we as audience actually had the chance to get a little acquainted. Yet, Maria´s invitation to play, was itself a play, on top of another play with the laws that gave her a temporary residence permit while her case was being reviewed (during which she was employed by the biennale). In this performance the audience were thus offered to symbolically and ironically take the role the Swedish police and authorities have had, to look for her. There were

several element in this set up that caused discussion about ethics – to "use" Maria for art, to expose her, place her outdoors, "exhibit" her and her tragic situation, and of course, the whole idea to "play" with a migrant was to many indeed a bit offensive. In fact, the reality of Maria´s fate and the fictional playful set up of the art performance seemed unreconcilable. It reminded of a minor classic installation/performance within contemporary art on migration, *Foreigners Out! (Please Love Austria)* by Christoph Schlingensief from 2000. This performance and television show kept asylum seekers from a detention center waiting to be deported were in a container on the main square of Vienna and filmed them – Big Brother style – so the audience (on web TV) could decide each who would be voted out (and "sent home"). Last refugee standing was supposedly given a residence permit.

Güells satire was not as drastic but, or therefore, managed to raise several questions beyond the "scandal," and make the art situation dense with political and ethical uncertainty. She seemed to draw upon and continue the exploitation and the precarious situation Maria was in. But the ambiguity of the direction, ethics and point of this play, about who were really addressed, targeted or mobilized, gave the work a long lasting effect on visitors and forced us to think again and eventually see in sharp light, the laws upholding the situation Maria was stuck in and spoke about. The first thing the audience was asked to do, was, in a way to suspend social decency and play hide and seek with a person who had been living in hiding. Still, to go along, play "police", was also to perform an act of solidarity. The refusal to play with 'Maria' for example based on an ethical consideration and concern for her precarious situation, was confusingly similar to the way we regularly block out the suffering of others, and in this case, that choice repeated the oblivion towards and the invisibility of Maria that the system had forced upon her.

Kimbal Quest Bumstead
"The horizon is far away" (2015) is a video work which seemingly operates within a traditional documentary mode. However, the arrangements in the production does away with any such readings. Bumsteadhad manipulated the situation beyond the typical documentary aesthetics, with cuts, cropping, voice over, arranged meetings and so forth. His film is taking

place in an abandoned refugee camp in the desert of Tunisia, on the border to Libya. "Choucha" camp was established by the UNHCR to temporarily house those that were fleeing from Libya during 2011. In 2013 the camp was officially closed, and those who had been denied asylum, mostly from sub-Saharan African countries, were advised to return to their countries of origin. Many attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe via Lampedusa, and the rest stayed living in the desert waiting for a solution.

Bumstead picked and choosed among those he meet in the camp as if casting, and what he found was a *representative*, an eloquent man who was given a role rarely given away in documentaries. "Brainy", as he is called by his friends, probably because of his way with words, got to narrate important parts of the films. This reminds us how rare it is, in spite of all the emphasis on letting people be heard and to grant subjectivity, agency and voice to people who are portrayed in precarious situations, that a director delegate the narrating role to one of them. So "Brainy" does not only get to tell about his situation, and of his friends, he also *explains* it and is thus the educator in this work, as when he in a section of the movie freely reflects on what it means to live in Coucha:

> Do you know how painful it is to be in the streets?
> We are living in the streets.
> Because someone who is living in an open desert, getting to four years of the western calendar… are exposed to different kinds of things.
> So really, it's very difficult to interpret, and painful at the same time to explain.
> Because do you think someone who sleeps in a tent, someone who sleeps in a tent, can give a definition of hope?
> Because inside the tent, there is nothing that symbolizes hope.
> So in other words, the man cannot even define hope.
> Especially when you are sleeping in a system that is explaining nothing to you, and yet, is in control.

These words aren´t complaints or outcry, they amount to a calm reflection which makes clear for everyone the lack of power which he speaks of, as well as the lack of empowering or agency that supposedly could have been distributed in this meeting. Discouraging as that may seem, it is a case of speaking truth *about* power.

Image 2, Still from video film "The horizon is far away", by Kimbal Quist Bumstead

Daniela Ortiz and Xose Quiroga

Daniela Ortiz and Xose Quiroga have collaborated on a series of art projects that address questions of migration and political boundaries, while they simultaneously ask questions about the image of migration. Their works are often based in the reality of refugees, with images and experiences that are regularly suppressed and forgotten in the media flow. However, their conceptualizations engage us but also adress our own position as witnesses, bystanders and possibly even perpetrators? I will bring in two of their projects here. The first one – "Aluche-Barajas", is a web based project gathering images from phone clips uploaded on social media sites by the public around Europe, from detention centers, air ports, busses, carriers, ferries. The images are depicting the concrete and brutal operations of the migration authorities, and their extensions. Ortiz and Quiroga seem at first to be operating within a logic of traditional exposure of that which is hidden, suppressed and forgotten, i.e., to bear witness. But as revealing images meant to stir us and maybe take action they carry a paradox in that these images are already out there, on YouTube, Instagram and the likes. In the corner of the image the artists have added a small piece of information, the extent to which the film clips have been shared and gone viral or not. And, although images such as these are rarely published

in mainstream media, they are indeed suppressed, while also familiar. We have seen glimpses. Watching them in this work evokes, I think, chock and also a sense of repulsive familiarity and sadness, as these are images of something simultaneously forgotten and widely published and shared, well-known and denied. Another aspect of these clips are their repetitious and rather anonymous quality. Who took them, who are filmed? One sees bodies, people wrestling, places, cries, i.e. deportations, but get to know no one. The anonymity denies us the relief of identification or any illusion of having established an ethical relationship between watcher and watched.

The other work is also based on information "out there", in this case reports of deaths along Europe's borders, printed in long lists on panels and hung from the ceiling in the gallery space. In "NN 15543" anonymity is thus explicit and central. The number states the number of dead migrants encountered on the shores and on borders or in centers of Europe, between 1998 and 2012. The years as well as the number reveals little, yet, we know that the numbers are too low. What is listed is what made it to public knowledge through media and from police reports, so that an activist group could gather names or information about the encounters.

Ortiz and Quiroga deleted the few cases with identifiable names from the original list, and ended up with the figure 15543. They printed these lists on panels that hung in a slight ironic monumental set up from the roof. Importantly, the installation also added information about which institutions, departments, and companies that upheld the system and thus are implicated in the deaths of migrants. In several small tablets opposite the panels, the audience could read about Frontex, the EU, Iberia Airlines, the Spanish Government, GS4, and so forth. Underneath each logo of these organizations were information about their activities and further below each organization's tablet there sat another tablet detailing specific deaths connected in various ways to these organizations.

The whole work made up a strong "je accuse!" in regard to the migration regime. However, the lack of people to identify with, see as subjects, empowered agents and so on, was striking. Instead it showed us the operations of a system, a regime, a machinery in operation and its material physical, political and economic logic and consequences.
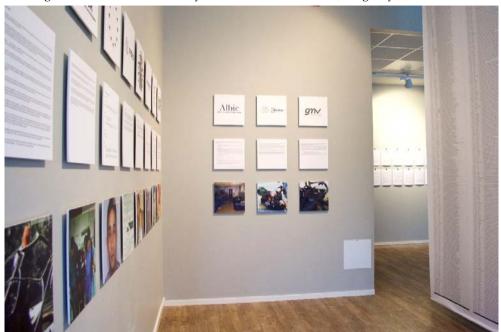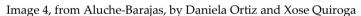
Image 3. Detail of "NN 15543" by Daniela Ortiz and Xose Quiroga, by Caroline Kvick

Image 4, from Aluche-Barajas, by Daniela Ortiz and Xose Quiroga

Conclusions

When we set out to make an art exhibition about the current migration regime, a starting point was Hanna Arendt´s laconic and sad conclusion in a passage of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* of the fate of the Jew, the law and thus political space:

> If a human being loses his political status, he should according to the implications of the inborn and inalienable rights of man, come under exactly the situation for which the declarations of such general rights provided. Actually the opposite is the case. It seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man. (Arendt, 1994, p.300)

We saw the same lack of extension of rights to migrants as Arendt had identified in her analysis of Europe´s fascist regimes. Arendt´s verdict caught our interest also because it spoke of the boundaries of the political, and the danger in ending up outside its realm. To loose political status is lethal. This moreover speaks to the necessity for representation for those who are not legally included in the polis, that is lack political status, vote and voice, and also, in relation to what was discussed above, the tragic vanity of trying to assert the humanity of people who have been denied legitimate political status.

The artists presented in this article have chosen strategies that account for the changed landscape for art and politics that migration entails. That is the main reason for my selection of them, but it took a while to understand what these artists had to teach about the migration issue, aesthetically. By and large, in these works they turn away from direct actions that try to escape *representation*. (Although, many of them make work that sits in between performance/action and symbolic gesture/representation, as for example Güell´s game of hide and seek). Representation becomes recharged with meaning in relation to subjects that have been deprived a voice in a radical way, are *outside of the polis*, stuck in camps, or at risk in the desert or on rafts at sea. Although the suspicions against representation have often rested on an inclusive participatory rational, a rarely surfaced premise have nevertheless been, as said, the ordered political community, with relatively unquestioned borders. But when the radical exclusion from is brought into the equation, the implicit premise that the street is the place

where the desired object of engagement/subject of change/ is sought is challenged. To put it simply, "the problem" addressed is also largely excluded and fenced out behind barbed walls. The "break out" from the white cube and the museum thus runs the risk of becoming a paradoxical and mute action. This mustn´t be understood as a literal move to an actual street, but is often pursued through more or less convincing efforts to simply open the space to new audiences – a relevant art-political act in itself, or temporarily create events and actions in the city, yet not erect "public art" (See for example Thompson 2017 and 2012, or Lundström 2015). The argument here is that the constituency to be mobilized – the audience – is not the same as the subject/object of this art, i.e. the migrant. So what this demands is to mobilize an audience not to break their shackles, but to solidarize and help out. In another way, represent, politically, the unrepresented. In the gallery this can only be propelled by artistic representation.

Migration and radical exclusion forces us thus to think again about the meaning of the art room, its withdrawal from the rest of society, and the prospect for transcending unequal shares of power for those involved - artists, curators, audience and subject/objects of the art in question, in this case, migrants and refugees. As the art-space is recharged with another meaning, it forces *representation* back. In relation to those not let in to the gallery or the street outside, there are few options other than to start "speaking for someone", i.e. to *represent* in the political sense of the word. And in societies where the toil of migrants is largely out of sight and inclusion of them is questioned by the main stream political establishment, the withdrawn art space can become a refuge in itself, where, maybe, resistance can grow, as well as anywhere else.

As is clear by now, these works also do not seek an opening for *identification*, i.e. they are not nervous about anonymity or distance, rather they use it, experiment with it and hold it up as a specific condition of the migrant regime: the disenfranchising, rightless, voiceless, nameless and origin less state many migrants are forced into. Consequentially, there is not so much concern in convincing the audience of the *humanity* of the migrants in focus. That is in most cases a premise. Secondly, it would be counter to a central point many of these artists make, in some different ways: that the political system´s denial of peoples humanity (rights,

political status, etcetera) cannot get an artistic solution. It is a political matter. This has also to do with the fact that the message that someone, or some group, is part of humanity, is always by the implication that this might be in doubt, a possible insult. Yet, again we live in a world, and Union, where this is something many need to be reminded about. But such a reminder, moreover, rest on another contestable assumption, that the culprits, the perpetrators of the "inhuman" migration regime, the agents of what I have called "the system", would rethink their policy had they or it only understood that migrants are human beings. This is a hope we often cling to. It is expressed in the many cries and graffiti tags in refugee camps: "Are we not human?" "We are not animals!". A legitimate question, but, when taking a closer look at this idea one can ask if that is really the problem, i.e. the lack of insight that these people are human. It is indeed a typical way of understanding racism. But is it not the other way around? The dehumanization of the migrant, or for that matter, the black person, the Jew or the Sami, is the tool for which to rationalize racism, in other words, the denial of asylum, rights, legal status, precarisation and exploitation, land grabbing and so forth, ultimately thus, tools for protecting privilege and power?

In sum then, a central focus of the works presented above are thus not the individual migrant, as human, as subject or as agent, but their *powerlessness*, and *the system* that breeds it. This is a very accurate focus, as it more efficiently solve many of the problems that had shaped prior political strategies. A focus which include a critique against the system upholding the migration regime and which also includes the audience as both implicated and responsible, by the power we have as people with political status within the system that excludes, and thus as potential agents of solidarity in relation to the precarious situation of so many migrants. Hence, the directness sought, can be found in the gallery as well as any other place within the walls of exclusion.

Powerlessness might seem to be a strange choice. But, if we ask why powerlessness and lack of agency, victimhood and objectification are so detested today, an inability to deal with *collectives* comes into view. The dominant shape of the individual today is as an agent on a market, this runs through all walks of life and within all institutions. Could it be that this blinds us to the systematic victim, not the "victimized"? The atrocities of the migration regime is enabled by an extreme categorization i.e. collectivization of human beings into a group not worthy our care, our

deepest values, our solidarity. And this, in turn, rests on the paradoxical disqualification of all groups and collectively expressed grievances, political identities, formed out of historical repression and exploitation. This paradox, the collectivizing denial of rights, and the denial of the right to become a political collective, is a major characteristic of our times and of the migration regime (Jonsson & Willén 2016). It is a sort of reversed *veil of ignorance*, where everybody, in the EU, find themselves safe, on the other side of the veil, yet, oblivion about where they were in the past, where they came from, and that they too, and/or their forbearers were once ignorant about where they would end up (Rawls, 1977).

Powerlessness can however be a starting point, and an entry to solidarity. As it has been before. The recognition and shared experience of powerlessness and exploitation have been an ignition to political mobilization through time. For the civil rights movement, the feminist movement and the workers movement and so forth, it seems as just as relevant a ground for a migration movement. And as anyone familiar with these historical movements, they have all benefitted on solidarity across borders and boundaries between the powered and the powerless, and by representatives from within their own ranks and from the outside.

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Borders Kill. Tania Bruguera's Referendum as an Artistic Strategy of Political Participation*

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Abstract:

Since the rise of modern nation-states, borders have played the important role to order society because they have the power to define territories, not only on the ground, but also on the level of the imaginary by shaping national identities and perceptions of the world. Borders can be intended not as places, rather as processes, as socially constructed and shifting structures of practices and discourses that produce norms of difference and exclusion. Within this context, arts, and particularly performing arts, can play a role in challenging these forms of representation, overturning the spectacle of the border into collective performances. Drawing upon these conceptual premises, the article presents the empirical insights related to Tania Bruguera's 'Referendum'. Referendum was intended both as a performance and as a form of political activism, inviting people to vote on the following question: "Borders kill. Should we abolish borders?". After analysing the collaborative procedure that led to the final results of the performance, we reflect upon the role of arts as pedagogical and political tool capable of changing the existing imagery on borders - and specifically on the Mediterranean Sea - and human mobility, stimulating new forms of debate and responsabilization in terms of co-citizenship.

Keywords: Border, Imaginary, Citizenship, Art, Political Participation.

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* The authors worked together to the conceptualisation and construction of the article. Although, Pierluigi Musarò wrote paragraphs 1 and 2, Melissa Moralli wrote paragraphs 4, 4.1 and 4.2, Paola Parmiggiani wrote paragraphs 3 and 5.

Melissa Moralli, Pierluigi Musarò & Paola Parmiggiani

"We're Prisoners of War" Chacko said. "Our dreams have been doctored. We belong nowhere.
We sail unanchored on troubled seas. We may never be allowed ashore.
Our sorrows will never be sad enough. Our joys never happy enough. Our dreams never big enough.
Our lives never important enough. To matter..."
Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

1. *The multiplication of borders*

Globalization is far from creating a "world without borders", as some people might have thought in the 1990s (Omae, 1990). In recent years, we have witnessed a multiplication of borders, also in the immediate sense of an increase in nation states. Borders, therefore, continue to play an important and often lethal role in the lives of millions of people. Around borders people die in many parts of the world: from the Mediterranean to the border between Mexico and the United States, just to mention the two most striking examples of the fatal relation between migration and borders (Mezzadra, 2018).

In the last 20 years, over 30 thousand people have experienced how fatal it is to feed the dream of the crossing if you start from the wrong side of the Mediterranean Sea. Thousands of ghosts whose voice does not reach us, protagonists of a tragedy that has transformed the Mediterranean into a liquid cemetery, the most dangerous border in the world.

For those fleeing wars and famines, poverty and dictatorships, the possibility of shipwreck is the price to pay for trying to re-exist (and resist) on the other side of the Mediterranean. Along the coast between Senegal, Libya and Turkey, men and women feel both desire to leave and nostalgia for home (Ahmed, 2014). Yet they do not give up. They undertake "the Journey"that lasts a few months or many years. A reality that often becomes a nightmare, transfiguring an even deeper abyss: the one that separates the migrant from the rest of humanity. A journey that breaks against the wall of the Mediterranean, in whose profound silence the stories of the media all over the world drown. Even if they present strong and moving images, capable of indignating or arousing pity, they dissolve like any event consumed between a click and some commentary on the

sidelines (Squire, 2014; Colombo, Murri & Tosoni, 2017; Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2018).

Although European policies try to discourage aspiring asylum seekers through blockades, rejections, repatriations and communication campaigns ad hoc[1], the *middle sea - Mare Medi Terraneum* in Latin, the sea in the middle of the land - that the Romans called *Mare Nostrum* - still attracts thousands of people seeking for a better life.

More than a border between Africa and Europe, the Mediterranean is a "liquid continent". In this sense, for example, Braudel (1986, p.55) recognizes the dual nature of the Mediterranean: barrier that extends to the horizon and at the same time of a place that unites, common denominator of trade exchanges between populations sharing the same habits and paces of life.

The Mediterranean has also become the theatre of diasporas and conflicts, hopes foundered in the form of massacres, human trafficking, arrests and solidarity. Although international agencies such as UNHCR, IOM, and the EU High-Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration acknowledge that asylum seekers travel side by side with people fleeing from poverty and seeking better opportunities, most European states are keen to show they are differentiating between asylum seekers escaping war, and those seeking a better life. This blurred distinction between forced and voluntary migration is at the basis of policy-making and is crucial for the future of newcomers. In order to prevent irregular arrival of asylum seekers, several states of the "Fortress Europe" have invested massively in border control, and made bilateral agreements for externalisation of borders (the EU-Turkey agreement on March 2016 and the Memorandum of Understanding between Italy and Libya on February 2017, among others). European governments from both sides of the political spectrum have enacted draconian measures to prevent, deter, and punish those engaged in the smuggling of migrants – both as smugglers and smuggled migrants (Andersson, 2014).

Despite the importance to inform citizens about what is happening in the Mediterranean area, the ways media report on migration and EU

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[1] For further information: https://openmigration.org/en/op-ed/dangerous-journey-limited-effect-of-information-campaigns-to-deter-irregular-migration/, last access on 17/07/2019.

policies and practices often contribute to create acategorisationof migrants as voluntary/forced, desirable/undesirable, and legal/illegal. In their attitude to report uncritically the political discourse on the "invasion" of migrants crossing the EU border, media often contribute to normalise the extraterritorial border by negatively stereotyping migration, or even criminalising it*a priori*. Moreover, this media uncritical approach not only deny the difference between people who have the right to ask for asylum and economic migrants who cross the border without a regular visa. They also reduce the complex narrative of human migration into simple dichotomies of good and evil, fostering, in turn, bad policies that put migrants at risk while, at the same time, empowercriminal organisations.

Moving from the theoretical assumption that nowadays the border seems to break down and then recompose itself, often in lethal ways on the bodies of men and women in motion, this article aims at exploring howarts, and particularly performing arts, can play a role in challenging these forms of representation, overturning the spectacle of the border into a political collective performance. In this sense, arts can represent a space to reflect critically on the denial of rights during migration, as well as on geopolitical relations and marginalizing migration policies (Mirzoeff, 2011; Papastergiadis, 2013). Drawing upon these conceptual premises, the article presents the empirical insights related to the performance "Referendum", presented by Cuban artist and activist Tania Bruguera within the international festival "Atlas of Transitions | Home"[2]. This festival was organized in Bologna in the frame of the project "Atlas of Transitions. New geographies for a cross-cultural Europe", aiming at promoting alternative representations of human mobility and cultural diversity in European cities. *Referendum* was intended both as a performance and as a form of political activism. Lasting ten days, it implied the activation of an urban referendum campaign that invited people to vote on the following question: "Borders kill. Should we abolish borders?". After analysing the collaborative procedure that led to the final results of the performance, we reflect upon the role of arts as pedagogical and political tool capable of changing the existing imaginary on borders - and specifically on the

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[2] http://bologna.emiliaromagnateatro.com/atlas-of-transitions-biennale-home/, last access on 16/07/2019.

Mediterranean Sea. In fact, we argue that in order to understand the meaning (and functioning) of borders, it is necessary to look at their processes of "externalization" and at the symbolic aspects of bordering, to unveil the typical narratives of mainstream media and politicians, overcoming the stereotyped imaginary of the humanitarian or securitarian approach. On the other hand, arts become a new public agora, an interactive arena where different ideas, opinions, insights on conflictual phenomena, such as borders, stimulate a renovated individual and collective responsabilization in terms of co-citizenship (Balibar, 2003).

2. *The physical and symbolic dimensions of borders*

Combining the freedom of movement within the Schengen space with the control of external frontiers, the 1990s are marked as the period when the EU began tightening and militarizing its borders (Bigo, 2002; Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013). The last decades are, indeed, characterized by a justification ofthe massive investments in border controls through the narratives of national security – combating human smuggling and potential terrorists –as well as through the humanitarian narratives –the rescuing ofasylum seekers' lives (Albahari, 2015).

As we have shown in other articles (Musarò, 2017; Musarò & Parmiggiani, 2018), media performances contribute to shaping the Mediterranean border as an emotional and physical setting in which fears and insecurities can be used to produce and perpetuate the colonial geographies of exclusion.

Nevertheless, since the rise of modern nation-states, borders have played the important role to order society because they have the power to define territories and delimit the geographies of nations. This happened not only on the ground, but also on the level of the imaginary, by shaping national identities of people and their perceptions of the world. Therefore, borders and the process of bordering are not only social phenomena, but they are also essentially political, which makes the border making a strategy to control both imaginary and real space, governing the "borderlands" (Agier, 2016). Borders can be intended not as places, rather as processes (Vaughan-Williams, 2015), socially constructed and shifting

structures of practices and discourses that produce norms of difference and exclusion across bodies and voices of would-be migrants (Musarò, 2017), sustaining projects of geo-political sovereignty. As technologically driven process of rhetorical identification and control (Chouliaraki & Musarò, 2017), the process of bordering thus systematically produces its own "discursive or emotional landscapes of social power"(Anssi Paasi, 1996).

Stressing the elasticity of borders and the symbolic dimensions of the bordering practices helps to define the perspective from which borders can be studied today. Although borders are often conceptualized as stable lines drawn on maps, we should acknowledge that the representation of borders as linesis an invention of European modernity). In fact, the drawing of these lines is the condition for the existence of the state territory and therefore has a *constitutive* function in relation to the state (as well as to "the people" who live there and to the citizenry that establishes their rights). However, more generally, the history of the linear border is intertwined with the history of European colonial expansion – with the continuous opening of border areas (often related to the genocide of native peoples), with the protean geography of imperial rules and, finally, with borders drawn with set square and pencil between the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the Sykes – Picot Agreement (Giordana,2018).

There is now a rich literature exploring the extraterritorial border management, focussing on two different aspects of this practice: the securitization of territory adjacent to physical borders and the topologies of biopolitics governing racialized bodies.

Several scholars have documented the extraterritorial "stretching of borderwork" (Casas, Cobarrubias & Pickles, 2010) through transnational statecraft manifesting securitized territories as "buffer zones", alternatively defined archipelagos (Mountz, 2011), or borderlands (Agier, 2016), among others. At the same time, research documenting the biopolitics dimension of the border management tends to emphasize the disciplining of undesired migrants through the toll deflection, detention, surveillance and deportation of migrant bodies (Agamben, 1998; Feldman, 2010; Amoore, 2013).

On the other hand, what requires greater attention is how states attempt the symbolic control of unwanted migrants, the use of extraterritorial subjugation as a practice of pre-emptive border security, how governments implement border externalizations through extraterritorially acting upon

people's perceptions of migration, including depicting irregular migration in a negative light. Yet, these symbolic and imaginary dimensions of border externalization have received little scholarly consideration(Collyer & King, 2016).

Beyond the physical aspect of the border, thus, it is fundamental to consider its symbolic dimension. Images and discourses reporting the European ways to tackle the "migration crisis", while illegalizing those who attempt to cross the border - focussing on their endeavour in terms of risks, death, prohibitions, acts of breaking the law, failure of the arrival - are part of how the media and communication contribute to shape the border (Cuttitta, 2014).

The media portrayals of people crossing the border, through narratives and images of security and salvation, for example, can be understood as representational barriers, that construe their identities as "desirable" or "undesirable". We can define it the "narrated border", which is part of the wider "mediatized border", intended as a regime of reception characterized by the digital fusion of caring compassion and military protection from mobile populations, which results from mediated practices. In other words, assuming mediatization as a process in which "the media exert a particularly dominant influence on other institutions" (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 13), we can describe the mediatized border as a techno-affective network of mediations around migrants and refugees, where emotions of fear and empathy co-exist through digital connectivities, ritualizing our relationship with the other and sought legitimation of the territorial border through discourses of difference and superiority.

Thus, to capture the symbolic and affective role of managing human mobility through a necropolitical approach (Mbembe & Meintjes, 2003), we need to explore and unveil how theseemotionalspatial imaginaries are extraterritorially disseminated by the states to symbolically normalize certain territorial relationships. Through their normalization, spatial imaginaries (re)shape social perceptions about places and people, being used as a "positive power" by the states to normalize human behaviour. A power that contributes to aid the policing of migration, through the shaping of the choices and desires of people.

Within this context, in the next sections we will examine how arts, and particularly performing arts, can challenge these power(full) structures,

while sustaining operations of de-bordering in a dual sense: a de-bordering of the ways borders are narrated and represented, in their physical, symbolic (and mediatized) interpretations, as well as a de-bordering of the spaces of responsibility and resistance through creative actions (Giudice & Giubilaro, 2014; Moralli, 2016).

3.   Atlas of Transitions. New Geographies for a Cross-cultural Europe

Atlas of Transitions is a European project co-financed by the European programme "Creative Europe" which includes ten partners in seven countries - Italy, Albania, Belgium, Poland, France, Greece and Sweden - The partners involved in the project are mainly theatres and cultural organizations that collaborate with a network of university stakeholders. The network has the aim to investigate the relationship between migration and performing arts through the methodology of action-research (McNiff, 1998; Levy, 2017), sharing different methodologies and knowledge. [3]Through an innovative use of performative practices, the project intends to challenge the stereotypical imagery conveyed by the mediatisation of contemporary migratory phenomena, working on new ways of perceiving public spaces and coexistence between European citizens, migrants and refugees. For these reasons, the project develops both a part of artistic action on the field, and a part of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research that involved artists, curators, researchers, migrants, students, citizens.

As a consequence, the project deals with performing arts and migration through different perspectives: it alternates theatre performances with bottom-up urban itineraries created by asylum seekers, public meetings on the theme of borders and the right to mobility, participatory dj-sets in suburban areas, but also installations, workshops on movement, conferences, and shared actions of political activism.

In Italy, the project was developed in the city of Bologna by Emilia-Romagna Teatro Foundation, the artistic collective Cantieri Meticci and the

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[3] The list of the partners included in "Atlas of Transitions" can be found at: http://www.atlasoftransitions.eu/partnership/, while list of academic institutions at: http://www.atlasoftransitions.eu/research/, last access on 15/10/2019.

University of Bologna. Here, the action-research began with an exploratory phase of context analysis, at national and local level, on the phenomenon of migration and ethnographic observation of the artistic workshops carried out in the city of Bologna by the collectives Cantieri Meticci and Zimmerfrei, accompanied by in-depth interviews with artists, curators, participants and activists.[4] On the basis of this first analysis, the research-action has provided different tools including meetings between all stakeholders involved, interdisciplinary conferences and seminars on project issues, public debates open to citizens, workshops and art workshops, training in high schools and university courses, involvement and comparison with the communities of migrants in the territory of Bologna. The analytical framework was completed by the administration of questionnaires(230 in total) to the audience of two festivals held in 2018 and 2019.

The first festival, "Right to the City", which took place in the city of Bologna from 15 to 24 June 2018, focused on the theme of the right to the city as the right of all to live, to participate and to re-inhabit symbolic and physical urban spaces (Lefebvre, 1968). The second festival, "Home", which animated the city from 1 to 10 March 2019, dealt with the concept of "home" conceived as feeling to feel at home or being away from home, starting from the reflection of Ahmed (2014), which proposes to overcome a reading and a representation of the migrant as "ontologically uprooted". A perspective that, on the basis of a feminist and post-colonial approach, tries to challenge ethnocentric narratives for which migrants are seen as an indefinite category that belongs nowhere, and primarily to a Europe with borders fortified by the Schengen agreement.[5]

These conceptual frameworks were therefore used as narrative expedients to reflect on issues such as identity, belonging, inclusion, borders and citizenship. The primary objective of the project was to try to deconstruct the imagery conveyed by stigmatising media and political

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[4] The participating observations continued throughout the duration of the project but were concentrated mainly in the first seven months (November 2017- May 2018). Moreover, a total of 47 in-depth interviews were carried out.

[5] The specific projects developed within the two festivals are reported at: http://bologna.emiliaromagnateatro.com/right-to-the-city/ and at: http://bologna.emiliaromagnateatro.com/home2019/, last access on 17/10/2019.

rhetoric. Imagesthat represent migrants as victims to be saved (fuelling an imbalance of power and conveying pietism), or as invaders to be rejected (supporting a criminalization of diversity and growing episodes of "everyday racism"). Themes capable of stimulating connections and cognitive effervescences, that convey different ways to reflect on social inequalities linked to the right to move. But, also, collective experiments of new forms of social integration capable of enhancing diversity.

Among these projects, in the next sections we will explore a specific project entitled "Referendum", proposed by the Cuban arti(vi)st[6]Tania Bruguera during the festival "Home", held in 2019.In particular, we will present the results of the analysis undertaken during the realization of the performance and the public debates that preceded the performance. These results have to be considered as part of the action-research presented above, coordinated by University of Bologna, involving both the project's partners and the academic stakeholders.

4. Referendum

In our theoretical framework we have argued that some of the most intense conflicts of our time are taking place around borders, creating symbolic borders which are transformed into spaces of everyday exclusion. Tania Bruguera's artistic interventions refer to this conceptual macro-frame, seeking to intervene politically through art and its institutions. Drawing upon a Critical Institutional approach, Tania Bruguera combines her role as an activist with that of artist (artivism)[7]. Among the main projects, she

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[6] "Artivist" is a portmanteau word combining "artist" and "activist".

[7] Tania Bruguera creates performances and installations that address global issues related to power, migration, censorship, repression, examining the effects on the lives of the most vulnerable individuals and communities. Her interventions investigate the possibility of transformation of institutional structures, of collective memory and education in the broadest sense. Through participatory practices that overturn the role of citizens from mere spectators to "active actors", her works target and reveal the effects produced by the work of political power on societies. She received an Honorary Degree from the School of the Art Institute in Chicago and was the first artist-in-house of the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, http://bologna.emiliaromagnateatro.com/spettacolo/tania-bruguera-referendum-2/, last access on 12/07/2019.

founded the Immigrant Movement International, based on acts of protest, participatory formats, workshops, meetings, works on the issue of migration.[8] Another interesting project, Arte Útil, was developed by Tania Bruguera and curators at the Queens Museum, New York, Van Abbe museum, Eindhoven and Grizedale Arts, Coniston. Arte Útil case studies show how arts can help to deal with issues that were once the domain of the state, depicting this process as part of a larger historical trajectory that is now shaping our contemporary world. A trajectory where self-organised groups, individual and collective initiatives bring to new methods and social strategies in order to answer emerging issues, intervening directly on the field.[9]

On the basis of a shared perspective of arts as a space of political intervention, Tania Bruguera was invited to propose a collective performanceduring the festival "Atlas of Transitions | Home",[10]. The artist proposed the project "Referendum", a performancelasting ten days in the form of aurban referendum campaign.[11]In particular, Referendum represented an invitation to vote and to reflect on a question concerning migration and borders, originated from a public and militant debate that engagedlocal organizations, activists, social workers, citizens. For the whole duration ofthe festival "Home", everyone could vote in different parts of the city, while a scoreboard marked the daily results of the referendum, making visible the urban response to the question and monitoring the choices of the participants. Referendum engaged students,

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[8] http://immigrant-movement.us/wordpress/, last access on 13/03/2019.

[9] https://www.arte-util.org/about/colophon/, last access on 24/08/2019.

[10] The characteristics of the audience attending the Festival will be illustrated in a further publication. However, the questionnaires collected (108 in total) showed that the 47, 54% of the audience was used to attend performing events between 0 and 4 times/year. Moreover, the audience was mainly composed by women (67,21%) between 19 and 35 years old (54,10%). In relation to the nationality, 81,1% of the audience was Italian, 2,5% UE citizens and 3,3 % extra-UE citizens. However, since the audience who voted during Referendum could not be examined within the general audience of Home Festival, the number of non-Italian participants could be much higher (particularly because the voting polls were positioned in different parts of the city of Bologna).

[11] For further information on the collaboration of Tania Bruguera within "Atlas of Transitions | Home", please visit: http://www.atlasoftransitions.eu/cuban-artist-tania-bruguera-in-bologna-with-2-projects/, last access on 17/09/2019.

activists, refugees, tourists, researchers, artists in different parts of the city, proposing a collective exercise in order to re-think the conceptual meaning of the "border".[12]

Before Bologna, Tania Bruguera performed Referendum in Toronto (2015) and in New York (2016), but, as we will see, the performance in Bologna was developed in a different way, giving citizens the possibility to re-think and transform the initial statement/question and to participate to public debates on issues such as freedom of movement, borders and rights. In fact, differently from the previous experience, the project in Bologna was conceived as a participatory project consisting in six (only partially consecutive) main phases: the organization of open public discussions held in Bologna at the Arena del Sole theatre, where the participants were invited to discuss the statement and the question to be used in the "artivist" performance; the training of the volunteers and students assisting in the voting stations; the promotion of the project through site-specific posters in different areas of the city; the realization of the "referendum" with static and mobile voting positions in the center and in the periphery of the city of Bologna; the organization of six open discussions during the duration of the performance and the presentation of the results in a final event.

4.1 Debordering Imaginaries

Borders limit and connect. They exclude and set the conditions for inclusion. Since the mythical story of the foundation of Rome, the walls, whose boundaries often surround each other, are bathed in blood (…). Originally characterized by a plurality of meanings (delimiting the sacred from the profane, the good from the evil, one private property from another), the border progressively assumes a specific political value in European modernity, marking - through its representation as a line in the maps - the territories of states and performing various functions in facilitating colonial expansion. It is this linear image of the border that still today organises our geo-political atlas, the map of the world with which we are familiar.[13]

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[12] Referendum was attended by 2,519 voters, but the people involved in all the phases of the performanceare many more, as we will discuss below.

[13] http://bologna.emiliaromagnateatro.com/spettacolo/tania-bruguera-referendum-2/, last access on 16/08/2019.

On Festival's website, Referendum's description begins with these words. Suggestive words ofreflection, disruptive imagination,critical deliberation, echoing and explicating the inequalities linked to the misfortune of being born on the wrong part of the (socially constructed) atlas. In these words, but especially in the main statement/question driving the referendum ("Borders kill. Should we abolish borders?"), the aim of this artistic intervention is clear: to challenge mainstream narratives on borders, to unveil power imbalances in the mobility justice (Wihtol de Wenden, 2013; Sheller 2018), in a world where some are dying to cross symbolic and physical borders and others are buying passports as part of economic and political strategies (Abrahamian, 2015).

This ambition started before the performance itself: in the weeks preceding the public performance, Tania Bruguera asked the curator of the festival, Piersandra di Matteo, to open the artistic intervention to the people[14], letting them to decide whether change the statement and the question. Inviting them to rethink the project in line with the Italian context and recent political events[15], the artist underlined how arts can represent a flexible mechanism of collective reflection on actual political and social challenges (Mouffe, 2007; Martiniello, 2016; Smithner, 2019). At the same time, Referendum became a space of political participation, sustaining the direct intervention of social actors in an artistic politically-oriented project, as we will see in the second section of this paragraph.

One half month before the performance, three public consultations were organized (January 2019) at the theater Arena del Sole (Bologna), between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m., experiencing the participation of about 40 people for each meeting.These occasions were not only important moments of discussion that led to the (partial) reconfiguration of the initial project, but they represented, primarily, fertile ground of open debates on actual political

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[14] The people who participated in the meetings were from civil society organizations, individual citizens interested in the topic, activists, migrants, students, researchers, local administrators.

[15] In winter 2019, when the project was developed, Italian minister of Interior had recently promoted a new Decree-Law on Immigration and Security, an anti-migration decree causing a growing social exclusion of newcomers and a formal criminalization of NGOs, declaring that Italian ports were closed for migrants. These acts worsened the situation in the Mediterranean Sea, making this liquid border even more dangerous than before.

facts and events. In other words, they became fundamental moments to discuss about borders, rights, citizenships, exclusion, conviviality.

The process itself wasinteresting[16]. During the meetings, different considerations on migration and borders arose. Among others,discussing about the statement and the question to beadopted for the Italian Referendum was also a reflexive mechanism to reflect about borders and the inequality of lives.In this case, the participants discussed about how bordersare socially constructed, becoming mediatized borders where images and narratives shape and legitimize unequal geographies of the world (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017). Thus, one of the first issues faced during the public meetings concerned the deconstruction of the border as a fixed reality, questioning its nature and its socially embedded character. As an example, a participant stated:

"We should ask ourselves what breaking down a border means: if the border is intended as something material it is easier, but if it is of another kind you must first of all make it visible, politicize it, understand whatthat border is like. It is necessary to make the border visible to identify the forms of struggle. My suggestion would be to find another question that is just as dry, but that keeps in consideration the difference between diverse types of border"(participant C.).

In fact, as wearguedin our theoretical framework, the concept of the border is something deeply complex and frequently disorienting. As a consequence, the riskcould be that of taking into consideration only the geopolitical or physical dimension of borders, minimizing their symbolic and psychological facets.

However, as we stated, borders are essentially mediated. They are constructed not only through wars, internal conflicts, international treaties and economic agreements. They are narrated, represented, imagined. In other words, borders are also shaped by social imaginaries (Abruzzese & Borrelli, 2000), expressed in images (visual or symbolic), as well as in interpretative categories. Images and categories that reveal a specific vision of the world represent simplifications of social life, influencing common

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[16] The three meetings were analysed through the technique of participating observation. During the meetings, we focused mainly on the participants' perceptions about borders, relational dynamics, interactions among "experts" and "non-experts" in the form of knowledge co-construction.

sense (Jedlowski, 2005). In the case of borders, as many authors sustain, these social imaginaries are mainly linked to a dual perspective, securitarian and humanitarian (Walters, 2011;Albahari, 2015), supported by mainstream political and mediatic rhetoric, and leaving a very narrow space for other interpretative perspectives and voices.

Through the disruption of a "simple" and direct question, Referendum broke these dualistic representation strategies, stating that borders kill and that everyone is called to do something (or at least reflecting on their role in such a setting). A call to reflection and, potentially, action, that invited, even before the general public, the participants to the meetings who underlined the importance to include, in the formulation of the statement/question,*"their attitude towards borders"*(participant F.). This aspect emerged abruptly when the participants were invited to decide between the following options: "Borders kill. Should we abolish *our* borders?" or "Borders kill. Should we abolish borders?". In this case, the collective reflection was so intense that the participants remained in the meeting room to discuss till after midnight, until a further (third) meeting was organized for the following week. Why a simple "our" was so important for them, at the point that they agreed to meet a final time before launching the project? How such a short term could change the meaning of the question? The answer clearly shows the complex nature of the concept of the border. The participants who supported the inclusion of"our" in the question argued the necessity to explicit the psychological dimension linked to the experiences of individuals andtheir personal barriers. They claimed, therefore, a form of individual responsabilization in eliminating, first of all, personal and psychological borders.

On the contrary, other participants highlighted how the focus on the private dimension of borders could minimalize the disruptive effects of geopolitical ones. Moreover, they sustained that "our" implied the identitarian dimension of borders, constructed through the years by modern nation-states to define territories and delimit the geographies of nations. This symbolic dimension works not only on the ground, but also at the imaginary level by shaping national identities of people and their perception of the world (Massey&Jess, 1996). According to this vision, therefore, these are semantic strategiesused by politicians and amplified by media to outline contemporary geographies of power, creating the

distinction between "us" and "them", between who has the right to move and who is depicted as a victim or as an invader without the right to feel part of this "game". Who says that the borders are "ours"? As a result of a long process of reflection, the decision was to leave "our", attempting to challenge the traditional rhetoric depicting "us" on the right side of the world. In fact, as a participant underlined "we should also try to overcome the dichotomy between us and them, we should find a phrase to make the person who responds part of the project but avoiding power relationships" (participant G.).

Both in the process of the formulation of the statement/question, and in its communicative power, Referendum entailed alternative imageries on migration and borders, challenging mainstream linkages between political discourse, mediatic representationsand moral imaginaries. The statement and the question unveiled specific narratives behind which hides a hierarchical gaze that legitimizes disparities in mobility for different people (Musarò&Moralli, 2019), normalizingborders as natural facts. As the analysis disclosed, Referendum contributed to challenge an imaginary composed of fixed borders capes and the paradoxical spectacle of the rescue andincursion, in a private space of reflection, critical interpretation and, consequently, in individual and collective responsabilization. A performance that supported the public visibility of borders and their effects, their psychological, symbolic and physical dimensions… In other words, an act of de-bordering of imaginaries around borders.

4.2 Debordering Resistance

Moving from the premise of Referendum as a critical space of symbolic and communicative de-bordering, this second level of analysis focuses on arts as a form of resistance and, potentially, deliberative political participation. A form of "participatory aesthetics" (Dezeuze, 2012), where taking part in artistic work can foster awareness about actual social issues, linking the political, civic and artistic sphere.

This particular characteristic of Referendum has partially been exposed in the previous section (e.g.: underlying that the statement/question was identified after a long process of open debates)but can be unveiled by many other aspects emerged during the action-research.

First of all, during the 10 days of voting, four further public debates were organized in order to discuss about the artistic intervention and discuss on the topic of borders. The first debate was organized at Damslab - an experimental interdisciplinary space of the Departments of Arts of University of Bologna - andinvolved the participation of Tania Bruguera. During this occasion, the artist explained the parallelisms between migration in Europe and in America and the political aim of Referendum. In her words:

> The objective of the Referendum is to bring issues concerning migration to the public, to bring out thoughts and feelings through a direct, face-to-face relationship, using the structure of a democratic legal institution: the vote, which implies taking a position through a gesture. It's a way to ask yourself why it's so difficult to relate to this phenomenon [...] The statement expresses a strong opinion: 'borders kill', which forces to make some reflections right away. The same question was asked in different contexts, despite differences. I am very happy with the process that you are developing in Bologna, it is essential to identify the right question to be asked now in Italy(T.B.).

The second debate concerned the presentation of the project "Mediterranea – Saving Humans", a Non-Governamental Action promoted by civil society to monitor and denounce what is happening in the Mediterranean Sea after NGOs have been criminalized for their rescue role[17]. Finally, the last two debates focussed on the recent Decree-Law on Immigration and Security and the gradual criminalization of NGOs – a process gradually started in 2016 (Fekete, 2018).

Secondly, the public debates as well as the voting stations, have tried to involve not only the central areas of the city but also the peripheries.[18] From the circles for the elderlyto the tourist bubbles of the two Towers and Piazza Maggiore, from social centresto the academies, theatres and intercultural centres... The acts of de-bordering did not only concern urban symbolic borders but also the physical ones, involving the elderly, students, tourists, migrants, in the centre as well as in the suburbs. A political engagement intention that tried to involve different opinions,

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[17]https://mediterranearescue.org/en/, last access 27/08/2019.

[18] For a list of the spaces involved in the project, both in terms of places where the open discussions took place, and of voting stations, please visit: http://bologna.emiliaromagna teatro.com/spettacolo/tania-bruguera-referendum-2/.

perspectives, insights, asking the question in different languages, in different urban contexts and multiple situations. This has contributed to create alternative spaces of political participation, in opposition to the"confined" forms of citizenships, constantly filtered from above - since institutions establish the political agenda and define the spaces, times and communication methods of participation. During the ten days, urban bulletin boards, radio interventions, leafleting boards, workstations in theatres, etc. literally invaded the city of Bologna. Moreover, thanks to the collaboration with Cheap, site-specific posterswere affixed in the Cheap on Board noticeboard circuit.[19] All these interventions were aimed at transforming the public space into a space of discussion, participation, re-appropriation (Lefebvre, 1968).

Thirdly, the training of the volunteers - mainly high-school and bachelor students - who oversaw the voting stations helped to argue artistic choices and promote an opendialogue on the topic of borders in everyday life with passers-by.[20] The training itself represented an occasion for talking about borders. This aspect was fundamental for the political core of the artistic intervention – as an active part of the action-research – for two main reasons. On the one hand, it sustained the de-construction of academic and scientific discourses about borders to find new communicative and accessible ways to explain geopolitical and symbolic assets characterizing international migration in Europe nowadays. In other words, during this phase, researchers, artists and volunteers discussed on the complexity and the multidimensionality of the concept of "border", trying to avoid stigmatizing mainstream communicative mechanisms. On the other hand, these communicative mechanisms have been adopted in the voting

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[19] The CHEAP on BOARD project is a collaboration between CHEAP, a Street Poster Art Festival, and the City of Bologna, with the aim to display unconventional street poster art and communication projects on the city government's unused notice boards, several hundred boards scattered around downtown Bologna, http://www.cheapfestival.it/en/on-board/cheap-onboard/, last access on 20/08/2019.

[20] Before the performance (February 2019), two different training meetings were organized both for the university and the high school students who where doing their internship within the project. In particular, the training concerned a critical and historical analysis on borders, past and actual geopolitical settings, the evolution of the right to move and European policies on migration.

stations, transforming the public space into an open space of interaction, reflection and dialogue on borders.

"After the debate to formulate the question, the second operative part was to bring the question to the whole city, to make its inhabitants take a stand. We had real voting stations where people could vote. Voting stations with people who were ready to dialogue with the public and to reflect on the question"(organizer A.)

Indeed, a space where to experiment and promote new citizenships, in plural, just as Mouffe (2007) suggests when she speaks about artistic practices as capable of subverting the dominant hegemony through an "agonistic approach". An approach which considers the differences instead of evening them out, a space of alternative political participation, a space of resistance in the urban space.

5. *Beyond the spectacle of the border*

In this article we proposed to focus on the symbolic dimension of borders, as they have the power to define territories and delimit the geographies of nations, not only in a physical sense, but also at the level of social imaginaries. In fact, borders can be intended not (only) asplaces, rather as socially constructed processes (Vaughan-Williams, 2015), producing norms of difference and exclusion. Drawing upon a reflection on the double nature of borders, the second part of the article focusses on the project Referendum, organised within the international festival of the project 'Atlas of Transitions. New geographies for a cross-cultural Europe'. Intended both as a performance and as a form of political activism, this project represented a symbolic and political space of reflection about borders and their complex nature.

Focusing onartsas an important space to enhance alternative social imaginaries, forms of political participation and resistance (Belfiore & Bennett, 2007), the paper explored Referendum as a form of symbolic and physical de-bordering. This double role was underlined by the artist but put into practice by the creative capacity (Moralli, 2019) of the multitude of social actors who participated in the process of identification of the statement/question, in the public debates, in the streets at the voting

stations, in the dialogues with the artist, in the notice boards and in the training of the volunteers. Hence, Referendum became a space where hegemonic representations were challenged through the creation of open spaces of collective reflection and creativity. An intention expressed also in the description of the performance:

In our time, a set of global processes has put this consolidated representation of the border in tension, transforming borders into places of intense and often lethal conflict. Mobility control is at the heart of these conflicts, in which other definitions of the border, such as race, gender, social, cultural, linguistic, etc., become central again. While the drive to cross borders is clearly driven by a search for freedom and a claim to equality, its containment or denial aims to reproduce an unequal distribution of freedom of movement and end up in reaffirming the original link between borders and violence. Violence that kills.[21]

Starting from a critic towards the forms of representation of borders as natural and fixed elements, this innovative artistic intervention not only sustained the double conceptualization of border as - symbolic and physical - social construction, but also became a space of resistance, activism and creative intervention in the public space. Thus, the experiential and relational nature of Referendum expressed the power of arts as social and political tools capable of shaping new social imaginaries and new forms of political participation.

In other words, Referendum can be considered as an "active sub-politics" (Holzer & Sørensen, 2003), meaning a solution to the lack of accountability that characterizes traditional political organizations and the assumption of responsibility on the part of citizens in their daily life, going beyond both the public and private sphere. In this perspective, Referendum has opened up new forms of individual and collective responsibilities, thanks to its ability to challenge(at least in part) the imaginary on borders: between symbolic and physical borders, between the centre and the periphery, between artistic and political intervention, between watching, reflecting and acting.In such a perspective, performing arts can provide innovative ways to represent migration, deconstructing conventional narratives and contrasting the post-humanitarian attitude of the "ironic

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[21]http://bologna.emiliaromagnateatro.com/spettacolo/tania-bruguera-referendum-2/, last access on 16/08/2019.

spectator" (Chouliaraki, 2012).It also represents a space for inclusion, recognition and citizenship (Isin & Nielsen, 2013).

In this context, arts can have a "deconstructing potentiality", promoting a re-signifying process to propose alternative narratives on migration. Moreover, this capacity of Referendum in intervening not only at the level of practices, in central as in peripheral urban spaces, but also at the level of social imaginaries, partially solved the limit of temporariness of the project itself. Indeed, even if the project had a limited duration, by challenging the dynamics of visibility/invisibility and resisting the status quo of mainstream political discourses,it displayed the politicised dimension of migration, becoming an alternative form of political participation in the shape of an "aesthetics of subversion" (Mazzara, 2019, p.10).

To conclude, a question remains: Will it be possible to abolish borders? 2030 voters replied yes, while 489 people voted against it.[22] It is difficult to answer this question, but we agree with Mezzadra (2018, p. 6), who suggests that "a border policy can aim to abolish some of them, to transform others from barriers to bridges, and more generally to make space around them for freedom of movement, meeting and multiple crossings"[23].

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[22]We expressly reported the result of the performance in the last part of the article because we preferred the analysis to be focused on the process and not on the outcome.

[23]Translated by the authors.

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Counteracting Dominant Discourses
about Migrations with Images: a Typology Attempt

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Abstract

This article examines a series of art and media images which have contributed to counteracting dominant discourses about migrations. Through recourse to recent research in political science and psychology, it suggests that both the genre of the images and the very nature of their message contribute to shapingopinions and public policies. Specifically, it emphasises how the recurrence of certain motifs helps to diffuse a feeling of anxiety about the migration "crisis". By doing so, this article updates the "Funnel of Causality",a theoretical tool elaborated by political scientists to analyse voting behaviour that is now used to understand attitudes toward migrations. In this scheme, the media effect, in which images play an increasing part, is consideredto be of minor importance, whereas moral values appear to be crucial. However, the present article shows how these very values are fostered and conveyed by certain images, particularly those of fictional nature.

Keywords: Migration, Images, Funnel of Causality, Motifs.

Introduction

During the First World War, at the time when the American population was influenced by the isolationist Monroe Doctrine, President Wilson's administration hired the advertiser Edward Bernays to promote U.S. commitment to the war (Aumercier, 2007, p. 452). The publicist proposed to disseminate cartoons picturing Germans looking like Hun monsters killing babies. The aim of this campaign was to convince the American population to enter into the war. Bernays'caricatural choice of representing Germany as a threat to freedom helped in raising awareness of the European conflict and in triggering American involvement in the war.

This set of images can be viewed in relation to other photographs publicised by the Polish Government-in-exile during the Second World Warthat aimed to bring attention and support to another situation. Graphic

photographs representing an accumulation of totally emaciated bodies and a dead toddler of a frightening thinness were published by Shmuel Zigelboim, a member of the National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile. They were illustrating a pamphlet titled"Stop them now, German Mass Murder of Jews in Poland". These photographs fall into a broader action undertaken by the Polish underground National Council, andin particular by the Catholic resistance-fighter Jan Karski, to inform the Allies on the fate of Jews in Poland (Becker, 2018, p. 19). These terrible photographs were sent to the Foreign Office in London, but even though they seem to bestow a prophetic significance to the images published during the First World War, they failed in ending the genocide. Similarly, the Allies did not pay attentionto the concentration camps, although they were clearly visible, in the aerial photographs through which they sought to identify industrial installations to be bombed (Rancière, 2012, p. 33).

What is intriguing here is that, in the first case, fictitious images managed to alert an opinion which was until then indifferent to the need to enter the war; whereas, in the second case, images of a realistic genre did not manage to change the course of history. Viewedin the light of the currentmigration "crisis", this historical aesthetic divergence raises the question of the ability of images to counter the dominant discourses that receive an ever-increasing audience in the present day. This article aims to identify and to analyse the images which have influenced today's opinions on migration.

Assuming that images have the ability to influence opinions, the article starts by investigating the relationship between contemporary art productions and media images currently picturing the migration issue. Examining on equal terms these two kinds of images,the objective is to extract common trends with regard to their main topic, their genre, and their framing,which could explain their potential influence on attitudes to migration, in particular within the European Union.In doing so, this article questions a conceptual device elaborated by political scientists from the Observatory of Public Attitudes to Migration (OPAM) to understand the causal variable at play in the policy process, which has had some success to date. Based in Brussels and implemented by the European Commission in 2017, the goal of the OPAM is to enhance knowledge "of attitudes to migration" with the ambition of producing a "step-change in our collective

understanding of perhaps the definitive public policy issue of the twenty-first century in Europe" (OPAM website).For this purpose, the OPAM uses an analysis tool that is an inherent part of the Michigan model elaborated in the 1950s. Known as the "Funnel of Causality", this conceptual tool contributes to explainingvoting behaviours by a series of social and psychological factors. The team of researchers at the OPAM have transferred the conclusions of this reading grid to the field of migration studies. In particular, following the lessons of the "Funnel of Causality" in the field of voting behaviour,the media would have little influence on electoral choices. When transferred to the field of migration, the conclusions drawn from the "Funnel" in relation to the media would be similarly expected to have little influence on attitudes toward migratory flows. In this essay, the impact of the media on attitudes to migration will be questioned, first, in the light of a typology of art and media images about the migration crisis, and then with regard to a psychological theory connecting emotions to moral values. The presence of common repeated motifs, in both art and media images, seems to bind these two kinds of representations together in what could be considered as the *media entry* in the "Funnel of Causality" conceptual scheme. From this vantage point, if both these kinds of images may have largelyfailed in deflecting the conduct of repressive policies, a few of them seem to have succeeded. More specifically, the successful cases include a fictional feature-length film, an iconic press photograph and a magazine cover, all dealing with the subject of migration.

The analysis of this set of still and moving images leads to the discovery ofa few commonfactors all conveying emotion: the identification process, the presence of a child, and the fictitious dimension of the image. Following Christine Tappolet (2000), a philosopher specialising in ethics, emotions appear to be levers for opening and shaping moral values. To the extent that these psychological factors and values are the most critical elements in the Michigan model, some images would therefore have the ability, through the use of emotions, to influence opinions on migration. Therefore, the "Funnel of Causality"would need to be updated to include Tappolet's conclusion on the relationship between rationality and emotions.

This study will begin by assuming that a narrow range of specific motifs bind together the media and images of current migrations by conveying a

general feeling of anxiety (I). It will then consider how a few determining factors in images appear to play a key role in triggering emotions and moral values influencing attitudes to migration (II).

1. A narrow range of motifs binding the media and art images of migrations

In an article intended to highlight the permanence of interest in the "Funnel of Causality", Matt Wilder (2016) stresses the ability of this conceptual model "to link the structural concerns emphasised in political economy to the micro level behaviour of agents". The early attachment to parties, in particular through sociological and parental characteristics, is recognised as the most decisive factor in explaining political behaviours. The media is also mentioned in the reading grid which composes the "Funnel" but, as the impact is perceived as being less powerful, it exists at one of the furthest places of influence. In the "Funnel" evaluation grid, the further the factor is from the attitude, the more the attitude is rooted in the behaviour.

The following evaluations aims to determine if the place assigned to media in the "Funnel of Causality" should be reconsidered. In this perspective, images that usually accompany the migration crisis subject in the mainstream media, namely those that the audience would have in mind about this topical issue, should be analysed.

To designate what composes the opinions formed in the collective consciousness is a perilous and slippery enterprise, not only regarding the definition of the "general public" in itself, but also in respect of the "collective imaginary" that accompanies it. Yet, both notions are as elusive asthey are crucial in the conduct of policies. More precisely, a series of relationships are at stake: the one between political decisions and the population's wish, and the one between these two components of public affairs and the set of shared perceptions of a phenomenon. These shared perceptions are what I would call a "collective imaginary". The latter would be composed of the images, whatever their medium, that are the most frequently confronted bya group of people. The images most frequently used to describe a situation would be decisive in the collective perception of the situation.Regarding migrations, the anthropologist Liisa

Malkki noticed that "photographs depicting refugees are so abundant that most of us, having seen them before, have a clear and fixed image of what a 'refugee'is"(1995, p. 10). Delineating which images are associated with migration would be a first step in addressing the relationship between policies implemented to deal with a phenomenon and the perception of it.

A survey conducted from 2013 to 2016 by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism of the University of Oxfordshows that, in the United Kingdom, people get their news mostly online and from television. During the period considered in the survey, respondents answering they have usedprinted newspapers as a source of news the past week witness a decline from around 60% to less than 40%.Regarding the same question, online news sources (including social media) remain stable around 70%. In 2016, online sources of information exceeded for the firsttime television as the most followed source of media. This change of source in direction of online information can be explained by the preferences of a younger generation. Considering "the gradual erosion of television as the single most widely used source of news, to the point that by 2016 it has been overtaken by online sources in terms of reach" (Nielsen, 2017)and the widespread access of the population to the internet (for example, 92% of the UK population in this study), the focus will be placed on images available online in the present study.

Regarding migrations occurring by the Central Mediterranean route, using the keywords "migration" and "Mediterranean" in Google's search engine generates a limited range of colours, materials and objects. Their combination around several themes leads to five main motifs: boats, endless lines of people, lifejackets, survival blankets and press infographics including maps. Motifs are defined as identified forms and objects contrasting with the background of the images. The word motif derives from the Latin "motivus" which means "what moves", as the nature of motifs is to move and to be repeated from one image to another. Free from spatial and temporal borders, this circulation affects all kinds of images, whether they be documentary or fictitious, media or artistic. Then, doing the same research toward artworks related to migration yields a similarly limited scope of images displaying boats, lifejackets, and survival blankets. As it is currently used by the OPAM team, the "Funnel of Causality" indicates thatthe media is classified by political scientists as a "contextual"

factor with little influence on opinions (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018, p. 7). Contemporary artworks making use of the same motifs than the media should thus also be largely ineffective with regard to changing opinions.

An example case can be found in the art productions of Chinese activistAi Weiwei, such as his 2016 installation at Berlin's concert hall which included 14.000 discarded lifejackets; *Reframe* (2016) composed of 22 rubber boats attached to the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence; *Circle of Animals/ Zodiac Heads* (2016) consisting of the wrapping of twelve sculptures located in front of Prague's National Gallery Trade Fair Palace with survival blankets; his 2016 re-enactment of Nilüfer Demir's famous photograph of the young Aylan Kurdi; the *Law of the Journey* (2017) made from an 80-metre long rubber boat;and *Soleil Levant* (2017) composed of 3.500 salvaged life jackets. As they predominantly repeat, generally in gigantic dimensions, the media motifs picturing the crisis, these art productions deliberately refer to the media images covering the crisis. More precisely, on a chronological timeline, the media images precede the artworks. They also evoke artistic practices such as the metaphor (for instance, the lifejackets as dead bodies), the accumulation (of lifejackets on seashores) or the wrapping (of refugees into survival blankets). On the other hand, the contemporary art images also seem to anticipate the media images.

These media motifs are also embedded in the works of other contemporary artists such as Alex Seton (*Life Vest M (Emergency)*, 2014; *Durable Solutions 1*, 2014), Banksy (*Dismaland refugee boat*, 2015), Gandolfo Gabriele David (*We Are Here*, 2017, flags made from life jackets) and Arabella Dorman (*Flight*, 2016, with a rubber boat;*Falling*, 2016,with life jackets and rubber boats).

While stating that media and artistic images seem to be connected by common motifs, the iconological approach, initiated since the creation of the *Mnemosyne Atlas*(1924–1929) by Aby Warburg and subsequently theorised by Georges Didi-Huberman (2002) under the term *The Surviving Image*,deserves to be embraced. This method of interpretation implies that images bear various temporalities. As Didi-Huberman claims to see the Jackson Pollock dripping gestures within a Fra Angelico fresco, various temporalities in the image generate collusions that may be anachronistic. The temporal movability of today's images of migration would thus be fostered by the circulation and recurrence of several motifs over time. In

relation to the present typology of images, their dissemination highlights a dialogical relationship between the two registers of images: those relating to the media and those relating to the contemporary artsphere. Drawing on this observation, representations originating from both the media and the artistic sphere will be perceived under the generic notion of *image* in the present article. Depicting the so-called migrant crisis in a massive number of works, characterised by a limited range of motifs, these media and contemporary art images would contribute to define the current Western collective imaginary of the migration in the Mediterranean.

Yet, with the notable exception of the Swedish and German governments which decided to accept significant numbers of refugees in 2015, mainstream images of the crisis (whether created by journalists or contemporary artists), neither succeeded in impacting national policies, nor, as shown by the success of populist parties, did they prevent the rise of hate speech. At a European level, a Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2014–2018, namely during the peak of the migration crisis,showed that the majority of respondents have a negative feeling toward immigrants from other EU member states and from non-EU member states (Dennison & Dražanová, 2018, p. 14).

Semiotic analysis of these recurring motifs can help to explain their impact on public opinion. Research in art history, in particular works conducted by Michel Pastoureau (2005, p. 114) regarding perceptions of colours, shed light on the images of migration in 2010. Associated with lifejackets, the colour orange, very present inthe images containing lifejackets and rubberboats, conveys the feeling of a subtle threat. It connects the viewer to the imminence of an emergency, as a signal meant to warn of some insecurity. The choice of framing is also crucial in the photographic compositions. Playing on this aspect, the UK Independence Party successfully used Jeffrey Mitchell's photograph of an endlessqueue of refugees walking along the Croatian-Slovenian border. This photograph, displayed on a truck by pro-Brexit politician Nigel Farage, emblematises a specific use of images in the service of a border shutdown agenda. As the art historian Antigoni Memou (2019, p. 8) observes, the line of refugees walking to the Croatian-Slovenian border is in stark contrast with the stillness of Farage when posing in front of the image. Besides, the anonymity of the homogenous crowd of exiles is opposed to the unique

silhouette of the politician. Whereas the viewer can individualise and identify him, the refugees remain an indistinct mass, in which the gaze cannot fix its attention on any of those who compose the scene.Furthermore, in Mitchell's photograph, the beginning and the end of the queues are kept out of frame, conveying the feeling of an endless line. Opponents to Farage's UKIP movement denounced Mitchell's photograph for its similarity to images in theNazi footage had been shown on BBC TV in 2005 (Stewart &Mason, 2016). Within hours of the unveiling of the poster, Twitter users pointed out the inadvertent similarity of Mitchell's photograph with the Nazi propaganda footage of migrants. If Godwin's law has been opposed in reaction to this comparison, as ittends to end the debate, the historical reference nevertheless remains telling regarding the significance and afterlives of motifs associating migration with invasion.

Visual historical imprints also seem to be at stake within press cartographies depicting refugee "crisis". Large arrows pointing to Europe in these infographics bring the impression of an invasion. In the blink of an eye, other cartographies and other geopolitical images conveying the notion of strategy are summoned. The latter are close to other cartographies related to military displacements, from Soviet to German operations during the Second World War, which convey the idea of a massive invasion.

The relationship between images, texts and speeches seems to contribute to a social construction leading to consider vision not as a purely optical process.In the images illustrating today's migrations, the exiles are tight against each other on doomed-to-wreck vessels, in seated positions, their gazes blank. Media images sold by press agencies display the vision of incomplete and unable humans. Coming from countries that are subjected to the West, the refugees are, in their turn, subjected in the pictures which represent them and subjected to a reality which denies their basic rights. More or less overtly referring to historical slave practices, the media images representing the migrants' crisis contribute to the feeling of a necessary "objectification" of migrants. Maintaining exiles outside of the scope of human rights, these images contribute to a sentimental humanism perception of Westerners toward their own selves.

As demonstrated by the American scholar Yogita Goyal (2017, p. 543), media coverage has repeatedly invoked slavery as a "grim historical parallel", which evokes moral outrage associated with Atlantic slavery

andshowsmigrants as the "living embodiment" of a Western transcended past. The idea seems to have impregnated the collective mind so well that, in 2015, the Word Press Photo award was granted to Massimo Sestini for an aerial photograph of the former *Mare Nostrum* operations picturing refugees pressed up against each other in a boat. This photograph evokes the 1788 campaign launched by a British abolitionist group which disseminated a diagram of the cramped conditions of the *Brookes* slave ship.

In 2016, the same photographic award was granted to Sergey Ponomarev for a photograph of refugees arriving on the shores of the Greek island of Lesbos. Ponomarev's photograph is reminiscent of Géricault's masterpiece, *The Raft of the Medusa*(1818–1819), whose particular aim was to denounce the persistence of slave practices. For Goyal (2014, p. 52), this historical reference "accrues hegemonic power" and prevents thinking about the specificity of the political situations which have led to these humanitarian situations.Metamorphic motifs evokingthe slave narrative contribute to the delineation ofa collective imaginary of migration and, in the same movement, act as a shield hiding the role played by the West in generating these very circumstances. For example, 70% of the arms exports made in the European Union are intended for regions outside the Union, among which the Middle East is the first beneficiary (Sabbati & Cîrlig, 2015).Looking at small arms exports, 83% are shipped to countries located outside the European Union,including Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. These countries act as transit countries for fuelling the Syrian civil war (Angelvoski, Patrucic & Marzouk, 2016; Fisk, 2018).

Above all, there petition of this narrow range of motifs conveys rather negative feelings toward migrants that appear to be linked to negative opinions to migration. As established by the OPAM research team (2017), statistics provided by the Eurobarometer at the height of the crisis show that negative opinions toward migration remain stable at a European level.

Following the Michigan model's analysis about attitudes to migration,which concludes the media has little influence on opinions, the narrow range of motifs present in both media and art works lead to the encapsulation of refugees in a visual vocabulary strictly falling under the humanitarian field. Far from conveying identification, and from attracting sympathy from opponents, they lock exiles into the narrow representation already assigned by the media. In view of the reciprocal influence of media

and art images, these art productions, far from proposing innovative forms of representation, lag behind the media, to which they are content to be echo chambers.

To synthesise the previous cited collection of art and media images, the collective imaginative vision regarding today's refugees in the Mediterranean would take the shape of an overcrowded rubberboat of black people who need to be rescued with recourse to lifejackets and/or survival blankets. The combination of these few motifs seems to delineate today's collective imaginary of migration. This imaginary appears to be that of coloniality. Born in the aftermath of movements of decolonialisation during the nineteenth century in South America, and in the 1960s in the African continent, coloniality designates the legacies of colonialism that perpetuate a relationship of domination and dependence from countries of the global North in the direction of countries of the global South. "You do not see coloniality, but there is no way you cannot sense it" claims Walter Mignolo (2018, p. 365). The traces left in the mind, by the mere repetition ofa few motifs that are picturing today's migrations in the Mediterranean, are evidence of the pervasiveness of coloniality.These traces also transpire in Jeffrey Mitchell's photograph of refugees walking through the Balkans into Hungary,in which an indistinct and apparently infinite mass of bodies heads toward the viewer.

Making refugees fully subjects within these images contributes to decolonialisation of theWestern gaze, Western representations and the collective imaginary attached to them. In this respect, a decolonial view on images "brings to the foreground the coexistence […] of stories, arguments, and doxa ignored by Eurocentered languages"(Mignolo, 2018, p. 365). This specific "partition of the sensitive" (Rancière, 2000, p. 12), at the core of universalist values, seems to be achievable through a few images which have influenced migratory policies. They deserve further examination.

2. Reaching moral foundations

In 2009, the film *Welcome*appears to have influenced French public debate on migration. Dealing with the story of a master swimmer in Calais helping a young Kurdish guy to cross the Channel, the movie became a

box-office success. It inspired the proposition of a law put forward by French deputy Daniel Goldberg, with the film being explicitly referenced in the proposal, whose aim was to withdraw the mention of "crime of solidarity"in the French legal corpus. How is it possible to explain this success and its following outcomes in French public life?

In an interview conducted in 2010, on the occasion of the DVD release of the film, the French director Philippe Lioret raises the notion of identification. He does not estimate that the success of the film lies in its social and political dimension. Based one hundred public screenings, and on his own writing from the characters, the director argues that the audience sees it as a story about people:

> The film touches the heart first and then moves to the brain. A political pamphlet would engage the mind without involving any feeling, any emotion, and have less impact. When you involve the emotions first, and then engage the mind, it has more impact. That's why the film was such a word of mouth success (Lioret, 2010).

Being aware that the emotions conveyed by images are built on perceptions of values would be key to exploring art as a form of resistance against dominant discourses. According to the philosopher Christine Tappolet (2000), emotions are vehicles which allowus to access and to build moral values. In relation to theoretical explanations of attitudes and political behaviour, the research team of the OPAM, the "first Observatory of its kind dedicated to producing comprehensive, pan-EU data and accounts of public attitudes to migration in Europe" by the European Commission (European Commission 2017), distinguishes ten determining human values. Among them, only four matter regarding attitudes to immigration. Among these four values, only one of them makes someone pro-immigration, and that is universalism: namely, the belief that everyone around the world should be treated the same and that we should break down barriers. The other three moral foundations concern motivations that can make someone anti-immigration and are related to self-preservation.They are tradition, conformity and security.

By triggering emotions through identification, the artistic experience would open up these moral foundations in the viewer. This process would be especially relevant when art evokes dramatically different lives and pathways.

In the absence of lived experiences, the attendance of certain works of art –one can think of literary works, but also of pictorial art and the seventh art –can have an impact on the way values are perceived. By identifying with the characters in a novel, the reader relives their emotions. As a result, the reader will have the opportunity to experience emotions that were previously unknown to him. In addition, he will learn in which context such emotions are supposed to be appropriate (Tappolet, 2000, p. 254. (personal translation from "En l'absence d'expériences vécues, la fréquentation de certaines œuvres d'art – on peut penser aux œuvres littéraires, mais aussi à l'art pictural et au septième art –peut avoir un impact sur la façon de percevoir les valeurs. […] En s'identifiant avec les personnages d'un roman, le lecteur revit les émotions de ces derniers. […] Le lecteur aura de ce fait l'occasion d'éprouver des émotions qui lui étaient jusqu'alors inconnues. De plus il apprendra dans quel contexte de telles émotions sont supposées être appropriées").

If it is true that, as argued by Tappolet, the emotions provoked by images allow awareness to values: which of their specific characteristics would be the determinant factors at stake?

Among the various images produced to illustrate migrations more broadly, two of them seem to have led to changes of direction in matter of opinion. Their common point is the presence of children. Paragons of innocence in regards toadults' actions, images including child victims appear as impactful factors to influence policies.

The first image led President Trump to step back on his decision to separate migrant families. The BBC (2018) reported that "he had been swayed by images of children who have been taken from parents while they are jailed and prosecuted for illegal border-crossing".Trump's policy had led to the separation of 2.342 children from 2.206 parents between 5 May and 9 June 2018. When signing the executive orders in which he backed down from his previous decision, the American President declared: "I didn't like the sight, or the feeling of families being separated"(Nakamura, Miroff & Dawsey, 2018).Among the images of children that may have swayed him, one had experienced particular success on social media. It pictures a little Honduran girl in tears wearing a pink jacket. Although it later appears that the toddler was not separate from her mother, as they were actually caught together by the American authorities (Mosbergen, 2018), it is worth being examined because it went viral and was chosen by *Time Magazine*as a poignant cover image for the issue disseminated 2 July 2018. The weekly cropped the toddler's silhouette and pasted it in front of a photograph of

President Trump, under the title "Welcome to America". In the meantime,, the NGO RAICES, which provides education and legal aid for immigrants in Texas, raised more money than any other single donation campaign in its Facebook history (Jacobs, 2018). Perhaps, as a result of its wide dissemination, the photograph of the little girl, in particular when associated with President Trump's silhouette on the magazine's cover, contributedto the shift in his policy.

The second image that influenced policies is the one that led Chancellor Merkel to ease German migratory regulations. The image of Aylan Kurdi was published on 2September 2015 at 8:42 am by the Turkish news agency DHA (Dogan Haber Ajansi). On 14 September, the photograph had been shared 2.843.274 times between various social media, blogs, news, and forums(Thelwall, 2015, p. 32) and had been viewed by more than 20 million people across the world in the space of 12 hours (D'Orazo, 2015, p. 16). Above all, it became viral in the circumstances because the young boy materialised both the consequences of the Syrian civil war, and the incapacity of the Western powers to deal with the issue of hosting refugees.During the night between 4 September and 5 September, Chancellor Merkel decided to open the German borders to migrants.Besides, in the aftermath of the image, people helped NGOs massively by giving donations (Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson & Gregory, 2017, p. 642).

Why, while the Syrian civil war had been costing the lives ofso many victims for four years, did the photograph of one of them, of the young Aylan, suddenly move the whole world? What did people recognise in this photograph?

Considering the repetition of motifs as a lever of circulation and the inclusion of images in the common imaginary, the photograph of the young Aylan Kurdi would implicitly refer to the Pietà, a Christian theme representing the Virgin Mary, as she cries with her child held in her arms. For Jim Aulich, "the imagery carries a huge potential charge as it connects to a heritage in western life and culture" (Aulich, 2015, p. 50)."As we as viewers are 'primed,' trained to perceive aestheticized corpses through the Christian tradition, Aylan's body is reworked into that of a sleeping angel",adds cultural theorist Olga Goriunova (2015, pp.7–8).As a correlation is drawn between the dissemination of the image and the ensuing global commitment worldwide into helping Syrian refugees

(Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson & Gregory, 2017), or as stated by media scholar Anne Burns, between "viewing and doing" (2015, p. 39), the evocative power of this iconic motif, in particular its religious connotation, suggestive of the spirit of charity(Aulich, 2015, p. 51), caused people to act in a moral way toward migrants.

Besides, the photographs of Aylan Kurdi were widely disseminated, and through this movement, were encountered by many diverse spectators. Following Dr Simon Faulkner (2015, p. 54), this very movement contributed significantly to the affective force of these images. The affective force trigged by the Pietàmotif belongs to a visual Christian tradition of death aestheticisation aiming to trigger a moral duty of charity. This value relates to the universalism that is shown as a lever to positive attitudes to migration in the "Funnel of Causality". As compassion fades when seeing images staging more than two persons, behavioural scientists consider that the lone toddler with his hidden face contributed to a process of identification among viewers (Slovic, Västfjäll, Erlandsson & Gregory, 2017, p. 642) and thus contributed to its dissemination worldwide. Accordingly,the Oxford Dictionary defines empathy as "the ability to understand and share the feelings of another" and universalism as the "loyalty to and concern for others without regard to national or other allegiances", and therefore the capacity to identify oneself in a picture would be essential in bringing about positive attitudes to migration.

This raises the question of how the specific register of images can serve as an explanation for the way in which they may counter dominant discourses. In the case of the cover of *Time Magazine,* the form is that of an obvious collage which *recreates* a political situation: that of the consequences of Trump's policies on children. Because of the overtly false juxtaposition that it sets, the cover brings into the same light two totally opposed individuals. Jacques Rancière (2012) notices that with the entrance into the realm of photography, the "age of History" begins. "History is the time when those who do not have the right to occupy the same place canoccupy the same image"(personal translation from "*L'histoire est le temps où ceux qui n'ont pas le droit d'occuper la même place peuvent occuper la même image*", Rancière, 2012,p. 19). For the philosopher, the "age of History" does not deal with equal conditions with regard to the camera shutter, but to a certain way of "sharing the light" that goes along with the notion of justice.

Following this point, the little Honduran girl would hold the American President accountable for her tears. In the age of History, an image can yield universalism. Yet this value, seen as a lever to creating positive attitudes to migration according to the "Funnel of Causality", must be one that allows a coexistence between the main subjectsof the images, e.g. in the matter of migration, that of the exiles and the viewer. The cover of *Time Magazine* openly constructs this face-to-face encounter. Regarding the film *Welcome*, the coexistence is fostered by the process of identification with the master swimmer. Western viewers could see themselves in the character all the more, so that the screenplay arranges two parallel love stories: one between the master swimmer and his former wife and one between the Kurdish boy and his girlfriend.

To resist dominant representations of migration, coexistence can be achieved by the catharsis of emotions, and/or by a certain setting in the image. In both cases, identification is what provides the sense of agency: to the exiles as human beings, and to viewers, enabled, thanks to the image setting, to access the values that are open to a common sensitive condition. In this light, images that seek to foster pity, for example, by individualising one specific exile who cries, do not bring identification. Their emotional power appears to be ineffective on people who cherish the values of tradition, security and conformity, which are shown in the "Funnel of Causality" as determining negative opinions to migration. When a shouting father is seen holding his crying baby and crossing a European barbed wired fence, the viewer who embraces these values does not associate his own life with that of the refugees. Conversely, this viewer, as s/he seeks tradition, security and conformity, would find himself in total contrast with the despair of the refugee pictured. As a result, miserable images of refugees might, in the best case, strengthenthese anti-immigration values.

To avoid this response, disseminating images which convey, on the contrary, a "positive image" of the refugees issimilarly inefficient with people that hold these values. As shown by Henrietta Lidchi (2015, p. 291),when discussing the charity campaigns of developing NGOs, "positive images are not, in any sense, closer to the "truth". They were, and are, deliberate, highly motivated answers to the truth claims and immediacy of negative images". The scholar bases her demonstration on the analysis of a

photographic image from the 1990 campaign of the British NGO Christian Aid. The latter represents a cycling Bengali Woman who has, hanging on her bike, a bag picturing the RedCross. The accompanying text mentions that the woman, whose name is given as Elizabeth, cycles every morning to villages to provide a health service and sanitation advice. Here, individuality and activity are sought in opposition to the homogenous masses and passivity portrayed in negative images. Staging an empowered woman, whose name is indicated, this image is created as a response to representations that reify those to whom aid is addressed. Development NGOs using "positive" representations of refugees seek something better and truer than images that reify migrants. Yet, followingJohn Berger, empowering visions of refugees still fail to influence security discourses and migratory policies:

> The well-fed are incapable of understanding the choices of the under-fed. The world has to be dismantled and re-assembled in order to be able to grasp, however clumsily, the experience of another. To talk of entering the other's subjectivity is misleading. The subjectivity of another does not simply constitute a different interior attitude to the same exterior facts. The constellation of facts, of which he is the centre, is different(Berger, 1975, pp. 74–75)

From this stance, what is crucial would be the emancipation of the viewers themselves.

The subliminal force of the motifs, which act to prevent the viewer from experiencing both the exiles' shared humanity and the role played by the West in generating these migrations,serves as a determining factor to accessing "the experience of the other". For now, the repetition of the narrow range of motifs (rubber boats, lifejackets, lines of people, survival blankets), leads to a situation where both sets of looks are captive: on the one hand those of the exiles, the "collateral victims" of globalisation's forces (Cava, Parito & Pira, 2018, p. 57), are subjected to practices of enslavement, and on the other hand, in a more surreptitious way, so are the Westerners. The Western gaze and attention appears to be subjected to more imperceptible and painless predation processes. To this end, "Tobii Pro Glasses" have, for example, been designed to determine motifs which are generating buying decisions. Western companies using these high-technology glasses analyse the successive points of focus of the look on

consumer products to understand what particular colour, inscription or motif could have attracted their customers' attention, and thus generate the act of purchase(Hermann, 2012). With the help of neuroscience, these companies therefore assume that analysing the gaze is analysing the brain. The repeated confrontation with a brand (with its logo, the imagery associated with it), contributes to the installation of a "reward circuit" in the brain. From then onwards, the sight of the brand instantly solicits a neurotransmitter, dopamine, which enhances actions considered beneficial, by providing pleasure by activating a sort of "reward system" in the brain (Schaefer & Rotte, 2007). On the other side of the border the exiles, subject to smugglers and human trafficking (IOM, 2016), also seek to attract these looks. Yet the mechanism of attraction of the Western gaze occurs in a closed circuit: when the consumer's eyes encounter the brand motif, this image immediately causes a molecule of pleasure, reinforcing the positive opinion that he seeks to feed. Thus, the meeting of the gaze does not take place in the Western context. Instead, far from encouraging coexistence, the repetitive motifs of mainstream images keep the exiles themselves out of the Western gaze;meanwhile, the Western consumer is struggling with other merchant circuits affecting their own bodies.

The collective imaginary of today's migration is composed of a narrow range of repeated motifs. Simultaneously,in both their spatial spread, over various supports, and temporal distribution, the motifs' circulation binds together art and media images. Used as a conceptual tool for deciphering the factors at stake in the matter of opinion toward migration, the"Funnel of Causality" appears to be updated by Christine Tappolet, whose research demonstrates that emotions allow access to values. As, on the one hand, emotions can be triggered by identification and setting into images, and, on the other hand, values are determining factors of political opinions, dissemination of media and art images could thus be key in attitudes toward migrations. Yet, refugees are subjected in the mainstream art and media images dealing with the topic. The limited range of motifs to which they are associated convey a mixed feeling of anxiety and passivity, which are inherited from a broader implicit analogy between contemporary refugees and slavery, as pointed out by Goyal (2017, p. 543):

When some seven hundred people traveling from Libya to Lampedusa drowned in

April 2015, and in the same month at least five boats sank in the Mediterranean and twelve hundred people lost their lives on the way to Europe, the visual imagery of black bodies lost at sea was a stark reminder of the atrocity named by *Zong* [Goyal refers to the 1781 disappearance at sea of 133 slaves, thrown overboard by their owner so that he could claim them as insurance losses. At the time, the tragedy contributed to draw attention to the anti-slavery discourse].In the words of the photographer Aris Messinis, what he witnessed on the Mediterranean made him think that the analogy to slave ships sailing the Atlantic "was exactly right—except that it's not hundreds of years ago."

The cases of the three varied images discussed here,of the film*Welcome*, the press photo by Nilüfer Demir, and the *TimeMagazine* cover, show that fostering the coexistence of the viewer and the exiles represented is key to counteracting these discourses. Allowing coexistence in the image, whether by means of an identification process or through the use of composition, is key to initiate a process of decolonisation of the gaze.

At the time I am writing these lines, the NGO SOS Méditerranée had to give up its action due to the withdrawal of both its flags by Gibraltar and Panama and an indictment opened by the Prosecutor General's Office of Sicily – which had already prosecuted other humanitarian vessels in the past – into alleged anomalies in the treatment of waste on board. To carry on its mission, SOS Méditerranée disseminated a video depicting the following scene. A man and a woman meet on a beach. They do not have the same view of the Mediterranean: for her it represents a swimming pleasure, for the man it signifies a threat. "When I look at it, I don't see the sea, no. It's a huge wall ready to crush me", he tells her. Both of them share the same desire to live; the desire that pushes entire families to risk their lives at sea every day. The narrative puts forward the common human conditions that they share, namely the coexistence of the stories called for by Mignolo for decolonialising the collective sensing of marginalised populations.

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Ai Weiwei and JR.
Political Artists and Activist Artists and the Plight of Refugees

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Abstract

The article will address Ai Weiwei's and JR's political engagement with the refugee crisis, the former as a political artist and the latter as an activist artist. Ai, in a series of conceptual installations and the feature film *Human Flow*, as did JR at Tecate on the Mexican-US border, have sought to shed light on the securitization of migration and the hollowness of neoliberalism's human rights discourse. More generally, the article will interrogate the roles of the socially concerned political artist and the socially involved activist artist. An underlying question deals with the power of representation inevitably wielded by artists. While the 'dilemma of representation' cannot be resolved, the article explores the different approaches to this dilemma employed by Ai and JR to mitigate the dilemma.

Keywords: Activist Artist, Dilemma of Representation, Movement Artist Scholars, Political Artist, Refugee Crisis.

Introduction

For Europeans the north-eastern rim of the MediterraneanSea has been the focal site of the Syrian tragedy and refugee crisis.Fleeing the war in Syria Alan Kurdi's family set off from the Turkish coast for the Greek island of Kos in an inflatable boat. Within minutes of pushing off, a wave capsized the vessel, and the mother and both sons drowned. Photographer Nilüfer Demir of the Dogan News Agency found three-years-old Alan's lifeless body on a Turkish beach and the resulting image became the defining photograph of the on-going war and refugee crisis. The photographgalvanized public opinion across the globe in support of refugees, at least for a time (Sohlberg, Esaiasson & Martinsson, 2018). Similarly, non-verbal (and verbal) images and interactionscan evoke

emotions of compassion and the humanitarian will to help and protect.The work of artists can educe empathetic insights into the plight of refugees.

Artists are involving themselves in different ways with what Passy (2001) calls the "altruistic solidarity movement" and the plight of refugees producing images and aesthetic interactions that are intended to awaken public support. The article addresses Ai Weiwei's and JR's political engagement with the refugee crisis and border life. More generally, the paper will interrogate the roles of the socially concerned political artist and the socially involved activist artist for political contention. Have they resolved the dilemma of representation? Do they as artist scholars bring their superior skills of representation to work *with* a movement, and/or an aggrieved community, or do they work solely *for*?

1. The roles of movement scholars and the dilemma of representation

In this paper I argue that Ai Weiwei and JR strategically employ their celebrity status as darlings of the Western neoliberal art world to undermine the securitization and human rights discourses from the inside. In different ways Ai and JR represent the experiences and grievances of refugees and 'paperless' migrants—those who lack the "right to have rights" (Peterson, 2017)—to the outside world. Are they working within solidarity movements or outside? How have Ai and JR resolved the power of representation dilemma?

A wide body of social movement literature highlights the cultural spaces opened for movement intellectuals, what I call movement scholars along the lines of Dieter Henrich's (1985) notion of the artist scholar, that is, authors, musicians and artists. In short, according to these theorists, social movements provide the cultural context for critical scholars. Social movements in general are breeding grounds for new forms of artistic, musical, and literary experimentation (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Kaplan, 1992). With the emergence of alternative cultural spaces, movement scholars, whether they are writers, musicians or artists, find new audiences of readers, listeners and viewers for which to direct their cultural and political challenges. The role of movement scholars is heatedly debated among activists and social movement researchers alike. One group of

theorists draw attention to the role scholars play for expressing the collective identity of social movements as "truth-bearers" for the movement (e.g. Eyerman, 2002; Eyerman and Jamison, 1998; Eyerman and Jamison, 1992; Frascina, 1999; Kaplan, 1992;). For these theorists, the work and lives of movement scholars provide the key for understanding the collective identity of the movement.

(Peterson,2012) took a different analytical strategy and used the life and work of one movement scholar artist, Anselm Kiefer, who was neither ascribed the role of movement truth-bearer nor bore the collective truth-claims of the German Student movement and New Left. Movement scholars are often understood as both embodying the movement and leading the movement. And while I agree that some movement scholars can be seen as embodying the movement (as long as they accept the role of truth-bearer), they more seldom lead the movement. It is not uncommon, I have argued, that movement scholars are at odds with the wider movement, expressing their challenges or alternative truth-claims at the outermost fringes of its context. Movement scholars not only challenge the wider society with their truth-claims, they challenge the movement itself, extending the cognitive boundaries for what can be acknowledged at a given moment in the movement's history (Peterson, 1994). In short, movement scholars are often even uncomfortable for their social movement publics. Anselm Kiefer became a thorn in the side of the German Student Movements with his obstinate denial of moral innocence for German responsibility for the atrocities committed during World War II (Peterson, 2012).

However, none of the social movement theorists mentioned above have directly addressed the question of power within movements, what Walter Nicholls and Justus Uitermark call the "Power of Representation dilemma" (2015, p. 189).

> Intellectuals can be a force *for* the movement but may also exercise power *over* others within the movement. The resulting Power of Representation dilemma – intellectuals have superior skills of representation but if they use them *for* the movement, they marginalize others *within* the movement – has been a topic of heated debate within many movements (emphasis in original).

Movement intellectuals are central players in all social movements, but they undeniably assume a position of power in the movement on the basis

of their superior skills and knowledge in producing discourses. But there are risks involved in the power of representation, as Nicholls and Uitermark point out. For example, artist scholars can repress images that do not 'fit' their representations, thereby marginalizing some groups. The risk is probably higher when the people they represent have scarce cultural and symbolic resources, which is the case of refugees, who, for the most part, do not represent themselves and their grievances but are represented by altruistic 'others' — movements and individuals.

A second group of movement theorists, trying to resolve the power of representation dilemma, outline a new role for movement intellectuals using the notion of "specific intellectuals", neither leading nor speaking for the movement.Specific intellectuals lend their concrete expertise in different areas (e.g. political, planning, law, psychiatry) to struggles, "speaking with the people in those struggles rather than speaking for them" (Nicholls and Uitermark, 2015, p. 190; also Kurzman and Owens, 2002). So rather than bearing the truth claims of the movement, specific intellectuals use their political, cultural and technical resources to facilitate marginalised groups to represent their own interests in public. However, this is often an idealised vision of the role of movement intellectuals. Highly marginalised groups, for example refugees and failed asylum seekers, most often lack the political and cultural resources to effectively represent themselves and their grievances in the public sphere. As Nicholls and Uitermark (2015, pp. 194-95) call attention to, then movement intellectuals are indeed key players in movement struggles in that they have the resources and knowledge which permits the experiences of marginalised groups to get into the "information system". Specific intellectuals "become key players as representational brokers mediating relations between marginalized groups and the outside world" (p. 201), thereby maintaining the representational gap between the people involved in the struggle—the aggrieved—and movement scholars. In these cases movement scholars inevitably exercise power in movement struggles.

2. Political artists and activist artists

Art critic Lucy R. Lippard (1984, p. 342) succinctly defines political art as

an art that reaches out as well as in. To varying degrees it takes place simultaneously in the mainstream and outside of accepted art contexts. … It often incorporates many different media in a long-term project. … As an art of contact, it is often hybrid, the product of different cultures communicating … [activist art] provides alternative images, metaphors, and information formed with humor, irony, outrage, and compassion, in order to make heard and sagen those voices and faces hitherto invisible and powerless.

Lippard distinguishes between "political artists" and "activist artists". The work of political artists is socially concerned commentary and/or analysis. The work of activist artists is socially involved within its contexts, with its audience. She emphasises that this distinction is not a value judgement on her part. Political artists and activist artists are often the same people. The subjects, and sometimes contexts, of political artists reflect social issues, most often in the form of ironic criticism. Activist artists work within the community in order to stimulate the active participation of their audience and mobilise for social change.

Ai Weiwei, in a series of conceptual installations and the feature film *Human Flow*, as did JR at Tecate on the Mexican-US border, sought to shed light on the securitization of migration and the hollowness of neoliberalism's human rights discourse. Both artists are not solely producers of discrete objects, but are collaborators and producers of *situations*, or in the words of British artist Peter Dunn,they are "context providers rather than content providers (cited in Kester, 2005, p. 76). They facilitate dialogues between different communities around the refugee crisis.Both artists are politically involved with the refugee crisis, but in different ways—JR more from within movements, Ai more from without. I argue that Ai is the quintessential political artist, JR the quintessential activist artist. In the following pages I will look more closely at the roles these artists play for altruistic solidarity movements and their different approaches to the "power of representation dilemma".

3. JR activist artist

JR, the French street artist who only goes by his initials, is a "self-proclaimed 'artivist' somewhere between artist and activist—and a

'photograffeur'—somewhere between a photographer and a graffiti artist" (Ferdman, 2012, p. 12). He has built his reputation pasting over-sized portraits of individuals in cities and towns across the world. According to Ferdman (2012, p. 13), his exhibits perform alternative narratives of urban spaces by giving a voice, "through the medium of photography, to actors/inhabitants who are often otherwise ignored in mainstream media, and who often live in poverty". JR's work, which he calls "participatory art", involves the communities — the audiences — he is engaging with in a lengthy process in which community members are involved in both the aesthetic decision making and the execution of the action. JR's work is ephemeral; if authorities do not tear it down, it is washed away by weather. Only the documentation of the action process remains as proof that the work existed, and it is the documentation, which gets inside the gallery.

JR has addressed a number of issues, but in this paper I will focus his "border work" (Peterson, 2017). In 2007 JR and his collaborator Marco, aided by community volunteers, staged what they claim was the largest illegal photography exhibition ever. They covered the entire surface of the Israeli West Bank Barrier, on both sides, with monumental close-up photographs of paired Israelis and Palestinians who held the same jobs, making a similar expression for the camera—teachers, farmers, students, taxi drivers, and so on, laughing and grimacing. The large-format photographs were posted side-by-side, face-to-face, so that onlookers couldn't tell who belonged on which side of the fence. Their intention was to make visible the similarities between Israelis and Palestinians — "twin sisters and brothers"—and the absurdity of the conflict and the border wall[1].

Ten years later in 2017 JR again confronted the absurdity of borders walls, this time at the Mexican-US border at Tecate. In Tecate, JR, his team, and on-site volunteers, constructed a huge scaffolding and posted a monumental 20 metre high photograph of the year-old toddler Kikito innocently peering over the border fence between Mexico and the US. A month later on 8 October 2017, a huge dining table was constructed on both sides of the border wall, with the eye of a "Dreamer" on both sides. JR hosted a one-day gigantic picnic which gathered Kikito, his family and hundreds of guests from the US and Mexico to share the same meal.

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[1] http://www.jr-art.net/projects/face-2-face, retrieved 18.04.2018;

"People gathered around the eyes of a Dreamer, eating the same food, sharing the same water, enjoying the same music (half of the band on each side). The wall was forgotten for a few moments…"[2]. The event of course could have been shut down, but it was not. One of his co-artists posted a video of herself bringing tea to a US Federal Agent on one side and JR on the other side. Standing on each side of the lathes of the wall, JR asks the border agent, "will you share tea with me now?" Whereupon the agent smiles as they clink their cups of tea with a salud from JR (Ibid.). The installation and performance offered a moment of humanity amidst the infected debate on Trump's rejection of DACA a month earlier (but offering a six-month window to find an alternative solution) and the construction of a border wall[3]. And like the *face2face* exhibit, *JR in Tecate* received massive media attention in, among other venues, *CNN*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times.*

In 2011 JR was awarded the prestigious TED Prize and the opportunity to "change the world"[4]. JR received $1,000,000 and access to TED's vast resources and professional networks to start his Inside Out Project— "a global art project with local ramifications, responding to local problems, mounted by local people. The work belongs to the people who created it and to those who saw it" (Ferdman, 2012, p. 22). The Inside Out Project that he initiated in 2011 has a relatively simple conception. Anyone can contact the Inside Out website with their photo portraits and a statement of their cause. If approved the action group is sent large-format copies of their photos (costing a suggested $20 donation per photo) and their action group is then included on the website where the action process is photo-documented, the portraits are presented and archived, thereby spreading their messages beyond the communities that are engaged in the action.

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[2] http://www.jr-art.net/news/gigantic-picnic-at-the-US-Mexican-border, retrieved 18.04.2018; Young undocumented immigrants were organised in what was called the "Dreamers Movement".

[3] The Obama administration passed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) in 2012 and an executive order in 2014, which provided approximately four to five million young undocumented immigrants with temporary residency.

[4] TED is a non-profit organisation that promotes innovative ideas in such areas as technology, education and design. Each year the TED Prize is awarded to an individual to develop an initiative that can spark social change.

There are however strict guidelines for prospective participants; for example, only one subject in the photograph, no animals, objects or people in disguises. Portraits must be framed closely around the subjects face. The actions cannot involve commercial actors, be used for branding, nor actions, which do not promote a progressive cause. While the actions, carried out across the globe, vary, they share "the visual trope of striking, black-and-white portrait posters of diverse individuals that are grouped together in a public space" (Orpana, 2014, p. 68). At the time of writing the project has included 1.318 group actions with 260.000 portraits of participants in 129 countries worldwide[5].

Many of the Inside Out action groups have addressed community causes along borders, for example, "Inside Out Juarez", as well as in support of refugees, for example, "Justice for Afghan Refugees in Belgium", support for Syrian refugees in Canada, "We Are People Too", and for Syrian refugees in Turkey, "The Forgotten Refugees of Balaban"[6]. An Inside Out project in Palermo and Sicily sought to highlight the energy of departures and flows on the island with 4.000 portraits in a square. "They are the memory that intertwines past and future in a continuous exchange that makes possible a cultural rebirth based on acceptance and integration. Thousands of faces in one square that will show our desire to remain truly human"[7]. With Inside Out JR provides the resources for those working in support of refugees, which would appear that he is taking on the role of specific intellectual in the solidarity movement, and to a certain degree this is true. He does provide the technical resources and aesthetic trope to altruistic movement activists who are speaking for refugees, but they are most often not speaking with the refugees they in turn represent.

In 2017 the Emerson Collective launched a nationwide participatory art initiative, "Inside Out/Dreamers"[8].According to their press statement, "Inside Out/Dreamers travel the country taking individual portraits that give visual expression to the overwhelming support for Dreamers". They organize community events and pop-up press conferences with Dreamers,

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[5] http://www.inside-outproject.net/en, retrieved 09.07.2018;

[6] http.//insideoutjuarez.tumblr.com, retrieved 03.07.2018;

[7] http.//insideoutproject.net/en/group-actions/, retrieved 17.11.2018;

[8] The Emerson Collective centres its work on education, immigration reform, the environment and other social justice initiatives.

activists, elected officials and local leaders to underscore that "with the repeal of DACA in September 2017, hundreds of thousands will begin to lose their status early next year unless Congress acts now to pass The Dream Act"[9].

On the Inside Out Dreamers website we find the following statement:

We are here. We are here with an open mind and heart, not an open hand. We are here to give. To add value.To be inspired.To inspire. We are here to start a small business, write a song, find a cure, open a law firm, become a teacher, discover a new star, bring home a gold medal, develop new technologies, and so much more — if you give us that chance. We are the same as every immigrant who has come before us. Filled with dreams. Determined to contribute. See our potential. We are all here. AND OUR STORY IS AN AMERICAN STORY[10].

The Emerson Collective's discursive strategy locks into what Nicholls and Fiorito (2015) have called the "bounded dreamers". The strategy stressed the deservingness of this group of immigrants; these minors were "the best and brightest" and fully American in all but their social security numbers and who stood to make important economic contributions to the country. But this representation of the Dreamers neglects the fact that not all Dreamers are straight-A students. Many, living in severe poverty, have had a rocky road in the school system. Pragmatically the Emerson Collective is trying to deflect the dominant discourse in Trump's US by emphasising the deservingness of a specific group of immigrants, thereby closing the door for other groups — the power of representation dilemma.

The new social turn, or more accurately labelled "social re-turn" (Bishop, 2012), in political art is situated within the many faces of neoliberalism, which is not only economic policies that are widening the gap between the rich and poor, but also a "powerful public pedagogy and cultural politics" (Giroux, 2005, p. 15). With the state rolling back, civil society is increasingly called upon to create innovative ways to revitalize local communities and fill the gap of a retreating welfare state. As a public pedagogy   and   cultural   politics   promoting   creativity,   flexibility,

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[9]   https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/emerson-collective-launches-inside-outdreamers-project-to-underscore-urgency-of-passing-the-dream-act-300543154.html, retrieved 06-05-2018;

[10] http.//www.insideoutproject/dreamers/, retrieved 06-05-2018;

individualism, and entrepreneurialism the social turn in political art is embedded in these dominant neoliberal discourses (also Kester, 1995 and 2005). And as Bishop (2012) points out, the new re-turn to socially engaged participatory art projects emerged, at least in Europe, with the dismantling of the welfare state as a new form of community "soft engineering". JR's work can be seen in this context. His work has found considerable institutional support, despite his claims that most of his actions have been carried out illegally. And many of his photographic interactions have appeared to re-vitalise a sense of community, in, for example, Rio's favelas, Paris' banlieues, and Sicily. As an activist artist, using close-up facial portraits as his medium, JR is forced to engage with a given community in a dialogue to obtain their trust and involvement working with movements.

While JR's work reflects what Claire Bishop (2005) calls"the social turn" in contemporary art practices, he has repeatedly separated his politics from his art, "clearly demarcating the 'art' as the autonomous space where things can happen" (Ferdman, 2012, p. 15; also Orpana, 2014). In his acceptance speech of the TED Prize on the topic "Can art change the world", JR discussed the role of art for social change. He argues that it is possible for art to change our *perceptions* of the world by starting conversations and addressing stereotypes through creative strategies that make people, and their causes, more visible. He stated:

> In some cases art can change the world. I mean, art is not supposed to change the world, the practical things. But it can change perceptions. It can change the way we see the world. Actually, the fact that art cannot change things, makes it a neutral place for exchanges and discussion[11].

It is within this what he calls neutral space, that JR produces highly community-involved installations — challenging people to see the world in new ways. Ai Weiwei, in contrast, does not see art as an autonomous, neutral space disconnected from politics. According to Ai, "all creative activism, if it works well, is a work of art. The same way that every good

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[11] http://www.ted.com/talks/jr_s_ted_prize_ wish_use_art_to_turn_the_world_inside_ out, retrieved 18-04-2018;

work of art, if it concerns itself with reality and politics, is a form of activism"[12].

4. Ai Weiwei—political artist

According to Christian Solace (2014, p. 396), "Ai Weiwei's artistic material is the flesh of politics: the decrees of China's Communist Party. … His defining artistic practice is to metabolize social contradictions and harsh realities". His art has called attention to government cover-ups and corruption. Most controversially in connection with the Sichuan schools corruption scandal, when shoddily built schools collapsed in the 2008 earthquake. Ai initiated a "Citizens Investigation" to uncover the names of the children who had perished, which the government had refused to release. 5.219 names were collected and posted on his blog, which the government promptly shut down in 2009. Ai created the work "Remembering". He covered the whole of the Haus der Kunst's façade in Munich with 9.000 children's backpacks, spelling out in Chinese a message that a bereaved mother had told him.Ai claims that it was this artwork, which made him the most dangerous man in China[13]. He was arrested in 2011 and held without charges for eighty-one days. In 2015 he was allowed to leave China and is now working in Berlin. Just as Ai took the empty gestures of the Chinese Communist Party as points of intervention when living in China, he, now living in Germany, takes on the empty gestures of neoliberalism's human rights discourse with his political-aesthetic interventions.

Ai Weiwei has produced installations calling attention to the refugee crisis across Europe; the following is just a sample. For "Law of the Journey" at the National Gallery in Prague, Ai installed a seventy-meter long inflatable boat with 258 oversized faceless refugee figures. Ai draped thousands of bright orange life jackets discarded by refugees on Lesbos

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[12]   https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/sep/17/ai-weiwei-without-the-prison-the-beatings-what-would-i-be, retrieved 19-04-2018;

[13]   https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/feb/15/ai-weiwei-remembering-sichuan-earthquake, retrieved 13-07-2018;

around the classical columns of the Berlin's Konzerthaus. Athens' NJ Goulandris museum of Cycladic art displays on one wall thousands of tiny photos of Lesbos taken with his smartphone; a marble sculpture of two rubber inner tubes from truck tyres used by refugees to float ashore. An installation places spent tear gas canisters from a riot at the Idomeni refugee camp in northern Greece next to ancient glass grief vases that held human teardrops. He has wrapped the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence with twenty-two orange lifeboats[14].

He withdrew his exhibition at Faurschou Foundation in Copenhagen, in protest of a new law passed by the Danish parliament that allows authorities to seize asylum seekers' valuables and to delay family reunions. However, he did not boycott Australia's offshore detention policy by withdrawing his exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in Australia; despite the Australian high court ruling that week that "the government had the right to detain people offshore, leaving the way clear for it to return 267 asylum seekers, including 39 children and 33 babies, to conditions in Nauru that the UNHCR has deemed inhumane"[15]. He donated to the museum his major installation there that gives homage to Australian activists involved in the refugee human rights movement. As *Guardian* art critic Toby Fehily points out, Ai is not consistent in his use of boycotts as a political tool, an example of the power of representation dilemma. Ai gave his support for Australian activists, but not for Danish solidarity activists— the power of representation dilemma.

In one of his most controversial works Ai posed lying face down on a beach in Greece, recreating the now-iconic 2015 photograph of drowned Syrian refugee infant Alan Kurdi for the magazine *India Today* and an accompanying exhibition at the Indian Art Fair. Fehily delivered a scathing salvo in *The Guardian*:

> If he's identifying with Kurdi, he shouldn't – there are no useful comparisons to be drawn between a refugee child dead at the age of three and a highly successful living artist.It is, however, an accomplished piece of viral imagery – a very specific kind of viral imagery, too; the kind that piggybacks on another viral image with slight variation and

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[14] www.aiweiwei.com, retrieved 11.06.2018;

[15] https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/06/there-are-better-ways-for-ai-weiwei-to-take-a-political-stand-than-posing-as-a-drowned-infant, retrieved 11.07.2018;

without adding anything. It is a meme. And like all memes, it got attention. But just because it gets attention doesn't mean it's good art, and it certainly doesn't mean it's good political art. The problem with the refugee crisis isn't a lack of attention; the problem is we are aware of their plight, but are not doing enough to help[16].

Ai explained the photograph as a spontaneous idea reached between himself, the photographer and the journalist as they walked along the beach.

I [wanted] to be in the same condition – to touch my face on the sand, to hear the ocean – which that little boy had no privilege to do that. And that little boy Alan is not a single person: it's thousands of refugee kids [who] lost their lives…[17].

Ai's caption for the photograph at the India Art Fair reads, "Artists are free to make art for art's sake, and I respect that, I do not criticize them. … I am not born an artist. I am born a human. I care about human conditions rather than the opinions. I have no choice". Nevertheless the question is raised: how do you respectfully represent the situation refugees are facing?

Ai Weiwei's film *Human Flow* is an epic documentary about the world's response to the refugee crisis. It looks at mass movement from Syria, Iraq and parts of Africa to Europe; of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh; from Palestine to Jordan, at the Texas-Mexico border. In one shot, taken by a drone over a camp in Iraq, the beige tents appear like a vast abstract canvas. Then the camera is slowly lowered to show the viewers all the people who live there. Ai puts faces to statistics and through a series of intimate interactions between Ai and refugees tells individual stories. We see Ai handing out hot tea on the beaches at Lesbos, comforting a woman inside a makeshift studio and cooking kebabs in a dusty refugee camp.

Ai explains that he always tries to find a language, a medium that can bring the voices of those who have no voice to the people who will not hear.

I always have to try to find a language to build up this kind of communication between the people who [are] desperate, have no chance to have their voice to be heard, and the

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16   https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/06/there-are-better-ways-for-ai-weiwei-to-take-a-political-stand-than-posing-as-a-drowned-infant, retrieved 11.07.2018;

17   https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/ai-weiwei-invu-1.4309871,   retrieved 11.07.2018;

people who [are] privileged and almost think those incidents have nothing to do with our real life and turn their faces away. So as an artist, I always have to make this kind of argument and try to find a language to present my ideas'[18].

Having been exiled as a child with his family during the Cultural Revolution, Ai seeks a common ground with his subjects. "I am a refugee, every bit," he says. "Those people are me. That's my identity"[19]. Ai intends to represent the face of refugees, but is it possible? Can the very real differences that exist between artists and a given community, in our case refugees, be transcended by well-meaning rhetoric and acts of aesthetic 'empowerment'?In one film sequence, he humorously swaps passports with Mahmoud, a Syrian refugee. Mahmoud is happy to do so and adds they should probably swap houses as well: a nice Berlin studio in return for a hot, crowded tent. Ai laughs, but won't take him up on the offer. "It's a moment that exposes the gulf between them" (Ibid). In an interview with Xan Brooks Ai remembers the sequence.

Yeah, that was the worst feeling. That really got me. Because [if] you're passionate, you think you mean what you say. You tell these people that you're the same as them. But you are lying because you are not the same. Your situation is different; you must leave them. And that's going to haunt me for the rest of my life (Ibid.).

Ai is painfully aware that he cannot fully represent the people who he identifies with; their situations are vastly different. A highly acclaimed artist with free mobility (at least in the west) does not share the same situation as a refugee trapped in a crowded dusty camp. He cannot resolve the dilemma of representation by denying difference. Ai is speaking *for* refugees from an elevated position of power. His voice is heard, but it is not the voice of refugees.

Brooks posed a question Ai was anticipating:

All day long, the media ask me if I have shown the film to the refugees: 'When are the refugees going to see the film?' But that's the wrong question. The purpose is to show it to

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[18] https://www.cbc.ca/news/entertainment/ai-weiwei-invu-1.4309871, retrieved 11.07.2018;

[19] https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/sep/17/ai-weiwei-without-the-prison-the-beatings-what-would-i-be, retrieved 11.07.2018;

people of influence; people who are in a position to help and who have a responsibility to help. The refugees who need help – they don't need to see the film. They need dry shoes. They need soup (Ibid.).

Ai makes a relevant point here. He is acutely aware that art on its own cannot change a situation. It is not enough to produce political art. The plight of refugees must be taken over by the institutions and people who have the influence and the responsibility to address the situation. Ai's audience is not the refugees he is representing. His expressed mission is to give voice to the refugees, which is the signature of a political artist working for marginalized 'others'.

Conclusions

A now dominant trend in the discourse on political art in general and participatory art in particular is an emphasis on a compassionate identification with the other, in which, Claire Bishop (2012, p. 241) warns that an ethics of interpersonal interaction risks prevailing over a politics of social justice.

In insisting upon consensual dialogue, sensitivity to difference risks becoming a new kind of repressive norm – one in which artistic strategies of disruption, intervention or over-identification are immediately ruled out as 'unethical' because all forms of authorship are equated with authority and indicted as totalising. Such a denigration of authorship allows simplistic oppositions to remain in place: active versus passive viewer, egotistical versus collaborative artist, privileged versus needy community, aesthetic complexity versus simple expression, cold autonomy versus convivial community.

As an activist artist JR is involved in the communities he approaches and arguably co-constructs the aesthetic representation of the community. He is committed to the participatory logic of his aesthetic community interventions. In the case of the group actions in the Inside Out Project he even denies authorship. However, JR's reliance on black-and-white poster portraits, in his own work and in the Inside Out Project, determines the aesthetic framework for the representation of the community. In this sense, in the end, he nonetheless retains (partial) authorship of the work.

JR's work can be characterized by a playfulness that does not seek confrontation, but dialogue. His work tends to elicit a smile, as was the case with the US Federal agent at Tecate. While perhaps not always appreciated by the authorities, it opens a convivial and welcoming space for human interactions.

Bishop (2012) critiques the influential art critic and curator Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) who contrasts contemporary relational art from that of previous generations.

> The main difference, as he sees it, is the shift in attitude toward social change: instead of a "utopian" agenda, today's artists seek only to find provisional solutions in the here and now; instead of trying to change their environment, artists today are simply "learning to inhabit the world in a better way"; instead of looking forward to a future utopia, this art sets up functioning "microtopias" in the present (Bishop, 2012, p. 54).

Bishop neatly sums up JR's political intentions in her critique of Bourriaud. JR is quoted as saying:

> (A)rt is not meant to change the world, but when you see people interacting, when you see an impact on their lives, then I guess in a smaller way, this is changing the world. …So, that's what I believe in. That's why I'm into creating more interactions[20].

Even Ai Weiwei, while not enacting "microtopias" in the present, sees the demise of "big politics". Ai is quoted as saying: "I think that our age, the age of big politics is vanishing, and that the micro-politics of countless individuals will begin to emerge. As Chairman Mao said: politics is the soul. I am now dealing with the soul" (quoted in Sorace, 2014, p.406). Ai is, however, not as modest as JR with the micro-politics of his aesthetic interventions. He is convinced that individual micro-politics, and his individual aesthetic interventions, can bring about social change.

In sharp contrast to JR's interventions to create cosy spaces for human interaction, Ai Weiwei's work is based on political confrontation; confrontation is the precondition, the motor for his art. Ai has spent his life in opposition to his homeland – in a perpetual state of friction. Ai is quoted as saying: "Duchamp had the bicycle, Warhol had the image of Mao. I have

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[20] http://www.cnn.com/2013/05/18/opinion/zhang-jr-inside-out/index.html, retrieved 12.07.2018;

a totalitarian regime. It is my readymade" (quoted in Sorace, 2014, p. 396). Sorace (2014, p. 397) claims, that "it would not be an exaggeration to argue that without the Chinese state there would be no Ai Weiwei". Xan Brooks also suggested in an interview with Ai that without China he wouldn't be an artist at all.

> Yeah, exactly, says Ai. The notion pricks his interest. I would be what? he asks. Without all the yelling, without the prison, the beatings, just what would I be? Probably right now I'd be walking down Broadway, just like all the other immigrants. Trying to find the next job, pay next month's rent. Or I'd be back in China, running a restaurant. Or in a suit, in an office, another Chinese citizen[21].

Ai's work has readily elicited criticism: for over-identification in the Alan Kurdi mock-up, for heavy-handedness with his political messages, in China he is portrayed as the "running dog for Western interests, obsessed with money" (Sorace, 2014, p. 404), for egomania, or simply for his phenomenal fame as the art world's superstar—*Art Review* named him the most powerful person in the art world.

While between forty and one hundred assistants work in his Berlin studio (16.000 Chinese artisans in his "Sunflowers" exhibit at Tate Modern), Ai's art, unlike JR's art, is not collaborative. He certainly does not declaim authorship; he claims sole authorship. "I'm the one who makes all the decisions, covers every inch, every setting, material, paragraph, I try to do as much as I can"[22]. His activism is as well more or less a one-man show. Unlike JR Ai does not ordinarily directly engage and co-operate with the communities whose grievances he aesthetically represents (an exception is perhaps the "Citizen's Investigation"). The refugees he interacted with in *Human Flow* were not co-producers of their representation in the film—this was Ai's work. He is passionately engaged in the refugee struggle but he does not seek collaborators. His role in the altruistic solidarity movement is one of individual entrepreneurial provocateur. Ai is in a sense a one-man

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[21]   https://www.theguardian.com/film/2017/sep/17/ai-weiwei-without-the-prison-the-beatings-what-would-i-be, retrieved 11.07.2018;

[22]   https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/sep/12/ai-weiwei-exhibition-royal-academy-from-criminal-to-art-world-superstar, retrieved 14.07.2018.

refugee movement who bears the truth-claims of refugees who do not have a voice, the classic example of the role of intellectuals. While JR works comfortably within the neoliberal discourse of community revitalisation, Ai works in direct confrontation with neoliberalism's hollow promises, just as he head on confronted the Chinese government in regards to their broken promises. I agree with Sorace (2014), Ai Weiwei does not practice liberal politics, but is rather in conflict with the neoliberal global discourse. For sure he exploits his celebrity position in the neoliberal art world, but to undermine the politics of neoliberalism.

By cutting short the post-production process—which their status allows—both Ai and JR use the temporality of their political-aesthetics to retain (more or less) control of their artistic products and the political messages they are intended to convey. Neither Ai nor JR resolve the "power of representation dilemma", but one can argue that the dilemma is unresolvable, even for the most well-meaning specific intellectual as championed by Foucault (1984). Suffice it to simply recognize that the power of representation is unequally distributed. Artist scholars such as Ai and JR, with their valuable resources of aesthetic representation, exercise their power to bring the grievances of refugees to the public and authorities. Whether they like it or not, some refugee voices are heard, some are not.

Paradoxically, the "Trojan horses" (Bishop, 2004) Ai and JR are both minions and critics of neoliberalism—but in different ways; the political artist Ai speaking *for* refugees, the activist artist JR speaking *for* but even *with* movement activists and border communities. As an artist scholar Ai effectively represents in his art the plight of refugees, revealing to the world the grievances of refugees and the vacuity of neoliberalism's human rights discourse, but his art is not produced within a movement context that can bear a truth claim as to what a better world might be. His art is a plea to the world, to those who bear responsibility, to address the grievances of refugees. JR's art—his "microtopias" in the present— produced within movement contexts, not only calls attention to the plight of refugees but also provides a glimpse as to what the world might be were there no borders and respect for human rights prevailed.

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Art as a Trigger for Reflection in Sociolinguistic Migration Research

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Abstract

Research methods that are inspired by the arts have recently become subject to increasing attention for language researchers working in migration contexts. There are various studies that show how *arts-based methods* can be used in socially-engaged research in order to better understand language practices and ideologies. Drawing on a longitudinal study of lived experience of language use in Sweden, the present article demonstrates how *language portraits* and *poetic transcriptions* have the potential to generate alternative narratives and creative forms of representation. Moreover, the article illustrates how *participatory action research* can prompt migrants to reflect on their experiences and emotions together with others in the creation of *drama performances*. These kind of *visual-*, *textual-*, and *performative representations* have a connotative force that invites the receiver to emotionally engage with the migrants. Such representations can thus function as a *trigger for reflection* and enable people to react to un-equal sociolinguistic orders.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Migration, Arts-Based Methods, Representation.

My heart is blue
it is French
my black arms Arabic
my yellow eyes English
and I talk Swedish now

I'm taking my first steps
with green feet
and a red brain
filled with words

in a new land
that is mine
but where
I do not
belong

Introduction

The poetic sequence above originates from a conversation with Esraa, a young woman, originally from Egypt, who now lives in Sweden. She is one of several migrants whose lives I have followed over a long period of time (2001-2019) in an ongoing ethnographic research project entitled *Narratives of language use in a multilingual Sweden[1]*. The above verses demonstrate how Esraa locates the different languages that she can speak in a 'body map' and how she relates to colours when she describes her sensation of living in-between languages and cultures (Weisman, 2012). Esraa's narrated experience in poetic form has the potential to appeal the imagination and affect the reader's emotions more directly than conventional transcriptions methods.

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in the use of creative and aesthetic methods in the collection, analysis, and representation of data in qualitative research. This thus challenges more traditional means that are employed to understand human action and experience (Leavy, 2019; Salvin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014). Even if artistry has been previously used in socially-engaged research, there are actually very few references to the deployment of the arts in this manner before the 1980s – when the post-modern turn opened the door to a variety of visual-, literary-, and performance approaches in the social sciences (Cahnmann Taylor, 2017 p. 355). The concept of *arts-based methods* was first introduced in 1993 at an educational conference organised by Elliot Eisner, who is one of the pioneers in the field (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Lately, the notion of *creative inquiry* has been appealed to in the domain of sociolinguistics, where researchers engage with people's complex communicative practices in relation to language ideologies and political realities. Such inquiry entails the study of art, the production of art, and a reliance on a wide variety of other creative- and aesthetic expressions (see The AILA Research Network on Creative Inquiry, 2019).

This creative inquiry has informed discussions about the quality and ethical validity with respect to arts-based methods; raising questions such as whether the data that is generated during such inquiry can be

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considered art and whether such data lacks consistency and credibility (Pirtoo, 2002). A further question that is raised is whether the data generated by creative inquiry affects the potential for engaged (activist) researchers to make social difference. Some scholars have argued for a classification framework which can be used to delineate systematic and transparent genres in this domain (Wang et al., 2017). Other researchers have highlighted the fact that the transcendence of existing categories lies in the very nature of arts-based methods, and that it may never be possible, or even desirable, to standardise genres and categories because they then run the risk of losing their unfettered imaginative properties.

In this article, I will not take position in this debate, but I will contribute to it tangentially – by introducing a 'definition of art' that is based on reflections of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas[2] (Armengaud, 2019; Cohen, 2016; Hofmeyr 2017). Levinas is known for his guiding concept *the face* (*le visage*) which refers to the *ethical moment* that takes place in the encounter with another person; i.e., face-to-face (Levinas, 2004; Cederberg, 2010). This confrontation does not necessarily need to be related to the actual face of another person; it can also be associated with the body, or the mere presence of another person. Moreover, the concept is linked with language, as Levinas (1987 p. 55) puts it: "the epiphany of the face is wholly language".

Transferring the concept of the *face* and the idea of the *ethical moment* to a discussion about art, we observe that, for Levinas, art is meaningful only when it is capable of affecting the senses, the sight, and the perception of the receiver, when it enables a *confrontation* with the other. In this sense, art is always a singular experience, with the ultimate function to captive the receiver's attention and create a desire in terms of *engagement*. In other words, rendering Levinas, art is based on the idea that people, by means of artistic expression, enter into a *relationship with alterity*; another person who can never be indifferent to us. Most importantly, he points to the fact that this kind of engagement has a crucial function of *triggering a reflection*; not

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[2] This 'definition of art' build on Levinas reflections about the relation between aesthetics and ethics, explained inter alia, in a discussion with Françoise Armengaud, published 2018 in: THINK ART Series of the Institute for Critical Theory: Zurich University of the Arts and the Centre for Arts and Cultural theory. A first excerpt of this discussion appeared in: Levinas, E. & Armengaud, F. (1989). *Art & Text*, 33, 30-41.

primarily in a form of aesthetic values, but in a form of a critical reflection that proposes something, that calls for a response (Mersch, 2019 p. 80).

In the present article, I thus employ Levinas' reflections about art, and draw on examples from my own research project. First, I contextualise the project in sociolinguistic-theoretical terms. I then relate this to my experience of using *language portraits* to prompt research participants to reflect upon and create complementary narratives about their lived experience of language use. Next, I apply *poetic transcriptions* to transmit these narratives in a creative and evocative way. Thereafter, I go beyond my actual research project and engage in a discussion about how *participatory action research* has the potential to include research participants more actively and produce narratives in collaboration with others in the domain of *performative art*. Finally, I demonstrate how this way of proceeding resonates with critical approaches in sociolinguistics; approaches which have the goal to empower individual speakers (the research participants) and aspire to transform unequal sociolinguistic relations in society.

1. A multilingual reality and a monolingual norm

Due to globalisation and a significant increase in immigration in recent years, Sweden has become a multilingual country. This has led to certain changes in society, not least in the way people use different languages in their everyday lives. More and more people speak a form of Swedish which they have learned in their adulthood. These people also regularly communicate in one or several other languages.

The Swedish population has often been characterised in terms of diversity and multiculturalism, but there also exists a parallel movement in Sweden that favours a strong regimentation of society with increased demands for homogeneous Swedish values (Milani, 2013). Even if multi-lingualism is mainly perceived as something positive, it still occurs that people who speak languages other than Swedish – or a variant of Swedish with an accent that indexes non-nativeness – are met with disbelief (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017). Such attitudes can be observed not only in Sweden. Linguistic diversity – particularly as a result of immigration – is

often seen as a threat, both to social coherence and to integration since a standardised national language and a monoculture is the dominant norm in most Western societies (Blommaert, 2010; Wodak, 2015).

In accordance with a critical approach in sociolinguistic research, there is a growing movement in academia that is driven by the idea of transforming social relationships and changing this *monolingual norm*, or *mindset*, that often leads to linguistic discrimination (Márquez Reiter & Martín Rojo, 2019). The goal is that people should avoid reproducing linguistically-mediated hierarchies and inequalities and that all speakers should develop respect for themselves and for others so as to achieve *linguistic agency* (Ahearn, 2001; Pujolar, 2019). This social change can be facilitated by questioning norms and values that are traditionally assigned to languages that are considered legitimate. Linguistic agency is aligned with the proposal for a more inclusive linguistic order (a so-called *sociolinguistic citizenship*) that also recognises linguistic resources that are not officially approved and mixed language practices, with the aim of fostering increased democratic participation in society (Stroud, 2015).

Given the ideological context described above, to counterbalance and be able to *resist* and even *transform* an unequal sociolinguistic setting, it is important to understand the lived experience of people who have a migration background. In my research project mentioned previously, I closely follow six individuals that came to Sweden in the early 2000s in order to explore how their *language trajectories* develop over time in relation to their social-, cultural-, and political circumstances. These six individuals form a heterogeneous group in regards to their origin, age, gender, social-and educational background. By using *biographical narratives*, the project adopts a phenomenological perspective and investigates embodied dimensions of language use (Ricœur, 1990; 1983-1985). This approach is informed by the idea that language is "intersubjective bodily-emotional gestures which relate the speaker to the other and to the world" (Busch, 2016 p. 7; Merleau-Ponty, 1945). Thus far, the outcomes of the project show that the research participants experience a wide range of emotions, including shame, fear, frustration, but also satisfaction, joy, and pride (e.g., Kramsch, 2009; Pavlenko, 2012). These emotions are experienced depending on (i) how the participants relate to their language resources, (ii) how they are recognised by others, and (iii) how they understand the opportunities that are

given to them as they take part in society and establish themselves on the labour market (e.g., Duchêne & Heller, 2012).

The negative emotions that the research participants give expression to in their narratives can be explained by the fact they experience learning Swedish as a much longer and more difficult process than what they expected when they first arrived to the country. Still, after eighteen years in Sweden, most of the participants experience difficulty in talking Swedish in certain contexts since they feel ashamed of their accent and they are afraid of speaking grammatically incorrect. This indicates that the participants have internalised a legitimised and dominant model of *speakerhood*[3] where the native, normative, way of speaking serves as a model (Márquez Reiter & Martín Rojo, 2019). The use of categories such as 'native-speaker' versus 'migrant-speaker' leads them to understand themselves in terms of being 'competent' or 'incompetent', which leads to constant frustration.

One of the methodological tools that is used in my project is *conversational interviews* and, in such encounters, it is normal that the participants recall critical moments (Pennycook, 2004). These moments are of particular interest since there is a strong potential for development in narratives that deal with difficulties and negative emotions, not least for the participants' own insights and reflections over what such situations signify and how they might be open to future change (cf. Pavlenko, 2007). Notwithstanding this, I have found it important to compensate for these narratives by asking the participants to give account for their positive experiences of language use. By introducing *language portraits* as a methodological tool (see the discussion in next section), I have been able to capture a more complete picture of how the participants experience their diverse linguistic practices in more neutral, and even positive, terms.

2. Language portraits

The poetic sequence found at the introduction of this article originates from my first methodological experiment with language portraits. Initially,

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[3] Speakerhood has been defined as a linguistic process of social becoming (Márquez Reiter & Martín Rojo, 2019).

I hesitated to employ this tool because I thought that the participants might think it childish, but it turned out to be an effective way to visually illustrate and represent the participants' *embodied multilingual resources* (eg., Busch, 2018).

This methodological tool is not a recent invention. Language portraits have for instance been used since long in schools to promote language awareness (e.g., Krumm & Jenkins, 2001). More recently, the method has been applied in research into migration and language diversity, where the portraits have generated conversations that reveal power relations and language ideologies (Busch, 2018). Furthermore, conversations about language portraits have been shown to have a therapeutic quality, and have been used in projects involving trauma therapists and linguists in order to strengthen resilience (Busch & Reddeman, 2013).

In previous studies, research participants have been asked to draw their languages and other modalities of communication in a prefabricated, empty silhouette (Busch, 2018 p. 9). While, in my project, the participants were asked to draw a complete body portrait of themselves on a white paper and fill it with colours that represent their different linguistic resources. This resulted in various creative interpretations; including colourful and imaginative portraits with strong symbolic values. These *visual representations* can speak for themselves, inviting the observer to interpret and create meaning. However, they can also be used as prompts that give rise to, or triggering, *narrative explications*. Two language portraits, followed by such explications, are provided below:

Figure 1. Esraa's portrait (left) and Tekle's portrait (right)

The first portrait was drawn by Esraa[4] (shortly presented in the beginning of the article together with a poetic transcription of her narrative explication). In our discussion about her drawing she clarifies that 'blue is the colour of freedom and hope'. The blue heart illustrates how much she 'loves' the French language. Growing up in Egypt, her father decided to place her in a French school (where Arabic and English were also used as mediums of instruction) when she was four years old. Although she never had the opportunity to cross the ocean and visit France, the 'land of her dreams'. Regarding Swedish, she has painted it in red, at the head of the portrait, so as to illustrate how cognitively demanding it is to learn a new language as an adult. Living in a Swedish environment, she says, is like having a 'boiling pot' in the place of one's brain. She has also used a green pencil, filling in the feet of the portrait to illustrate her 'first steps' in the new language and in the 'peaceful nature'. Further, she placed Arabic in the arms of the figure since the language is accompanied by a great deal of gesticulation. The colour black illustrates her 'mourning', since she does not have many opportunities to speak Arabic today. The two squares that replace the eyes in the portrait symbolise English, the language of the news programs that she follows on television. These squares are yellow, thereby mirroring the light of the television screen. Esraa refers with a playful tone to her 'artistic freedom' and laughs when she realises that she has painted her heart on the right-hand side of her body.

The second portrait is by Tekle, a man in his sixties, originally from Eritrea. He draws his portrait in silence and with concentration. Afterwards, he explains: the Swedish language is in the head since 'foreigners' like him have to 'think a lot' when they talk. The head is coloured red, he clarifies, because Swedes get easily burned in the sun. Further, he refers to Tigrinya as his roots, placing this language at the feet in the image. The feet are black, representing the 'dark skin' of the people in his country. These are people who regularly walk barefoot (since the weather permits it), and are often poor (shoes are expensive). Unlike Esraa, for Tekle the colours that he used in his portrait do not mainly symbolise feelings and emotions, but a more practical, cultural reality. The other languages that he masters are Amharic (official language of the neigh–

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[4] The names of the research participants (Esraa and Tekle) are pseudonyms.

bouring country Ethiopia) and English (learned at high school). He refers to these languages as 'useful clothes' (a yellow sweater and green pants) that can be put on and off when needed. The hands of the portrait are painted in blue. Tekle remarks that his 'fingers are Italian', since the Italians (Eritrea was an Italian colony 1890-1947) are good 'hand workers', something he claims to have inherited. In earlier meetings with Tekle, he always referred to the difficulties 'having a black face' in Sweden and being subjected to discrimination. Nothing on this topic came up when he commented on his language portrait. In fact, he expressed pity for Swedes since so many of them are sensitive to the sun and have difficulties in understanding 'migrant Swedish'.

There are significant differences to be found in these two narrated explications that can be explained by taking the research participants' different cultural-, educational-, and linguistic backgrounds into account. However, what the participants have in common is that they do not categorise the languages that they speak as either their first language, second language, third language, and so on. Instead, they refer to their linguistic resources as a whole, a *linguistic repertoire*, in which different languages complement each other and are used in different contexts for different purposes (e.g., Busch, 2017; 2018).

Moreover, my conversations with the participants about their language portraits often created a *translanguaging space* where the participants used several different languages when they explained the content of their portraits (Wei, 2011; Bradely & Atkinson, 2019). This took place, for instance, when Esraa learned that I speak French and then changed from speaking Swedish over to French. Subsequently, she continued her explication by mixing the two languages, sometimes even adding English words. This act of translanguaging was performed without comment (it was considered as normal) since the different languages that she used were immediately connected with her personal experiences and attitudes towards the languages she was talking about. Even Tekle engaged in translanguaging, by exploiting a well-established strategy of replacing Swedish words and expressions that were difficult for him to pronounce with English terms so as to ensure that he was understood.

Consequently, the participants presented themselves as *multilingual subjects* when they made their comments about their language portraits. A

notable aspect of their narrative explications is that the portraits produced a distance that provided space for an interesting form of self-reflection to take place. This was manifested when the participants occasionally shifted from talking about themselves in the first person (I) to the third person (s/he) or by using impersonal pronouns (one, you, it). In the drawings, they could see their own faces and bodies on paper, thereby gaining insight into themselves from another perspective – from a *visual representation*. This shift in perspective can be related to Levinas' concept of *face*; the portraits enabled the participants to enter into an *ethical moment*; taking up a particular *relationship* with themselves, by seeing themselves as an 'other'. According to Levinas, art can be described in terms of a *doubling of reality* (Hofmeyr, 2007; Cohen, 2016 p. 173). However, he does not restrict art objects to only the visual product, but also considers criticism to be an essential element of all artistic expression. In such critical comments, he places particular emphasis on observations with a didactic value (Cohen, 2016 p. 184). The use of language portraits as a methodological tool gives space for these aspects (visual representations, narrative explications, critical- and didactic comments) to emerge.

3. Poetic transcriptions

In my project, I have developed a practice of creating *poetic sequences* of the research participants' biographical narratives. The approach stems from an anthropological tradition where certain linguists re-transcribe narratives (initially American native folk stories previously presented in prose) in a particular poetic layout (e.g., Rothenberg & Tedlock, 1970). According to Dell Hymes (1981; 2003), the pioneer of the field *ethnography of communication*, oral talk has an inherent poetic organisation, since it is always performed in shorter sequences, in so-called discourse units. Hymes is also one of the originators of *ethnopoetics*, a rather complex method of transcribing oral talk in a poetic form. This method builds on a faithful rendering of a narrative, respecting the speakers' discourse markers (words such as oh, well, so, but, you know), false starts, and repetitions, etcetera (see Hymes, 1981; 2003 for a more detailed description). Lately, a number of sociolinguists have shown some interest in ethnopoetics, using this

method in the transcription of everyday narratives in different domains, particularly in education, but also in other kinds of encounters such as asylum applications and courtroom hearings (Blommaert, 2007; Blackledge et al., 2016). The primary motive behind the adoption of this method has been to *give voice* to people who otherwise would not have been heard since they have been marginalised by society. In migration contexts, there has also been an attempt to *reconstruct* and *revaluate* linguistic varieties that deviate from normative ways of speaking (Blommaert, 2006).

In my own practice, I have been inspired by the field of ethnopoetics, but also by a subsequent movement in the social sciences; the so-called *poetic inquiry* approach that employs poetic transcription in a more creative way than previously (Glense, 1997; Richardson, 1992). Scholars who engage in poetic inquiry are often poets themselves and have consequently established a somewhat subjective approach to the transcription process. Following this approach, the point of the departure in my practice is always the words of the participants, although I frequently reconstruct their speech order in short sequences so to reveal thematic structures more clearly. Further, I divide the participants' speech sequences into *lines*, *verse*s, and *stanzas* (standard poetic terms, also used by Hymes, 1981; 2003) based on the participants' prosody, shorter pauses, and silences. In this way, the transcriptions capture (to some extent) the original rhythm of the performed narratives.

It is important to note that this transcription practice includes a close analyse of the context, and (on the part of the transcriber) a choice as to whether to accentuate (or not) certain aspects that are considered important for the result of the study. However, transcribing and quoting research participants always requires a discussion about the notion of *reflexivity,* in order to give account for the ontological-, epistemological-, and method-logical assumptions that lie behind the researcher's approach (Bucholtz, 2000). Such concerns are related to *ethical validity* and also demand careful interrogation of the question of *who* is entitled to tell the stories of others, as well as *how* they should be told, and *why* they are told in a certain (Shuman, 2015; Kohler Riessman, 2015). In this context, note that feminist theorists have have taken into critical consideration the risk of objectifying people by reproduction of unequal relations, or by speaking *for* or *about* people who

normally do not express themselves in the public domain (e.g., Spivak, 1988; Shuman, 2015).

In my work, I refer to this poetic transcription practice as *transformation process* in order to underline the fact that the narratives have undergone an important change by my hand (this has been explained elsewhere, Ahlgren, 2014; in process). Furthermore, it should be noted that this kind of transcriptions no longer contains any trace of the interactive aspects of the conversation and discussion that took place with the participants (e.g., Bucholtz, 2000). Notwithstanding this, poetic transcriptions have several advantages, not least for the *dissemination* and the *reception* of the narratives, both inside and outside the academic world. Primarily, the graphic form of the transcriptions, together with the fact that they do not contain so many words, adds to their *readability*. The form also lends the narratives a rhythm that adds life to them, something which facilitates the reader's connection with the narratives and imaginative engagement with the experiences of the participants.

Moreover, poetic transcriptions accentuate the participants' *linguistic creativeness* and the resourcefulness in the way they speak, and can thus instantiate alternative models of *speakerhood* (Márquez Reiter & Martín Rojo, 2019). All such aspects cannot be perceived in the poetic sequence created from Esraa's narrative (cited in the introduction of this article) since it is based on a conversation that was carried out mainly in French, and has been translated into English. Tekle's narrative (as represented in the poetic sequence below) is given in a bilingual version that illustrates his particular way of speaking Swedish and his translanguaging, since he incorporates English words and phrases (in italics in the English version) when he comments on his language portrait:

Svenska är i huvudet	Swedish is in the head
du måste veta språket här	you have to know the language here
annars är det inte möjligt	otherwise it is not possible
to integrate	*to integrate*
Tigrinja finns i fötterna	Tigrinya is in the feet
hans barfötter är svarta	his bare feet are black
tröjan är yellow och byxan green	the sweater is *yellow* and the pants are *green*
like protection and relax	*like protection and relax*
har jag Amharinja och English	I have Amharic and *English*

Mina blå fingrar är italianer	My blue fingers are Italians
för dom är duktiga med händerna	since they are good with their hands
vi har lärt av dom	we have learned from them
att jobba hårt	to work hard

4. Toward participatory action research and the performative arts

In my research project, I use *language portraits* and *poetic transcriptions* as complements to other more conventional means of collecting, analysing, and representing migration narratives about language use. By combining two established methodological approaches – for the first time in this article – and by creatively adapting them for the purposes of my project, I provide an example of the hybrid nature of research methods that are inspired by the arts (Barone & Eisner, 2012, Chanmann Taylor, 2017). The visual and textual representations that these methods give rise to can be presented independently, with or without comment and further explication, depending on the context in which the representations are disseminated. An important potential of these representations lies in their *connotative force*, that invites the audience to engage emotionally, to reflect over their content, and to enter into a *relationship* with the individuals who are represented (Mersch, 2019).

Another method that is particularly suitable for prompting migrants to reflect over their experiences and emotions together with others (be they other migrants, researchers, or artists) is *participatory action research* (Reason, 2008). In accordance with the critical approach in sociolinguistics, participatory action research has an explicit objective to raise awareness of the collective dimension of the participants' situation so that inequalities in society can be addressed. Similarly, participants can facilitate the development of strategies and the discovery of alternative ways of coping with issues that are difficult to talk about, by exploring such issues in confidence and with trust. Earlier projects have shown that collaborative practices through the *performative arts*, such as drama and theatre, can create *safe spaces* in which lived experiences of language, as well as multiple forms of *belonging*, can be narrated and explored (Lehtonen & Pöyhönen, 2019). Feelings of belonging – or rather non-belonging – are something that

the participants in my research project often report on in their biographical narratives, especially when they talk about how they experience a sense of *in-betweenness* (e.g., ibid.; Wiesman, 2012). This in-betweenness refers to places, relationships, and languages from which they are dislocated, as well as to places, relationships and the language in the new country.

Moreover, drama and theatre can help to strengthen the use of a new language, since such performative practices build on collaboration and communication; not only on oral communication but also on additional means of expression such as gestures and other facial and body signs (Schewe, 2004). Performative practices can also enable people with alternative models of speakerhood and multilingual resources and to gain recognition by acting on a stage in front of an audience.

Within the context of the *performative arts*, personal testimony has been considered as a tool for *empowering* individuals through the sharing of *subaltern experiences* caused by social injustices (Spivak, 1988). But since such representations of victimhood can be problematic to share with others, it has turned out to be rewarding to blur the borders between reality and fiction. This approach has been implemented in a project in Italy, where newly arrived refugees participated in a drama workshop to create a performance in which they proposed an inverted migration journey, thereby radically changing expectations and perspectives with respect to actual human migration (Dalziel & Piazzoli, 2019). The Italian workshop resulted in a performance that included people from the North (Europe) and their migration journey to the South, i.e., to the African continent. Once in the South, they encountered problems related to weather acclimatisation, difficulties in language learning, and the struggle for integration in a xenophobic environment. In the creation of this (sometimes) ironic and humorous performance, the imagination of the participants filled in the gaps of the narrative. Additionally, the performance was produced in a *safe space*, where people from Nigeria and Cameron took up 'expert' positions by virtue of the fact that they possessed knowledge and skills about the language and society that was on display in the performance, the project turned out to be empowering and beneficial for the participants.

In Sweden, there are several ongoing projects where migrants are working together with artists to produce drama performances. The group *Acting for Change* is one example of collaboration where migrants from

Syria, Eritrea, and Afghanistan share their experiences of creating a new home in Sweden (Malmberg Linnman, 2018). One of their performances, *Home or About Love*, is based on the participants' thought and narratives. This performance is intimately intertwined with *Del amor (teatro de animales)*, a play by the Spanish writer, Fédérico García Lorca, where an absurd and humorous intrigue gives account for how a dove, a pig, a donkey, and a nightingale discuss their liberation from human oppression.

Another example from Sweden is *TeaterInterAkt* (2019), a community theatre group that base their performances on documentary material, collected through interviews and workshops. In *No Border Musical*, they portray an imagined utopian future, where everybody has the right to settle wherever they want. In the performance, they refer to the European migration 'crisis' and the policy of closed borders as a bizarre condition and a situation that recalls the past, when refugees were forced to live without papers and without rights.

Enabling migrants to create a distance from their own experiences and allowing them to step outside the role of the victim permits the enactment of new, powerful narratives where these individuals re-acquire the agency to transform their life world (Dalziel & Piazzola, 2019). In such a process, being acknowledged by an audience is of particular importance, since it is an avenue by which they can relate to society and the surrounding world. Moreover, it is a method which can be used to position 'bodies in a space' in a theatrical setting that proposes and offers up a *relationship* to a wider audience outside the academic world. Having said this, we return to Levinas' reflections about art. For him, the ethical aspect of this encounter (between the participants and the audience) is fundamental, because it relates to the *vulnerability* of the other – in moments of joy and pleasure, as well as in moments of discomfort and suffering. It is, however, important to underline that when Levinas talks about the *face* of the other, this should not primarily be construed as referring to a person's uniqueness, emphasising the fact that each and every person is different, whether this be by dint of the person's ethnicity, language, class, gender, religion, or any other biological or cultural difference (Cederberg, 2010). The otherness of the other is to be found in the precise sense of the human as such and one's encounter with the other. According to Levinas, art initiates an ability, in the viewer, to see the other. In that sense, *performative art* is perfectly

aligned with his idea of how the *face* is revealed: the body and the language of the other opens up an arena of shared experience, creating empathy through a change of perspective. This is an area of central importance to the creation of a sense of solidarity in society.

Concluding remarks

The application of creative methods that are inspired by the arts to sociolinguistic migration research enables researchers to explore subjective descriptions, emotions, and ideologies that are intimately related to the research participants' *language trajectories* and *linguistic repertoires*. The form of representations that these methods offer – visual, textual, and performative representations – invites the receiver (the observer/reader/audience) to *enter the life-world* of the research participants. The invitation is moreover a proposal, the purpose of which is to facilitate understanding of the participants' perspectives – not necessarily in terms of identification – but, rather, in terms of an emotional confrontation that creates a *relationship* with the examined persons (Mersch, 2019).

Invoking Levinas' reflections about art is a way to illustrate how arts-based methods can create empathy and compassion and *trigger critical reflection* that enables people to react to social injustices. In the present study, the injustice is instantiated by the *monolingual norm* as opposed to a *multilingual reality*. This injustice pertains not only to Sweden and the northern part of Europe, but also to countries in the Mediterranean region.

One might wish to talk about arts-based methods in terms of *resistance* to more conventional methods, since they allow for the exploration of creativity – linguistic as well as aesthetic – and challenge established principles in qualitative research. Not least by offering new ways of communicate research finding and make them more accessible to larger and diverse audiences. Moreover, one can also highlight the dimension of *reinsurance* that this kind of method provides since they offer a way of blurring borders – not only between methodological approaches but also between reality and the imagination. Thereby, they offer 'protection' to the individual research participant since this kind of representations are obviously based on a *construction* of reality (something that immediately

invokes a discussion of reflexivity). This protection is also in place when the research participants comment on their language portraits instead of themselves, or performon a stage (as one of several *dramatis personæ*). Considering *oneself as another* is a face-saving activity that satisfies an ethical concern which should be taken in consideration in further discussions about validity in arts-based research (Goffman, 1967).

This article has focused on the outcomes, the results – the representations – that arts-based methods give rise to and their ability to engage an audience – inside and outside the academic world. Further, it has elaborated on how such arts-based methods can raise awareness in research participants, thereby enabling them to learn about themselves and to build (positive) recognition for their multilingual resources. This has been done by respecting the claim that arts-based methods have the ability not only to show how the world is, but also why it is thus, and how it can be transformed.

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A Conversation on Cinematic Representation and Resistance in the films "Altered Landscapes" (2016) by Juan del Gado and "The People Behind the Scenes" (2019), by Elsa Claire Gomis

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Abstract

This is a conversation between Juan del Gado and Elsa Gomis about their respective films. Juan del Gado has made the film Altered Landscapes (2016), which is the first part of a cinematically projected triptych entitled *Drifting Narratives*. Elsa Gomis has produced the film *The People behind the Scenes* (2019), a full-length film, which builds on interviews and memory work and address current visual representations of migration by the Mediterranean.

Keywords: Film, Refugees, Mediterranean, Representation, Migration.

1. Choice of methods

Elsa Gomis: The name of your film is "Altered Landscapes". Landscapes are one of the main pictorial genres chosen by visual artists. Why did you choose to focus on this genre to deal with migration?

Juan del Gado: There are many ways to look at landscapes: I am looking at it as both a physical place and as a symbolic place, a mental landscape that has been culturally "naturalised" as the European landscape. Generally speaking, the landscape is everything you can see when you look across an area of land, including hills, rivers, buildings, trees and plants. As symbolic landscape, its significant meaning goes beyond what it simply looks like due to cultural associations.

EG: Which cultural background did you had in mind?

JdG: As Europeans we have a particular perspective, a particular way to think about Europe. What is our definition of a European landscape, rural

and urban, from a historic and contemporary perspective and how is this identity used to contrast with that of the "other" landscape?

JdG: You intertwine footage shot by your grandfather of Mediterranean places with those interviews with local residents of Malta, who share their stories about their bond to that sea as you came back to "shoot images embedded in my memory". You build the story through interviewing residents, a fashion designer, fishermen, film location manager, as well as those who were transiting this place, i.e. tourists, EU data collectors. The narratives are presented as flows of words in the shared space (of this island). What were you planning to achieve through this method?

EG: In relation to the theoretical research I pursue in my PhD, the film deals with current visual representations of migration by the Mediterranean. Following the Greek writer Nicki Giannari (2017, p. 21), I believe that migrants who arrive in Western countries "pass and conceive us". They pass because their great majority is led to temporary camps when not facing homelessness and deportations. For Giannari migrants "think us" because they mirror European democracies and in particular of their misfunctioning. Border crossings thus constitute as such a reading grid of Western social behaviours. From there, if analysing the passage left by today's exiles is a source of reflection for European societies, the production of images intended to represent them would thus be an anthropological tool to think migration policies applied to them.

EG: To get back to your title, what has 'altered' these landscapes?

JdG: I am using 'altered' in the sense of changing our perception of the landscape. The landscape captured in the film has witnessed something that we have not been able to perceive. It has witnessed an influx of migrating bodies carrying with them an undetectable pain. The landscape has had physical contact with them. It feels, senses and absorbs their trauma, on which they have left an invisible imprint. In the film the landscape screams silently from this trauma. In the film, the main character is crossing the geopolitical countryside of the Balkans and eventually arriving at the increasingly fortified borders at Calais, France. These landscapes have been 'altered' by the fences and panopticon watchtowers built to contain those on the move and ultimately defend borders.

EG: The landscapes are filmed as empty spaces, which render them impersonal and interchangeable. Yet, the places you chose to shoot were specific places and 'hotspots' in Greece (Macedonia and Calais) that host refugees. How do you explain these choices?

JdG: In my research, into an on-going project called Qisetna: Talking Syria, I interviewed many people who were either displaced inside their country, in transit while attempting to cross borders, and those who were stranded, waiting to move on, in countries such as Greece, France and Turkey. Many of those itinerant people spoke of their feelings of being invisible despite the massive influx of global images from the mainstream media that we're addressing this issue.

Before May 2015, people on the move were crossing borders by hiding in cardboard boxes allocated for luggage in the coaches traveling from Istanbul to Greece. In Athens and Thessaloniki, they were at the mercy of an international web of smugglers who only saw them as "merchandise in transit". During two weeks in Orestiadas, Idomene (Greece) and Gevgelija, (Macedonia), I listened to the experiences of many young Syrians.

EG: What did they tell you?

JdG: One night I met Abdullah, a lawyer from Damascus, who after two months of being stranded in Athens as a result of trying to cross the border, lamented to me "how much else do I have to erase from myself so that you can see me?" His eyes were enquiring. He wondered about why all this was happening. Why after having lost everything and risking his and his family's lives, fleeing his hometown, which was now converted into rubble -his world abruptly wiped out- why after surviving all this, he felt he was still being treated as a criminal and had to hide from the border police? "We are not criminals, we are victims of war, and we need help" I heard later in the days I spent at the Jungle in Calais.

JdG: And yourself, how did you choose the people you interviewed?

EG: To deal with those who pass, the film's bias is to focus on those who remain, namely on those who are not led to leave. For this, I conducted around forty interviews of local residents in various locations of Malta, Gozo and Comino, the three islands that make up the Maltese archipelago. The interviews were notably carried out with people who have an indirect,

past or metaphorical relationship with exile. It could be elderly people whose family experienced exile – such as my own parents and grandparents-, a statistician gathering data about migrants of an EU's organisation, an ornithologist specialised in migratory birds or a passionate reader of Ulysses' *Odyssey*. Besides, as my research is related to current media and art images of migration, I also wanted to meet people whose activity is related to the notion of 'representation' in the broadest sense: a designer of haute couture clothing, a traditional weaver or the person in charge of renting Malta's film studios. Yet, relationships between these two 'kinds' of interviewees appeared: the fashion designer's work is related to the successive settlements to which the island has been subjected; the weaver, whose children are abroad, has the same activity as Ulysses wife; the man renting the film studios has a particular interest in shipwreck films such as *Titanic*. Alternating the interviews of people with these backgrounds allowed me to gradually put in place my subject, while avoiding today's mainstream images on migration. Hereby, the film however also offers a reflection on these very images.

2. Counteracting the mainstream

EG: Since the Romantic period, artists, in particular painters, use depictions of the landscape as tools for conveying inner states and moods. This artistic process also seems to be important for your work. Why did you find it relevant to convey the feeling of exile and to counter the dominant images of the "crisis" of migrants? The urban and city landscape you shot seems to correspond to a romantic vision in which natural environment reflects the mood. In what way do you think it counteracts mainstream images of the migrant 'crisis'?

JdG: The city represents a territory through which the character wanders, between past and the present, searching for clues: "I need a sign". As the narrative continues, he becomes increasingly immersed in the urban space that is charged with layers of historical significance: "I live in a world of silence". It seems the character has become both an individual but also a metaphor of this entity named Europe, a symbolic body that is changing: "Everything I know, has started to disintegrate". Yet, the body remains off

camera, only his voice over is interacting with the influx of images of a harbour, deserted streets, silenced monuments…

JdG: Your filming style seems to fall into the traditional documentary storytelling. The narrative is structured in chapters or headlines - *To fly, To imagine, To count…*- all inviting the viewer to think of the filmmaker's intentions. It that what you were looking for?

EG: My Spanish forefathers settled in Algeria at the time when this territory was colonised by France and became 'pieds-noirs'. The geopolitical and social contexts of the communities now exiled by the Mediterranean and those of the 1962 returnees are totally different. Trying to draw a common sense of exile that can bring together exiles from yesterday and today is the challenge. When my own family embodies a national past that does not pass, namely France's colonial past, the search for a shared feeling with those who suffer the repercussions of exploitation policies, particularly the exploitation of natural resources that have since continued, is a perilous exercise. However, involving my own family history was not premeditated when shooting in Malta. Back from the archipelago, I looked again at my digitised family archives, which I know very well due to previous works from them, and I realised that I had unconsciously chosen to film situations or objects that had been filmed by my grandfather in Algeria. These family archives constitute my imagination of exile. They made an imprint on the choices of images shot 2018 in Malta and shaped the editing process. I decided to organise the film around the twin images (those of today and those of yesterday) and to title according to these reminiscences, as chapters of an imaginary research in the pursuit of images of exile.

JdG: What connects these various visual mediums?

EG: The mixture between family archives and contemporary high-definition images, but also, between videos taken on mobile phones or posted on *YouTube*, is organised around a common thread: that of the circulation of visual and auditory motifs that bear the imaginary of exile by the Mediterranean.

EG: You once told me that you were inspired by this statement of Malcolm X: "If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the

people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing." How does this idea influence your artistic practice?

JdG: As a filmmaker and moving image artist, I want my stories to develop without imposing a strict meaning. By this means, I want to detach my film practice from mainstream cinema, leaving a certain level of ambiguity and therefore, encouraging the viewer to engage with the story more personally. I am very aware of the role and responsibility I have as an artist and a producer of film culture who has become preoccupied with the representation and the narratives of displacement.

EG: How do you implement this responsibility?

JdG: As I see it, the narrative of displacement is strongly connected with the landscape in which they occur. In this sense, I wanted to animate and activate the landscape and give it a voice. My decision is influenced by my interest in the aesthetics of the sublime, which revolves around the relationship between human beings and the grand, yet terrifying, aspects of nature. In the film, nature has been forever marked by the traces of those who fled and transited through it. As viewers we react to a cluster of images of a landscape that is strikingly bright, of hills, trees, a river. All this whiteness seems to wash out the memories, those words the character presented in the grainy, shaky footage during the first part of the film, such as the traces of torn clothes caught in a tree, fluttering in the howling wind, echoes of the barking dogs that punctuate the nocturnal journey.

JdG: On your side, did you deliberately choose editing certain sequences to make statements about the body and the place, i.e. swimmers floating on the swimming pool and wrecked ships in the nearby coast?

EG: Absolutely. Intertextuality, i.e. the relationship between the different registers of images, is arranged in a triangular way between the archives, the film in progress and the media images. Left out of focus or only evoked through fragmentary motifs scattered in several places in the film, media images connect the words collected today with yesterday's family documents. The images whose circulation and repetition are the most significant are therefore used as a lever to build a dialogue between different image formats but also between points of views. This dialogue shapes the statements you are mentioning, which are formulated through the film into

chapters headings. The latter can be seen as so many proposals opening way to an alternative imaginary of migration by sea.

EG: These empty landscapes, which could be anywhere, also convey the feeling of a rather universal experience. Are they a reaction of the graphic images of the 'crisis' to which it difficult to identify as Westerners?

JdG: Yes. The narrator tells the stories of refugees but the moodily shot black and white film never shows the actual characters, but instead presents the journey through which they chose to travel, the vacuum left by the migrant body. This emphasis on emptiness of the space with no human presence is in sharp contrast to the actual deluge of images published by the mainstream media in recent times. Ultimately, the landscape becomes the witness of what remains as an *un*-representable wound.

JdG: Your film also explores the territory, including the underwater archaeological remains. In what seems to be an irony, the narrative avoids the current systematic portrait of the Mediterranean Sea as a grave in which thousands of people are drowned. Can the leaving out that "other" content, the bodies that tragically have disappeared in the sea, be read as a counter-act to the images from mainstream media?

EG: Dealing with current images of exile without showing them was the goal. Before leaving Britain for Malta, I analysed a lot of media images produced to capture the migration "crisis". This work led me to gather them into a narrow range of materials, colours and motifs dealing with humanitarian rescues at sea. They display precarious ships, life jackets, rescue boats or survival blankets.

JdG: In particular, it seems that you had one famous media image in mind…

EG: Yes, the iconic photograph of Aylan Kurdi's body. It has been the subject of numerous reframing and quotations, also occupied a significant place in these typologies of images. The film is based on both the intense repetition and circulation of these motifs. More precisely, it relies on the imprint that these circulations leave in the imaginaries. I considered that the imprint of these motifs were powerful enough to evoke the rest of the images they convey into fragmented and implicit ways: by showing re-

mains of inflatable boats on rocky shores, boats in the form of shreds on rocks, canoes stowed on liners or life jackets stored on shelves. Regarding the photography of the Aylan Kurdi, I relied on its similarity with the iconological theme of the Pietà, present in the gestures of a British tourist and in the frescoes of several churches in the archipelago. Avoiding to picture what you designate as the 'other content', namely as the most burning images with regard to migration, is indeed an attempt to propose alternative ways of representing it. Not recreating them or not directly showing them provides a reflection on the way mainstream images colonise Western viewers' imaginations. Their absence helps shaping the way a collective image is built.

3. Specific questions about respective arts and inspirations

EG: Another theme of your work is apparently mutation, in particular the metamorphosis of an insect. Why did you make this choice and by which other means do you think images can convey this experience that is inherent to exile?

JdG: The film is a journey that starts in a darkened room punctuated by flickering lights that penetrate through the windows. The perception of reality is different at night than in the daylight. The narrator reminds us that, "we are afraid of darkness", but for him "I am terrified of the reality that surrounds me." As viewers we might ask of which particular horror he is terrified? He is describing a 'maladie' that is affecting his body. The transformation of the landscape is echoed by the irreversible physical change as the main character transforms.

EG: One has in mind Franz Kafka's 'Metamorphosis' when seeing this sequence…

JdG: Actually, two pieces of writing have inspired me in the making of the film: Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis (1915) and Susan Sontag's Regarding the Pain of Others (2003), which look at our human response to other people's suffering. The process of mutation encapsulates the core drive of this film: the character is forced to move from where he is "out of fear of becoming paralysed". Again, the narrative navigates this ambiguity,

which triggers questions: why he is afraid of becoming paralysed? Where is he moving from and to? What or who is the motivation that forces him to move? Kafka's *Metamorphosis* is supposed to make us question our existence and ask, "Why are we here? "What purpose does our existence have?" and "Does it rest on what others think of us or are we valuable enough in our feeble existences to overcome the obstacles of perception?" These questions are particularly worth asking with regard to the existence of those among us who are often perceived as less valuable.

EG: What is the moth representing?

JdG: The moth is an eerie presence, which marks the peak of the narrative arch. The heavy breathing and voice will be irreversibly muted as the insect is seen flying away from the darkness into a strikingly white and luminous landscape. Words are replaced by the sounds of nature, including the harrowing voice of the wind. This abrupt shift in the narrative seems to evoke a sense that the immense emptiness produced in the individual by forced exile and loss, which cannot be described with words (Manea, 2012).

JdG 'The people behind the scenes', a statement said by one of the tourists about the current situation of migrants in Brexit's Britain. This title could also be interestingly applied to those who are also absent in the film, the migrant bodies, whose narratives aren't seen and yet are strongly felt. What made you decide on the title?

EG: Exactly. *The People Behind the Scenes*, those who allow the show to take place: these are the stowaways of our democracies, the essential but invisible key to their functioning. As I mentioned earlier, following Giannari (2017, p. 21), "They come, and they think us". Those who pass are those who, forced to play subordinate roles, allow the sequence, as a whole, to appear true. Thus, the refugees housed in Cinecittà in the post-war period gradually took the place of extras during the filming that took place there. "The figure of the extra", notes Marie-José Mondzain (2011, p. 289), "operates as an indicator of credibility that gives the star and the story their place in the real fabric of our history. An index of reality, without a name, without glory or history, it alone perhaps gives fiction its support and determines its plan for inscribing itself in a sensitive reality, both historical and filmed".

EG: To what extent have the various meetings you made on the field affected your work?

JdG: These encounters had a profound impact on the way I later decided to construct the narrative of this story. Altered Landscapes (2016) is the first part of a cinematically projected triptych entitled Drifting Narratives, a series of moving image works in which I continue my enquiry about displacement and trauma while presenting the landscape as the only witness to this chronicle of loss in which the human body remains invisible. The darkness is punctuated by the menacing sound of barking dogs.

JdG: How do you see the European democratic regime applying to those who are only seen as extras?

EG: Refugees, whose exploitation underpins the functioning of agriculture and construction and whose surveillance feeds high technology through national and European public markets, allow our national fictions to exist. It seems that based on this intuition, between 200 and 300 asylum seekers tried in vain to interrupt a performance of the Comédie Française on the 16th of December 2018. The exiles would be the missing image of our national films, which would nevertheless allow our democratic fictions to take place. The arrival of the "pieds-noirs" through the Mediterranean allows us to think about the French society of 1962, that of the exiles of the years 2010 offers a reflection on the contemporary European Union.

EG: And you, do you see this occurring in today's Europe?

JdG: In the film *Altered Landscapes,* I select the Acropolis of Athens, as a departing point to develop a narrative that fluctuates between documentary and fiction. The Acropolis is an ancient citadel located on a rocky outcrop above the city and contains the remains of several ancient buildings of great architectural and historic significance. It is considered one of the most enduring symbols of Western civilization, a concept used very broadly to conform to the heritage of ethical values and belief systems that have their origin in Europe.

EG: Could you tell me more about some previous works that also deal with migrations by the Mediterranean?

JdG: In *Altered Landscapes* I address the topics of loss and trauma, which I had examined in a previous work, *Fléchés Sans Corps* (2003), an on-site installation presented in the harbour of Cartagena, in Southern Spain in 2008. *Fléchés Sans Corps* was set up inside a shipping container covered by sand and shoes and framed by a rear projection of seashore under a stormy sky. The footage showed the endless ebb and flow of waves edited on reverse mode: this view presents the sea as a menacing environment whose monstrosity is revealed in the waves crashing against a rocky coastline. A female voice emerges between the violent poundings of the water. Her voice sounds like an elegiac song based on Rumi's poem to those absent bodies. Eventually the sea is perceived as a liminal space between reality and dream. The lament continues evoking an incommensurable sense of loss, due to the fate of the many young men drowned in the Strait trying to cross from Morocco into Spain since 1989.

Image 1. On-site installation at the Cartagena's Harbour, Spain (2008)

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Invisible Affections and Socialization to the Sexuality of Lesbians.
A Case Study in Italy

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Abstract

The article focuses on the process of socialization and sexuality of homosexual people, examining the specific case of lesbians living in Salerno, a major city in southern Italy.
The essay highlights the path that women go through in maturing their sexual identity, taking into account those relational contexts in which they find expression of their most intimate desires and support to deal with the burden of double stigma related to the condition of women and homosexuals. The analysis will highlight how "becoming sexual" means above all accessing a universe of symbolic references typical of the L world – in terms of practices, languages and representations – to which some women often adhere out of need of acceptance, to get out of invisibility, while others distance themselves from them for greater self-determination of their sexual conduct.

Keywords: Invisibility, Socialization, Sexuality, Affectivity, Lesbians.

1. *Between invisibility and empowerment: being a lesbian in Italy today*

Research on the lesbian population starts by considering a central aspect of their condition, *i.e.*, that they are at the intersection of a double process of stigmatization, regarding both gender and sexual orientation (Crenshaw K.W, 1989). Analogously difficult is their placement within the two movements which most carried their instances: the feminist and the homosexual. In the former, lesbians could share with other women the struggle against patriarchy and male domination, but with divisions due to the persistence, within the movement, of heteronormative orientations and homophobic feelings (Wittig, 2001). These aspects are reversed in the LGBT movement, where lesbians, while finding space to express their claims, are still subordinate and invisible to the predominance of men in the public space (both real and mediated, see Santostefano, 2008). As women, they

suffer the same oppressions regarding the persistence of a patriarchal model that wants them confined to private life: as homosexuals, their invisibility is stressed by the fact that the social representations of lesbianism are still characterized by clichés. Indeed, lesbianism is still confused with a friendship between women, or at most considered an erotic practice among heterosexual women. Alternatively, it is analysed based on the model of male homosexuality, which revolves mainly around sexuality (Chetcuti 2013; Chamberland & Théroux-Séguin, 2009). Faccio & Foffano (2010) ascribe such invisibility to the subordinate position experienced by women. They highlight how in the past male homosexuality was stigmatized as representing "half-men", whose behaviours, attitudes and mannerisms disappointed the social expectations of virility and masculinity, while homosexual women have been spared these sufferings because their relationships were often clandestine and invisible. Women were not at the centre of the social scene, nor did they adopt attitudes against conventions, and their sexuality has always been considered less transgressive, less scandalous and improper. Therefore, not being forced to contradict society, lesbians were able to keep themselves private.

This hypothesis aligns well with the studies carried out in Italy on the L-population and aimed at distinguishing the peculiarities of their representations and attitudes from those of homosexual men. The condition of the latter, unlike for the other categories included under the LGBT umbrella, has been widely studied.

On the context of Campania, theatre of our research, Corbisiero (2010) took into account various aspects of the sexual identity of homosexual people, including their practices. The survey belies clichés and highlights instead that while sexuality was for both a central component of existence, there were significant differences in their propensity towards stable or exclusive relationships. 73% of lesbians declared to have a stable sexual relationship with their partner, compared to 34% of gays, thus confirming the hypothesis of a greater inclination of lesbians to monogamous and stable relationships, like that of heterosexual women. The choice for a stable relationship can be read as the result of social and cultural conditioning, as it is more frequent among lesbians than among gays in the north than in the south, in large cities, in middle classes and among non-practising Catholics, but also among those who consider their

homosexuality as natural and respectable rather than among those whose personal acceptance is only partial. Moreover, the more open and tolerant is the context, the greater the possibility that self-esteem is preserved and that the most radical choices, such as those of coexistence and parenting, are visibly made (Faccio & Foffano, 2014).

The difference in how women live the homoerotic relationship is evident in their preference, compared to men, for side-lining sexuality in favour of affectivity, an aspect which generates substantial differences in the narration of the sexual self between women and men. On *coming out*[1], indeed, Trappolin (2011) documented that women often recount their experiences and the awareness of their diversity through episodes of falling in love, and the quality of the relationship with the beloved woman, and some also include the theme of their subordination to the interests of men.

These data indicate that there are significant differences in behaviour, concerning certain dimensions of sexuality, between homosexual men and women, following the current literature on the topic (Barbagli & Colombo, 2007). The search for a stable partner and the relevance attributed to the affective and relational dimension by women, compared to men, can also be partly explained in the need to find in the couple, and therefore in the partner, a model within which to be reflected, in order to affirm their identity, if and when they experience loneliness as a result of the weight of the double stigma. We must also remember that the socialization of sexuality for heterosexual people is made easier on the basis of cultural models learned from the family and other agencies of socialization (*e.g.* the peer group), while more complex is the assumption of homosexual identity for a teenager who needs models of reference that are not always found in their context, where references are heteronormative and full of negative stereotypes about homosexuality (Fidolini, 2015). Therefore, for the subject to assume a balanced identity of their sexual self, it is fundamental that they free themselves from those negative connotations, which, if internalised, strongly affect self-esteem. The confrontation with other homosexual people, and in particular with one's partner, is thus the

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[1] For Trappolin (2011) the stories recounting women's coming out include two themes: the closet and the coming out. They can only be distinguished from an analytical point of view since, in the narrative, they are interwoven by the subject.

fundamental path through which the subject acquires sexual identity, since Rinaldi states (2017:6), "becoming sexual means above all learning beliefs, representations, preferences, evaluation systems and practices, assuming specific roles and words within a process of sexual socialization that will take place throughout our lives". In the couple, the partner, as "significant other", is a reference to begin the process of socialization to sexuality, since, impersonating the homosexual role, thanks to the presence of an equal other, she can become an observer of herself, reflect on what she is doing, self-regulate about the purposes and compare the role that the other assigns her with her interpretation of this role, in a game of constant references (Kurder, 1991).

Starting from these premises, the following part will examine the first results of ongoing research on the processes of socialization to the sexuality of homosexual people, examining the specific case of lesbians living in Salerno, a city in southern Italy[2]. It examines the relational plots in which their most intimate desires are expressed, as well as support for dealing with the double stigma related to their condition of homosexual women. In addition to the classic channels of socialization, here are also considered online dating application[3], with the aim of clarifying how these new communication tools help in accessing the L-world and its symbolic references universe – in terms of practices, languages and representations – but are also an expression of greater self-determination in one's sexual conduct.

2. Methodological aspects and findings of the case study

The results presented here refer to 20 self-declared lesbians identified through a sampling of convenience and residing in the province of

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[2] The research was carried out in Salerno, a port city south-east of Naples, in Campania, with a population of about 134.000 inhabitants,

[3] The online dating application examined here is *Wapa*, considered one of the most popular tools used by lesbian and bisexual women (in the context examined) to find a partner. For further information on the functionalities of *Wapa*, please refer to the following link: http://wapa-app.com/

Salerno[4]. The data were collected mainly through biographical interviews and directly involving some women since the first drafting of the research design. In a social scenario where lesbians have little or no say in the construction of the social meanings that concern them, their direct involvement has proved to be fundamental to access without stereotypes the orientations and the maps of education that, at the level of collective life, guide the L-world of the context examined. After having noted the socio-biographical characteristics of the women, the areas explored by the biographical interview were:

– *identity*: aimed at investigating how women relate to their sexual self, to their intimate world, to the expression of their desires in a context in which the visibility of L women is compromised by the double stigma woman /homosexual;

– *relationships*: which examines how the friendship and sentimental bonds are fundamental for the process of socialization to lesbian sexuality and, therefore, to access the L world and its cultural scenarios;

– *space and visibility*: which analyses the spaces dedicated to the expression of LGBT sexuality; within this dimension, we also examined the resources that the web (social networks, dedicated apps) makes available to L women, trying to understand how they have helped the exit from isolation, the construction of emotional and sexual ties with other women;

– of *evaluations and opinions*: in this section we wanted to explore the opinions and evaluations that women express about the L world, trying to understand how heteronormativity, based on male/female, homosexuality/ heterosexuality binarism helps to define both implicitly and explicitly how women define and live themselves.

2.1. Discovering oneself a Lesbian: between homoerotic desires and relational anchors

My first girlfriend, my first kiss with a woman, was with a classmate of mine. I felt this strange attachment to her: usually, I am a bit cold, but with her, I always sought a physical

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[4] For accessing the field of research and identifying the sample has been paramount the contact with some exponents of gay associations (*Arcigay Salerno*) and the association *Famiglie Arcobaleno* (Rainbow Families). In the identification and selection of the sample, we tried to balance age, place of residence, occupation and educational qualifications of the subjects involved.

contact, even a hug, something that never happened to me with other people. So there the first 'alarm bells' started, so I thought that maybe I was feeling something different. (F, 27 years old).

The experience recounted by the interviewee is emblematic, to the extent that most of the interviews collected suggest that the first entry into the L-world generally occurs by chance, through a friendship, a particular affinity felt for that particular "person" and not on the basis of a general homoerotic desire towards people of the same sex. All the stories examined focus on the "affective", sentimental dimension as an entrance into a world of which little is often known, considering that, unlike male homosexuality, lesbianism in our country, and in particular in the context examined, is invisible. The difficulty, therefore, is often linked precisely to the absence of codes and models of conduct through which to direct oneself in the implementation of one's sexual self.

The pressures to conform to social expectations regarding gender and sexual models considered more appropriate for girls than boys can prove even more oppressive in contexts, such as those examined, where the families' control on young women's emotional and sexual conduct is quite common and is underpinned by educational models still markedly distinct by gender, for males and females (Iovine & Masullo, 2016). In the absence of such models, it is the heteronormative references that guide the first sentimental experiences of young women (Klinkenberg & Rose, 1994). These models constitute a point of reference to evaluate not only themselves but also other women, so the female sexuality is never expressed directly, explicitly, in a relational game that tries to avoid, even in the relationship between women, the negative stereotype associated with those who live their sexuality more freely.

In my opinion, the aim is always that, to sleep with someone, but it is as if the woman feels less guilty by building this sort of relationship/knowledge (...) among women there is always this cultural heritage for which, if the woman sleeps with you on the first date, she is a "whore" (C., 28 years old).

Getting to know other lesbians in this context is not an easy task, since, as many of the interviewees point out, there are few meeting places for LGBT people and those mostly in Naples. Other homoerotic spaces emerge,

especially for women, mostly coinciding with the informal contexts of friendship networks and sports-related places. These two modes, often mentioned in the interviews, constitute the prevalent ways to meet other women in Salerno:

At first, I lied to myself saying: 'no, well, it's only with her. I don't like women!' Being, at first, something I didn't accept. What's more, not having other friendships like that, I felt a little lonely, very much so. Then, thanks to women's football, I met people who are currently my best friends, even lesbians, people older than me who have helped me a lot, orienting me. I had, therefore, various experiences 'so-and-so', until I had this most important experience with my ex (F., 27 years old).

As highlighted in the literature, access to the L world generally takes place precisely from the first relationships established with other women, that facilitate for the interviewees the process of *coming out* inside and outside the LGBT community. The couple shares strategies to "cope" with the difficulties experienced outside, both with the family and with the wider society regarding their acceptance of themselves and the social stigma associated with homosexuality. It is in the centrality assumed by the affective dimension, and therefore by the relationship, that the ways to "define oneself" as a lesbian are generally acquired, following new terms and words detached from previous heteronormative references.

Since we are going into details, I am not ashamed to tell you that I thought I was a whole other kind of person in bed with a woman, I was really convinced. With her I discovered that I was the opposite, it took away many sex-related taboos due to my cultural heritage (S., 23 years old).

Several interviewees refer to little-diversified groups of friendships between women, characterized by a strong density of exchanges and relationships, which in the long run entail, as we can see in the following passage, some critical issues:

I have never met a friend of a friend, nor have I dated a friend of a friend, because I do not like this kind of business. I don't like intersections between people, intersecting stories, where everyone knows everything about everyone else and you are constantly subjected to other people's judgment (C., 24 years old).

As we will see further on, for some women the use of new media (such as dating apps), is not only an alternative way to access the socialization spaces of the L-world, but often also an escape from little-diversified friendship networks, made heavier by the social control exerted by the group and the pressure to conform to the more or less explicit rules. Using a dating app allows women to avoid other people's judgment, leading to a self-determined definition of oneself and unencumbered sexuality, free from stereotypes.

2.2. Becoming "sexual": socialization to sexuality and the use of the new media

Since its inception, the web has been an important resource for the L-people interviewed. Mailing lists, chats, blogs, are the first references of meaning for some women, through which they face fundamental discussions to define themselves, to "become sexual", to overcome internalized homophobia, to face the stigma resulting from their sexual diversity, conflicts with families, partners. Such discussions are not confined to the virtual world but are often the prelude to the formation of significant friendships and love relationships.

> So many words spent, millions of bits and thousands of emails exchanged for a decade with a thousand women scattered throughout Italy. Ten years of virtual exchanges but not only that. Almost immediately meetings were organized, one every year, which lasted from Friday afternoon to Sunday evening. From North to South. A person or a group looked for a welcoming place and we saw each other together for a full immersion of reflections and entertainment for some, love encounters and new conquests for others. (G., 52 years old).

The use of anonymity online and in apps such as *Wapa*, is, for some of the interviewees, a needed step to enter a world of which little is known, to come into contact with "sharable" representations of an otherwise unreachable lesbian culture, either in real life or through the traditional media. These possibilities are given through websites and applications promoting meetings between people of the same sex. The interviews also highlight that this path is common both to the more mature women and to the younger ones and that the dating apps are suitable for different uses.

Some use them as a channel to explore their sexuality, as first access to the L-world, and often end their use as soon as they form a stable relationship. Others continue to use them, and from a necessary channel,

they become instead a preferential instrument for searching for new sexual partners.

For some of the younger women who begin to explore their sexuality, the chats are also a strategic choice for getting in touch with women who live far away, thus limiting the risks of exposure in their home environment.

> She lived in Catania. But, you know, sometimes the distance is also useful, especially at the beginning, because it limits the intrusiveness, leads you to discover things as you go, you get there with more awareness, maybe someone living nearer your hometown would have been a problem, you would not have chosen her. I travelled there to meet her in person and somehow, more or less unconsciously, it was comfortable for me, no one knew my business and I could freely live the story. And then she showed me an environment, in Catania, completely uninhibited from this point of view (A., 36 years old).

A substantial difference emerges concerning the modes of interaction and communication between women and men who use such applications. Women's interactions on the *Wapa* dating app are never too explicit or direct and tend to focus, according to the interviewees, on aspects related to personality, interests and hobbies, and hardly fall on sexual practices. The communications are mainly aimed at finding a stable partner – indeed a greatly emphasized aspect – and sex is rarely disengaged from sentimental perspectives to the point that an interviewee points out in the interviewer his lack of perspective:

> Your questions are very "masculine". In fact, you (referring to the interviewer) are focusing mainly on the sexual sphere, therefore on sex, sexuality and this is not a dominant aspect. Women are still women, they were still girls and the aspect that prevails most is the feeling. This, even if it is commonplace, is also and above all truth. Of course, you will find women in whom the sentimental aspect is more developed than others but the key is that it is not sex (B., 42 years old).

The stress on the emotional aspects of relationships can also take on another meaning, as a woman who explicitly seeks sexual adventures is considered in the online environment as "a bad one". An interviewee claims that it is not uncommon to find what is defined "poly-love", expressed in the coexistence of multiple relationships, the succession of

multiple monogamous relationships that begin and end in a short time frame.

2.3. *The cultural universe of reference: between heteronormativity and widespread stereotypes*

The social representations of the interviewees are elaborated through social networks and interactions on the Internet, thus accessing the orientations and the "educational maps" that guide individuals – at the level of collective life – in their search for the requisites for carrying out specific roles within concrete relationships.

There is a widespread negative representation of people who are only looking for sex, considered as a drift that characterizes, according to older women, the younger generation. The latter, on the other hand, tend to emphasize psychological and behavioural aspects that particularly characterize women met on social networks, frequently mentioning "pathologizing" terms that frame some women as "psychopathic", "obsessive". Several young women point out that they are not looking for "lesbian dramas", *i.e.*, as explained later by the interviewees, particularly intrusive L-people who frequently contact someone even in the face of an obvious lack of interest.

Also interesting is the lexicon used on meeting apps, useful for deciphering the specific language of the L-community and identifying some of the most common relational practices. The interviewees describe profiles and conversations on social issues as contexts abounding in references to one's character, rather than to their body, using words and sentences from films, books, or poems that are often the pretext from which to strike a conversation.

Particularly stigmatized, in both face-to-face and online interactions, are women who do not conform to the stereotypical model that defines socially accepted femininity, thus defined by most as "masculine" or a "trucker". Deviance can pertain to the various expressions of the paraverbal language, such as tone of voice, gestures, type of clothing. Even for lesbians, therefore, the traditional binary genderist male/female model is the element from which to evaluate the identities that are found both online and offline. Yet dating applications can also be a place to express a different way of understanding female sexuality: the virtual allows for more freedom and,

therefore, subverts stereotypes that see female sexuality as hetero-determined and framed only in terms of affectivity.

Conclusions

The interviews highlighted some of the aspects of the condition of women in Salerno, confirming part of the results of previous researches that examined the condition of lesbians in the broader Italian and regional context (Barbagli, Colombo, 2007, Corbisiero). The interviews showed that in an area characterized by few resources and spaces of aggregation for LGBT people, the homosexual affectivity of women remains mostly invisible, confined to networks full of sociality among women and the use of online platforms such as chat and applications specifically devoted to same-sex relationships.

From the interviews emerge the important role of love and friendship relationships in shaping and conditioning women's intimate desires, in making them practically possible and in acquiring those cultural scenarios (*i.e.* representations, typical patterns of behaviour, specific languages) of an otherwise unknown L-world.

The interviews revealed the important role played by new communication channels, such as social networks and dating apps. These channels are suitable for several purposes: for some, they are the first access to the L world, a "temporary" way (therefore soon abandoned) to discover themselves and give voice to their desires, contributing to the formation of friendships and love relationships that are paramount for their socialization to L-sexuality. For others, these resources are only "parallel" worlds to broaden the networks of relationships, to diversify knowledge, also allowing to affirm a more self-determined way of being "sexual", free from the widespread stereotypes about lesbians in the reference environment.

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Review of Picarella, L. & Truda, G. (eds.), *Fundamental Rights, Gender, Inequalities. Vulnerability and Protection Systems*, Gutenberg, Baronissi (SA), 2019

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Abstract

Review of the book *Fundamental Rights, Gender, Inequalities. Vulnerability and Protection Systems*, Gutenberg, Baronissi (SA), 2019, edited by Lucia Picarella and Giovanna Truda. The book collects essays of sociologists about several topics related to fundamental rights and gender issues.

Keywords: Fundamental rights, Sustainable development, Cultural change, Gender issues, Inequalities.

A cry of hope that goes through the world!

I'm a woman. And a tender warmth warms me when the world hits me.
It is the warmth of the other women, of those who made this sensitive corner of life,
fighter, with soft skin and tender warrior heart.
Alejandra Pizarnik 1955 – 1972.

The political commitment not to "leave anyone behind" in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development will be a chimera if it fails to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The book Fundamental Rights, Gender, Inequalities Vulnerability and protection systems, published by Gutenberg Edizioni and coordinated by Lucia Picarella and Giovanna Truda, addresses the 'structural' phenomenon of violence and discrimination against women, and feeds the political debate from the theoretical-sociopolitical production of its different configurations. The book consists of an initial article, The Protection of New Rights in a Kantian Cosmopolitan Perspective, and two sections - Violence Against Women and Gender and Equality - with three articles each.

Specifically, in the first article Alessandra Petrone and Lucia Picarella analyze in particular the new rights, in a cosmopolitan perspective, presenting a comparison between the European and Latin American context. The authors focus on the importance of understanding whether, and to what extent, in a context of globalisation of politics, law, cultures, communication networks, the management of large-scale processes should move from national centralism to supranational governance. In this sense, cosmopolitanism is presented as the right solution for a solid protection of rights, in particular new generation rights or solidarity rights enshrined in different provisions of some international conventions. The first section, Violence Against Women, highlights the "narrative of violence in its subterranean currents of gender violence and violence against women while at the same time pointing out to us the idea that the fight against violence has to be against its perpetration, and that the success of the same will be if the fight for equality is carried out in parallel. Stellamarina Donato focuses on resolution 48/104 of 1993 of the General Assembly of the United Nations, since the pronouncement of its articles 1 and 2, raises the debate on the human rights of women and the relevant action of governments, civil society and social movements, in three macro-ambits:empowerment, gender equality and violence - distinguishing between gender-based violence and violence against women. The author shows us two paradigms to understand violence against women, the first one refers to what she calls integral understanding of this phenomenon that is based on male domination and patriarchy over women, which is seen as an inferior part of society. The second, with a broader social spectrum, with diverse dimensions and socio-cultural and situational settings based on extended beliefs, which based on the first paradigm undoubtedly creates "an adversarial environment that supports rape, sexual assault and violence against women".It shares with us the idea of creating capacities for women, considered not only as victims of violence, but also as active subjects of transformation of their adverse reality. In fact, in this document we recognize the role of researchers in creating awareness and address this social problem through the creation of content and language, and further suggests that we continue to delve rigorously into the modalities chosen by each level of community, regional and international, to understand the

trends of this phenomenon articulated to a global scenario, to scrutinize reasons and produce political alternatives.

On the other hand, Valeria Tevere instructs us on the categories of immigrant women as a heterogeneous vulnerable group in different conditions of vulnerability: refugees and asylum seekers, economic migrants, migrants for family reunification and, finally, climatic migrants. In addition to their vulnerability as women, the latter have a vulnerability related to their status as migrants. The de facto situation that determines their weakness, or 'impotence', is undoubtedly related to the initial condition of poverty, to the marginalization connected to the condition of migrant, to the greater exposure to the risk of violence, both during the migration process and during the entire period of stay in the destination State. The author bases this analysis on an interesting normative study of the general normative frameworks on the international protection of migrants and the UNHCR practice for the gender approach, as well as on the protection of migrant women in the European regional space, and the internal application profiles, leading us between genital mutilation, domestic violence, forced marriages, trafficking. Hammache Elkaina focuses on Algeria, where work is being done to eradicate all forms of discrimination in the workplace, as mandated by international conventions for the protection of human rights in general and women's rights in particular, but access to the labour market by the female labour force remains low. The methodology, based on focus groups with women entrepreneurs, yields experiences and perceptions, and identifies violence from sexual harassment as a social problem that they were frequently confronted with, along with misogyny, marginalization, refusal to obtain credit in the bank, and so on. The author concludes that it is not enough to have a legal basis that guarantees total gender equality and equal rights, if in practice the violence that affects women and the national economy in general is violated and suffered.

In the second section, Gender and Equality, the authors present three significant case studies. Chiara d'Auria, outlines us referents on the reality of women in China, and demonstrates that although with the political and economic reforms it has been proposed to become a harmonious society, it still maintains sections of marginalization and subordination of women. More particularly, in comparison with other developed or emerging

countries, in the case of the People's Republic of China, launched for more than forty years to economic and social modernization, a regression of the condition of women is underway and can lead, in most cases, to a condition of social precariousness. Daniela Sica, Ornella Malandrino, and Benedetta Esposito, study the historical evolution of gender equality in Italy, and tell us that, despite the efforts made, there is still much to be done to promote, coordinate and supervise initiatives in favour of gender equality. It highlights the gradual evolution in Italy on equality through the enactment of laws and creation of bodies to strengthen the social role of women from the end of the nineteenth century, enshrined in Article 3 of the Constitution which establishes formal equality between the sexes before the law and in the workplace, and laid the foundation for then promulgating norms of gender and social dignity of women, removing all impediments of economic and social order, autonomy and equality between citizens, to enable the development of the human person. However, the authors tell us that with respect to the gender perspective in Italy, there is a disparity between norms and their concrete implementation, since on the one hand there is a broad and well articulated legislation on equal opportunities between men and women, but on the other hand it is reduced in its implementation by the lack of knowledge of them and also by the absence of an institutional political will. Consequently, the gender gap continues to be expressed in all labour market indicators, with employment and female participation rates among the lowest in Europe.

Cultural change requires full awareness of recognized rights and existing safeguards. Clotilde Cicatiello, presents a perspective referring to gender equality and gender studies in research organisations and highlights the Gender Equality Plan of the University of Salerno, in this respect she tells us that the European Union has assigned to the universities a primordial role in the promotion of the cultural change of society towards a gender equality perspective, but in spite of the firm desire and commitment, the universities have not fully achieved the objective of equality, due to the strong under-representation of women in academia. Italian universities are still far from having made the transition to the culture of women's leadership, but, nevertheless, the University of Salerno has managed in the national context to promote gender equality in the field

of scientific research and in the socialization of gender consciousness, subject that achieved greater momentum from 2013.

In seven years, the teaching of women's history and gender studies at the Department of Humanities (DIPSUM) was established for the first time in the academic year 2013/14. Progress was made in 2011 with the creation of the Gender and Equal Opportunities Studies Observatory (OGEPO), an interdepartmental study centre on gender and equal opportunities studies, which includes 11 of UNISA's 17 departments. Through OGEPO, educational activities are carried out to ensure greater dissemination and awareness of gender issues and equal opportunities. A gender equality plan was drawn up by the University of Salerno to integrate teaching and research into the gender perspective, without falling into the exclusivity of a project for women, but rather a project for women and men that guarantees equal opportunities, better welfare and makes the University of Salerno a model of good practice at national and European level.

Finally, I would like to highlight the relevance of this collective book, which clarifies the panorama of women worldwide in their rights, inequalities, protection and vulnerability...it leaves the undeniable flavour that in spite of this, important advances have been made, especially since the 1995 Beijing conference, a crucial moment from which an awakening of women's groups is generated, actions are promoted worldwide and in Latin America that begin to make ruptures with beliefs, customs and cultural models that victimized women, closed their doors, reified them and sent them to the deepest world while we watched impassively the severe impacts of an unequal patriarchal-based system. Today there is a cultural mandate regarding what it means to be a woman, but we know that much more is missing, we continue to be unequal, the ferocity of failed political models, of majorities impoverished by the comulation of elites that control power and increase inequalities... The women and girls of these countries assume the greater weight of this systemic crisis of lack of guarantees and violation of rights. The lack of visibility of the situation of women increases male violence, gender exclusion and violations of rights and autonomies. In good time this magnificent research work is a contribution to clarify the vital realities of girls and women who assume the challenge every day to face danger, threat, violation and affronts.

Finally, I would like to invite the editors and authors of this valuable work to produce a second publication on this subject, making it possible to cover, in an even more specific way, all latitudes.